



New South Wales

Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday, 16 February 2022

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 16 February 2022

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

[Notices of motions given]

Bills

ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 24 November 2021.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (09:46): I lead for the Labor Opposition in debate on the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, representing the shadow Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, from the other place. The Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 represents a long overdue strengthening of our environment protection laws concerning illegal dumping, pollution and contamination events. From the outset, I make it clear that Labor will be supporting the bill because these changes have largely come about because of many years of advocacy from the Labor Opposition. The Government is likely to reject that claim but, having been a part of the conversations and campaigns over many years, I know it to be a fact and I will explain the basis of it in greater detail soon.

As local representatives, many of us in this place are well aware of the devastating impact on our communities of unscrupulous individuals and businesses who find ways to skirt the rules when it comes to waste management, illegal dumping, contamination and pollution. The bill expands and increases penalties for those criminals. It also goes some way to protect innocent landowners who often, too often, bear the brunt of illegal dumping and contamination events when the perpetrators are unable to be prosecuted under the current laws. I refer members to the former Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment's extensive second reading speech for a detailed summary of the provisions within the bill. Specifically, the bill seeks to amend the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, Contaminated Land Management Act 1997 and Pesticides Act 1999 to impose harsher penalties on polluters and repeat offenders; to strengthen the powers of the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA]; and, hopefully, to protect innocent landowners from the significant human health and financial impacts of illegal dumping and contamination.

The bill also amends the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991 to formalise the separation of the roles of the chairperson and the chief executive officer of the EPA in accordance with recommendation 1 from the 2015 upper House inquiry into the performance of the EPA. I will say that again: That is from a 2015 recommendation and it is now, pointing out the obvious, 2022—seven years later. We got there in the end. As I mentioned before, these changes are long overdue. The Port Stephens community is well aware of the impacts of dodgy and dishonest characters who knowingly operate commercial-scale illegal dumping practices, contaminate public and private land and leave innocent landowners to pay astronomical remediation costs. They see Port Stephens, and other regional communities not too far from Sydney, as their dumping ground. It is not on. We are well aware of the inadequacy of the current laws, which too often leave the EPA powerless to stop poor behaviour and unable to prosecute the criminals responsible. We are also well aware of the awful heartache and despair that descends on communities that are victims of illegal dumping, pollution and contamination.

Time and time again communities have been let down by the EPA, which has been let down by our weak laws and lack of resources. Like most parts of this Government with any responsibility for the environment, the EPA is starved of resources and battling staff cuts. One example of the very real consequences of inadequate laws combined with inadequate resources is that of Michael and Cheryl Corling from Millers Forest. Their case, amongst so many others, has demonstrated the dire need for the EPA to be granted greater powers and for polluters to be punished. Here we had an innocent family accept certified fill to build a pad for a new home. I have spoken about their predicament in this place previously, as has the member for Maitland, who will no doubt speak further to this when she makes her contribution to the debate.

Unbeknownst to Michael and Cheryl Corling, the fill which was delivered to their property had been tested by EPA officers two weeks beforehand while they were carrying out a site inspection at a waste management company in Greenacre, Sydney. When the test later returned a positive result for asbestos, EPA officers asked the company in Sydney to account for that fill. Shockingly, it admitted to the EPA that the material had already been trucked and delivered to the Corlings' property in Millers Forest. Unsurprisingly, when the mound at Millers Forest was tested, it returned a positive result for asbestos. This should have been an open and shut case of illegal dumping but, instead, the company and their lawyers spent almost a year spinning a web of blame and excuses, accusing the Corlings themselves of already having asbestos on their property. Remarkably, once that claim was made, the EPA found itself bound by the current laws. Unless the Corlings could prove that they did not already have asbestos on their property, the polluter, who had admitted to delivering the asbestos-contaminated fill to the property, somehow could not be held responsible.

The situation became even more absurd when the EPA issued a draft clean-up notice to the Corlings themselves—the innocent victims. The clean-up costs would have been hundreds of thousands of dollars, possibly \$1 million, and would have sent the Corlings bankrupt. I pay tribute to the hardworking member for Maitland, who joined with me to highlight the absolute injustice of this case and the terrible impact it was having on Michael and Cheryl Corling. Their story was shared by *A Current Affair*, the ABC and the *Newcastle Herald*. They were all shocked by and scathing of the situation that the Corlings were in and how they had been treated.

The member for Maitland and I were able to secure a meeting with the former environment Minister, Matt Kean, and the EPA on behalf of these constituents. We spelled out our significant concerns with the process, as well as the absurd and unfair outcome. To his credit, the Minister understood that an injustice had occurred and recognised that the current laws needed to be changed. Thankfully, following the significant media attention, the waste management company in Sydney decided to do the right thing and pay the remediation cost on the Corlings' property.

The Corlings' case has been a much-needed catalyst for change. This bill should send a clear message to those who might consider illegal dumping or contaminating land. The loopholes are being closed. The EPA is being strengthened and people will be held responsible for their actions, provided the EPA is adequately resourced. For that, I offer my genuine thanks to the former Minister for acting to address these long overdue changes, and I urge the new environment Minister to ensure that these changes are backed up with proper resourcing for the EPA. It should not be the case that prosecutions are avoided or abandoned because the EPA simply does not have the resources to fight. This bill means the EPA will have greater legislative powers, but it also needs additional resources to enable it to fully utilise those powers to hold polluters to account and protect innocent victims from criminal behaviour. Generally, as we all know, the polluters have deep pockets and they prey on those who do not. The EPA must have the resources to not only back innocent people but show that it will act and, in doing so, hopefully prevent the offence occurring in the first place.

Private landowners are not the only ones who can be left to clean up someone else's pollution or contamination. On occasions it is the Government—the taxpayer—that is forced to step in and spend millions of dollars to rectify criminal behaviour in the form of illegal dumping and contamination. The Hunter region is well aware of the Truegain example, which was referenced in the former Parliamentary Secretary's second reading speech. According to the Government, \$10 million of taxpayer funds has already been spent to prevent further toxic contaminated groundwater escaping the site and entering local waterways. The Government estimates that another \$10 million of taxpayer money will be needed to fully remediate the site. This situation will end up costing the people of New South Wales at least \$20 million. To put that into perspective, that money could pay for hundreds of additional nurses and teachers and police officers; my electorate could finally get a high school in Medowie. Instead, the money will be spent rectifying one company's poor behaviour.

Once again we saw the indefatigable member for Maitland, Jenny Aitchison, fighting for years in an effort to make the Government identify the source of the contamination, prevent the contamination and protect her community from this contamination. The member for Maitland will give a more fulsome record of the years of advocacy trying to make the Government listen to what was happening at this site. I was well aware that alongside the member for Maitland, her community and the local media spent years and years trying to highlight what was going on at the site before the Government finally stepped in and stepped up.

The delayed response has not only cost taxpayers dearly, it has taken its toll on the member's community, with properties now polluted by perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances [PFAS] and goodness knows what other toxic chemicals. While the member for Maitland has been raising concerns about that awful site for years—before she was even elected to this place—and while this awful toxic debacle has played out, the Government has cycled through five environment Ministers. The member for Manly is the sixth. Had the matter been taken seriously by this Government sooner, properties may not have been polluted by PFAS and innumerable other chemicals.

When I say that these changes are long overdue, I mean it. It is very real for a lot of people in New South Wales. When I say that the changes to the law we are debating today have come about from the Labor Opposition's advocacy, that too is very real. However, there is something missing from this debate that disturbs me. I sat in this Chamber last year when the former Parliamentary Secretary gave the second reading speech. There was no mention of one of the most significant polluting events in this State. That event has caused incalculable harm to hundreds of people's properties and lives for the past 6½ years. These people's properties and lives have been contaminated by PFAS emanating from the RAAF Base at Williamstown. They have been promised solutions by this Government, but it never ever had any intention of delivering them.

During the second reading speech, the former Parliamentary Secretary said on multiple occasions that the bill would ensure that the polluter pays. It would seem that is not the case when it comes to pollution caused by the Department of Defence. The pollution went from defence property onto people's private land, for which the EPA has responsibility. Given the Government has made no mention of the Williamstown PFAS pollution in the context of the bill, it is clearly not going to change anything for those residents. It also signals that this Government has no intention of doing anything to assist these innocent victims of pollution where their private land and their lives have been polluted. So whilst it is disappointing that this Government is continuing to ignore the residents affected by the PFAS in Williamstown, Fullerton Cove and Salt Ash, the bill does at least ensure the NSW Environment Protection Authority has greater powers to take on future polluters, provided this Government gives it the resources to do so. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (09:59): I am pleased to speak in support of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. As the member for Port Stephens outlined, the bill has a number of objectives and amends a number of bills, including the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997, the Land and Environment Court Act 1979, the Pesticides Act 1999, the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991, the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 and the Radiation Control Act 1990.

The bill aims, in general, to ensure that environmental laws continue to effectively deter crimes that pollute our lands and our waters. It will hold people and businesses who seek to profit from crimes to account, requiring them to clean up their pollution and return any monetary benefit. With criminal behaviours evolving, this bill is an essential step towards ensuring that environmental laws in New South Wales remain modern and effective and deter illegal activity that harms human health and the environment. As was noted in the second reading speech, existing environmental laws have successfully reduced harmful air and water emissions over the past two decades, ensuring legacy contaminated sites are made safe and waste is reduced or beneficially reused.

But environmental laws need to be continually improved to ensure that they keep the people of New South Wales safe and that those who commit crimes are held to account for their actions. The bill also makes important changes to ensure that environmental laws keep pace with changing criminal behaviours and business models. Some industry sectors and operators are establishing complex corporate structures to deflect accountability and avoid cleaning up pollution. Sadly, this practice is becoming more common. Separate companies are being created for each licensed site and then dissolved to avoid enforcement action and prevent the monetary benefits of their crimes from being recovered. Currently, the Environment Protection Authority [EPA], as the State's independent environmental regulator, can be limited in enforcing environmental laws against these new and evolving business models.

A significant number of investigations of serious environmental crimes have either not proceeded or were discontinued due to these individuals and businesses finding ways to get around the law and deflect any accountability for their crimes. This behaviour has exposed communities to health risks from stockpiled contaminated waste in their neighbourhoods. It has caused financial impacts to innocent landholders and the New South Wales Government, who are left paying the costs of cleaning up these crimes. Some polluters are avoiding their clean-up responsibilities and costs and are also profiting from their crimes. Recently, a subsidiary of a large waste management company received waste over five times its licensed limit at its waste processing facility. The EPA could not recover the monetary benefits of this crime from the subsidiary company because the parent company was the entity that received the financial benefit from the subsidiary's offence.

The evolution of corporate structures to avoid accountability and enforcement for illegal activities is an emerging issue that could undermine the effectiveness of laws designed to protect the people and the environments of this State. The bill will close the loopholes in environmental laws that allow companies to knowingly do the wrong thing and profit from their crimes. The bill responds to these changes in criminal behaviours and business models so that those businesses deliberately circumventing the law can be shut down and the people can be held responsible. The bill will do this by extending existing notice and order provisions to a company's current and former directors, related corporate bodies, and the current and former directors of those related bodies where the original company fails to comply. The changes will ensure that individuals and companies are responsible for

cleaning up pollution caused by the activities of companies they control, even if those companies are deregistered to avoid that responsibility.

The bill will make it an offence for current and former directors and related bodies corporate to receive monetary benefits from the commission of an offence by their associated company. The bill will provide a strong deterrent for related entities causing or benefitting from environmental crimes and will ensure they take proper precautions to protect the environment and our communities. That is good news for companies that do the right thing. They will no longer be competitively or financially disadvantaged by abiding by their environmental obligations. There is often a pattern of noncompliance across related companies that seek to exploit current laws to benefit from crimes.

The bill enables the EPA to consider, when making licensing decisions, whether related companies and current and former directors of those related companies are fit and proper persons. It will also enable the Minister responsible to issue a prohibition notice to deter those with a history of environmental crimes from moving to different premises and continuing to operate. Those improvements will prevent those individuals and businesses with poor environmental records and prior environmental convictions from using complex corporate structures to continue operating unlawfully and harming the environment for financial gain. The bill will hold environmental criminals to account and will increase protections for the community and for our environment. These are necessary reforms to ensure that our environmental laws remain modern, powerful and effective. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (10:06): Labor is supportive of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, but the New South Wales Government must also ensure that the NSW Environment Protection Authority is properly resourced and staffed to be able to deliver on the promises of the bill to prevent contamination, hold polluters to account and recoup the costs of remediating contamination and waste from polluters. Illegal dumping is a scourge on the environment and has very real consequences for local communities in areas where people dump toxic waste. The issues addressed in this bill have been problems for a very long time. The Newcastle and Hunter area is known for its heavy industrial past. My colleague the member for Port Stephens has talked at length about the appalling contamination and the Government's terrible response to it. My colleague the member for Maitland has been fighting for years about a toxic industrial dump, so to speak, in her electorate.

In Newcastle the BHP site, which has a large remediation footprint, is the first that jumps to mind. People who are not local may not be aware of the contamination through Hamilton North in particular. There are a few different industries in that area, including a lamp works and a fuel terminal, but there were huge problems with the legacy of the gasworks. Jemena spent \$11.5 million on that site, capping and containing contamination that it had nothing to do with. The gasworks operated there for 72 years. It produced coal gas by heating the coal on site and then burying the residue containing benzene, petroleum hydrocarbons, arsenic and lead, which ultimately contaminated the groundwater.

We also have major contamination sites at Kooragang, Maryville, Mayfield, Mayfield North, Mayfield West, Tighes Hill, Wickham and Waratah. That covers most of the suburbs of Newcastle. I could not speak about land contamination without mentioning the outrageous situation with PFAS at Williamstown, which my colleague the member for Port Stephens also spoke about. This has affected members of my community enormously. It is a textbook example of a polluter simply getting away with it. There has been a cancer cluster, a plummet in land values and livelihoods absolutely ruined, and still the polluter—Defence and the Federal Government—is not doing anywhere near enough about it. We welcome the fact that this bill seeks to address gaps in environmental laws to ensure that those who commit crimes are actually held to account and to protect innocent landholders and communities from the health and financial impacts from contamination and waste.

The measures in this bill are long overdue. For too long polluters have used loopholes in the law to avoid penalties for pollution, or weighed up the paltry penalties under the law against the cost of reducing pollution and preventing the contamination of New South Wales land and waters. For too long that cost-benefit analysis, which so many people who break the law in this area make, has been weighted so that people forget about the penalties so the Opposition welcomes the increases in fines. We believe the costs of managing the human health and environmental impacts should be met by polluters, and this bill does that. When land is contaminated by pollution, it can take years and millions and millions of dollars to remediate, as we saw with the Jemena site in Newcastle. Contaminated water can also have immense negative impacts on biodiversity and the viability of drinking water for communities. We only have to look as far as the contamination in Williamstown's water to see the effect on those communities.

We need a strong legal and regulatory framework to prevent and respond to pollution, and to ensure it is the polluters who have to pick up the bill when things go wrong. In terms of staffing, while it is positive that the EPA received extra staff last year, a number of those new staff were temporary or casual workers. These workers

need certainty in their roles to be able to enforce the law and respond quickly to reports of contamination. In summary, while this legislation is a good start, we have a long way to go but the Opposition welcomes it.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (10:11): I am pleased to support the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I thank the former Minister for Energy and Environment, the Hon. Matt Kean, MP, and the former Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Felicity Wilson, MP, for bringing this bill to the House. I know they did a great deal of work to get to it this point, but I also know—and I am sure members recognise—that the new Minister for Environment and Heritage, the Hon. James Griffin, MP, is a strong supporter of preserving the environment. I know he will continue this work and the work of those who came before him as well.

I think everyone in our electorates has had an involvement with the Environment Protection Authority [EPA]. Everybody has had some reason to give it a call or to have received a phone call from it to tell them what is happening in their electorates. In my electorate we had some contamination when an essential oil factory caught on fire and unfortunately lavender oil spread everywhere. The kids slept great that night! When a fire smells like lavender oil, it does have a benefit, which is that all the kids slept really well. But it is not particularly good for you, and it is not particularly good obviously when the other chemicals from that fire got into our water system. The EPA was brilliant at liaising with the council and our community to tell them what was happening and to make sure that our environment was looked after.

A couple of other times there has been asbestos dumping and EPA officers reacted very quickly to help out our community, as they did when there has been damage to our water system from people taking water illegally or from contamination that was needed to be looked at. So I am very grateful for the work they do, that there are people who know how to look after our environment and how to protect it, and that there is a department able to focus on the environment to make sure that nothing inappropriate happens to it. I thank the EPA for that work.

Protecting our local environment is something that we are all passionate about, and I have had a strong focus on that since being elected to this place. I have shown that through finding inappropriate developments like the Moorebank Intermodal—I think I have uttered those words more than anything else since I have been a member in this place—which took all of our trees. I was devastated by the impact it has had on our community, but I know the EPA will be there to hold the Moorebank Intermodal Company to account to make sure that our pollution levels do not get out of control and to protect our community. I have also been involved in securing protections for our local community. We have a disease-free koala colony.

Mr Geoff Provest: Hear, hear!

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: I know that the member for Tweed loves koalas and posts pictures of koalas on his Facebook page, but we have the disease-free ones. We are very proud of that, and we want to protect them. I know former Minister Matt Kean did a lot of work to make sure that the Georges River Koala Reserve was created and that a corridor was created past Campbelltown up to Holsworthy so that koalas can travel between the rivers, which is what they like to do—they like to have that space to spread out. I love that we were able to better protect their environment. And, of course, we have all been involved in supporting the Return and Earn program to reduce litter and rubbish in our community. That is making a huge difference. Bottles and cans are no longer littering our waterways, and it is also having the benefit of putting a bit of money in people's pockets. I know our sporting and school groups love it as well.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to supporting our local environment. This bill is another step towards that goal. It will ensure that communities and the environment are protected from contamination caused by individuals and businesses wilfully committing environmental crimes for financial and commercial gain. It improves existing environmental laws so that the New South Wales Government or innocent landholders are not left footing the bill for cleaning up contaminated sites, and that is only fair. It also modernises those laws to ensure that, when contamination is identified, the EPA can act quickly to prevent further contamination from occurring and direct its immediate clean-up by those who caused or contributed to it.

Currently the EPA is limited in how quickly it can respond when notified of contamination under the Contaminated Land Management Act, and that is obviously not a great thing. It needs to be addressed. The EPA's main powers to address contamination now only apply if and when the land is formally declared to be significantly contaminated. That process can take months. It needs to be fixed. If the contamination source is still active or contaminated groundwater or vapours are impacting nearby landholders, the EPA must be provided with the ability to take immediate action to manage and clean up the contamination.

In December 2019 the EPA was notified that underground petroleum storage tanks had contaminated the groundwater used for domestic purposes by a small regional town, potentially impacting the health of the local community and agricultural businesses. Due to the limitations of the current laws, the EPA was unable to

immediately act to require the landholder to clean up the site and manage the offsite contamination. That resulted in the contamination source further polluting the site and the groundwater, and it resulted in extended government support and cost to the community so that they could access clean water. That support is continuing to this day.

The bill will enable the EPA to issue prevention and clean-up notices to operators of a site, while assessing whether the contamination is significant enough to warrant regulation by the EPA. That change will enable swift action to stop any active source of contamination from impacting human health or the environment, and enable the site's clean-up to be expedited. Cleaning up pollution and remediating contamination is expensive and often far outweighs the value of the business that caused the pollution. Businesses that cannot pay for remediation often go into liquidation, leaving the New South Wales Government and innocent landholders to manage or remediate the environmental impacts.

Importantly, the bill will enable the EPA to require a financial assurance where residual contamination is regulated over a long time under an ongoing maintenance order or public positive covenant. That change will respond to the risk that businesses go into liquidation or deregister the company and expose the New South Wales Government and innocent landholders to the long-term costs of ongoing management for those environmental liabilities. The EPA will be able to lift a declaration of significantly contaminated land for a site and still ensure financial security for ongoing management and maintenance of residual contamination at the site.

The bill will ensure that the EPA can consider the financial capacity of a person subject to a contaminated land order or covenant in deciding whether financial assurance is required. This ensures that if there is a risk a person or business does not have the financial capacity to manage contamination risks at its premises, the EPA can require it to obtain financial assurance. That important change will prevent the New South Wales Government from having to fund and manage the clean-up of the contamination and prevent the risk that contamination is left on site, which would impact communities.

The bill will also increase penalty amounts across the Contaminated Land Management Act to align them with the penalty amounts for equivalent offences in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. Some penalty amounts in the Act have not changed since it was introduced in 1997. The increases are warranted given the health and environmental harm that contaminated land offences can cause and will strongly deter noncompliance with the environmental laws. The changes will also enable the court to impose a financial penalty that adequately reflects the seriousness of the crime when a person or company is found guilty of an offence relating to contaminating the land. The bill strengthens the effectiveness of our environmental laws and expands existing tools to better prevent, manage and remediate contamination that is impacting human health and the environment now and into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (10:19): In 2014 an ambulance was called to attend a Spotlight store at Rutherford because three employees had been overcome by fumes from the so-called Rutherford stink. At that time I was the Labor candidate for the electorate of Maitland, and the stink had been around for many, many years. The former member for Maitland, and former Minister for the Environment in this Government—that is, before she was sacked in 2014—promised during the 2014 election campaign that a Coalition Government would eradicate the stink. Indeed, it promised to spend \$400,000 to remediate the issue. My understanding is that the money never arrived. In fact, the former Minister was left to walk around the industrial estate of Rutherford begging suspected polluters for money to fund a study. That work should be done by the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA], rather than pointing at people and saying, "You might be the source."

In March 2016 Hunter Water, not the EPA, attended the site of the former Truegain oil refinery. It was known in Rutherford as Australian waste oils. Hunter Water stopped the plant from disgoring PFAS-contaminated water into our local waterways, which had an enormous impact on people who lived in the surrounding areas, including Stony Creek and Fishery Creek. That work should have been done by the EPA and the resources should have been there to do it. The Rutherford Air Quality Liaison Committee was established by the former Minister. It met for three years between December 2011 and October 2014. This bill is the direct result of the advocacy of people such as former councillor Henry Meskauskas and fierce community advocate Ramona Cocco. Other people on the committee included Stephen Francis, Ross Lidbury, Stephen Jordan, Neale Green, Ray Carson, Howard Bridgman, Phillipe Porigneaux, David Simm from Maitland City Council, Karen Marler, Leanne Graham, Jackie Teal, Victor Prasad from Hunter Water, and Shane Boslem. Every day those people and others tried to find the source of the stink, without the support of this Government.

Roll forward to my election to this place in 2015. I put out a survey to 8,000 people in my electorate in the area around Rutherford. The EPA kept telling me that people like Ramona Cocco had very sensitive olfactory nerves and that she could have worked in a perfume factory because she was very sensitive to scents. That is a disgraceful indictment upon the depth that the EPA would go to in order to cover up the fact that it did not have the power to act properly in this case. Ramona Cocco was not alone. Over 200 people responded to that survey. They told me about going outside to their cars in the morning and finding a thick, sticky residue of pollution and

toxic material on their cars that they would have to wash off before they could leave. People said they could not sleep with their windows open as they would be woken up in the middle of the night to a thick stench coming through their bedroom window.

People who had heard about the work we were doing to target the source of the stench rang me and said, "Jenny, I used to live there but my son had this terrible rash. We took him to doctors for years and years." In the end they were told, "Maybe try moving because something is wrong with your environment." When they moved away from Rutherford, their son's condition improved. This Government has avoided the issue and nothing has changed. As the member for Port Stephens said, five environment Ministers had charge of the portfolio before there was any action on this topic. Any action relied on me coming into this House and attacking on the issue. When Hunter Water stopped the PFAS disgorging, which ultimately stopped Truegain, the former member for Monaro came into this House and attacked me for shutting down the plant. This Government believes in protecting the polluters. The polluters are not called to account, and it is a disgrace.

That was the Government's idea: You protect the polluters; you do not call them to account. It was a disgrace. This bill is a direct result of that, and the Parliamentary Secretary and the Minister, who had a role in drafting it, had mentioned Truegain specifically. But, as the member for Port Stephens said, the Corling family has also suffered so much. Listening to other speakers on this bill, it beggars belief. People talk about how expensive it is, but the polluter told the EPA where it dumped the material. When we talk about delays between discovering pollution and action by the EPA, the EPA went to the site of the polluters and said, "That's contaminated fill. We will be back in a few weeks to come and take you to court." The polluters thought, "What do we do? We will just get rid of this," and they dumped it in Millers Forest.

When the EPA went back to the polluters, they said, "We dumped it up there." What did the EPA do? It went to the Corlings, a family that has a business looking after people's pets when they go on holiday, and said, "You have all this asbestos in your place and we are going to find it." The EPA found it and said, "We are going to charge you millions of dollars in fines and remediation. The Corlings said, "Hang on, we have all the right material and all the right documentation. What are you talking about?" The EPA said, "Well, we can't really get the polluter on this because there is no clear chain of custody. Maybe somebody came in and substituted the stuff that we know went missing with other contaminated fill and you actually knew that it was there." Because, let's face it, doesn't everybody want to have asbestos in their backyard! The Corlings had a dream of having a proper flood mound on their property to keep the animals they were looking after safe during floods, which are a big issue in Millers Forest. It is a dumping ground for disgusting polluters in Sydney that have been able to get away with that trick for a long time.

I give credit to the former Minister for acting on that. But the onus of proof on people has a perverse consequence in that situation. If anyone found asbestos in their backyard they would just cover it up because they would be liable for it. It would not matter if that asbestos had been there for 20 years, 30 years or 10 decades; they would be the person responsible for remediation and clean-up of it. That has been addressed in the bill and that is a good outcome. I support the work that the member for Port Stephens has done on PFAS remediation, and the work of my Federal colleague who represents the electorate of Paterson, which covers both Maitland and Port Stephens. I know the member for Newcastle has also been involved in that. But that just goes to show that this is not enough. It is a great idea to address those issues, but the Government has to stand up to the Federal Government to defend the homes and families that have been destroyed.

We cannot allow this to happen. I go back to Truegain because it distresses me that those five Ministers did nothing. It is not enough that Hunter Water shut the stopgap and stopped it generating more PFAS into our system. That site has been a ticking time bomb since 2016. Every time it rains, the EPA, if it knows about it, has to run out there and pump out all the contamination. I do not know where it then takes it. There are underground tanks that are in a disgusting state of disrepair and multiple surveys have been done, yet we are still no closer to getting it cleaner. Some \$10 million has been spent and there is another \$10 million to go—perhaps; that is only an estimate. Every time it rains we just hope that it will be secure.

It is not even secure as a site. Vandals have been in and opened the building. Any normal business has to have a Material Safety Data Sheet to outline the toxic chemicals present in case someone opens the wrong container in the course of that business. Vandals are walking around in an unsecured site with millions and millions of litres of toxic materials. Who knows what the long-term consequences of that will be? The door of the site was open. It is probably still open now. It was open for months. It is outrageous. What about the poor businesses located next to that? They are concerned about the impact on their business from what is going on. [*Extension of time*]

The problem with the site at Rutherford is not just air quality impacts on the site and surrounding businesses and residents. When it released PFAS onto the site, it also impacted nearby Stony Creek and Fishery Creek. A lot of that is agricultural land. I think then Minister Gabrielle Upton put something in the media for people who were

farmers in that area that said, "We are again telling farmers to be careful about their cattle and what they do." Again, the Minister had never been there. I and journalists Nick Bielby and Perry Duffin—Perry was at *The Maitland Mercury* at the time; I think he is somewhere else at the moment—went doorknocking. We went calling around: "Have you ever heard anything from the EPA that your land might be at contamination risk from PFAS?" The answer was no. But the Minister included the word "again" because she knew she had delayed it. It is outrageous and she never apologised to the community for that. She never did.

I will talk about two journalists, Nick Bielby and Donna Page—particularly Donna Page. Their work, which has been consistent and clear, has uncovered this disgusting mess. They reported on the dirty deeds done dirt cheap through the *Newcastle Herald*. The Walkley Award that they received for that was well deserved. They continue to this day. I am in contact with Donna Page every single time something happens. Through her advocacy and the advocacy of Labor, we have been able to get the Government to come to this point. I again give credit to Minister Kean for attending the site. He was the first Minister to attend the site since Robyn Parker, who probably could not avoid it because she lived in the electorate. That is a disgrace—and this is just one site. The impact in Maitland and surrounds is terrible. I received a letter at some point in this process in the past six or seven years from one of the workers. I will read it because I think it is important to appreciate the frustration of people who know what is happening. This person wrote:

... I Will not disclose my name for reason been is I have seen this Company True gain or Australian Waste Oil or Red line Lubricant's make fools out of the council, Water Board, EPA, BP Terminal, Newcastle, ALSO EX WORKERS.

I Worked there in the last 2 to 3 years and seen things I was amazed at but could not come for would as I needed to feed a family here are a few things U might not know ...

1 ... in the last April storms—

that was the April 2015 superstorms—

Supervisors Asked the Company for Generators to get ready for power outage as need to power pumps as the tank farms where full as if there is a storm they know like anyone that worked or works there that the power gets knocked out with the smallest off storms the Company Hesitated till it was pouring rain. HIRE PLACES SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROVE THIS ON RECITES. Also there was more OIL Than Water in SOUTHERN Tank farm due to Leaking pipe Flanges in witch The company Know about for ages but it all come down to money.

2 ... There is Leaking 44 ltr Drums off Grease in Shipping Containers & OLD TANKER TRUCKS FULL OFF UNKNOWNEN WASTE & OLD COOLANT THAT THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH. EPA WHENT THROUGH NOT SO LONG BACK AND TOOK THERE WORD THAT THE TRAILERS AND TRUCK TANKS ONLY HAD RAIN WATER IN THEM That's why they call EPA A Joke.

3 ... Waste water from mines & PITS with coal dust & unknown heavy Metrical was pumped into the back corners off the Southern tank farm AS MOST OFF TANKS IN Southern tank farm are full of waste they don't know what halve the waste is and don't have the funds to get them empty. Also there is a tank that has a cavity under cement footing at side of the fire water tanks closest to Creek TANK 103—

it also went straight into the creek—

4 ... There was 40 to 50 foot tall trees lobed down that died if you look hard you will see the Stumps.

5 ... A Supervisor by the name of—

and he named him—

... that has left now Bragged that they had mobile phone footage of a manager and—

another fellow—

... pumping water down back from Southern tank farm & used this to get what they wanted to get from the company when they left as The Company has a History off withholding Entitlements when people leave. All so you might get soil samples from behind WAST WATER PLANT around shipping containers & at side off the work shop at door that is at side off creek.

6 ... A semi-trailer & B Double DRIVERS has indicated FOR A WHILE NOW they drop fuel to Petrol stations around Eastern Creek & other places Which is cash & JOKE that's why U hear on the news that cars are breaking down before they get out of Servos in SYD. WHAT HAPPENS HERE IS .. the trucks go to BP terminal IN Newcastle pick up mixed fuel to be Recycled THAY come back to the yard at Rutherford FOR 1. IN CASE THEY ARE FOLLOWED BY BP. 2. check & drop water IF NEED TO THEN TEST TOP & DOTTOM OFF TANKER to test fuel if no good they refined it on site. IF ok then wait 1 HR THEN GO TO SYD WITH NO INVIOCE.

7 ... At The ST MARYS Yard not so long ago the company was ordered to Clean up by council I DON'T KNOW IF EPA GOT INVOLVED IN THIS . The Company trucked up a lot off, 1000lt PODS [SOME ALSO HAD LEAKS ON THEM] off contaminated Waste water & UNIDENTIFIED Waste CHECK WAST THAT THEY PICKED UP FROM 1. BANKSTOWN AIR PORT. 2. FROM WILLIAMS TOWN BASE I know u will be SHOCKED 3. They have been moving these pods backwards & Forwards For Quite a while now as I used to be told ... they got a tip of again that's why the move them about before the authority's get there ...

This is just disgusting. This is an insight into the grubby world of this environmental polluter from someone who works there because they need to feed their family but are disgusted every day by what they do. This Government

has failed to act for far too long. It is time it did. I hope that the Government will actually manage to stop this pollution and that it will act on what is happening at Williamstown.

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (10:35): I am pleased to speak in support of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. We have heard quite disturbing stories today from Government and Opposition members about the illegal dumping of contaminated waste. I would say that every single member in this place would have an experience of it occurring in their electorates. It is clear to me that our environmental laws need continual improvement to ensure they adequately deter the illegal dumping of contaminated waste and that those who commit waste dumping offences are made to pay for their crimes. Over the past three years more than 132,000 tonnes of contaminated waste has been illegally dumped. It is being dumped on vacant properties, in parks and forests, in rented warehouses and even in the middle of neighbourhood roads. While some illegal waste dumping is conducted opportunistically, most commonly it is being conducted by several repeat waste offenders undertaking a series of illegal waste dumping events at the same location.

Illegal waste dumping not only has the potential to harm human health and the environment, it also costs the New South Wales Government millions of dollars each year in avoided waste levy revenue and, more importantly, in clean-up costs. It is also important to know that illegal waste dumping impacts residents on land on which it is dumped. It affects all the people of New South Wales. Often the costs of illegal waste dumping on private land are left to innocent landholders to clean up. Additionally, where contaminated waste remains on site while responsibility for its clean-up is disputed, the local community is exposed to potential contamination waste. Illegal dumpers know the limitations of the current environment laws and have found ways to deflect accountability for their crimes.

The Environment Protection Authority [EPA] has discontinued several investigations due to limitations in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act relevant to illegal dumping crimes. Recently the EPA and members of the public collected evidence showing multiple trucks illegally disposing of contaminated waste in Millers Forest in the Hunter region. Despite having video evidence and photographic proof of the crimes being committed, the registered owners of the vehicles claimed that they leased the trucks and had no records of who was driving the vehicles. The EPA was unable to require the vehicle owners to clean up the contaminated waste or take any enforcement action for those crimes. The cost of clean-up has fallen to the innocent landholder, resulting in asbestos-contaminated waste being left on the site for a prolonged period of time.

In another case, in 2019 over 400 tonnes of contaminated and toxic waste was illegally dumped on private properties in Riverstone in a series of events. Multiple parties were identified as being involved in the illegal dumping of the waste, but the EPA was unable to pursue them to clean up the waste and dispose of it correctly due to the limitations of the Act. The innocent landholder in this case was left with nearly \$2 million in clean-up costs.

The bill seeks to improve the existing regulatory powers and tools to deter such crimes and ensure those responsible for causing contamination and pollution are held to account for its clean-up or management into the future. It expands the existing offences to ensure they align with how illegal waste dumping evidence is collected. Most evidence of illegal waste dumping is undertaken covertly to ensure the safety of EPA officers and the public, and because most dumping occurs when people do not think they are being watched. This means that video and photographic evidence of vehicle registration numbers is the most available source of evidence.

Currently the Act limits the EPA to only taking action against the driver of a vehicle involved in illegal waste dumping, not the vehicle's owner. Serial illegal dumpers are aware of this limitation. It is now common for vehicle owners to deny responsibility for alleged offences or refuse to disclose, or deny knowledge of, who was driving their vehicles. Importantly, this bill will enable the EPA to take action against the owners of the vehicle used to illegally dump waste instead of proving who was driving the vehicle. They will be required to take responsibility for crimes committed within their vehicles and will be liable for the cost of cleaning up illegally dumped waste.

The bill will improve how illegal dumping is cleaned up. If there is a series of illegal waste dumping incidents on a property by different people, the EPA is limited from taking action if it cannot prove to the required standard who is responsible for each portion of illegally dumped waste. The EPA is also limited to issuing notices to people who caused the pollution, not where multiple people contribute to illegal waste dumping at a site. Given these limitations, it is becoming increasingly common that innocent landowners, councils or the New South Wales Government are left to pay for the clean-up of the waste. The bill addresses these issues and ensures that those who pollute pay. It will enable the EPA to take action against multiple people who contribute to an illegal waste dumping crime. The EPA and councils will be able to issue a clean-up notice to all persons who are reasonably suspected of having contributed to a pollution incident. This bill is an important reform to deter illegal waste dumping and ensure that those who commit environmental crimes pay for them. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (10:42): As my colleagues have indicated, Labor is supportive of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. The illegal dumping of waste is a scourge on the environment and has very real consequences for local communities as people dump toxic waste. Two of my outstanding colleagues, the member for Port Stephens and the member for Maitland, have made contributions about the exact impact on their local communities. The member for Port Stephens spoke about PFAS in Williamstown. She has been following up that story for many years, probably since arriving in Parliament. The Corling situation is also a terrible scenario. In that sense, it is good to see that there is some effort now to ensure that we can start to rectify some things.

As many members have said, this bill seeks to address gaps in environment laws to ensure that those who commit crimes are held to account and to protect innocent landowners. The member for Camden gave some examples of innocent landowners. The worst thing, apart from the illegal dumping itself, is that if it happens on your ground and you are completely innocent, you are the one who is stuck with the bill. Yet we do not necessarily have an organisation that has the teeth to get to the point where prosecution can take place. I am pleased to see the long overdue measures. In the spirit of bipartisanship, I thank the Ministers. I note that this really important bill has been before the Parliament across two environment Ministers. I acknowledge that Labor has been loudly and proudly calling for this for at least as long as I have been in Parliament. We have been talking about how we need to work in a way that protects the environment because we have a responsibility to not only the current generation but also many generations to come.

Contamination of land and water has catastrophic effects. We see that play out at different times, whether in a flood or an emergency where materials are washed into the waterways that have a dangerous effect on not only humans who might want to go for a swim but also biodiversity—the potential for fish kills—and some of the fragile flora and fauna alongside and in those waterways. The cost of managing human health and the impact of pollution should be met by the polluters. The bill does that, which is a good thing. The cost is borne by either the innocent landowner, as so many other members have spoken about, or, eventually, the taxpayer. We know that the people who are doing these abhorrent acts are actually doing them because they know they can get around the law and that they can have plausible deniability and that all of a sudden it is not their problem anymore.

There are beautiful parts of the world. I note that the member for Ballina and the member for The Entrance are in the Chamber alongside my other colleagues. Those electorates are beautiful places; they are the most gorgeous places. I have the pleasure of going up there and spending some time whenever I can. I represent an area that does not have beautiful beaches and beautiful bushland, but the environment there is quite crucial as well. I will segue to a point about COVID. If nothing else, COVID showed us the importance of a beautiful environment, especially when we were in situations where we could not leave certain areas and we had to stay within our local communities. There are issues of local dumping in my area. The City of Canterbury Bankstown has a major issue with illegal dumping, particularly in Lakemba, and the council is working constantly on the issue. It is not necessarily contaminated dumping, but who is to say that it could not be? What if somebody just dumps whatever they need to get rid of? I would like to see some more support around that issue.

I show my support for any funding and work with local communities to improve the environment and make it look better. I believe if something looks good, people will treat it better and look after it. I think that is incredibly important. When land is contaminated, especially with chemicals, it is most likely to not get remediated. We are talking potentially about thousands and millions of years. There is a good chance that we will not see contaminated land remediated. Once the damage is done, it is really hard to rectify. Contaminated water can have huge impacts on biodiversity and drinking water. We talk about how important nature is for us to survive. We need a really strong legal and regulatory framework to ensure that polluters are held to account and that there is a very strong case for them to not pollute. I am glad that is one of the things the bill does.

I think the member for Port Stephens touched on the following point. It is fine to increase the penalties and have a regulatory framework, but the resourcing needs to be in place to make that happen. Members know that really strong rules can be in place across any part of our society, but the rules are only as strong as their implementation, including having the power to be able to implement the law, the staff and the follow-through so that things can be actioned quickly. There is no use having a regulation that takes a year or two to enforce because the agency does not have the staff. The flip side to that is to make sure that if the legislation does give the EPA the strength it needs, which the Opposition supports, then the legislation should also include a strong increase in the workforce and in the number of people who can follow things up. There were staff cuts in 2020, and we need to firstly get back to that point and then increase it. I think that is also how you would increase people's faith in the whole program.

As my colleagues have touched on, the amendments expand the power of the EPA to enforce environmental laws and impose greater penalties on companies that are responsible for environmental crimes and on people who try to use plausible deniability. That is a good thing. I reiterate, we need the staffing to make sure that those

causing pollution manage its clean-up, get rid of it and take responsibility for it. When we start prosecuting the right people then it sends a strong message to the community that we will not tolerate this and, hopefully, we will get rid of it. We also need to provide avenues for people to be able to remove any waste as well, in a way that is practical, affordable and sensible. We do not want people dumping illegally because they are creating catastrophic effects they do not even think about.

There are amendments to the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997, which is really important and, of course, expansion of the EPA's powers across the specified Acts, including the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991. A number of my colleagues have spoken today, and I think there is a sense of relief across the House that something like this has come into play. We all live in a beautiful environment, whatever that may be—whether it is a beautiful built-up environment or a beautiful natural environment—but pollution is a massive problem. The environment is something that is so incredibly important and the issue of illegal dumping—especially chemical and toxic dumping—goes beyond just making a place ugly; it actually makes it dangerous. It is our responsibility to stop that danger. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (10:50): On behalf of The Greens, I speak in debate on the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. We support the bill. But it is important to put on the record that the paradigm we currently have in this State of how we view pollution and environmental vandalism, particularly by big polluters, is overseen by a chronically underfunded EPA—a toothless tiger. That is extremely well documented, and I mean no disrespect to any worker at the EPA. The EPA is a toothless tiger. This bill is welcome, but The Greens share the Opposition's position that without adequate resourcing and staffing the EPA will continue to be a toothless tiger. That has certainly been my experience as a local member for seven years. Well-meaning, highly skilled EPA workers have unmanageable caseloads.

In beautiful Alstonville, in my electorate, there was an asphalt plant. There is nothing wrong with an asphalt plant. We need asphalt. But, because that asphalt plant was historically built before the growth of the village, what you had was residents living within cooee of the plant and there were really severe health issues. I visited residents near that asphalt plant on a number of occasions. My eyes were stinging and I had a petroleum taste in my mouth. Yet, the delays to have a proper assessment undertaken and then the rules—it was an absolute joke. No disrespect to the owners of that asphalt plant, but I am very pleased that it is winding up because it is absolutely out of step and has impacted the health of people in that area.

The Greens welcome the amendments because we believe they will strengthen corporate liability, and current polluter-pays mechanisms and enforcement. The Greens' position on protecting intergenerational resources such as clean air, clean water and people's health—we heard about cancer clusters today in Newcastle—is that those things are priceless. Until we attach a hefty bill to the destruction of those natural resources, we are nowhere near addressing environmental protection. The bill largely closes loopholes that people use to avoid prosecution by the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA] for dumping waste, which we know is a major issue. The Greens support those measures. The Environmental Defenders Office [EDO] examined how the NSW Environment Protection Authority can put in place mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions using its existing powers to control pollution and waste, recognising that uncontrolled emissions will have significant consequences for the environment and human health. The Greens have been talking about that for over a decade.

In its report the Environmental Defenders Office noted that Australia's average annual temperature has warmed by around 1.5 degrees Celsius and that the best available science tells us that average temperatures continue to rise. That is well-settled science, and I am simply reiterating it. The report tells us that the EPA has enormous potential to address that. The courts have started to address it, and the EPA is on a welcome trajectory. The NSW Environment Protection Authority is the lead environmental regulator in New South Wales and is responsible for protecting the quality of our environment and human health. However, its work cannot be effective if it is constantly faced with barriers to prosecution. This bill is a good start, but obviously we need to see further tightening of regulations. The EDO report also stipulated that urgent and rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is required. Some of the biggest emissions polluters are acting in ways that are exemplary, and the law is playing catch-up. It is a good thing that behaviours are changing.

Unfortunately, in my electorate of Ballina we see illegal dumping near the beaches. Certainly, every interaction I have had with the EPA in my electorate has been very good. I repeat that it has nothing to do with the workers there or with the institution itself; it is the chronic underfunding. The EPA needs to do its good work and extend that good work, and that takes time. It takes time to investigate. We want to see hefty fines. When it is cheaper to be fined for destroying an area or exposing toxic waste in rivers and waterways, we will never change or deter that behaviour. We must start putting a premium price on clean water, and on species and biodiversity. If that is what we must do, let us do it. At the moment no real deterrent exists to stop the big polluters. Probably The Greens will seek to amend the bill in the other place to pave the path for greater resourcing of the EPA. However, we broadly support the bill.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (10:57): I am pleased to speak in support of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. The bill is aimed at those who deliberately choose to circumvent environmental laws and obstruct the conduct of investigations to benefit from their crimes. Current environmental laws contain strong investigative powers and compliance and enforcement provisions and are often used as a benchmark across Australia and beyond. The NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA] relies heavily on those investigative powers to determine who is responsible for environmental crimes. Powers such as requiring people to provide information and documents are critical to ensure that those who pollute pay for their crimes and that contamination is quickly cleaned up to reduce harmful impacts on the environment and the community. However, increasingly, over time criminals supply false or misleading information about environmental offences to delay investigation and avoid responsibility for their crimes.

Currently there is no offence under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act for an individual or a corporation to voluntarily provide information to the EPA that is false or misleading. The bill will address this issue by expanding existing false or misleading information offences to include the supply of such information on a voluntary basis. In addition, the financial penalties imposed by courts do not act as a sufficient deterrent to those who deliberately provide false or misleading information to the EPA. This bill will increase the maximum penalty for corporations from \$500,000 to up to \$1 million to provide a strong deterrent to those in the community who obstruct or fail to cooperate with the EPA during investigations.

The changes to maximum penalties enable the court to impose a penalty that adequately reflects the seriousness of crimes committed to obstruct investigations and avoid responsibility for other environmental crimes committed. The bill also brings the penalties for false or misleading environmental offences closer to the penalties available for dishonesty offences in other New South Wales and Commonwealth legislation. The bill will introduce an imprisonment term as an alternative or additional penalty for individuals convicted of knowingly providing false or misleading information in certain contexts, such as knowingly providing false information in an audit and knowingly making a false or misleading statement in a report. These changes reflect the seriousness of knowingly providing false or misleading information, given the serious environmental consequences that may result.

In addition to improving the EPA's ability to investigate environmental crimes, the bill will strengthen environmental laws to ensure the safety of EPA officers. There have been several recent incidents where EPA officers were physically threatened or detained while on the job, which is an absolute disgrace. Unfortunately, existing New South Wales laws have been unable to ensure that those threatening the safety of an EPA officer are held to account. These officers have a right to carry out their work safely and without fear of harm. The bill makes it an offence to assault, threaten or intimidate an EPA officer in the course of the officer's duties, whether wilfully or otherwise. These new offences carry a maximum penalty of \$2 million for a corporation and \$500,000 for an individual. The bill will ensure that New South Wales has strong environmental laws to deter illegal activity and will efficiently and effectively take enforcement actions against those who commit these crimes for their own benefit.

Further to previous members' contributions about where and when this dumping happens, my electorate includes some of the Royal National Park and many State forests, in which it seems to be open slather to dump asbestos. I would like to see knockdown rebuilds get their own code and stickers so that asbestos can be followed rather than just put in the back of a truck. Members of the Friends of the Royal National Park, who kindly go out and pick up bottles and rubbish on the side of the road, often report asbestos dumping within the Royal National Park. The head borders of the Port Hacking River is a particular area that is well and truly away from prying eyes. Time after time people dump asbestos and National Parks and Wildlife Service staff have to pick it up, at great expense to the taxpayers of New South Wales, and then a week later there is more there. The implementation of registration identification at the Royal National Park, particularly when cars go in and out, is a great move forward. It is a good warning for these characters with their filthy, ill-gotten gains from dumping asbestos, who think they can foul up the pristine environments within the Royal National Park. They will be faced with the full force of the law in the not-too-distant future because they will be identified by their registration.

I have another story. I had the pleasure of being invited to an Aboriginal ceremony to hand over some traditional lands. The ceremony was very nice, and it was fantastic for the Aboriginal community who had gone through the process to be given the land. Within a month they invited me back to look at the dumping on the land. It cost them \$1 million to clean it up. They were Aboriginal community groups, so they did not have that sort of money. But that is what they were faced with. They eventually sold off the land to pay for the clean-up, which is an absolute disgrace. That is the impact those criminals have on our community and on people who have their hard-earned cash put into blocks of land. It may be a bush block or whatever and all of a sudden there is three tonnes of asbestos waste or other waste on their property that costs them a great deal of money to clean up. I wish the EPA all the best with getting million-dollar fines out of it. Hopefully that is ploughed straight back into the EPA to pay for extra resources because it is a fantastic organisation. As we can see, it is an increasing problem

for the EPA. There is more and more illegal dumping going on. We need to finish it. I thank the previous environment Minister and I thank the current environment Minister for bringing the bill forward. I commend it to the House.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (11:05): I speak in support of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. Like a lot of things in this place, it is a long time coming but it is better late than never. It is important to come together to address the illegal dumping of toxic waste because its impact on our environment and local communities is enormous. The member for Heathcote spoke about dumping in his area and we agreed with him that it is terrible and that it should not happen, but it does. The broader problem that is a work in progress is the whole mentality around dumping in general. Our society has always dumped things. Even the word "dump" we now call "waste facilities" and others. It is important to change the names because that helps to shape how we think, and we have to think differently about waste and what waste is.

The Environment Legislation Amendment Bill is very specific. It seeks to address the gaps in environmental laws to ensure that those who commit the crimes are held to account, and it also protects innocent landholders. I see the health and financial impacts from contamination and waste in the communities in my area. I will highlight three particular areas across the Lismore electorate: Jennings, Wallangarra and Tenterfield. Jennings is a border community. It is in New South Wales in my electorate of Lismore, but it has a Queensland postcode.

Mr David Elliott: Shame.

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN: It is a shame, I know—I keep saying that to Barnaby. It needs its own postcode. I was in Jennings a week ago on Saturday at the Tenterfield Show. I went there and walked not on but around a site with arsenic poisoning. There are departments working to address that, but I am helping some local growers and farmers there. There is another one in Lismore Heights and one in Murwillumbah South. Those three sites are well known and have been very public, but more have come to light. They created much angst and expense for communities to try to address. Polluters who have chosen to dump this toxic waste have used loopholes in the law to avoid penalties for pollution. They weigh up the paltry penalties and think, "Do we pollute? Do we dump or do we pay the fine?" The increase in penalties for corporations to \$2 million and for individuals to \$500,000 will help galvanise minds and change that behaviour.

I believe, and the Opposition believes, that the cost of managing human health and environmental impacts of pollution should be met by polluters, and this bill does that. That is why it is a good bill to support. When there is contamination, it can take years and millions of dollars to remediate contaminated water and restore biodiversity. There are all sorts of impacts it can have. This bill strengthens the policy framework through regulation, which is really important as a deterrent to stop the behaviour of dumping waste. The bill amends the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997 and the Pesticides Act 1999 and aligns the powers across those three Acts. It will make it more manageable and clearer to the public. Good laws should always be written in such a way that they have certainty and can be understood by all. That can be hard to do with some complex laws, but it is one of the elements of good lawmaking.

The bill amends the Protection of the Environment Administration Act and formalises the separation of the roles of chairperson and CEO of the EPA, which will improve independence and diversify the skills of the board. It is the responsibility of any board to ensure that there is a diversity of representation, but the bill will actually enforce it. I hope that the bill will address the authority of the EPA through a complete separation of the compliance and prosecutorial role and the education/information role. It can become a problem with authorities and agencies when they have to fulfil roles and powers within the law without any particular legislative guidance. I did not note if that is specifically dealt with in this amending bill. If it is not, I hope that issue is a work in progress following the formalisation of the separation of the roles of chairperson and CEO. With those comments, I commend the bill to the House. I am interested to see what happens in the other place with this bill, and how it is returned to this House.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (11:13): I make a contribution to debate on the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. It is probably not a bill that many in this House would expect me to speak in support of, but on this occasion I am very much in support of this bill. I think it is sensible. I think it is practical. If it gives the enforcement and regulatory agencies the power that they need to properly crack down on those who would seek to deliberately do harm to others by dumping or being negligent in the non-clean-up of pollution that they have knowingly or unknowingly caused for profit or otherwise, then that is something that should be supported by everyone in this Chamber. When the then Parliamentary Secretary introduced the bill and gave the second reading speech on 24 November she made a number of statements that I want to highlight to the House because they relate directly to one of the chief reasons why I am contributing to this debate. The Parliamentary Secretary said that this bill exists to:

... ensure that those who commit crimes pay for them and that innocent landholders, communities and the environment are protected from the impacts of those crimes.

Again, I think we can all agree with that. Later in her second reading speech, she made the comment that the proposed amendments in the bill were to:

... improve its efficiency and effectiveness and enforce the polluter- pays principle.

Today I will focus my remarks on that particular point, the concept of polluter pays—that is, restorative justice. It means that those who commit the offence are made to remedy the situation or, if they cannot, to pay a financial penalty commensurate with the impact that they have had on their innocent victim. I certainly hope that if the bill is passed by this Chamber—and hopefully by the other place—it will give the EPA the power to act more decisively to protect innocent victims.

In Armidale in my electorate there are two such people: a lovely couple by the name of Greg and Marianne Love. They are wonderful people who have done nothing in their lives but have the misfortune to have bought and built their lives on a property that is adjacent to a Fire and Rescue NSW training facility. Over years and years it leached PFAS chemicals downhill out of its site, through the Loves' property. The pollution was discovered a number of years ago and yet the one thing that has not changed is that the Loves are still on their property and trying to work out where to go for their future. They are not a young couple and they are very stressed. Despite multiple attempts to work with Fire and Rescue NSW, their property has not been remediated or purchased by Fire and Rescue NSW to undertake that remediation.

I have had a brief discussion with the new environment Minister. I congratulate him on his appointment. He has indicated to me that this legislation will help the EPA put a little bit of pressure on Fire and Rescue NSW to do what it bloody well should have done years ago—that is, look after an older couple who have done absolutely nothing but happen to live next door to a training facility. There is absolutely no doubt that the PFAS contamination exists. That is beyond doubt; it has been proven and admitted and acknowledged by Fire and Rescue. It is also not in question that the PFAS contamination emanated from Fire and Rescue's training facility, and that through its actions on its training facility—albeit lawful actions—that PFAS contamination leached off and into the Loves' property. None of that is in dispute. It is not as if we have a party that is disputing how that contamination came to be there or that they are not responsible. Fire and Rescue acknowledges that it is responsible.

As the local MP, I cannot for the life of me, nor can the Loves, nor can their solicitors, understand why almost four years on Fire and Rescue NSW still has not stepped up to the plate and done the right thing. I speak in this debate in full support of this legislation in the hope that, as the environment Minister said, this will give the EPA the power to make Fire and Rescue NSW do what it should have done in the first place: either remediate and remove the contamination from the Loves' property—their home, where they raised their family and where they continue to live and would love to live in the future—or, if it cannot be remediated, do the right thing and buy the property off the Loves so that they can buy a new property somewhere else to enjoy their retirement. At the moment they cannot do anything. They cannot sell their property because the land is contaminated. No-one is going to buy it—of course they are not. Until this issue is resolved, the largest asset they own for their retirement is barely worth a penny. So I hope that this legislation, when it passes in Parliament, will result in some justice for the Loves.

I use this opportunity to appeal to Commissioner Baxter of Fire and Rescue NSW to do the right thing by the Loves. It should not take the EPA to come knocking on his door to force his hand. He should do the right thing. You caused the contamination; you fix it. I support this legislation because, as we have heard in this debate, the Loves are just two of many people in this State who are innocent victims of PFAS contamination and other forms of contamination and illegal dumping that not just private companies but also some State and Federal government agencies are responsible for. I am not saying that they do it deliberately; almost entirely it is done unknowingly. Nevertheless, it has happened and it should be remedied.

I hope the new authority and powers granted in this legislation, which I welcome and fully support, do not have to be used. But if Fire and Rescue NSW do not step up to the mark, then I will be knocking on the good Minister's door to make the EPA do what Fire and Rescue have refused to do to this point—that is, the right thing. They should help out an innocent couple that are just trying to live their lives. The past four to five years of their lives have been absolutely destroyed by the lack of action by Commissioner Baxter and Fire and Rescue NSW. It is disgraceful. It should be fixed. I hope that the passing of this legislation sees no-one else in the same situation as Greg and Marianne Love. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (11:21): I make a contribution to debate on the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. The Opposition is supporting the bill, but we will be moving amendments in the other place to further strengthen it. These reforms are long overdue. The Environment Protection Authority [EPA] has

struggled for a number of years to effectively prosecute illegal dumping across the State. That is through a combination of factors that other members have highlighted, including legal arguments being used to get out of paying enormous fines. The EPA has also been understaffed for a long time. I certainly hope that the bill will go some way to remedying the problems we have had with fines being inadequate and also legal arguments being used by some large polluters to get out of paying those fines.

These issues are problematic across the State. In my area, the largest problem is probably asbestos and the dumping of asbestos-contaminated fill. We have heard from many other members about the legacy of PFAS contamination, particularly the member for Port Stephens. In the seven years that I have been in this place, she has been a tireless advocate for the communities in her area who live on land that was contaminated with PFAS by the adjoining Williamstown air base. In my area there is also a legacy of lead contamination along Duck River, adjacent to where there used to be a battery factory.

In the adjoining electorate of Parramatta, pretty much the entire peninsula of Camellia is contaminated. The groundwater is contaminated with hexavalent chromium. There is the legacy of the James Hardie site, which is responsible for much of the asbestos-contaminated fill over the broader area and many other industrial pollutants. Reading the list of contaminated properties in Camellia is like reading a street directory. Every one of them has multiple contaminants emanating from the uses of that site or from the adjoining sites. I certainly believe this is an urgent problem. I have been aware of this problem for many years, dating back to when I was a councillor on Parramatta council. At that time, western Sydney councils came together to deal with the issue and work in partnership to identify the source of dumped waste. We found that people were dumping waste in adjoining council areas and thought they could not get caught because that was essentially who was doing the investigation.

The first successful prosecution along those lines involved some rubbish in Alfred Street in Parramatta, not far from where I live, dumped at the end of the cul-de-sac adjoining the river. It had been tracked all the way from Penrith, and there was a successful prosecution in that case. But across western Sydney and all of New South Wales we see construction waste, particularly asbestos-contaminated fill, dumped in cul-de-sacs and bushland. Unfortunately, even the contractors working for the Government on the M4 widening project in my electorate of Granville put a giant pile of asbestos-contaminated fill on the site they were working on. They put up signs warning about the presence of asbestos, but those signs all faced internally to the site.

As important as it was to warn the workers on that site that there was asbestos present, the adjoining neighbours were not notified and it was only by chance that one of them saw the signs from their back window. That contaminated fill was stored for some months on the government site as part of the widening project until it was eventually removed. It was only through pressure from me and from local residents that we were given an assurance—and it actually happened—that the waste had been properly dampened down when it was removed. We are certainly not aware whether they bothered to damp it down when they put it there in the first place.

The legacy of asbestos is a huge problem in my area. A lot of fill was put in along A'Becketts Creek to expand development capacity in that area. Only last week I was talking to the Chaouk family, who live in A'Becketts Street adjacent to A'Becketts Creek. They have been dealing with the EPA for the past few years since it decided to step in to deal with the contamination problem along the creek. The EPA has concreted part of the family's backyard but it has never tested the dust under the house. The house is built on piers. For decades, Ali and Manaya's parents have grown vegetables in the backyard, digging through asbestos. It is almost inevitable that there are asbestos fibres underneath the house, but the EPA will not even go near it to check. The EPA has never spoken to the family about testing their health, even though for years they have been digging holes and growing vegetables in the backyard in asbestos-contaminated fill. The Chaouk family are quite distraught and concerned for their now elderly parents.

It is a similar story all along the river. Close to 20 years ago, a man by the name of Sam Mitry raised this issue with me when I was a councillor. For years, he maintained that the embankments were built from asbestos. But he was dismissed by everybody until a flood event about six or seven years ago washed all the vegetation away and everybody could actually see it—he was right. It is actually pretty obvious as historical photos of A'Becketts Creek show that it used to be a very wide creek. It became a very narrow one, concreted to improve water flow and prevent flooding. It also created a huge opportunity to build on the blocks. Plenty of homes were built on asbestos-contaminated fill. Playing fields throughout the area have also been closed since that flooding event and since the full EPA investigation identified that plenty of playing fields across the Granville and Parramatta electorates were full of contaminated fill, including Garside Park in my electorate of Granville. It has been a huge problem, and it is taking too long to resolve. The EPA needs additional resources as much as it needs this legislation to be updated to deal with illegal dumping.

The Camellia redevelopment presents another problem in the Parramatta electorate, which is very close to my electorate. It is highly contaminated with multiple contaminants. Every couple of months, the thinking seems to change about whether that will be redeveloped as a residential area or continue to be an industrial site. This

Government purchased one of the most contaminated sites there for the western metro project. There is great concern about the amount of public money that was spent on buying a worthless piece of land and taking on board the remediation obligations, which are upwards of \$50 million.

If that area is to be redeveloped, the process of digging up the asbestos-contaminated soil, taking it somewhere else and safely disposing of it will need incredibly careful oversight. It is questionable whether it actually can be redeveloped. It has enormous traffic constraints, and it does not have public transport. Even when the light rail goes through, it will only go through the western edge. The potential to create traffic havoc, if you develop it to the potential where you could pay for the remediation, is very questionable. In closing, this bill is long overdue. We need to crack down on this. Dumped rubbish, and particularly dumped asbestos, has been a problem for years all over western Sydney and New South Wales. This is not enough to fully address the legacy of these problems we have throughout the State. The EPA needs more funding, and we need to look at these things far more carefully and holistically.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (11:31): I acknowledge the shadow Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, and the member for Port Stephens, who has carriage of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 in this place. I acknowledge the member for Port Stephens for the work that she did when she held the shadow portfolio. I had a lot to do with the member opposite who was advocating on this issue for the area that I represent in Canterbury and advocating on the Cooks River, which I have struggled to attract attention and resourcing to.

As has been acknowledged, Labor supports the bill. Illegal dumping of waste is a scourge on the environment and there is a very real consequence for local communities when people dump toxic waste in their area. The issues addressed in this bill have been a problem for a long time. In my area there has been dumping of cars, trolleys, mattresses and hazardous chemicals. The list goes on. In recent years, we have had asbestos dumping. A number of notices have been put to groups relating to contaminated land. Hopefully, whoever is representing the Minister can answer a question for me.

A few years ago—and I acknowledge the Government was able to help us do this—we were able to transfer Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] land in Jackson Place in Earlwood to the Wolli Creek Regional Park so that it will hopefully become a national park. After campaigning, we were successful in having that RTA land transferred over to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. I understand that there is contamination, and I just want to know where that is up to. There are a number of other sites. The former Sunbeam factory is now apartments; I need some information on that as well.

The bill seeks to address gaps in environmental laws to ensure that those who commit crimes are held to account and to protect innocent landholders and communities from the health and financial impacts of contamination and waste. The measures in the bill are long overdue. For too long, polluters have used loopholes in the law to avoid penalties for pollution or have weighed the paltry penalties under the law against the cost of reducing pollution and preventing the contamination of New South Wales land and waters. Labor believes this requires that the costs of managing the human health and environmental impacts of pollution are met by polluters.

I acknowledge the penalties and the increase in the number of staff at the Environment Protection Authority [EPA]. That is really important considering that the Government completely smashed the EPA back in 2011 and in subsequent years with efficiency dividend cuts. We are now seeing the ramifications of blanket efficiency dividend cuts. Staffing of the EPA needs to be looked at by issue or sector. If the Government had kept those EPA officers or given them additional powers at the time, we would not be in this situation.

Polluters are cowboys; they think they can get away with polluting. Along Canterbury Road and in other areas around my electorate, there has been a whole lot of dumping. A few months ago paint was dumped in the Cooks River. It is a shocker. We want to remediate the Cooks River, have people picnic along it and naturalise the banks. I have been going on about that for a very long time, alongside the member for Summer Hill. We have been banging on about that. The river needs additional funding and the banks need to be naturalised. During the pandemic, people were getting outside and discovering their local parks. They want to be out, and we are encouraging everyone to get out and dine out.

From a workers' perspective, I think we still have a long way to go. The Government needs to increase the number of people working at the EPA and give them stronger powers. I acknowledge that the bill will do that; however, we need more officers. I would like to see them out and about in my area. The area has a lot of light manufacturing that does the right thing, but as I said there are cowboys and people who want to get around the rules and find the loopholes. That is just not on. We are a lot more environmentally conscious these days and we want to make sure that our kids and the future are pollution free. One can smell the fumes when walking up and down Canterbury Road. Kids walk up and down that road when they go to school. We do not want to continue to subject our kids to further pollution. The bill is the right way to go about it.

From a SafeWork NSW point of view, hazardous waste sites are areas where hazardous atmospheres such as flammable gases and fumes are likely to be present. Over the past three years, 304 workers were injured in New South Wales workplaces as a result of industrial gases and fumes. Four were permanently disabled and one died. Land contamination and illegal dumping of asbestos products cause asbestos-related diseases, asbestosis and lung cancer. Around 4,000 Australians die every year from asbestos-related diseases. Many workers will not know that they have been exposed until asbestosis develops some 10 to 20 years after the initial exposure.

This bill is good, it is welcome, but let us not forget that there are workers who are exposed to these contaminants and hazardous chemicals. Unfortunately, some polluters are cowboys who will pay struggling and desperate people to do their dumping for them, so they are at arm's length. Those people suffer down the track. I request that the Government get back to me about the then Roads and Traffic Authority's land at Earlwood.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (11:40): I speak in support of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which is an important bill to ensure the integrity of our land, our waterways and our communities across New South Wales. It is fair to say that the legislation, up until this time, has served our State well. This legislation will make it even better. The Environment Protection Authority and the Government have found out that there are people who will do the most terrible things, in the most tricky way, and they need to be caught. For example, one of the provisions proposed by this bill will ensure that the registered owner of a car can be subject to penalty notices for dumping infringements. When fleets of trucks delivered contaminated material to a site in Sydney, the drivers were penalised, not the owners of the trucks. There has been a series of fleets of company trucks doing this type of illegal dumping. The bill provides practical measures to ensure that the right people are held responsible.

The Parliamentary Secretary's speech highlighted that over the past three years the Government has spent \$20 million cleaning up contaminated sites. The member for Canterbury highlighted a lot of those areas within Sydney. What sort of person would dump paint in the Cooks River? But it is not just in Sydney. We have a big problem in many of our State forests and our national parks in regional New South Wales. People who are lazy, people who are greedy and people who are selfish will go there and dump their rubbish from a housing demolition site or from a renovation site, leaving it there for somebody else to clean up. That is a great burden on our communities and on local government, who are often left to collect it. It is a very big challenge. They are modern-day curses. But I do think our waterways are now much cleaner and better. For example, despite the dropping of that water, the Cooks River, the Parramatta River and rivers across New South Wales are a lot healthier than they probably were in the 1970s when this type of activity went on unabated and unpunished.

I will give an example of a waterway that has changed at Urunga within my community. The Government has had to spend an enormous amount of money—\$10 million—although the original budget was \$3 million, through the Soil Conservation Service. I encourage everybody to have a look at this remediated site. The Assistant Speaker in the chair has just put up his hand, like he is in class, suggesting that he has been to that site at Urunga, because he has a very dear friend in the Thora Valley and he loves going to my electorate. But he does not often come by my house to get his passport stamped.

It is an extraordinary location, but it was not always like that. It was a terrible location, full of acrid, acidic, polluted soils from the residues of antimony processing. Antimony is a product found in fire-resistant materials and is used, for example, in the production of aeroplane seats and fire-protective clothing. The antimony was processed with a very lackadaisical attitude about 80 kilometres down the mountain from where it was mined. When antimony prices changed, or it was more difficult to get the product, the processing plant shut down and everything left was dumped on a beautiful and incredibly important wetland.

Anybody who has walked along the Urunga Boardwalk, which I try to do at least once a day when I am home, will know how diverse the wildlife is. The best part about it is that the wildlife has become more diverse since we cleaned up that site. We had an original budget of \$3 million, approved by Niall Blair at the time. Rather than moving the contaminated material off site, some great people in the Soil Conservation Service put it into a cell. Another boardwalk goes around it. I was talking to Vivien, The Nationals Whip's assistant yesterday, who is another visitor to the region. She saw a photo of the area in my office and said that it is one of the most beautiful places on the planet that she has ever seen. She was there as the sun was setting. That is an example of something good that has come out of a very bad thing but at enormous cost to the taxpayer.

This bill is about ensuring that those naughty people cannot fall through the cracks of legislation or become more imaginative and that the polluter-pays principle is solidly entrenched in legislation. It is interesting that since 2012 the current regime has successfully prosecuted 680 polluters, fining them over \$12 million. We know that since 2012 other incidents have probably occurred where people have done things but not been caught. The new laws will ensure that we can do more to avoid illegal dumping. As I pointed out, we will be able to take action against not only vehicle drivers but also vehicle owners.

A very positive aspect of the bill is that it will expand the reach of prohibition notices to ban a class of persons or activities at a class of premises from carrying out specified activities. That is a whole bunch of words, but it will prevent those who repeatedly commit crimes from moving to different premises, continuing their bad behaviour and leaving problems behind. That is a very positive outcome. The bill also lessens the protections of directors of company boards and people behind the scenes who have tried to create a system of avoiding penalties through legal processes. That will enable us to address some of the gaps that exist currently in environmental laws. It is a very positive piece of legislation. I congratulate the former environment Minister, Matt Kean. I know that the new Minister, James Griffin, will do a good job to ensure that people who have been stepping outside fall inside.

In communities sometimes we do not celebrate what we have done in improving environmental measures. We do not appreciate that people would not have swum in the Cook or Parramatta rivers in the seventies or eighties, but I think people can do that now. Our harbour, for example, is a lot better. Nick Lalich often talks to me about Janice Crosio. Who could ever forget her, in those swimmers at Bondi, saying, "It's great to swim here!" when we treated sewage only to a preliminary standard and simply put it out in the ocean. I have said it before on the record and I will say it again: Compared to how regional New South Wales treats its wastewater, Sydney has a lot of catching up to do. Water is a finite resource in some respects, and we have to be clever in how it is managed in our new areas. It is a resource that can be recycled over and over. The most sophisticated countries in the world do it and we need to do it as well. I note that at the table is the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who represents Castle Hill and the north-west sector, which has—

Mr David Elliott: I am the transport Minister and I represent the electorate of Baulkham Hills.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: Sorry, Baulkham Hills—it has a "hill" in it—and transport Minister. The most important thing to note is that the member's electorate has two pipes that go to homes in the Rouse Hill community. That recycled water is being used incredibly well. This bill contains very important initiatives. I commend it to the House as we work towards making our environment even better.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (11:50): Imagine if we treated our land the way our Aboriginal brothers and sisters have treated it in the past. It was and always will be Aboriginal land. The care that Aboriginal people took and continue to take for our land is something that we should acknowledge, revere and bring into our management systems. We should include Aboriginal people and their expertise and connection to country, when we talk in this Parliament about legislating future protections for our land. I acknowledge the comments of the member for Oxley.

Labor supports the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which will protect our land, our waterways and our community. It is so very important. When land is contaminated by pollution, it can take years and millions of dollars to remediate. Contaminated water can have immense negative impact on biodiversity and the viability of drinking water for our communities, as is happening in my electorate. We need a strong legal and regulatory framework to prevent and respond to pollution and to ensure that it is the polluters who pick up the bill when things go wrong. The changes in this bill are so important and so welcome.

In the past, polluters have got away with so much destruction, which has to be dealt with not just by this generation but by generations in the future. We should be looking at protecting the environment on a global scale. It is on us as parliamentarians and on our Federal Government representatives to act immediately so that future generations are not dealing with the harm that is being caused in this generation. It is not enough to increase penalties; we must also ensure that the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA] is properly resourced and staffed to be able to deliver on the promises of this legislation: to prevent contamination, to hold polluters to account, and to recoup the costs of remediating contamination from waste polluters.

Ensuring the protection of our local environment is something I am deeply passionate about, particularly as I represent one of the most beautiful electorates in the country—although the member for Port Stephens does challenge me on that one every now and then. Tucked up in the beautiful heights of my electorate is the suburb of Mangrove Mountain. Carving through Mangrove Mountain is the long and never-ending Wisemans Ferry Road, which provides spectacular scenic views of the mountains' community and winds through hectares of beautiful orange and citrus orchards, native plant nurseries and livestock farms. The area is often cool and clean, but even this beautiful landscape has been tarnished by illegal dumping and still faces dust contamination from work that is going on to this day.

The Mangrove Mountain dam is a monolithic catchment of water that serves a large section of our community. To this day the Mangrove Mountain landfill site continues to threaten the quality of water in the Gosford electorate and across the Central Coast, as its catchment runs down through and into the Tuggerah Lakes. I thank all the journalists who were involved in the ABC exposé in 2018 that shined a spotlight on the failure of the waste disposal system in New South Wales. It highlighted two sites in my electorate: the Mangrove Mountain

dam, where Bingo Industries had removed a weigh station, allowing trucks to come in and dump way more than they were allowed across the site; and a site in Gunderman, where landholders had allowed asbestos and other waste to make a track across the wetland to the waterway. It is time that the EPA was properly resourced and that penalties were imposed on those who cause harm. Interestingly, at the time even the ABC investigative journalists struggled to track down those responsible for the Mangrove Mountain landfill dumping. The former mayor and then State member for Gosford, Liberal Party member Chris Holstein, defended the dumping and said that the EPA had assured him that the waste was safe and not a problem.

I acknowledge the fantastic work done by Dr Stephen Goodwin and Danny Wilmott, formerly of the Mangrove Mountain RSL Sub-Branch. It should not be up to community members to chase skippers to protect the quality of their own water. It should not be up to community members to do the research, to call out illegal practices and to call on the EPA over and over again, which at that time failed to provide the true facts about the quality of our waterway. I acknowledge Dr Stephen Goodwin, who has sadly passed, and his wife, Marilyn, for the work they contributed to the Central Coast community in highlighting and shining a spotlight on the corruption at this site and also for supporting the future safety of the Central Coast community water catchment area and our water. I acknowledge also Danny Wilmott and call out the corruption in the takeover of the Mangrove Mountain RSL Sub-Branch by RSL NSW. The land was donated to our community and then taken by the RSL and sold. The land belonged to our community.

Any action and penalties that are introduced to prevent corrupt behaviour and behaviour that contaminates our land are very important. We still have a huge problem at the site. Bingo continually waters the site so it does not release dust, but at the same time there is seepage into our catchment area and into the beautiful Hawkesbury River sandstone, which potentially will poison our waterways. I reiterate that the cost of contamination from pollution needs to be included in the penalties, so that these offences do not continue. A number of other sites in the Gosford electorate have received contamination notices. I commend the EPA for its work in holding those sites and site owners to account.

The increase in penalties is an excellent measure. I hope that, with the changing shape of recycling and water management across our communities, these penalties actually achieve the outcomes we are looking for. In closing, I point out that whilst some members have achieved an air quality testing facility in their electorate, the nearest one to my electorate and the huge community of the Central Coast is on the northern end of the Central Coast in Wyong. We still need one in the Gosford area. This legislation is well overdue. Bring on the penalties for those who try to destroy our environment.

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (11:57): I commend the Government for bringing the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 before the House. A number of members have spoken about the various impacts of dumping. The member for Gosford just made a passionate speech about it. Every member on both sides of the House has talked about the problem, the enforcement of penalties and the introduction of further penalties to ensure that people are held accountable. Rather than identify all the problems in the Blacktown area and other areas, I ask the Minister to inform the House how these laws will make any real difference. I am not trying to be negative, but as a former mayor of Blacktown City Council, and having been often quoted in the papers in my five-year reign about the many problems around dumping, I know that it is quite an interesting and difficult area of enforcement.

In Blacktown, Marsden Park is a thriving metropolitan growth area and one of the fastest growth areas in Australia. It is part of the north-west growth corridor, with a lot of new suburbs in the Riverstone, Marsden Park, Elara and Colby areas. In the middle of Marsden Park there is a mountain that everyone refers to as Mount Misty. It is made up of 33,000 tonnes of illegally dumped waste that is ridden with asbestos. The council chased up the matter over a number of years, from about 2000 to 2015. The issue was identified, and it went through court cases et cetera back in 2015. It will cost \$26 million to remove the illegally dumped waste. It is a mountain; it is about 20 to 30 metres high.

In 2017 *The Sydney Morning Herald* published a series of articles called "The asbestos game", written by Patrick Begley and Mario Christodoulou. The articles raised not only this matter but also a range of different dumping issues across New South Wales. The question posed to me at the time concerned children allegedly playing at the top of this growing mountain of 33,000 tonnes of waste. As the mayor, I responded that the children are trespassing and they should not be there standing on top of asbestos. Imagine the health implications of the situation! Mr Dib Hanna was a notorious dumper in this State. In 2013 he avoided a jail sentence but continued to dump in Marsden Park and across the Sydney Basin. It is not only that the asbestos is illegally dumped; if there is wind across this massive mountain, the asbestos will travel hundreds of metres or kilometres. You only have to inhale one particle of asbestos and you have a death sentence.

Barry Robson, President of the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia, referred to the EPA at the time as a "paper tiger". Mr Robson said that without more funding the EPA cannot afford the inspectors and prosecutors

who would send illegal dumpers to the "Malabar Motel"—referring to Long Bay jail. I ask of the Minister, what will happen to Mr Hanna and what effect will this new law have? Has Mr Hanna got off scot-free or do these new laws address that legacy issue? Following prosecution, Mr Hanna entered into a payment plan to pay off the hundreds of thousands of dollars of fines that he has accumulated, at a rate of \$300 a month. I understand that he has not been paying that money. If we assume he has been paying the fine, in 2072 at 97 years of age he will have paid off the debt. That was in 2015.

The EPA then prosecuted Mr Hanna in relation to Picnic Point and he was sentenced to a three-month suspended sentence, despite not having paid previous fines and having caused all of the associated problems. Mr Hanna also received a further \$225,000 fine. In 2013, Mr Hanna acknowledged in court that the asbestos could have been blown by the wind into the lungs of residents and expressed remorse. That is possibly why he received a suspended sentence. I would have thrown him in jail. Mr Hanna then left a trail of hundreds of tonnes of waste containing asbestos on properties across Sydney's west. The EPA found that Mr Hanna had dumped at least another 750 tonnes on properties in Wallacia, Cranbrook and East Kurrajong—in many cases right next to homes.

Mr Hanna's wife, Rebecca, registered a brand-new company in Victoria called New Line Demolitions and Excavation and Tipper Hire. The name is nearly identical to the name of the company registered in Sydney. How do the laws work? The Government says that you can go after truck drivers and everybody else, but it does not stop family members creating a new business or getting other people involved and starting up again. How will the laws stop the situation of Mr Hanna paying off fines until he is 97 years old, and then copping a whole range of other fines? Also in the Blacktown area, Mr Galainy dumped a mountain of asbestos at least 10 metres high in Hamilton Street and Melbourne Street, Riverstone.

He got a flat fine of \$50,000 for the Melbourne Street dumping and the court believed that a fine of \$10,000 a month was adequate to make him clean it up as quickly as possible. That was in 2015. For the Hamilton Street property, he was ordered to pay a lump sum fine of \$150,000 plus \$50,000 a month. He did not pay either of those fines and he has disappeared. We are left with two mountains of dumped asbestos. How do we recoup those costs? I believe he leased the Hamilton Street property, so the owner of the property is now stuck with a massive dump of asbestos. Even if the owner sold the property and it was pristine, removing the asbestos would cost two to three times more than the land value. So why would the property owner try to remove any of it?

We spoke about copping the fines. Just because important and additional fines are introduced in this legislation, the courts can allow offenders to pay them off or give them a suspended sentence. How will the new laws address those issues? In one particular situation concerning Blacktown council, a person went to jail for six months. An element I found out about is that even if someone gets fined or goes to jail and serves a sentence, it expunges all the other liabilities that they have—all fines and other matters. When they come out of jail, it is the double jeopardy rule because no-one, not even the council, can take them to court to clean up the existing mess. Whether it is private property or council property, we are stuck with a massive mountain of asbestos and the person has probably made millions of dollars from dumping it there. If they serve six months in jail—I would not want to go to jail but some people may take that option—then that liability is expunged and they can start all over again. How do these laws address that issue? I ask for an extension of time. [*Extension of time*]

The other practical element is that the council and EPA officers are associated with the problem. Usually people of ill repute are involved in this particular industry, including bikie gangs and other criminal elements. Once they know who the council officer is, they threaten their life. Two officers from Blacktown council were at risk when their lives were threatened. One officer had to move house and the other spent lots of money engaging security patrols to protect his family as well as installing a camera in the house. How do we protect those people through the court processes from those threats? The police were involved, and nothing really happened to the offenders. We have dodgy contractors and people with criminal records in this game because generally someone is not of good repute if they are dumping asbestos on someone else's block of land. We have a situation that if someone goes to jail, any previous problems are expunged.

These issues are mind-boggling. I know the Minister and the Government are trying their best to address this problem by also issuing fines to truck drivers, truck owners and others, including company directors. But, let's face it, those people do not have endless pockets of money and they might not know that their contract drivers are delivering these items. I heard a few other members say, and I will chase it up with the Minister, that the EPA helps to pay for the removal of some of the dumped asbestos. My understanding is Blacktown council has not received any funding. I know there are the standard grants, but Blacktown council pays approximately \$3 million to \$4 million a year to remove dumped asbestos. I stand to be corrected, but my understanding is that the EPA only pays for illegal dumping on public lands. There are no funds for private land and most of the land in the City of Blacktown that has experienced illegal dumping is private land. It is on what is called scheduled lands. They are tiny 300-metre blocks. They have just gone through a replanning process, which is wonderful, but it is basically outback bushland.

Council has put up video cameras and all sorts of things trying to capture number plates et cetera. But people know that there are video cameras, because you have to put signs up to warn people that they are about to be videoed dumping. So what do they do? They cover up their number plates, go out there and probably wear a face mask, as we are all doing in the Chamber. That way they cover their identity and still dump in the area. Some 600,000 people are going to be living in the City of Blacktown. These high-growth areas that are currently bushland will be turned into housing. Let's face it. Remember the old days of Manly versus the western suburbs? We had the fibro boys versus the silvertails. At least you had the brick houses there. I remember Roy Masters. I grew up in a fibro house. I was lucky I had a tin roof compared with my neighbours, who had an asbestos roof. I love the tin roof. It is coming back into fad now, which is really good because you can hear the rain.

But there is a lot of dumping. As I said, council is spending \$3 million to \$5 million in remediating not only their land but other lands or facing legal costs. I know with Mr Galainy and Hamilton Street, it was five years of forensic investigation with council officers, with the EPA, with lawyers et cetera. That was over a million dollars. As members know, councils should spend that money on parks and reserves, upgrading sporting fields and creating community activities rather than chasing illegal dumpers through the system. In summary, you can avoid all this great legislation by spending six months in jail. Does the bill change that or at least say that, just because you spent six months in jail, you cannot abscond from your previous sins of dumping? Is there a way to support the private sector, private houses, and the mums and dads who cannot afford to remove the illegally dumped asbestos on their property? There are a few issues. I am happy to chat to the Minister in greater detail or bring some of the Blacktown councillors and environmental officers to meet up with him to go through more detail and potentially another set of laws to further strengthen this. I thank the Parliament for its indulgence and the Minister and the Government for bringing the bill before us.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (12:12): Firstly, congratulations, Mr Assistant Speaker, on your appointment. I congratulate the new Minister on his role, and I welcome him to a challenging portfolio. We look forward to working with him, as we do all the Ministers in this new ministry as we head towards 2023. I commend the role of the former Minister, who put the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 together to address the loopholes in dumping, which is a particular concern across all electorates. The issue needs to be addressed urgently and other speakers have spoken on it.

I address one other very brief issue regarding dumping of contaminated sediment, which my office and Dr Bill Ryall, who is a contamination expert, have engaged on with the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and the former Minister, who was kind enough to meet with us. As members would know, the proposed western harbour tunnel will excavate between the end of Balmain at Birchgrove Road and under the harbour up to Waverton to drop a submerged tube. That tube will go into the sediment and will involve the digging up of hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of contaminated sediment. Much of that will be processed onshore at White Bay. The contaminated sediment will then be either processed and dumped in landfill or processed and—there is some discussion of this in the environmental impact statement [EIS]—dumped off the heads into the ocean.

The reason I raise this is because illegal dumping is absolutely critical—how we dispose of contamination, how we dispose of asbestos and how we dispose of the waste that our consumerist society tends to generate. I put on record that this issue is of significant importance to my office and to many people in my community. I encourage the Minister to note that the EPA needs to take a stronger role in the development processes, especially when it comes to State significant developments. The EPA is involved in the process, but it is our very strong view that there needs to be stronger responses from the EPA when it comes to the proposed processes in environmental impact statements. We have seen that in the relatively broad submission from the EPA on the EIS for dredging, and that is because the EPA tends to be at the back end of the process rather than at the front. We have seen that the submission from the EPA on the EIS for dredging was relatively broad, and that is because the EPA tends to be at the back end of the process rather than at the front.

Fundamentally we would really like to see the EPA become more involved in the early stages of environmental impact statements for major projects that are likely to pose a serious risk of polluting the environment or will significantly impact the amenity of the community. In our view, State significant infrastructure projects that pose a risk of harm to the environment should require detailed input from the EPA from the very beginning of the EIS stage and should clearly point out the methodologies about how to meet the targets set by the EPA to protect the health of humans and the environment. I raise that point because it is very critical that we change the way that those processes work. Potentially it will also have a positive benefit around variations. When the RFT, or request for tender, is issued and a construction company moves forward with an approach, if at that stage the EPA says, "We need you to comply with this," and the method is not acceptable, then there can be applications for variations and increased costs as a result of the EPA requirements.

We have already raised this with the EPA. I know there has been some correspondence about it, but it is important we put that on record. All of us—maybe with a few exceptions—want to make sure that the EPA is the strongest organisation possible to protect human health and the environment. What is critical, in our view, is that some of those major projects are having significant impacts. That is why I talk about the issue of dumping in my electorate. Obviously we would prefer a traditional tunnel rather than a submerged tube, which requires excavating a huge amount of contaminated sediments. In fact, the reported volume in the EIS is 142,500 cubic metres of contaminated sediments. It is a very significant removal and disposal of contaminated product, and we want to make sure that the EPA is really active and involved in it.

I acknowledge that the bill does something very important. It recognises that as soon as a law is created to deal with illegal dumping, people will try to find a way to get around it. That is why it is important that this legislation is brought forward quickly in a positive and timely manner. We support it. We will be taking up this issue with the new Minister, who I know is passionate about ensuring that our environment and human health is protected. I say very genuinely that all members want to make sure that the EPA does the right thing. I particularly acknowledge that members in rural and regional New South Wales have really significant dumping issues. It is not just about the laws; it is also about funding the EPA and funding for compliance to dismantle the barrier that sometimes exists between council and EPA. I call on this Government when considering funding, as we move into the next budget, to support the EPA for its compliance work to ensure that it has all the expertise and resourcing it needs to do its job. We think that the EPA should be involved up-front, especially when it comes to State significant planning.

I conclude by saying that we have had some back-and-forth correspondence with the now Treasurer and former Minister for Energy and Environment. I acknowledge that the EPA met with us, with the Minister, and that there has been correspondence between the Minister and Dr Bill Ryall, who has 30 years' experience in the area of contamination. He worked on the Homebush decontamination and a whole lot of other places, such as Barangaroo. We want to make sure that during any project our community is protected from any contamination risk. I acknowledge that the bill is a positive one and I commend it. I look forward to working with the new Minister and the EPA on some of the broader structural issues concerning resourcing and supporting the EPA so we can ensure that it is involved up-front in the EIS processes, especially on State significant projects.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (12:19): In reply: I congratulate the Assistant Speaker on his role and acknowledge his long passion and advocacy for the environment. I look forward to working closely with him on a number of issues, particularly plastic waste, which is an issue close to his heart. I speak in reply to debate on the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I am sure I echo the comments of many members in this place that a fundamental pillar of conserving and protecting our environment is the effective protection of it.

I begin by thanking the members who have contributed to the debate on this important bill, including the member for Port Stephens, whom I acknowledge in the Chamber now. Her long-held advocacy for all matters in the environment, particularly this bill, is welcome. I thank her for that. I thank the members for the electorates of Port Macquarie, Newcastle, Holsworthy, Maitland, Camden, Lakemba, Ballina, Heathcote, Lismore, the Northern Tablelands and Granville. I thank the member for Canterbury and acknowledge the Wolli Creek land parcel issue. I am not familiar with that, but I will certainly find out and give the member for Canterbury an update. I thank the member for Oxley for her strong support of this bill and her great example of the wetlands restoration in her electorate, which was fantastic to hear. I thank the member for Gosford and the member for Blacktown. I acknowledge the member for Blacktown's firsthand experience and frustration with the issues he outlined as the former mayor of Blacktown. I will come to those in a moment.

It is fair to say that the stories that all members have told about their communities and the impact that polluters have had on the environment underpin and reinforce the importance of this bill. The last few years have demonstrated the importance of the environment to the health and prosperity of people across New South Wales in all of the communities that we have the privilege of representing. I will make some comments but, whilst the member for Blacktown is here, it would be worthwhile to acknowledge and share for his benefit that he is right. Some industries, sectors and businesses go to great lengths to take unscrupulous tactics and do whatever they can to get around the laws. They set up complex structures and have parent companies that deliberately set up smaller companies for each licensed entity and then often deregister them to avoid enforcement for action for illegal activities on those sites. The arrangements impact the EPA's ability to hold offenders in the parent company to account and recover any monetary benefit that they obtain for their crimes.

We are seeing these changing corporate structures, related entities and family members becoming more prevalent. To address this, the bill proposes several amendments to break through, challenge and deal with these unscrupulous business models. It goes a long way to dealing with many of the issues that the member for Blacktown has raised as their root cause. The Environment Legislation Amendment Bill is the most substantial

update to the environment protection legislation in over a decade. The bill makes a number of improvements to existing environmental laws to ensure that those who commit crimes are held to account and innocent landholders and communities are protected from the financial and human health impacts of contamination and waste. It broadens the scope of the EPA's regulatory tools, powers and offences to ensure environmental legislation can prevent, manage and remediate contamination and provide a strong deterrent effect and penalties for environmental crime.

Members in this place unanimously agree that those who pollute must pay for their crimes. I turn to some comments during this debate. As noted by the member for Port Stephens, whom I have acknowledged as a passionate advocate for not only this issue but many across the environment, this bill will make significant changes to improve the EPA's power to respond to serial waste dumping incidents, particularly where proving who dumped it can be very difficult. Sadly, there is a buck to be made by unscrupulous people who will take advantage of landowners.

Changes in the bill will deliver more effective and quicker responses when waste dumping occurs. That will be welcomed by local councils, who also respond to many local waste dumping incidents through their regional illegal dumping squads. I note the comments about PFAS contamination. The EPA has previously noted the constitutional issues that prevent it from directing the Department of Defence, but that should not detract from acknowledging that the bill is an important step forward in ensuring that New South Wales laws are continually refined and improved.

I also respond to observations about EPA staffing. I am proud of the Government's strong track record in resourcing the EPA. We should not forget that this Government restored the EPA as an independent environmental regulator and that it was in fact a Coalition government that set up the EPA nearly 30 years ago. I look forward to celebrating that important milestone in the near future. The EPA currently has a workforce of over 720 full-time employees and is in the process of increasing its workforce further. The EPA has also recently restructured to ensure the agency can better respond to environmental incidents and increase its regulatory presence. The new laws in the bill, combined with the EPA increasing its workforce and operational agility, will ensure that it is a strong, credible and effective regulator now and into the future.

I acknowledge the contribution by the member for Newcastle. The matters raised by the member have been the driving force behind the significant reforms to environmental legislation set out in the bill. The bill will ensure that New South Wales has strong environmental laws that reflect changing criminal behaviours and emerging environmental risks, and will provide the EPA with contemporary regulatory powers, tools and offences to protect the community and the environment. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Maitland. The bill makes important changes to give the EPA better up-front powers to prevent contamination happening in the first place. I understand the frustration of the community, and taxpayers more broadly, about delays in remediating the abandoned Truegain waste oil recycling facility. The EPA continues to take action against a director of the now deregistered company that operated at the site and continues to respond to tip-offs provided by the community.

I also thank my colleagues for their contributions, which included some very specific examples of exactly why these amendments are required—particularly the example referred to by the member for Northern Tablelands, who spoke about the experience of the Love family. The New South Wales Government supports the important role of the EPA as the State's environmental watchdog, and this bill will give it the modern environmental regulatory powers it needs. This is an important bill that will strengthen the EPA and ensure those who commit crimes are held to account and ensure that we protect communities and the environment from the impact of contamination and waste.

I acknowledge Jacqueline Moore, Nancy Chang, Jackie Miles, Melinda Murray and all the team at the EPA, in conjunction with my predecessor, for their outstanding work on this bill. It has been resoundingly supported by members for good reason. It empowers the EPA to ensure that we all have the best environment to enjoy right across New South Wales, no matter where you live. For those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

*Budget***BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2021-2022****Debate resumed from 15 February 2022.**

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (12:29): Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment. I am sure you will do a fine job, as you have done in the past. In continuing my contribution, I specifically thank former Deputy Premier John Barilaro for coming to Iluka, listening to the pleas of the residents and working with health Minister Brad Hazzard to secure the funding for the Iluka ambulance station. I received a call from John and Ann Maclean, the prime movers in ensuring that Iluka got this ambulance station. They want John Barilaro to attend the opening, and we will certainly extend that invitation to him. It was a remarkable example of a community coming together to support a basic service that they desperately needed and that they were entitled to. I am really proud of the enthusiasm that the citizens of Iluka showed in fighting for something that they so desperately needed, and it has come to fruition.

Of course, the New South Wales Government continues its funding to families and to communities. Through the pandemic especially, significant support was extended to families with things like the two \$100 Active Kids vouchers, the \$100 Creative Kids voucher, the \$100 First Lap learn-to-swim voucher and, of course, more recently, the parents' vouchers, which can be up to \$250 on a \$50 per voucher basis. This will certainly provide parents with some respite, as well as support local businesses that have suffered through the pandemic.

Mr Victor Dominello: And the Stay NSW voucher is coming as well.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: Absolutely, that is exactly what I mentioned, thanks Minister. The \$50 Stay NSW voucher is going to be rolled out this month. I think I mentioned earlier the new ambulance station for Casino. The old ambulance station has certainly reached its use-by date. The new one is on the cards and will be much awaited by the community and the paramedics who use it. There was \$270,000 in funding provided to install the much-needed new lighting at the Casino greyhound track. We know that greyhound racing is very popular in the Northern Rivers, in particular in Casino, where there are many trainers, owners and breeders and, of course, a very strong patronage of that sport.

There was a new Rural Fire Service brigade shed built at Rappville at an approximate cost of \$600,000. Rappville suffered significantly during the 2019 bushfires and that shed is most welcome. It will certainly help to support the community through other disasters that it may face in the future. A new \$470,000 fire truck for the Grafton Fire and Rescue service and a new \$565,000 marine rescue vessel at Evans Head were also announced in the budget. These are terrific announcements for our first responders and our emergency services volunteers. Of course, we saw the Community Building Partnership program budget extended to \$400,000. Twenty-five community groups benefited from the Community Building Partnership fund. Whilst the moneys are not significant amounts, they certainly make a big difference to our small community groups and our volunteers, who work very hard to ensure that they can stay afloat to support community activities and to basically be the heart and soul of the community. [*Extension of time*]

One of the groups that received funding was the Iluka-Woombah Men's Shed, which received \$21,000 to improve their kitchen cupboards and lunch room and line the air conditioners. They would never normally get this sort of money to be able to do that, so they are very grateful for the Community Building Partnership program. The Lawrence Historical Society, which is an active historical society and one of the best in the Clarence Valley, received \$5,000. The Iluka Bowls Club received \$10,000. The Richmond Valley Council received \$25,000 to upgrade toilet amenities at the Coraki Youth Hall and \$14,000 for Meet Me at Rileys, which is a shared outdoor community space at Rileys Hill. The Clarence Valley Council received \$13,000 for the Wooli Community Hall air conditioning and acoustics. The St Vincent de Paul Society received \$10,000 for the purchase and installation of solar panels at its Casino centre.

Uniting NSW.ACT received \$10,000 for interior painting of its preschool facilities, including office privacy screening. That preschool is run by Neil Gorrington, who is a terrific administrator. He certainly has a wonderful preschool. The Ashby Community Centre and Public Recreation Reserve Land Manager received \$8,210. The New Life Church in Grafton received \$12,892 for airflow installation. The Lower Clarence Netball Association received \$17,000 for concrete pathways and accesses. The NSW Rural Fire Service Association, on behalf of the Glenreagh Rural Fire Brigade, received \$7,240 for the upgrade of the Glenreagh fire station. The Yamba Surf Life Saving Club received \$21,394 to paint its surf club. The New Italy Museum received \$19,910 for refurbishment and painting. The Mudyala Aboriginal Corporation's Rising Warriors program received \$45,000 for a vehicle to transport young people to various programs that they participate in. The Coraki Golf Club received \$16,765.

In addition, the Maclean Rotary Club received \$8,780 to upgrade the Maclean Rotary book shed. The Carrs Creek School of Arts Hall received \$12,000 to upgrade its amenities block. The Grafton Sporting Car Club received \$12,101 to extend its pit facilities and construct a safe loading pad. Lower Clarence Community Radio received \$7,700. The Grafton Clay Target Club received \$7,700 to repair its driveway and road access. The Maclean Golf Club received \$15,000 to extend its machinery shed. The Casino Croquet Club received \$5,000 to update its seating. The Casino Pony Club received \$5,000 for a mower and trailer, and the Ashby Rural Fire Brigade received \$6,952 for ramp access to the station's kitchen and toilet area.

All of those funding projects were only available through the Community Building Partnership program, which is so valuable to our small communities. They are so grateful for the funding, and it certainly makes a difference in our communities. Under the Regional Job Creation Fund \$900,000 was granted to Provenance Propagation to help establish its operations at Wells Crossing. The funding will create 45 new jobs and encourage other regional employment opportunities. Provenance Propagation is a specialist horticultural farm. A state-of-the-art greenhouse will meet the growing demand for seedlings and grafted plants.

The following grant funding was provided under the latest round of the Stronger Country Communities Fund: \$77,763 to FoodCare in South Grafton for a powered shed and driveway; \$185,722 to upgrade the women's change rooms at McKittrick Park, South Grafton, multi-sport facility; and \$240,718 for lighting and grandstand upgrades at Hawthorn Park equestrian facility in South Grafton, which is a much-used equestrian park and one of the best facilities for equestrian events on the North Coast. In addition, the Yamba Sports Complex received \$152,000 for upgraded changing rooms and public toilets. So many women participate in sport and now they no longer have to get changed in their cars or lose their modesty and get changed wherever they can.

The following funding was also provided: \$200,000 for a new multipurpose court at JJ Lawrence Fields in South Grafton; \$186,045 for new fencing at the Glenreagh Recreation Reserve; \$248,963 to Casino's Crawford Square regional park; \$212,500 to upgrade the play area at the Coraki swimming pool; \$55,000 to add custodian acknowledgement to Richmond Valley's town entry signs; and, from the Regional Sport Facility Fund, \$947,000—nearly \$1 million—for new, safer playing surfaces, environmentally friendly lighting, extra seating and more shade for our regional sporting facilities and grounds.

The New South Wales infrastructure fund ClubGRANTS program provided \$134,000 to fund the demolition and rebuild of the Nungera community hall at Hillcrest in Maclean. In addition, a \$26,000 grant bought a new outboard motor for the Marine Rescue vessel at Iluka. The Kings Park Equestrian Club on the banks of the Tallawudjah Creek at Glenreagh received \$120,000 to build a roof for the newly developed main arena, which will make it more fit for purpose for activities such as equestrian events, equine therapy, equestrian school excursions, ladies days and other recreational activities.

A beautification project on the river at Ulmarra was awarded \$2.3 million from the Public Spaces Legacy fund. Ulmarra is one of those river towns that was bypassed by the Pacific Highway, and this investment will ensure that the town is sustainable into the future and will provide some amenity for the residents, which we need to do when we bypass towns—we need to ensure that they remain vibrant and can provide the services that communities desire. A grant of \$700,000 was awarded to Maclean council to connect the existing foot and bike path, linking the communities of Townsend and Gulmarrad to Maclean from the existing pathway that was built as part of the Pacific Highway upgrade at the Maclean interchange.

There have been so many other grants and funds made available to my regional community that I could go on for quite some time. The Grafton Regional Gallery received \$7 million from the Regional Cultural Fund to expand its facilities, and it has now become one of the major galleries in the Northern Rivers. It is certainly something to behold and can now host some wonderful exhibitions that we would have missed out on previously. Showgrounds in Casino, Maclean and Grafton all received funding from the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund. I think they were granted something like \$619,000 in one round and then they received further funding grants in subsequent rounds. They have all improved to the point where they look splendid and can certainly perform as the communities expect them to, because showgrounds are the real heart of regional communities. The Government has continued to fund my community and regional communities across New South Wales. It will continue to do so whilst ever it is in government. We thank it for all the grants and funds that we have received to make our communities so livable.

Debate interrupted.

*Committees***COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION****Reports**

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

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (12:44): I speak as Chair of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption about its fourth report in the Fifty-Seventh Parliament, entitled *Reputational impact on an individual being adversely named in the ICAC's investigations*, which was tabled on 25 November 2021. There is no doubt that the ICAC plays an essential role in protecting the public interest. This inquiry confirmed the committee's support for the ICAC and its role in investigating, exposing and preventing corruption in New South Wales. The people of New South Wales expect public authorities and public officials to be held to account if they undertake corrupt behaviour and breach public trust. However, the committee considers that the damage that can be caused by reputational impact, which in some cases is not warranted, is not fully addressed by the current remedies and that additional safeguards are needed. I stress that this inquiry did not aim to protect the reputations of those found to be corrupt, nor is it an investigation of any particular complaint or a reconsideration of the ICAC's decisions.

The committee agrees that reputational impact should be a deterrent for those considering engaging in corrupt conduct. As the ICAC has significant powers in exposing serious and systemic corrupt conduct, there is a tension between those powers and functions that enables it to expose corruption and the possible unwarranted reputational harm to individuals that results from that. Reputations are important. We found that the impact on being involved in an ICAC investigation, whether as a witness or a person of interest, can have serious psychological, social and financial effects. A key finding of the inquiry is that reputational impacts can take effect almost immediately once the media reports on an investigation and can continue long after an investigation is finalised. That effect is heightened in today's media environment of readily available online and social media reporting and the 24-hour news cycle.

One of our key recommendations is for the ICAC to consider implementing mental health protocols for individuals as part of its investigations. Those recommendations involve potential changes during and after investigations. We know from the inquiry that the nature of reputational impact varies from person to person and from one investigation to another. We know that the impact goes further and wider than just affecting those being investigated. It impacts witnesses who give evidence and families, spouses, partners and even children. Another recommendation is that each ICAC report should include a table of persons involved in the inquiry that indicates if that person is the subject of an adverse or corrupt finding or if they are a witness only. That recommendation would alleviate some of the unwarranted reputational harm for those who find themselves involved in an ICAC inquiry but are not the subject of any adverse findings. That recommendation would provide the public and the media with a clear and accurate format to view how a person has been involved in an ICAC investigation. In addition, we also recommend that the ICAC update its relevant investigation page on its website following judicial proceedings to clarify and reduce unwarranted reputational harm.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Validation) Act 2015, also known as the validation Act, was also examined by the committee. We recommend that the validation Act be amended. The amendment to the ICAC Act was introduced following the decision of the High Court in *ICAC v Cunneen*. The validation Act does not reverse the High Court decision, but validates action taken by the ICAC before 15 April 2015. The committee found that the validation Act impacts an individual's ability to seek a judicial review prior to 2015. There were a small group of people who had legal rights prior to the enactment of the validation Act as a result of the Cunneen decision and had gone to court to have findings against them set aside. Their case was settled with the ICAC and orders were to be entered by the New South Wales Court of Appeal. Those legal rights were retrospectively extinguished by the validation Act. We recommend that this limited cohort of people should have those legal rights reinstated by amending the validation Act.

As part of the inquiry, we identified that there are certain areas that would benefit from further review. That includes an examination of the existing mechanism for judicial review. We also recommend looking into a merits review process and if that should be considered as part of the procedural fairness framework that ICAC operates within, which may go further to protecting unwarranted reputational harm. We look forward to examining these issues in another inquiry. I thank the ICAC's Chief Commissioner, the Hon. Peter Hall, QC; commissioners Stephen Rushton, SC, and Patricia McDonald, SC; and the ICAC's executive team for their contributions to the inquiry for the committee's review. I also thank the inspector, Mr Bruce McClintock, SC, for his contributions. In addition, I thank my fellow committee members for their valuable input during the review process. I thank and acknowledge the witnesses for their contributions throughout this review. Their contributions and the willingness of many to publicly discuss traumatic and professionally difficult situations was valuable to the committee for its

deliberations. I publicly thank the Speaker of this place for the provision of access to free mental health counselling for any witness, following their appearance at the hearings. Finally, I thank the committee staff for their assistance. I commend the report to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (12:50): I make a contribution to the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled *Reputational impact on an individual being adversely named in the ICAC's investigations*. I thank my fellow committee members, staff, and the Chair, as well as witnesses who provided evidence to this important inquiry. As noted in this report, the inquiry did not aim to protect the reputational damage of those found to be corrupt, nor is it an investigation of any particular complaint or a consideration of the ICAC's decisions. The committee agrees that reputational damage should be a deterrent for those considering engaging in corrupt conduct.

The inquiry culminated in 11 findings and nine recommendations. Significant recommendations of note were, first, the ICAC should consider implementing mental health protocols for individuals as part of ICAC's investigations; secondly, the ICAC prepare and publish with each report a table of persons involved in that inquiry, with the indication that the person was a subject of an adverse finding, a corruption finding or was a witness only; thirdly, the committee conduct a review of the threshold for determining whether to hold public hearings in both legislation and practice by the ICAC compared to like bodies in other jurisdictions. I also note recommendation 7:

That the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Validation) Act 2015* be amended to put the persons named in the correspondence from the Crown Solicitor dated 23 April 2015 in the same position as they would have been in on 8 May 2015 (the date set for the Court of Appeal proceeding) had the *Validation Act* not applied to them.

Importantly, finding 11 stated:

An exoneration protocol is misconceived and would be fundamentally inoperable.

As noted in the report, the committee considered if an exoneration protocol could be a possible remedy to address the negative reputational impact that may occur from being named in ICAC investigations. I am pleased to say to this House today that the committee found that such a protocol is inoperable and misconceived because exonerating someone found to have engaged in corrupt conduct by the ICAC on the basis that they were later found not guilty in a criminal proceeding was an inapplicable like for like comparison of proceedings.

It was also noted in the report that many submissions to the inquiry did not support the creation of an exoneration protocol. While some supported the current safeguards and remedies as being adequate, others were directly opposed to such a remedy, as evidenced by submissions received from the ICAC itself; the Office of Inspector of the ICAC; Professor Nicholas Cowdery, AO, QC; the Accountability Round Table; the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions; the Centre for Public Integrity; New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties; and evidence provided by Mr Andrew Chalk, Chair of the Public Law and Government Committee of the Law Society of New South Wales. Esteemed former Director of Public Prosecutions, Professor Cowdery, AO, QC, stated in his submission:

In my view an exoneration of protocol is not needed and is not desirable. There would also be practical impediments in the way of designing an effective one of universal application.

The Accountability Round Table noted in its submission:

... there is no necessary incompatibility between a proper ICAC finding of corruption and a jury verdict of not guilty even where there is much overlapping of the evidence which is relied upon in each proceeding.

As noted in the report of his evidence to the inquiry, Mr Andrew Chalk stressed that imposing the criminal standard to ICAC proceedings would undermine the rationale for its establishment. He added that "it would effectively destroy the value of the ICAC". [*Time expired.*]

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (12:54): I contribute to the take-note debate on the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption report entitled *Reputational impact on an individual being adversely named in the ICAC's investigations*. I acknowledge all the members of the committee and thank them for their excellent work and contributions. At the outset, I also congratulate and thank outgoing Chair Tanya Davies, who is leaving her role on the committee. I thank her for her leadership and helping to facilitate and chair those meetings. When this inquiry was proposed I was not particularly enthusiastic about it. It was my view that there was no need for any public exoneration protocol or process to be implemented. But it is always important to review matters and to look at them diligently and carefully. As a result of that, some positive elements came out of the report.

I draw the attention of the House to the findings and recommendations because it was a sobering experience listening to people who have had their reputations impacted by investigations undertaken by the ICAC. On balance, the Committee found that there is a broad range of safeguards and a broad range of changes have taken place. A lot of work has been done to the ICAC, including the implementation of procedural fairness standards.

A whole range of work has been undertaken—changes that we passed in this Parliament—that have acted to improve the way that the ICAC works. We also recognise that, as finding 6 identified, some reputational impact is unavoidable if the ICAC is to be effective.

The ICAC can do something that other investigative and crime-fighting agencies cannot do. The challenge for us is to minimise any unintended risk or damage. That is why the report clearly sets out the progress that has happened over many years. Listening to the stakeholders, the safeguards are adequate, and changes are not necessary, and I support that. In the short time I have today I highlight that finding 9 underlines that we are concerned about the passage of time between final hearings and the delivery of reports in a matter by the ICAC. It can take a number of years.

I am a champion of the ICAC; its capacity and effectiveness is incredible. I have been a strong advocate for increased funding and resourcing, for the protection of its powers and for extending opportunities for the ICAC to do its work. The ICAC is something we can all be proud of in this State, and jurisdictions around the world look at the ICAC in New South Wales and recognise just how powerful it is. It keeps people like us accountable and makes sure that the public sector is accountable. It is not only corruption finding but also anti-corruption education that is important.

In the past I have asked the chief commissioner about a member of this place who has had to wait a very long time for their matter to be resolved. That needs to be addressed. It is a funding issue and it is a resourcing issue. All of those things go hand in hand, and I encourage the Government to recognise that it can play an important role in speeding up those matters by making sure that the right resources are allocated. I thank all members of the Committee. There was robust discussion, as we say in this place, and a robust exchange of views on a lot of issues, but I think we have come to a positive place that shows how much we respect the ICAC and how important it is.

Report noted.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Reports

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

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (12:59): As Chair: I address the House regarding the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure's report No. 2/57 entitled *Transport Technology Sector*, tabled on 10 December 2021. The committee examined both the benefits that transport technology can provide and the challenges being faced to ensure the New South Wales Government can meet the needs of all customers, promote safety and protect individuals' privacy. We heard from a range of submission makers and witnesses, including transport technology industry stakeholders, road users, legal experts, and advocates for women and people with disability. In total, we received 15 submissions and heard from 14 witnesses at a public hearing. We extend our thanks to all the stakeholders who participated in the inquiry. Their passion for and knowledge of how technology can improve transport in New South Wales was apparent and made an enormous contribution to the inquiry.

I now draw the House's attention to some of the key issues and findings made in the report. The inquiry focused on four areas of emerging transport technology: Mobility as a Service, first and last mile solutions, real-time transport information, and connected and automated vehicles. We also examined how technology innovations can improve access and safety for travellers, with particular consideration of women's protection and accessibility for people with a disability. I turn now in detail to some of the key issues the inquiry examined. Mobility as a Service, real-time journey management and first and last mile solutions are currently being used and developed in New South Wales. We heard from Transport for NSW and partnered industry stakeholders about developing these technologies. We overwhelmingly heard that this type of collaboration continues to drive transport innovation in New South Wales. We therefore recommended that Transport for NSW continue to promote local research and development partnerships with industry stakeholders to provide advanced Mobility as a Service transport solutions.

We were also pleased to hear that first and last mile transport offerings have improved overall and encouraged continued work in this space and related Mobility as a Service offerings. One challenge raised by participants in this area was the safe and convenient integration of bicycles, motorcycles and other micromobility vehicles such as e-scooters into the broader transport network. Micromobility options play an important role in first and last mile transport solutions, including reducing pollution and alleviating traffic congestions. We therefore recommended that Transport for NSW consult with other road users to ensure they are effectively integrated into the network.

We also heard how transport technology can improve regional connections, women's safety and disability access, for example, improving safety on rural and regional roads by using connected and autonomous vehicle technology, improving safety for pedestrians and micromobility users by ensuring footpaths and roads are safe for all users, addressing safety concerns for gender-based violence by empowering women with more suitable transport information, and increasing the effectiveness of existing security arrangements. We recommended that these safety improvements should be explored further, and that advocacy groups should be included in the consultation and planning stages for transport technology to ensure it delivers these outcomes and meets the needs of all users.

Further, we heard that there are areas where rules and regulations need to be reconsidered in light of the emerging technology to ensure that they allow transport technology to integrate safely and successfully into our existing transport system. In response to these findings, we recommended that Transport for NSW examines rules and regulations regarding: the use of e-scooters and e-bikes on footpaths to ensure pedestrian safety; the regulatory and policy implications of connected and automated vehicles for personal injury liability and the development of a plan to address any shortcomings in the current framework; and privacy and data collection to ensure that the delivery of transport technology services appropriately balances service delivery with the privacy of consumer data.

The inquiry revealed the important work already being done in New South Wales to ensure that our transport network meets the needs of users today and tomorrow, and the committee's findings and recommendations aim to provide direction for growth of technology in the network. We were pleased to hear that all inquiry participants are enthusiastic about the opportunities that technology provides to improve transport for all customers, and the committee shares that enthusiasm. We believe, with careful planning that includes the perspective of industry partners and New South Wales transport users, technology will continue to improve the way we move around our beautiful State. Finally, I extend my thanks to my committee colleagues, whose valuable contributions were well heard throughout the inquiry process, and to the secretariat for their support. That concludes my remarks on the *Transport Technology Sector* report. I commend the report to the House.

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (13:05): I make a brief contribution to the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure entitled *Transport Technology Sector*. I make particular note of two recommendations, recommendation 7 and recommendation 8, which point particularly to issues around safety—especially women's safety—that are being raised as technology removes the human element of our public transport. Sadly, we have seen this Government—and particular Ministers—launch into a tirade, quite fixated on using technology to remove the human element from all aspects of government. What we have seen—

Mr Victor Dominello: To reduce suffering.

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL: That is not what has come out of our reports and from stakeholders, who have raised concerns about removing the human element—in particular, guards—from public transport, and the huge safety concerns that women especially have about using public transport. Most recently this Government unveiled the new intercity fleet and made a commitment that guards would no longer be on that fleet. Had it not been for the huge advocacy and threats of industrial action from the Rail, Tram and Bus Union [RTBU], we would have seen 300 to 380 guards removed. Significant safety concerns are being raised not only by the RTBU but also by women's groups about this issue.

As I have said, under this Government we have seen the human element removed from the building of transportation infrastructure. We have seen it with the new metro, we have seen it with the light rail and the Government was hoping to do the same with the new intercity fleet. There are massive safety concerns, and the over-reliance on technology and removing the people element from our public transport—from the stations to our community car parks—is a huge problem. I hope the Government takes note that this report puts forward a number of recommendations and raises those concerns. As I said, due to the great advocacy of the RTBU recently, decisions have been reversed on the new intercity fleet. But I hope that there are no further cuts and people removed and that the Government can play a constructive role by bringing more people back.

The Eastern Suburbs light rail is in my electorate. There are no guards on the light rail. Every second stop there might be someone who is not a security guard; they are not there 24 hours a day. People continually come to my office raising concerns about their safety and security when using public transport—people who want to use public transport but do not feel safe doing so. As I said, recommendation 7 and recommendation 8 raise significant safety concerns about removing the people element from our public transport network. I hope that the Government will heed those recommendations and listen to the voices of women and of community groups and their concerns about removing people from the transport network.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (13:08): I address the House regarding the report of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure entitled *Transfer Technology Sector*, tabled on 10 December 2021.

The committee examined both the benefits that transport technology can provide and the challenges being faced to ensure that the New South Wales Government can meet the needs of all customers, promote safety and protect individual privacy. During the process, we heard from a range of submission makers and witnesses. In total, there were 15 submissions and 14 witnesses at the public hearing. I extend my thanks to all of the stakeholders who participated in the inquiry, which focused on four key areas in emerging transport technology: Mobility as a Service, first and last mile solutions, real-time transport information and connected and automated vehicles [CAVs].

The report states that there are areas where rules and regulations need to be considered in light of this emerging technology, particularly the first and last mile solutions and CAVs. We need to reconsider these rules and regulations to ensure that we can safely and successfully integrate them into our existing transport system. There are recommendations that we examine the rules regarding e-scooters and e-bikes on footpaths to ensure pedestrian safety and that we look at the regulatory and policy implications of connected and automated vehicles for personal injury liability and develop a plan to address any shortcomings in the current framework. These two particular areas are of interest to me because I studied industrial design at university. It is something that we looked at back then, nearly 20 years ago.

The transport sector is one where we will see the greatest transformation in our lifetimes, where we go from vehicles without cruise control to vehicles that, if the regulations allow, could drive themselves from point to point. I foresee in the very near future that we will have completely driverless, automated solutions for personal transport. Within most of our lifetimes, I think that will be the norm. It is important that, as a government and as a society, we keep up with that.

The other interesting area that governments need to concentrate on is the use of e-scooters and e-bikes. With battery power coming down in size and price, we are starting to see many more solutions come onto the market at really good price points. Previously, people have had to take public transport or taxis. Around the Brisbane CBD, for instance, the use of e-scooters means that people can stay further away from their workplace. If you are there for a holiday, you do not need to consider taxis unless you are going to a further destination. This has tremendous impacts for traffic and parking in our cities. It is something that we need to keep up with. I thank the committee staff and the secretariat. I commend the report to the House.

Report noted.

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

Announcements

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

The SPEAKER: I inform the House that a media representative has been authorised to take still photographs on a pool basis from the side door of the Chamber this afternoon.

Question Time

NURSE STAFFING AND PAY RATES

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:17): My question is directed to the Premier. Under proposed new rules in the Government's workers compensation legislation, a nurse would have to prove that they contracted COVID on a ward in a public hospital while on a shift in order to access financial assistance if they were struck down with COVID. Given millions of people contracted the disease in the past nine weeks, will the Premier please explain to his own workforce how a nurse could possibly prove who gave them COVID?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:17): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and his interest in this matter. Obviously this is in relation to legislation that we passed through the Parliament last year. I make the point, as he quite rightly knows, that we are the only jurisdiction in the entire country who passed—

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Because we have got a crap workers comp system.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: That is illogical.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We passed this legislation last year, or I think it was actually the year before, in respect of the first outbreak of COVID during the Alpha outbreak when this Government brought that legislation into this place. This legislation, as members will be aware, sits in the upper House. Discussions are underway in relation to concerns raised by the crossbench and, as we have always done in respect of legislation

in both the lower House and the upper House, if there are areas where amendments can be made to the legislation, we will look at them and make those decisions that ensure the best outcome for the people of our State. Ultimately, when it comes to matters of workers compensation, we want to have the strongest system in place, particularly for our frontline workers—

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: —whether that is our nurses or all of our health workers, our teachers as well, so that support is provided to them if they get sick in the workplace, whether or not—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr Ron Hoenig: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. It is a specific question: Can the Premier explain how his own workforces, how a nurse, could possibly prove who gave them COVID?

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: When it comes to the presumption of where a worker may or may not have contracted COVID, we understand and ultimately want to provide that support for people right across our State, exactly as we have done, as a government, for the past two years. We know Labor members were out there yesterday protesting with the unions.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

Well, who was there? Who was there?

Mr Michael Daley: I was.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Yes, they were all there. What is interesting is that they were all there protesting and cheering and sharing the videos on Facebook and TikTok. But the thing is, you would expect that if someone joins in a protest that they actually support the demands of what the protest is about. That is what any reasonable person would think, until late yesterday—enter the great Lachlan Kennedy of *10 News First*, first at five, the best news in town. There he was yesterday, after the protest, asking the Leader of the Opposition if he supports the demands of the union. No response.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

We were not at the protest.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question was clear. I know the Premier is cranky about Willoughby. It is not our fault. It is not the nurses fault. It is all on the Premier. Willoughby is on him. He can be as cranky as he likes, but he should not deflect. It is all on him.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Who looks cranky? There he was, after the protest, after being out there with the entire—at least The Greens who were out there actually support the cause. We know where they stand. That is the difference with Labor—all protest, all politics, no plan, no policy, no principles. That is the Labor way, being all things to all people. Well done, Lachlan Kennedy, for calling it out yesterday.

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (14:23): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is ensuring families can have confidence in our future?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:23): I thank the member for Holsworthy for her question, the support that she continues to provide for her electorate and her contribution in this place. There has been no government, except the Liberal-Nationals Coalition, that has done more in terms of delivering initiatives to put downward pressure on household budgets across our State, particularly over the past two years as our State has gone through an incredibly difficult time during the pandemic. Because of our strong financial management, we have been able to deploy our financial strength to provide support for New South Wales families and businesses, wherever they are in the State. We have provided seniors with support across the board: the \$200 electricity rebate under the Energy Social Program, the discounts on water bills through the pensioner water rebate, and the favourite \$250 regional seniors travel card—

Mr Paul Toole: Extended by another two years.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Two, was it?

Mr Paul Toole: Yes, two years.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Extended by two years. There you go; it is a hit in the bush. They voted with their feet and they support that card. In fact, I was converted to supporting that card. When I have gone out to regional New South Wales. I have seen firsthand the importance of that card and the impact it has made on the ground. We introduced the \$2.50 all-day travel with the gold seniors Opal card; free seniors vehicle registration and driver licence; 9,000 discounts across 7,300 different businesses under the Seniors Card Program; and, for grey nomads, 40 per cent off the caravan and camper trailer motor vehicle registration. Those initiatives have not been around forever. Most of them have come in during the past few years of this Liberal-Nationals Government. We have been able to make those investments and provide that support for pensioners and seniors right across our State.

In addition, for families across New South Wales we have a number of initiatives that continue to put downward pressure on household budgets, which has been particularly important during the pandemic. We know that the support of two days of free early childhood education for young people right across our State is putting downward pressure on family budgets. In addition, our Active Kids program of \$100 per child, which we have doubled to \$200, is providing significant support for mums and dads and, in particular, is ensuring that we are getting young kids into sport. I have met many young people who, but for that financial support from the New South Wales Government, would never have been able to engage with sport. We will have not only the fittest kids who are the best at sport but also the smartest and most culturally creative kids. Our Creative Kids \$100 vouchers are encouraging people to get into creative arts, drama and music lessons. We provide free car registration—

[An Opposition member interjected.]

How much do I get? I will get to that—a lot. In addition, in this financial year's budget we introduced our First Lap voucher program, which is encouraging. I thank the member for Holsworthy who had the idea during the pandemic to extend that to younger children who may have missed out early on. I thank her for that idea, which we adopted.

Ms Prue Car: What happened to that?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: You should go and get it. It is around. In fact, the feedback we are receiving is that a lot of families who would not have enrolled their children in early swimming lessons are now doing so. We are seeing the numbers increase right across the board. Obviously, that increase is off the back of that support. We have introduced the payment of \$250 in vouchers for parents who have gone through a difficult two years of homeschooling. Today I see that we have already had 300,000 families register for those accommodation and discover vouchers. That is important because not only does it help parents by putting downward pressure on household budgets but also it supports those in the accommodation and tourism industries who have done it particularly tough during the past two years. Right across the board the Government's initiatives continue to provide support— *[Extension of time]*

Those initiatives provide support for families right across the State. Never before have we seen so much support. It has been driven through Customer Service and Minister Dominello. The initiatives are easily accessed. Registrations are occurring, which is incredibly positive. Through all those initiatives we are putting downward pressure on family budgets, saving families thousands of dollars a year. That stands in stark contrast to those opposite who have increased taxes—around the last election of increasing ten—

Mr Stephen Kamper: You've been in government for 11 years.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: At the last election the Opposition ran on a platform of increasing stamp duty for families across the State and increasing payroll tax for every small business, yet Opposition members have the hide to come out and say that the Treasurer's package did not go far enough when, under Labor, every single mum-and-dad business across the State has paid higher payroll tax. Labor introduced 11 new taxes and increased taxes 21 times.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: What we will do on this side of the House under the Liberals and The Nationals is continue to put downward pressure on family budgets—

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: —reduce the cost of living, and we will not increase taxes, like Labor does every single time it is in office.

WORKER PROTECTION

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (14:29): My question is directed to the Premier. In light of his previous answer and given even he cannot explain how an essential worker is meant to prove they caught COVID at work, will the Premier listen to the workers and dump this hurtful and disrespectful bill?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:30): The previous question was in relation to cost of living and reducing pressure on household budgets. As I said in my first answer—this question is almost identical to the first question—as we have committed to, we passed that legislation through this place. We are the only jurisdiction in the country that has that provision in place. We have said that we will work with the crossbench in the upper House. If there are ways that we can improve that legislation, we will. We always want to provide protection for our frontline workers. But ultimately as well—

Ms Sophie Cotsis: Did you read the transcript of the inquiry?

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Yes, I did. But ultimately, as well, it is important for a lot of businesses right across our State, where that matter is not as relevant, that we work through those issues and do not put onerous provisions in place for businesses across the State. Even Labor States understand that principle.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

The SPEAKER: The member for Canterbury has asked the question and will be quiet.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: But, as I have said, member for Canterbury, in relation to the first answer and in relation to the question, we will work with the crossbench in the upper House. Our number one focus is to provide support, as we have done through the pandemic, for all of our frontline workers, whether that is in health care, whether that is in teaching, whether it is our paramedics or whether that is our police officers, who have been doing an amazing job over the past two years keeping people safe during this pandemic.

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (14:31): My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Energy. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the Government is delivering for businesses in New South Wales and whether there are any alternative policies?

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

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy) (14:32): Can I thank the member for Vaucluse for her question and say how good it is to get a question on a Wednesday.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: Mr Speaker, last year you made a considered ruling on questions that contain the expression "are there any other alternate policies?" You indicated that they were not consistent with Standing Order 126 and that they were inconsistent with Standing Order 130. You held, in a considered ruling, that they invite debating of the question, which is in breach of the standing orders. I ask you to do what you said in your considered ruling: either require that the question be reworded or be ruled out of order.

The SPEAKER: I made that ruling in August 2019. A number of questions last year contained that terminology. Quite frankly, I was waiting for a point of order to that effect. You have taken the point of order too late in this case. The answer has commenced, so I will allow it on this occasion. In future, if you take the same point of order, I will uphold my earlier ruling. I have ruled that the question would have been out of order, but in this case it is in order because the answer has commenced. The Treasurer will resume his answer.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Can I be heard further?

The SPEAKER: To the point of order, very briefly.

Mr Ron Hoenig: To the point of order: The Treasurer will, because of the ruling you have made, now infringe upon Standing Order 130. We can see it coming and I will be taking that point of order.

The SPEAKER: The member for Heffron will resume his seat. I have made my ruling. The Treasurer will resume his answer.

Mr MATT KEAN: I was just commenting on how exciting it is to get a question on a Wednesday. I normally do not get a question on a Wednesday, but thanks to the member for Londonderry's efforts yesterday, tactics have decided that I am back by popular demand. I will send a small thankyou gift to the member for Londonderry up to level 10 in an ALDI bag. Let me be very clear, I am not going to talk about the betrayal—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr MATT KEAN: —treachery or disloyalty that the member for Londonderry showed towards Jodi McKay, her friend and confidante.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr Ron Hoenig: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 73. The Treasurer is casting personal reflections and making imputations of improper motives on the member for Londonderry. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to intervene and prevent him from entering into quarrels in breach of the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: I will hear further from the Treasurer and listen very carefully. The Treasurer will continue.

Mr MATT KEAN: I am just trying to defend the honour of that great female trailblazer, that great integrity fighter, the person who stood up to all the Labor crooks in head office and the first and only popularly elected leader of the Labor Party, Jodi McKay. Ron Hoenig, the member for Heffron, is trying to gag me. I will not be silenced in standing up for Jodi McKay. I will always defend the great work that she did as the first and only democratically elected leader of the Labor Party.

Mr Stephen Kamper: Point of order—

Mr MATT KEAN: I challenge you to defend Jodi McKay.

Mr Stephen Kamper: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. I thought this question was about small business and small business support.

The SPEAKER: The member for Rockdale will resume his seat.

Mr MATT KEAN: We know the member for Rockdale will not defend Jodi McKay.

Mr Stephen Kamper: He is doing nothing for small business. He has been asked specifically about small business.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: I am here to talk about the great things the Government is doing to support small business because applications open today for our small business support program in New South Wales.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: Businesses that have a turnover of under \$50 million and have seen a decline in their turnover of 40 per cent for the month of January and the first two weeks of February will be eligible to receive up to \$5,000 in support payments. That is because we want to make sure that those small businesses are able to get through this economic shock and come out on the other side stronger than they went in.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Are they going to get cash?

Mr MATT KEAN: I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Maitland, who is a very hardworking member and a great and strident defender of the former Leader of the Opposition. I acknowledge her integrity, decency and loyalty in standing up for the great champion of integrity Jodi McKay.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: I say to the member for Maitland that because of the great work of the member for Ryde—

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

Mr MATT KEAN: —the Minister for customer service, the system is up and running. You can jump on the website today. Eligible compliant businesses will be able to access cash within five to 10 business days of putting in their application. We want to make sure that we get cash in the hands of those small businesses. I know the member for Maitland has been a great champion for the tourist industry, which has been hit particularly hard not just through the Omicron outbreak but through Delta and Alpha as well.

Many members on both sides of the House, including the Independents, have raised the issue of restaurants, cafes and small bars around Sydney, which have been hit particularly hard, through no fault of their own. The personal services industries—hairdressers, nail salons and beauty parlours—also have done it tough and have been impacted by the drop in consumer demand. We worked with the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia, NSW Business Chamber and Wes Lambert. I know that Wes Lambert reads *Hansard* because he texted me last night and thanked me for the shout-out. I thank Wes again for his great work standing up for the restaurants, cafes and mum-and-dad business owners in New South Wales. It was greatly appreciated.

Working with those industry groups, we were able to design a package of small business supports that would help them get through this economic shock and come out the other side stronger. We on this side of the House support small business. The Labor Government in Victoria and the Labor Government in Queensland were not supporting small business by bringing in a business support package. In fact, we were the only jurisdiction in the country that came up with a comprehensive small business support package to deal with the Omicron wave. That is what good Liberal-Nationals governments do. As I said, businesses will be eligible for up to \$5,000 per week if they have experienced a drop of 40 per cent turnover or more.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: It is very important that that money gets out the door quickly and into the hands of small businesses, so that they can keep their doors open, serve customers and help grow our economy. While we have been doing big things for small businesses, the Leader of the Opposition has been doing small things on big issues. Yesterday I was trying to say that I was excited because my Valentine's Day present from the Leader of the Opposition was the first of his policies that he announced in a much-vaunted 100-day plan.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I will have to rely on Standing Order 73 because there are no standing orders that relate to being an ordinary performer and being cringe-worthy, but that is what the Treasurer is. He is pretending to be Bob Carr, but he is not even Kerry Chikarovski.

The SPEAKER: The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr MATT KEAN: That is very unkind to Kerry Chikarovski. What I did not look forward to on Valentine's Day was the launch of the much-vaunted Leader of the Opposition's 100-day plan. When did it come? It came on day 256 of him announcing he would have a 100-day plan. [*Extension of time*]

Wasn't it worth the wait? We waited 256 days for this much-vaunted plan to deal with toll mania and the cost of living for families. What was it? It was a plan to erect a sign. A sign! Is there no end to where a Princeton education can take you? I am sure caucus is waiting for Harvard's policy to be applied to all manner of public policy problems.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 130. The Treasurer is now doing what I envisaged he would do. He is debating the answer to the question because the question was so open-ended. I ask that his answer be relevant to small business and to the question asked by the member for Vacluse.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Treasurer will continue.

Mr MATT KEAN: I can see Lucy Cormack taking notes, waiting for the Leader of the Opposition's next policy pronouncement. How will he deal with climate change? A sign! How will he fight inflation? A sign! How will he tackle housing affordability? A sign! That is the scoop for *The Sydney Morning Herald*; Labor does not need to drop it to you. That is what a Princeton education gets you. This bloke is all sign and no substance.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order—

Mr MATT KEAN: He is all mullet and no material.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr Ryan Park: The village has lost its idiot. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. How does the Treasurer's answer have anything to do with the question about small business?

The SPEAKER: I have allowed the Treasurer a fair degree of discretion. I ask him to come back to the leave of the question. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MATT KEAN: I am talking about policies. I am lauding the Leader of the Opposition for coming up with his first policy, 256 days into his 100-day plan. I can see the campaign slogan, "Chris Minns 2023. Chris Minns will sign it over to me."

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

Mr MATT KEAN: It is sign-o-rama. He is the lord of the signs!

Mr Michael Daley: Mr Speaker, will you remind the Treasurer that if a point of order is taken or another member has the call, he needs to zip it and sit down?

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer's time has expired. He will resume his seat.

TRANSPORT ASSET HOLDING ENTITY

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) (14:42): Don't go away, Matt, we are not finished with you yet. My question is directed to the Treasurer. Last week the Auditor-General warned that taxpayers will pay an additional \$5.2 billion to bail out the Government's dodgy Transport Asset Holding Entity [TAHE], after she described the costings of the former Treasurer, now Premier, as "unsophisticated, containing errors, omissions and/or poor logic". How many schools, hospitals, teachers, nurses and police will communities across New South Wales miss out on so the Treasurer can compensate for the Government's dodgy TAHE?

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy) (14:43): I thank the member for Maroubra for his question. I hoped that as a former finance Minister he would have a better understanding of the State's finances. For the benefit of the member for Maroubra, let me firstly say that I reject the premise of the question. Let me explain to him that TAHE is fully owned by New South Wales taxpayers, so it is an asset of the people of New South Wales. When the Government puts money into one of its assets, guess what? The Government still owns the asset. We are in no worse position. This just highlights how incompetent the Labor Party actually is. It does not understand basic finances.

Of course, as a former auditor, I take the findings of the Auditor-General very seriously. This is very important. The audit report that she handed down deserves full consideration and respect, and we need to work through these issues. That is why the new Treasury secretary is establishing an independent, robust assessment of the processes that happened over the past month and the findings into the audits dealing with this issue. I can assure the House that I take the concerns raised by the member for Maroubra and the Auditor-General seriously, as does the new secretary, which is why we have commissioned an independent process. We should let that process run its course.

What I will say to the House is, despite the consistent sniping from the Opposition, the Auditor-General gave—guess what?—an unqualified audit opinion. She gave a clean set of accounts and a clean bill of health. The issues raised by the Auditor-General were very serious. We will work through those issues in the normal process. There is a new Treasury secretary in place, who is one of the most senior civil servants in the country. We will make sure that we resolve these issues, that we work with the Auditor-General in a constructive way and that we give the public of New South Wales full confidence that the State's accounts are not only true and fair but also in the interests of the people of this State.

Our track record is very clear, member for Maroubra. We are a government that delivers schools, hospitals, roads, and builds infrastructure and manages the assets of the State in a financially responsible way. That will continue on my watch. But on the topic of administration, which the Auditor-General was referring to, I was very interested to read a document, which is one of my favourite documents. It is called "Why Chris Minns and Jamie Clements Can Never Run the NSW Labor Party". This was not a document on administration prepared by Treasury; it was a document prepared by the Labor Party.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. It is completely irrelevant to the question, which specifically asked about TAHE and the Auditor-General's comments about it.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer has been entirely relevant for this question, so I will allow a slight digression but not for too long. The Treasurer had a good go the last time.

Mr MATT KEAN: On the topic of audits, I was very interested in the audit conducted by ICAC's Operation Aero inquiry, which revealed that Chris Minns received more than 10,000 bogus cheques as part of the efforts to hide Chinese property developer Huang Xiangmo as the true source of \$100,000 worth of cash.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Mr Speaker, if this is not a breach of Standing Order 73, then frankly nothing is. We will give the game away; just get the black pen and we will just cross it out because it will not mean anything.

The SPEAKER: I will allow the Treasurer to state statements of fact if they are proven statements of fact. If he goes beyond that, I will ask him to resume his seat under Standing Order 73. He transgressed it yesterday. I am warning him again to be careful.

Mr MATT KEAN: I am trusting the Labor Party got the facts right in the document that it circulated about its leader. It goes on to say that Huang's permanent residency has since been revoked due to the national security concerns surrounding his links to United Front Communist Party groups. If ever there was an audit required, it is into the nefarious activities of Jamie Clements and the people at head office who supported the Leader of the Opposition for the job.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 73, which relates to imputations. If the Treasurer wants to debate it, he can move a substantive motion. I am sure the Leader of the

Opposition would love to debate the Treasurer and the Premier over these issues. But it is not appropriate under Standing Order 73 for the Treasurer to go off on an irrelevancy just to attack the Leader of the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: I have indicated that within the realms of robust debate I am not going to stop an attack involving leaders of parties. But I am concerned that the area the Treasurer is heading into impinges on Standing Order 73. Although it is not as clear as yesterday, he will desist from that line. I am happy to hear further from him on other matters.

Mr Paul Toole: Is that an extension?

The SPEAKER: No, it is not an extension. The Treasurer's time has expired. I remind all members in this place that we need to uphold standards and the reputations of all members. As we head into the final year before an election, members should be careful because I will pull them up whenever they indicate a clear imputation of improper motives or make personal reflections on members. That does not mean members cannot criticise people or talk about factual matters, but they should be wary of Standing Order 73.

COVID-19 AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (14:49): My question is addressed to the Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Minister for Tourism and Sport, and Minister for Western Sydney. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government has supported communities as we emerge from COVID-19?

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Minister for Tourism and Sport, and Minister for Western Sydney) (14:50): What happened with the little frontbench change here, the member for Cessnock onto the front bench and the member for Rockdale back up there? Is it three calls and you're out? Did they get a bit worried about the member for Rockdale down here?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr STUART AYRES: I am loving the return of the member for Maroubra, back up on his feet again and really getting back into the swing of the Parliament.

[A member interjected.]

Mr STUART AYRES: It is better than the wet lettuce leaf. It is just good to have someone with a bit of energy. I thank the member for Mulgoa for her question. She is a fantastic advocate for her community, delivering projects like the performance and learning centre at Glenmore Park High School.

The SPEAKER: The member for Cessnock will cease interjecting.

Mr STUART AYRES: Cecil Hills High School is getting a massive upgrade due to the fantastic work of the member for Mulgoa. One of the most important ways in which we are helping the community emerge from the pandemic is our strong investment in health. Almost \$30 billion of the State budget, well over one-third of the State budget, is being invested in health to make sure that we have the health system that we need to take us through the course of the pandemic. Over 170,000 staff are employed right across the health system. Just in the last week 2,800 new frontline staff came into our hospital systems to ensure that we have the number of people that we need across those wards.

We are also investing substantially—and particularly in western Sydney—in new infrastructure. I know the member for Mulgoa knows the fantastic work taking place at Nepean Hospital—the stage one development, the fantastic tower. It has really come out of the ground, and it has really energised a lot of the workers in that community. We are almost at full completion of that first stage. One of the great things the health Minister did was bring forward planning and funding for stage two so that we can move straight into that stage. This is a hospital that Labor could never deliver. Labor could not manage the finances. It did not care about western Sydney. It did not deliver on the investment into Nepean Hospital and what that community needed. Only the Liberal-Nationals Government has been able to do this.

This is not just the Nepean story. I can see the member for Holsworthy, who knows how much our investment into Liverpool Hospital is changing that community. Over \$740 million has gone into that hospital for an absolutely key demographic in the south-west of Sydney. It took really strong advocacy from people like the member for Holsworthy to make sure that that community gets access to its hospital. We are also seeing \$630 million going into the Campbelltown Hospital, making sure that even further in the south west, no matter what is going on through the course of the pandemic, we have kept these infrastructure programs going. We have seen massive investment even in Blacktown and Mount Druitt. This is supposed to be Labor heartland. These are areas that Labor could only have dreamed of when it comes to investing in this type of infrastructure. It had 16 years to have a crack at it and could not get anywhere near it. We are building hospitals in Penrith, in

Blacktown, in Campbelltown and in Liverpool. And right in the middle of Parramatta we have seen amazing investment in the fantastic Westmead district.

The SPEAKER: The member for Blue Mountains will remain silent.

Mr STUART AYRES: I was really, really interested yesterday to see all the nurses out doing their thing. We had the nurse union movement out there talking about ratios. This Government does ratios. We make sure that we have nurses in our wards. They are out there saying they want a little bit of extra pay.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: They want more pay, and we have had the health Minister engaging with the unions, but here we are—I think Lachie Kennedy said the "final quarter". We are five minutes away from the election and what are we getting from the Leader of the Opposition? With an opportunity to talk to the nurses, he would not commit on ratios. He would not commit on pay either. The question I have to ask is does this mean the Leader of the Opposition does not support the 2.5 per cent? Could it be less? Does this mean that under Labor nurses might get paid less than they would under this Government? How would you know? This guy wraps up the Christmas present in the fanciest possible paper and then when you rip the present open, there is absolutely nothing.

Members opposite were out yesterday taking selfies and doing videos, but when they are asked what they are going to pay nurses, they say they might pay them less. They might get paid more under the Government, because we have been working with them, we are going to sit down with them. How would anyone actually know? What I know about the Labor Party is that it always has a puppetmaster. It used to be Eddie Obeid; it is now Jamie Clements. The puppet may have changed, but it is still the same old Labor Party.

REGIONAL AND RURAL HEALTH

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:55): My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Last night the member for Northern Tablelands and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Homes and Infrastructure said, "NSW Health cannot honestly believe the current system is adequate or working. It simply is not."

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

Ms PRUE CAR: He continued, "My constituents keep asking me, 'What is the point of these shiny new facilities when there is no-one to work in them?'"

The SPEAKER: The member for Londonderry will resume her seat.

Mr Alister Henskens: These are statements of fact which are not strictly necessary to understand the question. The member repeatedly engages in this. We should just have a question, not long, tedious statements of fact.

The SPEAKER: The question relates to a quotation and to that extent it is creating context. I will look at the question because the member for Londonderry, with respect, does have form. The member for Londonderry now has an amended question.

Ms PRUE CAR: My amended question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Last night the member for Northern Tablelands said, amongst other things, "My constituents keep asking me, 'What is the point of these shiny new facilities when there is no-one to work in them?' And you know what? They're right." We know the Premier does not listen to frontline health workers or the community. Will the Deputy Premier at least make him listen to members of his own party?

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (14:57): I thank the member for Londonderry for her question. I find it incredible that someone from Londonderry is asking a question about regional New South Wales. You would have thought they would have got someone from the country to stand up and ask this question, when it impacts the regions. Those opposite could learn a thing or two from that local member. This is a local member who works hard in his community. He actually listens to his community, and he advocates for them.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It means that he has an incredible margin in his seat because of the work that he has done. That is something that those opposite dream of. The Leader of the Opposition would kill for a margin like that. He would kill to have a margin as good as what the member for Northern Tablelands has.

Ms Prue Car: Point of order: It is clearly taken under Standing Order 129. If the member for Northern Tablelands is that good, why on earth did he get rid of him? Why did he sack him?

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Our nurses, our police, our teachers and our frontline workers have all done an amazing job over the past two years in keeping our communities safe. I thank all of them for the incredible work that they have undertaken. They have kept our community safe. But, as well, during that time we have supported them with more nurses out there on the front line. We have provided support to those who are needed to do the role. We have provided support in the business sector as well. In saying that, it is us who have provided billions of dollars to our health workers, when it comes to personal protective equipment and more nurses out there across the State.

Those opposite come in here—and they raised it yesterday. They turned around and said that they stand up for nurses, doctors and all those on the front line, but they clearly showed in the electorate of Monaro that they do not. They are hypocrites. Those opposite actually shafted the health workers and supported an anti-vaxxer. They say that they stand up for those health workers in our communities, but they preferenced an anti-vaxxer who kicks the guts out of our nurses, our teachers, our frontline workers and those people who are out there working hard each and every day. Opposition members can stand up and say that they support the work of our nurses, but clearly they say one thing out there and then come in here and do the complete opposite. I will say that this Government has continued to support our nurses across the State. If you have a look at our health system—

Mr Ryan Park: What about the rural health inquiry?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I welcome the health inquiry because, you know what, I think that is actually important to make sure that we get the health outcomes for our communities.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That health outcome is going to ensure that we provide the services that are needed in our communities. I do not mind who is in government. At the end of the day, it is about getting the right outcomes for our communities.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: But I know that it is the Liberals and The Nationals in government that will actually support our nurses and our health system across the State.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I also know that Labor cannot build hospitals. Members opposite talk about it, but they do not know how to build them. If we were looking at the electorate of Tweed, they would be still looking for the parcel of land to put the hospital on. The last one they built was back in my electorate of Bathurst, and what they did there was an absolute disgrace. They built a hospital that you could not see the "hurst" going in underneath. They built the doors so small that you could not get wheelchairs through. You had sewage coming up out of the pipes in the hospital. That is the Opposition's standard of a hospital that it wants to build.

We are investing in our hospitals across this State. We are investing billions of dollars and we will continue to do so. I am pleased to say that over four years, from 2019-20 to 2022-23, a total of 8,300 more frontline health staff will be recruited and over 45 per cent of them will be in regional New South Wales. That includes 5,000 nurses and midwives, 1,060 doctors and 880 allied health staff, with 45 per cent of them in regional New South Wales. It is the Liberals and The Nationals in government that will continue to stand up and fight for our regional communities.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Newcastle to order for the first time. Before I call the member for North Shore, I say that for those who perhaps have not noticed as much as others, when a Minister is actively attacking the Opposition, I am far more tolerant of interjections. But when a Minister is addressing the issue seriously, I do not expect there to be—

[A member interjected.]

The SPEAKER: I beg your pardon?

[A member interjected.]

The SPEAKER: Where is that coming from? When the Minister is speaking seriously to a question, I do not expect there to be loud interjections. When members do that, I will put them on calls to order.

COVID-19 AND SMALL BUSINESS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:03): My question is addressed to the Minister for Small Business and Minister for Fair Trading. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting small businesses through the Omicron wave of the pandemic?

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading) (15:03): I thank the member for North Shore for her question and acknowledge her long-held interest in small businesses and particularly their recovery through COVID-19. It is an absolute privilege to speak in this Chamber today about the 800,000 small businesses in our State and to have the opportunity to work for them and advocate for them. Small businesses are the engine room of our State's economy, employing 1.6 million people across all of our communities and adding \$400 billion each year to our State's sales and services income.

I am proud to come from a family of small business owners. I grew up watching my parents run their own small business, and today my siblings are on their own journey as small business owners. As we know, small businesses have experienced many challenges through the Omicron wave of the pandemic. This Government is standing shoulder to shoulder with all of these business owners to help them bounce back. It is vital that we get them the support they need to stay afloat and keep their workers in jobs.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

I am shocked that some members do not want to hear about small businesses in their communities right now. But to the small business owners in this State, I can say that this Government truly has their back. That is our message to the small business owners in this State. We have been there for businesses, providing more support throughout this pandemic than any other State or Territory government, and that continues. The Treasurer updated the House earlier on the amazing work that the Government has done in this jurisdiction to support small businesses. We are not only protecting our health system but also keeping people safe, ensuring that the economy stays open and that people are in jobs and businesses are in business.

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

Ms ELENi PETINOS: The breadth of support that this Government has delivered will help get our small businesses through the latest challenge and provide them with a springboard to bounce back, which is why the Small Business Support Program is so incredibly important. Today is the perfect opportunity to talk about it, because applications opened earlier today. The package will assist numerous businesses, sectors and individuals across the State to survive the immediate impact of the Omicron wave.

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

Ms ELENi PETINOS: To be eligible, businesses need to have between \$75,000 and \$50 million in turnover and have experienced a minimum 40 per cent decline in turnover in both January and the first two weeks of February 2022. Eligible employing businesses will receive 20 per cent of their weekly payroll as a lump sum for the month of February. Payments will be up to \$5,000 per week. As at 1.30 p.m. today, 257 applications have been received from businesses throughout the State. Only this Government could deliver this package, through the strong economic management that it has consistently—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister is addressing the question seriously. Members will listen to the response in silence.

Ms ELENi PETINOS: Only members on this side of the House would ever have the true economic management to be able to deliver a package of this kind and support the people of New South Wales and the small business owners through this wave of the pandemic.

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

Ms ELENi PETINOS: Further to the Small Business Support Program, the Government is also committed to supporting businesses through the Small Business Fees, Charges and RAT Rebate. Eligible small business owners will have up to \$3,000 to use as a rebate to cover half the cost of rapid antigen tests, along with other government fees and charges such as Food Authority licences, liquor licences, tradesperson licences, event fees and outdoor seating fees. Outdoor seating fees were particularly important for businesses like Kouzina Greco, which I had the pleasure of visiting yesterday while I was out on the ground in Parramatta.

Businesses that are already registered for the program will receive an automatic top-up of \$1,000 and newly registering businesses will receive a rebate of \$3,000 in full. We are also keeping workers safe in their workplaces, which is particularly important to us. We have doubled the SafeWork Small Business Rebate program to \$1,000 per application. That will cover measures such as access ramps to move products safely; guard rails for those working at heights; forklift safety measures such as specialised seatbelts, anti-vibration seats, automatic

stop-and-go barriers and reversing light systems; as well as sunshade protection to help safeguard outdoor workers from sunburn and skin cancer. [*Extension of time*]

These SafeWork Small Business Rebate programs are particularly important for all workers in the State. They make sure that our small businesses are being provided with the necessary funds to ensure that workers are safe in their workplaces and get home to their families safely. Since those opposite have treated this very important question with such a level of contempt, it is important to remind the people of New South Wales that those opposite are only interested in being Lockdown Labor. The only thing they want to do is lock down the people of this State and prevent our small businesses from keeping their doors open and keeping people in jobs. Members should not take my word on this. The Leader of the Opposition proved that he is Lockdown Labor and only Lockdown Labor when he was interviewed on 2GB on 7 January. He said:

Of course we have to learn to live with Covid but that doesn't mean we live without any government decision making.

The only decision that those opposite would ever make if they were entrusted with the wellbeing of the people of this State would be to lock down the hardworking men and women who run small businesses, keep jobs, services and goods going in all of our local economies and communities, and keep people employed. It is such a shame that those opposite, who only know about lockdowns, want to further the lockdown. They would never be in a position to financially support the economic recovery that this Government has delivered. March is Small Business Month. I truly hope that every member of this place gets behind Small Business Month and supports the hardworking small business men and women in their local communities.

REGIONAL AND RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (15:11): My question is directed to the Minister for Health. The NSW Rural Health Plan 2014-2021 is due to be re-struck. The last plan did not contain metrics around the delivery of health services in regional New South Wales. This results in less accountability for both health executives and also the New South Wales Government. Will the Minister direct that the next NSW Rural Health Plan will contain performance metrics in regard to the delivery of services developed in consultation with regional stakeholders?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health) (15:11): I thank the member for Barwon for his question and for his genuine interest in trying to improve health delivery across some of the most challenged and remote areas of New South Wales. I am also grateful for the fact that last time I headed up there, which was during the Delta outbreak, he accompanied me to a number of towns in his area. Over that period I visited Dubbo, Bourke, Wilcannia, Walgett and Broken Hill, amongst some others. The member was there, and we met with the local community, particularly the Aboriginal community. It was an opportunity to get an insight into the difficult challenges that face our remote areas in the regions. They are difficult and challenged areas. Of course, that has been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. I thank the member for his interest.

The member's question relates to the plan that was issued some years ago—the NSW Rural Health Plan. As the member correctly observed, that plan expires this year. The regional health Minister, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor, and I have given instructions to NSW Health to work with the broader community across the regional areas to develop a new strategy. It is crucial. Of course, a lot of what we sought to achieve in the original plan has been achieved, and circumstances and the population have changed. Telehealth was only a vision when that plan was created. Fortuitously off the back of the pandemic, these days telehealth has more support from the Federal Government, particularly through doctors being able to claim Medicare benefits.

I think the member for Barwon is very aware of the issues around the stroke telehealth service, for example, which is now making a huge difference across the regions. We introduced that \$21.7 million program two years ago and already I have met people in those areas, from Dubbo right through the Far West area, who have been saved from permanent disability by that telestroke health service. It is trite but I emphasise that I have sometimes seen people who want to diminish the value of telehealth. They have talked about it being a substitute—"This is what the Government wants to do as a substitute for face-to-face medical care." No, it is not at all, ever, but it is certainly a good adjunct to face-to-face health care and it works where they often find it very challenging to get medical practitioners.

The only thing I differ on with the member for Barwon is that he is asking about metrics. I support his premise that there should be metrics in the new plan, but I think his assessment of the former plan not having metrics is not entirely accurate. A whole host of issues were mentioned in the plan, and I have had to go through that plan many times. I am happy to go through many of the issues that were highlighted, particularly in the appendices, if the member comes up to my office at some stage in the next couple of days, if he likes.

The various issues that are looked at—for example, the rate of diabetes in various regional areas of New South Wales and how has it changed—are important aspects that are in the plan. It did not use the term "metrics" but they are metrics. There have been two evaluations already, I think in 2014 and 2018, of the plan and

how it was developing. Certainly my view is that we should move to the next stage as we go through it with those metrics reflecting where we are at now, and we should be able to evaluate those. But regional health is such a complex area. Obviously, the Primary Health Networks—GPs, effectively—are run by the Federal Government. There are 31 of those across Australia. [*Extension of time*]

They have an integral and really important role providing care not only through their practices but also often through local multipurpose services. The member for Barwon has a number of those in his very large electorate. I know he has visited quite a few and I thank him for that. They also have a role in the local hospitals as visiting medical officers. It has been a real challenge. I acknowledge that the regional health inquiry of the Legislative Council has highlighted some issues. I would have liked that to have been done in a more bipartisan political way; I think it has been a little too political. But I think it shows there are still some very challenging issues in getting GPs and medical staff across Federal, State and local government—and, of course, through the Aboriginal Health Services—into regional areas. That is one of the things we need to look at as we develop the new plan going forward for the next 10 years.

I look forward to the support and assistance of the member for Barwon, particularly in remote areas, as we try to engage with the community over the next six months. I say again that the Hon. Bronnie Taylor is also taking a lead role in this, and I am grateful for that. I know in the past the member for Port Macquarie has done a lot of work on palliative care across New South Wales. That is an important issue that was highlighted in the last plan. It remains a significant issue, although a lot of work has been done in that area. I think I heard the Deputy Premier talking about Bathurst hospital and some of the shortcomings, let's say—being polite—in its construction when Labor was in charge. I will not take the time now, but I could read out more than 200 health facilities that have been developed in New South Wales under the Coalition with 8,300 new staff at the present time, of which 5,000 are nurses and 45 per cent are going to the regions. I agree that we need more staff, but it is a big challenge to get them into the regions.

REGIONAL DRINKING WATER

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (15:18): My question is addressed to the Minister for Lands and Water. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is delivering clean drinking water to regional communities?

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Lands and Water, and Minister for Hospitality and Racing) (15:19): I thank the member for Port Macquarie for her question. She is a regional member who absolutely understands the importance of having clean, fresh running water not only in major coastal centres but right across regional centres in New South Wales. It does not matter where you are, whether it is Bombala, Barraba, Bondi, Darlington, Deniliquin, Dubbo or Delegate—

[*A member interjected.*]

Dapto as well. We need clean, fresh, running water. Dunedoo is another cracker; it is another great spot. If you ever go through Dunedoo, stop at the pub and have a country or a pie, say g'day and drop a coin in the slot. You will help regional businesses.

[*A member interjected.*]

I mentioned Deniliquin. Pay attention. Of course, they all need fresh, clean, running water, just as they do in Bombala and Delegate in the Monaro. The issue was brought to my attention by the new member for Monaro, Nicole Overall, who will join us in the Parliament very soon. She will be a great contributor to this Parliament for the community of Monaro. A concern was raised with her by the mayor, Narelle Davis, and the local communities from the Snowy, who said that the Bombala water treatment plant badly needed an upgrade. She said, "Come and have a look," so I went down to Bombala and I had a look around. I can tell you it looked like a backyard pool shed on steroids. It had been bandaged up, patched and held together with masking tape and electrical tape. Full credit to the water team at Snowy, which did a magnificent job in keeping that facility going.

Together with the local mayor and Nicole Overall, we worked through a couple of planning and action issues with that particular project. We were quickly able to determine that there was a small issue, so away we went and fixed it. A brand new \$15 million New South Wales Government-funded water treatment plant will be delivered for the people of Bombala. There are 1,700 residents in Bombala with access to clean drinking water. They have been calling for that for so long. Full credit to Nicole Overall, the new member for Monaro, and to the mayor of the Snowy Monaro Regional Council, Narelle Davis, for her advocacy in pushing hard on that issue.

We will also look at boosting and increasing the reservoir capacity of Delegate's water supply. Again, local communities there need fresh, clean running water. We are getting on with the job of delivering water infrastructure. Talking about delivering, particularly around Bombala and Delegate, if we are talking numbers,

there was an incredible 18 per cent swing to The Nationals in Bombala and another 18 per cent swing to The Nationals in Delegate. We are getting on with the job of delivering, just like we are with the billion-dollar Safe and Secure Water Program.

I was in Narrabri recently at a Local Government NSW conference to speak about water to some 92 councils. They all spoke about the Safe and Secure Water Program. One of those programs is the 270-kilometre Wentworth to Broken Hill pipeline, which delivers 37.4 megalitres of raw water per day from the Murray River to Broken Hill. That helps the member for Barwon, Roy Butler, with what he is doing out west. We had a great meeting with him the other day when he talked about a laundry list of issues that we are working on together. We are making sure we are delivering. That pipeline will ensure that fresh water is delivered to those communities. It created 150 local jobs and a pipeline workforce that was not there previously, which reached a peak of over 500 workers during construction. This is really important. Water is the lifeblood. If water is the cash, then dams are the banks. We have to build more dams. We have to make sure we keep creating the infrastructure. We are delivering. Nicole Overall from Monaro is joining a team that listens, is supportive and delivers water infrastructure in regional New South Wales.

Business of the House

BUSINESS LAPSED

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105, general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 2873 to 2898 will lapse tomorrow.

REORDERING OF GENERAL BUSINESS

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:25): I move:

That general business order of the day (for bills) No. 4 relating to the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021 have precedence on Thursday 17 February 2022.

I seek to reorder business to allow debate on the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021 to begin tomorrow. This bill will save the lives of animals in our pounds. Dogs and cats are being killed every day. Last financial year almost 7,000 cats and 2,000 dogs were killed in New South Wales pounds. Those figures are shocking, yet they are low in comparison to previous years. It is largely attributed to the pandemic, which has seen demand for companion animals soar thereby reducing the number of cats and dogs going into pounds.

Our current laws give pounds significant flexibility over when they can kill animals. This means they regularly kill healthy animals that could be rehomed—animals that shelters and rescue groups are willing to take and find good homes for. In August last year there were shocking revelations that Bourke Shire Council shot and killed 15 dogs, including a mother dog and her puppies, despite a rescue group's plans to take the dogs for rehoming. Such brutal killings are not the way a humane society should treat its homeless companion animals. With more people returning to the office and socialising again, there are fears that the number of unwanted companion animals could overwhelm council pounds.

We urgently need a system in place that ensures a minimum effort to work with shelters and rescue groups to rehome cats and dogs before they are killed. This bill is vital to saving the lives of healthy cats and dogs and ensuring that they find a loving home. The reform is urgent because homeless companion animals are being killed every day when they could be rehomed. The Opposition and The Greens have already established a position to support the bill in the upper House, and the Animal Justice Party and I are continuing conversations with the Government on amendments to the bill to get to a position where it can support the bill. Hopefully this means the bill can be dealt with efficiently. If not, there is a risk that a bill that all sides could likely support will fall off the business paper, risking the lives of thousands of companion animals.

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

Motion agreed to.

Condolences

DEATH OF MR JOHN RAPER

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (15:29): I move:

That this House extends to the family the deep sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death, on 9 February 2022, of Mr John Raper, who is noted for his remarkable contribution to the sport of Rugby League.

John Raper was an iconic and beloved New South Welshman, and one of the finest rugby league players ever to take the field. As members may know, last week the Raper family accepted the offer of a State funeral for Johnny in recognition of his remarkable contribution to the sport of rugby league. That will be a fitting tribute. Today, on

behalf of this Government and the people of New South Wales, I take the opportunity to extend my deepest sympathies to Johnny's family. To Johnny's wife, Caryl, and their three sons, Stuart, Kurt and Aaron, and to all his extended family and friends, we offer our deepest condolences. Please be assured that you are all in our prayers.

Johnny Raper was a legend in the true sense of the word. His name is synonymous with rugby league in Australia and he is among a select number of genuine contenders for the mantle of "greatest of all time". Growing up as one of nine boys in Revesby, footy was his calling from a young age. He was a prodigious junior and earned a jersey in the Newtown President's Cup side at just 17. A year later he made his first grade debut for Newtown, and the year after that he represented NSW Colts as a lock against Great Britain. From 1957 to 1958 he played 37 games for Newtown. In 1959 he began his historic tenure with St George, and would go on to become a lynchpin and leader in eight of the club's legendary 11 successive premierships. The Saints side Johnny joined had already won three first grade titles. They were renowned for their impenetrable defence, their ball skills and their fitness. They were a great side. But even among greatness, Johnny Raper stood out. He was tougher, fitter, and even more skilled; he was a natural, brimming with talent.

The great Jack Gibson said he was blessed with rare instincts and courage, a weapon in defence with his tackling and a weapon in attack with ball in hand. Johnny Raper's career with the Saints spanned a decade, with 185 games, eight premierships, 47 tries and 149 points. His name is etched into the club's history and folklore. His representative record is remarkable too: 24 caps for New South Wales, and 39 in the green and gold for Australia. In eight tests he ran out as captain, including the famous 1968 World Cup. After a final year as captain-coach with St George in 1969, Johnny stepped back from the New South Wales Rugby League competition. He joined the Newcastle competition as captain-coach with the Western Suburbs Rosellas, and he promptly led that team to victory in the 1970 grand final. He stayed with the Rosellas for two more years and then finished his distinguished playing career with two seasons at Kurri Kurri in 1973 and 1974.

Johnny Raper's achievements on the field were a testament to his talent, but they were also testament to the character of the man they called Chook. His work ethic was the stuff of legend. In a team that trained harder than any other, Johnny Raper trained hardest. As Jack Gibson put it, "There was an intensity about him. Nobody trained like he did." Roy Masters described him in *The Sydney Morning Herald* as a man who burned the candle at both ends "with a blow torch". I am told that after Frank Hyde said Johnny would not reach the age of 50, Johnny woke him up with an early phone call on his fifth birthday to tell him, "I made it." Underneath the gladiator of the sporting arena was the heart of a larrikin, loved by all. He was a charmer, with a sense of humour and a personality much larger than life.

He had a talent for making mischief, and a special affection for bowler hats, or so the story went. He earned the respect, admiration and universal praise of teammates and opponents alike, and the deep affection of friends, family and, of course, the fans. Footy was not the only life Chook knew. At 16 he had joined the NSW Police Force as a cadet, and he was confirmed as a constable in 1958. He worked general duties in the Sydney CBD and later at Kingsgrove. When he resigned from the NSW Police Force in 1963 to dedicate himself to footy full-time, he described it as one of the most difficult decisions of his life. His support for the force was unwavering throughout his lifetime, so it was only fitting that when the NSW Police Force celebrated its 150th anniversary, a picture of the young Johnny Raper in uniform turned up on the promotional materials.

After Chook called full-time on his playing career, he remained an integral part of rugby league as a coach, administrator, mentor, commentator and all-round ambassador for the game. To show how magnanimous he could be, he even stooped to lend his talent to that other code—rugby union. He coached the Lane Cove Rugby Union Football Club to victory in 1977. As you would expect, Chook's career was studded with accolades. He was named the New South Wales Rugby League's official player of the year in 1960 and 1964, and *The Sun-Herald's* player of the year in 1960, 1963 and 1967. He was the Clive Churchill medallist in 1966. In 1981 he was named as one of the first four Immortals of rugby league. In 1985 he was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame. In 2000 he was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire for his contribution to Australian sport and in 2002 he was inducted into the Australian Rugby League Hall of Fame.

Whenever the punters and pundits compile their team of the decade or team of the century, Johnny Raper is always there. In the debates among fanatics over the list of the greats, if Chook is not number one, he is never far off the pace. The awards testify to a life of extraordinary achievement—the kind of achievement that moves crowds to moments of rapture, that inspires young kids to reach for the stars, that pushes the boundaries of what we thought was possible and that raises the bar for the next generation to clear. It is the kind of achievement that brings us together in awe and admiration when talent and toil combine with something magical. It gives you goosebumps and you can hardly believe your eyes. Johnny Raper gave all those things to the people of our great State, the people of Australia and league fans all around the world for many years. When he rallied, they rallied. When he was cut down, they felt the impact and willed him back on his feet. When he hoisted the trophies high, he hoisted spirits high as well.

Frank Hyde described Chook as "the finest footballer I have seen". Australian Rugby League chairman Bill Buckley said that "his was the greatest game". To witness someone extraordinary doing extraordinary things is a blessing to cherish. Chook was all that and more to many people across our State and nation. But we recognise that, for all his achievements on the field, more than anything he was a beloved husband, dad, grandad and friend. Ultimately that loss is the most deeply felt. In Johnny's life story, *The Man in the Bowler Hat*, Caryl writes:

There are two of him; there is the wild man out there, and then there is the other man at home—a person who is loving and caring and does such incredible things that it knocks your socks off.

The recent years were challenging for Johnny and his family as he battled illness in Sydney. We hope that in the sadness of this time, there is peace and consolation that Johnny is now at rest. For a lifetime he had knocked our socks off. We mourn his loss. We honour his memory. Vale, Johnny Raper. May he rest in peace.

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (15:37): As Leader of the Opposition and member for Kogarah I pay tribute to the late Johnny Raper, who passed away on 9 February aged 82 after a long battle with dementia. He was the last surviving member of the St George Illawarra Dragons' four Immortals: Reg Gasnier, Graeme Langlands and Norm Provan who passed away in October. A larrikin and a true original, he joined the St George Dragons in 1959 after they had already won three premierships in a row. Raper joined their galaxy of stars but far from being intimidated by their success, he immediately found form and launched himself into a representative career for New South Wales and Australia. That included Australia's win over Great Britain in the so-called Swinton Massacre, winning the game 50-12 and securing the Ashes for the first time in 50 years on English soil. Veteran broadcaster Frank Hyde labelled the performance the greatest 80 minutes a footballer had ever played. He also captained Australia to victory in the 1968 World Cup Final over the French.

There is a fixture in professional sport of a stressed-out, anxious coach, captain or player studying the best move, worried about losing the lead or the match or their job and screaming at their teammates. More often than not success will not buy relief. For them, competition is almost agony. It is what drives them on to be the best. There is also another category: the natural; the player who could party all night before a big game, skip sleep, enjoy friends and the reputation of being the best player on the best team in rugby league history, then shake it off with a run on the morning of the game, turn up to the SCG in the afternoon and win man of the match. Chook Raper, the natural, did it with ease and made it look easy, even though it is not easy.

As Buzz Rothfield pointed out last week in the Telegraph, Raper was not big; at just 87 kilograms, he was not a monster on the field. Style, technique and heart had to make up the difference. There would not be too many sports stars today, with Instagram pages and PR managers, who would be thrilled with headlines about them walking through a little country town in England with nothing but a bowler hat on. The story was apparently a case of mistaken identity; Raper did not seem to mind and instead adopted the bowler as his trademark. Dementia is a horrible disease. It robs the spirit and vitality from people who suffer from it, particularly those who seemed to love life the most. Our sincerest condolences go to the Raper family: his wife, Caryl; his brother Maurie and Maurie's wife, June; and all his siblings, children and grandchildren.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Minister for Tourism and Sport, and Minister for Western Sydney) (15:40): I pay tribute to an iconic person—an immortal of rugby league, one of the original Immortals. His playing career started at Newtown before he moved to St George, where he was most well known, from 1957 through to 1969. His long and distinguished list of recognition and achievements includes over 215 games in different formats of rugby league; eight premierships; 57 tries; and 39 tests, including captaining our nation in the World Cup in 1968. In 1966 he won the Clive Churchill Medal as the best player on the field in the grand final. He coached the Cronulla Sharks in 1975 and 1976 and he coached Newtown in 1978. He was one of the original Immortals when they were established in 1981, alongside Clive Churchill, Bob Fulton and Reg Gasnier. He was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 1985. He entered the Australian Rugby League and International Hall of Fame in 2002. When rugby league named its team of the century, there probably was not much debate; John Raper probably was the first name on the list, straight into the lock position.

They called him Chook and, if you listened or spoke to any person who watched him play, they would all talk about the fact that he was not a big-bodied player. In fact, coaches spoke about him not being that big and not being very quick, but he just had the most exceptional technique. He ran in the right angles, he passed the ball at the right time, and his sense of timing was exceptional. And if you ever made a video of the technique of tackling in rugby league from 1950 through to 2022 for young kids to watch, you would include John Raper's tackling technique. From that time to today, it is still perfect. On the National Rugby League website you can see images of him playing and you can see that technique. You can also see his capacity to pass—the flick pass that would make Benji Marshall proud. This was a guy who did it all on the field.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke a little about John Raper's reputation for being able to do it at both ends. In fact, Roy Masters said that he burnt the candle at both ends. He was probably the first celebrity footballer. I wonder just how big John Raper would have been in the world of Twitter and Instagram. He was the first guy to enjoy the champagne, put the bowler hat on, take his brand into the commercial world with the "JAX the Ripper" ads and put the bowler hat to good use. This guy was a legend. His rugby league capability was truly amazing. They talk about that 50-12 test match at Swinton in the United Kingdom. Of 12 tries, Raper was involved in eight of them. It was an extraordinary achievement and a masterful game—a game of near perfection. This is a guy who enlivened the spirits of rugby league fans and particularly St George fans. He was obviously such an important figure in his family, and we offer our condolences to his entire family.

It is a unique thing to lose a person of such significant standing in the rugby league world. Just recently we have seen the loss of Norm Provan and Bob Fulton. I thank the Premier for offering John Raper's family a State service. For a period of time, we frowned on the idea of recognising people who made their contribution to the community through sport with a State funeral. It is appropriate that we recognise how important sport is to the fabric and psychology of our community. I have no doubt that through the dark days of the 1950s and 1960s, when they had ups and downs, it was people like John Raper who brought people out to the football. It was people like John Raper who allowed families to come together. His is still a name that inspires people not just in the St George district but right across the State of New South Wales. This is fundamentally what people in the sporting landscape can do, and we should never shy away from recognising them.

I stand here feeling like a bit of a fraud as a Penrith Panthers fan, but Marise happens to be the most devout St George fan that I have ever met. I am fairly certain that if you nicked a little bit of her skin and she bled, little red and white Vs would drip out of the wound. She is as passionate as they come. I think I get a photo in Marise's office, but it might depend from one week to the next whether the frame is up or down. There is a photo of Andrew Peacock in her office behind her desk. She gave a speech at his memorial service last week in Melbourne. The only other photo in her office is of her and John Raper. After 24 years of meeting people in the Federal Parliament, the one person she will always talk about and never forget meeting is John Raper. I thank Caryl, Stuart, Aaron and Kurt for sharing their family member—the absolute legend, John Raper—with our community in New South Wales.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:46): I also pay tribute to John Raper, one of rugby league's original Immortals. I join the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier and the Minister for Tourism and Sport in giving my condolences to his family, and I pay my respects to his incredible legacy. He played 24 matches for New South Wales between 1959 and 1970 and scored five tries during that period, but it was as a Kangaroo that he really excelled. He set a then record of 33 test caps in the Australian national team between 1959 and 1968 and represented Australia in six World Cup games between 1960 and 1968. For the 1968 World Cup, he captained Australia in four undefeated games, including the 20-2 victory against France in the final at the SCG.

While he made his first grade debut for Newtown in 1957, he joined the St George Dragons in 1959 as a lock forward. He played for St George until 1969, when he took over as captain-coach of the Dragons and steered his team to the semifinals. He played 185 games for St George and was one of their greatest players, if not their greatest player, in their greatest era. He played in eight consecutive New South Wales rugby league first grade grand final victories for St George and, throughout his career, he played a total of 377 first grade games and scored 96 tries.

In 1981 Johnny Raper and former test captains Clive Churchill, Bob Fulton and Reg Gasnier were recognised as the Immortals, as a way to recognise the code's best ever players. He won the Clive Churchill medal in 1966. He was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 1985 and the Australian Rugby League and International Hall of Fame in 2002. He was awarded an MBE from the United Kingdom in 2000. I have no doubt that other members today will comment that most people would say his best match was the second test at Swinton in 1963. Australia scored 12 tries in that match, of which he had a direct hand in nine. Some have gone further, including ARL chairman Bill Buckley, who said, "His was the greatest game I have ever seen."

In a major understatement, after the match, Johnny Raper said of his performance, "I just pass the ball the right way every time." Legendary rugby league caller Frank Hyde said, "When Johnny Raper was born, they not only destroyed the mould, they pulped it." Former New South Wales State of Origin coach Laurie Daley recently said of Johnny Raper:

Very sad when I heard the news. Chook was a massive figure in the game, certainly a massive figure at the Dragons. I had a bit to do with Chook when I was playing for NSW and Chook was chairman of selectors. Really enjoyed his company, he was good fun to be around. Obviously the last few years haven't been the best because he's been unwell. It's always a shock when you hear the news. In particular, I think it hits harder when they're a legend of the game, they're a massive figure. Anyone that knows rugby league or has been involved in rugby league knows the name Johnny Raper, so there'd be a lot of sad people today.

That was absolutely true. Johnny Raper attributed his success to being disciplined and was a fitness fanatic many years ahead of his time. He undertook a phenomenal amount of additional running and weights every day, which helped him achieve his personal goal of being the fittest player in the fittest team in the competition. Other speakers today have talked about that. It was an incredible commitment decades before sport science really perfected the art of knowing how much to train. He pushed himself to be the absolute best player he could be, and he was possibly the best player ever. Rugby league, and sport more generally, are part of our national psyche. Johnny Raper's dedication to fitness ensured that he became one of our best ever sportsmen.

Today we commemorate the passing of Johnny Raper and remember his enormous contribution to St George, to rugby league and to New South Wales—a commitment that continued long after he retired as a player. He was a coach, a commentator and an administrator, a public figure in our State for decades after he retired as a player. He gave so much to the game we all love, and a State funeral is absolutely a fitting gesture to reward and recognise the contribution he made to our State and nation, and the wonderful memories he left so many people. Dementia is a devastating disease and it is so hard on families, especially when you lose a larger-than-life figure. Dementia can cause people to, essentially, fade away and lose their own sense of self and their memories of their greatest achievements. It can be very challenging for family members as well. My thoughts are with his wife, Caryl; his three sons, Stuart, Kurt and Aaron; and his extended family and friends. You have lost a giant.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors) (15:51):

I acknowledge and pay my respects, and those of my family, to the late Johnny Raper, who passed away peacefully on 9 February 2022 at age 82. Affectionately known as "Chook" Raper, he was born in Revesby in south-west Sydney into a working-class family and played junior rugby league for the Camperdown Dragons before his debut at Newtown in 1957. However, Chook truly made a name for himself with the St George Dragons in 1959 as lock forward, appearing in 180 games and winning eight premierships in a row upon his arrival. He played 39 tests for Australia and represented New South Wales on 24 occasions, becoming well regarded for using pioneering tactics, such as his trademark low tackles behind the defensive line.

Chook was also well renowned as a larrikin and always loved a good time. He often stayed out all night drinking into the wee hours of the morning before going on a run, even winning the man of the match one afternoon at the SCG. He was fond of a drink and a party, and famously became known as "the man in the bowler hat". Jack Gibson, a legendary rugby league coach who played alongside Raper, described him as "small and not all that quick" however there was "an intensity about him, nobody trained like he did", and that it can truly be said that he had a "football instinct". His talent and dedication to the sport were recognised in 1981 when he was named as one of the first great Immortals of rugby league alongside some amazing players like Norm Provan, Reg Gasnier and Graeme Langlands. Moreover, he was inducted into both the international and Australian hall of fame in 2002, which is an absolutely phenomenal achievement.

Not only was Johnny an incredibly talented player, he was also a hardworking coach. He trained the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks in 1975 and 1976, and he also trained the Newtown Jets. As a member of the St George community and a lifelong supporter of the mighty Dragons, I was deeply saddened to hear of the loss of Johnny Raper. I truly believe that he made a wonderful impression on sport as a whole in our community and right across New South Wales. Growing up, Johnny Raper was a sporting hero and an icon for many aspiring rugby league players. I would like to think that his legacy has inspired many of the next generations of rugby league players to get involved in this fantastic sport.

Local rugby league clubs remain incredibly important to families within our community, encouraging critical thinking skills and demonstrating the importance of working in a team and staying fit and healthy. Team sports provide the opportunity to make lifelong friends and connections, as well as the chance to represent your local community on the field. Chook promoted these core values of rugby league while displaying tremendous skill in each and every game he played, earning his title as a legend not only in rugby league but in Australian sport as a whole. In the words of St George Illawarra and St George District chairman and my good friend, Craig Young:

Johnny Raper was an inspiration to his teammates and the entire St George organisation and is one of the key reasons why the famous Red V holds such esteem to this very day.

That sentiment truly conveys the man that Johnny Raper was. He was "a larger-than-life character on and off the field who loved the game dearly". I understand that Raper and fellow Dragons legend Norm Provan, who passed away last year in October, will be honoured by the St George Dragons in their round two clash with Penrith at Nestrata Jubilee Stadium at Kogarah—a touching tribute for two legends of the sport. I send my condolences and the condolences of my family to Johnny's wife, Caryl; his sons, Stuart, Kurt and Aaron; and his friends and former teammates. I understand this must be a difficult time for all involved. I conclude by acknowledging Johnny Raper's incredible contribution to our local community, the St George region and sport in Australia. May he rest in peace.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (15:56): As a mad St George Illawarra Dragons fan—like the member for Oatley, the member for Lakemba, the member for Wollongong and others in this place—this is a very sad time for those of us who love rugby league. Johnny Raper will go down as arguably our finest player. For those of us who love the game, watch the game and watch our kids or family members play the game, there was always something about the old footage of "Chook" Raper that we used to see. I think the member for Penrith, and Minister for Tourism and Sport, summed it up when he said that Raper's tackling technique was what you would show people now if they wanted to see how the best players in the game tackle. Probably a year or two ago I showed my young fellow, who is a mad rugby league fan and player, some old footage of Chook tackling. It was so impressive. You would not have wanted to be on the end of it. As the Leader of the Opposition said, he was not the biggest and certainly was not the fastest, but Raper will go down probably as the toughest, the fittest and one of the most determined players ever to play the game.

Many of us who lived in the Illawarra before the mighty Illawarra Steelers joined the New South Wales Rugby League competition were fans of the St George club. It was a natural club for us to follow, so we have always had a great affinity with St George. Even before the two clubs combined back in 1999, there was a strong relationship between St George and Illawarra district rugby league. All of us had great memories of watching vision of Chook playing. Certainly, he was one of the finest players who played in some of the finest teams the league has ever produced: premierships from 1959 to 1966; Kangaroos tours; New South Wales player of the year; *The Sun-Herald* best and fairest; grand final man of the match in 1966; the Australian Rugby League team of the century; New South Wales team of the century; Australian captain of the NRL teams of the 1950s to 2007 and the 1960s to 2006; and, of course, one of the first and finest Immortals—a small group of players who have played at the highest level for a sustained period in this great game called rugby league.

Obviously, Chook was not only a fantastic sportsman but also a remarkable human being. As the Premier has outlined, he served in the NSW Police Force and made an enormous contribution to keeping our community safe. He was a joker and a larrikin, and he summed up the time really well. He was the reason so many people back in that era enjoyed spending time in those packed grounds, where you could sit on a roof and stand wherever you could. There was not much consideration for public safety, but they had come to watch people like Chook. He brought them to the stands and the grounds from suburbs right across Sydney and beyond. They loved his endurance, his toughness and his tenacity. They loved his fitness and what he stood for. He gave the game his all every time he played.

Of Raper's absolute masterstroke and masterpiece in that second test at Swinton in 1963, then Australian Rugby League chairman Bill Buckley said, "His was the greatest game I have ever seen." The shadow Minister for Sport outlined that occasion when Raper launched a 12-try onslaught, with him obviously having a hand in three-quarters of them—an incredible moment and an incredible part of New South Wales Rugby League and Australian Rugby League folklore. We will remember Chook fondly and never forget him. Obviously, it is a very sad day. Members have spoken about the terrible disease that is dementia. I do not think there will be a person in this Chamber who has not had someone close to them touched by that terrible, insidious disease, which sucks the life, the vibrancy and the will to live, in many cases, out of some of the finest who walk amongst us. It is a terrible disease. He fought it hard but, as tough as he was, like many others he was taken too young and not in the way that he would have liked.

We pass on our sincerest and deepest thoughts to Caryl, Stuart, Kurt and Aaron. We remember Chook the legendary rugby league player, but they remember a great husband and father. During condolence motions, when we take time to reflect on the public achievements of great sports men and women, sometimes we forget the people who walk with them privately, who are part of their family and who have seen them in their most difficult times and in their best times. We know that this is a difficult time for the entire Raper family, and for their extended family and friends.

I thank the member for Oatley, Mark Coure, who said that the Dragons will be honouring John Raper and Norm Provan at their NRL opener against the NRL premiers, the Penrith Panthers, on 18 March. I will be there with my children. We will be barracking for our mighty Dragons, but we will also be thinking about the legacy of Chook Raper, what he has brought to our game and the way in which he inspired generations of young people—certainly my father's generation—to get out there and play rugby league, and to play the great game the way that Chook played it: hard, tough, fair, determined, always giving his best and always trying so hard, predominantly for the mighty Dragons.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (16:04): To be called an Immortal is certainly a title that few people can claim. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this motion of condolence on behalf of the people of the Ku-ring-gai electorate. I begin by extending my condolences to Caryl Raper, and to Stuart, Kurt, Aaron and other friends and family of the late rugby league Immortal Johnny Raper, who was a great natural sportsman.

Sport is incredibly important to building community, teamwork and personal character. There is no doubt that rugby league is a game that particularly requires courage and toughness, no more so than in the era in which Johnny Raper played. I remember going to my first game as a primary schooler in the early 1970s at the Sydney Cricket Ground. In those days, rugby league would fill the Sydney Cricket Ground with 30,000 spectators. That was before it had the fancy grandstands that it has today; there was a lot of grass around the ground. Regularly on a Saturday the Sydney Cricket Ground would be full of fans watching rugby league, such was the popularity of the sport at that time. There was far less protection of the players in those days. It was a game played by tough people. Johnny Raper was one of the absolute stars of that era, which is why he is being remembered in this way, with this condolence motion and a State funeral.

One of nine boys, John William Raper was born in 1939 and grew up in the rugby league heartland of Revesby, a place I spent quite a lot of time in during the 2019 election campaign. There is an excellent train service from Gordon to Revesby, which I availed myself of at the time. Johnny initially played junior rugby league for the Camperdown Dragons before transferring across to Newtown Rugby League Football Club in 1956. At the age of 16, Johnny also became a cadet in the NSW Police Force, which epitomises the way he was not only a great rugby league player but also a great citizen and somebody who was willing to perform the incredibly difficult job of being a police officer.

In 1957, at the relatively tender age of 18, Johnny made his first grade debut and played 37 games for the Newtown Bluebags, which, of course, would become the Newtown Jets. Regrettably, they are no longer in the premier competition but, hopefully, one day they may return. The following year Johnny was confirmed as a constable of police and posted to general duties in Sydney, later transferring to Kingsgrove. In a decision that he would later describe as the hardest of his life, Johnny left the police force in 1963 to focus full-time on rugby league. For those newer members of the House, 1963 was the year when the Beatles had their first number one hit. It was a long time ago and that was the era that Johnny played in. In the same year as he was sworn in as a police officer, he also debuted on the international stage, playing for New South Wales against Great Britain.

In 1959 Johnny began his magnificent career with the iconic Dragons—the white and red. During his career, he wore New South Wales blue on 31 occasions. He also wore the green and gold for Australia in 39 tests, and captained our nation on eight occasions, including during the famous 1968 World Cup victory. There can be no greater honour than to play for Australia and also captain a national sporting team, which reflects his iconic status in the sport of rugby league. One of the greatest in the rugby league paddock, Johnny Raper retired with 215 first grade games and 57 tries to his name. In 1970 he left St George and completed his playing career in the Newcastle rugby league competition. That was, of course, before the Newcastle Knights were created. One can only think that he may have strapped on the boots for the blue and red if the Newcastle Knights existed. He played three seasons as captain-coach for what was the leading club in Newcastle at the time, the Western Suburbs Rosellas. He took the club to the premiership victory in the 1970 grand final at the number one sports ground, before a packed-out stadium. I remember the time well.

Johnny Raper then went to Kurri Kurri, who poached him. The cross-town rival, Kurri Kurri, had some great teams. He played for Kurri Kurri from 1973 to 1974. He won the Harry Sunderland medal in 1964 and the Clive Churchill Medal in 1966 and was named one of the four original Immortals in 1961. He was a true inspiration. As we all know, sport in Australia is part of our rich culture. There is quite an extraordinary level of sporting talent in my electorate, whether it be league, union, soccer and so on. But there is no doubt that at the time that Johnny Raper played, rugby league was absolutely the leading football code in New South Wales. The member for Kiera spoke about its popularity in the Illawarra. When I grew up, it was enormously popular in Sydney, in the country and in regional areas, like the Hunter. Johnny Raper was a poster boy for it.

It is fair to say that my electorate of Ku-ring-gai has traditionally been a rugby union area. But I am happy to say that in recent times rugby league has started to take a bit of a foothold there. Our local Ku-ring-gai Cubs junior rugby league club is now entering its eighth season and is fast becoming one of our community's most popular sporting clubs for boys and girls. As a strong supporter and patron of the club, I am pleased that their home ground at Turramurra Memorial Park has received a major upgrade to its facilities thanks to a grant from our Government under the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund.

That upgrade is particularly important for facilitating female participation in sport because the facilities there were completely inadequate for women rugby league players and also women rugby union players who play for Old Barker Rugby Club, which was instrumental in getting that grant to upgrade the facilities. One of the great developments in rugby league is how many young women are now playing the sport and enjoying the benefits of a wonderful team sport. It builds many individual characteristics that are of great benefit later in life. The skills of getting on with people and having to work together and the personal strength and courage that a contact sport encourages is enormously important.

I am really looking forward to officially opening the upgraded facilities at Turramurra oval next month. Like all of us here, Johnny Raper had strong connections with his local community. Once his playing career finished, Johnny Raper did not hesitate to give back to the game. It is one of the characteristics of our sporting clubs throughout the State: the way in which people learn from their elders as they are a junior coming up, the way in which they play as a senior player, and then the way former players return and give back to their sport through coaching and working in the canteen. That is the way that parents support the clubs and participate. It builds a really important community focus through our sporting clubs.

Johnny Raper did that too. He lived and breathed rugby league and, for his service to that sport, was honoured as a member of the Order of the British Empire. He served with distinction as a city, State and national director and went on to coach the Cronulla Sharks and the Newtown Jets. Johnny was also inducted to the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 1985 and the Australian Rugby League Hall of Fame in 2002. Johnny Raper was an all-round good guy, who some have referred to as a larrikin. He was a tough working-class warrior and a great Australian success story. He was a Revesby boy, which in those days was a pretty humble working-class area. It is now much changed, but he was a Revesby boy made a star. Johnny gave so much to the sport and to this State. He was respected, he was much loved and he will continue to inspire many thousands of players. Vale, Johnny Raper.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:16): It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of an Australian rugby league champion, John William Raper, member of the Order of the British Empire. His nickname was "Chook". He was born on 12 April 1939 and passed away on 9 February 2022 at the age of 82. He is easily considered one of the nation's finest footballers of last century. Every year, as the Dally M Medal award approaches, we have this debate of who was the greatest, and we go through history looking at great men like Johnny Raper, Clive Churchill, Reg Gasnier and Andrew Johns. We look at all of these great players that have inspired their local communities, not just for their rugby league team. There are many young boys and girls who now look up to a sporting star, whether that is in rugby league, rugby union or cricket.

Earlier the member for Ku-ring-gai spoke about female involvement in rugby league, rugby union and cricket. Just recently we saw some excellent cricket in the Women's Ashes, with great viewing on the Seven Network. As a lock forward, Johnny earned a record of 33 test caps in the Australian team between 1959 and 1968, played six World Cup games between 1960 and 1968, and had the magnificent privilege of captaining his country in rugby league, which is an absolute honour. He captained on eight occasions from 1967 to 1968 and played in eight consecutive New South Wales Rugby Football League first grade grand final victories for the St George Dragons club.

As everyone knows, I am a big Balmain Wests Tigers supporter. I have been for many years of my life, but some years ago when I was a councillor on Kogarah council, St George was my second team. I had to support my local club. I will declare that when they played the Tigers I had mixed loyalty. The Red V is a fantastic club. I remember my father, who was a big Western Suburbs Magpies supporter and a former member for Epping, telling me stories about running onto the Sydney Cricket Ground after grand finals between Wests and St George. Back then people did not get fined for jumping onto the hallowed turf, and it was a race to get the corner post. The former member for Epping was quite a sprinter back then and was an inside centre and outside centre for Randwick. He played a bit of De La Salle rugby league in the Eastern Suburbs.

Mr Anthony Roberts: He still has a bit of pace.

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH: He still has a bit of pace for a 74-year-old. He got the corner post. He would be able to tell many stories about watching Johnny Raper in a grand final, especially when they played the Western Suburbs Magpies. John was practically born into a football family, being one of nine kids. He came from a big family, like the Perrottets and the Tudehopes, who also have big families. I am one of five and grew up in a rugby league/rugby union family. John grew up in Revesby in the electorate of East Hills and played junior rugby league for the Camperdown Dragons prior to representing Newtown in the President's Cup side in 1957. He displayed early talent and made his first grade debut for the Newtown Jets, which is now in first division—it is no longer in the NRL—when he was just 18 years old. That is quite a young age. We do see some 18-year-olds in first grade. Another great, Brad Fittler, played at 16 or 17 in the Penrith grand final many years ago in the early 1990s.

John's recognition on an international scale came in 1959, only two years after making his first grade debut, when he joined St George as a lock forward with incredible ball skills and the best defence we have ever seen. His defence was legendary. When I think of great lock forwards like him—Wayne Pearce for the Tigers, who was a magnificent defender, and people like Ray Price for Parramatta—there are some who have changed and evolved the game. Playing the game he loved, John helped St George win eight grand finals between 1959 and 1966. That is an incredible record. We talk about the records of Bradman, and Michael Jordan in basketball, but winning eight grand finals in that many years is amazing. Chook, as he was known, was tough, smart and determined. During his time with St George, he trained harder than anyone else. He was determined and was the fittest player

on the fittest team in the league. His endurance was remarkable and his strong defence and perfectly executed tackles saw him gain respect from competitors and spectators alike. Later on, Chook coached the Cronulla Sutherland Sharks from 1975 to 1976.

Mr Geoff Provest: Hear, hear!

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH: We obviously have a few Sharkie fans in the Chamber, being the member for Tweed and the member for Heathcote, who is in the chair. We have a few others, I think, including the member for Cronulla, the member for Miranda and others who are in the Chamber or upstairs in their offices. John Raper was then the coach of Lane Cove rugby union—he made the switch.

Mr Anthony Roberts: Hear, hear!

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH: I acknowledge the member for Lane Cove and Minister for Planning, who is at the table. I confess I did win a semifinal and knocked out Lane Cove in a suburban grand final when I was playing for Beecroft. I was suspended for 10 minutes at one point, but I was lucky I did not get sent off because I would not have been able to play in the grand final against Blue Mountains. John coached Lane Cove and helped them win the Judd Cup, which is the Sydney suburban competition just under the Sydney Shute Shield. In 1978 he was the caretaker coach of the Newtown Jets, following the resignation of Paul Broughton. John's life post-retirement continued to be a hive of activity. He was always in high demand as a guest speaker on various TV and radio talk shows and he even did an advertisement for the Liberal Party. I fully endorse that the great man did an advert for the Liberal Party. He was awarded a Member of the Order of the British Empire and was named an Immortal of rugby league in 1985. He was appointed as the Australian test selector in 1988 and was a representative of NSW Rugby League.

Chook graces the walls of both the Sport Australia Hall of Fame and the Australian Rugby League Hall of Fame. In 2008 he was on a list of Australia's 100 greatest players, commissioned by the NRL and the ARL. In my electorate of Wollondilly, the efforts of Johnny Raper and what he has achieved for rugby league will not be forgotten. His endurance was remarkable in the days when footballers played 80 minutes straight. These days we interchange a certain number of players, so the bigger fellows on the field, like me, can take a breather and get back on. When I was playing A-grade rugby league, there was unlimited interchange, so we had quite a big forward pack. We could go on field, go hard for a time, come off for a breather and then go back on. But back then Johnny Raper was an 80-minute player. Lock forwards are roving defence players, they cover tackling, and they are in ball play as well with fullbacks. They are the fittest players on the field. That is why people like Johnny Raper, the great Wayne Pearce and other lock forwards like Bradley Clyde are the fittest, strongest and best all-round players on the field.

Frank Hyde declared in 1995, "When Johnny Raper was born, they not only destroyed the mould, they pulped it." In Wollondilly we breed some of the toughest players in rugby league and hope to be inspired by the legend of Johnny Raper. With the indulgence of the House, I will mention some of my local clubs. The Southern Highlands Storm was set up last year. It is in group 7 rugby league and covers part of the Southern Highlands down to the Illawarra region. We also have group 6 rugby league. Every year I have the pleasure of presenting the first grade premiership shield at Campbelltown oval, where my beloved Wests Tigers play. The Thirlmere-Tahmoor Roosters have been the reigning premiers in group 6 for the past two seasons. They had a pretty tough time in October last year when a cyclone went through Thirlmere and ripped up the roof of the newly renovated female change rooms. Hopefully that will get sorted out pretty quickly.

The Mittagong Lions are a long-established team in the area. The Oakdale Workers Club was in debt only a few years ago and Macarthur FC, the A-League soccer club, came in and bought out their debt. They spent about \$1 million renovating the club, so it will not only be a supporter base for Macarthur FC but also help the Oakdale Workers. The Oaks Tigers were in a grand final two years ago. The Camden Rams, in the Camden electorate, crosses over with the Macarthur and Wollondilly regions. The Picton Magpies were premiers a few years ago. The Appin Dogs, the Warragamba Wombats, the Bargo Bunnies and the South West Goannas are all in Wollondilly. A lot of the teams do so much for the community, not only in rugby league. The Bowral Blacks rugby union club hosted a Waratahs and Brumbies match only a few weeks ago, which was the first time since the club was rejuvenated through grants from the State Government. They are doing wonders for the community and they are bringing people to the region. Johnny Raper, rest in peace, and may perpetual light shine upon you.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:28): I feel very honoured to pay tribute to the great Johnny Raper. When I managed the Georges River Sailing Club, which is adjacent to Kogarah, often a lot of the current or previous legends, including Johnny Raper, would come down. I had the pleasure of meeting him, Graeme Langlands, Billy Smith, Craig Young, Robert Stone and others. They are all legends. One of the things that always struck me was the amount of attention they paid to the younger players. They were always there in guidance. They were always there to say a few words. But it would be remiss of me if I did not inform the House about why

St George are called the Dragons. The legend of Saint George and the dragon tells of Saint George, who died in 303, taming and slaying a dragon that demanded human sacrifices. The story goes that the dragon originally extorted a tribute from the villagers. The oldest known record of Saint George slaying the dragon was found in a Georgian text of the eleventh century. I think that says it all. The St George Dragons won approximately 11 grand finals in a row. Being an old rugby league player, which I was not very good at at the best of times, I actually started my career playing for the Taren Point team, in the white and the red V.

Mr Ryan Park: That is a long way from Tweed, mate.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: That is a long way from everywhere, yes. In fact, I did have the career honour of becoming best and fairest. For the information of the member for Keira, I think that was in C grade, so one would say I did not get a call-up. I was a pretty mad fan of St George until the Cronulla Sharks came into being, and then I moved. But as a young fella I knew Norm Provan and I went to school with some of his kids and so on. I think Johnny should be remembered for what he was: a real legend. He was a genius on the field. He promoted the game.

St George Leagues Club, some members may or may not know, used to host the oyster growers' luncheon, which was very famous. At that time, I think the chief sponsor was Penfolds wines. We had legends there—previous legends, current legends and future legends. Let's say it was a fairly long lunch. Seeing those guys out in the early mornings, coaching young kids, going to school—my father was actually the deputy principal of Carlton South Public School. For those who do not know, that is just across the road from the Kogarah Oval. I can remember a couple of times Johnny would get free parking. The school P&C would raise money during a game by opening up the park beside the school and charging people to park their car. Johnny would always get a free car park right near the front entrance, which I think was very well deserved.

We go right back in history with St George. They were legendary. I think they set a great deal of the current rules, like that no five-tackle rule. They just blitzed it. I can always remember one of the other legendary callers: Frank Hyde; Tiger Black—remember Tiger Black?—and his daughter, Lyn, who I think went out with Changa Langlands for a little bit; and Peter Black, who went on to have a very illustrious career in Ainsworth poker machines. Those sporting legends should be remembered with honour. It was a tough time. I remember a good friend of mine, Graham Eadie, who was a Manly player.

Mr Guy Zangari: Fullback.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Absolutely. He kicked the winning goal against Cronulla in the grand final. We will never forgive him for that—I recognise the member for Manly for that. He used to often tell me that back in those days it was about \$200 a win and \$100 a loss, I think. I am probably showing my age, but as a young fella, to get an autograph from some of those legendary footballers, we would wait out on the road because they would all work on the local garbage truck. This was in the days when we had the silver can. My father used to complain they always dented it; every time we bought a new one they would dent it. As young kids, we would run behind the garbage truck to get an autograph. Times have changed, football wages have changed, and I do not think they will be out there collecting garbage any time soon. Johnny was a legend. Condolences to his family and to the whole football community, because I think he made a great contribution and his memory lives on, really, with it all. Being an old Taren Point man, I used to run out with pride wearing that white jersey with a red V, thinking I was one of the local heroes. I hope you rest in peace, Johnny. You have certainly left a legacy both here and now and into the future.

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

Community Recognition Statements

TAMIKA DEAN

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (16:35): Local Mulgoa resident Tamika Dean is a talented young artist in my electorate, who has quickly become popular for her artworks and is in demand for her work. It began in 2019, when Tamika completed her first commissioned artwork for a family friend. After just a few short years Tamika now has plans to start her own small business to further promote her work and engage in her passion. She has had an interest in art from a young age and, with the support of family and friends, has taken what was once just an interest and made it her occupation. This year she will begin studying a visual arts and nursing degree to continue to explore her passion in art and experiment with new mediums, such as pottery and glassblowing. I congratulate Tamika and give her my very best for her future endeavours in the art world. I applaud her for pursuing her passion and bringing joy to the community.

KEIRA ELECTORATE CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (16:36): I give my heartfelt thanks for the generous donations that individuals, businesses and community groups made to my annual Christmas toy drive. It has been a difficult two years, with the global pandemic on our doorstep. Countless people have lost their sources of income and face financial pressure that no-one wants to experience. Along with this, there has been a spike in people fleeing domestic violence. These are the people who this toy drive really helped, and it was our largest ever. I make special mention of the following groups and charities that helped put a smile on many faces: GongLUG, Corrimal Lions Club, Wests Illawarra, Woonona Bulli RSL, Corrimal RSL Club, Woonona Bulli Bushrangers, Tarrawanna Post Office, Little Fig Cafe, Bulli Craft Group, Little Zak's, Big Fat Smile in Bulli, Big Fat Smile in Corrimal, Mount Ousley Public School and Bungalow OOSH. I also thank the hundreds of individuals who generously made donations to my annual toy drive.

123 TIX

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (16:37): A big congratulations to Terry Wilcher and the team at 123 Tix, which won the coveted Gold Rhino after being named Dubbo's most outstanding business at the recent Dubbo Chamber of Commerce Rhino Awards. The team also claimed Silver Rhinos for excellence in innovation and excellence in microbusiness. It is an amazing achievement, given the events industry has been one of the hardest hit by COVID-19. Terry and the team made a conscious decision to see it as an opportunity. The team helped other businesses transition to hosting virtual events and, when events started up again, 123 Tix was one of the first platforms able to redeem the Discover vouchers for online ticket sales. 123 Tix handled last year's sold-out Rabbitohs-Panthers NRL game in Dubbo. Souths were certainly impressed, because they have now got 123 Tix managing ticket sales for this weekend's trial match against the Cowboys in Cairns. The crew also helped local show societies take advantage of the vouchers, and Dubbo Show had its largest ever crowd over three days. Well done, Terry and the team. Keep up the amazing work.

LOGAN SHARPE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:38): I congratulate Logan Sharpe, who was awarded a medallion in the 2022 Young Citizen of the Year Awards in Fairfield for the Australia Day Community Awards and Citizenship Ceremony. Logan is a student of Bossley Park High School, where he is the 2022 vice-captain. He acts as a role model for younger students and is actively involved in promoting the school spirit through activities which enable the students to collaborate in a positive manner. In 2021 Logan was involved in a team called "The Daily Specials", which entered and won the Game Changer Challenge, a competition run by the Department of Education. The team's idea to build a community garden with an interactive screen which would share recipes helped bond students over food. In 2021 Logan was the school ambassador for the Mullets for Mental Health campaign with the Black Dog Institute. He is also enthusiastic about promoting a healthy lifestyle amongst students through sport. I congratulate Logan once again on receiving the medallion and wish him all the best in future endeavours.

MICHAEL PONTICELLO

Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (16:40): I offer a huge congratulations to Michael Ponticello, who has won the under-18 Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association singles championship. Michael is a student of Picnic Point High School and has been playing tennis since 2014 at the age of 10. Following a leukaemia diagnosis in 2015, Michael took a year off from tennis. He is now back and playing competitive tennis in division one for the Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association and coaches children in tennis at lessons held on Wednesdays. Michael's love of tennis is an inspiration and stems from his love of the game and from a Make-A-Wish experience with the great Roger Federer.

ABBHEY EGAN

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (16:40): Out of indescribable grief, Abbey Egan has become a warrior for compassion and choice. Abbey is one of the faces of Dying with Dignity, campaigning for the legalisation of voluntary assisted dying, spurred on by the horrific passing of her partner, Jayde, from cervical cancer. From that terrible experience, Abbey has drawn on her strength and courage to speak for those who never had the choice and to support those who are facing terminal illness and want to have a choice. Over and over again she has told her and Jayde's story to anyone who will listen, including lawmakers and the media. She has rallied at events and driven a petition that received tens of thousands of signatures. I have no doubt that Abbey's efforts have instituted a change.

THE HILLS SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:41): I recognise the terrific community at The Hills Sports High School for educating students right across the Seven Hills electorate and beyond. I acknowledge and congratulate the 2022 student leadership team. Well done to school captains Joshua Vicary and Jessika Nash, and vice-captains Tallara Bamblett and Jayden Brien. I also congratulate prefects Leila Amituanai, Mia Chalcraft, Kimmy Manan, Sophia Mavros, Aiyana Paterson, Nimo Vaitusi, Tariq Kassem, Billy Scott and Levi Smith-Mann. It was great to see the parents of each student award them with their badges during the ceremony. The Hills Sports High School is an outstanding school with a proud community. I thank the student leaders of 2022 for their dedication and service to their school community and wish them all the best for the year ahead.

FLY THE FLAG CAMPAIGN

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (16:42): I congratulate Kamilaroi woman and Dulwich Hill local Cheree Toka on her successful campaign to have the Aboriginal flag flown on the Sydney Harbour Bridge year-round. Cheree's Fly the Flag campaign began in 2017 and called on the Government to fly the flag from the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge year-round, not just the 19 days a year it is currently flown. Cheree launched a petition that attracted 10,000 signatures and 177,780 digital signatures, and also crowdfunded over \$45,000 to construct a third flagpole when the State Government cited flag protocol as the reason the flag could not be flown. Finally, the Premier announced on Saturday 5 February that the Aboriginal flag would be flown on the bridge each and every day of the year. This is an historic and significant win. It places an enduring symbol of First Nations Australians at the heart of our city and serves as a powerful testament to what one woman can achieve against all odds to further recognise her people. I congratulate and thank Cheree Toka.

DUNGOG SHIRE COUNCIL AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (16:43): I congratulate the winners of the Dungog Shire Council Australia Day Awards 2022. I congratulate Marion Stuart on being named Citizen of the Year for her work across a range of local organisations, from the Dungog District Chamber of Commerce to Dungog Regional Tourism and Meals on Wheels. Young Citizen of the Year was presented to Dungog High School year 11 students Aaron Fisher, Alec Grainger, Jack Boyton, Jacob Rooke, Aaron Whelan, Cooper Edwards and Ryan Vella. This inspiring group of young men completed 78,565 push-ups in the Push-Up Challenge to raise \$20,000 and community awareness about mental health issues. Darcy Booth received the Junior Sports Person of the Year Award. Andrew Flannery was named Senior Sports Person of the Year. Fred Longbottom was recognised with the Volunteer Service to the Community Award. Dan Lyons was awarded the Environmental Citizen of the Year title. The recipients are to be commended for their community work within the Dungog community.

COMMANDER CHRIS WARREN

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:44): I congratulate NSW SES Kiama Unit Commander Mr Chris Warren, who was recently presented with an Emergency Services Medal at Government House in Sydney. Chris was awarded this medal as part of the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2021. A member of the NSW SES since 1982, Mr Warren is one of the original rescue operators of the Kiama Unit and his passion and dedication to honing his skills in rescue can be seen through his participation in competitions such as the National Disaster Rescue Competition and the Australasian Road Rescue Organisation. Chris was part of the team that won the National Disaster Rescue Competition back in 2015. Once again, congratulations and well done to Chris Warren on receiving this thoroughly deserved recognition and medal. He is part of a great team of SES volunteers at Kiama. I am sure that all members of the House will join with me in congratulating the great work of the SES across our State.

HARRINGTON AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:45): I recognise the junior finalists of the 2022 Harrington Australia Day celebrations for their exemplary service to community and their sporting accomplishments over the past 12 months. It was a pleasure to attend the event, held at the Harrington Community Centre, to acknowledge these amazing leaders and mentors who inspire, motivate and contribute to our society. The finalist for Junior Sportsperson of the Year was Mia Wells from Harrington Public School. Mia is a sporting sensation who displayed immense talent in the swimming pool throughout 2021 with her success at regional competitions. This year there were three finalists in the Junior Citizen of the Year category. I congratulate each of them on their achievements displaying leadership and community spirit. Keiara Williams was recognised for her contributions at Harrington Public School, reflecting the values of respect, responsibility and personal best. Stephanie Ashe was acknowledged for academic excellence and her willingness to help others through her kind-hearted and sincere approach. Chevy Stankovski was honoured for his conscientiousness in all school-based activities and for his optimistic outlook on life. Congratulations to all our nominees.

DISTRICT COMMANDER JOHN GRALTON

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:46): I acknowledge Mr John Gralton, APM, District Commander for Tuggerah Lakes Police District, who has made the decision to retire after 34 years of service in the NSW Police Force. Mr Gralton started his career in 1988 and has served as commander in the police force for the past 13 years. Throughout his career he has served in the Tuggerah Lakes, Newcastle, Central Hunter and Hunter Valley commands. Mr Gralton has also spent time in several other professional policing roles, even serving as the commissioner's chief of staff in December 2019. More recently, he was a local emergency operations controller, overseeing the response to floods and coastal erosion in 2020 and 2021. His conduct of those operations drew widespread community praise. I personally thank Mr Gralton for the many years he has spent serving not only The Entrance community but also the people of New South Wales. Ensuring the safety and security of the Australian public is an important responsibility and Mr Gralton should be commended for his tireless efforts providing this assurance. On behalf of The Entrance electorate, I thank Mr Gralton and wish him the best of luck and an enjoyable, well-earned retirement.

VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARDS

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (16:47): Late last year I presented Vaucluse citizenship awards to local students who showed outstanding leadership at their local schools. I congratulate those students today, including year 6 Galilee Catholic School student Kayla Martin, who won the School Leadership award; year 6 Rose Bay Public School student Chrisanthi Lahana—School Values award; year 6 Bellevue Hill Public School student Joshua Lore, whom I met along with mum Allyson last week—Citizenship award; year 4 Bellevue Hill Public School student Rachel Joffe, whom I met with mum Caryn—Citizenship award; year 1 Bondi Public School student Willow James—Citizenship award; and year 6 Bondi Public School student Olive Tsewang, who visited me at my office with dad Tenzing—Citizenship award. I wish these impressive students good luck with school this year and I hope to visit their schools soon.

ELIZABETH LLOYD, AO

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:48): I acknowledge the incredible work of Ms Elizabeth Lloyd, AO, a wonderful eastern suburbs local who has been made an Officer of the Order of Australia. Ms Lloyd has been recognised for distinguished service to the community, particularly to women and refugees, through a range of social welfare initiatives. Ms Lloyd is a founder of the White Ribbon Foundation, a previous president of UN Women Australia and a previous chair of the Violence against Women Advisory Group. Among many current appointments, she is the chair of the Research Fund Management Committee of the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. Her contributions to the life and future of women in Australia are truly remarkable, and her record of supporting the rights of refugees and those seeking asylum in Australia stands proudly beside that. I congratulate Elizabeth and thank her for everything she has done.

TREVOR READING

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Lands and Water, and Minister for Hospitality and Racing) (16:49): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Tamworth resident Mr Trevor Reading, who celebrated 50 years of service to QantasLink on 25 November 2021. Trevor's career with QantasLink began in Tamworth when, at just 17, Trevor decided that it was time to earn a wage and saw an opportunity advertised at the local airport. As a young man in the mid-eighties, Trevor moved to Sydney, continuing his work in the aviation industry. In Sydney Trevor's fairytale story came true, meeting his wife, Kylie, on the Sydney airport tarmac. Their marriage blossomed and brought two children, Joshua and Mitchell. Before too long, a return to Tamworth called in 1998. Back in Tamworth, Trevor became one of the most senior engineers in the hangar—a role in which he has excelled. Colleagues and apprentices will tell you that Trevor's advice, humour and mentorship sound loudly across the hangar. I thank Trevor and congratulate him on his 50 years of dedicated service.

SWANSEA BELMONT SURF LIFESAVERS

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (16:50): I acknowledge Kye Taylor and Bella Williams of Swansea Belmont Surf Life Saving Club, who made their professional debut in the Nutri-Grain IronMan and IronWoman series at North Bondi Beach. Kye and Bella are experienced athletes who have been involved in nippers' programs from a very young age. They are passionate about the sport and have continuously worked hard over the years to reach their goal of competing at a professional level against some of their idols. Their involvement in surf lifesaving has also enabled them to develop important skills to help keep beachgoers safe. Kye and Bella are outstanding athletes, who are role models to other young aspiring athletes not only in the Swansea electorate but also Australia wide. I congratulate Kye and Bella on making their professional debut and wish them all the best for future competitions. Madam Deputy Speaker, like you, we always acknowledge our surf lifesavers. They keep our beaches safe, which is quintessentially Australian. We love what they do.

LUCRECIA CARTER

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (16:51): Lucrecia Carter from St Benedict's Catholic College was recognised in the annual First in Course list for design and technology in the 2021 HSC. I congratulate her on that achievement. Design and technology requires a major work, which was made more difficult by the COVID-affected year. Lucrecia's major work involved the design of functional, affordable and sustainable living for remote Indigenous communities. Her flawless result is no doubt the outcome of the commitment, hard work and dedication that Lucrecia has put in throughout her education. I am sure Lucrecia will be successful in any field of study or employment that she may choose to pursue in the future, and I wish her great success in whatever she chooses to do.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN LE MOTTE

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (16:52): I pay tribute to John Le Motte, who passed away on 29 November last year. I think it is fair to say that John had a number of loves: his wife, Helen, their children and grandchildren, the Catholic Church, the Australian Labor Party and cricket. John was a stalwart of the local St Peter Chanel Catholic Church. Many parishioners will know him from the plate collection, but he also visited the sick in hospital, helped the church raise funds—for example, for its new air conditioning and solar panels—and was an integral part of the church community. He was also a great lover of cricket. I managed to combine that with his other love, the Australian Labor Party, by making the fortuitous decision to doorknock for preselection during an Ashes tour. There was more discussion about cricket than politics on that day. John Le Motte was not only a voracious reader of *The Sydney Morning Herald*; his name may ring a bell as a regular contributor to the letters to the editor page. I am led to believe he did that as a competition with a letter-writing friend. John will be greatly missed by the entire Labor family, who revered him as a good, decent bloke. His name was a byword for politeness and courtesy.

FREEMAN'S REACH SCHOOL OF ARTS

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:53): Recently I was pleased to announce a grant of \$110,681 from the New South Wales Government under the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund to maintain the Freeman's Reach School of Arts building. The improvements include construction of a retaining wall, fencing, tree pruning, painting and the installation of a fire hydrant. This important Hawkesbury asset has a rich history. It was opened on 11 April 1901 following a land grant to the Mechanics' Institutes by the New South Wales Government. In true Hawkesbury spirit, the hall was built by volunteers. The hall has since been used for countless and varied occasions, including locals coming together to farewell brave soldiers as they headed to war, weddings and birthday celebrations, and training classes and assemblies. I congratulate and commend Glenda Chapman for her efforts in preparing and submitting the application, and I thank her for her contribution to our community. I have no doubt that this building will continue to be a positive asset of strong value to locals and businesses from afar.

NOVEMBER SHEEHAN

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (16:55): I recognise November Sheehan, who was recently named Port Stephens Citizen of the Year. November has made a meaningful contribution to our community during the COVID pandemic. When government restrictions first descended, November created a penpal network to connect aged-care residents, who were hit particularly hard with social isolation. As aged-care facilities were forced to lock down, November built an army of volunteers who wrote letters and postcards to residents. At the time November said:

The ultimate goal of the group is to bring a shiny star into someone's day using the handwritten word. By writing a letter, sending a postcard or making a card, it shows this is a community that cares.

Last year I accompanied November to Regis Aged Care in Corlette to help deliver a package of letters. The gratitude was obvious. In fact, dozens of residents stood on their balconies and sang *You Are My Sunshine*. On behalf of the people of Port Stephens, I congratulate November on becoming Port Stephens Citizen of the Year and thank her for her caring contribution to our community in these trying times.

DR VINCENT ROCHE

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (16:56): I recognise Dr Vincent Roche from the Southern Highlands in the electorate of Goulburn. In 2021 Dr Roche was recognised with the Rural Medical Service Award for his service in Moss Vale, Bundanoon and Bowral. The Southern Medical Centre in Moss Vale is where Dr Roche began work in 1986 and is alongside the hospital where he also practised in 2020. It was one of the practices demonstrating an exemplary service despite the COVID-19 pandemic. I also publicly acknowledge Dr Roche's contribution, dedication and hard work in supporting the community within the medical field. I thank Dr Roche for his service.

TENTERFIELD SHOW SOCIETY

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (16:56): I congratulate everyone involved in the Tenterfield Show Society on their successful holding of the 2022 show. I was honoured to be at the show with them on Saturday 5 February. It was a great experience to get to the show and see the best that Tenterfield has to offer. This year there was free entry into the show, which was a great win for locals. I strongly lobbied for this as the local member, and it was paid for by State Government funding. As always, the show was diverse, with something for everyone. I thank the entire show society, including patrons Mac Fraser and John Landers, president Matthew Duff, vice-presidents Peter Petty and John Willcocks, honorary secretary Kim Rhodes and treasurer Rosie Carter, for their tireless organising efforts. I give a big congratulations to 2022 Tenterfield Show Young Woman of the Year Alyssa Dorward, who has an impressive resume as 2021 Tenterfield Junior Showgirl and 2016 Tenterfield Miss Mini Showgirl. I also congratulate runner-up Kiara Charlton.

ST CLAIR AND DISTRICT MEN'S SHED

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (16:57): Today I recognise a good and hardworking community organisation that continues to do its best to bring together the local community by supporting one another and combating mental health issues. The St Clair and District Men's Shed has partnered with Australia Post to launch a new project, providing lunch for local men every fortnight in an effort to combat mental health issues and other challenges faced by the community. This project has been supported and promoted by local police, ambulance and fire brigades, as they frequently come into contact with members of the community who might benefit from the support that the men's shed provides. In addition, the men's shed recently made a \$1,000 contribution to the Nepean Hospital Children's Ward. Organisations such as the St Clair and District Men's Shed highlight the good in people and the benefits that are gained when members of the community look after one another. I am proud to recognise the work of the St Clair and District Men's Shed and, as its proud patron, I will always do my best to support it.

NSW POLICE FORCE

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:58): It was wonderful to attend the NSW Police Force legacy Christmas luncheon at Doltone House in Pyrmont on Friday 10 December 2021. For the majority of families Christmas is a joyous time of year. However, for police legatees and their families the holiday season can be difficult. It is at Christmas time that the loss of a loved one can be felt most acutely. That is why every year the Police Legacy board of directors invite police legatees to gather together to enjoy a wonderful Christmas luncheon. It is a fantastic opportunity for police legatees to reconnect and provide support to each other. It is also a great opportunity for police legatees to form new friendships. The Christmas luncheon 2021 was a fantastic event that provided a supportive community for all police legatees, young and old. I thank Detective Superintendent Gary Merryweather, the chairperson of Police Legacy, for running a successful and enjoyable event that supports our NSW Police Force legatees. I also thank Police Legacy for the great work it does all year round to provide support for widows, widowers, partners and dependent children of deceased New South Wales police officers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It being 5.00 p.m. the public interest debate will now proceed.

Public Interest Debate

WORKER PROTECTION

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:00): I move:

That this House recognises the tireless efforts, sacrifices and commitment of our essential workers and calls on the Government to withdraw the Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2021.

It is probably one of the recent government briefings from the customer service department, so let us not forget that this workers compensation bill is about removing the very important protection of workers compensation for our fantastic healthcare workers. Yesterday we saw thousands of nurses and midwives protesting outside Parliament. I will read from a government briefing on its website: "How to know if your employee contracted COVID-19 at work. If your employee was exposed to someone in the workplace who has tested positive to COVID-19, it should be assumed they may have caught COVID-19 at work. This may include other employees, customers or visitors who were in the workplace before they developed symptoms or tested positive." I am happy to table that document. It is a government brief and it is on the SafeWork NSW website. The workers compensation bill is soon to be debated in the upper House, and we had an inquiry and we have heard all the evidence. Over 900 people responded to a survey that shows that over 90 per cent do not support the removal of this very important workers compensation protection.

NSW Labor is eternally grateful to the heroes of the pandemic and will continue to fight until this bill is defeated in the upper House. We will stand by their side. Their hard work, sacrifice and perseverance will not be

in vain under NSW Labor. I also acknowledge the crossbench in this place, which is very supportive. It, too, did not support the terrible bill when it was last debated in this House. I urge the crossbench in the upper House to reject the bill. I have heard that the Premier said, "Oh, you know, we're happy to look at amendments." He has not said that before. Is this the pressure of the by-elections? I note some of the booths in Willoughby had a 20 per cent or 21 per cent swing. How many public sector workers live in Willoughby? How many workers live in Bega?

Let us not forget that the Labor Party has won the Bega by-election. That is an historical moment. Why? Because this Government neglected to deal with major health issues in Bega, Monaro and Jerrabomberra. They are historic results, showing massive swings against the Government. I will read some statements a bit later. Just before question time I joined an online forum with workers from western Sydney. I would be very worried if I were a western Sydney Liberal MP. I would be very worried about the booths in those electorates, because Labor will be holding street stalls and leading the charge with the workers in those electorates to make people aware that Liberal MPS voted against their workers compensation protections.

I joined that online forum, which was organised by Unions NSW with workers from across New South Wales, including workers in Queanbeyan and western Sydney, to listen to their deep concerns about the removal of this very important protection. I heard from Joe. Joe is a hospital assistant from Queanbeyan and a member of the Health Services Union. His role includes infectious cleaning, including COVID-19 cleaning. So he is in direct contact with the virus, which makes him and his family vulnerable to exposure. Joe said that he and his colleagues are anxious and worried about giving the virus to their families—which creates severe mental strain—but they are continuing to work double and triple shifts. He has one message for the Government: Protect the workers who have continued to protect Australians, especially here in New South Wales.

For over 10 years, Tess has worked as a paramedic for Ambulance NSW in Sydney's south-west. To protect her family—particularly her elderly family—she has not seen them for over 12 months. Her family live 45 minutes from her. Tess described every step she takes to make sure that she protects her patients and her work colleagues. She is appalled by the questioning that she and her colleagues continue to get when they are exposed to COVID-19. "Did you breach PPE? Have you been out anywhere?" The assumption is that they are responsible for their exposure to the virus. Tess orders her groceries online and, as I said, takes every precaution to ensure that her parents are not at risk of contracting COVID. Despite being one of the most trusted professions, this Government does not trust paramedics. Her message is simple: The Government has forgotten the human side of this pandemic.

The repealing of the presumption will instil in the minds of all workers how this Government has once again let them down. Workers live in the electorates of those opposite. They live in Riverstone, Camden and the Hawkesbury. They will come after those opposite at the ballot box. Labor will remind them every single day between now and 2023. We will doorknock and hold street stalls. We will be reminding every single person that this Government has let down the health workers, the council workers, the paramedics and the retail workers. Government members said to those workers in this place, "Oh, thank you, we're grateful." Then they voted against them. But we will see the results at the ballot box. Those opposite got a taste of it on Saturday, and if the Government looks at its results in Willoughby—

Dr Hugh McDermott: And that is just the entree.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: Absolutely. I acknowledge that interjection. [*Time expired.*]

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (17:07): First, I acknowledge the incredible work of all essential workers in New South Wales. I thank every single one of them for their commitment to helping the people of New South Wales get through the past two years in battling the COVID-19 pandemic. I say this from personal experience; one of my sisters is a midwife in a public hospital and another is a paramedic. Whilst I recognise and support the amazing efforts of our essential workers over the past two years, I do not support this motion to withdraw the Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2021. After all, the protections were enacted at the beginning of the pandemic and as we come out of COVID-19 it makes perfect sense to remove them.

The bill seeks to make an amendment to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 to ensure the effectiveness and viability of the workers compensation scheme for workers and employees in New South Wales. In May 2020 this Parliament passed the COVID-19 Legislation Amendment (Emergency Measures) Bill 2020 in response to the emerging public health emergency. These changes included an amendment to the Workers Compensation Act 1987 to make it easier for workers in certain types of employment to establish the link between their work and contracting COVID-19, and therefore enable them to make a workers compensation claim.

This Government is committed to maintaining a healthy and competitive workers compensation market in New South Wales that is sustainable for the employers and workers of the future. It is worth noting that when it was introduced in 2020, the presumptive legislation did not create a new entitlement to compensation; it merely

reversed the usual onus of proof. Rather than workers having to prove that the disease is work related, the disease is presumed to be work related. The bill does not aim to take away the rights of workers to make workers compensation claims, as the Opposition suggests. Rather, this proposed amendment acknowledges the needs of customers and stakeholders of the workers compensation scheme more generally. Removing the presumption will ensure that the New South Wales workers compensation system is not overrun by an influx of potential COVID-19 notifications and claims.

Removing the presumption, and thereby reducing the impact of the predicted influx, will allow insurers to focus on maintaining good claims management practices with a clear focus on improving return-to-work outcomes that we know injured workers want and need. The bill aims to provide certainty to the workers compensation scheme. The workers compensation insurance market needs to be competitive and fair. Removal of the COVID-19 presumption will go some way to achieving that. It is also worth noting that the existing COVID-19 presumption is the only one in Australia with such broad coverage and is wider than in any other identified jurisdiction worldwide. Within Australia, the only jurisdiction that has something comparable to New South Wales is Western Australia, and that coverage is limited to health workers. Victoria does not have a specific COVID-19 presumption. Under Victorian legislation, a disease such as COVID would be regarded as being due to the nature of employment if that employment gave rise to a significantly greater risk of the worker contracting the disease.

Even if we look outside New South Wales and outside of Australia to what has been done internationally, only a handful of jurisdictions have deemed COVID-19 an occupational disease. Further, the majority of those, including Argentina, Italy, and Illinois and Alaska in the United States of America, limit coverage to health workers and first responders. In British Columbia in Canada, there is a presumption but it is limited by the requirement that the worker's employment involves a risk of infection significantly greater than that of the public at large, and that exposure occurs during the time and within the geographical areas defined in the applicable British Columbia public health or emergency notice. The presumption in New South Wales is the only one with such broad coverage in Australia and it is wider than in any other identified jurisdiction worldwide. I do not support the motion and for the reasons that I have outlined, the Government is removing the presumption that was not present pre-COVID.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:12): I am pleased to support this public interest debate in support of our essential workers in New South Wales. If there is one piece of legislation that can show how two-faced this Government is, it is the Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2021. Every day essential workers had to go onto the front line of the pandemic. Whilst the Government is praising how wonderful our nurses and paramedics are, it is putting through a compensation amendment bill that will take away those workers' right to presumption for workers compensation. It is absolutely unbelievable that during a pandemic a government would give a kick in the guts to those workers who are needed the most. It is absolutely incredible. The moment this Government got the chance, it screwed over frontline workers and essential workers by introducing this legislation. It is absolutely disgraceful. It is grubby. This is a grubby Government and it is on the nose for the people of New South Wales. Last weekend showed that.

The Bega by-election was very much fought on health care. It was the number one thing. I know members of this Chamber were there. It is a beautiful part of the world. No-one raised any Federal issues with me the entire time I was there. It was all about State issues, and the number one issue was health care and the fact that the hospitals are basically not coping. Added to that, when a frontline essential worker gets sick from COVID, the Government says, "No, don't worry about it—and obviously you have to prove to us where you got this." It turns around the whole presumption of where they get sick. If you are a nurse in an ICU ward and get COVID, you then have to prove that you did not get it in a social or other environment.

All the nurses and health professionals I know have not had much of a social life in the last two years, that is for sure. They are too busy constantly working and going on the front line. My wife, who does not work on the front line, works for a Federal government healthcare provider. I have hardly seen her except for when she has had to work from home. She works hours and hours, day after day, seven days a week, trying to deal with the pandemic and protect our community. And what happens? This Government comes in and gives them a kick in the guts.

This is another example of the absolute lack of support that the Perrottet Government provides for workers in New South Wales. Do not forget that this Premier, when he was the Treasurer, oversaw 52,000 workers losing up to \$80 million from icare. The debacle that was icare while this man was Treasurer was an absolute disgrace and absolutely criminal, in my opinion. The bill is an offence to all workers who have risked their own health and safety, and the health of their families and their loved ones and increased their chances of getting COVID-19 but who have continued to work on regardless for our community and State. The fact that the bill removes the key mechanisms that are designed to protect workers, thereby making it more difficult for workers to claim and access existing workers compensation, is absolutely unbelievable.

In western Sydney, which I represent, there are probably more frontline healthcare workers than in any other area in New South Wales. They are at the very front lines, risking their lives every day, especially in places like Westmead—the largest health district in not only Australia but also the Southern Hemisphere. They provide crucial health care. These essential workers have to get up every day and go into their places of work despite their suburbs once having the highest number of COVID infections in the State. Unlike others, our essential workers and our families did not have the luxury of sheltering at home. Losing work due to COVID-19 is extremely crippling for a family and an individual. Going without work for seven to 14 days makes it very challenging to put food on the table, pay the bills, and pay the rent or the mortgage. What happens? When you go to get your workers compensation, you have to prove where you got it. What then happens? I can tell you: You have to rely on your sick leave and other entitlements—[*Time expired.*]

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (17:17): When COVID first arrived on our shores about two years ago, there was a lot of mystery, a lot of doubt, a lot we did not know and a lot we had to learn and react to very quickly. A lot of people faced a lot of challenges along the way. It has impacted many people in our community in a variety of ways. For instance, residents of aged-care facilities have been, in many cases, locked up effectively for weeks, if not months, on end with very limited opportunity to interact with loved ones. Our frontline health workers have gone to work, particularly before there was vaccination, not knowing the risk they were going to face but turning up to work regardless. We recognise that. People in all sorts of industries had to learn to do things in different ways very suddenly. We heard the term "pivoting", which I had not heard in that context before, as people changed their business models overnight to adjust to health regulations.

Right across society, right across all of our community, people have had to adapt and adjust and often go through tough periods. Like some members on the other side who have spoken in this debate, I represent an area that was called a local government area of concern and had particularly harsh lockdown measures for months. The impact that had on people's mental health as much as anything else, let alone their finances and their capacity to interact with family, was real. The effects have been felt right throughout our community, and we have had to learn, adjust and put in place emergency measures. Those emergency measures are not just a set-and-forget position, because we have had to then pivot to something else and learn again as the virus has done something different.

It was entirely appropriate for this Parliament to react in 2020 by bringing in some emergency measures, a whole raft of them, across a whole range of fields, and this was one: to put in place a presumption that people in a number of professions or occupations who contracted COVID caught it at work. This was done to simplify things at a time before we had vaccination and before we knew where we were going and how we were going to get out the other side. But one of the problems that that has created is that, obviously, tinkering with the workers compensation system upsets its balance. Workers compensation comes from premiums that employers pay, and the obvious inference is that if an employer is doing the right thing in protecting employees, putting in safe work systems, their premiums will be lower; if they are sloppy and careless and have bad records, their premiums will be higher. That is how the system works. But a presumption overrides that and can apply those punitive high premiums to people who have done nothing or could not have done anything to prevent that cost.

As one of the effects of COVID, we have seen many businesses go under. Their income streams have dried up; their business models have been wiped out. People have struggled. They have had some government assistance, but in many cases it just has not been enough to be able to save them. This is one more impost that businesses face down the track that we need to control if our businesses, particularly small businesses, are going to survive the pandemic. There are casualties left, right and centre, sadly. The Coffee Club just outside my electorate office closed the other day. He has given up. He struggled for two years and he could not make it. We do not want to see that impact on any more businesses than we can possibly spare.

So we are trying to get a fair and balanced outcome. The bill does not do away with workers compensation rights, not for a moment. Workers still have access to compensation. What's more, even workers without the presumption over the past two years have been able to make successful claims for contracting COVID. There has been a pattern already established in other fields outside those protected occupations. We know how it can be done, we know it will work, and it is not an unreasonable thing to go back to what was the standard two years ago for all occupations and what is the standard for most occupations in most jurisdictions elsewhere in Australia and around the world, as we have heard. It is not taking away the right to workers compensation; it is just taking away a presumption.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (17:23): It really is a miserable, uncaring, ungrateful government that treats its employees with contempt.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has the call.

Mr RON HOENIG: Government members prance around this Chamber, stand up here at the table and say how grateful they are to frontline workers, and they are just words. They do not mean what they say. They are not fair dinkum in their approach, and they are not even demonstrating how grateful they are. The thing that concerns me more than anything else is that they send in their high-powered backbenchers, who do not even know what the provision of the legislation is.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Hansard cannot hear with those interjections.

Mr RON HOENIG: Now, if there be some intellectual basis to repeal this provision, then you might be able to argue on the basis of the philosophy. But I guarantee that, as the member for Riverstone starts talking about the Coffee Club, he has no idea who the beneficiaries are of this deeming provision. Section 19B of the Workers Compensation Act was established to provide a statutory presumption for essential workers who contract COVID and whose workplace was a substantial contributing factor or the main contributing factor for contracting the virus. It applies to the retail industry; the healthcare sector, including ambulance officers and public health employees; disability and aged-care facilities; educational institutions; police and emergency services, including the fire brigade and the Rural Fire Service; refugees, halfway houses and homeless shelters—

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

Mr RON HOENIG: —passenger transport services; libraries; courts and tribunals; correctional centres and detention centres; restaurants, clubs and hotels; the construction industry; places of entertainment; the cleaning industry; and other employment.

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

Mr RON HOENIG: It is not just our heroes within the health system. The most contemptible thing about members of this mean Government is that they do not even tell the truth. We had the Premier in here at question time today saying, "We are the only jurisdiction in Australia." Let me tell you who has a deeming workers comp provision: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States and Uruguay. This praying mantis prances up and down here and has no idea who is the beneficiary of similar deeming provisions around the world.

I find the approach of those opposite disgraceful, reprehensible and uncaring, not to mention the way in which they, in breach of an agreement they had with the Opposition, tried to slip this bill through on the Wednesday before the arrangement, where there would be no controversial legislation on the basis that they got supply and confidence from us. In breach of the arrangement, with no honour, they introduce a contentious piece of legislation. I remind members that midwives and nurses were out protesting yesterday because they wanted to be heard, and those opposite would not give them the time to be heard. Nurses and midwives have said to this Parliament that one of the issues, apart from cost—and to those opposite it is all about business; do not worry that older people are dying in nursing homes because of COVID; it is all about making money—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for North Shore will come to order. The member for Shellharbour will come to order.

Mr RON HOENIG: Nurses and midwives said that the workforce is fragile. This is the last thing the Government should be doing now, and it will increase the psychological stress and burden. That is what they said: The workforce is fragile. We know that the nurses and hospitals are fragile. Alternatively, the employed medicos said, when the amendment was introduced, that they were so pleased that the New South Wales Government had their backs if they caught COVID: "It is difficult for doctors to prove they were infected at work." And Government members say they are grateful. The member for Camden is grateful. How about they show some gratitude by shelving this bill before the Legislative Council does it for them?

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (17:28): I do not support the motion before the House to withdraw the Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2021. I am appalled by the fear factor that members of the Opposition have argued. They are scaremongering at the highest level. The bill repeals the presumptive rights to workers compensation. Our essential and frontline workers have done a remarkable job over the past two years, no-one is denying that. They have helped us through the pandemic and are now helping us transition back to a new normal.

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

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Our experience over the past two years has reminded us all how much we rely on our frontline workers to keep our society running. We value their contribution greatly. The presumption legislation was passed early on in the COVID-19 outbreak, when community-based transmission was low and vaccines were not available. It was introduced to provide additional assurances to workers at a time when little

was known about the impacts and treatment of COVID-19 and vaccine rollouts were not on our horizon. However, we now face a very different situation to that of early 2020. So much has changed through the application of public health orders, the development of COVID-safe plans and the swift implementation by employers of additional work health and safety measures that have benefited the whole community. Notably, the workers of New South Wales are now better able to protect themselves and their friends, neighbours and colleagues by receiving their choice of a free, safe and effective vaccine. Many New South Wales citizens have also now received a third booster shot, further increasing their protection.

As we transition to living with COVID, it is the right time to demonstrate that COVID-19 is not primarily a workplace issue requiring additional provisions for a subset of workers. As the New South Wales economy continues to open up and freedom of movement increases in New South Wales, and as we travel, socialise and interact, the existing COVID-19 legislative presumption has the potential to turn a large volume of COVID-19 diagnoses into workers compensation claims, even though the origin of infection will be difficult to pin down to a workplace in many circumstances. Exactly how that could play out in terms of numbers of potential cases and workers compensation claims is extremely difficult to predict. The changing nature of the virus and uncertainty around long COVID and its impacts complicate the ability to forecast the potential cost of claims over time. As we saw at the recent inquiry into this bill by Portfolio Committee No. 1 - Premier and Finance, even updated modelling done in December 2021 on behalf of the McKell Institute was itself overtaken by events only two months later.

With double-dose vaccination rates for over-16-year-olds approaching 95 per cent, it is the right time for the presumption to be removed and for the New South Wales workers compensation system to return to its pre-COVID state. The high vaccination rates are a remarkable outcome, and I thank the citizens of New South Wales for coming forward to be vaccinated. Together we have achieved a remarkable result as our State leads Australia out of the pandemic, becoming one of the highest vaccinated jurisdictions in the world. Now is the time to recognise that COVID-19 is not specific to employment. It is a public health issue that affects the whole community. Protecting those in our workplaces is this Government's utmost responsibility. This proposed amendment does not affect the right of workers who have contracted COVID-19 because of their employment to make a workers compensation claim. That can still be done; there is no denying that. The proposed amendment also does not affect their right to quality care and support during their treatment and recovery. That will still happen as well. It is scaremongering from the Opposition.

Workers who can establish that employment was the main contributing factor or a substantial contributing factor in them contracting COVID-19 will retain the right to make a workers compensation claim. I do not know how many times I have to explain that. That is in line with how other endemic diseases are dealt with in the workers compensation system and with arrangements that we are aware of in other jurisdictions. A worker would need to show medical evidence that they have COVID-19. The insurer may then conduct a factual investigation to determine the most likely source of the disease, including interviews with the employer and worker. This would likely include questions about contact with confirmed COVID-19 cases exposing them to the virus or if there had been other cases in the workplace.

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (17:33): I thank the member for Canterbury for bringing this motion to the House. It is timely to remind the Government of the important role essential workers play in our communities. What is an essential worker? It was not much of a thought for many before the pandemic hit. Typically, people thought of essential workers as being emergency service or healthcare workers. Those workers are absolutely essential, but we now know that essential workers make up a long list. Retail workers were at the coalface of human interaction while COVID was rampant, keeping shops open and stocked with essential items. Grocery stores were tended to and stocked by people to keep themselves and their families clothed and fed. Truck drivers remained essential to delivering the food, fuel and goods to keep everything else running.

Country New South Wales would not survive without truck drivers to deliver necessities. We would all be stranded if service station workers did not tend their stations so we could fuel our cars to get around. NSW Corrective Services workers cannot abandon their posts, even during a pandemic. They are essential to maintaining the protection of the community and ensuring the care of inmates in their custody. The spread of COVID-19 from jail to jail with inmate transfers meant our Corrective Services officers contracted COVID-19, causing a severe staffing strain. When homeschooling became a thing, we were soon reminded that school teachers are absolutely essential workers and critically important to the development of our children. Taxidriver and bus drivers are also essential workers, and they were out there running the COVID gauntlet, placing themselves at great risk to keep their jobs and to move people from point A to point B.

I said that healthcare workers were the obvious essential workers but, given the timing of this debate, our nurses warrant a special mention. Yesterday nurses from around the State resorted to strike action. They held rallies in Macquarie Street and even in small country towns out in the regions. It has been 10 years since nurses

took the drastic step of striking, but this action was years in the making. The Government should have seen it coming. It has done nothing to address nurse shortages, which has led to nurses being burnt out from extremely long shifts, being spread too thin and caring for way too many patients. The Nationals 2019 election platform was "Vote Nats for more country nurses."

Extra nurses are not being seen in most of the healthcare facilities across regional New South Wales. Tullamore Multipurpose Service has remained open only because of the goodwill of the nurses, who routinely perform overtime to fill the vacant nursing positions. Their goodwill has been taken for granted, but it is a double-edged sword. It has not motivated NSW Health to fix the problem because these stoic and community-oriented nurses have been working to fatigue so that their patients are cared for. Improved nurse-to-patient ratios not only would deliver a requisite minimum number of nurses to provide more timely care for patients but, just as importantly, would protect our hardworking nurses from being run off their feet and being burnt out. And what about our aged-care workers? They are absolutely essential. Without them our vulnerable aged people would be without essential care.

I have touched on a small number in a long list of essential workers, but I will now speak to their protections, or the lack thereof. Last November the Government demonstrated its eagerness to remove protections for our essential workers. It introduced the Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2021 for the express purpose of abolishing presumptive rights for workers who contract COVID-19. All of The Nationals and Liberal Party members in this House voted to remove these workers compensation protections. If my colleagues did not head off the bill in the other place, essential workers would have virtually no recourse for compensation if they contracted COVID-19 while at work.

So if taxidrivens, who are essential to moving people around, get COVID at work, they have to prove it. The same goes for Corrective Services workers, nurses, police, ambulance, paramedics, all of whom are essential to our society. It begs the question: How on earth can a worker who has so many dealings and interactions with people on a daily basis ever be expected to retrospectively prove to an insurance company where and from whom they may have captured COVID whilst at work? It would be almost impossible. For these reasons, I support the motion moved by the member for Canterbury.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:37): In reply: I start by thanking the member for Orange. In his time in this place he has been a very strong advocate for working people. I thank him for all that he has done for rural and regional New South Wales. I thank the members for the electorates of Prospect and Heffron for their very powerful speeches advocating on behalf of their communities and for debunking the nonsense that is coming from the other side of the Chamber. The member for Camden spoke about the competitive nature of insurance companies. This is an issue where the Government should sit down with unions, businesses and insurance companies to discuss the myriad of options already available, such as shared costs or a scheme like the one in Victoria. The Government does not need to come up with anything new, because other States have very good workers compensation schemes—unlike ours, where the Government allowed insiders to rip off the system.

The member for Riverstone can talk all he likes, but in those very tough days did I hear him talk about getting a vaccination centre in his electorate? No. It was the member for Blacktown, together with the Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre and Community Aid Service, who organised International SOS doctors to make sure that the first lot of vaccines were delivered to the vulnerable. The member for Riverstone may have good points, but I want to see him advocating strongly for those workers—the retail, construction and transport workers—who live in his electorate and who expect him to stand up for them and put forward substantial information to his Government.

How many businesses are still waiting to get the relief they expected four months ago? I continue to write to the Government on these issues. Of course, we want fair and equitable treatment for small businesses. The only reason small businesses are not doing well—"for lease" signs line our main roads and thoroughfares—is because they have not had the support from this Government. The member for Hawkesbury made an interesting contribution, but again I refer to the people who live in her electorate—the essential workers, public sector workers, retail workers and small-business operators. The transport workers and owner-drivers who are covered by chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 require support. I know many people who live in the member's electorate and who want their local member to wholeheartedly stand up for them. She has not done that today. I urge members to support the motion.

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

The House divided.

Ayes41

Noes41

Majority.....0

AYES

Aitchison, J	Doyle, T	O'Neill, M
Atalla, E	Finn, J	Park, R
Bali, S	Harris, D	Parker, J
Barr, C	Harrison, J	Piper, G
Butler, R	Haylen, J	Saffin, J
Car, P	Hoenig, R	Scully, P
Catley, Y	Kamper, S	Smith, T
Chanthivong, A	Lalich, N	Tesch, L
Cotsis, S	Leong, J	Voltz, L
Crakanthorp, T	Lynch, P	Warren, G
Daley, M	McDermott, H	Washington, K
Dalton, H	McGirr, J	Watson, A (teller)
Dib, J	Mehan, D (teller)	Zangari, G
Donato, P	Mihailuk, T	

NOES

Anderson, K	Hancock, S	Saunders, D
Ayres, S	Hazzard, B	Sidgreaves, P
Clancy, J	Henskens, A	Singh, G (teller)
Conolly, K	Kean, M	Smith, N (teller)
Cooke, S	Layzell, D	Speakman, M
Coure, M	Lee, G	Stokes, R
Crouch, A	Lindsay, W	Taylor, M
Davies, T	Marshall, A	Toole, P
Dominello, V	O'Dea, J	Tuckerman, W
Elliott, D	Pavey, M	Upton, G
Evans, L	Petinos, E	Ward, G
Gibbons, M	Preston, R	Williams, R
Griffin, J	Provest, G	Wilson, F
Gulaptis, C	Roberts, A	

PAIRS

Hornery, S	Bromhead, S
Minns, C	Perrottet, D

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The numbers being equal, I give my casting vote with the noes and declare the question to be resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

Community Recognition Statements

SHELLHARBOUR ELECTORATE CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:50): Who doesn't love Christmas? It is my most favourite time of the year. Every year I run a Christmas card competition and invite local schools in Shellharbour to participate. I acknowledge Mia Belsito, Hamish Vost, Ariana Wiecek, Logan Milnes, Lucas Fernandez, Cruz Burgess, Nathan Richardson, Lucy Grove, Millicent Wagstaff and Talli Borg, and thank them for their contributions. They are a talented bunch of kids, and we could not be prouder. There were 10 finalists, who I also acknowledge. Those wonderful artworks will go on and live forever.

LEADERLIFE

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (17:51): What a year it has been for Joh Leader and the entire team at LeaderLife. They were honoured at the recent Dubbo Chamber of Commerce Rhino Awards. Joh was named Dubbo's most outstanding leader, while LeaderLife received the award for excellence in social enterprise. Joh founded LeaderLife 10 years ago. It now runs early intervention after-school programs for vulnerable young kids, along with a mentoring program for

males at risk of disengaging with education and work readiness programs for young adults sometimes on the edge of the criminal justice system. I have been delighted to support part of the program through funding grants for the Narromine lime farm, which produces incredibly good lime cordial and, of course, limes. During Dubbo's COVID-19 outbreak, the LeaderLife team played a crucial role in supporting our vulnerable communities by making sure people were safe and fed and kids were not falling through the gaps. Well done and thank you to Joh, Mel, Alex, Taje, Riverbank Frank and the whole team for doing what they do so well.

AFLW PRIDE ROUND

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (17:52): I congratulate all those involved in coordinating the AFLW Pride Round match that took place at Henson Park in Marrickville last month. Henson Park has a rich sporting history, having been the home of the Newtown Jets since 1937. In more recent decades the tradition has extended to other codes, such as AFL, with many local women's and men's teams making a name for themselves on the famous ground. Women's AFL has a proud LGBTQI legacy, here, in the inner west and across the country. AFL teams have provided countless women with a space to be their authentic selves and form connections in a welcoming and caring community. It is wonderfully fitting that Henson Park played a role in recognising that legacy by hosting the AFLW Pride Round match between the GWS Giants and the Western Bulldogs. It is a nod to the history of Henson Park, the legacy of queer women in AFL, and the future of our wonderfully diverse community. I thank and congratulate all of those in the pride round. Everyone in our community is immensely proud.

SOPHIE SIMPSON

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (17:53): I congratulate a rising star of the Dubbo squash scene, Sophie Simpson, who has received a Commonwealth Games New South Wales grant. Sophie is one of 41 athletes to be recognised by the Commonwealth Games for outstanding talent and potential in her sport. Receiving the grant capped off an incredible 2021 for Sophie, who also won the State championship. Sophie competed in the Squash NSW championships late last year and won the under-17s State title in a tight five-set match, which had the spectators on the edge of their seats. Well done to Sophie. I cannot wait to see what she sets her sights on next.

JOEL KING

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:54): From Shellharbour to the world—that is the reality for 21-year-old Joel King, who has just signed with Danish football club Odense BK. This comes just days after his Socceroos debut against Vietnam on 27 January. Joel began his career playing for Shellharbour Junior Football club, and afterwards joined the Football NSW program Project 22. He then moved to Canberra to join the Australian Institute of Sport, and in 2018 he was asked to join the Sydney FC Sky Blues. In his time at Sydney FC, Joel made 75 appearances, won two championships and a premiership and last season was named A-league Young Player of the Year. Joel has returned to the Illawarra on multiple occasions to encourage local footballers to continue in the sport and has hosted sessions for Sydney FC's skills training program in Wollongong and Albion Park. I congratulate Joel King on his outstanding achievements. I know so many young players are going to be inspired by his impressive career. On behalf of the Shellharbour community, I wish Joel the very best of luck in his future endeavours.

Private Members' Statements

SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE HSC STUDENTS

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:55): I acknowledge the class of 2021 Higher School Certificate students and the immense effort, preparation and work that went into the completion of their studies over the 2021 academic year. Like many other electorates, the Seven Hills electorate is home to a variety of high schools where students undertake a well-rounded education. The HSC represents the knowledge and skills accumulated throughout a student's past 13 years and provides an opportunity for them to showcase their passions, interests and future ambitions. The HSC offers a large selection of subjects that are tailored to each student's needs and goals, as well as including the more conventional mathematics, English, history, geography and sciences. Students who prefer a workplace focus can study business, economics and legal studies, and those who are creatively inclined can select from visual arts, drama, music and other subjects.

In recent years, more specific subjects have been added to cater for the growing interest among students in the workforce, such as engineering studies, software design, and a growing list of languages. These subjects represent the constant adaptation that our education system undergoes to develop all aspects associated with a successful HSC graduate. For many students, the Higher School Certificate is now an extension of themselves, as they are given the opportunity to complete vocational TAFE subjects alongside their HSC studies. Students can learn about primary industries, business administration, the hospitality workforce and financial services. These

subjects allow students to take large steps towards a successful long-term career, while still completing the final years of their education.

HSC students who live in the electorate of Seven Hills are overwhelmed with opportunities for quality education. Students can choose to finish their final years of learning at one of many high schools located close to home, including Blacktown Boys High School, Blacktown Girls High School, Catherine McAuley Westmead, Crestwood High School, Gilroy Catholic College, Girraween High School, Glenwood High School, Model Farms High School, Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School, Oakhill College, Parramatta Marist High School, Pendle Hill High School, The Hills Sports High School, Toongabbie Christian College and Wyndham College. In the best of times the completion of examinations and assessments can be daunting, but the class of 2021 was faced with a global pandemic, lockdowns and remote online learning. Despite the constant distraction of the COVID-19 pandemic, students across Seven Hills proved to be more than capable and resilient.

Over 560 students from local schools were on the 2021 HSC honour roll, which means they achieved a result of 90 per cent or more in one of their subjects. The Blacktown Boys High School year 12 cohort received 30 distinguished achiever awards, Blacktown Girls High School received 37, Catherine McAuley Westmead received 64, Crestwood High School received 22, Gilroy Catholic College received 58, Girraween High School received 126, Glenwood High School received 50, Model Farms High School received 25, Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School received 35, Oakhill College received 119, Parramatta Marist High School received 90, Pendle Hill High School received seven, The Hills Sports High School received four, Toongabbie Christian College received 17, and Wyndham College received 25. It was an outstanding achievement across the electorate.

Among these distinguished achievers, there were a number of students who were ranked in the top 10 across New South Wales for their performance in a specific subject. This is an outstanding achievement and represents true mastery of their pursuits to the highest possible academic level. It is encouraging to see so many fantastic results from local schools, in spite of the circumstances students faced last year. I extend my congratulations to the class of 2021 and wish them all the very best for their future endeavours.

TRIBUTE TO FRED MOORE

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (17:59): Congratulations, Mr Temporary Speaker (Mr Alex Greenwich), on your new role. On 3 February this year our community farewellled one of Australia's and certainly our region's greatest unionists and advocates to have ever marched our streets, Fred Moore. Fred was a coalminer, a champion of the working class, a vocal advocate for women, an honorary Aboriginal Elder, a musician, a boxer, an author and a loving family man. Fred Moore was an extraordinary human, a true gentleman and a well-respected and much-loved leader in our community. When Fred spoke, people listened. It did not matter what he was speaking about or to whom he was speaking, people always wanted to hear what Fred had to say. He acted with decency and respect, and always strove for unity.

A mark of the esteem in which Fred was held is that when COVID caused the 2020 May Day march to be cancelled for the first time, unions instead took the march to his house and set up on his front lawn. Fred was a relentless champion for working people, our Indigenous brothers and sisters, peace and freedom, and the right to go to work, come home safely and earn a reasonable income. The Illawarra—the region I am proud to come from and a community that I am proud to represent in this place—is known as "union town" thanks to the foundations that Fred laid. He was resolute when he famously said, "When the workers take to the streets, the streets belong to the workers." He would have been proud of the nurses and midwives on the streets out the front of this place yesterday.

He was a coalminer, like many of his time who worked in our region, and he fought for better pay and safer working conditions. Safer working conditions in mining operations were not too common back in Fred's day. It is dangerous work today, but it was very, very dangerous work back then. We have had disasters across our community and in our region from coalmining, and many coalmining deaths. Fred always made sure that safety came first. My uncle Bill in Queensland worked closely with the Queensland mining union, but he was from our region and had fond memories of Fred. He spoke highly of him as a man who was committed to working people and to doing what he could to make sure working people got a better deal.

Fred was more than just a union delegate and a fighter for better working conditions. In 1961 he was the driving force, together with emerging First Nations leaders in our community, in establishing the South Coast Aboriginal Advancement League. During the 1967 referendum to extend citizenship and voting rights to Aboriginal Australians, he collected tens of thousands of signatures. Fred was one of the few non-Indigenous people to be made an honorary Elder of the Aboriginal community in our region—something I know he held close to his heart. Fred was made a life member of many organisations, including his own mining and energy union, the South Coast Labour Council and the Maritime Union of Australia. Fred Moore House, where many of our local

union offices are located, was named in his honour. I look forward to a permanent memorial and place in our community where all of us can reflect on what a true champion Fred Moore was.

For people following in his footsteps as an advocate for working people and as a community fighter, Fred showed the way for our generation and generations before me. He showed that being an advocate meant always putting others first and putting working people first. Your job as their advocate and their champion, whether on a picket line or in the workplace, was to try to make sure that working people were better off, that they were safer at their workplace and that they got the dignity of decent pay and decent working conditions. To all of us, Fred showed the way. The people of the Illawarra have lost a giant. We commiserate again with his many family members and friends. He leaves behind a legacy of leadership, courage and principles. Fred was a lifelong comrade to the working class. Vale, Fred Moore.

PEAK VIEW RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience) (18:04):

I pay tribute to the incredible members of the Peak View Rural Fire Brigade. On Sunday 23 January it was my absolute honour to join the volunteers of the Peak View brigade in Cooma to commemorate the second anniversary of the loss of the Bomber 134 American aircrew. Many members in this place will remember the terrible news that hit us on the afternoon of 23 January 2020 when, during aerial firefighting operations at the Good Good fire, a Lockheed C-130 Hercules crashed. The plane, codenamed Bomber 134, had left the Royal Australian Air Force Base Richmond at approximately 12.05 p.m. and had successfully undertaken two retardant drops over the Adaminaby Complex and Good Good fires. However, witnesses then reported seeing the aircraft bank left before becoming obscured by smoke. It was last seen flying at very low height at approximately 1.16 p.m. before it collided with the ground and ignited. It took several hours for the wreckage to be located, given the active fire and visibility challenges.

Tragically, the bodies of Captain Ian McBeth, first officer Paul Clyde Hudson and flight engineer Rick DeMorgan Junior were found. The aircraft and her crew, all from the United States of America, had been working in New South Wales since 6 December 2019. We honour the sacrifice that these three men made in the act of protecting our communities from fire. Their professionalism and dedication will not be forgotten. As the closest rural fire brigade to the crash site, members of Peak View have remained in contact with the families of the three American men and consulted with them on the wording and design of the memorial plaques that were created at both the crash site and the Peak View fire station. The brigade is determined to ensure that the memory of these three men is kept alive.

When I visited Cooma on Sunday 23 January, it was clear to me that this tight-knit brigade is still deeply impacted by what occurred. We first conducted a flag-lowering ceremony at the Snowy Monaro district office in Cooma. The Australian and United States of America flags were flown and lowered to half-mast, followed by a period of silence and reflection. It was wonderful to be joined by Commissioner Rogers as well as Lieutenant Colonel Drew Cunnar, the air force attaché from the United States embassy. Lieutenant Colonel Cunnar played an integral role in this ceremony and spoke at length about each of his fellow countrymen. Later in the day we travelled to the Feeneys Road memorial site, which has been recently created in memory of the three aircrew who lost their lives, for a wreath-laying ceremony. That was followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the Peak View fire station memorial.

I acknowledge two members of the Peak View brigade in the House today: Captain James Barron and call-out officer Julie Barron. It was my privilege to join Commissioner Rogers in presenting Captain and Mrs Barron with Commissioner's Certificates of Commendation. James and Julie have developed strong and genuine relationships with the family of the aircrew, and I know these connections continue two years on. The support that James and Jules have been providing to their fellow brigade members, the wider community and the American families is just exemplary. James and Jules are the driving force behind each of the events that I had the pleasure of attending on Sunday 23 January. The brigade is also keen to add some finishing touches to the memorial, and I look forward to returning to Peak View next January with the new member for Monaro to spend more time with our wonderful RFS volunteers.

I thank the Snowy Monaro District Manager, Superintendent Jim Darrant, for his leadership. I again congratulate Captain and Mrs Barron, and I thank every member of the Peak View Rural Fire Brigade. Commemorative ceremonies do not come together without a lot of hard work and remembering such a tragic event is very emotional work. This tragedy is still so raw for many in the Peak View community. They are still breathing in the trauma of what occurred two years ago. I know that the Peak View brigade is making sure that these three families in America know that we are very grateful for the service of their loved ones.

NORTHERN DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy) (18:09): Since it was established nearly 100 years ago, so many exceptional cricketers have represented the Northern District [ND] Cricket Club, which is based in Waitara in my local area. These include Australian representatives Jim Burke, Neil Harvey, Alan Davidson, Peter Taylor, Mark Taylor, and Brad Haddin and, of course, Nathan Lyon, who is a current Australian player. This success looks set to continue, as in recent years the club has consistently prioritised the development of young cricketers, and their system continues to produce exceptional talent. NDs is widely considered as the benchmark for other Sydney grade cricket clubs, as is further exemplified with three of its young cricketers earning selection in the Australian squad for the under-19 World Cup, played recently in the Caribbean. Corey Miller, Lachlan Shaw and Aidan Cahill are wonderfully talented young cricketers. All three are players to watch, although each has already achieved so much in their short career.

In second grade as a 17-year-old Corey Miller struck an astonishing 262 runs on 3 October 2020 against Hawkesbury to go to number five on the list of all-time scores in the 125-year history of NSW Premier Cricket's Second Grade competition. Corey's huge score is the highest individual score in Northern District Cricket Club's history, dating back to 1925-26. He scored his 262 off only 248 deliveries, which included 29 fours and five sixes, a total of 146 runs in boundaries. Corey's junior club is the Mount Colah Cricket Club, where he represented as both a junior and a senior cricketer from 2009 to 2019. Corey Miller has coached with the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai & Hills District Cricket Coaches' Association since 2018, giving back to the grassroots of the sport by guiding other young cricketers. Corey's high-level playing standard, his knowledge of the game and his communication skills have all combined to make him the most effective cricket coach.

Lachy Shaw's junior cricket club is Kenthurst, which, like Mount Colah, competes in the local Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai & Hills District Cricket Association competitions. For the Northern District Cricket Club, Lachy Shaw scored his maiden first grade century, 107, on 3 October 2020 against Hawkesbury in only his second appearance in the top grade. At 17 years and 282 days old, this achievement broke a 49-year-old record, with Lachy becoming the youngest batsman to reach triple figures in the Northern District Cricket Club's first grade history.

Aidan Cahill is a right-hand batsman and a right-arm fast bowler, a genuine all-rounder. He hits a long ball and last summer he hit a record-breaking 55-ball 110 for ND's Poidevin Gray team. Born in South Africa, Aidan moved with his family to Australia, first living in Grafton before moving to Lambton in Newcastle. Aidan played for Northern District's premiership-winning AW Green Shield team in 2018-19 and last year he completed his HSC in Newcastle. This summer he has been playing cricket for Newcastle City Cricket Club and the Poidevin Gray team for Northern District Cricket Club. Aidan will be moving to Sydney next summer to play full-time with NDs and attend university.

This summer, and for the eighth successive season, Northern District Cricket Club competed in the final of the AW Green Shield, the elite under-16 cricket competition, which is contested by all of Sydney's grade cricket clubs. This is an outstanding achievement. In recent seasons Northern District Cricket Club has been producing so many outstanding young cricketers and achieving incredible results from their junior representative teams, but this is no fluke. It is the result of the dedicated hard work of the club through its members, put in over the past decade at various levels. It is also a result of the strong positive relationships established with their local park cricket association and local clubs. This provides strong support and a clear pathway for talented young cricketers to go all the way to the top of their chosen sport.

Congratulations to Corey Miller, Lachlan Shaw and Aidan Cahill for their achievements to date and national under-19 selection. Participating in the under-19 World Cup, all three contributed strongly at various times as they helped Australia secure third place. I will watch with interest as their cricketing careers continue to progress. As the club approaches its centenary, I recognise the many individuals involved in the cricket club's coaching and administration who have created the positive culture that allows our young talented cricketers to achieve everything they are capable of in our national sport.

In particular I recognise the sustained work of former president Mike Langford, current president Jeremy Hook, and the AW Green Shield coach Josh Miller. The Rangers is an incredibly proud club. It has achieved so much on the field, but that does not happen by accident. It happens because of the hard work of many dedicated volunteers off the field. In addition to Jeremy Hook and Mike Langford, I should also mention Graham Gorrie, who this year is the president of the Sydney Cricket Association and is doing an outstanding job. Thank you to everyone involved in Northern District Cricket Club. I wish those young players all the very best for their very bright futures.

TRIBUTE TO ALBERT COLLINS

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (18:14): It is with a heavy heart that I speak of the recent passing of one of Bankstown's finest and most respected locals, Mr Albert Collins, who was affectionately known as Bert. He sadly passed away on 3 February 2022, a month shy of his 106th birthday. Bert was not only one of Australia's oldest surviving World War II veterans but also the oldest member of the Australian Labor Party and the Shop, Distributive & Allied Employees Association. Bert was born on 11 March 1916 to Florence and Maurice. At the age of 16, he got his first job at the Farmers department store—now known as Myer—where he worked for almost 50 years. He became a member of the SDA and retained his membership for over 91 years.

Bert married Norma, who sadly passed away. He did not have children; however, he kept himself very busy throughout his life. He was passionate about ballroom dancing and later married his second wife, Peggy Harmon, who was his dancing partner. He served Australia during World War II. It is this particular wartime service that is very much admired. I note that both the Minister for Veterans and the shadow Minister for Veterans have already made ministerial statements about him in this House. On 5 August 1940 Bert signed up to serve his country. He rose to the rank of sergeant in the 52nd Australian Composite Anti-Aircraft Regiment, based in Papua New Guinea, and was also posted to the 76th Australian Mobile Searchlight Battery, before being discharged on 1 December 1945. I have heard many of Bert's courageous stories throughout the years. He absolutely served Australia well.

On leaving the army, he continued to enjoy his passion for ballroom dancing and entered many championships. He moved to Bankstown in 1949 and had lived in the same house in Northam Avenue ever since. Bert's Anzac spirit has never wavered, and it is a quality that has inspired many people. His association with the armed forces continued until his final years, with Bert joining the Bankstown RSL Sub-Branch on 17 November 1961. In 2019 Bert was proud to be the oldest veteran to participate in Sydney's Anzac Day march. He was awarded the quilt of valour, a well-deserved accolade, for his invaluable service to our nation and his local community of Bankstown. I had the pleasure, together with the Federal member for Blaxland, of being at his home when that award was presented to Bert.

Bert was the dictionary definition of a survivor, having survived World War II, a heart attack and a stroke. In addition to those setbacks, five years ago at the age of 101 Bert was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic melanoma. Incredibly, with the greatest courage and determination, he overcame that bout of cancer, becoming one of the world's oldest survivors of melanoma. Bert's spirit and courage is one of the many qualities that made him such a profound inspiration to all. This kind and gentle man was renowned for his tireless local charity work, including raising much-needed funds for Bankstown hospital. Bert loved making beautiful dollhouses, which he would donate to charity to raise funds.

Last year he raised funds for the Melanoma Institute Australia by walking around his backyard, which was amazing. It shows how much energy Bert had. Last year he also received his life membership to the Labor Party. He joined the party after he retired at the age of 65 and was a lifelong Labor voter. Bert embodied the principles and values of the New South Wales Labor Party and played a pivotal role within the party, particularly our Condell Park branch—Paul Keating's old branch—where he was an avid participant. He called me every month to ask for a lift, which we always obliged and ensured that he was safely taken to meetings and returned home. We visited him not too long ago in October with SDA NSW secretary Bernie Smith and Jason Clare to present Bert with his life membership award. Bert was also the longest serving member of the SDA, having joined more than 90 years ago. He is absolutely passionate about the labour movement. I will miss him dearly; the branch and the community of Bankstown will miss him tremendously. He was very much loved by the Bankstown RSL and by the Bankstown sub-branch. I acknowledge president Terry Corcoran, the honourable secretary John Woodley, the honourable treasurer Ian Morrison, the vice-presidents, and welfare officer Jim Wrigley for their incredible service in supporting Bert. I also acknowledge his second cousin Lorraine Figures and the remaining members of his family. We will dearly miss Bert Collins. May he rest in peace.

TAMWORTH ELECTORATE VOLUNTEERS

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Lands and Water, and Minister for Hospitality and Racing) (18:20): I congratulate Mr Temporary Speaker (Mr Alex Greenwich) on his appointment. It is great to see him in the chair. There are those in our community who do their bit day by day, week by week and year by year without the recognition and accolades they deserve. They do their bit through the goodness of their heart and their own sense of self, decency and dedication to their community. There are those in our communities who support our most vulnerable, who build our regions to be stronger and who strive to make a better life for those around them. Their hard work is rewarded not with a pay cheque but with the knowledge that they are making the lives of those around them better. Service to your fellow man, to your community and to your country is something that we respect and admire, but far too often their work does not hit the headlines and we remain in the dark about the good occurring in our community.

Like many of us, I spent the Christmas and New Year period in my community among those who are playing their own part to build our region and improve the lives of the people who live with us. Reflecting on this time, I am still blown away by the dedication of so many in my community and the amount of time they sacrifice to support their neighbours. I thank the teams who run the Meals on Wheels programs across the Tamworth electorate. I thank the more than 120 volunteers who support the operation of Tamworth Meals on Wheels alone. That amounts to over 14,000 hours worked throughout the year—an astonishing number. Throughout the pandemic these volunteers have proven to be a vital point of contact for the most isolated and vulnerable in our community.

I thank young Steven Hopwood of Gunnedah, who has proven to be a dedicated volunteer at an early age. His involvement in groups like the Gunnedah Aero Club, Gunnedah Conservatorium and Gunnedah Junior Rugby League demonstrates his commitment to improving his community. At the outset of the pandemic, Steven found that many of his groups had been put on hold in lockdown. Never one to back down, Steven took it upon himself to volunteer with Gunnedah Meals on Wheels by writing letters and doing drawings for the service's clientele. I know that Steven's volunteer work brought a smile to the face of many through the extended periods of isolation, and I thank Steven for his work.

I thank the staff and volunteers of Tamworth's Inala House. Inala House provides a home away from home for cancer patients from right across north-west New South Wales. Critically, that service is provided fee free for those who otherwise cannot access Tamworth's Northwest Cancer Centre, removing any barrier for treatment for people across the north-west and improving health outcomes. I am amazed by the work of the staff and volunteers at Inala House. Again, they do not do it for thanks or recognition; they do it because they are compassionate and caring. That is why I am thrilled that they will soon be extending their premises thanks to the New South Wales Government's Community Building Partnership program. I thank those staff and volunteers who will now be able to provide much improved facilities to patients.

Those are just a few examples of volunteers in our community. The reality is there are too many to mention, and we love that because the more the merrier. Whether it is through local Rotary clubs, Lions clubs, the Country Women's Association, our many sporting clubs, museums or Tamworth's great new astronomy centre, our region is built by volunteers and the community's strength is a reflection of those who choose to make it their own. Those of us lucky enough to live in regional New South Wales thrive because we love it. We are better because we build it and stronger because we strengthen it. I will continue to give thanks to those who give their time to make our region better. So, again, a sincere thank you to all our volunteers who dedicate their time to improve the lives of those around them. You cannot put a price on what they do because what they do is priceless.

ARTS INDUSTRY VENUES

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (18:24): The inner west is a proudly creative community. Indeed, the Inner West Council reports that creative and cultural industries inject \$1.4 billion into the local economy each year. We have some of the highest concentrations of cultural sector employment in the country, with 6,500 people, or one in ten local residents, working in the creative and cultural sectors. We know that our local live music venues draw people from across the city, which drives our local economy and supports cafes, restaurants, small bars and retail stores. As a community, we value public art, we love our festivals and community arts, and we are passionate about supporting our local creatives and creative venues. But our local venues and cultural sector workers have never needed our help more.

Grassroots venues are venues run by music or arts experts that take risks in artistic programming and networking with other venues, which is a key generator of night-time economic activity. The inner west is full of them, including the Factory Theatre, Lazybones, the Great Club, Camelot Lounge, Gasoline Pony and Butcher's Brew Bar. They have all been particularly susceptible to the pandemic. Grassroots venues across the city first struggled under the Government's lockout laws. They have then had to lurch through the past two years of lockdowns, struggling to support staff and artists, while maintaining community safety. They were among the first businesses to close and the last to reopen, with devastating impacts on venues and the artists themselves.

To give a sense of the scale of the impact of the lockdowns, the I Lost My Gig survey identifies that over 32,000 gigs were cancelled across Australia between July and November last year alone. That is 32,000 lost opportunities for artists and musicians, promoters, sound and lighting engineers, ticketing and administration staff, hospitality workers and security guards to earn a living. Then just as venues were getting back on their feet at the end of last year Omicron hit, bringing a raft of new challenges. While they were not required to close, many suffered the effects of the "shadow lockdown." Venues had to contend with dwindling audiences, cancellations from acts as band members fell ill or were designated close contacts, staffing pressures as the virus spread, specific restrictions on singing and dancing, and of course, all the regular pressures of running a small business. The usually busy Christmas and summer period should have been a boom for these venues, which desperately needed business following the long periods of lockdown last year. Sadly, it has been a total bust.

Earlier this year Craig Peterson from Lazybones told *The Sydney Morning Herald* that he felt his business was being treated as "collateral damage." He said, "Why would any business say, 'I'm open now but, by the way, I've got no staff. I'm open but no-one's coming.' Why would you be in business?" Craig closed his doors for all of January. Tragically, in the past month alone we have seen three venues across the inner west shut their doors for good—the Old 505 Theatre in Newtown, the Lansdowne Hotel, and the Giant Dwarf. These were established, beloved and highly reputable venues where countless artists have cut their teeth, shared their work and performed for spellbound audiences. These were venues run by experienced, resilient operators who had guided their businesses through the worst of the first outbreak and the Delta wave. They had overcome obstacle after obstacle to establish their venues and keep the doors open no matter what was thrown at them.

The fact that these venues have closed shows just how critical the crisis has become for grassroots venues across Sydney and New South Wales. It shows just how quickly we need to act. We need targeted financial and regulatory support to carry venues through. The New South Wales Government announced a \$43 million package for festivals and the events sector, and its latest business package specifically singled out performing arts companies as needing support. That is a good start, but more must be done to make sure that funding is getting to the venues that need it most and that financial support is flowing through to workers, artists and musicians themselves. As any grassroots venue operator will tell you, the financial support on offer from the Government to date has not touched the sides. It has only helped them to scrape through the first wave of the pandemic. Our local creative industries and venues need much more than the too-little, too-late approach that we have had so far. They need a government that values them and the contribution they make to our local economies and to the vitality and wellbeing of our communities. They need a government that will stand up and act with courage in their interests.

GLOWALMAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (18:29): I take this opportunity to inform the House about how a little idea for a week-long junior rodeo has turned into a major event within the mid-coast region. The event is the annual Glowalman Junior Campdraft, Challenge and Sporting Championships. The man behind the idea is Gloucester farmer Fred Paterson. In the early 1980s Fred came up with this idea and the name Glowalman, which is a combination of Gloucester, Wallamba and the Manning Valley—the three areas in which the event takes place. The name is an abbreviation of the town names. The Glowalman is jointly organised by the Gloucester, Nahiab and Wingham junior rodeos. The concept is to have the three groups run their own event at their local showgrounds—Gloucester at the Gloucester Showground, Wallamba at the Nahiab grounds and Manning at Wingham Showground.

The Glowalman features campdrafting, stock rider, sporting and rodeo championships. Daily winners and overall points are tallied together for a final result. One of the trophies for the overall pointscore for the stock rider is named after Fred's late daughter, Deborah Paterson. The Glowalman is also an Australian Bushmen's Campdraft and Rodeo Association-affiliated event, which means all points earned by the competitors go toward their national total. The first competition was held in September 1984 during the school holidays. It was eventually moved to the second week of the July school holidays. As the Glowalman edges closer to its fortieth birthday, it continues to be a much sought-after school holiday occasion. Originally the event held a rodeo along with a campdraft. However, the rodeo component faded out, with more sporting events taking place. The Glowalman averages around 400 campdraft entries and 1,200 individual sporting entries. The sporting events include the flag, bend, barrel, bonfield bounce, ben bar aft and stock rider.

The Glowalman is specifically for juniors, with competitors aged from eight years to under 21 years, but activities are offered for under eight-year-olds as well. Due to the popularity of the Glowalman, in 2004 Fred decided to add another dimension to the event by organising an exchange with Western Australia. The committee chooses a competitor to represent New South Wales during events in WA. The representative is chosen based on sportsmanship, attitude and participation, not on results. Kelvin Gregory has been an active supporter of the Glowalman and has featured on many committees over the years. Kelvin has remained involved for so long purely because of his passion to see the future of horse sports survive through young competitors. I congratulate the committees who put this week-long event together. I make special mention of the Gloucester committee, which consists of approximately 10 members, president Howard Schultz, secretary Kathy Sansom and treasurer Leonie Edwards. I am sure Fred and Kelvin would want me to acknowledge everyone who has assisted Glowalman over the years and played a part in its enduring success.

Glowalman is about not only the competition for young riders but also social connections and spending time with other families who love horse sports. Sadly, like so many other carnivals and festivals, for the past two years Glowalman has had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fingers are crossed that this year in 2022 we will see this wonderful horse sport event take place again in the July school holidays in the mid-coast region. Finally, I commend Fred Paterson for his brilliant idea, which attracts hundreds of families and young competitors to the mid coast to compete. I conclude with a quote from Fred, who recalls:

Some said it won't last. It's more than lasted—it's grown and grown.

May the Glowalman continue to prosper.

TUGGERAH RAILWAY STATION

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:34): Congratulations on your promotion, Mr Temporary Speaker (Mr Alex Greenwich). Tonight I want to talk about lifts at Tuggerah railway station and ask, when is a promise not a promise? I also want to ask, at what point do we decide that a promise made by the Liberal Party and The Nationals, the current Government, in the heat of an election campaign is not being delivered and was no promise at all? These questions are relevant when we consider the history of lifts at Tuggerah station on the Central Coast. They are particularly relevant now, given that the transport Minister and Premier who promised lifts at Tuggerah station have left this Parliament and we now have a new Premier and a new transport Minister.

I begin the story of lifts at Tuggerah station and take members of the House back to 2011 and a newspaper clipping dated 11 March from the then *Express Advocate*, which showed a younger David Harris, then the member for Wyong, and a younger David Mehan, the candidate for The Entrance at the time. The newspaper report stated that the then Labor Government had commenced work to upgrade the railway station, including a platform shelter, car parking, a bus interchange and the "provision of lifts."

It is a matter of public record that the current Liberal-Nationals Government won the 2011 election and, whilst some of the upgrades at Tuggerah were completed, the lifts were cancelled. That is the way things have stayed ever since. I was not successful in 2011, but I was elected in 2015. One of the first community concerns put to me by my new constituents was the desperate need for lifts at Tuggerah station, so we went to work. However, it soon became apparent that having cancelled the lifts at Tuggerah, the new Government was not interested in the project at all. A petition yielded this response on 1 December 2017 from then Minister Andrew Constance:

I write in response to the petition lodged on 22 November 2017 by Mr David Mehan MP, Member for The Entrance, regarding the constriction of lifts at Tuggerah Railway Station. Contrary to the comments made by the Member for The Entrance, Tuggerah Station is accessible. The ramps on both sides of the station and to the platform comply with gradients for wheelchair accessibility.

That infuriated my constituents, and our campaign continued. I worked on my own party as well. On 9 November 2018 Labor announced its intention to build lifts at Tuggerah station should it succeed in the 2019 election. Then on 8 February 2019 former Labor leader Michael Daley confirmed the promise. In the meantime, in the heat of the election campaign, Minister Constance had a change of mind and also announced lifts at Tuggerah, as well as other upgrades. That was in a media release dated 23 January 2019. The important thing from the community's point of view was we now had a bipartisan commitment to build lifts at Tuggerah. Unfortunately, since then little has occurred. On 20 October 2019 I was sent a letter from the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads at the time, the Hon. Eleni Petinos, who wrote:

My earlier advice remains unchanged, that the provision of lifts at Tuggerah Station is in the early planning phase. Subject to community consultation and planning approval, construction work will commence in 2021.

On 18 May 2020 another transport Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Stephen Bromhead, said the same thing:

... construction work is targeted to commence in 2021.

Nothing has happened. The current update on the Transport website was only reviewed on 20 November 2020. It has nothing. It talks about planning being underway. There are no plans for my community; there is nothing there for the community to see. I am getting very concerned about the commitment of this Government to the project. On 1 February I wrote to the new transport Minister, Minister Elliott. My community is concerned that the project has been quietly shelved by this Government, which was never really committed to the lifts at Tuggerah station. My community deserves to be told; they deserve better from this Government. Will the Government keep its promise and when will it have the lifts built at Tuggerah station? Let me be very clear to members of this House and to my community, I will not rest until we have lifts at Tuggerah station.

RYDE MAYOR JORDAN LANE

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government) (18:39): Congratulations on your appointment, Mr Temporary Speaker (Mr Alex Greenwich). It is an outstanding appointment in my view. I congratulate Jordan Lane. He has been elected as the new mayor of Ryde. Ryde has been my home for almost my entire life, and I have watched it grow and develop over the years. It has flourished due to individuals who work tirelessly for the amazing people who live in our beautiful home. Jordan Lane is one of those outstanding individuals, whom I am very pleased to acknowledge as our new mayor. He is the youngest Ryde mayor ever. That is an extraordinary achievement and an honour that could not have gone to a more hardworking and deserving young man. It is a wonderful opportunity for the State and the council to work together to achieve positive outcomes for our community.

I first met Jordan through Max Potential, one of Australia's longest running youth development programs. The inspiring organisation is a unique personal leadership development program that runs over five months. It connects emerging young leaders from local high schools with community leaders from all walks of life. I have been and will continue to be a proud supporter of that program. Jordan is a person with authentic leadership qualities and with community service in his heart. He was school captain in 2012 at Marist College Eastwood, which is my dad's old school and my old school as well. He has worked in the private and public sectors and has demonstrated that regardless of where life takes him, he puts his best foot forward and always strives to do the best job for his community.

Alongside his impressive work efforts, he has also been working hard on his education. He finished his bachelor degree and masters at Sydney university and is now working on completing his Juris Doctor at the University of New South Wales. It is a commendable profession. As a former lawyer, I might be a bit biased. Jordan grew up in the area and has proven that he is continually motivated to create a better community every day, first being elected to Ryde council in 2018. He has continually strived for the betterment of Ryde whilst serving on council for the past three years. I have no doubt that he will continue this important endeavour as Ryde's mayor.

Jordan is supported by a number of Liberal Ryde councillors who were re-elected alongside him: Sarkis Yedelian, who stands for inclusion, accountability and sustainability; and Trenton Brown, who currently works as a governance adviser with the State Government and is passionate about stopping overdevelopment in Ryde. Jordan is also supported by Liberal councillors who were elected for the first time, including Sophie Lara Watson, who is a young professional working as an auditor and holds a chartered account membership; Shweta Deshpande, who is a local mum of two primary school-age kids and who also works full time in the pharmaceutical industry; Daniel Han, who is a local high school teacher with a pharmacy background and who has worked and lived in Ryde for over 20 years; as well as the ever-present deputy mayor, Roy Maggio, who is an advocate for council's support of local small businesses and promotion of all forms of sport and other community-based recreational activities.

Jordan has definitely hit the ground running and he has a very visionary agenda for our local community. For starters, he is reforming and modernising Ryde's broken planning laws, improving local environment and amenity through planting trees, more chemical clean-outs and expanding off-leash park areas for dogs. There is so much more that we can do together with Ryde council, whether it is alfresco dining grants, small business grants—I acknowledge Minister Petinos at the table, whose leadership is driving that initiative for the betterment of businesses across our State—Meadowbank Park, where the primary school is going to a new site and the current site will go to council for a park; or the widening of Victoria Road to create the V-line. We also need to get on with investing half a billion dollars in the new Ryde hospital.

Jordan is mature beyond his years and through his vision, hard work and passion for the greater good he has a rare ability to bring people together on a journey. In my mind, humility and compassion for those less fortunate are true marks of leadership, and Jordan has those in his DNA. He always has the respect of others, even though he may not share their views. It is rare to see those highly developed qualities in someone so relatively young. I congratulate Mayor Jordan Lane on all the success he will bring.

COOGEE ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:44): I speak this evening about the dire state of health care in my electorate. On the one hand, I am incredibly lucky to have three public hospitals in my electorate: Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick; Prince of Wales Hospital; and Royal Hospital for Women, which is the only female-specific hospital in all of New South Wales. On the other hand, not a week goes by that I do not hear from doctors, nurses and allied health workers about the dire state of our hospitals. Yesterday tens of thousands of nurses across this State chose to strike for the first time in a decade. Nurses from all three of my hospitals were there, fighting for better conditions for themselves and better health care for us.

There are so many things in life that we take for granted until they are taken away from us or we really need them. These critical elements of a decent life are so often not appreciated until they are not there. COVID-19 has of course made us more aware of the many aspects of our lives that we should be grateful for. While most of us are very lucky that we do not regularly see the inside of a hospital, for years nurses, doctors and healthcare staff have been talking about understaffing and unsafe working conditions that threaten the delivery of quality health care to our community. Those engaged in the delivery of healthcare services and many of their recipients have been aware of this looming crisis for years, but now we are all witnesses to nursing shortages, extended emergency waiting times, long waits for ambulances and even the absence of radiographers and radiologists. Behind these now visible problems are exhausted, overworked, stressed and underpaid healthcare workers, who have put their own lives in danger to be our frontline defence during this pandemic.

At the Prince of Wales Hospital in September 2021—in just one month—there were 328 hours of unfilled nursing shifts. Last year surgical dressers in the spinal unit at Prince of Wales Hospital had three staff leave, and they are yet to be replaced. Domestic services and food services at the Randwick hospital campus regularly complain of shifts being left vacant. Clinical support officers have become a dumping ground for any additional tasks that need doing on the wards and workloads are becoming completely unsustainable. I have personally experienced the very best and worst of our healthcare system. During the 2019 election campaign my father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and spent extended time in and out of hospital. Nursing and allied health staff were almost always amazing in their delivery of quality care, yet cracks in the system were already evident in staff turnover, reliance on casual contract staff and inadequate staffing levels, particularly on weekends.

The current problems in our healthcare system are nothing new. COVID has simply highlighted issues that have been bubbling away and increasingly worsening as even more pressure is put on our already stretched healthcare system. Simply not enough nurses, midwives or allied health workers are being rostered on each shift, resulting in workplace fatigue and dangerous workplace conditions. Emergency and surgical wait times continue to balloon. Kitchen staff, who are without sufficient training, are required to care for patients. Incidences of violence in hospitals continue to grow. There are not enough nurses for patients, and it is putting patients' lives at risk. We need better staff-to-patient ratios to safeguard the future of our public health system. I have been an unwavering supporter of nurse-to-patient ratios for years, and I will continue to be so.

Good nurse-to-patient ratios ensure a safe level of care and decrease the risk of poor patient outcomes as well as unnecessary deaths. Without the right ratios, patients across New South Wales are missing out on thousands of hours of much-needed nursing care. Research over the past 20 years has shown a direct correlation between nurse staffing levels and improved patient outcomes. Research conducted on ratios implemented in Queensland shows that 185 lives have been saved since the policy came into effect and a further 255 readmissions were prevented. If patient care is not enough justification, since Queensland implemented ratios, the Government there has saved \$70 million attributable to the improvement in patient outcomes. We must address the staffing shortages and workloads of all health workers across New South Wales immediately.

HARRINGTON AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:49): This year on Australia Day I was honoured to join the Harrington community to acknowledge and celebrate our nation's history—from our first inhabitants, the Biripi people, to those extraordinary individuals who have achieved milestones in sport, leadership and service to their community. I shared the day with former Deputy Prime Minister and local resident Mark Vaile and the chairman of Harrington Crowdy Head Chamber of Commerce, Mike Parsons, to present a number of awards to deserving nominees.

The prestigious Citizen of the Year award for 2022 was presented to Cheryl Rowe from Marine Rescue Crowdy Harrington for her multifaceted roles and tireless service to the organisation. Cheryl is simply a marvel in myriad tasks she has performed in Marine Rescue over many years, including radio operator, workplace trainer and official training officer. In 2019 Cheryl was appointed deputy unit commander and, after the tragic loss of unit commander Leon Elelman in 2020, she stepped up and absorbed the role. Cheryl lives by the Marine Rescue mission of "Saving lives in the water", and her achievements in recruiting volunteers and leading the organisation are truly outstanding.

The Junior Citizen of the Year was awarded to Calista Elmer for her exemplary school ethic, maturity and leadership inside and outside of the classroom. Calista is an active member of the Crowdy Head Surf Life Saving Club and is a positive role model to her fellow students. Volunteer of the Year was presented to Ruth Cheers of Harrington for nearly one-quarter of a century volunteering with a number of organisations since she moved to the area in 1997. Despite now being in her senior years, Ruth commits her time to the Harrington branch of the Country Women's Association, the Anglican church op shop, Friday craft group and her church's pastoral care team. Her incredible enthusiasm for supporting others in her community is impressive and no doubt inspires others to give back through volunteering.

The Volunteer Group of the Year was presented to the Harrington Waters volunteer garden group. Formed in 2010 to assist the MidCoast Council in managing the public reserves of Harrington, this small but dedicated group of members has donated hours to restoring and managing the river walk lawns and gardens between the boat ramp and Victoria Parade beside the harbour boulevard. With 68 active members who have performed every garden task imaginable over the past 12 years, it is no surprise the group was acknowledged on Australia Day for their combined achievements. Darcy Eady-Muxlow was named Youth Citizen of the Year 2022, acknowledging his commitment to surf lifesaving, patrolling our beaches and sharing his knowledge with the younger nippers. He is officially the stage manager for the surf club, coordinating events including sprint, flags and relays. In his spare time Darcy volunteers at the Taree soup kitchen and is recognised as a role model to his peers at St Clare's High School.

Youth Sportsperson of the Year was awarded to Brooke Hosgood for her noteworthy accomplishments in school athletics, Little Athletics and surf lifesaving. In 2021 Brooke was selected to compete in cross country at a State level and is known as a fierce competitor in flags, board races, sprints and Iron Man events. She is a leader of the nippers, an amazing volunteer for surf lifesaving and a well-deserving recipient of this award. Last but by no means least, Bailey Martin from Harrington Public School was presented with the Junior Sportsperson of the Year award after his success in swimming at a regional level and his brilliant work ethic and leadership qualities at school. His encouragement of others to participate in sports carnivals and his positive sportsmanship that is always on display are qualities that earned him this acknowledgment.

It would not be an Australia Day in Harrington without the local Lions club assisting with the organisation of the event and, of course, the delicious fare for attendees, including a sausage sizzle and damper. I thank the chamber of commerce, which I know puts in many hours to make the event a success and one that is enjoyed by all who attend. In closing, I particularly commend Harrington Public School leaders Jarrah and Kaiden and thank them both for their thoughtful address. It was their first official duty as newly appointed leaders and they certainly impressed us all with their contribution. On behalf of the community, I congratulate and thank all nominees and winners.

REGIONAL COUNCILS

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (18:53): The Barwon electorate has 13 local government areas, and many of those councils cover vast geographical areas, have thousands of kilometres of roads to maintain and have duplication of assets across many communities. Councils provide vital services to communities, such as water, sewerage and garbage collection, and amenities such as pools, toilets and recreation areas. Without such services, communities cannot function. Councils also give us roads, bridges and other essential infrastructure. But regional councils in New South Wales are faced with a major problem that is often overlooked in the city and, it seems, by the New South Wales Government to date.

Whilst city councils have huge rate bases and can collect millions of dollars in revenue every year from fees and charges for services like parking, venue hire or development application fees, things are very different in the country. The unfortunate reality of regional councils is that many operate in areas with a relatively small population but a large geographic spread. They lack the large number of ratepayers and the vast revenue-raising abilities that are available to big city councils, yet they have to provide services and amenities to a much wider area. As a result, they are mostly dependent on government funds to pay for large, vitally important infrastructure projects. But even when they manage to secure that funding, there is a longer term cost that the councils have to bear. In effect, they are being killed with kindness. Accepting an asset or grant puts them further into the red.

When councils are handed a new project—say, a new stretch of road or a water treatment plant—they are left to deal with the depreciation. What might seem like a boon for the council becomes an ever-increasing burden. As any asset acquired by the council begins to deteriorate over time, it needs more and more upkeep, bringing about what is known as an infrastructure backlog—a lag between what is needed to look after the asset and the continued ability of the council to cover the cost. Figures from the New South Wales Government's Your Council website show:

Regional ... councils have the largest infrastructure backlogs in total dollar terms, with an average backlog of \$52 million, with Metropolitan councils having an average backlog of \$28.7 million.

As already mentioned, this is combined with lower opportunities for revenue and a much smaller rate base. On multiple occasions councils in the Barwon electorate have refused to take on assets that would bring a community benefit because of the depreciation implications. The accounting rules are denying people in regional New South Wales opportunities for better public assets and more public amenities. While a new asset built in a big city might add value, draw tourists and help raise revenue, in regional areas—despite being of major use or value to the local population—an asset might not do anything to substantially increase the council's revenue; it might do quite the opposite.

There is a burden of relentless cost shifting from State and Federal governments to councils. We are expecting councils to do more but not creating the financial environment to ensure their viability. If cost shifting is to continue without commonsense changes to accounting rules, especially for depreciation, the future viability of regional councils is at increasing risk. It is clear that the rules that work for city councils do not always work for people in the bush. The burden of depreciation thereby becomes a disincentive for taking on a big infrastructure project and, in some cases, regional councils run close to being unable to operate because of the excessive cost of depreciation of their assets. In the geographically largest council area in the State, there is a duplication of assets due to its sheer size. For example, it has more than one airport, pool and sports field. All of them are essential to the community in the region, but all of them are also a drain on council resources.

There are even cases where a regional council is forced to take responsibility for the depreciation of an asset over which it has no control. One example is RFS fire trucks and buildings, which councils do not buy and have no ability to influence. But they still have to wear the depreciation implications. It is a matter of survival for some regional councils. They need to be relieved of the cost burden of accepting assets acquired or they risk going under. We cannot continue to use the same accounting rules for councils in regional New South Wales. The disadvantage of regional councils is exacerbated by these accounting rules they must operate under. I implore the New South Wales Government to acknowledge the difference between a cashed-up metropolitan council and regional councils struggling to fund basic services. Either the State Government needs to cover the cost of depreciation on the assets because the local council has not funded them, or the Government should take ownership of the government-funded asset and then pay the council to manage the asset.

SWANSEA ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (18:58): The lack of public transport services available within the Cams Wharf, Catherine Hill Bay, Murrays Beach and Nords Wharf communities has been an issue for far too long. My office has been contacted by residents from these suburbs expressing their need for greater access to public transport. Currently only one transport service, the route 99 bus, operates via most of these communities. It operates only twice per weekday between Lake Haven and Charlestown via Catherine Hill Bay. On Saturdays there is only one northbound service and two southbound services. There are no services at all on Sundays and public holidays. The Cams Wharf, Catherine Hill Bay, Murrays Beach and Nords Wharf communities are witnessing a dramatic population growth due to a number of large-scale residential developments taking place.

Recent developments include the Beaches estate at Catherine Hill Bay and the Murrays Beach estate. There are several other residential developments planned for the area, including one at Middle Camp, which is north of Catherine Hill Bay, Nords Wharf and Pinny Beach. With these developments in mind and the fact that many young families are moving to the area, Lake Macquarie City Council has estimated that the population of these communities will continue to grow from approximately 2,000 persons to almost 7,000 persons by 2036. These suburbs have been overlooked by the Government for public transport improvements for a number of years, many of which I have mentioned in this Parliament on a number of occasions. Given the area's growing population rate, greater public transport services are urgently needed to service these communities and prevent social isolation.

In addition, many Cams Wharf, Catherine Hill Bay, Murrays Beach and Nords Wharf parents and guardians have shared with me the difficulties they experience in getting their children to and from school each day because of the lack of transport services. I am aware that there are no morning school bus services to Swansea High School, which is in actual fact the local high school for Catherine Hill Bay students. There are also no school bus services to or from the local Catholic schools to Lake Munmorah and Swansea. Due to the absence of school bus services operating via these communities, parents and guardians are required to transport their kids to and from a bus stop on the Pacific Highway or at Nords Wharf. This is difficult for many working families, who often have work-related commitments around school start and finish times. In fact, one mother has informed me that she has to book a taxi for her son to travel to and from school most days because she and her husband work.

Safety is also a major issue. Given the walking distance to the bus stops, combined with the 80 kilometre per hour speed limit on the Pacific Highway, poor crash history and lack of safe crossing facilities, it is simply too dangerous for these kids to catch a bus on the highway. I understand that some parents and guardians are eligible for a School Drive Subsidy because of the limited public transport available in these areas. The subsidy offsets the cost of parents and guardians using their vehicle to drive their children all or part of the way to school. I have no doubt that this subsidy has assisted some of the impacted families. However, this measure would also be costing the Government a substantial amount of money and does not sufficiently address the lack of public transport services available within those communities of Cams Wharf, Catherine Hill Bay, Murrays Beach and Nords Wharf.

Moreover, buses do not operate in Murrays Beach, despite the number of bus stops present in the estate. In April 2018 I provided the former Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast and the Hunter with a petition of more than 500 signatures from Murrays Beach residents calling on the New South Wales Government to provide them with public transport services. While I understand that the roads within the Murrays Beach estate are quite narrow and are not suitable for large buses, I have suggested to both past and present transport Ministers that small and medium buses be a solution. Despite this, no action has been taken.

The people of Cams Wharf, Catherine Hill Bay, Murrays Beach and Nords Wharf have been denied appropriate access to public transport services for far too long. The lack of transport services available to these communities is an issue that I have continually raised with the former transport Minister, with no action taken. I hope that the current transport Minister acknowledges the severity of this issue and provides Cams Wharf, Catherine Hill Bay, Murrays Beach and Nords Wharf residents with the public transport system they deserve.

I invite the transport Minister to come and see firsthand how difficult it is for these parents, and I hope that he can see how disadvantaged these communities are.

MYUNA BAY SPORTS AND RECREATION CENTRE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (19:03): Temporary Speaker (Mr David Layzell), I welcome you to the Speaker's panel. As a member of the Speaker's panel, I am proud to have you and Mr Alex Greenwich on board. Thank you very much for that. I wish to update the House on a matter I first raised in this Chamber in 2019. In March of that year, while the Government was in caretaker mode, the Office of Sport evacuated and closed Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre without warning on the basis of a risk report prepared for Origin Energy, which owns the nearby Eraring Power Station and associated ash dam.

I do not wish to go over too much old ground, but it is fair to say that neither the Lake Macquarie community nor I agreed with the closure and certainly not with the way it was done, but we have continued to work towards making sure we received a replacement centre. I am happy to report that we have cleared a major hurdle in achieving that. Last month the sport Minister joined me and a local delegation at Morisset, where a new sport and recreation hub will be established. This has been a difficult process to traverse. When the Myuna Bay centre was closed, the Office of Sport and Origin Energy agreed that a new centre would be built on a site that was owned by Origin and away from any risk posed by the dam. They eventually settled on a 21-hectare site at Eraring, but the site was a compromise. As with most compromises, it left a good deal wanting.

I knew we could do better, so I set out to find a better solution. That led me to Morisset. The new site is perfect for a sport and recreation centre. It is located on Morisset Park Road and loosely fits between Morisset Hospital and Bonnells Bay Public School. Long-time residents remember the site as the former piggery and farm that was part of the Morisset Hospital estate. While the land is now part of the State conservation area, it has had no attention since the piggery and farm operation ceased in the late 1980s. While mostly cleared, it is covered with weeds and is heavily degraded. I commissioned some architectural images depicting how this could work, and armed with those concept images, I spoke with the Office of Sport and the Minister about the possibility. On receiving some promising comments, I undertook additional discussions with local community members and had overwhelmingly positive feedback.

I am pleased to say that the Morisset site is now formally the preferred location. As I mentioned earlier, it has been locked in by Minister Ayres as the home of the new Lake Macquarie sport and recreation hub. An extensive public consultation phase, which will feed into the final design phase, will start soon. The likes of the Lake Macquarie City Council have already expressed a desire to be a part of the process, along with local police commander Superintendent Rashelle Conroy, who sees great opportunities for organisations, such as the PCYC, to be involved. My own office has fielded dozens of calls from local sporting organisations that want to be a part of this exciting project. It will be a twenty-first century facility that will be open to the local community, so things like playing fields, swimming pools, indoor sports halls and tennis courts—if they eventuate—can be used by everyone, not just those groups taking part in traditional sport and recreation activities. Origin Energy remains committed to funding the replacement centre, as per the commitment it made when the Myuna Bay centre was closed. I thank Origin for confirming that commitment. It may have taken three years to get here, but I am happy that things are finally moving ahead.

I acknowledge the support of Karen Jones and her team at the Office of Sport, the sport Minister and a number of others who acted in that capacity previously, including the member for Drummoyne, the member for Parramatta and the Hon. Natalie Ward from the other place. I have kept in touch with some of the staff who worked at the Myuna Bay centre, and they remain absolutely passionate about the role that sport and recreation centres play in educating and developing young people from our communities. I value their knowledge and advice and thank them for that. Eraring residents, particularly Terry Pascoe, were very patient and helpful as options were examined. I thank the members of the Lake Macquarie community for the support they have provided and the patience they have shown in getting to this point. I especially thank the 16,000 people who signed my petition when the Myuna Bay centre was closed. There is more to do, but we are well on the way to achieving something fantastic for our local community. Myuna Bay served the community well for over 60 years, and I am very proud to say that Morisset will serve us well for generations to come.

WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (19:07): In March 2021 the people of the Hawkesbury-Nepean region experienced an approximate one-in-20-year flood at Penrith and possibly a one-in-15-year flood at Windsor. This was at a time when persistent wet weather across the State caused floods in a number of catchments, particularly on the mid North Coast. For some residents of the Hawkesbury-Nepean region, this was a new experience, as it had been 30 years since an event of a similar scale. In March of last year, the water peaked at 12.9 metres at the Windsor gauge. It was in 1990 when the river was last that high.

Members will recall media reports of evacuations from flooded homes in the Emu Plains, in low-lying areas around Windsor and in small communities downstream from Windsor. We also saw a small number of homes in the Riverstone area inundated through backwater rise in Eastern Creek. In total, there were hundreds of homes inundated in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. Yet none of these homes would be permitted by today's development standards. To gain permission to develop land for residential use today, the land needs to be at the one-in-100-year flood level plus half a metre. In the areas referenced by the river gauge at Windsor, that means a level of 17.8 metres. That is 4.8 metres higher than the river rose last year.

The challenge faced in the region is that thousands of homes date from long before town planners and regulatory schemes were in place. Over the past 230 years many people settled and built on land which we now know is too low. Knowledge and understanding of flood levels developed gradually, and the controls and heights settings that were introduced had to be raised several times over the years. The result is that approximately 7,600 homes are on land lower than the current one-in-100-year flood level. Many of those homes are several metres lower and are subject to flooding in events like the March 2021 flood. They would be the first beneficiaries of raising the Warragamba Dam wall and would be spared the frequency of inundation which their location would otherwise imply. The risk of people drowning would be reduced.

If the Government were to do nothing, that would be to accept the real risk that loss of life will occur in the future. To me, doing nothing is not an option. If the Government were to buy out all these properties, it would cost billions of dollars, which is probably unaffordable. Yet doing that would yield no flood mitigation benefit beyond those particular properties. On the other hand, raising the wall of Warragamba Dam will reduce the risk for these residents while also reducing the level of risk faced by all residents on land above the one-in-100-year flood level all the way up to the probable maximum flood. Raising the wall will also massively reduce the inevitable damage bill for the community that major flooding will cause. Not only homes but also public buildings, commercial buildings, roads and bridges, powerlines and substations, sewage treatment plants, railway assets and all manner of other structures, public and private, would be damaged or destroyed by a major flood of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River. It constitutes the greatest potential disaster risk exposure faced by New South Wales.

In one respect I agree with those who have expressed reservations about the project. Raising the wall of Warragamba Dam should never result in lowering the level at which new urban development should be permitted in the valley, not by one millimetre. The project is not about that, and I would never agree to that. Further, any new release areas planned should only be approved if it can be demonstrated that the road network can support safe evacuation for all the residents of the area, current and future, who may need to evacuate in the event of major flooding. The project is not about enabling additional development on lower ground. It is about protecting those who already live on low land in the Hawkesbury due to historical development. It will also improve the safety factor available to those living on higher ground, who nevertheless must have safe egress as a condition of any development. The case for raising the wall of Warragamba Dam is based first and foremost on doing what is possible to reduce the risk of loss of life. That factor should never be lost in the fog of arguments on other matters, relevant and significant as they may be. As members, we have a duty to protect the people we are elected to represent. For them, the wall of Warragamba Dam must be raised.

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience) (19:12): I acknowledge the member for Riverstone and his advocacy. He is a fierce fighter for the people of his communities and always comes to the House to put forward his ideas on how to create a better world for his people and more broadly for the people of New South Wales. As the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, I acknowledge the pain and difficulties that the people of his electorate faced during and in the aftermath of that flooding event. It impacted upon many people across that region and beyond. Finally, I commend the member for Riverstone for standing up for his people and coming to this Chamber with his ideas. Let us hope that we can get on and do some really good work for the people of this State. They deserve it.

NURSES AND MIDWIVES

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (19:13): I am going to talk about nurses and midwives, but I just want to say that coming from Lismore I can really empathise with the member for Riverstone about floods—the damage caused and the emotional and other impacts on people. Yesterday local nurses and midwives went on strike in my local area. Whilst I could not join them, I made a statement which they read out. I will read that statement in the House tonight, as my contribution. It stated:

Today is the day you have decided to draw a line in the sand, to say 'no more'. Today is the day I stand with you and declare that the gloves are off and I shall fight for you, for safe staffing, for proper pay, proper conditions. Today is a call to action to our community to stand with our local nurses and midwives to ensure we have a strong, secure, safe nursing and midwifery workforce.

I add that our local community has been doing a lot of things to assist, like delivering food and drinks to the local hospital. They are doing all sorts of things within their capacity to help. I commend them for that. My statement to the nurses and midwives continued:

You have been extraordinarily patient these last few years because you care so much, but you cannot continue this way. I have to ask the NSW Government: Where are the 5,000 nurses and midwives you promised? I have to ask the NSW Government and the local National Party, who made the promise for 280 nurses and midwives, 32 doctors, 38 allied health workers and 50 hospital support workers in 2019, where are they? I have not seen one and I am sure you haven't either.

I add that Tenterfield hospital is within my electorate of Lismore. It comes under a different local health district [LHD]—Hunter New England. They have been asking for three by three by three to make sure that they have enough nurses to carry the 24-hour shifts that they have to do. I will continue to support them in that advocacy. My statement continued:

I have to ask the NSW Government where are the extra nurses—

that is, for across both of the LHDs that I represent, the Northern NSW LHD and the Hunter New England LHD—

Like you I have been patient as we deal with bushfires, floods, drought, COVID. The NSW Government now has to govern, has to deliver on its promises and has to ensure you, our trusted nurses and midwives have a proper workforce, proper pay and proper conditions.

I finished my statement:

The gloves are off. We must win this. We will win this.

Whilst on the issue of nurses and midwives, I will talk a little bit about Lismore Base Hospital. It is the big hospital within the Lismore electorate. Lismore Base Hospital nurses and midwives have worked the equivalent of 27 full-time positions of overtime in the previous month and this figure has been consistently above 20 full-time equivalents [FTE] for the past year. That is so for other hospitals in the region as well, including the Tweed Hospital, which is in a neighbouring electorate but is one of the big hospitals in our area. Other hospitals and multi-purpose services [MPSs]—and we have a lot of MPSs—are reporting large amounts of overtime. In addition, permanent part-time staff are working above their hours every week, which comes up as hidden overtime.

All the other hospitals across Northern NSW LHD are experiencing the same issues. Vacancies at Lismore Base Hospital are over 50 FTE and the overall figure for the LHD is over 100 vacant positions. Within Lismore Base Hospital, we also have a wonderful cancer care unit. It provides great care—the health workers work way beyond the call of duty—but it is understaffed as well. Professional rates of pay and ratios are well below those of other States. Both of those things need to come up. All of us here want to support nurses and midwives. One way we can do it is by improving the rates of pay and to take away the 2.5 per cent freeze on their wage increases. Another is by improving the ratios. Ratios are about safe staffing and about safe care for our patients.

NURSES AND MIDWIVES

COVID-19 AND SMALL BUSINESS

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (19:19): On the first sitting day of Parliament this year, tens of thousands of nurses and midwives took to the streets of Sydney and thousands more took to streets across regional New South Wales, including a large gathering in the Hunter. At the rally, I spoke with a nurse who works in an oncology-neurology ward in a Sydney hospital. She said that she regularly works 18-hour shifts because there is not enough staff and that it is dangerous. Another nurse I met said that with more than a decade of experience she had left her job. She is no longer nursing because she just cannot cope anymore. Standing with the nurses and speaking with them yesterday, I could hear and feel their hurt, frustration and anger at bearing the brunt of decisions made by this Government, not only during the global pandemic but also prior to that. They simply cannot take it anymore. The big message they were trying to send to the Government yesterday was that they are not coping. So I am saying it in this Chamber today in the hope that someone in the Government might actually listen.

The Government did not listen to the experts when it decided to remove modest restrictions in mid-December—a decision that was made entirely on the basis that our health system was coping and doing fine. But it was not. That decision made things so much worse. At that time in the Hunter we were already experiencing the enormous Omicron cluster, which was growing exponentially from The Argyle House nightclub event. Skyrocketing cases created immediate and significant workforce issues. Meanwhile Premier Perrottet was in Sydney telling people and the media that case numbers do not matter; but they did. The health experts said that they did, but he was not listening. Now our nurses and midwives are breaking. Instead of accepting any blame for those decisions and for what is continuing to play out, the Premier came into this place yesterday and again today beating his chest, saying how good his Government is.

In question time yesterday the health Minister claimed there was not a single area in New South Wales where a hospital has not been upgraded. That is not true. In Port Stephens we have one hospital. It is called the Tomaree Community Hospital. Probably no-one in the Government has heard about it because they simply do not care. For years our doctors, nurses and the entire community have been crying out for an upgrade and more health

services at that hospital. All we have seen is a rehousing of community health—not a single increase to beds or staffing or services at that hospital. This Government has refused to listen. Our hospital is continuing to struggle, and in fact it is getting worse as our population increases.

It is not only our doctors, nurses and midwives who this Government is failing to listen to. It has not even listened to the small businesses that it says it supposedly represents. Many of those businesses continue to struggle to survive, especially travel agents. For more than two years travel agents have had no product to sell. They cannot pivot or adapt their business when there is no product to sell. Instead, if they have not already closed, they have been forced to lay off their staff. So for travel agents, the Government's recent paltry offer of a percentage of payroll outgoings is insulting. Many travel agents have exhausted their own superannuation or remortgaged their homes in an effort to keep their doors open, after decades of building a profitable business.

To rub salt in their wounds, Government members hide behind the "borders reopening" and "cruise ships starting to sail again"—all these lovely announcements—but travel agents do not earn money until holidays actually commence. So they still face months and months of no income, but they cannot hold out until then. They are saying that they face bankruptcy. These are businesses in my electorate. They are saying that their doors will close in a matter of weeks, not months, but this Government is not listening to them. The Premier and Treasurer should urgently act to support travel agents to ensure that those small businesses can survive and do not lose everything. Today the media has reported on another area that has been ignored, domestic violence services, which have been led down the garden path by this Government. Eight months ago it promised funding—Staying Home Leaving Violence—to try to address the skyrocketing need for services. The funding did not appear. Those services still have not got the funding. This Government must start listening.

GOULBURN ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (19:24): Today I acknowledge the many Australia Day Award recipients, particularly those from the Goulburn electorate, whom I am exceptionally proud to represent in this place. The Goulburn electorate has many award winners for outstanding commitment to the public service and a Member of the Order Public Service Medal and Emergency Service Medal has been awarded. Ms Megan Lees Murrumbateman was awarded a Public Service Medal for her role in leading the Australian Defence Force national response to COVID-19 and for her provision of policy and communications advice to the defence community. Mr Daniel Gauchat of Woodlands received a Member of the Order for his service to education, the arts and business. Mr Gauchat's passion for the arts, education and business and the opportunities that this has provided for many others within the community is to be commended. Mr Mark Spencer of Binalong received an Emergency Service Medal for his ongoing commitment to service for the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association.

With five local government areas comprising the Goulburn electorate, unfortunately I could not attend all the Australia Day activities, but I was pleased to hear of the local award recipients. These people make our communities what they are. They are the heart and soul of our regional communities, and I recognise each of them today. In the Southern Highlands, Mr Eric Savage was awarded Wingecarribee shire's 2021 Australian Day Citizen of the Year for his community advocacy, volunteer work and leadership with the Berrima Residents Association. Mr Savage has been a passionate advocate, promoting the wellbeing of residents and progressing local issues on their behalf.

Mr Nathaniel Smith: A good man.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: A very good man. Moss Vale High School captain Jeremy Millward was awarded the Young Citizen of the Year for his advocacy for mental health and wellbeing programs and for his ongoing dedication to raising awareness and charity funding. Mr Millward is a wonderful young mentor for his peers and is to be congratulated on his commitment to these issues, which have impacted many in the community. I congratulate them both.

Goulburn Mulwaree 2022 Citizen of the Year was awarded to Mrs Heather West, who was recognised for her role as the coordinator of the Friends and Residents of Goulburn Swamplands, commonly known as FROGS, and the many other roles that she undertakes as part of the restoration of historic cemeteries, the Goulburn Historical Society and Galleries on Track. Mrs West is also an active member of the Goulburn Show Society and has written a number of books on Goulburn's history. I also recognise Goulburn Young Citizen of the Year Mr Anabarasan Mitchell. He was nominated for his work in fundraising, his musical talents and his high achievements in the sport of golf. This young gentleman is a true role model and mentor for his peers and he contributes significantly to his community.

This year I also had the pleasure of attending the Australia Day celebrations in Crookwell with the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley. I was

thrilled to be a part of such an historic occasion, at which there were many deserving community award nominees and recipients. In the upper Lachlan, the Taralga AP&H Association was acknowledged for its wonderful 100th annual Taralga Show. I acknowledge the amazing response to that event, especially during COVID-19, and all the hard work of the staff to hold it. Other Australia Day Award recipients for the upper Lachlan shire included Crookwell Citizen of the Year Helen Campbell, Gunning Citizen of the Year Kathy Johnson, Taralga Citizen of the Year Prudence Burfitt, Crookwell Young Citizen of the Year Tyson Allwright, Gunning Young Citizen of the Year Angus Mackay, Sportsperson of the Year Lachlan Croker and Young Sportsperson of the Year Jack Page.

Several award recipients in the Hilltops in my hometown of Boorowa were recognised for their contributions to the community, including Phil Riles, Helen McGrath, Julie Poplin and Bert McMahon. Boorowa Citizen of the Year was awarded to the hardworking Justin Fleming, who is an amazing community member. His work running the local rugby union club for 10 years has been amazing. He has increased participation in the sport and also has raised over \$100,000 for charity. Justin is also chair of the Country Education Foundation of Boorowa, which is absolutely remarkable. I cannot forget the Yass Valley Australia Day Awards. I congratulate its Citizen of the Year Barry O'Mara and Senior Citizen of the Year Gwen Warmington.

SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:29): I speak again on infrastructure within my electorate, particularly the proposed Sydney Olympic Park high school. The community has fought for a decade for this school. As the name suggests, it was always intended that the Sydney Olympic Park high school would go into Sydney Olympic Park. Geographically, that would make sense. It is the centre of the peninsula and it is accessible from Newington and Wentworth Point, where 24,000 to 25,000 people are going into high-rises and there is one road in and one road out. On the other side, it is also very accessible from the Carter Street precinct development, where 6,200 high-rises are being built.

The Sydney Olympic Park Authority made three offers of sites within the Olympic Park precinct, which the Government found unsuitable. The Sydney Olympic Park Authority is a government agency and acts at the discretion of the Minister. There were significant community concerns at the time that a commercial wave pool could be placed on car park P5 of Sydney Olympic Park, which is a large site that is very suitable for a high school—but a high school site could not be found within the precinct. At the end of the day, the Government announced that it is putting this high school on a site at Wentworth Point, which previously was made available for Peninsula park. The Government proposed it would open that park in 2016. We are now in 2022 and that parkland has not been built. It is on land owned by the Roads and Maritime Services and the State Government had a responsibility to build parklands for the 11,000 apartments that have been built there.

When this was announced, I gathered the P&Cs together and said, "We can fight to get this back into a better spot, but you've waited a decade for this school. I'm happy to do what the community wants me to do." They said, "Linda, we have waited far too long. There are far too many students waiting to go to schools who just cannot get into public schools in the catchment area. Even though it's not an ideal site, we will cop that just to get our high school." They will cop it, even though going into the peninsula to drop off and pick up children from school will create a huge traffic issue. That is particularly so because it is co-located to the Wentworth Point Public School, which is also on a small and constricted site.

The community had already given those concessions, which meant that they lost open space and they had to accept a higher density. So when the development application for this high school was lodged, they were furious to find out that they were not getting a 1,500-student capacity school, as recommended by the Department of Education. Instead, they were getting only stage one, which catered for 800 students and that stage two would possibly be built at a later time. Everybody on that peninsula knows that this Government's record on high schools is appalling. The Government has put 50,000 people into a peninsula that was supposed to have three schools—Wentworth Public School, Carter Street public school and a new high school in Sydney Olympic Park. At every step this Government has not delivered the capacity that is needed, nor has it made the funding available.

Wentworth Point Public School was meant to open in 2017 but it opened in 2018. The Department of Education said that it needed a capacity of 1,000 students, but the Government built it for 400 students. It was at capacity on day one, and it now has 15 demountables. The new Wentworth Point high school is being built. I have written to the Government and said that the community is furious about its two-stage build. Instead of coming back to me saying, "Look, we understand the frustration with the two stages. We understand the community's need, so we're going to build it," it said, "Funding is not available for stage two. You're getting only 800 students because funding is not available for stage two." In that same letter it mentioned funding for Carter Street public school. The letter states:

... funding will be assessed against competing projects in schools as part of the budget process. At this stage, a timeframe of when funding may be approved is not available.

This school was included in the Government's master plan for which half of the apartments have already been built, but there are no plans to fund the school. It is a disgrace.

MULGOA HSC DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVERS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (19:34): In this House tonight I acknowledge and commend the Mulgoa electorate's best and brightest, our community's 2021 Higher School Certificate distinguished achievers. Tonight I highlight those achievers and celebrate and recognise their hard work, determination and dedication. Attaining an HSC mark of 90 or above in a course of study is a remarkable achievement, and to have accomplished this all while managing through a global pandemic is phenomenal. It reflects the incredible work ethic and commitment to studies of each and every student. The achievement also recognises the staff and teachers who provided those students with the necessary skills, knowledge and belief that they could achieve as well as the parents and carers who encouraged and supported these students through the past two tumultuous years.

There were 165 students from the Mulgoa electorate who reached this educational status. I commend and recognise this tremendous talent. They are future innovators who will challenge the status quo to become captains of industry and entrepreneurs. Their success is indicative of the high-quality educational opportunities afforded to students in the Mulgoa region. Students from the length and breadth of my electorate were acknowledged by the NSW Education Standards Authority as distinguished achievers. The schools that produced distinguished achievers include Caroline Chisholm College, Cecil Hills High School, Christadelphian Heritage College Sydney, Emmaus Catholic College, Erskine Park High School, Glenmore Park High School, Nepean Christian School, Penrith Anglican College, St Clair High School, St Narsai Assyrian Christian College and Thomas Hassall Anglican College.

The principals, staff and teachers of those schools should feel incredibly proud of not only their students but also themselves. I cannot imagine the challenges they have endured over the past two years implementing online learning in the face of lockdowns and the additional time and commitment involved in maintaining connections with students and families. All members understand and place a great emphasis on the powerful, fundamental and transformative power of education. Education is the cornerstone of much of our society. It equips our children and grandchildren with the necessary tools to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century with confidence, vigour and conviction. Moreover, education has the profound ability to shape and reshape opportunities for young people. Education, after all, is the great equaliser. It ensures that individuals are afforded the ability to go above and beyond their social and economic status and boundaries.

To all those distinguished achievers in Mulgoa and beyond, I express my congratulations and best wishes—sentiments that I am sure are shared by all members in this place. I am confident that as learners they will achieve and accomplish much if they continue to persist in working hard and striving to reach their goals. On a personal note, I encourage all 2021 HSC graduates. At the end of the day, your HSC mark does not determine your future or your opportunities. Set your goals high, dream big, work hard, be calculated risk-takers and we will see you moving amongst us in the workforce and broader community. The class of 2021 should feel incredibly proud of what they have achieved, succeeding despite the challenges of managing through COVID-19. Everything these graduates have accomplished, especially during the past two tumultuous pandemic years, will hold them in good stead for the next chapter. Now that their formal years of schooling have come to an end, a new era of possibilities and opportunities has emerged. I wish them all the very best for future endeavours in whatever form they manifest and continued success as they pursue careers and personal and life goals.

TAXI LICENCES

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:38): Mr Temporary Speaker (Mr David Layzell), it is nice to see you in the chair tonight. I congratulate you on your promotion. Today I am calling on the Government to finally implement a taxi licence buyback scheme and to fully compensate those in the industry who have been experiencing severe financial hardship since reforms were introduced in 2016. It is not the first time that I have stood in this place and talked about what has been going on in the taxi industry, and the hardworking people who drive taxis. Since 2015, the value of taxi licences in New South Wales has decreased by at least 80 per cent as a result of the Government's handling of rideshare services operating in the State and through the introduction of the Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016.

In the Wollongong area, the value of a licence has dropped to just \$30,000 in 2019, compared to \$200,000 just six years earlier. The impact on leased licences has also been significant, with lease values averaging \$25,000 per year before the reforms and declining to an average of \$13,000 after the introduction of the reforms. During the pandemic, the lease values have declined even further, with many owners reporting that they received just \$1 a month from the leasing of their licences in 2020. Due to the Government's various reforms and the introduction of rideshare apps without proper compensation for taxi licences, owners have been left with debts they can no longer pay.

I received correspondence last November from Muhammad Ali Shabassi, a taxidriver in my electorate, who owns plates with his wife. They believed them to be a solid financial investment and so did not invest in superannuation. They are hardworking, decent people who have worked hard all of their lives, only to have the Government rip it away from them. They deserve better than that. Their plates generated a comfortable income until 2015. Over the next few years, their income decreased significantly and the expenses for their cars increased. Their income today is less than 50 per cent of what it was in 2014. Mohammed has gone into debt to try to keep the cars on the road. His financial stress has impacted his relationship with his wife, and he has since fallen very ill. He is now unable to drive his taxis.

Mohammed and many others like him have been abandoned by the Government. They purchased an asset in the past that they believed was a safe investment. They did not foresee—rightfully so—that the Government would change the regulations so drastically, causing the value of their assets to collapse. We all know that the Government's previous industry assistance package of \$250 million was woefully insignificant and insufficient and failed to alleviate the financial hardship that was and continues to be felt across the industry. Of the \$142 million made available to those in the industry experiencing financial hardship under the additional assistance payments scheme, only \$42 million had been spent as of December 2020. Of the 1,258 applicants for the scheme, a payment of zero was given in 727 cases. The Government purposely made the payments as inaccessible as possible. We have seen that before. The application consisted of 31 pages of advice material, a 26-page information kit and a set of control conditions, comprising 46 requirements. The application also asked for information on health issues, living expenses and three years of tax records for both the applicant and their partner.

That task would have been extremely difficult and taxing for many, particularly those who are elderly, unwell, came from non-English-speaking backgrounds or had limited literacy and computer skills. Owners could apply for the compensation of \$20,000 per licence for a maximum of two licences, and the compensation received was deemed taxable by the Federal Government. That meant that the \$20,000 of compensation was only \$14,000 in real terms. Those people deserve better treatment from this Government than to have their livelihoods and nest eggs ripped away from them. I am calling on the Government again tonight, as I have many times before, to compensate owner-drivers of taxis with the proper compensation they deserve—the market value. The Government did it to the commercial fishers and now it is doing it to the taxidrivers. I am again calling on the Government to bring in a fair payment for those licences.

Community Recognition Notices

PAK-AUS-ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I am happy to recognise the Pak-Aus Engineers Association (known as PEA). The Association held a function on Saturday 11 December 2021 at Yagoona to welcome the High Commissioner of Pakistan to Australia, His Excellency Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri. Also present at the event was the Pakistani Consul General in Sydney Mr Muhammad Ashraf. The PEA is an organisation that was established in 2017 to provide pro-bono professional advice and support to projects and communities. It helps finding job placements for engineers and providing career support and mentoring to young professionals. I should acknowledge the office-bearers in the association: Insaf Khan, President, Khalid Javed, Vice-President, and Fuad Ahmed, General Secretary. Other members of the Executive include Dr Tahir Qureshi, Ahmed Jamal, Dr Mansoor Syed, Iqbal Khan, and Syed Abdul Ghani Azizi. The event also saw the presentation of a number of Engineering Excellence Awards including to Engineers of many decades of experience.

BERNARDINO SIRY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise Bernardino Siry, who sadly passed away on 7 January this year. He was a good man and a friend of mine. He was born on 4 May 1952 in Same, East Timor. He was a very well-known figure in the East Timorese Community in south-west Sydney. He was well known in the broader community as a Multicultural Community Liaison Officer with Green Valley police station and with Liverpool City Police Area Command. His funeral was held at All Saints Catholic Church, Liverpool. He will be sorely missed by his family, his friends, and the East Timorese community in south-west Sydney.

AUSTRALIA DAY 26 JANUARY 2022 – ALBURY CITY

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I would like to congratulate a number of residents of the Albury Electorate who received honours or recognition from the government or a council on Australia Day 2022. Albury City 2022 Citizen of the Year - Beth Docksey for her pioneering role with NSW Police, and for her work as a mentor for 'BACKUP for Life', which supports former NSW Police officers in their life after being in the force. Beth was also instrumental in establishing Bowls GR8 for Brains and has been heavily involved in ongoing community work. Albury City Volunteer of the Year - Phillip Cooper for his service to St John Ambulance.

Meg Harris – Albury-born Meg was awarded an Order of Australian Medal for her service to sport period at the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo Meg received a gold medal swimming the 2nd leg of the 4×100 m freestyle event which set a new world record. I thank you all for your contribution. Your efforts are making a difference for your regional community.

DANIEL KAHL

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—I would like to recognise Daniel Kahl of Narrabri, who has been awarded the Central North Rugby Union's 2021 prime services to rugby award. This prestigious award is a reflection of his dedication and invaluable service to the game. Daniel is the zone's junior vice president, Narrabri Rugby Club's assistant secretary, referee liaison and long-time player for Narrabri and Central North. He puts his heart and soul into rugby union and is determined to improve the standard of the game in the zone. Daniel is very well deserving of this award, and I would like to congratulate and thank him for his continued passion and commitment to this sport.

VERONICA (BON) EDWARDS RETIREMENT

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—After more than fifty years in the workforce, Veronica (Bon) Edwards is ready to spend more time with her family and exploring Australia. She's worked in many roles, a roadhouse waitress, a shearer's cook, a roustabout, eventually leading to her role as a Diabetes Educator with Maari Ma's Primary Health Service in Wilcannia. For twenty-seven years Veronica, has assisted the Wilcannia community with their health needs and will be sorely missed by her colleagues and clients. Veronica (Bon), I commend you on your many years of service to the Wilcannia community and thank you for your dedication to remote health service delivery. I wish you all the best in your retirement.

SHANNA WHAN, AUSTRALIA'S LOCAL HERO

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Maules Creek resident Shanna Whan has been named Australia's Local Hero at the Australian of the Year Awards. Shanna was honoured nationally for her work addressing alcohol use in rural communities through her charity, Sober in the Country. The award paid tribute to Shanna single-handedly creating significant social impact and change around how we discuss and use alcohol in rural Australia. What began as volunteer work to help others locally, evolved into a grassroots charity which now offers peer support, broad scale advocacy and education. I would like to congratulate Shanna on this outstanding award and importantly thank her for such commitment and dedication to this important cause.

HARRY HUNT

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)—I recognise Harry Hunt who recently passed away aged 77. Harry has been a significant figure in Southwest Sydney for decades. He ran Hunt's Hotel at The Crossroads for more than 50 years and did many things for our area. He had a long-time involvement with Liverpool Chamber of Commerce and with tourism taskforces, as well as with Rotary. He was also famed for his charitable contributions and his Christmas lunches. His support of fundraising events extended to SES, medical research and Liverpool Hospital, and many other worthy causes. He was a member of the Order of Australia. He made a very significant contribution to our area and was a good man. He leaves behind his wife, 2 daughters, a son, a son-in-law and grandchildren. He will be missed.

W.J. SANDERS MARRICKVILLE – AUSTRALIAN OPEN TROPHY MAKER

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—Marrickville is proudly a community with manufacturing at its heart. Our reputation for hard work and excellence was brought to the fore earlier this year when Ash Barty held up her history-making trophy when she won the Australian Open, a trophy made in Marrickville. The W.J Sanders Company has been running manufacturing operations for 110 years. Their warehouse at Fitzroy Street, Marrickville, has been the birthplace of many significant trophies, but perhaps none as special or relevant as the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup which Ash Barty took home after her stellar victory on the court. The trophy was handcrafted over 8 months by a team of 10 craftsmen and women, who diligently worked to do Marrickville proud when Ash Barty held up the trophy on every Australian's TV screen. On top of this important trophy, W.J Sanders was asked for the first time to make all the trophies for the whole Australian open, a total of 90 trophies. Thank you W.J Sanders' Marrickville team for your effort and craftsmanship – you have ensured that everyone knows just how hardworking Marrickville is.

A NEW CHAPTER FOR REVERSE GARBAGE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—Reverse Garbage is beginning a new chapter after relocating to a new premises at 30 Carrington Road, Marrickville, and appointing a new CEO, Kirsten Junor. Reverse Garbage has relocated from its previous home at Addison Road Community Centre, where it was located for over 46 years. Moving after almost 50 years in the same location posed unique challenges, but thanks to the extraordinary

leadership and hard work of staff, the doors of the new premises opened in January. I'm pleased the beloved mosquito sculpture and giant dinosaur head survived the move and have found a new home alongside the trademark treasures Reverse Garbage is known for. I warmly congratulate Kirsten Junor on her appointment as CEO. Kirsten has been with the organisation for almost 7 years as the Creative Director and brings a wealth of experience in community organisations. I extend huge thanks to Naomi Brennan, the outgoing CEO, and wish her all the very best for her retirement. Naomi's years of service have ensured a long and prosperous future for the organisation. Congratulations Reverse Garbage on this exciting new chapter – I encourage everyone to head down and check out the new location.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS FOR KIDS

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)—I acknowledge all the local doctors, nurses, pharmacists and health workers who have helped ensure children aged between the ages of 5 and 11 have been able to get vaccinated in time for the return of school. COVID has been tough on kids. Lockdowns moved the classroom to the lounge room, and play time was restricted to their siblings or parents. Despite many of them being too young to understand the depths of the virus and the harms it posed, they knew they had to stay home and follow the rules to keep their families and communities safe. I'm so proud that in just the last month, the number of 5- to 11-year-olds who have received a jab is nearly 45 per cent. Almost half of all students running back into playgrounds are able to do so with the added protection of at least one vaccination. Thank you to every one of the kids and young people who have done their bit and gotten vaccinated, to the many parents and carers holding their little ones' hand through it, and of course thank you to all the health workers who made it possible.

CONGRATULATIONS TO LABOR COUNCILLORS IN WAVERLEY AND RANDWICK

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—I wish to congratulate the newly elected and re-elected councillors of Waverley and Randwick Councils. The Local Government elections were hard fought, in difficult circumstances, and it was fantastic to see so many locals out casting their votes and enjoying a democracy sausage or two. On Waverley Council, I would like to congratulate new councillor, Cr Michelle Gray in Bondi Ward, Cr Steven Lewis in Hunter Ward, Cr Paula Masselos in Lawson Ward and new councillor, Cr Tim Murray, in my old ward, Waverley Ward. Congratulations also to Cr Paula Masselos for being re-elected as Mayor of Waverley Council for another term. On Randwick City Council, congratulations to Cr Alexandra Luxford in West Ward, Cr Danny Said in South Ward, Cr Kathy Neilson in North Ward, new councillor Cr Marea Wilson in East Ward, and Cr Dylan Parker in Central Ward. Congratulations also to Cr Parker for being re-elected as the Mayor of Randwick, extending on from his short tenure in the lead up to the Local Council elections. I look forward to working with both Waverley and Randwick councils to continue to support and improve our wonderful local communities.

WARREN DOYLE

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)—Today I wish to recognise the efforts and dedication of Randwick resident, Warren Doyle. For the past 5 years, Warren has worked tirelessly, tending and watering the young plants in Fred Hollows Reserve, Randwick, and has done a remarkable job at rejuvenating the green space. Warren has also worked diligently along large sections of the walking track to make the vista more pleasing for the many locals and visitors who use the track every day. Warren has taken enormous pride in the work he has carried out and receives many positive comments from passers-by. Warren has even inspired others to lend a hand in Fred Hollows Reserve and it is one of these volunteers that have brought Warren's great work to my attention. Another volunteer, a local horticulture student, was recently able to access more than 100 native plants that would otherwise have gone to waste, which Warren and the others have added to impressive array of native flora in the reserve. Fred Hollows Reserve has become a show piece of native colour for all those who use the track to enjoy. Congratulations and thank you Warren for dedicating so much time and effort to our community.

AUSTRALIA DAY 2022

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)—Speaker, I give that notice that this House recognise the citizens of Manly who received Australia day honours. This includes Late Mr David Allen of Balgowlah who received an OAM for his service to veterans and the community. The Late Mr Alister Forsyth of Manly who received an OAM for his service to the Wollombi Valley and the Wollombi Valley Rural Fire Brigade. I would further ask the house to recognise Ms Rachel Grimes of Freshwater who received an AM for her contributions to accounting and professional associations. Finally, I ask the House to recognise Mr Martin Hill of Seaforth who was awarded an AM for his contributions to business, sailing and the broader community. I thank them all for their service and contributions to their respective areas and the significant respect they bring to Manly electorate.

WAKEHURST GOLF CLUB

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)—Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the fantastic work of Wakehurst golf club to raise money for the Jane McGrath foundation. In late January Wakehurst golf club hosted raffles and opportunities to donate. This resulted in \$4604 dollars being raised for the McGrath foundation which raises money to fund McGrath Breast Care Nurses who provide invaluable support and care to women and men experiencing breast cancer. The fundraising work by Wakehurst golf club is essential and highlights the compassionate and generous nature of the people of Manly making me immensely proud to represent them.

NEW THEATRE, NEWTOWN

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate the New Theatre on their successful Community Building Partnership Grant 2021. New Theatre has been a landmark of Newtown since 1973, and one of Australia's oldest continuing producing theatres. They have played a massive role in educating and guiding young talent, all without any on-going grants or subsidies. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the volunteers over decades that have made such a significant contribution to keep New Theatre operating and keeping the productions happening. This grant will be used for New Theatre's Raise the Roof project, to install a much-needed new roof for the theatre. I thank the New Theatre team and community for their continuous contribution to our creative community.

NEWTOWN NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL P&C

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate Newtown North Public School P&C for their successful Community Building Partnership Grant. This grant will be used for the creation of a nature observation space at the school. Newtown North Public School P&C does critical work supporting Newtown North Public School to focus on enhancing the learning experiences of its students. None of this would happen without the contribution of parents, carers and the school community working together. I acknowledge and thank members of the Newtown North Public School's P&C for all their hard work and the contribution they make to the education and care of the next generation.

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOL P&C

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate Newtown Public School P&C on their successful Community Building Partnership Grant. This grant will be used to deliver an inclusive outdoor playground upgrade. Newtown Public School is an important part of the Newtown community, and the P&C works tirelessly and truly values community connection - working closely with families, local businesses and friends. Our public schools rely on the contributions of parents, carers and the school community for so much - and it is wonderful to see the contribution made by Newtown Public School's P&C. In these challenging times, I acknowledge and thank the parents and carers for all their hard work, as well as the teachers and administrative and support staff for all they do for our next generation.

NORTH SHORE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS WINNERS 2021

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—I want to congratulate all of the winners from my electorate for the North Shore Local Business Awards 2021. It is pleasing to see local businesses doing so well after such a tumultuous year with the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been so diligent with constant changes to public health orders and lockdown conditions, and I appreciate the significant time and effort they have put into being COVID-19 safe. Congratulations to Laura Stone of Sydney By Kayak who won Business Person of the Year. Sydney By Kayak offers tours around the beautiful North Shore coastline and Sydney Harbour Bridge, as well as rubbish collection tours to help keep Sydney Harbour clean. Other businesses from my electorate who took home awards include Giuseppe's Gourmet Meats, Charlie & Frank's – North Sydney, Lessons Afloat, Floriade, Marlow & Finch, Le Coq and Fish, the North Shore Plumbing Group, and Teho. I extend my congratulations to all of these businesses, and the teams behind them, for their success. Thank you to the Local Business Awards team for organising this great event and helping give business in our community the recognition they deserve.

NORTH SYDNEY GIRLS HIGH ETHICS OLYMPIAD TEAM WINS GOLD MEDAL

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—I want to congratulate the Ethics Olympiad Teams from North Sydney Girls High School who competed at the Australasian Middle School Competition. The competition challenges students to use their critical thinking skills to tackle and provide solutions to ethical dilemmas over a whopping six-hour stint. There were two teams for North Sydney Girls High School who competed in the competition against 240 other schools with one team going on to win the Gold Medal. Congratulations to all of the girls from both teams, you should be so proud to represent your school and the local community on a national level. Special congratulations are in order for the Gold Medal Winners Alex Shearer, Amy Kilborn, Rebecca

Stephen, Mandy Carnegie, and Belinda Sun. Well done on this amazing achievement. This team will now go on to represent Australia in the World Final in February, competing against 28 other teams from around the globe. I wish them the very best of luck in the competition, no matter the final result they should be proud to have come this far and be able to represent our country.

NEUTRAL BAY CLUB CELEBRATES 140TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—I want to recognise the Neutral Bay Club [NBC] as it enters its 140th year of operation this year. The NBC is one of the oldest registered clubs in New South Wales, since being founded in 1882 it has operated continuously. The NBC is an institution that is integral to the fabric of North Shore serving as a hub that has linked our community for decades. The NBC offers opportunities for the community to connect through its bar and dining facilities, its sporting groups such as tennis and bowling, and through its extensive social events and activities. I have had the pleasure of enjoying their services personally with my family as well as through my role as the area's state representative, having attended their ANZAC services for example. I would like to extend my congratulations to Club President Tamsin Baker, General Manager Peter Lewis, and Secretary and Manager Mark Foster for helping steer the NBC to this significant historical milestone. I thank you for your service, and I extend my thanks to the entire team at the NBC for continuing to keep the spirit of the Club alive every day.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF NSW

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I acknowledge the service and advocacy of the National Council of Women of NSW [NCW NSW] over 125 years. NCW NSW is one of the oldest women's organisations in Australia with a history of proudly fighting for equal status, opportunities and women's rights, coordinating individual members and affiliated organisations in community education and advocacy to promote the removal of all discrimination against women and protections for women and children. NCW NSW's focus on human rights and the status of women, social welfare, child protection services, mental health, domestic violence and sexual violence has contributed to law reform, policy development and increased community awareness. Through regular events, newsletters and network communication, NCW NSW informs and mobilises the community on issues, and helps make sure women's opinions are heard by the government and community leaders. Awards and scholarships from NCW NSW recognise the achievements and dedication of women and foster future leaders. I congratulate and thank the National Council of Women of NSW and past and present members for their contribution.

JACKIE BRAW

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I wish to thank Jackie Braw for her work in NSW Police Crime Prevention Command as Sexuality, Gender Diversity and Intersex Policy and Programs Officer, which grew from her initial role as the first NSW Attorney General's Department Policy Officer, Gay and Lesbian Liaison in 1999. This work has been vital for the cultural change occurring within NSW Police addressing past homophobia and transphobia. Jackie is well known for her passion and commitment to serving these communities and working on reform within NSW Police. Police officers have reported on Jackie's practical and personal support, and her critical role with training Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers [GLLOs], organising conferences and providing resources, information and advice for these officers across NSW. Jackie has been central to police engagement with LGBTIQ+ communities, particularly with events that recognise, celebrate and build more positive relationships with NSW Police. These programs have developed and expanded under Jackie's hand, and I trust that NSW Police will build on her experience and expertise to develop this work further. I commend Jackie Braw for more than two decades service in this role.

KIRKETON ROAD CENTRE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I wish to congratulate the Kirketon Road Centre [KRC] and Director Dr Phillip Reed for providing excellent access to COVID vaccination and health support for vulnerable people in the inner city during the COVID pandemic. Since early 2020, KRC has been running pop up clinics and making home visits to vulnerable and isolated people across the city including Woolloomooloo, Surry Hills, Belmore Park, Martin Place and Kings Cross in this electorate. KRC clinics have supported people who have difficulty accessing mainstream health services, including less mobile, at-risk people and those experiencing homelessness. Each pop-up clinic has a doctor, nurses, an education officer and social worker to provide people with COVID-19 testing, vaccines, boosters, advice and support. KRC has been providing free, anonymous, non-judgmental health care since 1987 and their contribution to the community during the pandemic has helped people to reduce COVID-19 transmission and protect themselves, their families, and neighbours. I commend Kirketon Road Centre and all those involved for their inclusive COVID-19 program that continues to make sure everyone is included in our response to the pandemic.

VALE HARRY HUNT OAM

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta)—It is with great sadness that I rise to inform the house of the recent passing of Mr Harry Hunt OAM. Harry was a true local stalwart who dedicated his life in service, as he tirelessly worked to make south-west Sydney the remarkable place it is today. Local residents would know Harry from a variety of different avenues, whether it be working on projects with the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, operating Hunt's Motel's or just volunteering at the various community events being run throughout the region. For his tireless advocacy, support, and dedication to the broader community, it was an incredibly proud moment for us all when we learned Harry was to be presented with an Order of Australia Medal in recognition of his tremendous deeds over the years. With Harry's passing, he will be dearly missed by one and all. Our community has lost a true local champion who cared a great deal about us, and about our community. On behalf of all Members of this house, I extend our sincerest condolences, prayers and well wishes to his family. Harry will be missed by us all. Vale Harry Hunt OAM.

LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta)—I am incredibly grateful that for the first time in recent years, our community has had the opportunity to spend time with their friends and family to celebrate and welcome in the Lunar New Year in person, as opposed to over Zoom. This year, we welcome in the Year of the Tiger which symbolises bravery, courage, and strength, which is apt, in light of the enduring pandemic and the strength and resilience shown throughout the community since it began. It was heartwarming to see our local temples opening their doors once again as they invited the community to welcome in the new year, with many young faces having never had the opportunity to visit the temple before. Although we have been given the opportunity to celebrate with friends, family, and the community, it was fantastic to see the community as a whole taking additional precautionary measures to ensure the safety of themselves, and those around them. I would like to extend my best wishes to all those who celebrated throughout this auspicious time and may the New Year bring good health, happiness, and prosperity to all.

MAHASANGH INC.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On Thursday 3rd February, it was good to meet with Mahasangh Inc., a fantastic multicultural organisation that supports Hindu culture and relations. Based off the Hindu religious principles of cooperation, this growing organisation works to support Hindu Education and provide a quality network platform for members of our Hindu community. In addition, the team at Mahasangh are doing great work to create support services for domestic violence. A total of 21 women are working with Mahasangh Inc. to help with domestic violence work. Members of Mahasangh Inc. are currently working to organise cultural events and activities which will be accessible for the broader community. I would like to thank Arunesh Seth, Convenor, Priyan Rajaram, Bhumiika Mhatre, Domestic Violence Officer, and Sanjay Parashar, Public Officer, for their great work in supporting and delivering quality services to our vibrant Hindu community. I look forward to working with you and the entire team at Mahasangh Inc. in the future to help support the needs of our Hindu community in Western Sydney.

MATERNITY CHOICES AUSTRALIA

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—On Monday 29th November 2021, I was met with Azure Rigney, Vice President, Maternity Choices Australia and Vanessa Scarf, Clinical Midwife and Professor at UTS to discuss Maternity Choices Australia and issues facing maternity care services in NSW. Maternity Choices Australia is a fantastic consumer advocacy organisation that promotes the advancement of best-practice maternity care for all Australian women and their families. This includes promoting awareness about the care that a woman needs during pregnancy, birth and postnatal period. Members of Maternity Choices Australia work diligently to improve the maternity system so it better meets the needs and choices of Australian women accessing maternity care services. In our meeting, Azure and Vanessa made me aware of wide scale systematic issues facing the maternity sector, including a lack of safe and respectful maternity care and a shortage of midwives in NSW. I was engaged by this discussion and it brought to light issues we need to address in the future. I would like to thank Azure and Vanessa for their continuous hard work in promoting and helping aid Australian women during their time of need. We will continue to work together to improve women's maternity care.

DR SELWYN SMITH

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to pay tribute to the life of revered Sydney psychiatrist, Dr Selwyn Smith. Dr Smith dedicated his entire working life to treating and rehabilitating innumerable patients in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Dr Smith specialised in post-traumatic stress injuries, supporting many members of the police force and other first responders. Dr Smith was well known for his work in supporting the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder programs at the St John of God Hospital in North Richmond, treating military

veterans, police and emergency service workers suffering from psychological injuries they sustained in the line of duty. Dr Smith is also known for his fierce protection of and advocacy for injured first responders subjected to workers injury and compensation claims. Known for his compassion, guidance and reassuring care, many of his patients benefited ongoing, productive and fulfilling lives. At 80 years of age, Dr Smith was still working tirelessly and enthusiastically when he was diagnosed with terminal melanoma, which brought about his sudden retirement in October 2020. Sadly, Dr Smith passed away on 18th January 2022. I extend my condolences to the family and friends of Dr Smith, and his patients who lost a true champion.

GLENN ATKINSON

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to recognise Glenn Atkinson, of Orange. Glenn initiated a fundraising campaign, Glenn's Push from the Bush. Glenn's objective was to raise money for much needed medical equipment to care for premature babies through a public fundraising and awareness campaign, which involved him walking from the Orange Hospital to the Royal Hospital for Women at Randwick while pushing his twin babies' pram. Glenn and his wife Renee wanted to give back after an incredible healthcare team helped their twin daughters survive a premature birth. Their twins, Ellie and Zoe, spent time in both hospitals when they were born. Glenn wanted to help support medical services and other families with premature babies by raising money for specialised equipment. To help raise money, each day of October Glenn auctioned off a cap personally signed by a high profile local. Glenn commenced the 270-kilometre walking journey on 3rd January 2022, which was well supported by the community, and the NSW Government. Other than well-worn shoes, Glenn managed to get \$210,000 in donations, which will go to the Running for Premature Babies Foundation to purchase specialised neo-natal equipment for the Orange Health Service and Royal Hospital for Women. Congratulations, Glenn.

DEBORAH STAPLETON

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)—I acknowledge Deborah Stapleton of Como who was nominated for the Environmental Citizen of the Year at Sutherland Shire Council's 2022 Australia Day Awards. Deborah is a community minded individual with a deep love for the environment. Earlier this year, Deborah launched the Sutherland Shire Balloon Library on Facebook as part of her commitment to help reduce waste caused by balloons and single use party goods. The Balloon Library is free to join and allows our community to contribute their used helium balloons, which Deborah retrieves free of charge and lends to the public as many times as possible. Deborah both volunteers her time and covers the cost to recycle the balloon remnants through the Terra Cycle Program. Deborah's incredible initiative has motivated individuals to spread awareness about balloons and their environmental impact. The Balloon Library has been a success in our community and only continues to grow. I congratulate Deborah on receiving this nomination and thank her for her commitment to protecting our environment for future generations.

PONTIFEX JEWELLERS

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)—I acknowledge Pontifex Jewellers in Sylvania, who were named Jewellery Store of the Year at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards 2021. Opened in 1983 by Bonnet Bay residents Ray and Evalyn Pontifex, this family small business has built a reputation of outstanding customer service and the finest jewellery. For over 38 years, the Pontifex team have offered an extensive range of custom design and repair services, as well as assist clients to find their perfect piece of jewellery. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Pontifex Jewellers were quick to adapt to challenges. Led by Rebecca Chin, daughter of Ray and Evalyn, the team altered their usual day-to-day activities to ensure that each customer's experience remained special and personal. The team would video call clients as well as personally deliver gifts to all corners of our community. Rebecca's husband Brad and eldest daughter Bella also joined in the work, continuing the family passion for jewellery across three generations. I congratulate the entire Pontifex Jewellers family on winning this award and extend my best wishes for the future.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE NETBALL ASSOCIATION

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)—I acknowledge Sutherland Shire Netball Association who are the successful recipients of \$18,000 from the NSW Government's 2021 Community Building Partnership Program. Home to 25 clubs, the Sutherland Shire Netball Association is one of the largest netball associations in New South Wales. Since 1960, the Association has developed thousands of players through their various winter and summer competitions including representative netball. The funding will provide upgrades to the office facilities for the Sutherland Shire Netball Association's volunteer administrators and purchase a new roller shutter for the canteen. These refurbishments will enhance services for the Association's members and continue to support young players and visitors to the Bellingara Netball Courts. Of course, none of this is possible without the hard work and dedication of the Sutherland Shire Netball Association Executive Committee. I acknowledge President Karen Salter, Vice President Lisa Woodham, Secretary Jenny Rees and Treasurer Sue Woods alongside Prue Haberecht, Kerry Phillips, Nerida Noble, Vicki

Kerr and Aynsley Dryden for their efforts. I thank the members of the Sutherland Shire Netball Association for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it makes for our community.

LIFEGUARDS IN PINK

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—Visitors to the beautiful Redhead Beach in the Charlestown electorate on Friday 7 January would have spotted our fantastic local lifeguards wearing pink. On that day, lifeguards donned their pink shirts to raise awareness of the McGrath Foundation and the invaluable work they do funding breast care nurses. 1 in 7 women are diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and approximately 55 Australians are diagnosed each and every day—which adds up to about 20,000 Australians diagnosed with breast cancer each year. Lake Macquarie City Council senior lifeguard Lucas Samways, who lost his mum Sharon to the illness in January 2019, said that he hopes that by wearing pink he and his mates will encourage women everywhere to get regular breast cancer check-ups. Early detection is vital, and I thank Lucas and his colleagues for helping to raise awareness. I would also like to thank the McGrath Foundation for their incredible work.

ST JOHNS AMBULANCE

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—St Johns Ambulance is Australia's leading supplier of first aid products, services and learning and, over the course of their 139-year history have done so much for our community. The Charlestown electorate is home to the Warners Bay Division. These amazing volunteers help out at events as far afield as Tamworth, Taree and Port Macquarie, and towards the end of last year members assisted with flooding in the Upper Hunter. When I was offered the chance to help support them in their work by helping them obtain a new vehicle through the Community Building Partnership Program, I jumped at the opportunity. The new seven-seater diesel four-wheel drive will help the local teams get to places normal vehicles can't, and provide the Warners Bay Division, and other local divisions, with lots of capacity to deliver care. A big thank you to those who welcomed me to the Warners Bay Division so I could check out the new vehicle: Superintendent of Warners Bay Division Lynn Howlett, Superintendent of Lake Macquarie Cadet Division Damien Wardrope; Sergeant of University of Newcastle Division Scott Dodd; Grade V1 Officer Lake Macquarie Cadets Bruce Hounslow and Riley Petherbridge of the Lake Macquarie Cadets.

MEALS ON WHEELS AT CHRISTMAS

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)—In the run-up to Christmas, I spent some time with the amazing volunteers at Charlestown & District Meals on Wheels. I was happy to help out, dishing out crumbed fish to go with hot chips, peas and carrots, alongside meals of delicious thick sausages, onion gravy and vegies. Christmas can be a difficult time for many people and, while Meals and Wheels is always appreciated, their activities are especially welcomed during the holiday season. Meals on Wheels is such an important part of our Charlestown electorate community, helping to ensure frail-aged locals are kept well-supplied with nutritionally balanced meals. Especially at this time of year, they help spread some joy and community spirit. I cannot thank them enough! A big thank you to all the volunteers and staff for everything they do. I would particularly like to acknowledge Charlestown & District coordinator Kathy Jenkins. I look forward to joining Kathy, her team and the volunteers again in the future.

MARULAN PHARMACY

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government)—I rise in NSW Parliament today to formally recognise the contribution of Marulan Pharmacy to the community. The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges that we as a community have not only faced but risen to. Without the tremendous effort from Marulan Pharmacy throughout this pandemic, particularly for their contribution in the momentous vaccination effort, we would not be in the position that we are today. I also wish to publicly acknowledge, thank and praise Marulan Pharmacy for their actions. The sheer dedication and hard work of each and every person—Doctor, Nurse, Pharmacist, Health Administrator and Staff or Volunteer—who supported our community in a medical capacity is indefinably appreciated. Thank you for your service.

YASS PRICELINE PHARMACY

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government)—I rise in NSW Parliament today to formally recognise the contribution of Yass Priceline Pharmacy to the community. The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges that we as a community have not only faced but risen to. Without the tremendous effort from Yass Priceline Pharmacy throughout this pandemic, particularly for their contribution in the momentous vaccination effort, we would not be in the position that we are today. I also wish to publicly acknowledge, thank and praise Yass Priceline Pharmacy for their actions. The sheer dedication and hard work of

each and every person - Doctor, Nurse, Pharmacist, Health Administrator and Staff or Volunteer – who supported our community in a medical capacity is indefinably appreciated. Thank you for your service.

JUNEE NETBALL APPEAL

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)—I would like to extend my appreciation to Junee Junior Netball Association on their 'off-court' efforts to help families who may be struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Organisers, players and supporters of Junee Netball have taken part in a 'back-to-school' initiative with an appeal to help community members who may have been affected financially in recent times. The 'back-to-school' initiative focused on providing school supplies to those in need, collecting stationery and other essential goods which had been kindly donated by the community. Donations included stationery and school clothes from local businesses, with the organisation overwhelmed by the generosity of the community in the donations they received. It is a very thoughtful way for Junee Netball to give a little back to their local community and it is a pleasure to take this opportunity to highlight their efforts, thank all those who supported the cause, as well as wish Junee Netball all the very best 'on court' throughout 2022 as well.

GRATITUDE FOR LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)—I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Emergency Services Units of Narrandera who rallied together to help their community following recent wild weather. Local Volunteer Rescue Association members, Fire and Rescue personnel, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service members rallied together throughout the night of the 28 January 2022 after a severe weather event ripped through town. The combined efforts of these units made an invaluable contribution, both in the clean-up and ensuring local residents were safe. It was extremely heart-warming to see local personnel, supported by units from Leeton and Griffith, work together for the safety and wellbeing of the people of Narrandera. Emergency Service personnel right across the Cootamundra Electorate and beyond are selfless in their role supporting their communities through tough times. My sincere thanks once again to Narrandera VRA, Narrandera Fire and Rescue, Narrandera Rural Fire Service and Narrandera State Emergency Service personnel, amongst all those who put their own needs aside to help. You are all true heroes.

MONICA MINOGUE IS A MEMBER FOR LIFE

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)—I congratulate Monica Minogue of West Wyalong on receiving life membership of the West Wyalong Bowling Club. Monica has been honoured for her 37 years of membership during which she has held a variety of roles, including: President of the West Wyalong Women's Bowling Club on 12 occasions from 1997 until 2021, Vice-President on eight occasions, Secretary for nine years, Assistant Secretary in 1993, 2000, 2001, and Treasurer in 1986 and 1987. Additionally, Monica is a Foundation Member, inaugural member of the Catering Committee, member of the Selection Committee and Triples Tournament, as well as the Catering Committee for Men's Pennants. I am reliably informed Monica is always the first to arrive for club cleaning and working bees and if there is anything to be done inside or outside the Club, Monica will be onto it. Congratulations to Monica once again on achieving the special recognition of Life Membership from an organisation to which she has given so much.

ST MARYS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, MAYS HILL

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—For my 2021 Christmas card I was privileged to be able to use an image of an icon from the Parish of the Nativity of the Theotokos, also affectionately known as "St. Mary's, Mays Hill", and for those who attended since the 1990s, still lovingly referred to as "Saydet Merrylands". When anyone walks into the Church, one of the first things you see is the mural and the presence of icons. For worshippers, icons are an integral part of worship. I visited the Church in November and saw for myself their marvellous Nativity icon and Nativity mural and their representations of the first Christmas. St Mary's is under the patronage of His Eminence, Metropolitan Basilios (Kodseie), the Archbishop and chief shepherd of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines. The parish has been guided by parish priest Reverend Father, George Saad, since 2004. My thanks to His Eminence, Father George and Khalil Mansour for their assistance in helping me spread some happiness and joy in the local area for Christmas 2021.

CLR LISA LAKE, MAYOR OF CUMBERLAND COUNCIL

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I would like to congratulate the new Mayor of Cumberland Council, Clr Lisa Lake elected on 12 January 2022. Lisa is first female Mayor on Cumberland Council and this is a wonderful achievement. Clr Lake has been a councillor on Cumberland Council in the Wentworthville ward since 2017 and previously Holroyd City Council. She is keen on improving sports grounds, libraries, pools, parks and playgrounds and increasing employment opportunities for youths. Clr Lake a strong advocate for Western Sydney

area who has campaigned against overdevelopment in the Cumberland area. In particular, she has been heavily involved in making sure that the Wentworthville CBD redevelopment site provides adequate resources for the area and ensuring there is no overdevelopment of high-rise units during the time when the proposed development application commenced. The Wentworthville site is still awaiting redevelopment. I was delighted to join Cllr Lake was heavily involved in ensuring that Wentworthville Pool remained open, and this was a great achievement. Cllr Lake is a dedicated, hardworking and is committed to helping the city evolve into a healthy and vibrant city. Congratulations again Councillor Lake.

25 BEACH CHALLENGE

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate young Zac Doran of Woonona with his initiative—The 25 Beach Challenge. I first met Zac on the beach last year when he was completing this surfing challenge and extend my gratitude and thanks for his determination and spirit to make a difference. This is an annual event that was founded by Local Wollongong Surfer Zac in early 2020. In the midst of the devastating bushfires Zac came up with the idea to combine his love of surfing to create awareness and raise money to a cause he valued. Since its beginning, Zac has raised money for Wires Wildlife Rescue, Kids Helpline and this year money raised will go to Stepping Stone House, who provide long-term shelter and support programs for young Australians experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The concept is to surf 25 beaches, 3 waves at each beach, starting at Stanwell Park beach in the north and finishing Shellharbour in the south. I congratulate Zac and wish him all the best for the challenge due to take place 12 March 2020.

ALEXIS BOWEN

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)—Bin chicken. It's a phrase that people often say when they are referring to the Australian White Ibis. However, I am sure that people in Campbelltown at least are now beginning to associate the words with a fantastic initiative led by a passionate local by the name of Alexis Bowen. In fact, Alexis' work was even officially recognised during the 2022 Campbelltown Australia Day awards – where she was presented with the Environmental Citizen of the Year for her work with Bin Chicken. What is Bin Chicken? It is a program free for Campbelltown residents where members are given compostable bags to collect drink containers. The bags are collected every two weeks from the member's home. As an extra incentive, members also go into the monthly draw to win vouchers to spend at local businesses. It is an easy program to participate in that makes a huge difference to the local parks and waterways of Campbelltown. It is little wonder why Alexis was awarded with the prestigious Australia Day award. I would again like to congratulate Alexis on establishing a great initiative and on her accolade.

100 YEAR BIRTHDAYS

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—What was lifelike 100 years ago? It's hard for most of us to comprehend how rapidly and fundamentally life has changed over the last century including the way in which we live and communicate, but a few residents from Wollondilly would be able to tell you from first-hand experience. At the start of the New Year, I want to wish a very happy 100th birthday to those in my electorate who hit this important milestone last year. Congratulations go to: Mrs Katharina Knopp of Burradoo; Ms Joan Maginn of Bowral; Ms Isobel Marchment of Mittagong; Mrs Alice Mealing of Mittagong; and Mr Donald Williams of Bowral. What an amazing thing to have been present for the major events of the last century! They have lived through wars and revolutions, the landing of the man on the moon, the invention of the computer, the best days of Elvis Presley, The Beatles, and Bob Dylan, and the normalisation of international air travel. They have given and sacrificed much for our generation, and I hope they are all now enjoying a peaceful life surrounded by loved ones. I wish the centenarians a wonderful year ahead!

BOWRAL BLACKS

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—It was fantastic to see the Bowral Blacks host the Super Rugby Pacific trial match between the NSW Waratahs and the Brumbies last month at Eridge Park. Despite the wet weather, the event was the biggest ever for the Bowral Blacks Club, and the enthusiastic crowds made for a festive atmosphere. It has been a tough time for rugby fans in the Southern Highlands, with the past two seasons having been cancelled. The timing of this Super Rugby match was great for the region, kicking off Bowral Blacks Rugby Club's 50th anniversary season celebrations in style. Hosting the match also provided a boost for local tourism as rugby fans travelled to the Highlands for the weekend. Congratulations to the Bowral Blacks for being chosen to host this clash of bitter rivals, and I look forward to a great Rugby Season in the Southern Highlands.

C3 MINISTRY IN BOWRAL

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)—The Southern Highlands Christian Community Centre has a new space that has opened on Bong Street in Bowral. The ministry, which is connected with C3 Destiny Church, has been operating as C3 Coffee Hub and C3 Cares for over seven years, but they now have a home base to

welcome people to. The new café space is set up so that those doing it tough due to homelessness, an unexpected crisis, or just feeling isolated can come and have a coffee, some company, or pick up groceries or a frozen meal. Those that can are encouraged to give a donation, but the food is free to all in need. I am very pleased to see this welcoming space open in the heart of Bowral and I would like to commend the workers, volunteers, and donors at the Southern Highlands Christian Community Centre.

TAJ CARTER-SMITH

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—I congratulate Elderslie High School student Taj Carter-Smith who in December last year became the Under 17 2021 Australian Mountain Bike Enduro Champion. The weather at Green Valleys Mountain Bike Park was described as brutal with high humidity and scorching heat but Taj fought through with his many years of experience. Taj was presented with his well-deserved Australian Jersey and Gold Medal. Congratulations Taj on your flawless achievement and I wish you all the best moving forward in your Mountain Bike journey.

MACARTHUR ANGLICAN SCHOOL CLASS OF 2021

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—Each year the HSC students continue to impress and deliver exceptional results in Camden. With the many challenges that faced this particular cohort over the past two years, I am thrilled to share some amazing achievements of these students. I congratulate all the students at Macarthur Anglican School. Congratulations to Arnav Gupta (DUX) who achieved an ATAR of 99.65, Arnav also achieved 7th in the state for English Advanced. Congratulations to Madeline Mingay ATAR of 99.30 and Muthuli Gunawardena ATAR of 98.65. I also congratulate Reuben Gomez, Laura Whitelaw, Amelia Wood and again Arnav Gupta who have been recognised as 'All Rounders' for attaining Band 6/E4 Results in at least 10 units.

JONATHAN LIN

Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)—Every year thousands of HSC students spend countless hours working on a major work for their art course. Of those thousands across the state only a very select few are included in the showcases called ARTEXPRESS of the year's best pieces. This year one of those featured prices was created by Jonathan Lin. Jonathan completed his HSC at Macarthur Anglican School where he worked hard on his photographic collection called 'Confined'. The collection featured eight photos, all self-portraits in a domestic home setting. His style tended towards darker tones, capturing lights and shadows with the intention of allowing viewers to find their own interpretation of the images. Congratulations Jonathan on this achievement.

ASQUITH BOYS HIGH SCHOOL 2021 HSC RESULTS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)—I would like to recognise one of the most impressive high schools in my electorate and the results of their 2021 year 12 students. Asquith Boys High School is a comprehensive community school committed to achieving exceptional learning opportunities for boys. The school prides itself on its ability to engage all boys through innovative programs in academic enrichment, leadership, community service, the arts, sport and many other areas that ensure that their students become fine young men. In 2021, Asquith Boys High School students achieved excellent results in the HSC despite the learning disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the delayed start to the Examinations. Luke Ivers was awarded the distinguished academic award of Dux for the 2021 HSC cohort, achieving an ATAR of 91.75. Cameron Hay, Anthony He and Joshua Jones-Blair all excelled achieving ATARs over 89. The school's excellent HSC results and exceptional learning opportunities for boys, is credited to the quality relationships established between the students and their passionate, dedicated teachers.

CWA GALSTON AND CENTENARY OF CWA NSW

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)—This year is the Country Women's Association [CWA] NSW centenary. I am pleased that the Galston CWA branch, from the rural area of the Hornsby electorate, will recognise this milestone. On April 20, 1922, an organising committee for the Country Women's Association of NSW was formed. Stephanie Stanhope, CWA of NSW President, said, "These women were initiators, fighters, and lobbyists, who were passionate about making rural and regional NSW better for those who lived there. For 100 years the members of the CWA of NSW have continued the legacy by improving the social, educational, recreational, and medical realities for their communities." The CWA has evolved over the past 100 years to remain as active and relevant today as it was when Grace Munro, founder and first state president, mobilised members to save women and children dying because of lack of maternity care in rural hospitals. The inauguration of CWA Galston in 1958 was met with great enthusiasm. If you take a drive around the Galston area you will see many of the roads named after the earliest farming families whose second and third generations established the CWA Galston branch.

JACK AND JILL KINDERGARTEN 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)—Today I would like to recognize the Jack and Jill Kindergarten, Hornsby, who are celebrating their 60th anniversary. Established in 1961, the Jack and Jill Kindergarten has truly been an asset to our local community for over 60 years, with families connecting with them years after their children have left. They have many children who attend the centre whose parents once were also Jack and Jill students. Current Director, Pearl Sachinwalla, once a parent at the centre herself, has been involved with Jack and Jill for over 30 years. Always community focussed and, even with their personnel changes over the decades, their core philosophy has never wavered. The kindergarten has a strong commitment to inclusive education, to see every child as an individual and nurture their skills to help them reach their full potential. Their staff strive to help children become responsible citizens within their community. Many of the children from Jack and Jill have gone on to take leadership roles within their school communities both at primary school and high school. Jack and Jill Kindergarten, Hornsby is not just a community preschool it often becomes part of a child's extended family.

ALBERT DAVID

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—With the community encouraged to be more sustainable, a St Clair local is leading the way inventing an award-winning environmentally friendly product. I would like to acknowledge local business owner, Albert David, on launching his invention, Flexsil-lid. Flexsil-lid replaces single use plastic film and foil in commercial kitchens and has taken the world by storm. Even though he didn't have a background in hospitality, Albert created the re-usable lid because he saw a need in the market. He noticed how much plastic cling wrap and aluminium foil is used in industrial and commercial kitchens to cook or store food and thought there must be a better alternative and immediately thought of silicone! The lids are used to cover a range of six pan tray sizes to keep food fresh without leaking and will keep the food softer and tender. They are oven, freezer, microwave and dishwasher-safe and you can even write on them over and over again! Appearing on Channel 10's 'Shark Tank' program years ago, Flexsil-lid has won international awards and is sold around the globe. Congratulations to Albert on your success and I wish you all the best!

HANNAH STEPHAN AND MIA HOSKING

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—I would like to congratulate Caroline Chisholm College students on their impressive achievements in securing their places in tertiary education and taking advantage of universities' early offer programs. Hannah Stephan, one of the many students who received early entry into tertiary education, received thirteen different offers from nine universities. A range of the courses include social work, law and psychology, but she has ultimately accepted and enrolled in UTS for Design and Architecture and a Masters of Architecture. Furthermore, fellow Caroline Chisholm student Mia Hosking was pleased to take advantage of these early offers. She received eight offers from seven universities mostly under the health science branch and has decided to study nursing with the Australian Catholic University. Congratulations to Hannah and Mia on their accomplishments. I wish you good luck and all the best for your future studying endeavours!

VANESSA MURRAY

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)—I wish to acknowledge local St Clair mum, Vanessa Murray, on her amazing efforts in decorating her house along Chatsworth Road for the community this past Christmas. Vanessa loves getting into the Christmas spirit and goes all out on decorating every year with this past Christmas being her 10th year doing so. Vanessa and her family have many people come to see their displays and thank them for doing it for the community and keeping the Christmas spirit alive in their suburb. Being a mother to five kids, she says nothing brings her more joy than seeing their faces every night when they go out to look at their Christmas lights. Thank you to Vanessa for getting into the spirit of decorating for Christmas. I congratulate her on such a wonderful way to bring excitement and fun to families in the community after such a stressful time.

CAVES BEACH PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS 2022

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—Speaker, Today I acknowledge Jack Smith, Stephanie Buckley, Billy Snowden and Zahli Ange on being named as the 2022 Caves Beach Public School captains and vice-captains. I also acknowledge Mia Lambkin, Josiah Croft, Imogen Flower, Emily Drain, Lillian Berry, Finn Taylor, Maddy Price, Lily Howell, Aria Jones, Lucy Palfreyman, Dean Plumber, Alexis Judd, Ruby Taylor, Kai Delaney, Blair Turkington and Thomas Mills on being elected as the 2022 sports captains. These students always demonstrate a consistent work ethic and are proud to be members of the Caves Beach Public School community. Each of these students have been involved in a number of school activities and events over the years. They continuously strive to do their best in their studies and act as role models for their peers. Being named as the 2022 Caves Beach Public School leadership team is a testament to each of these students. I am sure they will carry out their new roles with

pride and develop skills that will assist them in the future. I congratulate all of these students on their achievement and wish them all the best with their final year of primary school.

FLORAVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS 2022

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—Speaker, Today I acknowledge Olivia Martin, Tyler Wells, Lillian Zhao-Wilson and Mitchell Battye on being elected as the 2022 Floraville Public School captains and vice-captains. I also acknowledge Alina Gal, Madison Miller, Oliver Smith and Jake Nelson on being named as this year's prefects. These students always demonstrate a consistent work ethic and are proud to be members of the Floraville Public School community. Each of these students have been involved in a number of school activities and events over the years. They continuously strive to do their best in their studies and act as role models for their peers. Being named as the 2022 Floraville Public School leadership team is a testament to each of these students. I am sure they will carry out their new roles with pride and develop skills that will assist them in the future. I congratulate Olivia, Tyler, Lillian, Mitchell, Alina, Madison, Oliver and Jake on their achievement and wish them all the best with their final year of primary school.

GWANDALAN PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS 2022

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)—Speaker, Today I acknowledge Taylah Cooper, Kaitlin Alston, Skye Smidt and Rudy Burrows on being elected as the 2022 Gwandalan Public School captains and vice-captains. I also acknowledge Chase Myers and Nathan Jackson on being named as this year's prefects. These students always demonstrate a consistent work ethic and are dedicated to the Gwandalan Public School community. Each of these students have been involved in a number of school activities and events over their time at Gwandalan Public School. They continuously strive to do their best in their studies and act as role models for their peers. Being named as the 2022 Gwandalan Public School leadership team is a testament to each of these students. I am sure they will carry out their new roles with pride. I congratulate Taylah, Kaitlin, Skye, Rudy, Chase and Nathan on their achievement and wish them all the best with their final year of primary school.

MURRUMBATEMAN PHARMACY

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government)—I rise in NSW Parliament today to formally recognise the contribution of Murrumbateman Pharmacy to the community. The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges that we as a community have not only faced but risen to. Without the tremendous effort from Murrumbateman Pharmacy throughout this pandemic, particularly for their contribution in the momentous vaccination effort - we would not be in the position that we are today. Mr Speaker, I also wish to publicly acknowledge, thank and praise Murrumbateman Pharmacy for their actions. The sheer dedication and hard work of each and every person—Doctor, Nurse, Pharmacist, Health Administrator and Staff or Volunteer—who supported our community in a medical capacity is indefinably appreciated. Thank you for your service.

SENIORS' STORIES VOLUME 7

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill)—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise local Castle Hill constituent Sally Maxwell, whose story, 'A Difficult Lunch', recently featured in the NSW Government's 7th volume of Seniors' Stories. The anthology contains a great many short stories, written with the wisdom and discernment that elders can reveal in their writings. Sally's story contains a moving and sombre reflection on the themes of loss and grieving, but concludes with an unwavering optimism, and a commitment of looking to the future. Senior's Stories is just one of the many ways the NSW Government is empowering seniors across the state, with Seniors' travel and discount cards allowing seniors to get out and about more often. I'd also note the upcoming NSW Senior's Festival and Expo, which, as usual, will be culminating in the annual Seniors' Concert. Based on the number of enquiries my office has received, I know this year's concert will be as popular as ever. Once again, my congratulations go to Sally, and I'd encourage her to continue her writing.

AUTUMN FESTIVAL TO COME BACK WITH A BANG

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I was so thrilled to hear at the Australia Day Ceremony in Tenterfield this year that the Autumn Festival will be returning this Easter long weekend. Last year was a roaring success and I look forward to the festival coming back with a bang. I commend organising committee members Kerri Hampton, Tenterfield Shire Mayor Cr Bronwyn Petrie, Kate Lee and Kim Rhodes for their tireless organising efforts. It is a big job doing every from the fundraising, gig organising and promotion. Last year was such a fantastic success with the Lift the Country Spirit concert which was headlined by Shannon Noll, the Buckleys, Nine Year Sister and Taj Matheson. Over 2,000 people came through the festival which for a shire of 6000 is impressive. The Autumn Festival was recently named Community Event of the Year at the recent Australia Day Ceremony in Tenterfield. A well-deserved honour for this fantastic festival. I also commend the joint efforts

of the Tenterfield Lions Club and The Tenterfield Show Society who worked with the Tenterfield Autumn Festival committee to provide this event for the Tenterfield Community. I hope to get down to the festival this year.

KYOGLE PUBLIC SCHOOL OUTSTANDING SPORTS SUPERSTARS

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I wish to send a big congratulations to Kyogle Public School students Lauren Binney, Ruby Nix and Argent O'Meara on outstanding sporting achievements of state, national and international significance. Our whole community is extremely proud of them. Lauren Binney is a talented football player. So talented that she has been selected as part of the Western Sydney Wanderers Australia International touring squad. The squad will be touring England and France in January 2023. They will be playing different school teams, soccer clubs and representative teams. In addition to playing at this international high level, Lauren and the squad will learn from some of the best soccer coaches in the world. It will such an exciting and growing experience for Lauren. Argent O'Meara and Ruby Nix have both made it into NSW State Level teams for School Representative Sport. Argent has been selected in the NSW PSSA Open Touch Football Team and Ruby was selected to play in the NSW PSSA Girls Cricket Championships. Unfortunately, those events were cancelled due to COVID but the students should be so proud to be selected. I can't wait to see what these sporting stars do in the future.

JENNA ROBINSON - SYDNEY ROYAL AG SHOW NSW YOUNG WOMAN 2022 FINALIST

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—I congratulate Lismore's Jenna Robinson on her progression into the state finals for the Sydney Royal Ag Show NSW Young Woman 2022. Jenna is an outstanding young leader in our community. I was delighted to see her win this award last Saturday night at the Sydney Royal Ag Show NSW Young Woman 2022 Zone One Regional Finals. It was inspiring to hear of her ambitions, talents and plans for the future. We are in good hands with capable, articulate and determined young women leaders like Jenna. Jenna is an enrolled nurse at Lismore Base Hospital and has been on the frontline of this pandemic. Caring for our community in difficult times. Jenna is committed to community service and helping others. Recently she talked her passion for local family farms and the North Coast National. She is a credit to the show and great ambassador for our community. She says that it is important for young people get involved in agricultural shows because our local agriculture industry needs the next generation to thrive into the future. With young leaders like Jenna involved I have great hope for that future.

DENILQUIN RACING CLUB

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I would like to acknowledge the work of three Denilquin Racing Club committee members - Peter Simpson, Russell Douglas, and Joan Douglas. Through their dedication and hard work, the trio have secured over \$60,000 worth of infrastructure upgrades to the Club, along with vital funding from government grants. Through their ongoing commitment to the Club, it has seen its fortunes turn around both financially and in terms of race day success. While Peter has now stepped down from his role, his contributions are widely acknowledged and respected, as are the significant contributions of Russell and Joan. I thank Peter, Russell and Joan for the positive impact they've had within the community and the Club. Alongside them, I acknowledge the work of the rest of the board and thank all members for their service.

GWEN WILKINSON

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Madam/Mister Speaker, Today I would like to recognise Gwen Wilkinson for extensive service to the Gol Gol community. For over 50 years, Gwen has volunteered and contributed to her local area. In acknowledgement of her service, she has been recognised through a NSW Bushfires 2019-2020 emergency response award. Prior to that, she was made a Life Member of the Gol Gol Rural Fire Brigade. Beyond her work within the RFS, Gwen and husband Terry have been actively involved in the Sunraysia Wildlife Carers Group, looking after injured wildlife for 35 years. Gwen is also an active volunteer with the Australian Inland Botanical Gardens, taking on the role of events co-ordinator, and looking after the impressive Sturt Desert Pea display that welcomes everyone to the Gardens. I thank Gwen for her many decades of commitment and contribution to the Gol Gol community.

AUSTRALIA DAY 2022 HONOURS LIST

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—Two residents of the Granville electorate were recently recognised for their outstanding service to the community. The Very Reverend Father Peter Gregory Williams of Granville received a Member (AM) in the G Division for significant service to the Catholic Church in Australia, and to tertiary education. Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, Diocese of Parramatta, the Very Reverend Father Peter Williams was appointed Director of Liturgy for World Youth Day Sydney, 2008 and in November 2014 Peter was elected by the College of Consultors as the Administrator of the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta. Mr Robert Michael Freshfield from Merrylands received a Medal (OAM) in the General Division for service to veterans and their families. He was 20 in 1971 when he served in Vietnam as an infantry soldier for nine months

and is a former president of the Merrylands RSL sub-branch and club director. He is a member of the Vietnamese Veterans' Peacekeepers and Peacemakers' Association of Australia's NSW branch, whose office is in Granville. My congratulations to The Very Reverend Father Peter Gregory Williams AM and Mr Robert Freshfield OAM.

LYNETTE QUINN, OAM

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I am proud to have nominated Ms Lynette Quinn OAM for the 2022 Local Woman of the Year Award for Bankstown. Ms Quinn has resided in Bass Hill for 56 years and is the longest serving Meals on Wheels volunteers having spent 48 years delivering meals to our elderly and more vulnerable workers within the area. In particular, Lynn has worked tirelessly to ensure all vulnerable and isolating residents were provided with a meal throughout the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms Quinn has clearly demonstrated a long-life commitment in supporting our most vulnerable community members. In 2010, she was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her service. Despite her many personal challenges including having endured two knee replacements and two hip replacement, Ms Quinn further continues to be an active member of the Meals on Wheels service. On the weekend, Ms Quinn volunteers her time to the local netball competition as a netball administrator. I am delighted to have nominated such a caring, enthusiastic and well-respected woman for this award.

BANKSTOWN ELECTORATE HSC STUDENTS

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—On behalf of my electorate of Bankstown, I would like to congratulate the Class of 2021 on their HSC results. The class of 2021 have overcome uncertainty and challenges. The HSC is already stressful enough without having to transition to online classes and be kept away from fellow peers due to the lockdown. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Year 12 students of the following high schools for their terrific effort, and hard work during a very difficult year; Al Amanah College, Al-Faisal College Bankstown Girls High School, Bankstown Senior College, Bass High School, Birrong Boys High School, Birrong Girls High School, Chester Hill High School, George Bass School, Georges River Grammar, La Salle Catholic College, Karringul School, Sefton High School and St Euphemia College. I congratulate the following students from the Bankstown Electorate for coming first in their course: Styliani Koliris for Modern Greek Continuers, Konstantinos Zispoulos for Modern Greek Extension, Raneem for Arabic Continuers, Roaa Ahmed for Arabic Extension, and Ting Jun Liang for Chinese in Context and Christina Solyom for Hungarian Continuers. I also wish to thank all the principals, teachers, staff and parents for their contributions in supporting our Year 12 students.

PADSTOW COMMUNITY CARE

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)—I take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate the outstanding recipients of this year's Canterbury Bankstown Australia Day awards. The awards recognise selfless and inspirational individuals and groups, who have contributed significantly to our local community through acts of kindness, civic duty and charity work. After such a challenging year, the awards are an important reminder of how our local area came together to support one another. The recipient of the 2022 Canterbury-Bankstown Community Organisation of the Year Award is Padstow Community Care. Padstow Community Care is an exceptional organisation offering support to members of our community during times of crisis. The organisation focuses on addressing the immediate needs of individuals and families in an effort to set them on a better path in the long term. Over the years Padstow Community Care centre has offered numerous forms of incredible support such as the Food and Life store which provides subsidised groceries to people in need and the hands-free program which connects volunteers with disadvantaged people who may require support. Once again, I congratulate Padstow Community Care and all their volunteers on this well-deserved recognition.

BEDSAHEAD - SUTHERLAND SHIRE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)— I congratulate BedsAhead in Caringbah for winning the home furniture store category at the 2022 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. BedsAhead custom makes beds, bed heads, headboards and other furnishings including bed bases, valances, blanket boxes, ottomans, pelmets and scatter cushions. The business has been run by family team Michelle and Farid Bostan since 2013 after they made their first bed head—because they couldn't find one that they liked for their own home. The couple left their jobs to start the business and they are now looking to add to their four other staff to cater for the popularity of their made to order products. Michelle says the key to their success is going above and beyond to provide great service and offering an excellent quality product at a reasonable price. Initially all orders were from Sydney, but now 30 to 40 per cent of customers are from Victoria and Queensland, with much of their business coming from repeat customers or recommendations. BedsAhead is a local success story providing quality products and I congratulate Michelle, Farid and their team on their success at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards.

BLISS DAY SPA - SUTHERLAND SHIRE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)— I congratulate Bliss Day Spa in Caringbah for winning the best beauty services category at the 2022 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. Bliss Day Spa offers traditional beauty treatments like facials, massage and waxing as well as advanced treatments for skin rejuvenation and tightening using the latest technology. Daniela Boerma of Port Hacking has owned the business for eight years. In that time the team has grown from three to seven. It's the second time in a row the business has won the category. Daniela says while it was unexpected, she puts this success down to how much they care for their clients by treating them like family and doing the little things that can make a big difference. Bliss is dedicated to providing high levels of service for clients with a big focus on staff education, working to the rules for their industry and continually upgrading the salon. The Bliss team continued to serve clients during COVID lockdowns by staying connected with nursing home and isolated customers, doing virtual treatments and home delivering products.

GRAYS POINT SOCCER CLUB UNDER 18A

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)— I congratulate the Grays Point Soccer Club under 18As for being crowned champions of their age group at the recent Bathurst Cup. The mighty Possums defied the odds against more fancied opponents in their march through the finals, beating Canberra Olympic FC and South Coast Flame FC before taking out the final against Nepean FC in a penalty shootout. The team, coached by Peter Slater and managed by Jeff Poulter, is Toby Allen, Joel Cox, Evan Dracopoulos, Rowdy Graves, Luke Hewitt, Ethan Mifsud, Grady O'Brien, Bailey Pickup, Campbell Poulter, Eli Poulter, Zac Poulter, Fabian Schwoepfinger, Harrison Slater and Ruben Wilshaw. These young men managed to take out the title in a competition that consisted mainly of National Premier League teams. Part of the team's success came down to them being a close-knit group of mates who got together and formed their own side. Well done to the Grays Point 18A players and support staff on your win at the Bathurst Cup - your club and community are proud of your achievement.

ROAA AHMED - BEVERLY HILLS GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the outstanding achievements of Roaa Ahmed of Beverly Hills Girls High School. Roaa, whose family hails from Egypt, received an extraordinary ATAR of 94.50. This achievement is even more amazing considering she lived in a COVID-19 hotspot during her preparations for her exams. And sadly, she experienced the loss of her grandfather and aunt, both of whom she was very close to. To achieve this result is a testament to her courage, resilience, and dedication. Roaa's achievements are only matched by her ambition. She wants to do a double degree in psychology and journalism in order to represent and give a voice to minority communities. I wish her all the best with her future endeavours. I also acknowledge the wonderful teachers and counsellors at Beverly Hills Girls High School who did an excellent job guiding Roaa and the Year 12 cohort through a very challenging year. It is very impressive how students across from Beverley Hills Girls High have been so resilient throughout the pandemic, meeting every challenge thrown at them.

VALE KEVIN INGRAM, OAM

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—It is with much sadness that the Fairfield community received the notice of the passing of Kevin Ingram OAM. Kevin was a longstanding member of the Club Mounties Board of Directors for over 40 years. He was a dedicated and loyal President for eighteen years. Kevin's work was highly regarded by the community. He was always on hand to offer assistance and support to organisations. His lifelong service was recognised with an Order of Australia Medal which was well deserved. Kevin was a dedicated family man and a trusted community volunteer who will be sorely missed by family, friends and Mounties staff. A stalwart of the local community, Kevin will forever be remembered for his unceasing dedication and commitment to our area. Vale Kevin Ingram OAM.

DANIEL MEAGHER – EPISCOPAL ORDINATION

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—I wish to congratulate the Most Reverend Daniel Joseph Meagher on his Episcopal Ordination at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney on the 8 December 2021. It was an honour to witness the ordination along with the College of Australian bishops, priests, deacons, religious orders and respective parishes and organisations that Bishop Daniel has worked with over the years. Equally it was also a privilege to be amongst his family and friends to celebrate such a momentous event in Bishop Daniel's life. I wish Bishop Daniel well in his new ministry as the third Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Sydney along with fellow Bishops Terry Brady and Richard Umbers. Bishop Daniel is a truly humble, committed and dedicated man who will now attend the spiritual needs of the Archdiocese of Sydney as an ordained bishop.

KEN APAOLA

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)—I wish to congratulate Year 12 Visual Arts student Ken Apaola at Patrician Brothers' College, Fairfield, for his ArtExpress 2022 nomination. ArtExpress is an annual art exhibition that showcases Higher School Certificate Visual Arts Examination artworks from across New South Wales. Ken's impressive Body of Work is titled 'Ua ou misia oe papa', translating to 'I miss you papa', and features a series of carvings on layers of paint accompanied by sound. I congratulate Ken on this very special achievement.

ELERMORE VALE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Elernmore Vale Public School on their appointment. Elernmore Vale Public School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Luke Somerville, the outstanding staff at Elernmore Vale Public School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Working together for children" by developing and supporting each student through their foundational years of learning. The kind-hearted students at Elernmore Vale Public School never fail to approach every opportunity with positivity and diligence, helping uphold the wonderful culture that the school community shares. The 2022 leadership team is a group of amazing students who demonstrate the Elernmore Vale Public School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, Captains Jackson and Gemma, Vice Captains Lucas and Sienna and Prefects Jack and Layla on their successful appointment. These students should be incredibly proud of this achievement. I look forward to seeing them lead their peers through this exciting year filled with new opportunities. I extend my best wishes to the new student leaders at Elernmore Vale Public School.

JESMOND PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Jesmond Public School on their appointment. Jesmond Public School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Deborah Kelly, the outstanding staff at Jesmond Public School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Learn, Grow, Shine" by developing and supporting each student through their foundational years of learning. The kind-hearted students at Jesmond Public School never fail to approach every opportunity with positivity and diligence, helping uphold the wonderful culture that the school community shares. The 2022 leadership team is a group of amazing students who demonstrate the Jesmond Public School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, Scarlett, Rajjo, Raabia and Hassanin on their successful appointment. These students should be incredibly proud of this achievement. I look forward to seeing them lead their peers through this exciting year filled with new opportunities. I extend my best wishes to the new student leaders at Jesmond Public School.

MARYLAND SANTA CLAUS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—The only thing more exciting than Santa Claus riding a sleigh pulled by six white boomers is Santa behind the wheel of a mint condition 1959 Hillman Minx. On Sunday, 12 December 2021, the Big Man himself came down from the North Pole, busted out the Minx and cruised the streets of Maryland giving lollies out to the local kids. Santa tried to get to every street in Maryland, handing out four hundred bags of lollies to boys and girls on the nice list—and Santa posted on his Maryland Santa Run Facebook page that "It was so wonderful to see everyone today during the run!" Right back at you, Santa—after a difficult year for so many locals, the sight of Santa in the western suburbs of Newcastle was a very welcome one indeed! Events like this help build local community, bringing people together to celebrate the joy of Christmas. After the hardships of the pandemic, this sort of thing goes a long way. I also want to thank Andrew Treacy for helping to organise Santa's visit. Good work, mate! Take care of that beautiful car.

CARTER HEAVY HAULAGE AND TRANSPORT FINALISTS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—In 2013 wife and husband team of Leonnie and Josh Carter made the decision to establish Carter Heavy Haulage and Transport. Each had established skill bases developed over years of experience, and together they made the entrepreneurial leap. Fast forward to 2022 and I am very happy to be able to extend my congratulations to the Carters and their team upon their nomination as finalists in the 27th Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards. Leonnie overseas the running of this business with a strong focus on service delivery and quality assurance. Josh has been recognised as the Road Freight NSW Professional Driver of the Year in both 2018 and 2019. They support and are supported by a team of skilled drivers and operations/administration staff. I am very happy that their combined efforts have been recognised with this nomination. I wish the entire team at Carter Heavy Haulage and Transport the very best of luck with the awards, and as they move forward into 2022.

MRAG SKY WHALES

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—On January 15th Maitland received a surreal visitation from on high. Very high actually. That morning Skywhale, Skywhalepapa and their offspring floated across the Maitland skies lit by the rising sun, sparking our imaginations and prompting our conversations. Skywhales: Every heart sings is a National Gallery Touring Event, and we thank the Maitland Regional Art Gallery for their part in bringing this singular experience to life in our city. Creator Patricia Piccinini's Skywhale and Skywhalepapa are hand sewn sculptures in the form of massive hot-air balloons. Piccinini said while the original Skywhale had been inspired by the wonder of nature, the new addition of Skywhalepapa reflected the importance of nurture as the new work also depicts their nine babies protected under the mammoth fins. This represents a strong masculine figure nurturing his children and supports the ideas that caring is not gendered. I can only imagine the range and depth of conversations that this vision generated for those fortunate to be part of this experience. I commend the Maitland Regional Art Gallery for their efforts to bring this event, and these works, to our city to encourage us to think outside of our usual boundaries.

UAINE CANDLES FINALIST

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)—I congratulate Andrew Mason and his team at UAINE Candles who have been announced as finalists in the 27th Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards. In the words of the team themselves: The Gaelic name UAINE ('oonyah') means green and verdant reflecting their Hunter Valley heritage and their commitment to the environment and our community. UAINE Candles' manufacturing facility is situated in Morpeth overlooking the Hunter River. They are very close to the site of Morpeth's original candle factory which was established in the 1850's. Their products are proudly promoted as natural, fresh and vegan-friendly using 100 percent soy wax. This demonstrates a thoughtfulness towards their customers. They are a valued member of the Morpeth township. The Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards are one of our region's longest-running awards and have built a reputation as the Hunter's premier business excellence awards. I wish Andrew and his team the very best of luck as a finalist in these awards, and I encourage them to continue to move their vision forward in 2022.

JENNIFER ANDERSON

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)—I would like to thank the former Mayor of Ku-ring-gai Council, Jennifer Anderson for her 16 years of continuous service as a councillor on Ku-ring-gai Council, concluding at the 2021 Council elections. Jennifer was elected to Ku-ring-gai Council in 2006 and went on to serve as Mayor for six terms. She is the longest serving mayor in Ku-ring-gai Council's 104-year history. In 2014 I nominated Jennifer as the Davidson Woman of the Year due in part to her extensive community work, particularly through Council. She was chair of Council's Heritage Reference Committee for five years and Chair of the Community Reference Committee. She also served on Council's Audit Committee and represented Council on the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Council and the Metropolitan Libraries Association. In 2017 Jennifer was presented with the Minister's Award for Women in Local Government and in 2021 she received a Local Government NSW Excellence Award. Jennifer's devotion to public service has been inspirational and I hope she continues to serve the community, including as patron of the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter and many other local causes for many years to come.

MERRIWA COMMUNITY AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—I would like to congratulate the following winners of the Upper Hunter Shire Council – Merriwa Community Australia Day Awards 2022: Robert Smith for being honoured with the title of Merriwa Citizen of the Year; Brodie McMillan on being named the Local Young Citizen of the Year; Sharee Witney and Beatrice Voysey, who were recognised with the Merriwa Achiever of the Year title; Ruby Wong for receiving the Merriwa Young Achiever of the Year Award; Merriwa Pony Club named Community Group of the Year; and Merriwa Petroleum & Ag Supplies recognised with the Sustainability in Business Award. The recipients are to be commended for their community work within the Merriwa community and I thank them for their contribution to the Upper Hunter electorate.

GLOUCESTER COMMUNITY AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)—I would like to congratulate the following winners of the Mid Coast Council – Gloucester Community Australia Day Awards 2022: Trudy Schultz recognised with the Local Citizen of the Year Award for her volunteer work in the Gloucester community; Jessica Kernahan named Local Young Citizen of the Year; Drifta Camping & 4WD received the Local Community Business of the Year Award; and Gloucester Scorpions Soccer Club was rewarded with the Local Project of the Year title for the Gloucester Soccer Club Lighting. The recipients are to be commended for their community work within the Gloucester community and I thank them for their contribution to the Upper Hunter electorate.

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)—I rise to congratulate Georges River Life Care for all of their hard work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by looking after the needs of local residents and their families. I particularly want to make a special mention of their annual Sleeping Rough event which was a huge success in 2021. This initiative continues to raise much needed funding for victims of domestic violence through legal support, emergency relief and the provision of food services. As someone who has been involved in this event on multiple occasions, I believe that it is highly valuable as it allows all participants to pause and reflect on the circumstances of those experiencing domestic violence. Everyone deserves a safe place to call home, but unfortunately this is not the case. I want to thank Senior Leader, Scott Morrison, Glenn and Karen Power as well as the entire team for their continued support for those doing it tough. Your work is making a huge difference in the lives of those experiencing domestic violence and that is something that you should all be extremely proud of.

ALL SAINTS OATLEY WEST FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)—I am pleased to announce that the All Saints Oatley West Football Club has received much needed funding from the NSW Government. Thanks to the NSW Government's Local Sports Grants program, the organisation has received funding which will allow the Club to purchase new sporting equipment and upgrade their storage facilities. I recently took the opportunity to head over to Oatley Park to meet with the Club on match day to announce this important funding. I wish to thank the President of the All Saints Oatley West Football Club, Jeremy Babb, Vice President, Con Fiamegos and the entire team for continuing to provide an inclusive place for local football enthusiasts to gather. The Club was originally started in 1923 before re-launching in 1960 with just 13 registered players. Since then, the Club has grown exponentially with players competing across all age groups and abilities. I have no doubt that this funding will provide significant improvements to the All Saints Oatley West Football Club and I look forward to seeing more fantastic football in the year ahead.

RICHO CUP

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)—Community sport is the lifeblood of the St George region and nothing brings our community together quite like the annual Richo Cup. When local St George footballer Matthew Richardson passed away suddenly on the field in 2014, our local football community responded. The Richo Cup was founded the following year to raise money to purchase defibrillators for every Club in the St George Football Association. With the help of the St George Football Association, the defibrillators were provided to each Club to help prevent future cases like this from occurring. In 2021, the Richo Cup raised \$21,000 for the Cardiology and Coronary Care Unit at St George Hospital. This funding will be used to provide life changing care for patients throughout the St George region and that is something that our football community can take great pride in. I want to thank the St George Football Association and our local football clubs for continuing to organise this annual event to pay tribute to Matthew and his family while also supporting those in need.

DYLAN EATHER

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)—I congratulate Dylan Eather for being named Dubbo's 2022 Young Sportsperson of the Year. Like many athletes Dylan has had a disrupted recent couple of years but it's not only COVID that he has had to overcome – he also broke his hand at the 2020 National Track Championships, after leading NSW to bronze in the Teams Pursuit. However, Dylan bounced back two months later dominating the NSW U19 State Championships, taking out Gold in the Omnium, Pursuit, and Team Sprint, and Silver in the Time Trial. He then carried this red-hot form to the National Track Championships in Brisbane in March 2021, taking Gold in the Scratch Race and Silver in the Time Trial. Dylan is not only an incredible rider, he's incredibly dedicated to his training and his teammates, and has a reputation for digging deep when the team is under pressure, pulling super human efforts to get his team back into medal contention. Congratulations Dylan and can't wait to see how far your bike can take you!

DUBBO ELECTORATE HSC HIGH ACHIEVERS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)—Finishing school is a fantastic achievement – graduating in a pandemic is even more impressive. But to really thrive and excel in such trying circumstances is commendable, so I want to congratulate a few young people who have managed to do just that. Narromine's Abram Liddell topped Electrotechnology Examination through Western Institute – Dubbo campus. Also studying through Western Institute, Luke Dunkley finished third in Automotive Examination, while Joe Lukkett came ninth in Construction Examination. St Matthew's Catholic School Mudgee graduate Lucinda Lillis finished ninth in the state in Mathematics Standard 1 Examination. From

Mudgee High School, Emma Clulow has had her 2021 major work selected for this year's HSC Textstyles Showcase! And St John's College Dubbo graduate Caitlyn Murray's major work Construct is right now on exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW as part of ARTEXPRESS. Congratulations to all of you, and all the best for a bright future!

DAVID BOSWORTH

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)—I want to congratulate Dubbo's David Bosworth, who on Australia Day was recognised with an Australian Fire Service Medal. David has been a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service for over 55 years. He was one of the first members of the Cobar Central Bushfire Brigade and was instrumental in establishing Cobar Shire's high frequency two-way communication system. David's been involved in many brigades across the region, holding positions of Captain, Senior Deputy Captain and Deputy Captain, Equipment Officer and President. He was voted a life member of the Megalong Valley Brigade in 2015. During his time with Megalong and as part of strike teams, he has attended every major fire in the Blue Mountains. Even though he's now in his 80s, and well and truly deserving of retirement, David continues to support the RFS. His lifelong service and commitment to ensuring the safety of the community is remarkable. Thank you, David, and congratulations.

GREG CONKEY

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—I wish to acknowledge the former mayor of Wagga Wagga, Councillor Greg Conkey, who chose not to run in the December local government elections. Councillor Conkey has performed the role through one of the toughest periods in our state's history, with COVID-19 and the subsequent delays to elections. For as long as I have known him, Cr Conkey's dedication to the community has never wavered. He has always had the interests of Wagga Wagga at the heart of everything he does. He has been and remains a strong advocate for the environment. First elected to Wagga Wagga City Council in 2012, Cr Conkey became mayor in 2016 and was re-elected in 2018. Due to COVID his tenure was extended by 15 months. I would particularly like to acknowledge the hard work done by Cr Conkey and Wagga Wagga City council general manager Peter Thompson to find a solution to the water supply issue for Lake Albert. It was great to work with them and I look forward to seeing this project completed. I thank Cr Conkey and his wife Jenny for their dedication to Wagga Wagga and wish them well in the future.

RODGER SCHIRMER

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—I wish to thank Cr Schirmer for his years of service to the council and to the towns and villages of Lockhart Shire Council. Having been elected as a representative for A ward for the first time nine years ago, Councillor Schirmer decided not to seek re-election in the December local government elections. For the last five years, Rodger Schirmer has been the mayor of Lockhart Shire Council. It has been a busy period of leadership for Cr Schirmer, who has seen his community experience droughts, fires and floods, not to mention a pandemic and a mouse plague. Cr Schirmer has been a dedicated and hardworking representative of Lockhart Shire Council, who always puts the community at the centre of everything he does. His pride in the achievements of Lockhart Shire Council is clear in everything he does. I would like to commend Cr Schirmer for his community service. Indeed, he has a proud family history of public service and followed in the footsteps of his father Edmund, who also served in local government. I wish Cr Schirmer, his wife Alison and their whole family well as they move into the next phase of their lives.

UNCLE PAT CONNOLLY

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—Congratulations to long-time Tumut resident Uncle Pat Connolly, a proud Wiradjuri elder, who has been recognised for many years of sharing his culture with school students. Uncle Pat has been presented with a Nanga Mai Award. These awards celebrate and recognise Aboriginal students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, other departmental staff, Aboriginal community members and schools that demonstrate excellence across a diversity of areas. Uncle Pat has been teaching Wiradjuri language and culture to students at Franklin Public School, Snowy Valleys School, Brungle Public School, Tumut Pre-School and others for more than 20 years. He was presented with his award at Franklin Public, a school he has a particularly close association with. He shares his knowledge about culture and how to care for Country to ensure it is preserved for generations to come. Uncle Pat supports the Department of Education with cultural immersion activities and has taken senior staff on Country, sharing his personal stories and telling them of the impact of past government policies on Aboriginal people since colonisation. He was nominated in the category of Outstanding Contribution to Educational Achievement by an Aboriginal Community Member. I commend Uncle Pat for his work and leadership.

AUSTRALIA DAY 22 JANUARY 2022 – GREATER HUME SHIRE

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—Greater Hume Shire Council marked Australia Day by acknowledging the work of several citizens from within the shire. These included: Citizens of the Year, Helen and Ross Krause from Walla Walla; Young Citizen of the Year, Jole Hoffmann from Walla Walla and Jessica Toogood of Henty; Sports Person/Team of the Year was awarded to Holbrook's Ben Parker and the four-team Holbrook RSL Bowling Club; and Community Event of the Year, Yvonne Booth for her launch of her book *Henty's Heroes: Short stories of Henty's Enlistments of World War I*. I also wish to acknowledge Steven Pinnuck, General Manager for Greater Hume Shire Council, who attended this year's ceremony for the last time in an official capacity. Congratulations, Steven, on your outstanding leadership for the community over so many years. You will be missed. I thank you all for your contribution. Your efforts are making a difference for your regional community.

AUSTRALIA DAY 26TH JANUARY 2022 – MURRUMBIDGEE COUNCIL

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)—I congratulate the following constituents who have been recognised in this year's Australia Day Honours and Awards. These individuals have served our community through their commitment, service and dedication. Citizen of the Year Award: Carmen Lawton; Little Aussie Awards: Ruby Neessen (St Joseph's Primary School) and Zara Williams (Jerilderie Public School); Young Citizen of the Year Award: Rory Knight; Sports Team of the Year Award: Jerilderie Bowls Pennant Team for season 2020-21 Players: Terry McGee, Faith Bryce, John Bryce, Colin Bryce, Betty Conn, Bill Williams, Ken Dallas, Terry Chaplin, Mary Catena, Lucy Gurciullo, Michael Pitt and Mark Baldwin; Emergencies: Kathleen Williams and Lucy Sweeney. I thank you all for your contribution. Your efforts are making a difference for your regional community.

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I bring to attention of the House the beginning of the 16-day Lunar New Year Festival, celebrating the coming of the New Year in the lunar calendar of many cultures across the world. Also known as the Spring Festival, Tet, Nyepi, Rija Nukan, Songkran, and Seollal, the festival marks the coming of good fortune, happiness, wealth, and longevity. The Balmain Electorate is home to wonderful Chinese, Vietnamese, Balinese, Thai and Korean families who celebrate during this time. Despite the challenges of COVID, I'm hopeful that the Lunar New Year brought reunions with family and friends, and celebrations of the coming of new beginnings. On behalf of the residents of the Balmain Electorate, I wish everyone a happy new year. Good luck in the year ahead, may there be peace all year round, and may all your wishes come true.

YABUN FESTIVAL 2022

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)—Today I recognise the 20th anniversary of the Yabun Festival 2022, which was held on the 26th of January 2022. Yabun means "music to a beat" in the Gadigal language, and the festival is the largest one-day celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in Australia. For decades the Yabun Festival has provided a vital space for our First Nations community to come together and celebrate their heritage, discuss their past, present and future, and to give a stage to First Nations artists, speakers, and leaders. It continues a longer tradition of commemorating Survival Day on the 26th of January, the festival celebrating the survival of First Nations people in light of colonisation, dispossession, and injustice that is ongoing. The success of the festival reflects the resilience and endurance of First Nations people, and the richness of their 60,000-year-old culture, one of the oldest continuing cultures in human history. On behalf of the residents of the Balmain Electorate, I want to thank the organisers of the Yabun Festival for an outstanding event and their ongoing leadership in creating spaces made by and for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

JACLYN BOYETT

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)—Today I recognise the work of Byron Shire 2022 Citizen of the Year Jaclyn Boyett, founder of the not-for-profit Global Ripple charity and op shop. Global Ripple is committed to helping individuals and communities gain access to medical and dental care, food and supportive networks. The group also fosters opportunities for small businesses to effect sustainable change through education and startup funding. In Byron, Global Ripple supports the Hot Showers project in partnership with the Byron Community Centre and the Women's Collective, which provides individuals with temporary accommodation during the worsening housing crisis. They have provided much-needed goods to people living in remote villages around the world, helped people in India cope with COVID-19 and provided funds to rebuild a family home on Savu Island in Indonesia that was destroyed by Cyclone Seroja. Jacqui has given countless hours of her time to look out for the needs of others. People like her are the true heroes in the community and I applaud her social conscience, energy and generosity of spirit.

MR & MRS ADCOCK 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—Today I wish to acknowledge two of my Menai constituents, Adrian and his wife Marilyn as they recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on 10 February 2022. 60 years of marriage is a momentous milestone and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on their diamond anniversary. I wish Adrian and Marilyn many more years of love, happiness and good health together.

MRS EVA SHEPHERD 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)—It is with great pleasure that today I acknowledge Mrs Eva Shepherd on her 100th birthday which she celebrated on the 14 January 2022. I am sure Eva celebrated this momentous occasion accompanied by her closest friends and family. I take this opportunity to again extend my sincere congratulations to Eva and wish her good health and happiness for the future.

LAWRENCE ORCHARD – OAM HONOUR

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to congratulate a living legend of music education and development in my electorate, Lawrence 'Laurie' Orchard on receiving an Order of Australia [OAM] Medal as part of the 2022 Australia Day Honours List. Camden Haven music prodigy Laurie Orchard was acknowledged for an illustrious 72-year career dedicated to music education. Laurie's vast musical repertoire includes playing the piano, flute, recorder as well as choral experience. From humble beginnings as a Tamworth music teacher in 1950, Laurie's career quickly expanded as his passion for music led him to Sydney Demonstration School and then to Wagga Wagga Teachers' College, Newcastle Teachers' College and the then Bathurst Teachers' College, later renamed Mitchell College of Advanced Education and Charles Sturt University. Laurie was credited with founding the State's first music conservatorium in Bathurst during the late 1970's. Today there are over 15 conservatoriums in regional NSW demonstrating the legacy Laurie's contribution has left for the benefit of others. He has also worked and directed a number of musical projects including Gilbert and Sullivan, opera and more recently wrote musical composition for St Jude's Anglican Church, Randwick. I thank Laurie for his lifetime of teaching and directing music.

JONTY SMITH – GRADUATE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to recognise Jonty Smith of Port Macquarie for his recent success in the NSW Golf Course Superintendents Association Awards. The NSW Golf Course Superintendents Association is where Professional Turf Managers, their employees and a vast range of turf related specialists share information and strategies to improve their turf on golf courses. Each year the Board Members call for nominations to recognise dedicated apprentices who are outstanding performers with the view to support their careers and foster future leaders in turf management. Jonty joined the Emerald Downs Golf Course as an apprentice in 2019 and in 2021 was nominated for the Association's Graduate of the Year Award. Jonty was recently announced as Runner Up for the prestigious award which is an impressive coup. This award will play a major role in the development of his career. Congratulations Jonty on this fabulous award and I'm sure this honour will provide a huge boost to your career aspirations. Your dedication to Emerald Downs Golf course's picturesque landscape is a credit to you and the team.

MICHAEL LANG – LIFE MEMBERSHIP SURF LIFE SAVING NSW

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise in the House to congratulate Mick Lang from Port Macquarie on receiving life membership from Surf Life Saving NSW. A remarkable man renowned for his longstanding contribution to surf lifesaving and love for his community was awarded life membership at the 2021 NSW Surf Life Saving awards celebration. Mick Lang, a former policeman and detective of 30 years has been recognised with the pinnacle of all accolades in surf lifesaving acknowledging his volunteer efforts and leadership. The list of honours in surf lifesaving is literally endless for Mick for what seems a lifetime of volunteering and educating the next generation of young and aspiring lifeguards. A highlight for Mick was taking out the 2021 Coach of the Year Award at the Surf Life Saving NSW Awards of Excellence, for the imprint he has left on the members at Tacking Point SLSC, since joining the organisation in 1995. In his time at Tacking Point SLSC Mick has held a number of positions in the organisation including Club Branch Director, Club Captain, Branch Coach and Club President, a role he still holds to this day. Congratulations.

SUMMAH CHELLEW

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)—I offer my congratulations to Summah Chellew who has been busy fundraising to help the local villages of Tucabia, Ulmarra, Pillar Valley, Tyndale and Glenugie. Summah saw a need to have defibrillators placed in these small villages and set herself a target of \$12,000 to enable the defibrillators to be purchased. Summah was recognised for her community spirit and was presented

with the 2022 Clarence Valley Young Citizen of the Year Encouragement Award. Congratulations Summah on recognising the need and for your dedication to achieving a fantastic result – well done.

PRESIDENT BERNIE PERKINS – ROTARY CLUB OF ARMIDALE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise Rotary Club of Armidale President Bernie Perkins and his fellow members for extending Rotary's general community contribution to supporting the Ezidi community in Armidale. With the aid of a State Government grant, Rotary Club of Armidale can work with the Northern Settlement Services' Regional Employment Agricultural Project [REAP], which provides access to farm land for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The local Ezidi community can apply their existing rural skills to the Australian environment which could provide long term employment and sustainable business benefits for them. I congratulate President Perkins and the Rotary Club of Armidale for getting behind the REAP in support of the Ezidi community. I commend Bernie and the Club for recognising an adversity among our new Australians and finding a practical solution.

LAING AND SIMMONS ARMIDALE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise Lachie Sewell, Director of Armidale's Real Estate, Laing+Simmons on being named a finalist in three categories in the upcoming Real Estate Business [REB] Awards. The categories being 'Innovator of the Year Award', for introducing a new approach to real estate franchising which aligns the interests of ownership with the principals and offices in the network in a way that's not been done before. 'New Office of the Year Award', for Lachie and his growing team redefining the way property is brought and sold in the Armidale region and CEO Leanne Pilkington is up for the 'Industry Thought Leader of the Year Award' for her leadership, not only at Laing+Simmons but the entire industry as Real Estate Institute of New South Wales [REINSW] President throughout the pandemic, enabling work to continue, showcase properties and serve customers. I congratulate Lachie and his team for their excellent contribution to the real estate industry with each member adding to the overall production. I wish Laing+Simmons all the very best in the REB Awards.

PATRICIA ELKIN, OAM – PACKSADDLE FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise Patricia Elkin OAM for her lifelong commitment to art and the promotion of Australian artists. Ms Elkin's artistic endeavours began at a very young age and was pursued commercially with her own exhibitions. When she moved to Armidale and discovered the New England Regional Art Museum [NERAM], it was a natural move to use that establishment to promote Australian artists and the Packsaddle Fundraising Committee was born. Ms Elkin had seen people favouring traditional European artwork and most probably buying an affordable copy, overlooking Australian artists. The Packsaddle Committee was formed to support the many artists they knew to get their work sold. The annual exhibition has become one of the biggest selling art exhibitions in regional NSW. In addition to promoting Australian art, the Packsaddle Committee has provided funds to the NERAM, assisting with the Museum's acquisitions. I congratulate Patricia on the recognition she so richly deserves in being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. I commend Patricia for the impact she has made on Australian artists and for enriching our lives with the awareness of the value of local art.

NOWRA SHOW

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast)—I would like to acknowledge the success of the 145th Nowra Show 2022, President Mark Stewart described the event as "outstanding" with all events at the show running smoothly. What a great turn out for this year's show, the show was fantastic, and it was great to see so many locals come together to support the show by either competing or attending. The weather was superb over the two days and encouraged the massive crowds, in fact the show's gate ticketing could be one of the biggest on record. This is incredible with COVID cancelling many other events it was great to see the success of the 2022 Nowra Show. Congratulations to the Nowra Show committee on making the show great and the achievement of working tirelessly to get the show up and running.

CALEB BAKER

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I'd like to extend my congratulations to an extraordinary young man who topped the State in last year's Retail Services exam for the Higher School Certificate. Caleb Baker from St Paul's Catholic College at Booragul is a true young leader. Not only is he the school's captain, but now he's on the New South Wales Education Standards Authority's 2021 First in Course merit list. What's more, he has achieved these accomplishments at the age of just 16, completing the Retail Services exam while he was in Year 11. Caleb decided to take on the HSC exam a year earlier than required to lighten his study load this year. While students from across the State had the added burden of school closures and lockdowns due to COVID-19, Caleb used the opportunity to study from home to his full advantage. He now plans to continue with the study

pattern he developed last year to put him through the remainder of his Year 12 exams this year. I think it's safe to say Caleb's future will be a bright one, and I look forward to seeing what he accomplishes in the future.

SAM SMITH

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I'd like to acknowledge the efforts that nine-year-old Sam Smith from Bonnells Bay has made to help dozens of local families in need. Sam has collected and recycled almost 6000 cans and bottles, netting him \$538 through the Return and Earn scheme, but instead of adding the earnings to his own pocket money, he's donated it to Lake Macquarie charity, Southlakes Incorporated. Southlakes volunteers run food banks, provide emergency accommodation, clothing and haircuts, and provide funds to homeless people and those under severe financial strain. I cannot think of a more worthwhile cause to donate to. For the past three years, Sam has also helped the charity at Christmas time by handing out hampers at Cooranbong and Lake Munmorah. Last year Sam even ran his own food drive at Heritage College Lake Macquarie to help the charity gather food for its emergency hampers which were delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic. And it appears he's not about to slacken off, aiming to collect 10,000 cans and bottles this year to raise \$1000. That's enough to provide 100 hampers to local families in need. I congratulate and acknowledge Sam on a magnificent effort.

HARRY AND CHRISTINE SPURR

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—It's not every day that people have the courage and strength to follow their dreams, but I'm proud to say that's exactly what one of my youngest constituents and his mother have done in the most public of ways. Five-year-old Harry Spurr and his mother Christine from Bonnells Bay blazed across television screens throughout Australia recently when they appeared on "The Voice Generations" in the blind audition round. Performing Cher's "If I could turn back time" they had the audience entertained and won high praise from the judges, bringing one to tears. While they didn't make it through this time, Harry was able to achieve another of his dreams by sitting in Keith Urban's chair, hitting the infamous red button and turning it around. Harry and Christine's talent is well known across Lake Macquarie. Harry started singing while he was still in nappies and was attending dance classes at the age of two, while Christine is a well-respected teacher at Triple Threat Academy and Performing Arts in Morisset. I think we will see big things from young Harry in the future and I wish him well.

**The House adjourned pursuant to standing and sessional orders at 19:45 until
Thursday 17 February 2022 at 9:30.**