



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday 17 February 2022**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 17 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.

## *Documents*

### AUDITOR-GENERAL

#### Reports

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 421D of the Local Government Act 1993, I announce receipt of the report of the Auditor-General entitled *Local Government Business and Service Continuity Arrangements for Natural Disasters*, dated 17 February 2022. I order that the report be printed.

## *Announcements*

### COVID-19 POSITIVE TEST RESULTS

**The SPEAKER:** I inform members that there have been two positive rapid antigen test results this morning, one for a member of the Legislative Assembly and one for a member of the Legislative Assembly support staff. Any people considered close contacts have been advised. Based on the medical health advice, there are no close contacts in this precinct. I emphasise that those individuals had negative tests yesterday and positive tests this morning, which validates the importance of the procedures that we have in place. I remind members of the need for compliance with social distancing and the wearing of masks as much as possible in this Chamber. The rules around masks are not imposed by this Parliament but are in fact public health orders, and it is important that we comply not only to protect all members but also to set the example that we need to in order to reinforce those messages with the public. However, I note that it is not practical to do so when either members or I am speaking.

[*Notices of motions given*]

## *Budget*

### BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2021-2022

**Debate resumed from 16 February 2022.**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (09:49):** I am delighted to address the House regarding the Government's budget and the financial challenges that the State is confronting, as well as the effect the budget is having on my local community in Campbelltown and the Macarthur region. I take this opportunity to touch on matters in my shadow ministerial portfolio areas to ensure that some of the issues confronting veterans, the local government sector and families across western and south-western Sydney are also noted by this House.

In 2015 when I was first elected and given the privilege of being the member for Campbelltown, I had one aim: to create a better Campbelltown for everyone. I believe each member of our community deserves their fair share. There is a very strong feeling not only in my electorate of Campbelltown but also right across western and south-western Sydney that inconsistent decisions were made during the pandemic about restrictions and other rules that were imposed upon us. There is still much fury and anger across the west and the south-west at the Government for making those isolated decisions, which put in place a system and process that unfairly and adversely affected people's livelihoods.

I believe the Government has missed a massive opportunity to provide funding and stimulus to the local government sector. Many councils have programs and capital works in place that have already been scoped, planned and funded; they just need the finances to actually go and do them. If the Government had decided to provide adequate funding to councils then it would have created direct stimulus for every community across New South Wales, securing local jobs and building a legacy of infrastructure for communities to enjoy whilst also growing local economies at a time when they seriously need it.

The financial status of many councils is in dire straits. That is why we are seeing many special rate variation applications, particularly in merged councils and even after harmonisation. The Central Coast Council, for example, is looking for additional funds to subsidise what was ultimately a bad decision by the Government to forcibly merge those councils. As we now know, that is the case in nearly every—if not every—merged council

across New South Wales. The financial status of many of those councils is not sustainable. Quite frankly, communities, local families, local businesses, ratepayers and workers should not have to pay the price for a bad Government decision. Opposition members called it out when those councils were forcibly merged, and we will continue to call it out.

To add further insult to injury for many of those communities and councils, the Government has left them high and dry. The Government made the decision to forcibly merge them and has now left them high and dry. The Government is not providing adequate funding to ensure the financial sustainability of the councils, which is having a direct effect on communities in two ways: Communities and ratepayers are having to cough up and pay the price, whilst services and job security have also been reduced throughout local councils. That is unacceptable. We know that the local government sector, local councils, are the closest level of government to community and play a vital role, particularly over the course of the past few years with the pandemic and in fire-affected areas. Many of them are still recovering from drought, and many of them continue to be affected by flood. Councils, our State emergency services and other volunteers have all been at the front line of those challenges, supporting their communities.

The Opposition knows that of course the State plays a vital role when it comes to supporting veterans. Yes, the Department of Veterans' Affairs is a Federal government body but that does not mean that the New South Wales State Government does not need to make adequate representations. We know that funding comes via conduits from the Federal Government to the State Government and are allocated accordingly. It would be wrong of me not to express sincere disappointment, on behalf of every fellow veteran in this State, that this Government did not even put in a submission to the royal commission on behalf of the veterans of New South Wales.

When the Opposition realised that submissions were needed, we put in a submission to try to set some of the terms of reference. Once those terms of reference were set, we also made a final submission. I think that is quite fitting and appropriate. I did that on behalf of the Labor Opposition but I also did it on behalf of every veteran in this State. The disappointment among the veterans community about the Government not making a submission is very serious. That said, I understand the Government now is taking steps to do so, and I welcome that from the Government. I note witnesses have been appearing at the royal commission yesterday and/or today as well as at other various times. We need to see the outcomes being implemented. We have seen report after report, with findings and recommendations that simply have not been adopted. We do not want to see that happen again with the current royal commission.

I know the royal commission is very thorough and is looking into everything. But, most importantly, once those recommendations and findings are handed down by the royal commission, we need to see a collaborative approach from all levels of government to provide veterans with the support they need to transition from military life to civil society and to address the many serious issues that veterans continue to confront. Whether it is employment, mental health or physical injury, it is vital that they get the attention they need and deserve. If it was good enough for service personnel and veterans to serve our nation, it is good enough for every government to serve them in their time of need. Earlier I touched briefly on the effects of the pandemic and subsequent restrictions across west and south-west Sydney. We are not seeing adequate investment in west and south-west Sydney. Quite frankly, all we have seen are tolls, taxes, privatisation and removal of revenue from west and south-west Sydney, particularly in terms of stamp duty and a serious disparity between what is being taken out and what is put back in.

I note many major road projects are delayed, resulting in cost blowouts. That is unacceptable. We have not seen this Government make any appropriate representations when it comes to the extension of the South West Rail Link from Leppington through to the aerotropolis. This is a vital piece of infrastructure because, as we know, that will connect the two major airports—Kingsford Smith and the aerotropolis. Every piece of research shows that if there is no public transport link between those two primary and secondary airports, it limits the opportunity for that secondary airport to prosper. We cannot have that. Also, a heavy rail link will ensure that the aerotropolis and Western Sydney Airport have every opportunity to achieve their best in terms of freight. There have been many reports and it has been stated that freight will play a vital role in the success of the Western Sydney Airport, but it will not just be about the success of the airport: It will be about the jobs that need to be created. We know that approximately 1.3 million people—a population the size of Adelaide's—are destined to be located between that western Sydney belt of St Marys and Campbelltown or down through the Macarthur. That is an enormous amount of people going into an area in a reasonably short time and not too far into the future.

We have not seen adequate planning or budget allocations from this Government for a hospital. Adelaide has four hospitals; this Government has not planned to build any extra hospitals. I acknowledge we have seen upgrades around it. I know members opposite will be happy to point that out. But they are not on anything near the scale of what we actually need across the west and south-west. It is good to see health services buildings upgraded, but it is not a silver bullet. We have to have adequate staff, health workers, nurses, physicians, clinicians

and everything else associated with the health service in place. We have to look after the people who are working in that field. They do not go to work just to get paid. They go to work because they want to care for patients, and that includes every allied health worker, every nurse and every doctor, clinician and physician.

I urge the Government to get serious in negotiating and working with these workers. On Tuesday I saw the biggest rally I have ever seen out the front of this building. It was a display of the frustration and the pressure that the sector is under at the moment—and the Government must pay attention. The Government must consult with those staff and provide them with the support that they need. They are the ones that have already supported us through this pandemic and they continue to do so. It is just as good for this Government to support them whilst they are supporting us.

I draw the attention of the House specifically to my electorate of Campbelltown and to the broader Macarthur region. The Campbelltown Hospital upgrade continues to progress. I welcome that upgrade. I am proud to work with our community to secure \$632 million for it. But the reality is we do not have adequate funding in place for our allied health workers, nurses, clinicians, doctors, physicians and everyone else. We live in an enormously growing area. That hospital services much of the outer south-west, including Camden, Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands. It supports Liverpool Hospital, which is another fantastic hospital, filled with many amazing workers and staff. But the problem is the rate of population growth compared with the budget allocation for health and other services. The disparity between the two is just continuing to grow because adequate funding is not being put in place.

I must draw the attention of the House to the fury over the Government building a car park and making people pay for it. Ultimately, the car park has been built with taxpayers' money and now taxpayers—that is, patients, carers and workers—have to pay to park. Let us be honest, some of those workers are on the lowest wages in the industry. I commend the Health Services Union, which has been standing with those workers and fighting for a better outcome. I also acknowledge my colleague the shadow Minister for Health, Ryan Park, who has been standing with those workers and fighting for better outcomes in the sector. But it is a gross display when a government uses taxpayers' money to build a car park and then makes the same taxpayers pay for parking. It is inappropriate and just simply unjust and unfair.

When talking about our road network and transport services, it would be remiss of me not to mention yet again the urgent requirement for the upgrade of Appin Road. Yes, we have seen some upgrades to the south, further down towards the Illawarra. But, more specifically, the 10.5 kilometres from south of Fitzgibbon Lane to the roundabout in Appin needs to be upgraded. We need to keep ensuring that the Outer Sydney Orbital is connected. I have always been of the view that the orbital would be best connected to Picton Road. That would not disrupt our valued koala habitat and would recognise the sensitivities of all of our wildlife, particularly given the uniqueness of the area between the Nepean and Georges rivers. Everyone wonders why Campbelltown has the only disease-free koalas. It is because of those two rivers and the longstanding fight by community to ensure that our koalas are looked after. They must be a priority.

We need to have a holistic and collaborative approach when it comes to property development and providing the houses that people and young families want. I want to see young families and people able to afford to buy their first homes. I understand that a lot of that is based on supply. But I also understand that balance can and must be found when it comes to property development in green-space areas. That balance is based on the needs of our economy and the supply and demand requirements of the industry and our requirement to build houses. Upgrading the Appin Road and conserving our valued and cherished koala habitat are equally important. The Government must work with all stakeholders to find that balance.

I also note the connection of Liz Kernohan Drive at Menangle and the Hume Highway. The Government's commentary has been very disturbing in recent times. I hear that it is going to place limitations on the on and off ramps. That is unacceptable. We do not want to see the same mistakes made to the south, in connecting Menangle Road and Liz Kernohan Drive to the Hume Highway, that we saw at the Narellan Road intersection. My colleague the member for Camden would be very aware of that, as it borders our electorates. He would understand, too, the frustration that the Narellan Road created for the community over many years. That could have all been avoided. I am not blaming anyone, because respective governments were involved, but we do not want to see the same mistake made again. Let us be honest: If we build the Menangle Road to Hume Highway interchange to the south and get it right in the first place, we will not be going backwards and forwards and having that same mess. It will be cheaper as well, because costs are forever going up, so why not get it done right the first time? It is so important.

Our students, teachers, mums and dads have done an amazing job through the pandemic, whether in homeschooling or quite simply in making sure that our students continue to be educated and have every opportunity to be educated. But the reality is that we require maintenance upgrades in Campbelltown and broadly across the Macarthur—again, this is population forecast. We are seeing a disparity in plans for building new

schools and upgrading the ones that we have. I credit all our staff who work in our schools, as well as our teachers, the mums and dads, and our students, who have worked so hard and done so well during the pandemic, which has provided unique challenges. But the reality is that we cannot get locked into that. We need to have a broader, more holistic view on education funding in Campbelltown and across the State. We need those new schools, particularly in my electorate and the Macarthur region, as we continue to grow. We need to upgrade the schools that we have. That will provide the staff with the resources that they need to provide our students with every opportunity to get the best possible education.

In terms of transport, I continue to be disappointed. I look forward to meeting with the new transport Minister to discuss the bus requirements through Macarthur Heights. We also need to make sure that Campbelltown gets Service NSW back in our city. It should never have been closed. It was an outrage at the time and it has infuriated my local community. It also affects the electorates of Camden and Wollondilly because the only one is in Gregory Hills. It is compacted all into there. It is simply not enough. Campbelltown is the regional city of the south-west. It is the regional city and epicentre of Macarthur. For it not to have a Service NSW is nothing short of ludicrous. I will continue to fight, with our community, to get Service NSW back into Campbelltown. The Government should never have taken it away in the first place, but we will continue the fight. I will work with the Government in every possible way to ensure that our community gets its fair share, and Service NSW is one of those major priorities. We are a growing but beautiful region. The strength of our people is resilience. The best thing about where I live and our community is our people. I thank them for everything they have done during very challenging times. I thank the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (10:09):** It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of my electorate of Castle Hill about the outcomes of the most recent budget. I will also go over in detail the broader aspects of the New South Wales budget—its effect, the amount of money that has been expended on various aspects, various communities and infrastructure projects right across the State—that ultimately have a positive impact on not only my community but people right across New South Wales. First of all, off the top, there is nothing more important than our investment in schools.

A very rapidly growing area like my community always has a need for the upgrading of schools. The \$3 million invested into the Castle Hill Public School upgrade in the most recent budget was very welcome news for that particular school, which is incredibly impacted by the surrounding development and infield development around the Castle Hill CBD. Whilst it has not been traditional for children to live and grow up and be raised in apartment blocks, some of our apartment blocks are quite high quality and becoming more of a trend these days as people choose to live in those types of dwellings. They have the advantages of the metro station close by as well as other extraordinary bus and road linkages to travel to work and other places. That impact of the increasing number of families, and indeed their children, certainly presents challenges for Castle Hill Public School and the \$3 million investment will be greatly welcomed for the future of that particular precinct.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** That is my school.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I acknowledge that interjection from the Minister at the table, who says it is his school. I wish he had paid much closer attention while he had been there and he might have been something other than a lousy member of Parliament! He may have even aspired to much greater things, and I do not mean solicitors and lawyers. I mean greater things in life like landscape gardeners and bus drivers and things like that.

*[A Government member interjected.]*

I would ask that you ask the Minister to stop interjecting, Mr Speaker! I do not need to go through the \$10 million upgrade for Samuel Gilbert Public School. The school faces similar issues in terms of the growing population. That upgrade has now been undertaken for the past 18 months. It is getting close to completion, getting close to being opened and getting close to children moving into that facility. It is an upgrade that has been necessary for the past decade. I am very pleased that it has happened on my watch. I am also certainly pleased that the Government has responded with that injection of funding that went into Samuel Gilbert Public School. It will be welcomed by the entire community.

More broadly, when we speak about cultural aspects we do talk about the Minister who is sitting at the table and his electorate, which has been the beneficiary of \$23.7 million for the new Powerhouse Museum at Parramatta. That injection of funding of \$23.7 million includes money to rebuild the Museums Discovery Centre, which is in my electorate of Castle Hill. It is a wonderful aspect of the Powerhouse Museum. I have been critical in the past of how it is under-utilised, but with this upgrade I am sure it will be opened up and be more accessible for our community, especially for the young people in our community, and it will certainly be a great addition. A huge aspect of that \$23.7 million is going into the Museums Discovery Centre in Castle Hill.

On the back of that funding into cultural aspects, \$200,000 is going into upgrades to historic houses within my electorate. My electorate of The Hills—and in the Hawkesbury previously to that—is adorned with those wonderful historic houses. I could ramble on for an hour about homes such as Rouse Hill House, the most notable of those historic homes, and Mungerie House, which is right next door to the Rouse Hill Town Centre. Within only a couple of hundred metres of my home is Bligh's original hunting cottage. Governor Bligh was the fourth Governor of New South Wales, and he was succeeded by the great Governor Lachlan Macquarie. Aberdoon House is another one in Rouse Hill. My electorate has a litany of historic homes that date back to the beginning of European settlement in this country, to a time when my family arrived here on the First, Second and Third fleets, of which we are very proud. We were given land grants across The Hills and the Hawkesbury area, and many of my family members are still located in those areas today. Acknowledging the importance of those heritage homes is absolutely vital. The \$200,000 in last year's budget is a welcome addition.

There is \$75,000 for upgrades to social housing in my electorate and a \$5 million grant to Link Wentworth to deliver another 32 homes in Rouse Hill, predominantly around what we call Civic Way, which is based in and around the town centre. I take great pleasure in advising the House that, whilst I was on The Hills Shire Council between 2003 and 2008, when the Rouse Hill Town Centre planning concept and development application went through all stages, the council insisted that an aspect of social housing exist in and around the town centre. That was certainly supported by the government of the day, and it has continued to be supported by our Government. There are great opportunities for available dwellings for nurses and policemen who are living in those areas. They are close to everything because the Rouse Hill Town Centre is very much the centre of the universe, especially now that it has the North West Metro leaving the station every four minutes. There is no need to have more than one car per family. Some families do not even have one car. Social housing support in that area has been a welcome investment, and it will continue to provide for many families that require social housing. Link Wentworth has been a great provider, and it will continue to work in that area for years to come.

There has been \$8.4 million delivered on stage two of the Outer Sydney Orbital, which will benefit my constituents in the Box Hill area and more broadly in the years to come. It will be a while before it is complete, but planning is underway and money has been injected into it. Planning for the future is what is important. We have not been a government that has allowed development to take place without the appropriate and necessary infrastructure for the future. I look at my electorate and the upgrades to Showground Road and the North West Metro rail link, and the many aspects of sub-arterial roads that the Government has supported the council in delivering, which is all very important. The Outer Sydney Orbital will be extremely important in the years to come, linking our areas to the aerotropolis at Badgerys Creek and linking areas of the south-west to the north-west. This will happen once the North West Metro is completed in its entirety around the metropolitan area. The \$8.4 million of funding for the Outer Sydney Orbital is greatly welcomed and will benefit my electorate in the future.

**Debate interrupted.**

### *Bills*

## **COMPANION ANIMALS AMENDMENT (REHOMING ANIMALS) BILL 2021**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (10:19):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Thousands of dogs and cats are killed every year in New South Wales pounds. Last year almost 2,000 dogs and almost 7,000 cats were killed. Shockingly, those high figures represent drops on previous years and pre-pandemic numbers when there was an increase in people staying home. The Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021 was introduced in the Legislative Council by Animal Justice Party member the Hon. Emma Hurst, who is in the Chamber today. I thank her for her leadership on the bill.

This matter is close to my heart as my dog, Max—as a number of members may know—is a rescue dog. I remember when we got Max from Monika's DoggieRescue right after my inaugural speech in this Parliament 10 years ago. My husband was sitting in the public gallery and was looking around the Chamber, and back in 2012 there were a lot of very robust-looking members. At the end of my inaugural speech, my husband said to me, "Alex, we are getting a dog and you are going to walk that dog every day." Inevitably, we got a dog. We went to Monika's DoggieRescue on the advice of the former member for Sydney, Lord Mayor Clover Moore, and we met and fell in love with Max, who was a four-year-old whippet fox terrier cross. Max was rescued by Monika from a pound. He was set to be destroyed two weeks after she rescued him. He was a healthy, wonderful, loving animal. Had it not been for the proactive work of Monika's DoggieRescue, Max would not have been with us, would not have given us the joy he does every day and would not have kept me in good shape.

Those appalling figures of healthy animals being killed in New South Wales should come as a surprise because we are an animal-loving nation and Parliament, and we have some of the highest rates of companion animal ownership in the world. The pandemic has seen animal ownership soar even further, with the demand to adopt rescue animals over buying them from pet shops or classifieds continuing to grow. Pounds report that the main reason for killing dogs is they are unable to rehome them, and for cats the main reasons are being unable to rehome them or because they are feral or infant. But investigations by the Animal Justice Party have uncovered that, more often than not, animals are killed because the pound does not have the resources, space or willingness to care for them. Investigations found that some pounds actively shut out rescue groups that are willing and able to find homes for their animals.

Many councils do the right thing and actively work to ensure that animals in their care find a home. The City of Sydney partners with the Sutherland Shire Animal Shelter, which has a no-kill policy. The staff and volunteers work to ensure the welfare of the animals and find an appropriate home. The city also runs a program to rescue kittens from streets by placing them in foster care, where they are rehabilitated, desexed, microchipped, vaccinated and rehomed in collaboration with rescue groups. But other councils continue to choose to kill healthy animals that can be rehomed because it is simply easier. We should stop this act of convenience killing.

The Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021 will require pounds to take certain steps to rehome an animal before it considers killing them. First, a pound will be required to take reasonable steps to advertise the animal for rehoming. That could involve advertising the animal on social media, the council website or through a rescue group. A pound would also have to write to at least two designated rehoming organisations to find out if they are interested in taking and rehoming the animal. These organisations include the RSPCA, the Animal Welfare League and the Cat Protection Society as well as any organisation designated by the Office of Local Government under section 88B of the Companion Animals Act 1998. The council must provide the rehoming organisation seven days to accept the invitation and if they do, the pound must not kill the animal but rather make arrangements to transfer them. When an animal is killed, the council must keep a record of the steps that were taken to rehome the animal. A pound does not need to take these steps if the animal is so ill or hurt that it would be cruel to keep the animal alive.

The new requirement on councils and pounds as a result of the bill would be minor and reasonable and, importantly, it would save the lives of healthy animals. Many rescue groups are willing to help find a home for unwanted animals and many people are willing to adopt them. Local Government NSW supports the bill, confirming in a letter to the Hon. Emma Hurst in November last year that the "changes proposed by the Bill are straightforward and reasonable, and the additional notification and record keeping requirements for councils are not onerous". I understand that the Office of Local Government is undertaking a comprehensive review into current rehoming practices, investigating ways to reduce companion animal euthanasia rates. I welcome that process. The review is expected to be complete by the middle of the year, providing an opportunity to fine-tune any requirements in the bill through existing regulation-making powers already in the Companion Animals Act, such as setting out the information about animals that pounds must provide to rescue groups. Nothing in the bill limits those regulation-making powers and it will be important for the Government to consult with stakeholders, including the RSPCA, in creating these regulations.

I met with the RSPCA this week. We had a very constructive conversation about the bill. I thank them for their engagement and also thank the Animal Welfare League, Maggie's Rescue, and Monika's DoggieRescue—where we were able to adopt Max—for their support. The bill will help protect animals under the care of council pounds and facilitate finding new homes for them. I thank the Government and the Minister for their productive engagement on this legislation. I thank the Government, the Opposition and the crossbench for agreeing to reorder the bill to ensure that we could debate it today. I think it sends a significant message for this Parliament and our commitment to animal welfare and companion animals that this will, hopefully, be one of the first pieces of legislation passed this year. It also shows a real sign of respect from the Government to the crossbench for their productive engagement on this legislation. In particular, I thank the leadership of the Animal Justice Party and the Hon. Emma Hurst and her awesome staff, including Tess Vickery—Emma and Tess are here today—for drafting such a sensible and compassionate bill. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (10:28):** I speak in support of the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021. In doing so, I foreshadow that I will move amendments later in the debate. The Government is committed to protecting the welfare of animals and promoting responsible pet ownership in New South Wales. I understand the importance of pets to the community, and this Government is committed to ensuring that animals are well looked after throughout their lives. The bill will amend the Companion Animals Act 1998 to prescribe the actions that local councils in New South Wales must take when seeking to rehome a companion animal who has been seized or surrendered.

The measures in the bill are in no way intended to denigrate the outstanding work that local councils already do and the extraordinary lengths to which council pound staff go to find forever homes for cats and dogs that end up in their care. The amendments in the bill are sensible measures that simply formalise the rehoming efforts that the vast majority of councils already undertake. By doing so, it will standardise the rehoming process and create a consistent approach to rehoming across all New South Wales councils. Those requirements are consistent with the current objective of the Companion Animals Act: that euthanasia of an otherwise healthy animal in a council pound or shelter is an option of last resort.

In supporting the bill, I note that Local Government NSW, the peak body for councils in New South Wales, has indicated its support for the bill. It is important to acknowledge that Local Government NSW characterised the proposed amendments as "straightforward and reasonable" and noted that "the additional notification and record-keeping requirements for councils are not onerous". As the Hon. Emma Hurst noted in her second reading speech in the other place, many councils already work closely with rescue groups and foster carers, and also make use of social media to find forever homes. I agree with her wholeheartedly when she says that many councils are doing the right thing. I am pleased to advise that I have the statistics to back that up. This Government has worked closely with local councils and animal welfare organisations to significantly reduce euthanasia rates in pounds and shelters across the State. I am pleased to advise that the number of animals euthanised decreased by 45 per cent for dogs and 26 per cent for cats in 2019-20 compared with 2015-16.

Sadly, there are still cats and dogs in New South Wales who are not able to be rehomed, which is why, together with my department, I will continue to examine ways to improve the framework governing rehoming practices in New South Wales. Rehoming practices are constantly evolving, and we need to ensure our framework continues to reflect best practice. That is why in November last year the Government launched a comprehensive review of animal rehoming practices to be undertaken during the first half of this year. The Government is getting on with that review, which is due to report midyear. The review will be carried out by the Office of Local Government in consultation with key companion animal stakeholders and animal welfare organisations, including my ministerial advisory group—the Responsible Pet Ownership Reference Group—chaired by my colleague the member for Albury.

The review will examine breeding, desexing and rehoming practices, and their impacts on euthanasia in New South Wales. Importantly, it will also look at ways to reduce euthanasia rates and will identify any need for further legislative reform, improvements to impounding processes and avenues for better data collection. It will build on the amendments proposed in this bill to further improve the rehoming rates of dogs and cats in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government is committed to reducing euthanasia rates for cats and dogs, and we will continue to work with councils and animal welfare agencies to promote responsible pet ownership. The Government understands the importance of pets to the community, and it is committed to ensuring that animals are well looked after throughout their lives.

In part, responsible pet ownership reduces the burden on pounds and shelters by ensuring that fewer animals are lost or abandoned, or are required to be seized after an incident. To date, the New South Wales Government has undertaken a range of actions to address concerns relating to the rehoming of companion animals. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government delivered over \$500,000 to all council-run pounds to ensure that they continue to run effectively. The Government has also made registration for pets adopted from pounds and shelters free, which helps give animals in pounds and shelters a second chance, and will work towards reducing the burden on pounds and shelters in New South Wales.

The Government has also implemented a range of measures to reduce the number of companion animals entering council pounds, thereby taking the pressure off rehoming services and reducing euthanasia rates. The measures include making it easier for pet owners to register their cats and dogs through the online NSW Pet Registry; reducing registration fees for cats by \$10 from 1 July 2020, therefore creating a stronger incentive to register and desex cats; and implementing an annual permit program to encourage early-age desexing of cats.

The amendments I will propose are designed to ensure that councils are not burdened with unnecessary regulatory red tape. Furthermore, I will ensure that the rehoming practices review looks at the impacts, if any, that may follow if the bill is passed. I will also seek to implement any other suggested regulatory changes or process improvements recommended during the review, which is really important. Any further changes in this area will also be carefully considered by an advisory group on companion animals, the Responsible Pet Ownership Reference Group, which consists of key stakeholders, including councils, RSPCA NSW, DOGS NSW, the Cat Protection Society of NSW, the Australian Veterinary Association and the Australian Institute of Local Government Rangers NSW. I remind members that the peak body for councils, Local Government NSW, has made it clear that the additional requirements that the bill places on councils are not onerous. I also note that, in her second reading speech, the Hon. Emma Hurst highlighted her consultation with councils and rescue groups during the development of the bill as part of her pound reform working group. I thank Ms Hurst for that.

I turn to the provisions of the bill, and again I emphasise that the bill will formalise the tireless work of local councils in rehoming abandoned and seized animals. It will require councils to give written notice that an animal is available for rehoming to at least two rehoming organisations; take reasonable steps to advertise that an animal is available for rehoming; and ensure that the written notice must specify the period of time, not less than seven days from the date the notice is given, during which the animal is available for rehoming. Also, if a rehoming organisation gives a council written notice that it is able to rehome an animal, whether or not the organisation was given written notice by the council, the council must not destroy the animal and must make arrangements to transfer the animal to the organisation for rehoming. The bill will also require councils to keep records that identify animals that have been rehomed and destroyed, along with a record of the actions the council took to rehome the animal and alternative action the council considered before destroying the animal. These sensible amendments will ensure that cats and dogs that end up in the care of council pounds and shelters have the best possible chance of finding a new home.

The review my department is undertaking will guide us in the next steps as we continually refine rehoming practices in this State. I thank my colleague in the Legislative Council the Hon. Emma Hurst and her office staff, especially Tess, for their continued work in this area and for introducing this bill to the Legislative Council. I also recognise the member for Sydney, Mr Alex Greenwich, for pursuing this issue and introducing the bill into this place. The bill is a testament to what can be achieved when we work together to achieve a common objective. To that end, I thank both the Hon. Emma Hurst and the member for Sydney for working collaboratively with me and the Government to achieve this outcome.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:39):** I am delighted to contribute to debate on the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021 on behalf of the Labor Opposition. At the outset, the Labor Opposition does not oppose the bill or the amendments. In essence, the bill seeks to amend the Companion Animals Act 1998 to set out actions a council must take towards rehoming a seized or surrendered animal if it is considering killing the animal. The Minister pointed out that Local Government NSW [LGNSW] and the sector do not oppose the bill and do not consider there to be any onerous issues or impositions on the sector by doing so.

I acknowledge my colleagues in the upper House the Hon. Mick Veitch and the Hon. Emma Hurst. I acknowledge the Hon. Emma Hurst's staff and her passion on this issue, which is so important to many people in our community. I understand that and the Opposition understands that. I also acknowledge Alex Greenwich, the member for Sydney, and his hard work and contribution, as well as the collaborative approach that the Government has taken in formulating the bill. I agree with the Minister that it is a testament to what can be achieved by working together. Ultimately, the best outcomes are always achieved by working together.

I also acknowledge former Minister Shelley Hancock for her efforts and contribution during the course of last year when she was the Minister. The bill provides that a council must take reasonable steps to advertise an animal for rehoming. Ultimately, that gives the community every opportunity to provide the animal with the rights it deserves. The bill and the amendments address that provision. Secondly, the council must reach out in writing to at least two rehoming organisations to see if they are interested in taking and rehoming the animal. That is a fair and reasonable outcome, and a change that must be made. Thirdly, the council must allow the rehoming organisations at least seven days to accept the invitation and make arrangements to transfer the animal. Finally, in the event that an animal is killed, the bill requires the council to keep records of the steps it took to rehome the animal.

It is important to note there is an exemption to the regime, and that is when a vet practitioner determines that an animal is so severely injured or diseased or in such a physical condition that it is cruel to keep them alive. That is why the Labor Opposition does not oppose bill. The sector has been looking for certainty and clarification on this issue. I also note that the stakeholders of the sector—the United Services Union, LGNSW—and others support the bill and the amendments. For that reason, we on this side of the House do the same.

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (10:42):** I contribute to debate on the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021. I congratulate the Animal Justice Party and the Hon. Emma Hurst in particular on her advocacy in the area of euthanasia rates because she grilled me about it so many times in budget estimates. This issue is close to her heart and all of our hearts because we want to reduce euthanasia rates throughout the State. In fact, that has been happening over the past 10 years. The rates are coming down; we have reduced them by more than 50 per cent. But we can always do better. I will talk about the enormous efforts on behalf of this Government to do that.

I congratulate Alex Greenwich because I know that he has a soft spot for animals. He is a compassionate and wonderful person. I love the story about Max and Monika's DoggieRescue, which is emblematic of rescue organisations in Sydney and throughout New South Wales. There are so many of them and they are run by volunteers. We must ensure that when we introduce legislation like this that there are no unintended consequences

for those organisations. I note that the Minister is going to move amendments and that the member for Sydney also intimated that he would consider further amendments to be included in regulations. I will raise some of those later. I thank the member for Sydney for his advocacy.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the enormous efforts of organisations such as the RSPCA to reduce euthanasia rates. Last year the Government made a huge effort to encourage the imprimatur of many organisations to adopt, not shop. People who visit the RSPCA at Yagoona will note the enormous investment by this Government that has occurred over a long period to upgrade the veterinary facilities and shelter facilities where the dogs and cats are kept. It does an enormous amount of work in this space. It has a foster program for the many animals who cannot be readily rehomed, either overnight or in a few weeks or months. I note that the member for Holsworthy is in the Chamber. The member has accompanied me many times to the facility at Yagoona and participated in the foster program. The member fostered kittens who were not easily rehomed: She took the kittens home and fostered them until the RSPCA could find them a home. This is part of what the RSPCA does. Foster carers do not necessarily want a long-term pet or animal, but they will care for them until they find someone who does.

We must consider the challenges faced by rehoming organisations, councils and the RSPCA concerning animals who will simply never find a home. That is why euthanasia will sadly always play a part. There are animals who have been abused or have been seized from the most dreadful circumstances. They have been involved in dog fighting or cock fighting—which actually still occurs in this State. I have witnessed attempts to re-educate vicious dogs so they can become pets, but sadly that will never happen. Very often there has to be the alternative of euthanasia, and we have to accept that. We will never drive those rates down to zero. I commend the New South Wales Government for its investment of \$20 million since 2011 in rehoming shelters, councils and the RSPCA. Last year the Government invested half a million dollars because we realised that councils were facing challenges with the COVID pandemic. That is one of the initiatives that I sought from Treasury to assist councils.

This Government considers councils. I have visited Sutherland Shire Council, where Carmelo Pesci is once again the mayor. The member for Sydney mentioned collaboration between the City of Sydney and the Sutherland shire, which has a no-kill policy. I visited that shelter, and it will not euthanise animals. It will go to any lengths to prevent it. I congratulate Sutherland Shire Council and other councils that aim to reduce their euthanasia rates every single day—nobody wants to euthanise. This debate was prompted by the fact that Bourke Shire Council kills dogs and puppies, and the story went around the State and the country. It appeared the council had other alternatives, apart from killing those dogs. As the former Minister, I undertook an investigation of Bourke Shire Council. We understand the reason it took that action: It was in the middle of the pandemic and it was difficult to transport animals across its border to other areas. It was an horrific episode but not emblematic or symptomatic of other councils in this State, all of which do a fantastic job.

I note the Minister has said that this legislation is about consistency, and it is. If you are going to take a consistent approach to legislation, you need to consult. My message to the member for Sydney and the Animal Justice Party is: You need to consult. I know there is some urgency to this matter because we do not want more animals killed, if we can prevent it. But there must be a consistent approach across the board to consult with all stakeholders. It is great that they have consulted with Local Government NSW, but it is not the only organisation and it does not represent every single council in this State. You must consult with all councils; it is onerous and time consuming, but you need to do it. You must consult with all the rehoming organisations and shelters. Their input is required to avoid any unintended consequences of the bill. Consultation must include the RSPCA, which is such a fantastic organisation in this State.

Consistency means consultation and that any ideas received are taken on board to make the bill better. I recognise that the member for Sydney has clearly indicated that the concerns raised by those organisations will be taken on board and will be included in future regulations. I thank him for that. I raise some of my concerns. Firstly, there needs to be an onus on councils to periodically check that a shelter has the capacity to take the animals it is given. That measure is to prevent hoarding. Members might think to themselves, what animal rescue shelter would hoard? In fact, multiple shelters that are currently recognised as rehoming organisations under section 88 (b) have been prosecuted on more than one occasion for hoarding. If a council gives an animal shelter 20 animals, for example, an important animal welfare safeguard is that it checks what has happened to those animals before more are sent.

It might seem a bit obtuse that I raise that, but many animal shelters will simply take animals because they are compassionate people, they are volunteers. The fact that they have been prosecuted for hoarding means they perhaps do not have the capacity to take any more animals. We must ensure that shelters' credentials are up to date and that they are not taking too many animals and hoarding, and check what they do with the animals if they cannot rehome them. We have to help the shelters as well. As I said before, we are investing and have invested a

lot of money into those organisations. So let us be sure we do that right on behalf of the animals that will be surrendered. We also must allow the shelters to opt in or out of the scheme. That is fair enough when it is a group of volunteers who are working in that space. That is something that the Animal Justice Party might consider. Shelters need to have that option of opting out of the scheme. We would like them to all opt in and be part of it, but perhaps they do not have the capacity or the ability to do what we are asking them to do.

Councils are different. There will be ramifications for councils in the bill. In the interim between now and whenever the regulations come into force, and therefore the Act or the bill, we must consult widely with councils on what the unintended consequences might be for them. My view is that if a notice is to be sent by a council to a shelter, it must include all available information about the animal's chip number, its age, weight and the circumstances as to why it has been surrendered to a shelter. So, a number of amendments should be considered and included in the regulations. I am happy that the member for Sydney has said that he will consider them because they are all sensible amendments that will become sensible regulations. Again, I congratulate the Animal Justice Party. I have worked well with them in the past. They are passionate, committed people, and the member for Sydney, of course, is the same. I support the bill.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (10:52):** I support the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021, introduced by the member for Sydney. I also take this opportunity to thank the Hon. Emma Hurst in the other place not just for her advocacy on this bill but for the many causes she has sought to raise awareness of through Parliament. I am pleased she is in the gallery today. When I was in the ministry, she brought forward a sensible reform linking animal cruelty to the Working With Children Check to ensure that we strengthened the existing provisions. I made some comments in this place and supported that sensible reform. I am glad the Parliament has done the same.

I also congratulate my friend and fellow crossbench colleague the member for Sydney, who, should this bill pass, will probably have had more bills passed than most Ministers. His record is incredibly strong. I acknowledge the comments on the bill from my friend the Minister for Local Government and my dear friend the member for South Coast. The bill recognises the importance of the role of not only animal welfare but also animal shelters, which are essentially public services. Too often they are underfunded and under-resourced.

I note that the Department of Primary Industries is about to undertake the first review in more than four decades—a long overdue review—of the resourcing, support and operation of these shelters. However, we saw last year the disgraceful and appalling treatment of 15 dogs that were shot. They were puppies that were destroyed in a very inhumane and inappropriate way. I am a proud dog owner. I put on record my first *Hansard* shout-out to my dog, Oscar. Oscar is a tremendous companion animal. I look forward to the day when we might have more dog-friendly workplaces and I might be able to bring him into Parliament. As much as I would like to say he is my seeing eye dog, I do not think I would get away with it. I would like to see more dog-friendly and pet-friendly workplaces.

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** And parliaments.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Indeed. We need some of man's best friends around here because finding a best friend in Parliament is often very difficult.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Well, for some. Most of us are alright.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Self-praise is no recommendation, Minister, but thank you for trying.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** It is not self-praise, I'm telling you right now.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I will leave that interjection as it stands and let it reflect as one might wish it to reflect. But I say that it is important that we talk about these issues more. Often it is the vulnerable—it does not matter whether it is vulnerable families or vulnerable animals—that are often left to the side because it is so easy to ignore these issues. It is so easy to get caught up in the grander issues, the ones that the media might focus on and the ones that might even be more popular. But it speaks volumes about our civic maturity and our decency as a community when we put these issues first and say that we want to find homes for vulnerable animals and not just see them euthanised. As my friend the member for South Coast stated, we want to be able to support the foster carer program and better advertise these animals so that their owners can be reunited with them or we can find appropriate homes.

This legislation is not just about supporting vulnerable animals. It is a statement of belief about where we are as a community and what we consider to be important. I thank all members of the House for supporting animal welfare. I thank all members of the House for working together. The media gallery is of course empty today. They would not want to report on seeing all members of the House united on something because it is not newsworthy. That is a shame. Sometimes it is not a Liberal or Labor thing to do, but a right thing to do. I thank all members

for being collegiate, collaborative and showing that this Parliament is not only a decent place to work but one where we get things done together. I congratulate the Hon. Emma Hurst and my friend the member for Sydney for bringing this bill forward, and I hope we see more debates like this that unite us rather than divide us.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (10:57):** I support the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021. I acknowledge the member for South Coast, and former Minister for Local Government, Shelley Hancock. She has given great input and knowledge from her previous role of the relationship that councils have in looking at companion animals and how they are rehoused, as well as how well they manage their assets. The Government is committed to protecting the welfare of animals and promoting responsible pet ownership in New South Wales. We understand the importance of pets to the community and we are committed to ensuring that animals are well looked after throughout their lives. The amendments proposed in the bill are sensible measures that will formalise what most New South Wales councils already do about rehoming companion animals in their care.

The bill will make amendments to the Companion Animals Act 1998 to prescribe the actions that local councils in New South Wales must take when seeking to rehome a companion animal that has been seized or surrendered. Under this bill, the rehoming process will be standardised and the bill will ensure a consistent approach across all New South Wales councils—an approach that has seen euthanasia trend downwards over the last five years. In fact, the Government has worked closely with local councils and animal welfare organisations to significantly reduce euthanasia rates in pounds and shelters across the State. It is clear the proposed amendments will formalise the practices that have resulted in this downward trend. The measures proposed in the bill will further complement the Government's broader animal welfare agenda. In May 2018 the Government released the New South Wales *Animal Welfare Action Plan* to deliver an animal welfare system that is outcomes focused and reflects evolving animal welfare science and community expectations.

Animal welfare is a priority of the New South Wales Government, as highlighted by the commitment made under the action plan to streamline and modernise the animal welfare legislative framework. The measures proposed in the bill will complement the Government's broader animal welfare agenda, which my colleague the Hon. Dugald Saunders, Minister for Agriculture, is leading. In January this year the draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022 was published. The development of the draft bill was informed by two rounds of public consultation as well as targeted stakeholder consultation. During that consultation, almost 6,000 people took the opportunity to have their say on the future of animal welfare laws in New South Wales. That really good input tells us that we are looking at reform that is long overdue.

It is clear this bill will reinforce the hard work the Government and councils have done to date and in many ways will formalise what is already being done by councils throughout New South Wales. The proposed amendments reflect the Government's commitment to and progress in protecting the welfare of animals, a commitment that, through collaboration with councils and animal welfare organisations, has seen a reduction in euthanasia rates in pounds and shelters across the State. Further work is underway that will continue to prioritise the protection and the welfare of animals now and in the future.

I put on the record that I had a rescue dog, a little red cattle dog whose name was Spud. I still remember the day when I went to the pound, saw him romping up and down the fence line and thought, "This dog is for us." We took him home and we named him Spud. He saw the early days of my children's growth and was a great companion to all of us. I understand the importance of rescue and the public interest in ensuring that there is a good match between the owner and the dog. That has to be well considered, because one wants the dogs to go to homes where they will be loved and cared for and have a long, enduring and happy life. It is all about bringing happiness to the families as well as to the dogs and cats that need to be rehomed. I note the Government will introduce a number of amendments to the bill that will lessen the burden on councils and ensure that they are not unnecessarily tied up in regulatory red tape. I support the bill.

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (11:01):** I too speak in support of the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021. The Government understands the importance of pet cats and dogs to the wellbeing of families and individuals. We have certainly noticed that throughout the pandemic, when the number of dogs and cats that have been welcomed into families has escalated and, of course, the price of designer dogs has gone through the roof. I just hope that they continue to be part of those families when we get back to some degree of normality after the pandemic. They make a big difference in families, and they are very comforting. Pets make a happy household and are important to the wellbeing of everyone in the family, who in turn are important to the wellbeing of the pets themselves.

That is why Government members are committed to improving animal welfare, including by promoting responsible pet ownership along with safe and ethical breeding practices. By continuing to foster those two fundamental aspects of companion animal management, we are ensuring as few animals as possible end up in

council pounds in the first place. I am sure that dogs and cats that end up in a pound probably feel like they are in a refuge camp. The bill certainly eases the pressure on pounds, shelters and rehoming organisations.

In 2018 the Companion Animals and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 was introduced as the first step in the Government's Animal Welfare Action Plan. The important amendments in that bill support families buying a cat or dog by providing more information about the animal and the breeder selling it, make it easier for pet owners to register their pets, allow enforcement agencies to trace puppies and kittens throughout their lives, enforce animal welfare standards, strengthen efforts to reunite lost pets with their owners, introduce a requirement from 1 July 2020 to hold an annual permit to keep a dangerous or restricted dog, define the term "serious injury" for the purpose of declaring a dog dangerous or menacing, and introduce a requirement to hold an annual permit to keep a non-desexed cat that is older than four months of age.

In June 2021 the Government passed the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act 2021 creating some of Australia's toughest suite of animal cruelty penalties. This Act dramatically increases penalties for animal welfare offences and expands the range of tools available to courts to effectively deal with animal welfare offences. These laws ensure that the penalties reflect the seriousness of animal welfare offences and send a clear message to those who commit abhorrent acts on animals that if you do the wrong thing, you will face severe consequences.

Breeders selling, or people giving away, cats and dogs must include an identifying number in all advertising. This is either a microchip number, a breeder identification number or a rehoming body number. Since 2015 the Government has funded half-price registration for pets adopted from pounds and shelters. In 2018 this subsidy was extended to animals adopted from rehoming organisations. This is part of a new Companion Animals Regulation which came into effect on 31 August 2018. Further, from 1 July 2021 this Government made registration free for animals adopted from pounds, shelters and rehoming organisations. This helps to ensure cats and dogs that are not reclaimed by their owners are more quickly adopted by new families.

As at 30 June 2021 the Government has provided \$2.02 million in subsidised registration fees for 73,546 pets purchased from rehoming organisations. To improve the likelihood of successful rehoming, the Government is encouraging councils to work with rehoming organisations and community volunteers to care for animals while they are awaiting a new home. The Government also reduced the registration fee for cats by \$10 from 1 July 2020. This creates a stronger incentive to register and desex cats and encourages people to adopt cats from pounds and shelters. To further explain the broad scale of work the Government is doing to protect companion animals, I will briefly talk about this Government's commitment to the welfare of ex-racing greyhounds. We know that greyhounds make fabulous pets. They really are very friendly. They are lounge lizards but they certainly like to go for a walk, and they are very loyal.

The Government is committed to improving animal welfare, including providing a system that supports whole-of-life tracking of ex-racing greyhounds as well as safe and ethical breeding practices. We already have in place a strong legislative framework which is supported by systems that provide the mechanisms necessary to meet our commitment to whole-of-life tracking of greyhounds. Since March 2020 the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, or the GWIC, has access to the NSW Companion Animals Register. This enables GWIC to add the details of retired greyhounds that are adopted outside the industry so that these animals do not fall between the cracks. The Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission is also able to search for animals on the register, mark an animal as missing, and update ownership details, which means that GWIC has the tools available to continue to monitor retired greyhounds rehomed outside the industry, if it so chooses.

Registered greyhounds that are retained by their registered owner or trainer as a pet or breeding greyhound remain on GWIC's register and are covered by the NSW Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice. Under the code of practice it is an offence for an industry participant to transfer a greyhound in circumstances where the participant knows, or ought to know, or has reason to believe, that the greyhound may be euthanised. The amendments contained within this bill simply formalise the tireless rehoming efforts that the vast majority of councils have already made. The bill represents the next step in the Government's continuing refinement of the legislative and policy framework that governs animal welfare and the management of cats and dogs in New South Wales. I note that it also has the backing of Local Government NSW, the peak body representing councils in New South Wales.

I think all members agree that the euthanasia of an otherwise healthy animal in a council pound or shelter is a decision of absolute last resort, and that we are unified in our belief that councils go to extraordinary lengths to find forever homes for cats and dogs who end up in their care. It is heartening to see that the number of animals euthanised decreased by 45 per cent for dogs and 26 per cent for cats in 2019-2020 compared with 2015-2016. I am sure that is largely due to the pandemic and people wanting to have a happy home—cats, dogs and other pets make for a happy household. The bill will increase consistency and certainty in the rehoming process, which will lead to a welcome further decline in the euthanasia rate. Following amendments that I note are foreshadowed—they are good amendments that should be supported—I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (11:10):** On behalf of The Greens, I strongly support the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021 and I thank Emma Hurst, MLC, in the other place for introducing the bill and the member for Sydney for bringing it to this place. I say upfront that The Greens absolutely support the bill because it seeks to amend the Companion Animals Act 1998 to require councils to take additional steps and actions before an animal can be euthanised. In short, if a healthy or treatable animal is seized or surrendered to a local council in New South Wales, that council must make reasonable attempts to rehome the animal by approaching at least two other rehoming organisations.

I note that the new Minister for Local Government is in the Chamber and recognise that over the years a lot of the burden and the challenges around this issue have fallen on councils. It is important for us to recognise that we need to make sure we are doing all we can to boost State Government support for local government. That means recognising in this Chamber the needs of local government and the funding support required to deliver on what we believe is necessary. It is not enough to simply put more and more requirements on councils; we also need to recognise that local government needs the support of the State Government to do all the things the community wants it to do, and to do them well.

The Greens also note that there has been discussion about amendments that will be brought by the Government in the Legislative Assembly. We absolutely welcome the Government's support for this legislation, recognising the very interesting political times that we live in. It is wonderful to see that we are getting good changes and reforms in this Parliament. While we will not oppose the amendments, it is disappointing to see that they are a mild watering down of the protections in the bill that we saw pass through the upper House. Obviously much more work needs to be done when it comes to protecting the rights and welfare of animals in this State.

Right now in New South Wales animals are needlessly being euthanised in pounds and shelters every single day. This issue hit the headlines in August last year when the incredible activist from Animal Liberation discovered and exposed the senseless shooting of 15 dogs and puppies at a council pound in regional New South Wales. I acknowledge that that council has now made a commitment to overhaul its euthanasia policy, but we must ask ourselves how many other council pounds are continuing this horrendous practice unchecked. The good people of the Newtown electorate make it very clear that animal welfare is a key part of what they care and feel passionate about, and that we must always stand up for it and support it. Every month my office receives hundreds of emails in support of stronger animal protections in New South Wales. It is wonderful that we are seeing the delivery of some stronger reforms in this Parliament today.

I am proud to be a member of The Greens, who have a long and proud history of standing up for animal welfare—and this bill is no exception. The Greens support the commonsense provisions in the bill. They are a good first step, and we recognise that. But let us not think for a minute that this bill is enough. We need to think about what it means, because at this moment it means that unless council-run pounds are required to turn to private and volunteer-run shelters to help with rehoming, these animals will be euthanised and killed. That is not acceptable.

For years advocates and activists have been calling for better legal protections, oversight, transparency, accountability and support from the New South Wales Government to help ensure that council-run pounds are able to house animals so that they are treated and rehomed as they should be. As it stands, council pounds are extremely underfunded, meaning that they are mostly run down, do not meet the basic welfare standards and do not allow any public access. We need to fix that. Council pounds provide a public service that is required by government. They require adequate funding to be able to do their jobs to a morally acceptable standard. It is that simple. I hope that the Minister for Local Government is given the funds required to be able to work with and support local councils to deliver on that in the coming period.

As my Greens colleague Abigail Boyd, who holds the current Greens animal portfolio, said in the other place, the animal shelter system in New South Wales is deeply broken. The bill is an excellent start. It is encouraging to see that we have the support of the Government, and that we can work to fix this and make this change. But we cannot say that this is the end of the work ahead of us. Fixing our council-run pounds needs to be a key priority and will continue to require a complete overhaul of legislation and oversight mechanisms to drastically increase the funding for local councils, and significant investment in education and information programs. The Greens are supportive of the bill. We acknowledge all those who have worked to bring forward the shared reform to this point and hope that it is a sign of many other good and progressive reforms over the coming year in the Chamber.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (11:16):** I speak in support of the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021. I commend all members who have spoken in favour of the bill and acknowledge the member for Sydney and the work of the Animal Justice Party in the other place. I acknowledge all those staff in government and members' offices who have worked to help make the bill positive and something that can be supported by the House. The bill was precipitated by the tragic and preventable killing of 15 dogs in Bourke Shire

Council pound in August of last year. Those animals were shot dead after the person who regularly assisted with rehoming was unavailable during a time when the pound's holding pens were at capacity.

Nothing in the public health orders would have prevented council staff from contacting another rescue group but the officer chose to shoot those animals dead because the law did not prevent them from doing it. While we take the deaths of those dogs seriously, it always strikes me that we value different animals in different ways. We can say how concerned we are about the killing of a dog and then we can have no concern about the killing of other animals. I think it should draw us all to consider how we treat all animals in our society and how differently we treat different animals based on history, culture and other factors, when in fact all animals' lives are important.

The bill seeks to amend the Companion Animals Act to create a right to rescue, which is very important. It will require councils to take additional actions before any animal can be killed—quite simple, thoughtful and basic actions. The council must attempt to rehome a seized or surrendered healthy or treatable animal by approaching at least two rehoming organisations. In the event that an animal is killed, the bill requires that the council keep records of the steps it took to try to home the animal in accordance with this new section. It is a very sensible, commonsense approach. It is relatively uncontroversial. I think all members who have spoken in this House have said that. It is a pity that it has taken so long to come here. It should not have any significant impact on councils, but it should have a very significant impact on the lives of many animals.

In New South Wales tens of thousands of homeless dogs and cats are killed each year. In 2019-20 almost 4,000 dogs and 8,000 cats were killed in New South Wales pounds. Only a very small percentage of these animals—just over 10 per cent—were euthanised due to illness or disease. The practice of killing healthy animals that could potentially be rehomed has been known as "convenience killing". The bill will seek to address this. This happens so often in council pounds because they are generally under-resourced. Having spent 12 years in local government as a councillor and a mayor, I know how councils struggle and how State governments often try to put a lot of pressure on councils to do a lot of work that is really the State government's responsibility. It is important to recognise that the bill proposes a simple commonsense step that councils could take. It is really important that councils prioritise pounds, but they also need support and support from the State Government. Many council pounds are not really fit for purpose, do not meet the important welfare standards and, importantly, do not allow public access, as we have heard previously. In contrast, many of the volunteer-run shelters and private shelters are well supported, and they have an opportunity to make a really significant difference when it comes to saving lives rather than taking lives.

The bill requires council pounds to allow these well-resourced animal rescuers to take animals off their hands when they would otherwise be killed. Of course, it does not oblige rescue groups to take every animal on death row, but rescue groups already do an enormous amount of work unpaid, often supercharged by incredible volunteers, to take care of homeless animals with virtually no government support or recognition. This is a movement that is powered by volunteers, and I acknowledge all of those volunteers who make a really critical contribution to our community. I appreciate that Emma Hurst, MLC, in the other place specifically highlighted that the purpose of the bill is not to transfer the Government's legal or financial burden onto rescue groups, but I do note that other States, including Victoria and Western Australia, are going further by making grant funding available to support this critical work.

I briefly take a moment to recognise those organisations, including the RSPCA, the Animal Welfare League, Animals Australia and Oscar's Law. I also recognise all the wonderful local groups, including Maggie's Rescue, the Cat Protection Society, Sydney Dogs and Cats Home, and Fetching Dogs, which actually rescued our former office dog, Juno. The bill simply asks councils to permit organisations like these to assist them to give animals the loving, safe, forever homes they deserve. This is a right that all animals should be extended. They should have loving, safe and forever homes, and we should always be thinking about the double standards that we have when we look at different animals and how we treat different animals. All animals deserve life. I commend the measures in the bill. I again acknowledge all those people across this Parliament who have done so much positive work in this area. These measures are simple, sensible and necessitated by community expectations. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (11:22):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of the Companion Animals Amendment (Rehoming Animals) Bill 2021. I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for introducing the bill to Parliament. I also thank the member for Sydney for taking carriage of the bill in the lower House and for his second reading speech. I certainly enjoyed his comments about Max. As a veterinarian, I can say that most veterinarians at some point in our lives and our careers inherit a rehomed animal. For me, it was early on in my marriage. The member for Sydney mentioned his husband in his second reading speech. Well, mine was a bit of a different situation. I took home a cat, George. I did not tell Tabitha that we were inheriting a cat until I got home, and I think George and I were about to spend the first night together outdoors in the chicken coop. But the member

for Sydney spoke of the love that our pets bring us, and for us George was a pretty special character. He had telepathic skills, the way you sometimes could wake up in the morning to find a cat staring in your face. Those who are cat owners will understand that as well.

In that regard, before I go too much further, the member for Sydney and a number of speakers who contributed to this debate, like the member for Clarence, spoke about the high number of animals that are euthanised. As a veterinarian, this is a significant issue. I remember in my first year in vet school in 1996 we were talking about the numbers that are euthanised. What remains in my mind—this is going back 20-odd years now—is that the number of animals euthanised each year in New South Wales could stretch from Sydney to Newcastle; I think it was something like that. It is just horrific, the number of animals that are euthanised. That goes to the point, because we talk about this amendment and this reform, which I think is most welcome, but at the end of the day far too many animals are coming into shelters and pounds in the first place.

As a veterinarian, I appeal that we are doing what we can to ensure that we are not seeing animals needing to be rehomed in the first place. Making the decision to bring a pet into your life is a beautiful thing, but it comes with a level of responsibility. Make sure you are accepting that responsibility and choosing a pet that suits your family and environment. Sadly we often see situations where a pet is not compatible because of the nature of the animal. There are athletic, sporting animals that need engagement being cooped up in confined spaces. Choose one that is right for your family and make sure that it is socialised. Absolute gurus on veterinary behaviour, such as Kersti Seksel, talk about the importance of socialisation. We need to look at these things to reduce the number of animals that come into pounds in the first place. We have to do what we can in that regard.

Unwanted breeding is the other big thing. Lots of veterinarians will do "adopt a cat" and will desex kittens. The number of kittens that are left at the doorstep of veterinary clinics each year just because they are unwanted in the first place is extraordinary. It is a real concern. The focus needs to be on making sure that we are decreasing the number of animals that are going into pounds in the first place, which will decrease the number of animals being euthanised. The member for Clarence said that the numbers have decreased over the last 12 months, which probably reflects COVID. That is wonderful. Many people have reached out to welfare organisations and pounds seeking a pet during this time. Let us hope that we do not have a wave of unwanted animals as the pandemic finishes.

It is a privilege to have been asked by the member for South Coast, the former Minister for Local Government, to be Chair of the Office of Local Government's Responsible Pet Ownership Reference Group. The concerns mentioned are some of the concerns that get raised in that group. I encourage and welcome the member for Sydney to engage with the reference group. It is a privilege to chair the group right across sections of the companion animals sector, from the RSPCA through to the Australian Veterinary Association, the Veterinary Practitioners Board and DOGS NSW. I give a shout-out to these wonderful organisations. I thank both the former and current Ministers for Local Government for their work in the companion animals sector as well.

The intent of this bill is important. It is making sure that the euthanising of a companion animal in a pound situation is an option of last resort. It is important to recognise that intent and that we need consistency and standardisation across all councils. I credit the work that the Albury City Council rangers and the Albury local pound does. The member for Sydney spoke about the Sydney council and the great work that councils often do with rehoming organisations. There are some fantastic rehoming organisations in my area, like Albury Wodonga Animal Rescue [AWAR]. A few years ago I worked closely with Ella at AWAR and Peta McRae at Wodonga Dog Rescue. They are very passionate about what they do. I should not have favourites, but my favourite is Golden Retriever Rescue, which is led by Gail Boyd and Di Hanby. I cannot believe that these most gorgeous golden retrievers need to be rehomed.

Councils like Albury city and Sydney city do really well to work hand-in-hand with rehoming organisations, seeking to get the right outcomes. In that regard, we want that consistency across all councils in New South Wales. I welcome the proposed amendments from the Minister for Local Government. An important point has been made that we need to make sure we are not building an administrative burden on council rangers and local councils. I welcome the amendments because I think they give a little bit of clarity where it is required in the bill to make sure that we are driving the right outcomes.

Subclause (7) in the bill raises a good point on how we go about defining a "rehoming organisation". I know that will not be addressed today. I understand that in section 88B of the Companion Animals Act and in the Companion Animals Regulation there are guidelines for designated rehoming organisations. But perhaps, as we move forward, one area we could explore is, again, making sure that there is consistency across rehoming organisations. New South Wales has many wonderful rehoming organisations, but we want to make sure that all of them are on the same page when it comes to our response to rehoming animals. In that sense, I welcome the Department of Primary Industries' review of rehoming. Again, I hope we make sure there is a consistency of expectation in that regard as well. We need to seek clarity around clause 64B (1) (b) and (3) (b) and keep the

administrative burden for councils down. I welcome the bill. I thank the member for Sydney, the Minister for Local Government and the Hon. Emma Hurst. I support the bill.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (11:31):** Being the member for Blacktown and the former mayor of Blacktown city, which has one of the largest rehoming facilities in the State, it is important I note some of the challenges for a council like Blacktown, which seems to be ignored by this Government quite often. Blacktown council is spending \$30 million of its own ratepayers' money to build a brand new state-of-the-art animal rehoming centre, affectionately referred to as BARC—Blacktown Animal Rehoming Centre. It will house 230 cats; 135 dogs; livestock; and what are called "pocket pets", including 20 to 30 rabbits and guinea pigs, whose numbers have been increasing. The kennels will have underfloor heating and the cat condos will have controlled air to minimise disease and cross-contamination.

I thank the member for Sydney and the Hon. Emma Hurst from the other place for introducing the bill. The member for Albury spoke about the need for consistency. We need to have a lot more consistency across the State. Why is it that a place like Blacktown council has to spend \$30 million of ratepayers' money building a centre that supports eight other councils? It supports Auburn council, the City of Canada Bay Council, the Cumberland council, Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Parramatta, City of Ryde and Willoughby. That is approximately 1.2 million people across the Sydney Basin. Animals from councils accounting for almost 25 per cent of Sydney's population go to Blacktown pound when they need to be supported. Up to 5,000 dogs and cats go through that facility.

We need consistency and these rules should apply everywhere. It is important to have consistent rules because, depending on who the mayor is at the time and what the council's focus is—especially with budgetary constraints—laws actually allow for the euthanasia of pets after 14 days or up to 21 days. When I was mayor of Blacktown City, my fellow Labor councillors and I changed the council's policy to focus on vacancies; while there was a vacant space in the pound, no pet would be put down. That change substantially reduced the euthanasia rate such that Blacktown's pound was seen as a "no kill" pound for dogs.

Another great initiative of Blacktown City Council in relation to cats is happening as we speak. The council is working with a world expert in cats, Dr Cindy Karsten from the University of California, to develop fostering activities to get the animals outside. Blacktown City Council also has a close relationship with the University of Sydney veterinary school. Mayor Tony Bleasdale and the Blacktown City councillors have made looking after these animals at their shelters a priority. But it is really important that there is consistency of funding and support for animal welfare across councils. As the member for Balmain said, councils need to prioritise and support animals in their districts. But how do they do that? It is impossible with minimal funding—especially when council rate increases are capped at 0.5 per cent.

Finally, I mention the Mini Kitty Commune. Members may have seen its Facebook page; it is an interesting Facebook group. Its members do two wonderful things well. One is promoting the rehoming and adoption of kittens and cats, and the other is being a very outspoken group of advocates for cats. When I was mayor, I found myself on the receiving end of comments from the Mini Kitty Commune when a cat died in the council's pound that I was the most evil mayor under the sun. But, at the same time, when they saw that the council was actually working hard and trying to do the best thing for those animals, they praised me. I do not think they would have ever imagined that they would be mentioned in New South Wales *Hansard*, but I put on record my thanks to the Mini Kitty Commune for both their good and bad character assessments of me, and for their wonderful work in making sure that our kittens and cats are adopted.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (11:36):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate. I particularly thank the Minister for Local Government and her team for their constructive work on the bill. I thank the shadow Minister for indicating the Opposition's support. I thank the former Minister, the member for South Coast, for the issues she raised. I outline that nothing in the bill limits the broad regulation-making power in the Companion Animals Act to enable the Minister to address the items that she discussed. I thank the member for Kiama and his dog, Oscar. I thank the member for Hawkesbury and her rescue, Spud. I thank the member for Clarence, the member for Newtown, the member for Balmain and his electorate office dog, Juno. I thank the member for Albury, and George the cat with his telepathic skills. I particularly thank the member for Albury for bringing his experience as a vet to the debate. I also thank the member for Blacktown for his contribution.

I acknowledge the former Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation, who is at the table, for the significant work that he did with me and the Hon. Emma Hurst towards allowing companion animals in strata complexes. It was more difficult than you would expect, but we got there successfully, and it is really important for the wellbeing of so many companion animals and people who live in strata units. I also give a shout-out to the member for Holsworthy for the work that she does in fostering cats. This legislation is a no-brainer. I thank all members of the House for supporting this reform to protect animals. I especially thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for her dedication, passion and hard work for animals. Her work on this bill will immediately save animals from death row. While many of us love animals, our voiceless friends cannot vote and not everyone is willing to defend and

fight for them the way the Animal Justice Party does. I congratulate the Hon. Emma Hurst and the Animal Justice Party on their achievement and thank them for giving me the opportunity to support and sponsor this important reform. 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.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mrs Wendy Tuckerman.**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2, and schedule 1 be agreed to.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (11:39):** I move Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2022-055D:

##### **No. 1 Advertising**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 64B(1)(b), line 10. Omit all words on that line. Insert instead—

- (b) take reasonable steps to advertise on a webpage or through a social media platform that the animal is available for rehoming.

This amendment requires councils to take reasonable steps to advertise on a webpage or through a social media platform that the animal is available for rehoming. As currently drafted, the bill requires a council to take reasonable steps to advertise the animal as available for rehoming. The amendment clarifies that requirement and establishes the best-practice process. It also ensures that councils will put in place consistent approaches across the State. It makes the most of technology we are all familiar with and ensures that councils will be able to connect with the broader community to quickly rehome animals in forever homes. Also it provides the opportunity for those who are looking to adopt a new pet, no matter their council area, the chance to find a suitable pet anywhere in New South Wales using the search functionality at our fingertips every day. I commend the amendment to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (11:41):** This amendment will ensure that pounds can use their website or social media platforms to advertise animals in their care under the provisions in the bill. Websites and social media are a great way of informing the public about animals that are available for adoption and of helping to find loving homes for them. The amendment reflects the bill's intention, and I thank the Government for working towards provisions that are in the spirit of the aims of the bill. I support the amendment, as does the Hon. Emma Hurst and the Animal Justice Party.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (11:41):** The amendment is extraordinarily reasonable and appropriate. As originally drafted, the bill had the right intent, which was that councils would take reasonable steps to advertise. However, it was somewhat unclear as to how the advertising requirement would be executed. One of the uncertainties was whether it would require, for example, a council to advertise in the local newspaper. By bringing forward this amendment, which makes it clear that advertising can be done on a webpage or through a social media platform, the Minister has facilitated a more effective way of bringing to the attention of the public the availability of a rehomed animal. We all know that social media will probably be the most effective way to let people know that an animal is available. The amendment moved by the Minister is sensible, and I commend it to the House.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The question is that Government amendment No. 1 on sheet c2022-055D be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (11:43):** I move Government amendment No. 2 on sheet c2022-055D:

##### **No. 2 Cost of transferring animal**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 64B(3)(b), lines 18 and 19. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead—

- (b) make arrangements for the collection of the animal.

This amendment relates to the cost of transferring an animal and requires councils to make arrangements for the collection of the animal when a rehoming organisation has indicated it is able to rehome it. Under the bill, as it is currently drafted, the responsibility for the cost of transferring an animal rests with the council. The amendment ensures that councils are not solely responsible for any associated transportation or collection costs. It will enable

councils and rehoming organisations to determine who is best placed to cover the costs of the animal's collection. The amendment acknowledges that councils are faced with a range of competing cost pressures, never more so than in the aftermath of bushfires, floods and of course the COVID-19 pandemic of recent years. Those cost pressures are most keenly felt by councils located in rural and remote areas of the State. It also acknowledges that it might be more appropriate for the rehoming organisation to initially cover the costs of collecting or transferring the animal, and subsequently recovering those costs from the proud new owners of the animal. This is a sensible amendment and will be welcomed by councils in New South Wales. Therefore, I commend the amendment to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (11:44):** This amendment will make sure that councils and rescue groups can make arrangements for the collection of an animal, ensuring that there is no assumption that the obligation lies entirely with the council. Many rescue groups have the resources to collect animals from pounds, but it is important that councils and rescue groups work together to establish a system that works best. I thank the Government for proposing the amendment, which will strengthen the bill's capacity to create partnerships between pounds and rescue groups. I support the amendment, as does the Animal Justice Party.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (11:45):** I also commend this amendment to the House. It again falls into the category of the earlier amendment because it makes clear what was intended in the original bill. When subsections (3) and (4) of section 64B of the bill are read together, they convey what is in the Minister's proposed amendment, but it is not entirely clear that that is the case. This amendment is clearly within the spirit of the original legislation. That clarity is incredibly important, as the Minister said, particularly because regional councils have been doing it very tough recently. It is important that it is made clear where the financial burden for rehoming animals lies, and this amendment does that. I support the amendment.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The question is that Government amendment No. 2 on sheet c2022-005D be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (11:46):** By leave: I move Government amendments Nos 3 to 5 on sheet c2022-005D in globo:

**No. 3 Records**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 64B(5), line 25. Omit "and make available for inspection".

**No. 4 Records**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 64B(5)(b)(ii), line 32. Omit "and".

**No. 5 Records**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 64B(5)(b)(iii), lines 33 and 34. Omit all words on those lines.

These record-keeping amendments propose to remove the requirement for councils to make available for inspection records identifying rehomed animals and animals that have been destroyed. However, the amendments will not remove the requirement for councils to keep and maintain such records. To be clear, they merely remove the requirement to make this information available for inspection. The amendments will also remove the requirement for councils to keep and make available for inspection details about the alternative action the council had considered before destroying an animal.

Councils have a statutory duty to consider whether there is an alternative to destroying an animal and, where practicable, to adopt that alternative. Councils are also required to report each year on their strategies for complying with the requirement to seek alternatives to euthanasia for unclaimed animals. The amendments acknowledge that the euthanasia of an otherwise healthy animal in a council pound or shelter is a last resort. They acknowledge that the Government, local councils and animal welfare organisations continue to work hard to significantly reduce euthanasia rates in pounds and shelters across the State. Their efforts have paid off, as we have seen a significant reduction in euthanasia rates in pounds and shelters across the State. It is heartening to report that the number of animals euthanised decreased by 45 per cent for dogs and 26 per cent for cats in 2019-20 compared with 2015-16. The bill creates consistency and certainty around the rehoming process, which will lead to a welcome further decline in euthanasia rates. These are sensible amendments to the record-keeping arrangements proposed in the bill. I commend the amendments to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (11:48):** The Hon. Emma Hurst and I support these amendments.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The question is that Government amendments Nos 3 to 5 on sheet c2022-005D be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (11:49):** I move Government amendment No. 6 on sheet c2022-005D:

**No. 6 Reporting guidelines**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 64B. Insert after line 34—

- (5A) The Departmental Chief Executive may issue guidelines about the giving of information regarding animals rehomed under this section or destroyed under section 64 or 64A to the Departmental Chief Executive or the public, or both.
- (5B) A council must comply with the Departmental Chief Executive's guidelines.

The amendment seeks to provide the departmental chief executive with the ability to issue guidelines about the provision of information regarding animals rehomed or destroyed. The Government recently announced it has commissioned a rehoming practice review. The review will examine ways to reduce euthanasia rates and identify any need for further legislative reform and improvements to impounding processes. The recommendations from the Government's review will also identify avenues for better data collection and reporting mechanisms. The information from that review will be critical to developing the guidelines proposed within the amendment and, more importantly, to further improving the rehoming rates of cats and dogs in New South Wales. The amendment provides flexibility for the Government to consult with key industry and sector stakeholders as part of the review, and determines the most relevant information that should be available to ensure appropriate transparency and accountability in the management of cats and dogs within New South Wales pounds and shelters. I commend the amendment to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (11:50):** Again, this is a sensible amendment and it is supported. I thank the Government for its work to get this legislation to a place where it is supported and can pass this House. I commend the amendment to the House.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The question is that Government amendment No. 6 on sheet c2022-005D be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The question is that clauses 1 and 2, and schedule 1 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2, and schedule 1 as amended agreed to.****Third Reading**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.***Motions***REGIONAL JOB CREATION FUND**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (11:52):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the Government has provided significant employment support through the allocation of the Regional Job Creation Fund.
- (2) Acknowledges this fund has supported eligible businesses with grants to purchase new equipment, expand facilities, acquire technology, create new production lines or establish businesses in regional New South Wales.
- (3) Thanks the Government for its investment, which is setting businesses up for success as well as helping the local community grow through new jobs, meaning more people earning and spending locally.

The Regional Job Creation Fund has provided significant support to boost employment across my electorate of Goulburn. Not only has the fund supported eligible businesses with grants to purchase new equipment, expand facilities, acquire technology, create new production lines and establish businesses across regional New South Wales; it has also been responsible for activating innovative ideas that bring forward expansion and attract investment in our regions. In the Goulburn electorate, \$700,000 has been invested for three projects, which will support up to 35 jobs. That includes the allocation of \$100,000 to NSWGR Holdings, which will expand its capacity in the train tourism business; \$300,000 to Oridor, which will expand its music royalty recovery operation

in the Southern Highlands; and \$300,000 to Gubbins Pulbrook Frame and Truss to increase its capacity to produce materials for housing supply in the Southern Highlands.

I now turn to the first of the three projects in my electorate. NSWGR Holdings Pty Ltd is a rail tour company that takes tourists back in time. They host scenic trips on vintage train carriages across regional New South Wales and are now on track to add an additional service as a result of the allocation of funds derived from the Regional Job Creation Fund. The \$100,000 grant has allowed NSWGR Holdings to purchase and refurbish an additional vintage train carriage for the service. The process of purchasing, refitting and restoring the 20-person sleeper carriage will also create an additional five jobs.

The major works to be undertaken on the carriage are no small feat in itself. The carriage was last used in 1994 and requires extensive cleaning, rust and fitting repair, re-engineering, upholstery, new windows, doors, fittings, mattresses, curtains and more. When the project is complete, it will add a sixteenth carriage to the NSWGR Holdings fleet and increase its guest capacity from 136 to 156 people. This project will allow tourists and train enthusiasts to step back in time aboard a 1960s Aurora Australis sleeping train. Adding an extra carriage means more people can spend their time and money in the magnificent regions that the train touring company visits. By helping the local business expand with the refurbishment of the carriage with modern engineering and comforts, there will be an additional crew of five for the carriage when operating.

In Moss Vale the Regional Job Creation Fund is supporting the recovery of royalties being earned in the music industry. Local business Oridor tracks down unpaid music royalties for musicians and is now set to expand its operations due to greater capacity. Oridor works in both the domestic and international scene by liaising with digital and streaming companies such as Spotify, Pandora and YouTube. This is wonderful news for our creative industries too, since Oridor's work is putting more money into the pockets of Australian musicians as well as boosting local employment. The fund awarded a \$300,000 grant to help Oridor purchase new space to expand its current workforce by employing a further 15 royalty recovery experts in order to meet the growing demand in the digital space for royalty recovery in Australia and overseas. The company will also use the grant to help purchase and fit out an additional workspace in Moss Vale to accommodate its growing team and take on additional work as streaming services continue to gain more listeners around the globe.

Also in the Southern Highlands a Moss Vale hardware supplier has been framed for an upgrade, thanks to the fund. Gubbins Pulbrook Frame & Truss will have a bigger roof over its own head, expanding its ability to supply more frames and trusses and catering for the boom in housing in the Southern Highlands. The \$300,000 grant will help Gubbins Pulbrook Frame & Truss to build three new manufacturing sheds to supply materials to the housing market. The expansion will help the company to purchase manufacturing equipment, create new production lines for framing and trusses, and speed up production times so more of the housing materials it produces can get to market quicker. The Southern Highlands continues to be an area of growth for both real estate and housing development, and helping Gubbins Pulbrook manufacture frames and trusses locally is good for the industry and great for builders. This expansion will not only create up to 15 roles for assemblers, estimators and salespeople but will also generate efficiencies for local tradies who can now get what they need locally, without having to travel to other areas to get supplies.

While the Goulburn electorate is a wonderful example, across New South Wales the \$140 million fund across two rounds aims to create 7,000 new full-time equivalent jobs. These are direct jobs in regional New South Wales over three years. In the \$100-million first round of the fund a total of 116 projects received funding. The second round opened on 2 February 2022 and will aim to build on this investment and continue to create jobs across the State. I thank the New South Wales Government for its investment through the Regional Job Creation Fund. The investment has set businesses up for success and helped local communities grow. In particular, it has helped industries that are doing it very tough. We are talking about a targeted approach to the music industry, local builders being able to get the equipment that they need to build houses, and investment in the tourism industry, which has really taken a hit during the COVID pandemic. Helping to create and establish jobs in those industries is important for our local community and the State. I thank the New South Wales Government for the work that it has done to initiate jobs in these areas.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (11:59):** NSW Labor supports jobs, particularly local jobs and jobs in the regions. My colleagues the member for Gosford and the member for Keira, who are representatives in regional New South Wales, and I all understand the importance of regional jobs. I welcome this motion and talk about some of the businesses in my area that have received funding, which will create significant local jobs. My area is gathering a strong manufacturing base of diverse, small-base manufacturing. The companies that have received funding go across the food industry, the chemical industry and other manufacturing areas.

The first company I highlight is Cordina food company. Cordina Farms is probably Australia's largest broiler chicken meat integrator. It was incorporated by Rosario and Joe Cordina in 1948, although its beginnings were in the 1930s. In 2014 we welcomed the establishment of a new manufacturing plant in the north Wyong

area, which employs around 100 people. Out of the Regional Job Creation Fund, Cordina Farms will receive \$2 million, which will fund 100 ongoing jobs. That money will also go towards the purchase of equipment for increasing its production line capabilities. It is a great company operating in that area and we welcome its expansion.

Another exciting initiative is a brand-new manufacturing facility at Halloran, which is a brewery. It is under the auspices of Beerfarm, a company that already has a successful environmentally sustainable brewery and paddock-to-plate-style restaurant in Western Australia's Margaret River region. It is looking to set up a similar business on the Central Coast at Halloran. The plan is to develop the eastern part of the site as a boutique brewery and restaurant, including car parking and a market garden to grow produce for use in the restaurant. The brewery will be one building with a laboratory, mill, brewing room, packaging area and cool room storage for goods and raw materials. The brewery area is where the milling, mashing, lautering, boiling, fermentation and other processes to produce beer will be undertaken. The packaging area is where the finished product will be prepared for distribution and storage.

Another building will comprise a 450-seat restaurant at ground level, with a mezzanine for the kitchen and bar. The whole site will have a farm theme. I know the member for Terrigal on the other side of the Chamber is just as excited as I am about this project. Sadly, Central Coast Council has delayed the project getting off the ground because of water and sewerage issues on the site. Once again it is sad to see that even though the State Government and State representatives are keen about projects, often when they get to our local government arm things grind to a halt. Beerfarm received a grant of \$900,000, which will help to fund 47 ongoing jobs as well as another 27 part-time jobs. Hopefully those site issues can be resolved and this exciting tourism and manufacturing business can get up and running.

FMC Manufacturing is also looking to expand at north Wyong. A grant will help it to establish a new production line and the construction of a new packing plant, plus a research and development hub. FMC received a grant of \$360,000 to help it employ an additional 18 people. FMC has manufacturing operations throughout the world, but its Australian and New Zealand base is on the Central Coast at north Wyong. The Wyong plant has a greater than 30-year history of quality crop protection manufacture, including herbicide, fungicide and insecticide capabilities. It has 100 years of knowledge and experience in manufacturing, and the management team at the Wyong plant is focused on continual improvement of safety, environmental quality and customer success. It is very exciting that it is going to be able to expand, create more jobs and service the agricultural industry right across New South Wales.

The next company I note is Spiralz Fermented Foods. It received a grant for \$160,621, which will help create 10 additional jobs. The interesting company has been creating delicious, clean, raw, vegan fermented food that is also dairy and gluten free—a very niche market—since 2015. Based in the Tuggerah Business Park, it has a team working together on something they truly believe in. The company's products include sauerkraut and fermented beetroot, vegan kimchi and concentrated juice-based probiotic shots.

Members will appreciate the range of different companies operating right across my electorate, particularly in the food industry area. We welcome these grants. I encourage local companies to apply in round two. We need to create more jobs on the Central Coast so that people do not have to commute out of the area. A brand new business park has started construction at Kiar Ridge, which is an exciting prospect. Out of the 65 lots there, the first 25 have already been sold. I was out there the other day and works are well underway. Hopefully that will attract even more new businesses to that part of the Central Coast. It will help with unemployment, particularly of our young people, and build on the fact that the current Woolworths distribution centre is also about to undergo a massive upgrade. It is jobs, jobs, jobs on the Central Coast—and we certainly welcome that.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (12:06):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of the motion brought before the House by the Minister, and member for Goulburn. Having listened the contribution of the member for Wyong, it is fantastic to see the passion of all members across the Chamber for the growth of local manufacturing in our electorates. It is now probably a different sense of manufacturing, too, with small- and medium-sized enterprises and little bespoke industries popping up. The member for Wyong did not lose me when he started talking about a kimchi manufacturer. I was still right on board with that because I am passionate about seeing local manufacturers develop right across regional New South Wales. It is really important to recognise the New South Wales Government's investment in the \$140 million Regional Job Creation Fund and acknowledge that there is now a round two of funding with \$40 million available. I encourage businesses, wherever they are across the State, to put their hand up for these funds and ensure that they have got an opportunity there.

While listening to the contribution of the member for Wyong, for a moment I thought that he was almost going to have the best electorate. However, I am going to list some local manufacturers in my electorate that have been able to jump on board with this funding. The member for Wyong mentioned a boutique brewery, but I come right back at him with the grant going to Barrel Brokers Australasia in the Albury electorate. It will enable the

business to build an insulated barrel workshop and storage sheds so that the Assistant Speaker's whisky can be stored in locally manufactured barrels, creating 26 jobs. That complements the Corowa Whisky and Chocolate factory. It is great to see jobs for not just larger regional centres like Albury but also smaller centres like Corowa. It is fantastic to see jobs going to those towns.

Another big one for me in a smaller regional community is the exciting project at Staughton Group. Funding from the Regional Job Creation Fund is going towards supporting Staughton Group, which is investing just under \$20 million to establish a new pet food production facility in Howlong. That small regional town just 20 minutes outside of Albury will be growing, with 186 new jobs. It will be a massive boost for the town. It is a real privilege to be able to meet local manufacturers, and one that really strikes home for me is AgBoss, a company in Albury that manufactures Australian farm tools. In recent years we have seen jobs go offshore, and to see them now being created locally in our regions is fantastic.

While going around the floor, I met a young woman named Sos, who is doing her apprenticeship in screen-printing. They are the sorts of jobs that we want to drive, in trades that might have been dying out. We have not been seeing much of those trades, and now our young men and women are being offered jobs and the opportunity to learn new skills and grow back manufacturing in our regional areas. I thank the member for Goulburn for moving the motion before the House. Both sides of the House are very passionate about the growth in manufacturing that we are now seeing in our regional areas, and we acknowledge the support of the New South Wales Government through the Regional Job Creation Fund.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (12:10):** I also welcome the motion by the member for Goulburn. Members have an important responsibility in Parliament to celebrate and promote jobs in regional New South Wales, and it is great that the Central Coast can actually access some of the funds. Sometimes we are excluded from regional opportunities, and it is good to see the member for Wyong and the member for Keira, on the South Coast, in the Chamber. We are not that far out of Sydney, but it is important that we have jobs in our region so that people can work locally rather than commuting by train or driving into the city every day.

It is also great to celebrate the diversity of what is happening in my electorate. Three of the Regional Job Creation Fund grants are in the mountains district, which further reflects the importance of keeping the area west of the expressway free of housing development and dense housing. It is an important, essential food bowl for the Sydney market. One of the projects is Eastcoast Beverages, a favourite of mine, and I am sure, of the member for Terrigal. Their great facility in Kulnura is supplying beverages up and down the east coast of New South Wales, with a view to doubling the current output and creating 18 more jobs for the Central Coast. That is great news for Sam and the family up there in the mountains.

Supreme Poultry & Chickens is a global initiative, and the Regional Job Creation Fund will allow further expansion of the poultry industry on the Central Coast as well as an abattoir facility. Chicken farmers do incredible work and support locals up there, and 30 new jobs are coming. A great local business in Glenworth Valley, which is one of our favourite tourist locations, will deliver a mountain bike park. I commend the people who have been advocating for that mountain bike park development, with 15.3 jobs coming to that location. Somersby is also celebrating an expansion of the Vision Lighting manufacturing facility, with \$600,000 allowing them to modernise their production machinery and methods, to expand their storage for raw materials and components and to establish eight new production lines for manufacture, testing and packages. That will create 30 jobs, which is fantastic, and I note that the Sydney market is just down the expressway.

One of my favourite local businesses is the Broken Bay Pearl Farm. Those guys are absolutely fantastic. They grow not only pearls but also the beautiful Japanese Akoya oysters. When they first introduced the oysters to the east coast of Australia from the west coast, I had the pleasure of sitting down near the new Woy Woy wharf and enjoying one freshly opened. This big, chunky, creamy, fleshy oyster is being developed as a food source for the domestic market as well as for the global food market. That signature dish will be grown on the Central Coast. The funding will help purchase a whole bunch of oyster meat development as well as an aluminium vessel that serves as a floating work platform and will create six new jobs. That is another oyster farming initiative we need to look at for Brisbane Water.

We also have Harvest Connect at Mooney Mooney with an oyster processing plant expansion. The member for The Entrance is not here but, excitingly, Australian Beverage Contract Filling at Lisarow will be opening up in The Entrance electorate with 144 jobs for a flexible beverage manufacturing program, with three glass lines, one still line for wine and spirits and another line for beer—keeping in the theme for alcohol production in the awards! But it is really good because people from across the Central Coast will be looking for jobs there. The Regional Job Creation Fund is a great reflection of the skills and the focus and the cross-section of fabulous facilities available in the Gosford electorate. I will be encouraging a lot of the small businesses in my electorate to apply in the second round of the fund. It is so important to keep jobs and grow manufacturing in regional New South Wales.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:14):** Congratulations on your appointment, Mr Assistant Speaker. I am absolutely delighted to speak in support of the motion of the member for Goulburn. It is a fantastic opportunity to talk about all the great work being delivered by the Liberal-Nationals Government in my region of the Central Coast. The region is receiving millions and millions of dollars' worth of grant funding from one end of the Central Coast to the other. As the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, I am delighted to be able to support these projects.

As I said, round one of the Regional Job Creation Fund has delivered literally millions of dollars. More than \$5 million of grant funding has been granted to electorates. It is interesting because recently I copped a bit of flak in the local media about grants not being fairly distributed on the Central Coast. This is a really good example of where actually every electorate but mine received millions of dollars' worth of funding, essentially, with almost \$3.4 million going to the Wyong electorate, \$1.9 million going to Gosford, and \$120,000 going to The Entrance. Terrigal has not received any funding in round one but this is a good example to demonstrate that it is not about the electorates; rather it is about the whole region benefiting from this fantastic investment. This will provide hundreds of jobs for people on the Central Coast.

I am a fierce advocate for all things Central Coast. I will lobby all businesses from one end of the Central Coast to the other, regardless of where they are located, to make sure that we get our fair share of funding. As I said, we have seen literally millions and millions of dollars of funding—whether it be for roads, jobs, schools or hospitals—all going to the Central Coast. But what we have heard this morning is acknowledgement from the member of Wyong and the member for Gosford of the great job the Liberal-Nationals Government is doing by delivering the \$5.5 million worth of funding to the Central Coast, which is great to see. Eastcoast Beverages in Gosford is receiving \$360,000; Vision Lighting in Gosford is getting \$600,000; the Performance Engineering Group in The Entrance is getting \$120,000; Broken Bay Pearl Farm in the Gosford electorate is getting \$100,000; Sprialz Fermented Foods, which the member for Wyong will be visiting regularly to get his kimchi, is getting \$160,000; and Beerfarm in Wyong is getting \$900,000. Of course, the big one was Cordina Food in the city of Wyong getting \$2 million. In addition to that, Glenworth Valley Horse Riding is getting \$300,000. The list goes on. Supreme Poultry & Chickens in Gosford is getting \$600,000 and FMC manufacturing in Wyong is getting \$360,000.

I am delighted to be part of a Government that is delivering this infrastructure and these jobs on the Central Coast. As the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast it is such a proud moment for me to see our region going ahead in leaps and bounds because of the huge financial support that has been provided by this Government from one end of the Central Coast to the other. I encourage all businesses—small, medium or large—to look at applying for round two of the Regional Job Creation Fund. I had the pleasure of announcing it being opened again on Monday. So many businesses on the coast are going from strength to strength and the Government stands with them to help them. The Regional Job Creation Fund is the perfect example of that. I am sure if the member for The Entrance was here, he also would be saying how good it is that the Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering funding in his electorate because we do not discriminate. We make sure that everybody on the Central Coast receives their fair share. As we have seen, the coast has received over 5½ million dollars' worth of investment and hundreds of jobs.

I congratulate Scott Gould and Alison McGaffin from Regional NSW, who do a fantastic job of going through these applications and working with the applicants to make sure that we get the most amount of funding possible through the Regional Job Creation Fund for the Central Coast. I am a fierce advocate for jobs, jobs, jobs on the Central Coast and it is this Government, this Liberal-Nationals Government, that is delivering this record investment from one end of the Central Coast to the other. I congratulate the member for Goulburn on giving me the opportunity to bring this up in Parliament. I look forward to telling everyone on the Central Coast.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (12:19):** I thank the Minister, and member for Goulburn, for this motion, and I congratulate her on her appointment. It is great to see cross-party support for this wonderful initiative, although the member for Wyong had me at fermented beetroot. I think that is a step too far for me.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Kimchi.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** Was it kimchi? I will butcher a famous saying here: I might not agree with your food choices but I will defend your right to manufacture them in regional New South Wales. In the Coffs Harbour electorate we are seeing nearly \$2 million in round one going to four different businesses, which is creating many jobs. Of the four recipients, many are related to the housing and manufacturing industry. For example, \$120,000 will help Ossie O buy and install new plant and equipment for its North Boambee factory, supporting the creation of six sustainable jobs for the region. It will allow the company to rely less on overseas-made components for its retractable screens, awnings and shutter products, which will increase local production schedule times and open more opportunities. Its mosquito and insect screens, awnings and shutters are

much sought after and soon it will be able to make these products with locally made components to meet the ever growing demand in the market.

Also, \$260,000 will help Advance Metal Industries to construct a new metal fabrication facility to expand its current product offerings, creating over 13 sustainable jobs for the Coffs Coast. The new facility will be fitted out with machinery that will allow the company to speed up the manufacturing time from three days to two hours—quite a significant increase in speed—for its custom-made aluminium windows, doors and balustrades. The new fabrication shop will significantly reduce manufacturing time, allowing Advance Metal Industries to increase its output and take more orders for doors and windows to meet the growing demand for the custom aluminium products. We all know we have a housing crisis on the North Coast. One reason is that supplies are not available. Manufacturing products locally instead of bringing them in from interstate or overseas will help to produce more jobs and ease the housing crisis.

In addition, \$760,000 will help the RED Factory take on major contracts for its offsite volumetric modular construction. I will break that down. It is a four-inch thick laminated pine construction that can be made in the factory, put on a truck and stacked six high. The company currently offers this great product and the funding will help create 38 jobs to bring it online much quicker. These constructions can be used in a diverse range of housing and accommodation, including Indigenous housing, ecotourism and quality affordable housing.

The one grant I am most excited about is \$840,000 going to Build Onyx Australia. The reason I am excited is that the building and construction industry is about to undergo a significant change, and this company is the forefront of that change. Build Onyx designs and manufactures the components of a house, building or internal fit-out. It does that on site in a factory, which is then packed in a box. The box goes to the site and, instead of building the house, essentially people install it. I have seen a show house, perhaps about a quarter of the size of this Chamber, be installed in a very short time. The construction waste was put in the red bin because there was very little of it. That is one of the big issues that the construction sector has. This grant will help to create 42 jobs and get the company from a concept—an idea and proof of concept—to a fully working product. This is a great program. Applications are open now until 14 March for round two. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (12:23):** By leave: I thank the Opposition for allowing me to speak on this motion. Jobs in regional New South Wales are as scarce as hen's teeth. People do not have the same job opportunities in regional New South Wales as they do in the city. We have very limited jobs in finance, IT and manufacturing. Most of our jobs revolve around primary production. If you are not in primary production, you either work in health, education or the local council. It is terrific to see the investment that the New South Wales Government has put into regional New South Wales, in particular in my electorate, to create jobs, not just through the Regional Job Creation Fund, which I will speak to in a moment, but also through infrastructure projects in the area.

The infrastructure projects include the Pacific Highway upgrade, which at its peak saw something like 3,500 jobs in my electorate. Those jobs were very welcome and stimulated the local economy. They certainly gave opportunities to apprentices and young people to get into the construction industry. It was fantastic to see. The second crossing of the Clarence River with the new Grafton Bridge was a \$240 million project that created a stack of jobs. It provided an opportunity for local businesses and suppliers to participate in that project and it has been life changing for the people in Grafton and the Clarence Valley. The Clarence Correctional Centre was a \$700 million public-private partnership with the John Laing Group. It created 1,100 jobs through construction. It trained apprentices and now has something like 600 full-time permanent jobs. If you do not have a job in the country, you will not have an opportunity to buy a house. We know how tough it is right now.

Under the Regional Job Creation Fund, we have seen a couple of projects get up in my electorate. One was with Provenance Propagation, which is a specialist horticultural farm at Wells Crossing, on the border of the Clarence and Coffs Harbour electorates. The project, a state-of-the-art greenhouse facility, is meeting the growing demand for seedlings and grafted plants. It is all about ensuring that we have the strongest, most productive seedlings that can produce and reproduce into the future. That is what it is about: productivity. Provenance Propagation received a \$900,000 grant, which will help create 45 new jobs in this exciting industry. I admire and say thanks to CEO Jack Mooney. He was incredibly grateful for the support of the New South Wales Government, and I am sure that we are going to see great things come out of Provenance Propagation.

One of the other recipients of the Regional Job Creation Fund is Harwood Marine. It received \$1.5 million, which it will match, to purchase, install and commission specialist equipment, a travel lift that will lift ships safely out of the water and onto a hard stand on site. The lift will reduce costs and make Harwood Marine very competitive with Asia. Harwood Marine currently employs about 65 people, and this project will create an additional 75 jobs. It is a long-established business in the Clarence Valley and employs a range of tradespeople from welders and apprentices to fitters and turners. It is a terrific business. I commend the motion to the House because the Regional Job Creation Fund is so important to regional New South Wales.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (12:28):** By leave: I speak in support of the motion. I thank all the members who have contributed to the debate. The Regional Job Creation Fund has been of enormous benefit, particularly to my local area, and has enabled businesses to expand. I will give a few examples. The Glass Lab, which makes and shapes surfboards, currently employs around 30 to 40 people. The production is all computerised but, like high-performance vehicles, the final touches, sanding and polishing, need to be done by hand and require a very high skill level. The Glass Lab has employed about another 20 and, believe it or not, it is approaching 10,000 surfboards manufactured a year for some of the major companies.

I am pleased to see what the regional job fund has provided for the younger people in my electorate. Once if they told their mums and dads and families that they wanted a career in making surfboards, it was considered not a real job. With the regional job fund, surfboard shaping is now a certificate III course at TAFE in Kingscliff. Currently, The Glass Lab has employed about 15 apprentices, and 30-odd young people are now studying for their certificate III in surfboard shaping at Kingscliff TAFE. It is one of the few courses—the only one, I believe—in the State. The regional job fund has really come to the fore in giving a great deal of incentive to young people. Sure, it makes jobs for existing employees, but it also looks to create further jobs for young apprentices, as I will shortly speak about further.

Then there is our Tweed Valley hospital. As members know, it would be an understatement to say that it was discussed robustly in the last election. Tweed Valley hospital set itself a target to have 20 per cent apprentices working on site. Currently, around 600 people are working full time there. We have actually gone over that target and are now up to about 25 per cent. Increasing the number of Indigenous apprentices was another target the hospital set for regional jobs growth. The initial target was that about 16 per cent of all the apprentices would be Indigenous. Currently, believe it or not, that figure is around 28 per cent, which is a really great take-up.

The Regional Job Creation Fund has been magnificent for not only the young people but also our Indigenous people. It has increased skills, ranging from concreting, electrical work and air conditioning to carpentry—a whole raft of subjects. That has been a by-product of the fund. I could not speak more highly of it. And it is hotly contested. They are even breeding my famous Bay Lobsters, the Moreton Bay bugs. It is a first in Australia, the Australian Bay Lobster. It is very scientific; all done in the dark. They are employing apprentices with skills in marine aquaculture, which is a great plus for our local area. The Regional Job Creation Fund has been an enormous success in the regions and it is doing exactly what it was designed to do: creating employment for young and old.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (12:32):** In reply: I thank members who contributed to debate on the motion. I particularly thank the members representing the electorates of Wyong, Albury, Gosford, Terrigal, Coffs Harbour and Clarence for their recognition of the enormous results that the job creation fund is delivering to regional areas. There is no doubt that the New South Wales Government has hit a winner with the fund. Creating jobs in regional and rural areas, supporting businesses and growing manufacturing is doing nothing but helping communities. I am so thrilled that members on both sides of this House are recognising the contribution that the New South Wales Government is making to jobs growth in regional and rural areas.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **MORE THAN THANKS CAMPAIGN**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:33):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes teachers are doing more than ever and they work 55 hours a week or more to keep up with higher student needs and constant curriculum changes.
- (2) Notes teachers need to be treated with dignity and respect by listening to their More Than Thanks campaign, along with consulting those in the teaching profession when decisions are made that impact their work.
- (3) Calls on the Minister for Education and Early Learning to support a much-needed pay rise because, without great teachers, kids do not get a great education.

I thank the Government for leaving me the crumbs when it comes to time, as usual. It makes it difficult for Opposition members to move the motions that they have worked hard on. I am well aware of the challenges and struggles that educators have had to deal with in less turbulent times, but COVID has amplified these challenges. Our teachers are overworked. They are struggling with ever-changing COVID-19 rules and restrictions,

attempting to address the individual needs of their students and grappling with constant curriculum changes. Many are working 55 hours a week. The recent Gallop inquiry found that the skills and expertise of teachers has increased significantly and that their daily workload has become more difficult, demanding and challenging. At the same time, wages have fallen when compared with other professions.

Is it any wonder that there is an ever-worsening shortage of teachers in our public education system? How will the Minister address the growing divide between children of the privileged getting the lion's share of quality education, resources and extra learning while the children whom I used to teach in Walgett get the crumbs? More than 1,250 positions remain unfilled across New South Wales, and this shortage is increasing. Enrolments in New South Wales public schools are rising rapidly and, without enough teachers to fill the available positions, it is our kids who will suffer as a result. The vulnerable kids in Cobar, Wilcannia and Walgett are suffering the most.

The NSW Teachers Federation campaign, titled More Than Thanks, sets out the valid reasons for a deserved pay rise for teachers. Why do one in eight teachers leave the profession within six years? It is because of pay and workload issues. Without addressing those problems, the teacher shortage cannot be fixed. The education Minister needs to look at this issue very seriously. Teachers need a pay rise, and they need their workload to be made more manageable. Furthermore, teachers need an additional two hours a week for lesson planning and collaboration, as well as an urgent reduction in administration and compliance work.

Consultation with teachers is essential when making decisions that impact their work. The concerning lack of consultation has led to teachers spending less time doing what they love—teaching—and more time tackling a huge mountain of paperwork. I have received overwhelming support from the Wallsend electorate for the fair treatment of teachers and for them to get the appreciation they deserve for the critical work they do. A local teacher told me:

The last two years have been absolutely chaotic, trying to stay on top of constant changes to the way we're supposed to do our jobs, while we're also struggling with the same pressures everyone else is under. It's nice when people say thanks, when people appreciate the difficulties, but my family and I are struggling to get by.

A member of the Wallsend community told me, "I don't understand how they expect teachers to do more and more and deal with all of this stuff. They do not pay them enough." We are all aware that teachers work hard and of the wonderful impact that a good teacher has on children's lives. We all remember the best teachers. We love them, and the memories and their impact is wonderful. Those who have been teachers know how rewarding it can be, but also how crushing it can be.

New South Wales teachers are highly trained professionals and are struggling under difficult conditions. Their pay is much lower than they deserve. I urge the House to listen to the NSW Teachers Federation and the More Than Thanks campaign, and I ask the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning to please support their request for a much-needed pay rise. Our teachers work hard to ensure that our children get the best education they can. For that reason and their effort, they deserve more than thanks.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (12:40):** A good deal of this motion is worthy of support, but the Government cannot support some elements. I absolutely agree that teachers need to be treated with dignity and respect. Like the member for Wallsend, I was a teacher in my previous career, and working with children, unlocking their talent and helping them to grow and be the best people they can be is a wonderful and noble profession and a most important task. I think members in this Chamber recognise that teachers are crucial not only to our future as a society and a nation but also for the role they do person to person. That is of great value. We do need to take responsibility, and the New South Wales Government is seriously providing the best possible education for every child in our community wherever they might be.

The New South Wales Government values the contribution of schoolteachers and has established consultation mechanisms to ensure that the views of the teaching profession as they relate to the public education system are captured. Matters with an organisational impact on the profession are also regularly discussed with employees and their representative organisations, particularly the NSW Teachers Federation. These are responsive to both individual matters and matters of interest to the teaching profession generally. The department is committed to working to ensure that school time is focused on what matters most: learning, teaching and supporting students. As a profession, the work of a teacher is not confined to the hours of the school day. I know that, and no doubt members opposite who were in the teaching profession know that too.

The teaching profession is structured around an academic year of approximately 40 weeks during which teachers are required to attend the workplace and participate in all activities, both those occurring within and outside the operating hours of the school. Further, the New South Wales Government's School Success Model has set ambitious departmental targets focused on improving support, including reducing the administrative burden, which is something the member for Wallsend referred to. As part of that work, in 2021 the department released the draft Quality Time Action Plan for consultation. The action plan received over 4,000 responses from a wide

range of teachers, principals, non-teaching staff and members of the community from across the State. Their feedback will ultimately drive decisions about which initiatives are prioritised and is important to ensuring that meaningful and significant improvements are made for our schools.

Teachers are valued and their wellbeing is one of the New South Wales Government's priorities, because we know that when teachers feel supported, students benefit. The 2021 People Matter Employee Survey results showed that 69 per cent of employees at New South Wales public schools rated their workplace as favourable in terms of wellbeing—up two points from the previous survey. The Government will continue to support our teachers through a range of programs and initiatives. In response to the pandemic, the Government invested \$383 million on top of the \$337 million committed earlier in 2021 to fund tutoring support for schools to provide students with additional learning support. By 2023, there will also be more than 2,280 new assistant principal, curriculum and instruction positions—which is 1,372 full-time equivalents—across 1,760 schools with preschool to year 6 enrolments. That is an additional permanent executive entitlement in our schools.

I am pleased to note that a number of those positions have already started in schools this term. Those roles will provide high-level support and guidance to enhance teacher growth and development in literacy and numeracy, and strengthen school-wide instructional capabilities across the curriculum. New South Wales public school teacher salaries are competitive with those offered by other State education systems. The Government's wages policy over the past decade has ensured that public sector employees' wages have kept pace with inflation and indeed done better than in any other State. The inclusion of this element in the motion is the reason why the Government cannot support the motion.

We know that career progression is important to many teachers, and that is why we announced a new FASTstream program to accelerate high-performing and graduate teachers into leadership roles in schools. The FASTstream program is unapologetically selective and competitive, and will be very rewarding in the long term. Those who are successful will be fast-tracked into a principal role, which can normally take around 20 years, in under 10 years. The applicants will be mentored by our best and help lift teaching quality in our system for students both in the city and the country. We want the best teachers to be our future school leaders—those who will transform the education system of tomorrow through academic excellence, outstanding ability in front of a class and ambition.

Like many others in the community who have had to adjust, the leadership demonstrated by teachers and school staff to be flexible and innovative throughout the pandemic has been outstanding. They have striven to keep our schools open and ensured that learning and support continued even when the toughest pandemic restrictions were in place. For some, often that meant teaching remotely and on site at the same time. We acknowledge that the health and wellbeing of our school staff has been impacted during this period, as it has for students, parents and carers, and the wider community. School staff work in a complex environment with the pressures of human interaction and the needs of students and parents.

Being Well is the holistic and integrated staff wellbeing framework of the Department of Education. The program allows staff to access wellbeing support easily and use the matrix of wellbeing areas and levels of support intensity to direct them to the most appropriate support for their circumstances. The program includes a range of key preventative programs and initiatives within the department, including the Employee Assistance Program, Healthy Lifestyle Check and Respectful Workplaces. The department has actively promoted Being Well through newsletters and monthly campaigns which deliver practical staff wellbeing strategies, support and resources throughout COVID-19. It continues to prioritise targeted supports to assist staff with their health and wellbeing.

Teachers are an essential component of the vitality of every school and the community it serves. We know that the largest factor influencing student performance is the quality of the teacher in front of them. The Government is determined to prepare and support the best teachers it can possibly have in our schools to ensure that every student—wherever they are located in the State, whatever demographic they come from, whatever start in life they might have had—receives the best possible education that the New South Wales education system can give them. We stand in support of that.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:47):** The member for Riverstone just said that the Government is interested in supporting teachers where it can, and then, in the same breath, he said that the Government will not support the motion. Am I missing something? That does not go hand in hand. I believe I can safely say that every member recognises the stress and strain that our State's teachers are under, and have been under for a considerable amount of time, under the Government. It is abundantly clear that for years now the Government has neglected to provide the resources, pay and assistance that teachers so desperately need to do their jobs to the best of their ability. It is more interested in penny pinching than it is in supporting our teachers.

Our teachers were stretched to their absolute limit even before the COVID-19 pandemic upheaved their routines and forced them to adapt to an entirely new method of teaching—and certainly not for the better. They

have been forced to take on extra workloads by having to organise video calls with each student as well as their parents, tracking progress online through submissions and phone calls at home and providing individual support for students rather than in the usual group scenario of a classroom. It also took extra planning and time for our teachers to transition from an in-person class of 30 to online teaching. That has happened time and time again. The extra preparation time that teachers were required to put in to prepare for their classes has been underpaid, unsupported and under-recognised by the Government.

The past two years have highlighted further the struggles that teachers have been facing for years. The ongoing pandemic has exposed the cracks in our education system and how little our teachers have been working with. Fewer people are entering the profession, and conditions and salaries do not reflect teachers' experience, qualifications or workloads. The concerns of teachers are not being considered seriously. Members of the profession are not being consulted over decisions that directly impact them and their work, and they are being disregarded because they appear to some to be "managing". Even if our teachers are managing, they deserve to be thriving and developing. The educators of our children—the people who shape our children's development and futures—should not simply be coping.

For years now this Government has done nothing but disregard our teachers' needs, and we are seeing the ramifications. Our teachers are overworked, understaffed, underpaid and unappreciated by this Government. They are leaving the profession and telling others not to join, and for good reason: Our teachers are not being given the respect they deserve. When I say "respect", I do not mean applause or thanks. I mean increased pay to reflect the years of education and experience that our teachers possess; adequate preparation time and proper breaks; and incentives for casual staff to cover absences. The chronic lack of concern for our teachers and their frustrations negatively impacts our children's learning and development. I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing another brilliant motion to this place. Over the past 15 years the member has continued to highlight the failures of this Government. I congratulate her on bringing the motion to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (12:51):** Probably we are all in furious agreement in regard to the value that we place on our teachers. The member for Shellharbour suggested that our Government undervalues teachers. Nothing could be further from the truth. I take on board the fact that the mover of the motion and the member leading on behalf of the Government in this debate are both former schoolteachers. That in itself is to be valued. When people from that profession—and indeed any other profession—enter Parliament, I imagine they have a representative duty on behalf of their profession. I have spoken about many aspects of my previous life to support those various roles. But we all know that a teacher's role is not confined to the hours of the school day. The teaching profession is structured around an academic year of approximately 40 weeks, during which teachers are required to attend the workplace and participate in all the many and varied activities. Those activities occur within and outside the operating hours of school.

The weekly working hours of New South Wales public school teachers are not prescribed. Rather, as professionals, teachers exercise their judgement as to the work that is necessary for them to undertake to ensure student wellbeing and to make sure students' educational outcomes are met. Much of the work undertaken during the school day involves teaching and interaction with students. Some of that work is performed during the timetabled release time or free periods during the school day. However, as with any professional role, some work is completed outside face-to-face teaching hours during the school term or in non-term weeks, or a combination of both. The conditions of teachers, particularly the paid non-term weeks during student vacations, provide flexibility for teachers in how they manage their work.

New South Wales public school teacher salaries are very competitive with those offered by other State education systems. I place on the record that in 2011 the annual salary for teachers at the top of the salary scale was \$84,759. Comparing that with the 2022 salary, a band 2.3 annual salary is now just under \$110,000 per year. That is a significant increase in that time, meaning that over the past 11 years the classroom teacher salary at the top scale has increased by no less than \$25,219, which represents an almost 30 per cent increase from the 2011 salary.

The New South Wales Government requires the public sector agency to conduct award negotiations in accordance with the NSW Public Sector Wages Policy, released in August 2021. As members are aware, the policy provides for increases in remuneration for public sector workers, including teachers, of up to 2.5 per cent per annum. On 6 October 2021 the Department of Education commenced negotiations with the NSW Teachers Federation for a new teachers' award to operate from 2022. The department has made application for a new three-year award, offering future increases in remuneration of 2.5 per cent per annum in 2023 and 2024, consistent with the wages policy. The award will be arbitrated by a full bench of the Industrial Relations Commission in May 2022.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (12:55):** I support the motion of the honourable member for Wallsend, which is rightly being debated in the Chamber today. It speaks to the urgent need for the Minister for

Education and Early Learning to support a much-needed pay rise for teachers, because without great teachers kids do not get a great education. I will detail why this pay rise is much needed and why I support it, relying on what I know from local teachers, school communities, P & Cs and senior students the length and breadth of the Lismore electorate, as well as the erudite and independent report entitled *Valuing the teaching profession - an independent inquiry*, commonly referred to as the Gallop report. This report was commissioned by the NSW Teachers Federation but should have been commissioned by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning.

I support the motion for a number of reasons, including the current staffing shortages—which go to the heart of the issue of a pay rise for teachers—that school communities and teachers are facing in the Lismore electorate and across New South Wales. At the beginning of 2021 there were 1,250 unfilled teacher vacancies. Student enrolments are expected to increase over the next two decades by 25 per cent. One in eight teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years. In any risk analysis, that should be a red alert for the Minister. That should be enough to cause the Government to act, but it has not. There is a range of reasons for teachers leaving, including the decline in teachers' pay, particularly when set against their increased skills and responsibilities compared with like professions.

Even more telling is that there has been a very large increase in workload intensification across all areas, and there has been no real review into this change. The last review into workload and salaries—and the two have to go together—was in 2004. None of these issues has been addressed, including the resignation rate of teachers, which teachers tell me is due to what they call exponential intensification of workload plus the decline in pay. Further, the report found issues with changes to work, constant policy changes, significant increases in student needs, rapid expansion in technology, and expansion and reform of the curriculum. The proposed curriculum change should not go ahead this year until these issues are addressed and teachers' pay changes. Teachers are drowning in data administration. I have met with a lot of teachers and walked through their day, their week, their month and their semesters, and it is really terrible. What shocked me—and I am not easily shocked—is that allocated preparation time has not changed since the 1950s for high school teachers or the 1980s for primary school teachers. It is recommended that a measly two hours be allocated to teachers for preparation time as soon as possible. There is so much more to be said. I commend the motion, and the member for Wallsend for moving it, to the House.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (12:58):** This is a great opportunity to speak about teachers and the great profession of teaching kids so that they can go on and have great careers. All members agree on how important teachers are and their vital role in the community. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting teachers achieve the best outcomes for their students. This is an opportunity to discuss a program that I fully support. It is named the Quality Time program. It recognises the high value of teacher time and is all about making their day on the job better. We need to make sure that teachers are doing what they love—teaching kids. The New South Wales Government is taking that issue very seriously. It has set ambitious targets for the Department of Education to reduce the administrative burden on teachers by 20 per cent by the end of 2022, as part of the School Success Model. Those practical, on-the-ground changes will make a difference in teachers' lives.

**Ms Anna Watson:** What are they?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. I have warned her several times to cease interjecting

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL:** The department is systematically identifying and eliminating administrative frustration points for school staff, and it continues to consult widely with teachers to find ways to better support them in the important work they do in the classroom. In addition to streamlining processes and reducing the administrative burden, the School Success Model is improving the support provided to schools so that teachers have the tools they need to respond to specific needs of students.

As part of the Quality Time program, the department has released a new learning resource hub, which provides teachers with high-quality, curriculum-linked resources to make better use of their time when planning lessons. Recent research on teaching effectiveness by the Grattan Institute has recognised the learning resource hub as an example of reforms that can make a real difference in freeing up time for teachers to do what they do best—that is, teaching and leading students.

In October 2021 the department consulted with stakeholders on the draft Quality Time Action Plan. It outlines the opportunities to simplify and modernise administrative processes and practices, so teachers and school leaders can focus on the work that best supports quality teaching and learning. Feedback on the other opportunity areas detailed in the draft action plan will ultimately help drive decisions about which initiatives to prioritise. It is important to ensure meaningful and significant improvements are made for our schools.

Current prioritised initiatives include an overhauled assessment system, allowing teachers to generate individual student-focused assessments in minutes, and streamlined administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation. In 2022 the department is prioritising initiatives to support teachers in managing their workload, including assessment and reporting; professional accreditation; curriculum resources; administration of extracurricular activities, excursions and data collection; and monitoring and analysis. We are mindful of the ongoing challenges for schools and will continue to work with them and key stakeholders.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (13:02):** By leave: Firstly, I acknowledge the hardworking member for Wallsend and thank her for bringing this important debate to the House. Members opposite, particularly the member for Upper Hunter, have addressed the Chamber today to describe what the Government is supposedly doing to support teachers. If the Government is making any difference whatsoever, why on earth did teachers take the enormous step to strike at the end of last year to say that they deserve more than thanks from this Government? They were forced to do it. It is because this Government is ignoring public education. There is a teacher shortage and a classroom shortage.

Professional teachers are tearing their hair out every day trying to deliver the education they want to deliver to their students, but they do not have the resources to do it. They do not have the time to plan the lessons they need to deliver the quality education that they want to deliver and that they have been trained to deliver—that this Government does not support them to deliver. I cannot talk about public education in this place without also talking about this Government's lack of interest in the infrastructure and the classrooms that teachers need to deliver education. In 2011 in my patch in Port Stephens, the Coalition committed to having a public high school in Medowie shovel ready if it formed government. It formed government but in 11 years, nothing has happened. There is no public high school for the entire community of 10,000 people. We have two independent high schools and three primary schools, but we do not have a public high school.

When it comes to public education, this Government has abrogated its responsibility to my community. It is abrogating its responsibility to teachers every single day by not giving them the resources, the pay and the time that they need to do the job that they need to do. Their job is fundamentally and essentially about our future. It is about delivering an education to students who will build the future of our country. This Government continues to ignore calls from teachers for support. Teachers deserve this Government's respect, and they deserve the action required to deliver the pay and conditions that they ought to have. Government members in this place should be supporting this motion today, and if they do not it is a complete disgrace.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (13:06):** By leave: The one thing we should do to support the More Than Thanks campaign by teachers is to show solidarity with those in the Chamber who are trying to move a progressive agenda, despite the Government's attempt to squash the vote. I will speak very briefly on behalf of The Greens to say that we support the NSW Teachers Federation, we support teachers and we support the More Than Thanks campaign that recognises the overworked and under-resourced teachers in New South Wales. We have met many, many times with local teachers and principals. I know that the member for Ballina and the member for Balmain share my views when I say that The Greens wholeheartedly support the campaign being run, which says the salaries of teachers and principals need to be reset at a level that better reflects their skills and responsibilities, and values the work that they do. We need to see salaries increased. We also need to recognise that a report commissioned by the NSW Teachers Federation and prepared by education economist Adam Morris found that a minimum of 11,000 additional teachers need to be recruited by 2031. It is absolutely critical that we do that and it is critical that we vote on this motion today. I will leave my contribution there.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:07):** By leave: I record my support for the motion and thank the member for Wallsend for bringing the motion before the House. I record my support for the More Than Thanks campaign being led by the NSW Teachers Federation and I put on record again my support for the public education system in this State. It contributes to the fundamental building blocks of an equal society and opportunity for all. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH:** I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:09):** In reply: The Teachers Federation, which is following this debate in *Hansard*, will be interested in the limited amount of time and number of speakers from this side of the House who were able to speak in support of a real pay rise for public school teachers. I thank the members representing the electorates of Riverstone, Shellharbour, Castle Hill, Lismore, Upper Hunter, Port Stephens, Newtown and The Entrance for their contributions. The Teachers Federation will be interested in the way in which Government members filibustered during the debate to deliberately limit Opposition members talking about public education, which reflects how the Government values teachers—it does not. The Government talks about how

much it values teachers and gives them a patronising pat on the back. But it does not want to give them a pay rise. It does not want to increase their resources or reduce their working hours.

The Government does not want to do that. I have listened to Government members make the same arguments time and again when I was a member of the Teachers Federation. Not one Government member talked about a pay rise. No-one in the Government talks seriously about reducing or helping to manage teachers' ever-increasing workloads. I thank members of The Greens and all of my colleagues on this side of the House who wanted to speak but did not get an opportunity to do so. We support a pay rise for public school teachers, like I was. We support an opportunity to look at how we can achieve better working conditions for our teachers so that we can attract more teachers instead of facing a shortage. I urge the Government to support the motion. I thank all of my colleagues and I apologise to those who had limited time. Thank Government members for that, because they did that deliberately. I urge all members to support the motion.

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

**The House divided.**

*[In division]*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I grant an extension of two minutes for the division.

*Later,*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is that the motion be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative.

**Noes, 2**

Mr Nathaniel Smith  
Mr Gurmeh Singh

**Motion agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will 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 pool photographs from the side door of the Chamber this afternoon.

*Members*

#### REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** On behalf of Mr Dominic Perrottet: I inform the House that the Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities and Minister for Active Transport will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Veterans.

*Question Time*

#### ROAD TOLLS

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:16):** My question is directed to the Premier. So far the Government has been talking about two-way tolling, one-way tolling, half-tolling and no tolling on the Harbour Bridge and the Harbour Tunnel. This week we heard that Treasury had plans for new tolls on the crossing in both directions, and we learnt that the Western Harbour Tunnel is not viable without significant increases in tolls on the Harbour Bridge and the Harbour Tunnel. Will the Premier finally come clean with his position on new tolls for the Harbour Bridge and the Harbour Tunnel?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:17):** What I will come clean on is that we will continue to build the infrastructure to make a real difference to people's lives. That is exactly what we on this side have done since coming into government. After inheriting a \$35 billion infrastructure backlog, we got to work.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** But a triple-A credit rating.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** It's called a pandemic, buddy.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Those are the facts, and what have we done? We have got to work building the roads to make a real difference to people's lives, so they can get to work quicker and home faster. Whether it is WestConnex or the M2, across the board, every one of those projects was opposed by Labor. The point is that we are working through the issues that come with building major road projects. In doing so, different advice will be received. But, ultimately, it is not the departments that make the decisions; it is the elected representatives and the members of the Executive. Those opposite can run scare campaigns if they like.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** There are complex issues associated with the Western Harbour Tunnel to ensure that congestion does not build up on other roads, so we are working through those. When the Government makes its decision, members opposite can then ask questions in relation to that position. But we on this side will continue to build the roads, public transport, schools and hospitals that make a real difference to people's lives. What we have seen is the same old Labor—all protest, no progress. Labor did it back in the day when they tried to censure Bruce Baird, who was the transport Minister at the time.

**Ms Anna Watson:** Bruce Baird?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Yes, Bruce Baird. This is the same old Labor playing the same old approach.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** That is part of my generation.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** You were probably here.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Heffron has the call.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** The question asks how much he is going to slug motorists, not about what might have happened with Bruce Baird in this House.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has been relevant to the question. The member for Heffron will resume his seat.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I have been completely relevant, Mr Speaker. My New Year's resolution is to answer questions in this place and I have been doing that from the outset.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** We might give you a score.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Thank you. The reality is that the same approach Labor is taking with the Western Harbour Tunnel is the same one Labor took when we were constructing WestConnex, the same approach Labor took when we were building the M2—a road that Labor called the "road to nowhere", as though no-one was ever going to live in north-west Sydney and why would we build that road? Could members imagine driving up Epping Road now? Could members imagine Parramatta Road without the WestConnex being built?

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Yes. There would be less traffic on Parramatta Road if you had not put the tolls back on.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** You opposed it. When we build the Western Harbour Tunnel, what you will see as well is a major transformative project that makes a real difference to people's lives. On that second aspect of the question, in accordance with my new resolution of answering questions, the Leader of the Opposition spoke about financial viability. You know what? It probably was not financially viable to build the Harbour Bridge back in the 1920s, but what did it take? It took Bradfield and a vision to set up our city and our State for success.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** That is exactly what we have done since being in office since 2011 and that is exactly what we will continue to do as we move forward.

#### STATE ECONOMY

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (14:21):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on economic planning and the benefits this brings to the State?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:22):** It is a great question from the member for Hawkesbury, and I can. We know that in 2011 when this Government came to office the New South Wales economy was in tatters. We know it was in tatters. From 2011 onwards, we turned around the State's finances, we invested in taking on challenging reform that was opposed by Labor—such as the poles and wires transaction—to unlock capital, invest in productive infrastructure, drive economic growth and drive jobs growth right across

the State. Those strong economic and financial foundations—in what were, after a while, good times for our State—put us in a strong position as we were heading into the pandemic to be able to invest right across the board. Since the pandemic began, the New South Wales Government has invested \$46 billion in total. In general years, that would be about half the expenditure of the New South Wales budget.

We have been able to invest during this pandemic to get businesses through every step of the way. The support packages in conjunction with the support packages from a Federal Government level have ensured that during each of the outbreaks—for example, the early Alpha outbreak when 260,000-odd jobs were lost in this State—every single one of them was recovered. The unemployment rate in 2020 hit a peak of 7.1 per cent. It was a difficult time for our State, but the investments we made and our strong financial and economic management leading into the pandemic enabled us to be on the side of businesses and to be on the side of workers right across our State.

In the Delta outbreak, with the unemployment rate at 5.4 per cent, 225,000 jobs were lost across our State. Every single one of them has been recovered because every step of the way we have been with workers and with businesses. And then in relation to the Omicron outbreak, once again, under this Treasurer, because of our strong financial management, we are the only jurisdiction in the country able to invest in businesses and stand side by side with them to help get them through. Today's unemployment numbers are at 4.2 per cent. They are January figures at the height of the Omicron variant.

When you take a step back, you see that in New South Wales there are 9,100 more jobs today than there were at the outset of the pandemic. That is a sign of strong success. It is a sign of good management in the good times, strong financial foundations and strong economic conditions delivered by this Government, keeping people in work, even on the transport side of things. The \$70-odd billion of investment is driving 130,000 jobs across our State. Under Labor there was no construction, no economic plan and no vision for our State, taking our people backwards. The investments and policies of this Government continue to show the difference between the Liberals and The Nationals, and Labor. It stands in stark contrast to Labor. I received a letter the other day from two constituents from Maitland. I do not know where the member for Maitland is.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** These constituents in Maitland wrote and said, "For some time we've been considering who is the best to lead our State towards a safer, economically sound future for families and communities. But we are yet to feel adequately informed, therefore confident, in what would constitute the Labor Party's strategic plan to restore real local and national economic security. We're a little old for platitudes and nebulous intangibles." How did I come across it? It was sent to me as a representative from the member for Maitland. She wrote to me asking where Labor's plan was. I say to the member for Maitland: It is a simple answer. There is not one. Next time maybe she should go to the Leader of the Opposition or the shadow Treasurer first. But I will be sure to write back to the constituents. It is a very simple answer—no policies and no plan for the future of our State.

## ROAD TOLLS

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:26):** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Premier will not rule out new tolls on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Tunnel, will the Premier at least rule out a 4 per cent yearly increase and handing it over to a private operator?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:27):** Once again, a reasonable question. But, as I have said numerous times and will continue to say, while Labor continues to run a scare campaign on tolling regimes in relation to the infrastructure investment in this State, the Government's position is that it will continue to build the roads and it will consider the tolling regime as it moves through that process. A mature, professional government will look at all the options. But the two key focuses of this Government when it comes to building the roads to make a real difference to people's lives are that we actually construct the roads, unlike under Labor where nothing was built, and that we put downward pressure on family budgets. That is exactly what this Government has done.

Under Minister Dominello and Customer Service there is about \$6 billion in initiatives in putting downward pressure on family budgets across the State. Whether that is our free registration for those people who use the toll roads regularly, half-price registration, which we know makes a real difference to people's lives, caps on Opal cards, Active Kids and Creative Kids rebates, or support for our tourism and accommodation sectors, who have done it incredibly tough during this pandemic, we will always put the families of New South Wales first, whilst acknowledging that as we build these roads there are inconveniences. But, ultimately, the alternative is the Labor way of do nothing, plan nothing and deliver nothing for the people of our State. The fact is that as we continue to build and construct—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: The Premier has strayed well and truly away from the specific question that has been asked of him. He wants to do a dissertation of Labor's policy. He was asked to rule in or out something specific.

**The SPEAKER:** I am satisfied that the Premier is being indirectly relevant at this stage.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I am taking this personally. How am I being indirectly relevant?

**The SPEAKER:** Premier, please do not argue with me. The Premier is speaking to cost-of-living issues. The question was in relation to a 4 per cent annual increase in tolls.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I answered that at the outset.

**The SPEAKER:** You are being indirectly relevant, which is relevant. That is satisfactory.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Well, that is incredibly disappointing, Mr Speaker. I have been making such an effort. I said it at the outset—and, fine, maybe I was straying a little bit. But let us go back to the premise of the question. I said that, as we move through the construction of those roads, the Government will consider all options available to it with two key focuses: building the road and putting downward pressure on household budgets. That is what we have said we will be doing and it is exactly what we will do.

#### NSW POLICE FORCE

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (14:30):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Police. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on what the Government is doing to support police officers in New South Wales?

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (14:31):** I thank the Parliamentary Secretary, and member for Tweed, for his question. He understands the needs of his community and stands up for frontline workers across the State. As I said on Tuesday, it has been a productive number of months for the people of the State as the Government continues to build infrastructure and provide services. A personal highlight for me from the past few months, and one that the Premier shared, was attending the swearing-in ceremony of Karen Webb, the State's first female police commissioner. It was also the first time that a police commissioner was sworn in to their role outside Sydney. Choosing her school in the home town that helped shape her as the location for the event speaks volumes about the new commissioner.

When a young Karen Webb first walked through the gates of the Boorowa Central School as five-year-old, few would have guessed the phenomenal trail that she would be blazing today. But kids who grow up in the bush usually defy the odds and expectations. Looking at where she has come from and her journey along the way clearly shows that the commissioner is an outstanding woman. I had the opportunity to meet her nieces, who have followed in her footsteps and also joined the NSW Police Force. In taking on a new role as police Minister and as someone from Bathurst, I could not have been happier than to be sharing the occasion with the new police commissioner, who I know shares my values and beliefs about the importance of connection to community.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will pause one moment. A member in the Chamber has been continually making a noise on a mobile phone. They will stop it.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I know the new commissioner puts people first. We see those values in each of our police officers, and it has been a great privilege to travel around the State and meet many of them on my journey. I have already had the opportunity to meet many police officers at the stations of Raymond Terrace, Maitland, Newcastle, Queanbeyan and Jindabyne. In the last couple of weeks we turned the first sod for the new police station to be built down in Jindabyne. We are delivering a modern, world-class police force, with people at the centre. No matter where you live, in the city or in the bush, our 22,000 police men and women have your back. The foundation has already been laid. Since 2019 we have delivered 950 new police officers, and that includes 328 new officers in the regions. That provides an enormous boost in keeping our communities safe right across the State. We stand with our police officers and all of our frontline workers. But the question is: Where do those opposite stand? The Labor Party stands for nothing. I do not know who they represent.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

I do not know who you stand up for. At least in opposition you should have a policy or a position on anything, but you do not. You clearly do not have a position as a party. What we hear from you lot is one thing in this place and another thing out there. You stand there and take videos and selfies. You pretend that you are standing with our frontline health workers and talk about supporting the nurses. I remind you again that in Monaro

you shamefully preferenced an anti-vaxxer. You shamefully kicked our frontline health workers and our frontline workers in the guts once again.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: The Deputy Premier has well and truly strayed from the nature of the question. He is debating the answer, and he is trying to encourage members to be disorderly by so doing. He started off alright, but he just cannot help himself. I ask that the Deputy Premier answers the important question that was asked of him.

**The SPEAKER:** I will give the Deputy Premier some leeway, but I will equally give the Opposition some leeway in interjections if he continues in the current vein.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I acknowledge the incredible commitment given by our police officers right across the State. When one actually talks to them about the stories of where they go and where they travel and the incidents that they deal with— [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** I am happy to give the Deputy Premier two minutes, but it is on the basis that he keeps it serious. He has had a go at the other side.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said, we thank those men and women for the work that they do. We thank them for putting themselves out there all the time and keeping our community safe. I also take on the role of police Minister because there are a few things I want to find out. I want to find out what actually happened to Country Labor. I want to find out why it disappeared. I want to find out why Country Labor was deregistered. I want to find out why Country Labor was used as nothing more than a front for dodgy donations.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I would like to hear the member for Heffron.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Mr Speaker, you gave the Deputy Premier an extension of time conditionally upon him being specific to the question in his answer. Secondly, a couple of years ago you gave a considered ruling about when you will and will not give that extension of time. You have been inconsistent with that ruling. I did not get a chance to raise that with you, Mr Speaker, before you gave the Deputy Premier an extension of time under Standing Order 131. I now ask that you ask the Deputy Premier either to resume his seat or to provide the House with the information that has been sought from him by the member for Tweed.

**The SPEAKER:** I am happy for the Deputy Premier to continue. I have granted the extension, but I ask the Deputy Premier to be more relevant to the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It is interesting. When I start to actually talk about frontline workers and our police officers out there working hard, and I point out that Labor actually did shamefully preference an anti-vaxxer at an election, they are true facts. When I mention this, it shows that—

**Ms Anna Watson:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It is time for Labor to stop its campaign of fearmongering, have some policies and stand up for the people of this State.

**The SPEAKER:** The Deputy Premier will resume his seat.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** On this side of the House, we will represent the people of New South Wales.

**Ms Anna Watson:** Mr Speaker, he is flouting your ruling. You have asked him three times and he is flouting your ruling. If that was one of us doing that, you would kick us out.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Deputy Premier to order for the first time.

#### QR CODE DATA BREACH

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (14:39):** My question is directed to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government. The Government knew about the QR code data breach that revealed the location of sensitive sites, including domestic violence shelters, in October of last year. The Premier said he was not told about it until Monday. Was the Minister told about it before this week?

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

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government) (14:39):** I thank the member for her question. I will read a statement issued by the Information and Privacy Commission, dated 16 February 2022. This is not a Labor media release; this is a statement from the Information and Privacy Commission. The statement says:

The Privacy Commissioner is aware of media reports suggesting a breach of the QR Code data set.

The data set which was published in September 2021 did not involve a compromise of the QR Code data set. Rather a decision had been made to make publicly available the list of businesses which had registered as COVID-Safe businesses. In publishing that list of addresses, the Department of Customer Service (DCS) also published in error addresses of businesses that were of a sensitive nature as the data set expanded.

The Privacy Commissioner was briefed by DCS on the incident, including the circumstances which resulted in the incident and was satisfied with the actions taken to contain, respond to and remediate the incident.

**Mr Chris Minns:** When did you find out?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** I am reading a statement from the—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will continue his answer.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** I am being directly relevant, and I am not going to be interrupted when reading a statement from the Privacy Commissioner. Again, this is not a Labor media statement; this is a statement from the Privacy Commissioner. It continues:

DCS undertook a review of the incident and the findings were shared with the Privacy Commissioner. The data set is no longer published. The Privacy Commissioner supported the decision to cease publication of the data set.

The QR Code Check-in app, developed and implemented to support the NSW response to the pandemic, was not a factor in the incident. Citizens should continue to follow the public health orders relating to the use of the QR Code Check-in app.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: We are 2½ minutes in and the Minister is not answering the question. When was he told? It is a very specific question.

**The SPEAKER:** I am happy that the Minister is being relevant. The Minister will continue his answer.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** He is not answering the question. Would you like a copy of it, Mr Speaker?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Swansea will resume her seat and allow the Minister to answer the question.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** I have forgotten where I was up to.

**Mr Paul Toole:** Start again.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** No, I will not start again. I am happy to answer the question. The statement continues:

Privacy safeguards, including concerning the use and sharing of the QR code data and its retention, were built into the design of the QR Code Check-in process. Most recently, legislative safeguards for personal and health information collected by the Check-in app were implemented, strengthening the Government's commitment to robust privacy protections for this information.

The Privacy Commissioner continues to work with all agencies—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** We could read this statement for ourselves.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Yes, send me an email. The Minister is not answering the question. When was the Minister told?

**The SPEAKER:** I have already ruled that the Minister—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** He is not answering the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Swansea will resume her seat.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** When was the Minister told? Why is he hiding this information?

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

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** I conclude with the last paragraph—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Send me an email. For goodness sake, save us all the time. What did you know and when?

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

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** "The Privacy Commissioner continues to work with all agencies in implementing privacy positive practices." That is a statement from the Privacy Commissioner. In relation to the

incident, of course, as the Premier said, absolutely, it should never have occurred. I apologised whole-heartedly when I became aware of it, and I will get some—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** When?

**Mr Chris Minns:** When?

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** Slow down.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister is being relevant.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** I will get some information in relation to when I became aware of it.

**The SPEAKER:** Opposition members will let the Minister answer the question. The member for Londonderry will resume her seat. The Minister has the call.

**Ms Prue Car:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order? If it is relevance, the Minister is being relevant.

**Ms Prue Car:** He has admitted that his department stuffed this up—

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

**Ms Prue Car:** —but he will not tell us when he knew.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Londonderry to order for the first time. I call the member for Rockdale to order for the first time. The Minister has the call.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** As the Premier said, it is an incident that should not have occurred. On behalf of the agency, I apologise. It should not have happened.

**Mr Chris Minns:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr Chris Minns:** I am reluctant to do it, and I do not do it often. I have a lot of sympathy for the Premier. He was not told about it for six months.

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

**Mr Chris Minns:** Our question was very specific. When was the Minister informed of the data breach? That is all we want to know.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister is being relevant to the question and will continue.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** Again, I will find out specifically. I do not have that memory—

**Ms Prue Car:** You will find out when you were told? Why are you hiding this?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has directly answered the question.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** I will find out specifically.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Keira will be quiet.

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO:** This is the Opposition again spreading a mistruth. They are used to it. The first sentence of the Privacy Commissioner's report says that "reports suggesting a breach of the QR code data set is inaccurate". The Opposition is talking about something that is completely false. There was an error in relation to the publishing of data in relation to addresses. I absolutely, on behalf of the agency, apologise for that. But the suggestion that there was a QR code data breach is false. [*Time expired.*]

#### ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (14:46):** My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales. The current Premier speaks proudly of his history of privatisation. The previous member for Bega has said that "a leasing of country electricity assets should be considered by the Government". Will the Minister support Labor's bill to protect western New South Wales electricity assets from his Government's privatisation agenda?

**Mr Ryan Park:** Don't go looking for a "no", Dugald. There ain't one in the folder.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (14:47):** I thank the member for Keira for his support.

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

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** I thank the member for Lakemba for his question. I will continue to support the people of regional New South Wales. In my area we have the first declared renewable energy zone. We are working towards a really clear pathway forward on energy, which includes a renewable pathway and a mix of energies and a mix of solutions. Jobs are created constantly through this. We have large-scale solar panels that are being approved as we speak and construction jobs in the hundreds, and I will continue to support that.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: I appreciate the renewable energy zones. As the Minister might remember, the Labor Party supported that as well. But my question was quite direct. Will the Minister support Labor's bill to protect western New South Wales electricity assets from his Government's privatisation agenda?

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** That is a pretty ludicrous question. No, but we have a pathway forward. I appreciate the member's question. Can I talk?

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Sure. The question was about privatisation.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Lakemba will resume his seat.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** What about the—

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** The fearmongering is not taken on board by me. Being lectured to by people who have previously privatised the gentraders is out of order. This Government has a clear pathway forward. I thank the member for his question.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has completed his answer. Before I take the question from the member for Upper Hunter, I apologise to him. I confused the order.

### ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (14:49):** My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Energy. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the Government is delivering affordable and reliable energy for New South Wales?

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy) (14:50):** I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question and recognise his advocacy for energy workers in the Hunter region. Today has been a particularly tough day for many people, following Origin Energy's announcement that it will be bringing forward the closure of the Eraring power station. The power station employs around 400 workers and the coalmine that supplies it with fuel employs an additional 600. This is a difficult day for those workers and the broader Hunter region. I want to make it very clear that I expect Origin Energy to honour its obligations to its workforce and to do everything in its power to support those affected and the community at this very difficult time.

I will be announcing the Government's comprehensive job support package in the coming days, which will focus on creating new opportunities for workers in these regions. Today I announced the Government's response to the energy issues caused by Origin Energy's decision. Let me be very clear, New South Wales is well positioned to handle this closure. The plan I announced today has been designed to ensure reliability of supply following the closure of Eraring and is designed to put downward pressure on electricity prices. The plan has been reviewed by the independent Australian Energy Market Operator [AEMO], which has said that it will ensure that the State's energy security target is met, even with the closure of Eraring. The State has the strongest energy reliability standard anywhere in the country, and that standard is to ensure that the State has enough firm rated capacity to continue to meet the State's energy needs during a one-in-10-year peak demand event, even with the State's two largest generating units offline.

AEMO has confirmed that our energy security target will be met when Eraring closes, after the delivery of our plan. The plan involves building the largest transmission battery in the southern hemisphere. The role of this battery is not to provide energy for New South Wales consumers. It is designed to remove constraints in our transmission network to allow energy consumers in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong to access more of our existing generation on peak demand days. Our transmission network conveys energy from our generators to consumers. Transmission lines can carry only a limited amount of energy at any one time. Some of that capacity is currently kept in reserve to handle shocks to the electricity system, such as lightning strikes and bushfires. The

role of this big battery is to act as a shock absorber to manage these risks and free up the excess capacity to carry more energy to consumers in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong from our existing sources of generation.

In addition, we will bring forward the delivery of the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, which was legislated by the members of this House two years ago. The reason we legislated this mechanism was to ensure that new electricity infrastructure would be built before the old infrastructure closes. It also means that we have a powerful and flexible mechanism to deal with events such as Origin Energy's announcement today. I thank all members of this House for supporting this mechanism to ensure that we are able to build the new electricity generation that is going to keep the lights on and put downward pressure on prices. Let me be very clear that today's announcement from Origin Energy will put pressure on electricity prices, especially in the year that Eraring closes. However, the best way to put downward pressure on prices is to bring in more supply, which is precisely why we are accelerating the delivery of the roadmap. To assist the bringing forward of the roadmap, we will invest an additional \$84 million on top of the \$360 million the Government announced in last years' budget.

We will also establish a transmission acceleration facility to make sure we can deliver multiple renewable energy zones—modern-day power stations—in parallel with the other work. The generation that we will get from the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone—I acknowledge the leadership of the member for Swansea, who drove the declaration of that zone—and from the New England and Central-West Orana renewable energy zones will be the energy that powers our State and puts downward pressure on electricity prices. The Government has a comprehensive plan to ensure reliability of electricity supply and to put downward pressure on electricity prices following Origin's announcement today. We will respond with a comprehensive jobs package in the coming days, particularly to support those regions that are impacted by our changing energy mix.

I reiterate that this has been a tough day for workers, their families and the community in the Hunter following Origin's decision, which reflects the commercial reality being faced by our power stations in New South Wales and across the country. In New South Wales we have the most comprehensive mechanism to build the new supply that will ensure reliability and downward pressure on prices. [*Time expired.*]

#### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (14:55):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning, and Minister for Homes. Will the Minister update the House on what the Government is doing to improve housing affordability and supply in regional New South Wales?

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Planning, and Minister for Homes) (14:55):** I thank the member for Albury for his question and for the opportunity to inform the House about how the Government is improving the delivery of new housing in regional New South Wales. During the pandemic record numbers of Sydneysiders have flocked to the regions for a sea change or a tree change. Since 2019 over 100,000 people left Greater Sydney to live in other parts of this great State. A strong economy means more people are able to stay in the regions and work in jobs close to where they live, or take advantage of today's technology and work remotely. Over the 12 months to December 2021, total employment in regional New South Wales has grown by 2.3 per cent with an unemployment rate of just 4.5 per cent. That is why regional housing is a priority for this Government. Normally I would critique Labor's position on the issue but, frankly, in this instance I cannot because it does not have one. In fact, it has never bothered to have a position on regional housing. It has never bothered about the regions, or had a real footprint in or an understanding of the regions.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** What about Bega?

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Oh Bega? You mention Bega. The new member for Bega will be disappointed when he turns up to Labor's party room caucus meetings to find no-one understands the regions. He will never be looked after in the regions. I feel sorry for the people of Bega, who would not be looked after under any potential Labor government. However, help for the regions is on the way from Country Labor. Recently I took a photograph in Strathfield of the Country Labor tent. Obviously, Country Labor is moving. It has left Leichardt and it is moving west, leaving a scattering of cafe-latte disposable cups or keep cups as they move to the west.

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order—

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Sometime in about 2053 Country Labor might get to Parramatta, but it is on the move.

**Ms Kate Washington:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. This is an incredibly important issue for the regions. For those of us who live there, housing is a critical issue, especially the lack of social housing delivered by this Government.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister is being relevant and was responding to an interjection.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** We are not just there, but we are on the way. We do care about the regions. We are exploring every avenue at our disposal to lift barriers to housing supply, and we have called in the experts to help us in our quest. We have set up the Regional Housing Taskforce to make recommendations on ways we can tackle increasing pressures on housing supply and affordability. While we are working on a comprehensive whole-of-government response, we are getting on with the job of helping to eliminate the housing pressures in the bush. We have made \$250 million available to councils experiencing some of the highest growth in our regions through the NSW Public Spaces Legacy Program and the NSW Regional Housing Fund.

Up to \$1.4 million in funding will be available to each of 21 councils to deliver new infrastructure projects if they develop and implement plans to address regional housing at a local level. This builds on the Housing 2041: NSW Housing Strategy to deliver outcomes across metropolitan and regional New South Wales; housing in the right locations, housing that suits diverse needs and housing that feels like a home—a home for everyone. We have launched a Housing Evidence Centre, making it easy to access housing data for all of New South Wales. We are unlocking Crown land in regional areas to build more homes. I acknowledge the great work the member for Oxley undertook in this place. Last week in Cooma we announced that 12 hectares of Crown land is being transformed into 140 homes, easing housing pressures while providing a boost for the local economy, investment and jobs.

Members on this side of the House know that by establishing genuine partnerships we can all contribute to reducing regional housing pressures in New South Wales. We have set up the NSW Public Spaces Legacy Program to encourage faster assessment of development applications and rezonings. Currently in regional New South Wales more than 117 infrastructure projects are underway, worth more than \$287 million, to support housing growth. Over the past few years we have made record investments in delivering social and affordable housing across the State.

From 2012 to 2020 the number of social and affordable homes in New South Wales increased by some 5 per cent, and across the country in the same period the increase was just 3 per cent. We have invested \$29 million in housing for teachers and police in regional areas, and we are looking at new ways to help new home buyers get into the market, including options for the Government to provide equity, which will help those currently struggling to buy a home for the first time get their keys faster. The New South Wales Government wants people in our great State to know that, no matter their income, there is a home for them.

#### **TOLLAND RENEWAL PROJECT**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (15:01):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning, and Minister for Homes. Given the Government's stated commitment to improving social and affordable housing in regional New South Wales, will the Minister provide an update to the people of Wagga Wagga on the progress of the much-needed Tolland Renewal Project?

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Planning, and Minister for Homes) (15:01):** I have not had two questions in a week since the days of Mike Baird! I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his question, and for the opportunity to inform the House about the great work the New South Wales Government is doing to improve social and affordable housing in regional New South Wales, particularly in the wonderful regional city of Wagga Wagga—so nice it was named twice. I have enjoyed many an afternoon with the member for Wagga Wagga out on the beach at the beautiful Murrumbidgee River, surfing the famous five o'clock wave. For those who have not been to Wagga, if you are making a trip, do not forget your surfboard or bodyboard, or maybe you are an old-school esky lid rider like the member for Tweed. But if you do not have any of those, I know the good doctor would be happy to loan one of his longboards to you to experience this remarkable phenomenon.

But we are not just here to talk about the world's greatest mysterious inland wave. I am pleased to update the member on this planned project for Wagga Wagga, about which I am excited—a project that, once approved, will enhance the area even more and provide housing and amenities of which the town can be proud. In March 2021 the NSW Land and Housing Corporation [LAHC], the Aboriginal Housing Office [AHO] and the Argyle Consortium signed a collaboration agreement to work together to prepare a concept plan and viable business case for the Tolland Renewal Project. I am pleased to advise the House and the member that the group is close to finalising its concept plan and the delivery of the business case for Tolland. The Argyle Consortium expects to present its recommendations to the LAHC and the AHO for approval consideration by 30 June this year. The group will also continue to collaborate with other significant stakeholders such as Wagga Wagga City Council and the Department of Communities and Justice.

I am pleased to inform the House that the project objective is to transform the existing Tolland Estate by changing the high concentration of social housing into a newly mixed community of private, key worker and social housing. This magnificent redevelopment project will deliver modern, fit-for-purpose social housing in the right locations, produce much-needed vacant lots for sale to the market, provide new community amenities and

services for residents and others, and facilitate improved connectivity with surrounding suburbs. To assist with starting the reduction of existing concentrated social housing at Tolland, LAHC currently has five smaller-scale projects under construction across Wagga Wagga, yielding some 14 social housing dwellings. Those projects are expected to be completed late this year.

We are doing so much more for social housing in beautiful Wagga Wagga. LAHC has accelerated the program of a further four larger-scale projects in Wagga Wagga, set to deliver a total of 60 social housing dwellings. Those projects are currently in the planning and design phases, with forecast completion dates ranging from 2023 through to mid-2025. That exciting regional project at Tolland provides a great opportunity for a community housing provider such as Argyle Housing to partner with the Government to deliver housing and associated services in a regional New South Wales city. It is considered a pilot project, which gives us a platform to replicate it in other regional locations throughout New South Wales.

This Government is continuing to do great work on major renewal opportunities all over regional New South Wales. I will give some examples. Coffs Harbour City Council is working with the Government to address housing affordability in Coffs Harbour and the growing need for new social and private homes. LAHC is to increase housing in Cooma through an amazing project to deliver around 140 housing lots with a mix of social, key worker and private housing, providing a boost for the local economy, investment and jobs. There are projects right across the State, whether it is north in Tweed or south in Monaro.

There are 311 new social dwellings across 23 regional projects, delivered through asset recycling funds and stimulus construction funding. There are 88 new social dwellings across 35 regional locations, funded under the Medium Density Housing Pilot Program. We will identify further opportunities to work with Crown lands across this great State. Some 22 per cent of NSW Land and Housing Corporation properties are located in regional areas, providing social housing. The Government wants to grow this number. When it comes to the exciting Tolland Renewal Project, I happily inform the member for Wagga Wagga and his constituents that the concept plan and business case are nearing completion.

#### AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (15:06):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is investing in western New South Wales and building stronger and more resilient agricultural, fishing and forestry industries?

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (15:07):** I thank the member for Clarence for his question and for his ongoing support for the farming, fishing and forestry sectors across the State, particularly in his beautiful electorate. I was there with the member a week ago. We looked at a lot of things. It was great to catch up with farmers, forestry workers, millers and also those who are involved in making a difference to driving regional New South Wales. We popped into the Forestry Corporation production nursery at Grafton, which produces seedlings for hardwood and softwood plantations. I give a big shout-out to Kath French and her team, who showed us around that day. It is an amazing facility. It was updated significantly in 2019-20 after the bushfires and it now produces up to 4 million seedlings per year.

Those seedlings start their journey in the nursery and then they are hand-planted to start regrowing the timber plantations. A record 3.3 million seedlings were dispatched in 2021. That is an amazing record. Once in the ground, the seedlings are grown for around 35 years until they are harvested to supply the timber we use every day. It is one of the most renewable industries in New South Wales. We should be extremely proud, as I know the local member is. I am also pleased to report that the agriculture sector continues with an outstanding recovery from the substantial challenges over the past few years—drought, bushfires, COVID, a mouse plague, COVID again and, more recently, flooding. But in spite of all those challenges, in the last financial year the total economic output for primary industries reached a staggering record of \$20.9 billion. It is fantastic. We will continue to support our primary producers as they recover and rebuild from the events of the past few years.

Since receiving the honour to be appointed the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales I have travelled quite significantly, from the Clarence to Cooma. I have met with numerous stakeholders, including canegrowers, the forestry industry, rice growers and all the councils that I have put up with, through to land managers, who have raised issues about African lovegrass in the Monaro. African lovegrass is one of the issues that I will be working on with the new member for Monaro, Nichole Overall. She will be an outstanding member. We have had an incredible 10 years of representation in the Monaro and a decade of progress building schools and roads, helping farmers build resilience and more profitable farming systems, building stronger regional economies and rebuilding following the bushfires. We all know that if it had been a Labor

government the area would have gone backwards. It is good to know that we have the backing of the Monaro electorate with a fantastic new member.

Living and working in regional New South Wales obviously involves a degree of resilience. There is no better story of resilience than our native Murray cod. We all remember the devastating scenes during the drought in December 2018 and January 2019, when the Macquarie and Lower Darling rivers were reduced to puddles. It was a great honour to release the last 5,000 Murray cod fingerlings into the Macquarie River about a month ago. That will take the total number of fingerlings restocked into our waterways in 2021-22 to a record 1.25 million. It is a huge number and eclipses the previous record of 780,000. There is a great story behind that: The fingerlings are actually the progeny of the fish rescued from the Lower Darling and Macquarie rivers in 2018-19. That progeny represents a homecoming. It is a great way to recognise the importance of the fish. I thank everyone who took part in the rescue mission, including the local farmers and fishers, who will now see the benefit of that recovery.

It is not just the inland waterways that will benefit. Initiatives that will bolster the \$3.4 billion fishing industry include artificial reefs. I was in Forster last week to announce that it will be the home of the State's newest offshore artificial reef that will receive \$1.1 million and provide high-quality fishing experiences for current and future generations. There have been nine reefs deployed, spanning from Tweed Heads all the way down to Merimbula. I will announce another new location for an offshore artificial reef soon. The benefits from the Government's achievements are felt far and wide. The Government is delivering infrastructure across all of New South Wales, but in particular western New South Wales. I will have more to say about that in the coming weeks. There is over \$190 million committed through the Regional Growth Fund and job creation and recovery funding.

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **JELAN YOHANA**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (15:13):** I congratulate Jan Yohana, who was awarded a medallion in the 2022 Volunteer of the Year awards sector at the Australia Day Community Awards and Citizenship Ceremony in Fairfield. Jan volunteers with the Salvation Army, Fairfield West, and was active throughout the pandemic assisting isolating families with supplies and support. Jan supported those families by offering translation services and emotional support, as well as by assisting with the procurement and the delivery of both perishable and non-perishable food, clothing and cleaning products. I congratulate Jan once again on receiving the medallion and wish Jan all the very best in all future endeavours.

#### **JACKSON O'MARA**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (15:14):** Eleven-year-old Jackson O'Mara is Glenmore Park's latest young entrepreneur to start his own business with his dad, Luke, in an effort to pursue his passion for the outdoors and to earn some extra pocket money. Jackson's business is called LOJO, which is a combination of his and his dad's initials. Jackson's business specialises in residential lawn mowing, garden care, edging, hedge trimming, weeding and gardening. The business currently services the communities of the Nepean and Blue Mountains area. Jackson was looking for a way to make extra pocket money because his hobbies, like woodchopping, which I have spoken about in this place, are expensive. He loves the outdoors and he is always helping his dad maintain the lawn. The recent school holidays were a perfect time for Jackson to work on his business and provide a valuable service to his local community. He loves helping people get their lawns and gardens looking nice and, of course, earning some extra pocket money. Well done to Jackson on his entrepreneurship. I wish him and his dad all the best in their new endeavour.

#### **HELEN MCDERMOTT**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (15:15):** It is with absolute pleasure that I congratulate and acknowledge a special local in my electorate, Helen McDermott, on being recognised as Kiama Municipal Council 2022 Senior Citizen of the Year. No-one is more deserving of that award and title. I applaud her outstanding contribution to the Kiama municipality through her many years of community work, in particular her involvement with the Gerringong and District Historical Society. Helen also played an instrumental role in the official opening of the new multimillion-dollar Gerringong Library and Museum in November 2021, which is a fantastic community hub. She was integral to securing all the grants, and I was delighted to work with her to secure State funding to see that project become a reality. The community hub will preserve and protect the history of our community for a long time to come and provide a library for our community, which will be well used. I congratulate Helen McDermott of Gerringong on being an outstanding local citizen.

### INDOOR CRICKET GUINNESS WORLD RECORD

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:16):** I highlight the mammoth effort of a bunch of mates from the Central Coast and Newcastle who broke a world record in December. The boys set out to smash the Guinness World Record for longest indoor cricket match, which they achieved after playing for 33 hours straight. That equated to about 28 innings. The captain of the Central Coast team, Nathan Watford, confirmed that they took on the challenge to raise funds for men's mental health and suicide prevention organisations such as Lifeline and the Black Dog Institute. The teams were successful in raising over \$10,000 for the cause. I am delighted that the Central Coast side took out the win for the game. It was an awesome effort for such a great cause and I congratulate both the Newcastle and Central Coast teams.

### CAMPION COLLEGE GRADUATION MASS

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:16):** On Wednesday 15 December 2021 I was delighted to attend the graduation mass and ceremony for Champion College. This year the college celebrated its fourteenth graduation ceremony, which was held at St Patrick's Cathedral in Parramatta. Champion College is a fantastic Roman Catholic tertiary education college that is located in Toongabbie in western Sydney. It is also Australia's first liberal arts tertiary college and is highly regarded for producing impressive results for liberal arts, humanities and sciences. We were joined by the Most Reverend Anthony Randazzo, the bishop of Broken Bay. The occasional address was given by Mr Greg Sheridan, who is the editor of *The Australian*. Well done to Campbell Evans, president of the Champion College Student Association, who gave the valedictory speech, and congratulations to Sophia Shogren, secretary of the Champion College Student Association, who was awarded this year's college medal for the highest academic achievement. I thank Champion College for organising and inviting me to this wonderful ceremony. The students have worked hard in the past year and have endured unexpected learning challenges due to the pandemic. It was great to see them acknowledged and appreciated for their hard work and important achievements.

### DALE AND DANIELLE GOODWIN

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (15:17):** I recognise Dale and Danielle Goodwin of the Northern Tablelands for their entrepreneurial approach to farming. The Goodwins run Border Leicester ewes on their property, which provide for their butcher shop in Uralla and their catering business. Business is looking good, but it has not been easy. Coming out of the disastrous drought, which nearly broke them in 2019, the Goodwins were forced to destock, and only recently their numbers have risen again. Satisfying their quality demands for the butcher shop and catering business is paramount and has seen the Goodwins improve lamb quality with marbling and eye muscle area, and even breeding length, to give better cuts for retail sales. To complement their meat supply and lamb production and value-add to their business, beef is sourced from the saleyards and pork from a known pig supplier. I congratulate Dale and Danielle on their successful farming and commercial initiatives. I commend both of them for their commitment to providing quality products and their consistent pursuit of excellence.

### CON RYAN AND 5 LANDS WALK

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:18):** I congratulate Con Ryan, who has been recognised as the Community Service and Activity award winner in the Central Coast Council's 2022 Australia Day awards. Con was the backbone behind the establishment of the 5 Lands Walk, which has become an event that is celebrated by locals and more than 20,000 participants every year. The 5 Lands Walk starts at Macmasters Beach and traverses five beaches: Macmasters, Copacabana, Avoca, North Avoca and Terrigal. It links our communities and tells the story of local Aboriginal connection to our beautiful sloping landscapes and stunning beaches. The 5 Lands Walk attracts tourists and visitors from across our State, and Con's work as the president of the steering committee has been crucial to include local schools, community groups, businesses, governments and our Indigenous community. I also appreciate Con's efforts to include people with disability. I congratulate Con and I hope we see this wonderful event grow even bigger in years to come.

### PROFESSOR GEOFFREY DELANEY, AM

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:19):** I congratulate Professor Geoffrey Delaney, AM, on receiving an acknowledgment at this year's Australia Day Honours. Professor Delaney was awarded his honour for his significant and continued service to oncology and cancer services, as well as his commitment to tertiary education. Professor Delaney is the Director of Cancer Services for the South Western Sydney Local Health District and is the director of Liverpool Cancer Centre. Quite frankly, he is a phenomenal doctor to have when you are sick with cancer. Everybody raves about him and wants to have him as their doctor. He and I have spent many hours talking about his passion for helping people and the plans for the Liverpool Hospital redevelopment.

He was absolutely integral to the agreement regarding the \$790 million redevelopment. I commend him for all he has done for cancer research and services, and congratulate him on receiving this recognition.

#### **ROSS "ROSSCO" BECKLEY, OAM**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (15:20):** Ross "Rossco" Beckley was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours List for his services to community health, largely in recognition of his establishing Behind the Seen in 2013. Ross and his partner, Veronique, who co-founded the organisation, are two of the best human beings I have had the pleasure of knowing. I have attended different events organised by them where I gained a better understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] and its effects on individuals and families, especially emergency services workers. Ross is on a mission to encourage emergency services workers to put up their hand if they need help. Ross co-founded the Behind the Seen project with his partner seven years ago. They bring issues of mental health and PTSD into the light, encouraging conversations and advocating for policy change. Ross's mantra is "Heroes are people too", which means they have the same emotions as everyone else. Ross uses his own experiences from his 21-year career as a first responder that led to post-traumatic stress disorder.

#### **RIVER DECK CAFE, ALBURY**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:21):** I congratulate the River Deck Cafe, located on the beautiful Murray River in Albury, on winning gold at the NSW Tourism Awards 2021. The cafe won in the competitive category of Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services for 2021, with esteemed runners-up in silver and bronze hailing from the South Coast and Southern Highlands. The event was live streamed to an audience of over 650 industry guests. The past two years have seen our region face significant challenges, with our hospitality and tourism sector dealing with the Black Summer of 2019-20 and border closures due to the pandemic. This is a well-deserved award for a business that has endured and risen above these challenges. I commend owner Alex Smith and all River Deck staff for their excellent work and this well-deserved award. I also thank the NSW Tourism Industry Council for the valuable work it does and for recognising Albury's River Deck Cafe.

#### **END YOUTH SUICIDE WEEK**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:22):** This week is End Youth Suicide Week. We know one in four young people experience mental health issues. Evidence shows that half of mental health disorders emerge by the age of 14, with 75 per cent emerging by the age of 24. Sadly, nine people die of suicide each day—and this number is growing. Youth Insearch is an organisation that has been operating for 37 years to try to address this issue. The national End Youth Suicide Week calls on us to defy the stigma of suicide by talking openly about suicide with friends, families and communities in order to normalise the conversation and support our young people. A special shout-out has to go to Headspace in Maitland, the Maitland Region Suicide Prevention Network, Lifeline and all our mental health service providers for the work they do to address this issue in our community. I thank the House.

#### **TEMORA LITTLE ATHLETICS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience) (15:23):** It is a pleasure to highlight four athletes hailing from Temora—Damien Wells, Lana Pike, Lara Curry and Sasha Curry—who attended the Athletics NSW Country Championships held in Maitland last month. Damien Wells participated in four separate events. He placed first in the under-20s hammer throw, setting a new meet record of 58.39 metres; second in the under-20s discus; second in the under-20s shot-put; and eleventh in the under-20s 100-metre sprint. Lana Pike competed in three running events. She placed first in the under-16s 400 metres, first in the under-16s 800 metres and fourth in the under-16s 1,500 metres. Lara Curry came second in the under-15s 1,500 metre event and Sasha Curry came first in the under-12s 1,500 metre event. Temora Little Athletics is justifiably proud of these athletes amongst all who participate in the athletics program locally. I congratulate them once again and wish them all the best for the year ahead.

#### **ANNABELLA SYDES**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (15:24):** One of the highlights of my job is attending end-of-year celebrations at schools. Unfortunately, over the past couple of years I have not been able to go to as many, which is why I was especially thrilled to get a chance in early December last year to go to Charlestown Public School's presentation day and personally present year 6 student Annabella Sydes with a Community Service Award. Annabella was nominated for this award because she is a role model for her peers for her behaviour, integrity and willingness to help others. She has shown great sportsmanship at school carnivals throughout the year, has excelled as a kindergarten buddy and is always volunteering to help others. The outpouring of support and love for Annabella on social media was so inspiring to see, and it was my absolute pleasure to present Annabella with

a certificate and book voucher. She is an absolute delight. I hope she enjoyed some well-deserved fun over the holidays, and I wish her all the very best as she settles into high school.

#### **JAMES BARKELL**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (15:25):** I offer my congratulations to Bowral local James Barkell, who was recently awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours List for service to his community through a range of organisations. Mr Barkell has worked as a solicitor specialising in family law. He has also served as president of the St Andrew's College Society and the Sydney Grammar School Foundation. He was involved in the Sydney University Regiment and the University of New South Wales Regiment. I thank Mr Barkell for his years of service to the community.

#### **VALMAI MARTIN**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:26):** I recognise a local woman who on Sunday 20 February will finish her career that has spanned more than 40 years, working as a nurse and educator in Shellharbour and Wollongong hospitals. Valmai Martin is currently the nursing administration senior nurse manager at Shellharbour Hospital and has dedicated her career to working as a nurse and educating others. She holds qualifications in nursing, hospital administration, midwifery and emergency trauma, and she has lectured internationally on those topics. Valmai has previously been awarded a life membership of the Australian College of Emergency Nursing, clearly highlighting her significant contributions to her profession. I have been contacted by some of her colleagues at Shellharbour Hospital, who highlighted how much her particular skill set, support of other staff and ongoing mentoring will be missed, along with her always welcoming smile. It is very clear how much Valmai has helped to shape the environments that she has been a part of. I thank Valmai for her many years of service to our community and to other members of her profession. I have no doubt that she will be sorely missed.

#### **MILPERRA PUBLIC SCHOOL ANZACS MURAL**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (15:27):** I acknowledge the students and staff at Milperra Public School for their vision to create a mural in the school's Centenary Garden that remembers the Anzacs. The mural will allow future generations and new students to learn of that history at their school. It was a great pleasure to welcome Minister for Veterans David Elliott to Milperra Public School, where he announced \$1,000 in funding through the Anzac Community Grants Program. I also thank Vietnam veteran John Shields and Revesby Heights Ex-Servicemen's Memorial Club branch member Ray Devnie for attending and talking to the students about their experiences serving our nation. We are thankful for the sacrifices made by current serving members as well as all our service men and women from over a century of service. This art will be a reflection of their dedication and the commitment our community has to supporting our veterans. I again thank the school community of Milperra for their vision.

#### **SOPHIE SMITH, OAM**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (15:28):** I acknowledge the incredible work of Sophie Smith, OAM, a wonderful Eastern Suburbs local who has received a Medal of the Order of Australia. Sophie is a Coogee resident who is being recognised for her distinguished service to the community through her charitable work. Sophie is the founder of Running for Premature Babies. This wonderful organisation was set up in 2007 after Sophie and her late husband, Ash, lost their firstborn triplet sons, Henry, Jasper and Evan, following their premature birth. Thousands of people have run for the cause since then, raising more than \$4 million for lifesaving neonatal equipment and research and giving thousands of premature babies a better chance of survival. Sophie's contributions to research, equipment and resources are invaluable and have touched the lives of thousands of families. She continues to inspire others to tie up their runners and hit the pavement for premature babies. I congratulate Sophie and thank her for everything she does.

#### **NOWRA-CULBURRA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (15:29):** I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the bravery and teamwork demonstrated recently by members of the Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club when called to rescue a father and daughter from a rip at Culburra Beach. On 17 January Tom Letters, who was at the beach, heard someone in distress and discovered a woman screaming for help. Her daughter and husband had been swept to sea. Mr Letters called the Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club to inform them of the situation.

Mitchell Pakes and other members of the club and Jackson Balmer rushed into action. Mr Balmer quickly grabbed the rescue board and headed out to the male swimmer, in dangerous surf conditions 80 metres out, successfully paddling him back to shore. Mr Pakes on the jetski spotted the female in the dangerous surf 300 metres from shore, struggling to hold herself up and disappearing into the water. Mitchell made it to the girl

and brought her to safety. A huge thankyou to those involved and to the members of the Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club for their aid and services to keep all beachgoers safe every day of the summer.

#### **STEEV HASSALL**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:30):** I acknowledge Steev Hassall for his tireless effort and dedication as acting service manager for Berkeley Vale Neighbourhood Centre in 2021. The neighbourhood centre is a community centre funded by the New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services under the Community Building Partnership program. The centre's aim is to provide support, assistance and guidance to vulnerable members of the public, in turn strengthening the community by reducing inequality and disadvantage.

Over the last year Steev was confronted by several obstacles to service delivery amid the public health crisis. The centre was faced with major volunteer and staff shortages, coupled with a dramatic increase in people needing basic services. People needing food-related support services, for example, increased by 300 per cent as a result of the lockdowns. Despite the setbacks, Steev, along with other devoted staff members, worked tirelessly during this period, often working very long hours to ensure the centre remained open. Steev has been highly commended in the local community awards and in the council's 2022 Australia Day Awards ceremony. On behalf of The Entrance community, I thank Steev for his service.

#### **SISTER BARBARA MCDONOUGH, OAM**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:31):** I take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate local faith and education advocate, Sister Barbara McDonough, on being awarded the Order of Australia medal in the general division of this year's Australia Day awards. Sister Barbara has been deeply engaged in the education and development of students across the electorate of Seven Hills for nearly 40 years. Sister Barbara served as principal of local school Catherine McAuley Westmead from 1984 to 1987, where she was known for her passionate commitment to quality faith-centred learning.

For her devotion to the Catholic education community and to acknowledge the impact she left on the school, Catherine McAuley Westmead opened a learning hub in her name. In addition to her educational leadership roles, Sister Barbara has dedicated her time towards preservation of archives at Our Lady of Mercy College at Parramatta. Sister Barbara currently spends her time selflessly dedicated to the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta congregation, an organisation that provides both domestic and international charity aid to those in need. I thank Sister Barbara for her work in the education and faith communities across Australia.

#### **ROTARY CLUB OF MAITLAND SUNRISE SHELTERBAGS PROJECT**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:32):** Sadly the experience of homelessness is becoming more common throughout the greater Hunter region. Recognition of this situation has motivated the Maitland Rotary Sunrise group to purchase 20 Shelterbags from South Africa, which they plan to donate to the Maitland Neighbourhood Centre and Carrie's Place to distribute to local people experiencing homelessness. The creator of the bags, Bas Timmer, was moved to action after a friend's father died from hypothermia while sleeping outside. He was sleeping next to a homeless shelter in Africa but it was not open that evening. After much consideration and effort, Mr Timmer launched the Shelterbag in South Africa in 2020.

The Shelterbag is a portable sheltered bed that rolls up into a bag—much like one of our swags. It is waterproof, lightweight and easy to handle, and it has an extra compartment for personal items. It comes with a sleeping bag and a built-in pillow and is adaptable for all seasons. Should this initial step prove successful, the club has said it is intent on undertaking further fundraising to purchase additional bags. I commend Maitland Rotary Sunrise for this action and encourage them in their future endeavours to support community members experiencing homelessness.

#### **MRS HELEN GIBSON**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (15:33):** This evening I recognise a living legend in health care, Mrs Helen Gibson, who has worked tirelessly for our health district in radiology for more than half a century. Helen Gibson has made an extraordinary contribution to Port Macquarie Base Hospital over 50 years. She is only one of a handful in this sector that can claim such a milestone. Now retired at the young age of 76, Helen has left an indelible mark through her work in radiology administration, which began when she accepted a full-time position in 1963. Over the period she has seen it all, from black snakes found underneath the X-ray machine and in the air vents to life-threatening situations. One situation she recalls involved a man with a piece of timber lodged through his body. Helen grew up on a property near Rawdon Island at Hurley. She moved away to boarding school in her earlier years before continuing her education in administration through Kempsey TAFE Campus. Helen worked in a solicitor's office after graduating until a full-time job was offered to her in radiology. I thank Helen for her many years of service to our local health district.

### **KOLLIAS FAMILY FISH AND CHIP SHOP**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:34):** I acknowledge the dedication that the Kollias family has provided to the community over 36 years of service at the Olympic Take-Away fish and chip shop. Theo and Helen purchased their store in 1986. But on 7 February this year the family decided it was time to close up shop. The couple's son John Kollias and his brother and sister grew up working at their parents' fish and chip shop located in Darley Street in Shellharbour and operating seven days a week. The regular customers thought of the business as a second home, getting to know Theo, John and their family on a first-name basis. In the 1980s when they opened the Shellharbour store, it was much smaller than it is now. Suburban development like Shell Cove had not yet even begun. Mr Kollias got to know many in the area as the region boomed, and he was known to do things the old-fashioned way. He always cooked everything fresh and kept the ice cream bar and milkshake makers running. I wish Theo, John and their family the best of luck for whatever their future plans may be.

### **TRIBUTE TO MATT PYNE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:35):** I commemorate Matt Pyne, a member of the North Shore community, who sadly passed away earlier this year following an ongoing battle with cancer. Matt was a longstanding member of the Middle Harbour Yacht Club. He has been described by his peers there as a valued and much-loved member of the club's family and part of the fabric of the club, as well as a wonderful and generous person who will be truly missed by all. I extend my condolences to Matt's family during this difficult period. I understand the deep emotional weight that this terminal illness can place on individuals and their loved ones and I can only imagine the added strain of having to manage it during the pandemic. I hope that his end-of-life care and passing were peaceful and that all of his loved ones had the opportunity to farewell him. I also extend my condolences to all of Matt's friends in the Middle Harbour Yacht Club and those who knew him in the wider community, and my deepest sympathies to Matt's family. I look forward to supporting Middle Harbour Yacht Club members as they work to find an opportunity to celebrate Matt's life.

### **TRIBUTE TO JIM GARDINER**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:36):** Jim Gardiner was someone with a huge heart who gave the Labor Party everything he had in a short time. I knocked on his door in early February 2015, just before the State election. He had voted for the Liberals in 2011 over the truncation of the Newcastle rail line, but after the Liberal Party decided it would cut it anyway, and as a 68-year-old retired train driver, he wanted a Labor sign in his front yard. Soon enough, Jim was doorknocking Morpeth with me. They were hot, tiring days but we went together and he would not stop. "We have got to tell everyone to vote Labor, Jenny," he would say. He did pre-poll and on polling day he handed out all day. He ended up joining the Labor Party. He was so proud when his wife Luz gained Australian citizenship and could vote Labor for the first time. Every so often Jim would come to a meeting, but in June 2018 he was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis, which meant he was on oxygen. Sadly, Jim passed away in late 2021. Jim will long be remembered by everyone in Maitland for his passion and commitment to social justice and Labor values. Vale, Jim.

### **BRUCE BLAND, AM**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (15:37):** Today I acknowledge local resident Bruce Bland, AM, who last December stepped down as vice-president of the Rose Bay Residents Association. Bruce advocated strongly for our local community and represented it on committees such as the Rose Bay Beach Working Group, Woollahra Municipal Council Community Safety Committee and Sydney Water Community Reference Group. I named him as one of my New South Wales Premier's Community Service Awards recipients. You can also catch Bruce having an early-morning swim at Shark Beach, where he leads the Nielsen Park regulars. Locals who swim and socialise regularly together have built a strong community and fellowship. They are a great example of a truly organic community group who love and care for our local area. I sincerely thank Bruce and I also thank his wife, the wonderful Graziella, for their community spirit and strong and long contribution to our local community.

### **MADI MORIARTY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (15:38):** Local St Clair resident Madi Moriarty has been busy at work breaking barriers for young women and carrying out her apprenticeship as a carpenter. Madi is currently in her fourth year of her apprenticeship and loving her trade. But it has not always been smooth sailing for Madi. Her first stint as an apprentice was with a cabinet-making company with a boss who gave no training and no help when she approached him to raise concerns that men working with her had been acting inappropriately towards her. Since then she has moved to a new company in Penrith with a great environment—a place where she can really engage with her passion. Madi now promotes women in trades via her Instagram page, where she regularly receives positive responses from other women who are also being inspired to get into trades. I wish Madi all the best in her career as a carpenter.

**DI LYMBURY**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (15:39):** I congratulate Di Lymbury on being named Lismore Citizen of the Year. Di received this award for her tireless work helping those in our community living with Parkinson's to cope with their daily lives. Di is so committed. She is passionate and has improved the lives of people in our community, particularly those with Parkinson's. She has Parkinson's and still works tirelessly to make sure that they have a voice. She is a great advocate. I have also been supporting her advocacy for a Parkinson's nurse in the Lismore area. I truly congratulate Di and wish her well.

**TIM AND SUZANNE WRIGHT**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (15:40):** I recognise Tim and Suzanne Wright as participants in an innovative project conducted by PwC Australia, the Macdoch Foundation and the National Farmers' Federation to quantify the costs and benefits of investing in natural capital to support farm management decisions. Tim and Suzanne concluded that holistic farming proved advantageous during the severe drought in the 1980s when circumstances revealed that their costs of production were higher than their returns. Their solution was to reduce costs. They expanded their holistic farming principles to ensure the entire property was protected with the maxim of "minimal chemical and mechanical and maximum ethical and ecological". Is there a link with long-term farm profitability? Yes, there is. Farming for the Future, the multi-year research program, aims to test and quantify that producers have experienced increased profits by investing in their natural capital. I congratulate Tim and Suzanne on leading the way in successful holistic farming practices. I commend them for their contributions to the Farming for the Future.

**PORT STEPHENS WOMEN IN BUSINESS**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (15:41):** Recently I had the pleasure of attending the annual general meeting [AGM] of Port Stephens Women in Business. This is an energetic, enjoyable and inspiring group that helps connect women in Port Stephens who are in business. I encourage any women business owners in Port Stephens to join in the fun. The AGM was inspired by Councillor Leah Anderson, who was a founder of the group. She told the story of her career to the point of now becoming a leader across the community, and everyone there was inspired by her words. I congratulate the President of Port Stephens Women in Business, Fiona Brown, who was returned as president on the night; Christine Blosdale, who was returned as vice president; and Dinah Watson, who was returned as secretary. There were four new committee members: Elechia Jones, Linda Beks, Katherine Parker and Jacalyn Price. I wish them all well for the year to come and encourage everyone to join in the fun.

**JOSHUA WILLS**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (15:42):** I congratulate Joshua Wills on his outstanding HSC results. Joshua was the dux of Georges River Grammar in 2021 and achieved an ATAR of 98.30. Joshua achieved band 6 results in English Advanced, English Extension 1, Mathematics Extension 1, Mathematics Extension 2 and Modern History. I also congratulate the following students for their band 6 results: Ellie Allogia, Zena Bourgol, Thomas Borg, Dylan De Domizio, Courtney Emmas, Ryan Freeman, Madelen Giannisis, Rachael Gillett, Raymond Hatem, Joshua Hutchinson, Tarryn Shaw and Ava Wills. These results are a great credit to the teachers, the senior leadership team, the school board of Georges River Grammar, and of course the students, who had an extraordinary last two years of high school and undertook their HSC under the current pandemic conditions.

**BOB AND ANNIE DENNERLEY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:43):** Until recently, Bob and Annie Dennerley's Dennerley Leather Designs, where they handcrafted unique leather goods filled with love, was located as a jewel on our levee in Maitland. The Dennerleys are passionate advocates for Maitland and The Levee precinct in particular. The Levee runs parallel to the Hunter River and provides a link between the city and the riverscape. The Dennerleys welcomed sightseers and shoppers into their handcrafted world and encouraged them to wander and support other local businesses while they were there. I acknowledge the immeasurable and generous contributions that Annie and Bob made to our community and our city, both as active participants in their own business and as passionate advocates for other businesses in the CBD, and for their generous sponsorship and support of many organisations supporting the most vulnerable people in our community. I wish them both all the best in their future endeavours and thank them for their contribution to Maitland as one of our leading businesses over the past 10 years.

*Private Members' Statements***TRIBUTE TO DARYL BURGE-LOPEZ**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (15:44):** It is with great sadness that I inform the House of the passing of Daryl Burge-Lopez. While he had battled some health issues, his passing at the age of 78 came as a sudden and unexpected shock for those who knew him. I know there will be many who have missed their chance to say their

goodbyes. As a fixture of the Kogarah community, Daryl had a lifelong passion for history, social justice and the Australian Labor Party. Daryl's true love was campaigning and elections, and he was in his finest form when he was out on the hustings. His booming voice, quick turn of phrase and quirky sense of humour were always a highlight at whichever booth he was placed on. Daryl first joined the Labor movement in Victoria and was part of the anti-Vietnam War protests. His time in the United Kingdom saw him involving himself with the British Labour Party, before returning to Sydney and dedicating himself to the Kogarah Labor community, beginning in 1999 with Cherie Burton's first campaign.

Daryl worked on every local, State and Federal campaign for the past 20 years. He was a fierce campaigner and a steady set of hands, and I was proud to have him as a member of our local team. He served Kogarah and its Labor community with great loyalty, passion, and conviction. Daryl's passing will be acutely felt by his best mate and fellow party member David Dawson. Known by many in the area as the "odd couple" for their diverging personalities and debating styles, together they were the elder statesmen of St George Labor. Together, their contribution to the local Labor movement cannot be understated. Many will know that Daryl was a dedicated bibliophile and he amassed an impressive book collection that was the envy of every political junkie. I extend my condolences to his cousin Barbara, his brother Peter and the rest of his family. He will deeply and truly be missed by me and my wife, Anna, along with everyone in the Kogarah Labor community.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:46):** On 8 December 2021 the Premier addressed the National Press Club. While his topic may have been "Future of federation in a post-COVID world", I noted the emphasis was placed very much on education reform—on "making the federation work for families". To quote the Premier:

The way responsibility for education is currently apportioned between the states and the commonwealth makes no sense.

The Commonwealth funds childcare. The States regulate it.

The States fund early childhood education in community and mobile preschools.

But if it's in long-daycare, it's mostly funded by Commonwealth.

...

More than ever, we understand the impact a strong start can have on the rest of a person's life.

A child who gets two years of early childhood education before they start school walks into the classroom on average 8 months ahead of kids who do not.

This advantage carries through to those children's academic prospects and earning capacity later in life. This brings me to the town of Tumbarumba, a growing regional centre with strong timber, wine and tourism industries. Agriculture is its biggest earner. There is just one long day care centre and a mobile service that services children outside of Tumbarumba. The current long day care centre has a long waiting list, including 75 children who are unable to access the preschool program as the centre is full. Having visited the Hyne timber mill, for example, there is a clear link between difficulties finding or retaining staff and the problems they face obtaining child care. Other businesses have echoed this story to me. To their credit, members of the Tumbarumba community have recently formed a working group to investigate options for early childhood learning. Council and the Tumbarumba Chamber of Commerce are supportive. The working group will be submitting an expression of interest for capital funding to build a new preschool on a greenfield site through the New South Wales Government's Start Stronger Capital Works grants program.

I have been out to Tumbarumba to listen to the community about how the situation is affecting them and how this flows on to force limitations on local industries, schools and businesses. A school principal wrote to me, noting the obligation she felt to have staff to provide a high-quality education for children in Tumbarumba and surrounding districts equal to that of any school in urban or city areas of New South Wales. However, it was this principal's experience that a number of staff had been willing but unable to take up teaching positions available at the school due to limited or no availability of childcare places in Tumbarumba and surrounding districts. This impacts on the economic development of the area, which had to battle devastating bushfires in 2020 and COVID-19 from within a geographically isolated community. Here is a selection of what local people had to say. One person said:

I am lucky to be in the position where I can work from home while having the kids at home with me but there have been plenty of times when care has been wanted for social aspects for our children or needed for time sensitive work or extra work that has been offered, and I have been without care.

Another person said:

Our town is missing out on great FEMALE professionals in all sectors because they can't go back to work due to no childcare placement and that is sad to see in this present moment.

Another said:

I now nurse in Batlow because child care is not available in Tumba!

Yet another person said:

I had to leave the mill last Christmas because I had no child care. My partner is working away at the moment and we don't have a family support network that can help out so it's just me thru the week.

And finally:

We are luckier than many in that we both work on farm / office but there is a serious flip side to that. Not being able to get enough childcare has affected our business so much that we are in a constant state of survival mode, and our business is barely hanging in there, with too often only urgent work getting done and us getting further behind every week. Perhaps more importantly, we get so little quality family time, working every weekend, always till dark, and often after dark and some stupidly early mornings doing urgent office work.

The Premier was spot-on when he said to the press club:

Work and family life are changing—and the pandemic has accelerated that change. Our education systems should make the juggle easier for mums and dads, while also getting the best outcomes for students. There should be more flexibility. More options. More choice.

Together, we must look for ways to support parents, schools and businesses, which all rely on access to quality early childcare centres close to life and work. I will continue these important discussions as we work towards a childcare and early childhood solution for Tumberumba. More options. More choice.

### ANTI-CHRISTIAN PREJUDICE

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:51):** The Prospect electorate is home to the largest and most vibrant Christian communities in New South Wales, with faith playing an important and meaningful role in many lives within the electorate and throughout western Sydney. Our community includes Palestinian, Coptic, Armenian, Chaldean, Assyrian, South Sudanese, Maronite, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant faith traditions. I speak on an issue of importance in my community. On 13 December 2021 the patriarchs and heads of the Catholic Orthodox and Protestant churches in Jerusalem signed a joint statement on the current threat to the Christian presence in the Holy Land. They warned that, since 2012, Christians have increasingly become the target of frequent and systematic attacks perpetrated by fringe and radical groups in an attempt to drive the Christian community out of Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land.

The areas of concern encompass the modern state of Israel, Palestine, Jordan and parts of other neighbouring countries. It is said that the nature of these attacks includes the ongoing intimidation of local Christians, the vandalising and desecration of worship sites, and physical and verbal abuses against priests and other Christian leaders. The leaders also stress that these radical groups have been strategically acquiring property in the Christian quarter of Jerusalem, often using dishonest methods and intimidation tactics to evict and drive out residents from their homes, with the purpose of diminishing the Christian presence in the area and, therefore, disrupting historic pilgrim routes between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

The joint statement brings to light alarming issues that require holistic solutions; however, it is important to acknowledge that the Israeli Government has begun the process of dealing with these issues. It has declared a commitment to provide a safe and secure home for Christians in the Holy Land. This commitment is true and evident from the Israeli Government's facilitation of Christian pilgrim visits to the holy sites of the Holy Land. Nevertheless, the criticism from the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and Christian leaders abroad is that more needs to be done by local politicians, officials and law enforcement agencies in Israel to hinder the dangerous actions of those radical groups. This is in no way an easy or simple issue to solve, and I do not wish to allocate blame to the Israeli Government, the Palestinian Authority or local political leaders for the actions of reckless and dangerous radical groups.

However, the fact of the matter is that families are living under the threat of violence and intimidation. People are being driven from their homes and threats are being imposed on Christian culture and heritage. It is also a fact that the Christian community residing in the Holy Land is vital to the financial tapestry and culture of the area. It is in the best interest of the Israeli Government to ensure that the community is safe and secure. The local Christian community provides significant educational, health and humanitarian services throughout Israel, Palestine and Jordan, not to mention that Christian pilgrimage brings considerable financial benefits to the economies of Israel and Palestine.

The joint statement signed by the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem requests an urgent dialogue between church leaders and local political authorities of Israel, Palestine and Jordan. They hope that the dialogue will deal with the challenges created by the radical and fringe groups in Jerusalem concerning Christians and the rule of law. Church leaders also hope to discuss the creation of a Christian cultural and heritage zone to

protect the Christian quarter in the old city of Jerusalem. I urge, without criticism, the Israeli Government, inclusive of local politicians, officials and law enforcement agencies, to work with Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant leaders in Jerusalem to provide a safe and secure home for Christians in the Holy Land. It must be done for the sake of preserving human rights and the rule of law.

As the member for Prospect, I have the privilege of representing tens of thousands of Christian families and community members, many of whom have come from nations all over the world and chosen to make western Sydney their home. A large number of those community members have come from nations where wars have been fought along religious lines. They have been vilified and genocide has been committed against them for their religious beliefs, and they have sought asylum in Australia. My community knows all too well the issues created through the trauma of religious persecution and discrimination. Individual nations and the international community must constantly strive to protect all persons of faith.

### TRIBUTE TO LIONEL SMITH

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (15:56):** It is with great sadness that I advise the House of the passing of Lionel Smith, an inventor of firefighting techniques, a dedicated RFS volunteer, a loving husband and father, and a local legend. Lionel's distinguished career in the RFS contains an almost unbelievable number of achievements and is known as much for the individual exploits it contained as for the longevity it had. Last year Lionel celebrated 75 years of continuous involvement with the RFS, and even in the months before he died he was deeply involved in planning and technical arrangements, as well as attending as many bushfire call-outs as he could. It was my great honour to have been invited to attend and speak at a special memorial service held in his honour by the RFS on Saturday 11 December.

My involvement with the Smith family goes back to when I became great mates with a fellow by the name of Ian Smith, who was Lionel's nephew. We became friends at high school, and I spent a lot of time with Ian and his wonderful family when growing up. I also got to know Lionel's brother Ron, who was an independent heavy vehicle assessor I employed from time to time when repairing buses for Glenorie Bus Company. In later years, I also met Lionel's son Malcolm, who is a water services consultant and who has provided me with invaluable information regarding water services in our rapidly growing area. Little did I know that all those people were from the one family. The one consistent feature was their selfless service to the community.

Lionel Smith was born in 1929 in Oakville to a farming family and attended local primary and high schools. In 1945, at the age of only 16, Lionel was involved in putting out a fire ignited by a spark from a steam train close to Mulgrave station. Lionel and the other locals were forced to use wet bags and knapsack sprays as the only available firefighting equipment. The lack of resources and homemade remedies greatly concerned the locals, which led to Lionel's father founding the Oakville Rural Fire Brigade in 1946, with Lionel being a founding member at the age of 17.

By 1962, Lionel was the senior deputy in the brigade and in his career would go on to hold a wide range of positions, most notably as fire control officer of The Hills Shire, then known as the Baulkham Hills shire. Lionel would also serve on a wide range of committees and boards at different times in his career, including the Technical Committee of the Bushfire Council of NSW, the Radio Sub-Committee of the Bushfire Council of NSW and the Fire Control Officers Association of New South Wales, which would later become the NSW Rural Fire Service Association. The latter was the official representative body for RFS members, giving ordinary RFS volunteers a voice in the service's proceedings. Lionel would go on to serve as chair of that organisation.

Throughout his life, Lionel worked in the automobile industry. He had a naturally creative and technical mindset, which he brought to his job and his RFS work. Lionel was heavily involved in the repairs and designs of brigade trucks and pumps. There would hardly be a piece of equipment in the Hills that had not been fixed, designed or tinkered with by Lionel, as it was one of his true passions. This passion was what saw him become an important and active member of the Bushfire Council of NSW. Lionel's dedication to the RFS was shared by his family, most of whom I have already mentioned, by his wife, Gwen, who was also heavily involved, and his children and brothers. Gwen served with distinction as the chief radio operator for the RFS brigades in the Hills. Both Lionel and Gwen were of paramount importance in ensuring two-way radios were in place at all Hills brigades so that urgent and up-to-date data could be relayed from the field to headquarters.

Perhaps most impressively, Lionel invented and manufactured the Quenchmaster firefighting foam system, which is still in use today. It is easily adaptable to tankers of all types and is now operational across Australia and New Zealand. Even after his death, Lionel's impact on the firefighting world is still being felt and his legacy is still putting out fires and saving lives. Unfortunately, on 27 September 2021 Lionel passed away. However, his impact on the community and firefighting more generally will never be forgotten. Lionel was fortunate enough to be recognised with an Australian Fire Service Medal and a National Medal, becoming the first NSW RFS member

to ever have a sixth bar added. Whilst Lionel did not serve with the intention of being praised or remembered, I know that the recognition of his great achievements will be of considerable consolation to his surviving family.

It is also important to note that Lionel Smith passed away within days of another long-serving member of the RFS, Peter Speet, whom I also knew very well. He was a lifetime member of the Oakville Fire Brigade. Just last Thursday I attended the funeral of my great friend Dick Petrikas, who was a founding member of the Tennyson Fire Brigade. These three long-serving RFS members saved the lives and properties of countless members of the Hills and Hawksbury communities, and I acknowledge their wonderful courage and dedication on behalf of us all.

### *Petitions*

#### **PORT MACQUARIE KOALA HABITAT**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The House will now consider an electronic petition signed by 20,000 or more persons regarding koala habitat in Port Macquarie, lodged by the member for Ballina. I advise members that a member of staff from the Department of Legislative Assembly will be taking photos during the petition debate for the Legislative Assembly's social media.

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

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:01):** I am very proud to introduce the Port Macquarie koala habitat petition. This is a story of the heroism of the Port Macquarie community and the willingness of their local member, the member for Port Macquarie—who is here today—to listen to them and take action. But it is also a warning. Why do we wait for communities to do our legwork? It is a moment of celebration for what has been achieved and of what the outgoing environment Minister was able to do. It is a good step, but there is still so much to do to stave off the extinction of koalas. We cannot let the community be the ones who constantly have to bring these matters to the floor of the House.

I recognise the strong advocacy and tireless community campaigning work of environmentalists Bronwen Hughes, Lauren Edwards and Susan Proust, who initiated this petition and brought the plight of the Port Macquarie koalas to our attention. I also acknowledge the incredible work and efforts of Hastings Birdwatchers in conducting their extensive research and reaching out to members of Parliament to advocate for change. I note that the petition has been responded to and that the koala habitat has been purchased. That is a welcome decision.

I again recognise the work of the member for Port Macquarie, the Hon. Leslie Williams, and her strong advocacy on this issue. It was indeed a career-changing stance that she took. I congratulate the former environment Minister for putting his money where his mouth is when it came to purchasing 147 The Ruins Way. But the model of waiting until this stage of impacts to take action cannot be the way forward. With koalas just reclassified as "endangered" in New South Wales, we need to see a dramatic U-turn across the board and a bipartisan approach across the Chamber if we are to halt the extinction of koalas in our lifetime.

Hastings Birdwatchers are a group of volunteers. They are an affiliate of Birdlife Australia, the largest bird conservation group in the country, which has over 110,000 members. Their bird surveys and mapping led to the beautiful moment when they noticed the impacts of loss of habitat and the real danger for the koala population in Innes Ruins and Lake Innes. They took action, noting that the whole site is a key biodiversity area. They started writing submissions to Port Macquarie Hastings Council and making a lot of noise about the issue. Lauren Edwards, a local environmentalist, took a firm stand on the issue, and then we saw the local member raise the call in this place.

It is a great story but, as I said, we cannot solve this issue with the \$193.3 million commitment towards doubling the number of koalas in New South Wales by 2050. Imagine if we had to wait. The process started in 2019; it is now 2022. At that rate and with that sort of change, we are in real trouble. It is a significant investment pledge, but those funds must be directed to the areas where koalas need the most protection, not simply to the electorates that are winnable for the Liberals and The Nationals. The parliamentary inquiry into koala populations and habitat, chaired by my colleague and koala spokesperson in the other place Cate Faehrmann, found that koalas are likely to become extinct by 2050, which was traumatic. The Black Summer bushfires exacerbated the problem. As members know, recently the Federal environment Minister reclassified koalas as endangered, which was necessary. The Greens have been calling for it since the Black Summer bushfires.

If this Government is genuinely concerned about the survival of koalas, it needs to stop excessive tree clearing and stop koala habitat being sold off to developers. While 147 The Ruins Way was saved, critical koala habitat—much of it in State-owned forest—is being cleared and logged. The Nationals hold the Liberals to ransom when it comes to conservation in this State, but the Government cannot obtain the advice of ecologists and environmentalists about the realities, pledge to fix it and then hope for the best. Only last year my office received

submissions opposing a new development in Bangalow in the Ballina electorate that would have drastically affected koala survival in the area. I thank all those in my electorate who have committed to saving koalas and their habitats: Linda Sparrow, Maria Matthes, Friends of the Koala and North East Forest Alliance in particular. I note the member for Lismore is in the Chamber. She works very closely with those organisations.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** I am friends with Sledge—my good mate Sledgy.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH:** And so does the member for Tweed. It is our communities doing the heavy lifting when it comes to conservation in this State.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:07):** I thank the member for Ballina for tabling this petition and extend an enormous thankyou to all members in this House who support the petition. I thank the 24,970 petitioners. The majority of them were from the Port Macquarie electorate, but thousands were signatories from across the State who also deeply care about our koalas. On 8 November 2021 I was pleased to inform the community that the New South Wales Government had purchased the 194 hectares of prime koala habitat at 147 The Ruins Way, located adjacent to the Lake Innes Nature Reserve in Port Macquarie. That purchase by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is a victory for the many advocates in the local community who have fought so hard for this result.

Of course, this triumph was the result of a joint initiative made possible through the generous contribution of \$3.5 million from the Koala Conservation Australia and funds from the New South Wales Government's landmark \$193 million investment in koala conservation. I acknowledge the work of the president of Koala Conversation Australia, Sue Ashton; board members; and the incredible volunteers at the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital. It was such welcome news in the Port Macquarie region that the Government had recognised the significance of this prime piece of koala habitat. As acknowledged by the member for Ballina, great credit goes to those involved in the passionate local community campaign. Our community members have the surety of knowing their children and generations to come will see koalas in the wild, which is a cause for celebration. As well as the koala, three additional threatened species—the eastern coastal free-tailed bat, the glossy black cockatoo and the grey-headed flying fox—have been recorded on the property. It is expected that more will be found through survey effort, noting another 44 threatened species that may use habitat on the land have been recorded within a two-kilometre radius of the property.

The Port Macquarie-Hastings region has extensive iconic habitat that is ideally suited for koalas, so it is no wonder the local community has such a strong affinity with this much-loved species. The koala, or guula, is a totem animal to the Birpai people, and maintaining its population is of great cultural and spiritual importance to contemporary Birpai families. Special mention must go to the members of the Guulagu Koala Custodians group—Les Mitchell, Bronwen Hughes, Sunni Bolton, Kailas Wild, Lauren Edwards and Arly McInherney—for their outstanding work on getting so many signatures on this petition.

I join the member for Ballina in applauding the Hastings Birdwatchers group for their tireless work over an extended period. I also recognise and thank the Hon. Catherine Cusack in the other place for her ongoing support and for her strong advocacy to help protect this extremely important habitat. I am indebted to the work of the former environment Minister, the Hon. Matt Kean. I thank him for listening to the pleas of my community. The photos taken on the day of the announcement at 147 Ruins Way underplayed the excitement among the volunteers of the koala hospital and of the Guulagu Koala Custodians. On behalf of our community I also acknowledge the strong advocacy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service team under the leadership of Atticus Fleming and, locally, Shane Robinson, as well as Christian Dunk from the Minister's office.

The koala population in the Port Macquarie-Hastings region is beloved and a key part of our community's identity. Its conservation helps to support our tourism economy, attracting tourists who want to enjoy the magic of seeing a koala in the wild. The conversations across the community and word of the petition came to the attention of some of the youngest people in my electorate. I visited Kendall Community Preschool prior to Christmas after the preschoolers wrote to me to share their thoughts on the importance of protecting koala habitat. They wrote:

The forest in Port Macquarie is important for baby koalas. If you cut down the forest the koalas will have no food or shelter from predators and the koalas will die. We don't want the koalas to die. This forest needs to be protected from the giants. You are hurting the Earth and we want to help make the Earth better. Please find somewhere else to build your house and save our koalas.

I thank them so much for sending me that letter and allowing me to visit their preschool, where I was able to present them with some books about the importance of our environment. While I was there they showed me their very own little koala hospital and a protection area that they had built. In the time that I have been the member for Port Macquarie I am proud that this Government has done an incredible amount locally for our koalas. They have certainly received much attention. The Australian and New South Wales governments have provided \$3 million from the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund to establish the Cowarra nature-based tourism

precinct, which will be home to the first ever conservation breeding facility for koalas. The precinct has since been renamed Guulabaa, which is the Gathang translation for "place of koala". I thank the member for Ballina and the many other members in the House who I know are keen to speak and support the petition. I again thank the almost 25,000 signatories to the petition. It was such an incredible effort, and what a great result!

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (16:12):** I acknowledge this petition, the tens of thousands of people who signed the petition and every single person who acted to ensure that the target of the petition was met. However, this is a small, bright star in a very dark night. People are saying that koalas are becoming extinct; in fact, we are killing them with the decisions we are making. It is up to us as a parliament to ensure that we do everything we can to protect them. The recently released State of the Environment report by this State Government shows how enormous the challenge is.

The report shows that land clearing in our State has tripled in the past decade from already alarming levels. It also shows that the number of threatened species is going up and bird populations and freshwater fish are in decline. All of this is happening in front of our eyes, and we can and must take action on a broad scale. However, it is not just land clearing; bushfires, drought, urbanisation and disease have destroyed koalas in New South Wales. We have done that and we are responsible, but we have the tools to take action. Australia has just listed the koala as an endangered species across most of the east coast after their dramatic decline in numbers. There has been plenty of commentary on the listing, as there should be. Lisa Cox wrote recently in *The Guardian*:

Writing about the environment, I've got used to hearing the refrain that extinction is a choice. Or rather it's a thousand choices – small and large – that lead to cumulative impacts of the kind we have seen this week.

Last year, a parliamentary inquiry determined that koalas would be extinct by 2050 unless there was urgent action. There may now be as few as 50,000 koalas left in the wild because we have neglected our responsibility to respond. The good news is that we know how to fix the problem. We might not be able to cure diseases in this population but we can stop the precipitous decline in their habitat. Importantly, koalas are an umbrella species; if we protect the habitat of koalas, then we protect the habitat of so many other species in New South Wales. This purchase was an incredibly important step, and I hope it emboldens the community. I hope it nourishes and encourages those who stand up for and take on issues that they think are impossible to achieve.

I thank the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Ballina, who is a Greens colleague of mine. I acknowledge Tamara Smith, who brought forward the petition. Importantly, I thank all the scientists who ring the bell as loudly as they can to make us listen and change our laws on planning and land clearing. They have begged us to take these steps. As I mentioned, the State Government's *NSW State of the Environment 2021* report reports three times more land clearing in the past decade. It is becoming a crisis. It has to stop and it should stop here today. This petition will be a great example.

I acknowledge the charities and the not-for-profits that helped contribute to the purchase by committing over \$3 million. I thank all those who signed the petition and all the activists in the community. Those heroes have sent a very powerful message to us today. I acknowledge not only those people who have participated but also the members in the House. I am sure members will support the petition of those who say, "You can do something. You can change our planning laws. You can change our land clearing laws and you can make sure that we turn the tide against what we fear will be the extinction of the koala population."

Two-thirds of koalas live on private land, but we know that land clearing laws are critical to protect them. The Government has refused to strengthen land clearing laws but has weakened laws that protect native flora, timbered areas and grasslands and bushlands. It is particularly important to acknowledge and celebrate this success today and all those who had a role in it. I acknowledge important petitions like this and the harnessing of the community's voice to project that voice into Parliament. All involved can be content and pleased with the success in the community. They, like us, know that far more needs to be done. I thank all of those here today. The job has just started with this decision. We need to change the fundamental way we approach nature if we are to protect koalas and other threatened species in the future.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:17):** I support the petition because it is a very important one. I support the member for Ballina and the member for Port Macquarie. It is good to see an awareness of positive outcomes in the wider community and that this is generating interest. As the member for Port Macquarie indicated, koalas young and old are extremely important. I, for one, have been very supportive of the work in this space. The purchase of this land is part of a Government program worth \$193 million. There is a lot more to the koala equation. Habitat is extraordinarily important, but so is the disease of chlamydia.

A few years ago the Government was successful in gaining extra land in the Tweed, where we established one of the first koala chlamydia research stations. A vaccination trial has been conducted out of the Queensland University of Technology in partnership with Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. This very large sanctuary, which is located at the southern end of the Gold Coast, currently treats around 350 New South Wales-based koalas. The

sanctuary is trialling the vaccination and releasing the koalas back into the wild. To help the Currumbin sanctuary, the Government, together with Jenny Hayes at Team Koala, planted well over 15,000 trees in the area for feed. Jenny does a great job and was Tweed Shire Citizen of the Year last year. Well done to Jenny and her team.

With community support, we recently bought another 80 hectares at Clothiers Creek at the back of Cabarita Beach, which abuts Cudgen Nature Reserve. There is massive awareness of this issue, but I think we can do more. The member for Balmain referenced land clearing laws. The Tweed has been successful in receiving an exemption and protection from those laws for 18 per cent of the shire. I have made representations to the Minister, and the new council is putting in a submission to increase that from 18 per cent to whatever it chooses. We finally got the koala plans of management, which have been sitting on somebody's desk for a lengthy period, through. I have been fortunate to be involved with Landcare, and recently a number of grants were made to private landowners. The member for Balmain mentioned that two-thirds of the koala population is on private land.

It is important to stimulate interest in private land. The money enabled landowners to rehabilitate the land, get rid of a lot of exotic plants, replant koala trees and create corridors. Corridors are crucial. I am a big supporter of koala conservation, and we have created a number of sanctuaries and added them to national parks. I have spoken to the experts—I am no expert in the field—and they talk about creating corridors. Dr Michael Payne from Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary says he fears that certainly koala colonies on the Gold Coast are inbred. The koalas are not mixing the gene pool up and down the coast because they have been cut off in little islands. We need to do a hell of a lot more in this area. I have been advocating for some time on my side of politics about the importance of koalas and of all nature. I am not surprised the member got 20,000 signatures on the petition. That is a great effort. Well done.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** We got 25,000.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** I stand corrected, and I correct the *Hansard*. That is enormous and should be recognised along the coast. I know koalas are extremely important in the Lake Macquarie area. Indeed, they are important everywhere. We can do more with our local communities, because ideas will not work unless we bring the community along with us. I have always believed Australians react poorly to being told what to do, so for an idea to work we must bring the people along. Then we can save the koalas and, more importantly, we will save our natural environment for many years to come. There is a lot more to be done in this space, but I am pleased the Government recognises that work is needed. Is there enough money? Probably not. Do we need more? Absolutely. Do we need new science? Yes, indeed. But if we all work together we will have a great outcome for the future of our koalas.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:22):** People may be forgiven for wondering whether that was really a contribution from a National Party member. I welcome this amazing support from across the Chamber. I congratulate the amazing residents and First Nations custodians who initiated this petition to save this critical piece of koala habitat from being sold. I congratulate the member for Ballina and thank her for her advocacy in sponsoring the petition and bringing it to this place so we can debate it. Almost 25,000 people signed the electronic petition in support of this issue. How wonderful to see that community actions and advocacy and grassroots support have seen the last piece of privately owned, unburnt core koala habitat east of the Pacific Highway purchased jointly by the Australian Koala Foundation and the New South Wales Government.

It is rare for the Liberal-Nationals Government to heed and respond to the overwhelming calls of the community. Today is a special occasion. The community has called for action—everybody knows that it is absolutely essential to act—and the Government has responded. If only that happened more often with other petitions members bring to this Chamber. After much of the koala habitat was burnt in 2019, only small patches of land remain to support their populations, and most of this is on private land. The devastating cumulative impacts of bushfires, land clearing, disease, animal attacks and encroachment from residential development were brought into stark relief this month when koalas were officially listed as an endangered species in New South Wales.

This petition rightly stirred the passions of tens of thousands of people, who do not want to stand by and watch as we drive one of our most loved and iconic native animals to extinction. They spoke up and they won. Of course, the campaign to save the koala is not over. As we have heard, so much more needs to be done. I know the member for Ballina has been working with her community and pushing to save this habitat. I acknowledge the advocates from the northern part of the State who have come together and who recognise the absolute importance of this change. The campaign to save the koala must continue. The *NSW State of the Environment 2021* report painted a grim picture of environmental degradation in New South Wales. Land clearing has tripled in the past three years and over 1,000 species are now threatened with extinction.

We can and must do more. As we have heard today in the contributions of members from all sides of the Chamber, we can do more because the problems are ones we can solve. We know that there are solutions; we know what needs to be done. The Government must have the will to invest in the necessary legislative changes

that are needed to protect endangered koalas. As the member for Balmain said in his contribution, koalas are not endangered because of something that is out of our control; it is absolutely controllable. Koalas are at risk of becoming extinct as a result of actions taken by successive New South Wales governments that failed to prioritise nature and the need to protect endangered species.

I had the joy of spending the summer holidays driving from my electorate of Newtown through all of the electorates of the members who have contributed to this discussion. I acknowledge the member for Port Macquarie's contribution in which she mentioned primary schoolchildren talking about the importance of protecting koalas. Every time we saw a yellow sign that had a koala on it, my daughter felt certain that at any moment a koala would appear. She got very excited, squealed with enthusiasm and kept her eyes peeled for koalas on the side of the road as we were driving. It was the middle of the day, so it was unlikely that she would see one.

Her enthusiasm and excitement from knowing koalas were around immediately made me realise the risks we are taking by clearing that land. If we do not protect the koala habitat for future generations, the joy, excitement and love for koalas that people feel, particularly young people, will never be experienced in nature because we failed to act. This petition and the actions of the community of stepping up and speaking out on this crucial issue should be commended. The Greens 100 per cent support the petition and the amazing community that brought it to the Chamber today.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (16:27):** By leave: I thank the member for Ballina for bringing this important petition before the House today. I also acknowledge the member for Port Macquarie, who represents this area. I wholeheartedly thank every one of the almost 25,000 people who signed this petition. In this State we know that unless the community raises its voice and fights hard to give koalas a say, the Government will fail to listen time and again. The fact that we are debating this petition today is an exceptional example of when the Government has responded. The Opposition supports this petition, wholeheartedly. We are pleased to see the Government taking some action on protecting koalas. But I can give some examples of when this Government failed time and again to support the survival of koalas in New South Wales.

In 2016 this Government sold to a developer the Mambo Wetlands, in the beautiful area of Port Stephens that I represent. It is a critical koala breeding habitat and the Government sold it to a developer via an online auction. It took three years for my community to fight and fight—with a petition as well—to try to have that land returned to public hands. That only happened prior to the 2019 election. In 2017 the NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee recommended the Port Stephens koalas be listed as endangered. I represent an area where koalas have been recognised as endangered by the science community since 2017, yet this Government changed the law to prevent that recommendation actually being put into place. It was not until very recently, on the eve of a Federal election, that the Federal Minister for the Environment finally listed all koalas across the State of New South Wales as endangered. This Government could not do that itself because it changed the laws to prevent it happening.

Then, in 2020, a New South Wales parliamentary inquiry found koalas could be extinct within 30 years unless urgent action is taken. Yet just after this was clearly articulated through a lengthy parliamentary inquiry, this Government and its Federal partners in crime again gave the green light to clear core koala habitat in Port Stephens to make way for the expansion of the Brandy Hill quarry. Time and time again, this Government has proven itself incapable of meeting any of the deadlines that it sets itself. It keeps getting headlines saying that it is going to do all these marvellous things to protect koalas in this State, but time and time again its statements are not backed up by action. The Government says it is protecting this crucial habitat after years of empty promises on koala protections in New South Wales, but it is very unsurprising that a lot of people across the State do not trust this Government when it comes to protecting koalas or the environment.

As mentioned by other members in their contributions today, just yesterday the Government snuck out the *NSW State of the Environment Report 2021*. It showed that pest animals and weeds are spreading across the State and costing the economy \$2 billion a year. It showed that permanent land-clearing rates have increased threefold from three years ago to 35,000 hectares a year. More native species are listed as endangered than ever before and the condition of native vegetation is only moderate, and it is getting worse. New South Wales is currently without a koala strategy, yet Government members stand in this Chamber today stating, "This petition is good; we've done good here." They need to do so much better. After saying they cared about the disease-free koala population in Campbelltown, hundreds of trees are being removed down there as members speak. The Perrottet Government, like the Berejiklian Government before it, makes lots of lovely promises, says lots of nice things and gets lots of pretty headlines. But the koalas of this State need action right now. I say well done to all the petitioners.

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (16:32):** By leave: I am also pleased to offer my support to this petition. Camden is in the Macarthur region, and backing onto Appin Road in Campbelltown is the Georges River National Park, which contains the largest disease-free koala colony in New South Wales. It is imperative this Government and future governments protect the koala colonies there and all through New South Wales. The

purchase of the property at 147 Ruins Way, announced on 17 December 2021, demonstrates that this Government is committed to koala conservation in Port Macquarie. The joint initiative between Koala Conservation Australia and the Government will see important habitat and threatened species conserved. Adding the property to the Lake Innes Nature Reserve and declaring it an asset of intergenerational significance will ensure the highest possible protections for this koala population in perpetuity.

In relation to koala values, the first NSW Koala Strategy, released in 2018, aimed to address key threats to stabilise and then increase the numbers in the wild. The Government's \$44.7 million investment to deliver the strategy secured significant outcomes that included adding more than 5,300 hectares of koala habitat to the New South Wales national parks system, setting aside more than 8,900 hectares of State forest for koalas and conserving 2,834 hectares of koala habitat on private land through conservation agreements.

The Government also achieved koala conservation outcomes in the Port Macquarie region through the Hastings-Macleay Koala Recovery Partnership, which is a three-year partnership project between Port Macquarie-Hastings and Kempsey councils, Mid North Coast Joint Organisation, Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and the New South Wales Government. The project will deliver habitat restoration, veterinary care, a reduction in vehicle strikes, landholder and community engagement and koala monitoring.

The Government has committed \$193.3 million over the next five years towards delivering the Government's goal of doubling koala numbers by 2050, with the aim of increasing their numbers by 20,000 over the next 30 years. Through this investment, the Government is already making real progress with the purchase of the property at 147 The Ruins Way. That purchase and the Government's overall investment in koala conservation will build on the achievements and groundwork of the first NSW Koala Strategy. The Government will release a new NSW Koala Strategy in the near future, which will continue to deliver actions that conserve koala habitat, support local communities to conserve koalas, improve the safety and health of koalas and build our knowledge of koalas into the future. I reiterate the Government's commitment to the protection of local iconic species and look forward to the release and implementation of the new Koala Strategy.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (16:36):** By leave: I thank the House for the opportunity to support those that have petitioned on this very important issue. I would never have thought that, after 11 years as the member for Drummoyne, I would be speaking about an issue of this nature. But I am passionate about wildlife, and so are many of my constituents. At a time when public transport, infrastructure and hospitals are such important issues, I am amazed at the number of emails I get from constituents about koalas and wildlife in general.

The environment and wildlife play an important part for every local member, whether their electorate is metropolitan or regional. It should transcend all political parties, and it is imperative that everybody works together to get the best outcome. Toing and froing will not solve this situation. It needs a coordinated approach, so one would think a plan of management would be a very good starting point; it is no good piecemealing things together to save a particular animal from extinction. It is really important that it is staged properly right across the State, and this issue has been heard loud and clear.

This debate today is both a symbolic win and an important win for community members across the State, because the issue is not taken lightly by one particular area but is important to everybody. I congratulate all those that have put their name to paper. Really, it is quite poor when people have to go to that extent to get their voices heard. As we have heard in this Chamber this evening, a local member's role is to represent their community. Having to go to the extent of getting 20,000 signatures and dragging members kicking and screaming into this Chamber so that people's voices can be heard is certainly not the way to go. The petition is a collaboration between many members, for the greater good, and I hope it is the start of bigger and better things. Once our wildlife is gone, it is very difficult to bring back.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (16:39):** I am delighted to speak in support of this petition. I thank the member for Ballina for presenting this very important petition to the House and for tabling it. I also thank the member for Port Macquarie, within whose electorate the land acquisition resides. I also thank the member for Balmain for his comments and his ongoing advocacy for all things environmental, in particular the koalas. I thank the member for Tweed for his contribution and the member for Newtown and acknowledge her comments that this is indeed a special moment. I thank the member for Lismore and the member for Port Stephens and acknowledge her commitment to and advocacy for this particular issue. I thank the member for Camden as well as the member for Drummoyne, whose comments encapsulated this moment. He is absolutely right in saying that the environment transcends politics. It does not matter what postcode you are from, what part of New South Wales you are from, people care a great deal about the environment. In particular, they care a great deal about the koala, an iconic Australian species.

As the member for Port Stephens acknowledged, it has only been in the last week or so that the koala was up-listed by the Australian Government as an endangered species, which underpins the importance of the

continued work that must be done across the State to ensure that the koala population is supported in all parts of the State. The up-listing by the Australian Government brought with it \$50 million in Commonwealth funding across the entire country. The New South Wales Government committed \$193.3 million to support the koalas. I acknowledge the comment of the member opposite that more needs to be done and it needs to be done quicker. She has a commitment from me as the Minister for Environment and Heritage that the Government will roll out the NSW Koala Strategy at speed. It is these types of acquisitions and this type of support that brings together private landowners, the conservation movement and NGOs like the Koala Conservation Australia group, who have partnered with the New South Wales Government to deliver this fantastic outcome and will support our ongoing efforts to reinvigorate and double the koala population by 2050.

I address the remark that the *NSW State of the Environment 2021* report was snuck out. It was tabled in this place yesterday at 3.30 p.m. after question time, and the tabling was followed by a media article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. It is an important report that is produced by the Environment Protection Authority. It provides a great deal of transparency as to where the challenges are in our environment and where we must do better. I thank all members in this place for their comments regarding this petition. I congratulate all of those who have supported the petition. I say, well done. This is a terrific outcome for koalas in the State of New South Wales.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (16:42):** In reply: I echo the Minister's acknowledgement of the speakers. I thank the member for Port Macquarie, the member for Balmain, the member for Tweed, the member for Newtown, the member for Port Stephens, the member for Camden, the member for Drummoyne, and the Minister. We heard about the young activists in the Port Macquarie electorate. We heard from the member for Balmain about the tripling of land clearing in the State. We heard from the member for Tweed about the fabulous committee of research that is going on in his electorate and his advocacy for protecting native forestry.

We heard from the member for Newtown about the dire need for legislative change. We need teeth to be able to enforce change. We heard from the member for Port Stephens, who highlighted the crisis and the desperate need for the NSW Koala Strategy. The member for Camden flagged our desperate need for that to avoid extinction. I welcome the passion for wildlife of the member for Drummoyne and his calls for a holistic approach and a plan. I thank the Minister for his comments. It is great to hear his commitment today and his pledge that the Koala Strategy will be delivered at speed.

The statistics we heard today tell us that koala protection must be high on the priority list of the entire Parliament. It is a parliamentary matter. It is not a political party matter. We also concede that there is a disconnect at times, which was highlighted this week. There is a disconnect between the stark scientific reality of endangered wildlife in this State and extinction crises. There is rhetoric and verbal commitments to address the need but there is a lack of resourcing and a lack of specific plans to halt extinction trajectories. That is a disconnect that must change. I would like to think we are marking that line in the sand here today. I reiterate that it is the community that is the hero. We thank them for doing the heavy work for the 25,000 petition participants.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The debate on the more than 20,000-signature electronic petition on koala habitat in Port Macquarie has concluded. I thank all members who participated in the debate and say that I personally hope it advances the cause of koala conservation. I also thank members of the public who have been taking an interest and listening to the debate online. The question is that the House take note of the petition.

**Petition noted.**

#### *Private Members' Statements*

### **DUBBO ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (16:45):** I pay special tribute to four individuals from the Dubbo electorate who received Australia Day honours: Hugh Bateman, who has been appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia, and Matt Hansen, Mark Meredith and Kellie Dickerson, who have all received a Medal of the Order of Australia. Hugh Bateman, AM, has been involved in many different organisations over the years and has always sung Mudgee's praises as much as he possibly could. It has earned him the nickname Mr Mudgee, as in, "Here comes Mr Mudgee." Hugh received the honour for significant service to business through real estate and to the community.

In 2016 Hugh founded Pink Up Mudgee, encouraging Mudgee businesses to decorate their shopfronts for Breast Cancer Awareness Month and help raise money for the McGrath Foundation. Pink Up Your Town is now an official initiative of the McGrath Foundation and has expanded across Australia. Over the years Hugh has also been involved with the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal, the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, the Mudgee Business Enterprise Centre, the Mudgee Business Association and the Mudgee Museum, and he also did a stint on Mudgee Shire Council. Hugh says that he wants to be remembered as somebody who puts back into the community, and

I think it is fair to say that he definitely will be. I congratulate him on this enormous honour. It is very well deserved.

Dubbo musical director and conductor Kellie Dickerson, OAM, has been recognised for her service to the performing arts. Kellie has taught and mentored young conductors over the years and helped stars enter the industry through the Rob Guest Endowment, for which she is founder and executive committee member. She was awarded a Churchill Fellowship for musical direction of original works, has conducted the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and received the Green Room Arts Award for Musical Direction of *Wicked*, *Once* and *City of Angels*. Sadly, Kellie has been diagnosed with multiple system atrophy, which is a rare, degenerative neurological disorder and which has forced her to retire from the industry to focus on her health. She is still a panel member for the Helpmann Awards and New Musicals Australia, and a former panel member for the Australian Council for Arts. Kellie wants to see more young people from the country, especially young women, pursue a career in the industry. Kellie's contribution has been incredible and I am sure it will set the example and inspire many more.

Matt Hanson, OAM, has been recognised for his services to recreational fishing and conservation. Matt is a real estate agent by profession but his real passion is fishing. Matt founded volunteer recreational fishing group the Inland Waterways Rejuvenation Association, establishing a strong volunteer committee of like-minded recreational fishers that have conducted numerous high-profile fundraising initiatives. He also co-founded the River Repair Bus, a Work for the Dole initiative that has been restoring large stretches of the Macquarie River for the past four years. To date, the Dubbo River Repair Bus group has planted over 7,500 trees, collected 400 trailer loads of rubbish and supported at least 20 participants into full-time employment.

When this Government took unprecedented action to combat fish kills in that dreadful summer of 2019, Matt was one of the people leading the way to rescue our iconic native fish species. The progeny of those fish are now being returned to the river. I joined Matt in Dubbo recently to celebrate the end of a record-breaking Murray cod restocking season, stocking over 1.27 million fingerlings back into our waterways, which was fantastic. Matt is also a member of the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Committee and a representative for recreational fishing on my Ministerial Advisory Council. His previous accolades include the 2020 Australian fishing volunteer of the year, the 2018 Premier's Award for community service, and the Keep Australia Beautiful NSW award 2012. Remarkably, Matt was also recognised on Australia Day as Dubbo's 2022 Citizen of the Year. The mighty Macquarie River would not be what it is without people like Matt, so this recognition is definitely well deserved. I wish him all the best for the future.

Detective Sergeant Mark Meredith, OAM, has also been recognised for his service to the community. He has been involved with the Macquarie Raiders rugby league football club for many years, including as president. He was a referee with the Dubbo Touch Association for more than 20 years. He is a police officer of more than 30 years. He received the National Police Service Medal in 2014 and the Deputy Commissioner Field Regional Challenge Coin in 2019, which I was delighted to be present for. Nothing, of course, could prepare Mark for the death of his son Perry in 2016. That tragedy sent Mark's community service in a different direction and he has since become an ambassador for LIVIN, a mental health and suicide prevention organisation with the motto "It ain't weak to speak". Mark uses his story to help others break down the stigma of mental health and talk about it. As a police officer, no doubt he has made the world a better place to live and, as an ambassador, he has saved many lives. I congratulate Mark. He is a top bloke. Well done.

### ROCKDALE ELECTORATE ROAD SAFETY

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (16:50):** Last Wednesday in my electorate of Rockdale the first ordinary meeting of the newly elected Bayside Council was held, with Bayside's excellent new mayor Dr Christina Curry in the chair. The major item of business was the ongoing honing and extreme vehicle noise problem in various parts of Bayside, most notably in Brighton-Le-Sands and a number of other suburbs near the foreshore of Botany Bay. This is not a new problem. I have spoken on it in this place at least three times in the past several years, but so far no comprehensive solution has been found. The residents of my electorate have been suffering for years from the deafening crackle of gunfire-tuned car exhausts and illegally modified motorbike engines. This intolerable, torturing noise goes on until four in the morning, night after night.

Residents ring my electorate office in tears because they and their families have not been able to sleep for days on end. As well as the noise, dangerous and uncontrollable burnouts and speeding are common. We have already seen several accidents where hoons lost control of their burnouts and crashed in the high-pedestrian restaurant strip of Bay Street, Brighton. It is only by sheer good luck that no innocent bystander has been killed. This good luck will not last if no action is taken to stamp out these idiots and their deadly behaviour. Bayside Council has done everything it has the power to do. It has installed numerous traffic-calming devices, has closed car parks at night, and has recently pioneered anti-hooning automatic number plate recognition cameras, which capture evidence of dangerous driving that can be used to issue penalties. But the full range of solutions needed to crack this problem is wider than the council has the power to implement alone.

The council and I have asked the Government for assistance with this situation multiple times over many years. The response has been consistently disgraceful. Our new transport Minister did provide a little colour and movement in his previous role as police Minister and I look forward to working with him in his new position. But unfortunately former transport Minister Andrew Constance did not even provide that. Showing a total lack of interest in doing his job, he flat out ignored multiple requests to close the hooning epicentre of Bay Street—a State road—on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings.

He flat out ignored multiple requests to install red light and speed cameras at two major hooning hotspot intersections. These are simple things. He flat out ignored multiple requests to organise noise-and-defect enforcement action from Transport for NSW compliance inspectors. I can only say that it is great to see former Minister Constance now seeking a retirement job in Canberra. I wish him good luck. In massive contrast to the inaction of the former Minister, Bayside Council under Mayor Curry's leadership is determined to fix this issue once and for all. Mayor Curry has kickstarted the response and has her foot on the accelerator.

At the meeting last week council passed a number of important resolutions. The first resolution, from the mayor, re-established a local anti-hooping task force with council, police and my office, which I welcome. Secondly, council is looking to introduce a new generation of licence plate recognition noise cameras, which will automatically measure the outrageously loud vehicles that torture my constituents and record their vehicle details for enforcement action. These cameras are already in use with huge success in parts of London, and council resolved to request that the relevant Ministers ensure that New South Wales legislation allows for their use here. Thirdly, council resolved to ask the new Ministers for police and transport to visit Brighton-Le-Sands in person to see firsthand the impacts of these late-night idiots on the local community. I commend Bayside Council's resolutions. I look forward to working with all levels of government to get actual solutions for the suffering people of Bayside. Above all, I call on the new Ministers to distinguish themselves from their predecessors by actually doing something about this problem at long last.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (16:55):** Temporary Speaker Layzell, what a delight to see you in the chair. I congratulate you on your rapid movement up the ranks. I thank everybody involved in local government throughout the electorate of Oxley, where four councils represent the four valleys. Whether I get on with some of The Greens councillors does not really matter; I will work with everybody in my community. I thank everybody who ran at the local elections, and I want to highlight particular successes.

I will start with the Bellingen Shire Council. Steve Allan was elected thumpingly as the new mayor, replacing Greens mayor Dominic King, and some great people join him as new members of council. Jo Cook from the Dorrigo Mountain is a nurse, a natural resource scientist and a dairy farmer—an incredible woman with enormous energy. I am so thrilled to see her on the team at Bellingen. Jo Brotherton, another woman of enormous energy who works tirelessly throughout the Urunga community, was on the ticket with Steve Allan. Independents! I actually do not support party politics in local government, and these guys have run as community members. Stephen Glyde and Ellie Tree, a new young member, were also elected to that council. They are fantastic results. I now turn to Port Macquarie. Mayor Peta Pinson was thumpingly re-elected with her team. Great community-orientated people, like Sharon Griffiths, are also returning. Danielle Maltman joins Josh Slade and Adam Roberts, and Lisa Intemann from Wauchope continues her long service.

At Nambucca Valley Council, I give a big shout-out to retiring councillor Janine Reed, who is a very good friend of mine. Mayor Rhonda Hoban received something like 70 per cent of the vote. She is a dedicated, hardworking community representative, who never misses an opportunity to tell me what is going wrong and what is going right. I am very proud and pleased to work with her. What is most exciting is that three Indigenous candidates were elected to that council. Martin Ballangarry returned. He is one big happy, smiling person, who lights up every room he walks into. His relation Trevor Ballangarry moved back to the district—a fantastic individual who supports and gives to his community—and Ricky Buchanan is a great young man with a lot to deliver. I am very proud of their elections. John Wilson was also returned, and I have to say I am really excited that Jimmy Angel, one of the best Australian rules football players who has ever come to the Nambucca Valley, has joined that council. He will have a lot to contribute.

It was bittersweet in Kempsey. My friend Liz Campbell was not returned as mayor. Former schoolteacher Leo Hauville got up. Also elected were Simon Fergusson; Craigie V; Arthur Bain from The Greens; Alexandra Wyatt, a great community member from South West Rocks; Josh Freeman; Kerri Riddington, who has long service in the business community at Eversons meatworks; and Anthony Patterson. I want to spend the rest of my time talking about the challenges that Kempsey now faces thanks to the NSW Electoral Commission. I am very disappointed with what members of my community are going through. They are going through enormous uncertainty because of mistakes made by the NSW Electoral Commission and because of court proceedings. I am going to read comments from councillors who are being impacted by the decision of the NSW Electoral

Commission to challenge the results in Kempsey. I know the member for Upper Hunter, who is in the chair, is facing the same thing in Singleton Council. It boils down to 34 iVotes that could not be cast. This is causing great concern in my community. Kempsey can be a community that has very disparate points of view, but everyone in Kempsey is joined together at the moment, very upset with what is going on. Former mayor Liz Campbell said:

To find yourself as a defendant in the Supreme Court defending the fact that you were democratically elected to local council is distressing and defies logic and justice. Kempsey Shire Council has been sworn in and are getting on with the job. The probability of a different result because of the 34 iVotes and the modelling used by the Electoral Commission in its predictions is very questionable. What is not questionable is if a new election is held it will defiantly be a completely different result.

Those comments by Liz Campbell are joined by Dick Pearson from the Kempsey Shire Residents Association. He said:

The elected councillors have nothing to defend—the Electoral Commission is the party that should be 'in the dock' answering for their mismanagement of the electoral process.

I stand by my community and council. When Kempsey comes together as one, there is something very wrong with the argument on the other side.

### DOORALONG PUBLIC SCHOOL SITE

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (17:00):** I plead with the New South Wales Government to delay the sale of the former Dooralong Public School site. This school operated between 1903 and 2011, when it was closed because there were no longer students to attend. It has sat idle since then. Unfortunately, it has not been very well looked after, even though I have made several pleas for the grounds to be kept in good condition. In 2018 the Department of Education tried to have the four-hectare site rezoned, but it was refused by Central Coast Council. The site's only purpose is education, and there has been no consultation with the local community about other possible uses for the site. Anyone who knows small communities understands that these small schools were the centre of those communities and that they were relied upon heavily to bring people together.

In stark contrast, when Yarramalong Public School was due to be closed, the then New South Wales Labor Government went to the community and asked it to come forward with submissions for other possible uses for the school. Following that, with the work of Libby and Graham Keating and others in the Yarramalong Valley, the school became Crown land and is now used by the community not just for Darkinjung Barker school but for arts, festivals, music and a whole range of other things. Libby was on local ABC radio talking about this issue, and she encouraged the Dooralong community to fight this and make the former school site something that the whole community can still get value from.

The site goes to auction at the beginning of March. There are two heritage listed buildings on it, and it is zoned for education, so it has very limited use to most people. We know that when the New South Wales Liberal Government closed and sold Wyong Grove Public School, the developer who bought it was never able to rezone it. In 2012 the school was sold to a developer. He has made several attempts to rezone it, but it still sits there not having had anything done with it other than the local musical society, through the goodwill of the developer, being allowed to use the old school hall.

Since I have gone out publicly about this and asked for suggestions from the Dooralong community, I have been inundated with possible uses for the site. The most exciting suggestion, which I think the Government should have a close look at, came from a burgeoning group of small-scale regenerative farmers in the Dooralong Valley. They wrote to me saying that they may well benefit from the use of the site as a packing and distribution centre, as well as using it as a locally stocked food market, cafe, bar, demonstration garden and education site, similar to what Yarramalong has but owned and operated by the community, with any profits used to keep the site up to scratch.

The people involved in looking after the Dooralong hall and oval and the RFS site would be perfectly capable of taking over and looking after this site as well. Matt Allen, who is part of that group, points out that the road between Dooralong and Mandalong has now been sealed and the site has great tourism opportunities. I ask the Government to pause, take it off the market for the moment, go to the community, see if there is a viable option and work with that community to try to make sure that the school is not sold off to a developer but is actually put to use. That school has history; it opened in 1903.

I have a conflict of interest: I was principal at the school between 1993 and 1999. Former principals, such as Paul Maish, who continues to live in the valley, have also contacted me. They are devastated that the Government has moved to auction off the site. It is a lost asset to that community. It has a great opportunity to be a binding place for that community. They have not been consulted at all on the issue. When I asked the department what was happening, their answer was that they did not even know either. I ask the Government to get its act together and act on behalf my community.

## KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (17:05):** Education is critical to children's and young people's development, delivering a range of positive social, physical and intellectual outcomes. Importantly, education also provides a pathway for social mobility and employment. It teaches young people how to think so they can better support themselves and the broader community, and flourish into independent leaders and thinkers. The Ku-ring-gai electorate offers young people a variety of exceptional schools—public, Catholic and independent—which strive to nurture students into successful, independent young adults.

Each year in December I attend presentation award ceremonies at my local community schools, where I have the opportunity to present awards, deliver speeches and engage with students, parents and staff. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, parents were unable to attend the primary school ceremonies in person, but the events were live streamed due to the hard work of staff. I thank them for their efforts. In the first week I attended ceremonies at Knox Grammar School, Ravenswood School for Girls, Abbotsleigh and Wahroonga Adventist School. The brilliant Knox Symphony Orchestra performed *Chicago* and *Pusztá*, and I was impressed with the high level of musicianship. Similarly, at Ravenswood, the senior vocal ensemble, symphony orchestra and wind ensemble performed *Let Your Light Shine*. Abbotsleigh students prepared a virtual musical video collaboration which reflected the innovative thinking and approach of the students and school. I was also present to see the first cohort of year 12 students graduate from Wahroonga Adventist School, which was a primary school for over 100 years. The students have made outstanding achievements across all fields from academic and music to sports. The atmosphere was great when that first year 12 cohort graduated.

In the following week, award days were held at St Leo's Catholic College, Turramurra Public School, Normanhurst Public School and West Pymble Public School. The musical performances at St Leo's Catholic College are always exceptional and this year they ranged from rock to pop. I was pleased to present the certificates to year 12 students. The impressive vocalists and guitarists had clearly honed their skills over many years at school, and I found it particularly enjoyable. Turramurra Public School gave me the privilege of presenting its public speaking award and delivering a speech, as did West Pymble Public School and Normanhurst Public School at its year 3 to year 6 ceremony. In the final week of presentations, I attended Pymble Public School, Wahroonga Public School and Beaumont Road Public School. All three schools had great achievements and outstanding musical performances, and I was honoured to present awards to the magnificent students. During the primary school presentations I saw the year 6 captains and prefects pass on the mantle to next year's school leaders, and it was inspiring to see so many talented young people committed to serving their community.

Unfortunately, several schools were unable to hold ceremonies, and because of clashes, I was unable to attend all 33 schools in the electorate. I was honoured to attend 14 assemblies, and I thank all schools for their invitations. I also attended a belated year 12 graduation ceremony in January for the class of 2021 at Pymble Ladies' College, where I presented the legal studies award once again.

It was a pleasure to meet the staff, principals and parents, who, quite amazingly, adapted to lockdown measures last year, making the transition from in-person to remote learning. Undeniably, there have been challenges for all of our schools, as there always are in life. But rising to the challenges is an important lesson in itself and we should be very proud of how they all adapted and overcame those challenges in 2021. I can confidently say that the students of Ku-ring-gai have demonstrated outstanding grit over the past two years, despite the myriad of challenges to their usual routine, from lockdowns and HSC exams. Their resilience and achievements should be celebrated, regardless of whether they received an award for them or not.

They are all exceptional young people who will flourish in whatever paths they choose. I extend my thanks and congratulations to all students, staff and parents for their resilience and achievements. I wish them good luck in their next adventures. I think we all hope that our schools will be back to their usual way of operating in 2022. It has been a great challenge. There has been a huge interruption to extracurricular activities, but I was quite amazed at how Ku-ring-gai schools have been able to continue their wide range of co-curricular offerings. I look forward to spending more time at our schools in Ku-ring-gai this year.

## MAITLAND HOSPITAL

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (17:10):** Exactly ten years ago today, the New South Wales Liberals promised that they would build a new hospital in Maitland. Less than a month ago, the new Maitland Hospital finally opened. I know many of Temporary Speaker Layzell's constituents will go there, hopefully for nice events like births. The entire Labor movement fought so hard for this new hospital to be fully public—our local Labor branch members and the State parliamentary party working hand-in-hand with our industrial wing, the mighty trade union movement, including the Health Services Union, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation of NSW.

It was not just the health unions that stood with us against the privatisation of our health facilities but also every other union and our local communities. We collected more than 30,000 signatures on petitions. We had three parliamentary debates. We held rallies in Maitland Park, outside the new Maitland Hospital, outside the old Maitland Hospital, and here on Macquarie Street. We worked our hearts out for the Maitland community to have a fully public hospital. Everyone—with the exception of members opposite—knows that it does not matter how much you can pay and how much private health insurance you have. We all need our public health system to be functioning properly because, at the end of the day, we can all end up in it.

It was a great day when the hospital finally opened. I get so many comments from people in the Maitland community who are proud of the work that we did together as a community, against the ideology of others, to reach a common goal of a half-a-billion-dollar hospital that we can all be proud of. There have been issues with the transition to the new hospital. People have reached out to me with them and I have raised them with the Minister. I will meet with him formally later this week to discuss them. I encourage people to continue to let me know if there are issues. There is a lot of goodwill behind the hospital, but there is an enormous amount of work. The staff are working their guts out. It is so difficult to be transitioning in a time of COVID, and the community needs to understand that what we saw on Tuesday shows that there are just not enough resources for nurses to do their work. I had nurses in my office in tears. They are so exhausted by their workloads.

We have healthcare staff who just cannot go on and on. When they go off on stress leave or sick leave, the hospitals are short-staffed and that creates a bigger issue. Add to that the general exhaustion of dealing with COVID and I can understand how difficult their jobs are. I thank them every day for the work they are doing. That is why I was really shocked this week—a week when tens of thousands of nurses rallied around the State about the lack of support, the lack of wages, the high workloads, the risks to patient care—that supporting our nurses was not everyone's highest priority. It should have been. The Federal member for Paterson, Meryl Swanson, has been putting together submissions to the State and Federal governments to get a fully funded MRI licence for the brand new, state-of-the-art MRI machine at Maitland Hospital. It still does not have a public licence.

An article came out from the Federal Liberal candidate for Paterson. She was swanning around the electorate saying she was going to start a petition for a new railway station at Maitland Hospital. I hate to say it, but she has missed the train. We have been asking for that for many years. In fact, her Liberal and Independent councillor colleagues at Maitland City Council derided Labor councillors who put forward a proposal for that station. I have been calling for a station. In fact, just last month we got bus services because the Government would not build a station. The nearest station is a 17-minute walk away.

Former State transport Minister Andrew Constance refused to even consider purchasing the northern part of the Metford station, which would have helped, when that proposal was put to him a year or so ago. The Liberals can argue that the Federal Australian Rail Track Corporation owns the track, but we all know that the State Liberal-Nationals Government runs the trains and builds the new train stations and services. When I spoke to the Hon. Sam Faraway, the new Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, on the topic earlier this week, he had no idea there was an issue. So I do not understand how the Liberal candidate for Paterson could have raised it with him. Who was she talking to? It is very strange.

Labor advocacy got the bus service, and in time Labor advocacy will get the train station for the hospital. Our community will not be relying on the Liberals and the Independents. My message to the candidate for Paterson is this: Yes, sure, support Labor's calls for better rail connections and transport, but get out and actually do something about the achievable things, like an MRI licence. While she is focusing on health issues, how about slinging us some cash for the hardworking staff in our hospitals, or maybe focusing on the Federal issues and funding our successful GP Access After Hours service properly, or addressing the six-week wait to see a GP caused by the Liberal-Nationals Government cuts to Federal funding. She needs to be real.

### CENTRAL COAST INVESTMENT

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:15):** As Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, I ensure that our region, from one end to the other, gets its fair share. I am pleased to update the House on the investment in our region. In the recent 2021 round of the Stronger Country Communities funding, the Gosford electorate received a total of \$868,725 split across four fantastic projects at the Narara Wyoming Cricket Club, the PCYC at Umina, the Gosford Sailing Club and the Central Coast Council's Kariang Child Care Centre, which received money for an upgrade to that excellent facility. Stronger Country Communities Fund grants also include \$850,000 for an outdoor water park at Peninsula Leisure Centre, the opening of which I had the pleasure of attending, and \$700,000 for an amenities upgrade at Central Coast Stadium, which included highly overdue female change rooms. It is hard to believe that a stadium could be built without female change rooms.

Additional funding allocations include \$436,689 for the Central Coast Youth Collective project, run by the outstanding team at Regional Youth Support Services in Gosford, and \$2 million for upgrades to the Central Coast

Conservatorium of Music in Gosford. I commend Claire Braund and the rest of the team at the conservatorium for the fantastic job they have done. Gosford Musical Society received \$200,000 for upgrades and new equipment. I congratulate the society's president, Ros English, and her amazing team of volunteers. In addition to providing funding that benefits smaller individual communities on the Central Coast, the Government has committed to upgrading services and programs that benefit every person in our region. Road upgrade funding in the Gosford electorate includes \$391.6 million for the M1 upgrade between Kariong and Somersby; \$6.6 million for the Manns Road intersection upgrades at Narara Creek and Stockyard Place; and \$6.9 million, committed in 2020, to continue the now-completed construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Maitland Bay Drive, Blackwall Road and Brisbane Water Drive at Ettalong Beach, which is an outstanding piece of infrastructure.

Further, \$1.5 million was provided to finalise planning and commence pre-construction work on intersection improvements at Blackwall Road and Memorial Avenue in Woy Woy. The Transport Accessibility Program provided \$9.5 million for construction to begin new lifts and accessibility upgrades at Point Clare station, which was never done by Labor. Gosford Hospital has benefited from a \$348 million redevelopment. Some \$24.2 million was allocated in 2018-19 and a further \$35.5 million was allocated for an upgrade of the hospital car park, which has been completed. A \$400,000 transformation of the old maternity ward, of which I am particularly proud, has given the hospital a brand new palliative care unit, which will also benefit from the more important \$3 million recurrent funding to support 20 additional full-time equivalent staff. I congratulate the community on working with the Government to secure this state-of-the-art palliative care facility. Some \$8.3 million was committed in 2020-21 as part of a \$39.6 million project for the Central Coast Clinical School and Research Institute. That world-class facility on the Central Coast delivered by the Liberal-Nationals Government is state of the art. Recently I was also able to announce that the peninsula will be home to a brand new, state-of-the-art ambulance station in Woy Woy as part of the Government's \$232 million Rural Ambulance Infrastructure Reconfiguration program.

With regard to education funding, in December last year it was fantastic to join Minister Lee to announce that the Gosford CBD will be home to a brand-new, state-of-the-art vertical TAFE campus. The proposed multimillion-dollar revitalisation program will supercharge vocational education, delivering thousands of additional students to the Gosford CBD and training people across the Central Coast. In addition, in 2021 the Regional Renewal Program provided eight public schools across Gosford with over \$1.2 million for projects, including new infrastructure and upgrades. In 2020, three schools across the Gosford electorate also shared in \$9.93 million of funding for maintenance work, including painting, carpeting and accessibility upgrades, all of which have been long forgotten by Labor. In 2019, three early childhood education centres across the Gosford electorate were granted over \$20,000 in funding for the Quality Learning Environments program.

Social and affordable housing in Gosford has been another focus in my role as Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast. The 2021 budget provided \$8.1 million to upgrade and improve social housing across the Central Coast, \$15.3 million for 41 new homes in Beane Street, \$1.6 million towards the Adira development in Woy Woy, and \$200,000 to Coast Shelter. The list goes on. Other funding included \$879,000 to purchase and install new energy-efficient systems at Gosford Hospital, \$1.8 million for a new courthouse and \$10 million for the Leagues Club Field. The project was criticised by those opposite when it was announced, but it has been completed and is being utilised by residents and visitors across the Central Coast. The Government will continue to deliver millions of dollars for the Central Coast region. As the Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, I will ensure that we get our fair share.

### COUNTRY SHOWS SUPPORT PACKAGE

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (17:21):** The sound of the announcer's box, the smell of a sizzling barbecue with steaks and snags, and the lights of a sideshow alley—the country show schedule in the Northern Tablelands is back to its very best. From the pavilions selling home-baked goods to the equine events in the arenas, country shows are the beating heart of every country town in the bush and celebrate everything that is good about living west of the Great Divide. Unfortunately for some communities, finding that positive has been difficult over the past three years, with shows postponed because of the drought, the bushfires and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. Admittedly, most shows in the Northern Tablelands did operate last year; however, gate takings were expectedly well down, with restrictions keeping people away and reducing patron numbers.

Show societies make their income to spend on hosting the following year's event through gate takings and pavilion entries. In order to see a triumphant return to business as usual, the State Government's Country Shows Support Package has given many local shows not just in the Northern Tablelands but throughout rural and regional New South Wales the much-needed top-up to their bank accounts that allowed them to clear legacy financial issues and host their biggest shows yet. To date more than \$235,000 has been shared across nine shows in the Northern Tablelands, providing certainty to show societies and committees so that they can lock in suppliers, hire equipment, purchase goods and secure top-notch entertainment.

This money has already had an impact in my electorate. Last month the Bundarra Show crashed back onto the calendar for the first time since 2019, using its \$14,125 allocation to host a monster demolition derby featuring 34 vehicles. I recognise president Dave King, secretary Aaron Kemp and the entire committee for reviving the smallest show with the biggest heart in northern New South Wales. There was concern that Bundarra may have hosted its last show in 2019, with volunteers and entries hard to come by, but through sheer hard work 2022 was a roaring success. This has given the committee confidence that once again the Bundarra Show will become an annual fixture.

Not to be outdone, and making the most of its refurbished showgrounds, Uralla Show President Wes Styles, secretary Sue Barnden and treasurer Margaret Scott hosted a one-day show. A grant of \$13,581 from the Country Shows Support Package covered the publication of show booklets and the hiring of equipment, and funded a donation to local organisations to run the gate and provide COVID-19 marshalling. Last weekend the "Royal of the North" was held—the 154th Glen Innes Show—and it was an absolute cracker. President Scott Brown, secretary Neal Royal and treasurer Cathy Crosby had the historic grounds looking absolutely amazing. The quality of the livestock exhibits in particular showcased the wonderful season we are having in the Northern Tablelands.

It was wonderful to see longstanding showjumping committee member Neville McIntyre awarded life membership of the Glen Innes Show Society. That is a fitting tribute to his lifelong contribution and connection to the Glen Innes Show. The Glen Innes Show Society secured \$45,000 from the package, and it truly was a magnificent event. Tomorrow night I will be with president Richard Post and secretary Dorothy Lockyer of the Guyra Show Society as they set out to break record numbers through the gate for the 114th annual Guyra Show. I am confident that will happen, with the introduction of the Guyra Long Lunch, celebrating local food and produce making its way onto the schedule for the first time on Saturday. The Long Lunch has been an aspiration of the committee for a long time, and this year the hiring of a marquee and cool room and the provision of entertainment was made possible with the \$27,954 grant.

Next is the Ashford Show on Saturday evening, where president Gilbert Fitzhannim, secretary Melissa Wilcox and treasurer Sandy Cox have put the focus on supporting local business. The \$15,000 they will receive will subsidise stall fees for producers and community organisations and cover the costs of supporting locally based arts, culture and musical offerings. Proving the sun never sets on the Northern Tablelands, still to come this year is the Inverell Show, the Armidale and New England Show, the Walcha Show, the Moree Show, the Warialda Show, the Bingara Show and the Mungindi Show. I cannot wait for all of them. The Country Shows Support Package has set up our local societies this year and in the future with fewer costs, more money and more patrons through the gate. It is going to be brilliant. I congratulate each of our show societies and committees and the many wonderful volunteers and stewards. They are legends for their continued involvement in their local shows and for showcasing the wonderful communities in our part of the world.

### PARRAMATTA ROAD TRAFFIC VOLUME

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (17:26):** I often sit in this Chamber and wonder how this Government can get it so wrong in areas of such great need. My electorate has the second-largest population in the State, the second-highest unemployment rate, the second-highest homelessness rate, and the largest cohort of single mothers living in poverty. Putting the pork-barrelling aside, it makes me think, "How do you get it so wrong, when you have the data and the economic statistics but decide that this is not somewhere we should invest?"

The Premier confirmed in the Chamber today what I have always believed: The Government does not bother looking at the data. During question time today the Premier said, "We are building the roads and the infrastructure to reduce traffic on Parramatta Road." That is what he said in the Chamber today. Every person in the electorates of Granville and Auburn knew that putting tolls back onto the M4 meant that traffic would increase on Parramatta Road, which quite frankly was already at capacity. The Government's own environmental impact statement said that traffic would increase by 20 per cent. That 20 per cent increase on Parramatta Road in the Granville and Auburn electorates has had a huge impact on the local community and the local area. Blind Freddy could have told you the traffic was going to increase when you impose a toll starting at Parramatta.

The Silverwater-Sydney Olympic Park precinct has a turnover in normal years of \$5.5 billion. It is bigger than the Parramatta CBD and it is driving the economy. It has the advanced manufacturing industry that those on the other side of the Chamber profess to be interested in. The next exit where there is no toll, Olympic Drive, goes to the Sydney Markets. Of course, all the trucks are going to come off at Parramatta Road and block up Parramatta Road from Parramatta and Woodville Road all the way down past Olympic Drive and Centenary Drive at Sydney Olympic Park. Blind Freddy could have told you that, and the Government's own report tells you that. The Premier speaks in this Chamber and tells a completely different story to that of his own Government reports, which stated that traffic would not only increase but increase significantly in the part of Sydney that drives our food distribution and manufacturing.

The result of that decision by the Government is that suburbs such as Guildford and Merrylands—where drivers would normally get onto the M4 prior to the tolls—have become a rat run through the suburbs of South Granville and Auburn, causing absolute chaos on Mona Street and Wellington Road. I note that in September last year the Government announced that it would have a \$5 billion WestInvest fund to rejuvenate western Sydney communities and boost jobs. One of the projects is clearing local traffic. This press release was put out in September of last year. At the end of last year I wrote to Matt Kean saying that I had been approached by many people, and if the Government was going to fix up one thing, how about fixing up the Mona Street and Wellington Road local traffic, which is at a standstill due to the tolls on the WestConnex. I wrote to Matt Kean last year asking for the details of the grant for \$3 billion for western Sydney, to fix up the local traffic. Will there be unsolicited bids that the Government will look at?

There has been a deafening silence from the Government about this fund. But we are used to that on this side of the Chamber. We have received no details and there has been no community consultation or consultation with the members representing western Sydney as to what the fund will include and who will have access to it. The question for this Government is: When will you read the data and the reports that tell you what is happening and allocate money to the areas that have been subjected to the biggest impact? Here is an idea: When you announce a fund in September 2021 and the local western Sydney MPs write to you for the detail, how about you get off your backside and send it to us.

### SUSTAINABLE CITIES

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport) (17:31):** Much like other parts of New South Wales and the western world, house prices in my community of Pittwater have escalated rapidly over the pandemic. Setting aside the broader challenges of unaffordable housing, the most significant reason house prices in Pittwater have risen so quickly is that our isolation from the rest of Sydney is no longer a constraint on living there. In the past, lengthy commutes to the city helped to make Pittwater relatively affordable for homebuyers. Now, as working from home is an attractive arrangement for those privileged to be able to do so, living in Pittwater has become a more desirable option for a wider range of people.

Anecdotally, we are seeing a huge influx of new residents from the eastern suburbs and inner north ready to embrace our incredible environment. It is made easier by remote working. For so many, the pandemic has been an opportunity for greater flexibility for workers. The initial disruption of the pandemic has given way to more liberty and freedom for workers to choose how and when they work. It has given new opportunities for parents to spend time with their children, to embrace local neighbourhoods and public spaces, and to live healthier lives chasing individual pursuits. Some companies have chosen to embrace working from anywhere as the default arrangements for their employees. Atlassian is building a revolutionary timber skyscraper as its global headquarters at Central Station, but it expects its staff may only come into the office four times a year.

There is another perspective: The privilege of working from home is not a privilege afforded to all. For medical workers, teachers, cleaners, transport workers and industrial workers, working from the comfort of home has never been a realistic option. The very idea of essential workers is an important reminder for white-collar workers. Surely if their job can be done from the home office, what is to stop the job moving to Bangkok or to Bangladesh? As the peak of the pandemic recedes we really need to consider the question of the imperative for white-collar workers to come back to the city to work, while recognising those arrangements are very likely to change. There is evidence that, contrary to expectation, working from home is making the work day longer. Without a separation of places for working and for living, it is hard to turn off the laptop or put devices out of sight. Research by McKinsey found that younger workers eager to learn the ropes and progress in their careers are less likely to have a separate working space in their home. They are the age group most keen to return to the office.

We should expect that the pandemic will force us to question our assumptions about culture and the economy. Recent debate over school hours recognises that although we have defaulted to a 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. school day, this does not reflect higher female workforce participation rates, nor the best pedagogy on the times of day students best learn. At a time when infrastructure investment will help drive our economic recovery from the pandemic, we will need to make swift judgements about how our community will move around the city and the State. For example, is investing in mass transit the best option at a time when a large share of the workforce may be making the traditional radial commute less often than ever before? Does our infrastructure program need to shift to focus on the movement of goods rather than supporting our decentralising cities? Multiple minor projects, rather than major megaprojects, might be a more appropriate method of building sustainable cities. I noted with interest the comments of Professor John Quiggin of the University of Queensland in *The Conversation* earlier this week, in relation to the five-day working week.

He argues that a four-day working week would lift worker productivity and that slight reductions to wages for employees and profits for businesses would be more than offset by happier livelihoods for the many. In a world of globalised capital and un-unionised workforces, those changes are not likely to be generated by the great conflicts of old. Changes in our working culture and geography will be driven by incremental shifts that reflect precise economic, social and environmental conditions. In Sydney, places like Surry Hills and the South Eveleigh rail yards have shown how good leadership and careful planning can support emerging economies and new jobs where old industries once stood. All that puts the onus on businesses, property owners and city authorities to work together to make a compelling case for workers to return to offices.

At the CBD Summit last week the Premier and I heard a range of proposals from business and government about how we can get our city centres humming again. Paul Nicolaou from Business Sydney made a terrific and sober contribution to the summit which recognised that the revival of all city districts cannot be guaranteed. One-off events are likely to only have a short-term impact on uplifting activity. Government can lead the conversation on the future of cities but it will require a collaborative effort to ensure that we have a consolidated approach to getting people back to offices and making a compelling case—not just doing it by mandates but also doing it through encouragements and incentives. We all have an interest in seeing our city centres thrive. For instance, superannuation funds are the driving force in commercial real estate investment in Australia. Both want to see a stimulation of economic activity to use their assets. Their members want to see their retirement incomes thrive but may enjoy the benefits of going to the office less regularly. American architect Daniel Burnham wrote:

The delightfulness of the city is an element of the first importance to its prosperity, for those who make fortunes will stay, and others come if the attractions are strong enough and the money thus kept at home, added to that freely spent by visitors, will be enough to ensure continuous good times.

This quote is as true now as it was when the royal commission for the improvement of the City of Sydney quoted it, writing in 1909. The death of cities have been much heralded, but so often they have survived and reinvented themselves. With conscious planning, good design, cooperative management and support for original and innovative ideas, our city centres will rise again.

#### **DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (17:36):** I take this opportunity to speak about the Community Building Partnership grant program. A number of community organisations within my electorate have benefited from the grant program over the years. The 2021 round of grants was finalised towards the end of last year and successful applications have been announced. It is pleasing to know that \$400,000 will be shared across a number of wonderful grassroots organisations in my community. I advise the House of some of the projects that will come to fruition thanks to this great funding.

The Concord High School P&C Association will receive \$150,000 of the \$400,000 grant for an amenity refurbishment of Concord High School. The funding will contribute towards upgrading bathrooms, bubblers and seating. The project will also benefit the 10 community groups and approximately 15,000 additional residents of my electorate who use Concord High School facilities outside of school hours each year. I know that funding will make a real difference at Concord high. This school needs a major injection of funds to bring it up to date, which we have heard about over the past week in this place. The New South Wales Government has a real opportunity to fund this great school. I put on record an invitation for the education Minister to meet with the P&C of Concord High School. It is the only public high school in my electorate and I am supportive of the school community.

Concord Public School P&C will receive \$50,000 through the Community Building Partnership grant to refurbish the current playground. The project will see the asphalt replaced with a rubber softfall surface treatment. I particularly acknowledge and thank the committees of those two P&Cs for their commitment to improving and enhancing their school amenities and facilities. One of the most heartening experiences of being a local member is seeing the great work of local organisations within their communities. Often the Community Building Partnership grant is the only source of external funding that assists grassroots organisations. Not all projects require large sums though and the projects that are funded are important to their respective communities. It has been heartening that the 2021 grant round has had a variety of different projects across a number of different aspects and community groups.

The Wellbank Children's Centre submitted a successful application to establish a biodiversity community garden. The vision for this project is to create a safe and accessible community garden for locals to gather together and connect with nature and the local community more broadly. This project is a great way for locals to meet and make meaningful friendships, which will benefit residents in the years to come. St Ambrose Parish in Concord West will be using the grant program to build a ramp to provide wheelchair access to the church building. I know that this project will mean a lot to the parishioners of St Ambrose. Providing access for all abilities is a priority objective of community buildings and facilities in my electorate.

In terms of local sporting projects, the Sydney Cricket Club will construct an additional two cricket pitches at Drummoyne Oval. This will support the growing cricket community in my electorate, including the growing female participation in this great sport. Although I am unable to mention all of the wonderful projects that were successful in the 2021 Community Building Partnership grants, I extend a hearty congratulations to all of the organisations that were successful in this round. I look forward to seeing these projects being completed. I understand that the 2022 round of Community Building Partnership grants will open later this year. I encourage all local community organisations in my electorate to make an application for community infrastructure projects that will deliver positive social and recreational outcomes for the community.

### VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY EVENTS

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (17:40):** The Vaucluse electorate is a diverse community of ethnicities, faiths and cultures. On Australia Day we celebrate those differences, cherish what it means to be Australian and celebrate with those pledging to become Australians for the first time. This year Australia Day citizenship ceremonies hosted by my local councils, Waverley and Woollahra, were online due to COVID-19, like most of the citizenship ceremonies during the pandemic. Nevertheless, even though they were remote they were very happy occasions. We welcomed 71 new citizens to my local community, including 42 citizens who live in the Waverley council area and 29 from the Woollahra council area. I warmly welcomed these citizens, complimenting and congratulating them on the decision they had made to call our part of Australia their home.

Australia Day is a time to acknowledge those people in our community who have contributed their personal professional efforts to making a difference. This afternoon I congratulate the Australia Day 2022 Honours List recipients from the eastern suburbs. Firstly, I congratulate Paddington resident Adrian Boss, OAM, on a medal in the general division for his services to the community, particularly his advocacy for cycling programs and infrastructure. Double Bay resident Professor Leslie Burnett, AM, was made a member in the general division for his service to pathology, medical research and professional societies, especially through his role as a principal medical geneticist and a medical director at the Garvan Institute.

Bronte resident Mark Cotter, OAM, was recognised for his service to surf lifesaving in Australia and extended volunteer services to one of my two local surf clubs, the North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club. I have worked with Mark over the years I have been a local member of the club. He is such a special part of that club and has dedicated a lot of his life and effort to it. Woollahra resident Professor Emerita Andrea Durbach, AM, was recognised for her significant services to law, human rights and tertiary education, principally at UNSW. Paddington resident John Hartigan, AO, known as "Harto", was made an officer in the general division for his distinguished services to the media industry, Indigenous welfare and, of course, to sport. Bellevue Hill resident Rick Holliday-Smith, AM, was recognised for his services to business through a range of leadership roles. Vaucluse resident Alan Joffe, OAM, was recognised for his services to our Jewish community, including with COA Sydney Woollahra and B'nai B'rith. Rose Bay resident Donald Magarey, OAM, was recognised for his services to law and music.

Darling Point resident Dr Helen Nugent, AC, was recognised for her distinguished services to business, the arts and the community, and her policy leadership in supporting people with disability. Dr Nugent has served as chair of a number of organisations and also as president and director of a local school of mine, Cranbrook School in Bellevue Hill. Rose Bay resident Nicolas Parkhill, AM, was recognised for his services to community health, especially to improve the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS. He has served as CEO of ACON Health since 2009. Darling Point resident Emeritus Professor Arie Rotem, AM, was recognised for his services to tertiary education and public health. He has been emeritus professor at the UNSW Faculty of Medicine since 2006.

Vaucluse resident Rod Sims, AO, was recognised for his service to public administration and, notably, for his role as chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission from 2011 to 28 March this year. I am also pleased to congratulate one of my local residents, Gina Cass-Gottlieb, who is taking over Rod's role as the new chair of the ACCC from March. Gina is very experienced, and no doubt she will be a great fit for the legacy that Rod has set up and leaves behind. Every year I am amazed by the level of community contribution and professional excellence of residents in the eastern suburbs, among a broader Australian contribution to community. I am very proud to share it with the House today. I extend my congratulations to all our Australia Day Honours recipients, and I commend my private member's statement to the House.

### MANLY WHARF 3 UPGRADE

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (17:45):** This evening I speak about a terrific project that is underway in Manly. For many years I have campaigned for the upgrade of Manly Wharf 3, an old wharf in Manly that services the Manly Fast Ferry service, which this year has been celebrating its thirteenth birthday. The wharf is an old timber one with no wet weather cover or accessibility provision for wheelchairs or prams. For that reason, I have long campaigned to provide better infrastructure at the

wharf. The upgrade of the wharf and the rejuvenation of Manly Cove, where the old Sea Life aquarium stands, is now underway. Funding for both projects comes from the Government's \$205 million maritime stimulus spend on infrastructure and safety upgrades.

The upgrade means that a new hydraulic platform will be constructed at the wharf, with seating, weather protection and proper gangways. Importantly, those changes will improve pedestrian access around the wharf. They will speed up boarding and disembarking and provide customers with shelter from wind, rain and sun. The project also includes enhancing the former Sea Life aquarium site by removing the aquarium building and reconnecting the Pavilion, which is a heritage building, with the beach. Many members will be familiar with the aquarium, which was built in the sixties and housed marine life until it closed in 2018. The building itself still houses giant custom-built tanks and enclosures that are not easily adapted for future use. The building also blocks the beautiful heritage building behind it, the Manly Pavilion. The upgrade presents us with a terrific opportunity to improve public waterfront access, with the possibility to include a small wharf for use by recreational vessels at that end of the harbour.

Detailed environmental studies will form part of the environmental impact assessment for both projects in Manly Cove, which are in their early stages. The assessment will lead to modifications in design, identifying and implementing safeguards during the construction and operational phases. The environmental assessment process gathered baseline environmental information. Many constituents will have seen the crews out on the water, and that assessment identified several key environmental sensitivities. They included threatened species such as Manly's famous little penguin colony, which makes this area its home and breeding ground. The aquatic ecology and biodiversity includes other Manly residents such as white seahorses, sea moths and pipefish, which make their homes among the seagrass meadows and pylons of the wharf and pool. More detailed environmental studies will be carried out to ensure the protection of those important residents and their homes in the water.

I offer my sincere thanks to Transport for NSW for such a comprehensive community engagement period. It had four onsite pop-up sessions at Manly Wharf, with over 650 interactions with members of the Manly community and beyond. Over 13,000 notifications were distributed, 152 feedback forms completed and several media articles written. That fantastic engagement clearly shows that the Manly community is very supportive of this long-overdue upgrade of Wharf 3 and the terrific benefits that it will bring to the community. There is broad support for demolishing, enhancing and opening up the space where the former aquarium sat. It is a pleasure to see the New South Wales Government opening up that space and giving back prime harbourfront land to the people of Manly and anybody from across the State who wishes to come and enjoy wonderful Manly. They will enjoy it even more once they see the beautiful new spot and the open public space on the waterfront. I know the member for Sydney will be on the ferry, coming across to enjoy his time in beautiful Manly.

### **NURSE STAFFING AND PAY RATES**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:49):** Tonight I speak in support of our healthcare workers, who are experiencing exhaustion and burnout as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our nurses, paramedics, doctors and hospital workers including cleaners, administration staff and allied health workers have been doing the heavy lifting during the pandemic, particularly during this year's Omicron wave. Over summer, the Omicron wave saw COVID-19 infections skyrocket across Sydney and the State, just as we were opening up after the Delta wave. Over one million people have been infected this year alone. And while Omicron is considered a milder strain than Delta, people can still get very sick and the sheer transmissibility has seen hospital admissions at their highest since the start of the pandemic.

In the first two weeks of January, New South Wales hospitals accommodated over 3,500 COVID patients, 40 per cent of whom were people over 70 and 7 per cent of whom were children and teenagers. Daily death tolls reached higher than at any other time in the pandemic, including during the Delta wave. Intensive care and high dependency units in some hospitals have been overwhelmed. At the same time, healthcare workers were being infected with or exposed to COVID-19. There have been days when over 5,000 hospital workers in the State were in isolation, adding pressure to an already stretched system. Nurse-to-patient ratios plummeted, with reports of high dependency units [HDUs] having one-fifth of nurses absent at certain times. The HDU ratio is normally one nurse to three patients but that was cut to one nurse per five patients.

Less experienced nurses had to do higher risk activities with less support. Similarly, paramedics came under immense pressure, many working 13-hour shifts after which they continued to be on call. To deal with the problem the Government allowed healthcare workers who are close contacts but do not have symptoms to return to work. But this created new risks, with many workers worried that their workplace became less safe and more stressful. The impact on the health system has been harmful, with emergency wait and ambulance response times longer, leaving critically ill and injured patients at risk. Patients are not being seen in time and healthcare workers are reporting that the care given to patients needing hospitalisation has been compromised.

On 10 January elective surgery was put on a temporary hold, with only a partial reinstatement on 7 February. Delaying elective surgery like hip replacements or kidney stone removal may not be life threatening but it can severely affect quality of life including mobility, pain and discomfort. With healthcare workers working significantly longer hours, many are feeling exhausted and say their capacity to work their best has been affected. The already stressful work environment is made even harder with the need to wear personal protective equipment over long hours, which is especially difficult in the heat. It is frightening to hear that nurses and healthcare workers are starting to resign in large numbers because the pressure is too much. This is understandable given the stress, burnout and what some would describe as unsafe conditions. We must take action to retain and grow this essential workforce.

This week nurses held their first statewide strike in almost 10 years and New South Wales paramedics are currently taking industrial action. These decisions were not made lightly. Nurses are desperately calling for staffing ratios and fairer pay, as is the case in Victoria and Queensland, and paramedics, who are the lowest-paid paramedics in the country, want better resourcing and pay. The Victorian Government has recognised public sector nurses and midwives through a new hospital surge support allowance. I call for a similar allowance for healthcare workers in this State and I support the NurseKeeper campaign, which calls for an immediate \$5,000 bonus and pandemic pay for all nurses and paramedics working in the New South Wales public health system during the pandemic, and any willing to immediately return.

When the healthcare system comes under too much pressure, people feel unsafe, affecting health, mental health and the economy. It is vital that we provide a safe, satisfying and rewarding workplace for all healthcare workers that acknowledges the risks they take and burden they carry for all of us. The Omicron wave has made it clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is far from being over and we cannot predict what will happen next. But we know that we need a strong, safe and reliable healthcare system with happy employees. I call on the Government to support our healthcare workers with pandemic and fairer pay, and safe working conditions.

#### NURSE STAFFING AND PAY RATES

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:54):** For the first time in nearly a decade our hardworking nurses and midwives rallied outside New South Wales Parliament. They called out the Government for leaving the burden of the pandemic on their shoulders. They called out the Government for wanting to remove their COVID-19 workers compensation safety net. They called out the Government for not providing better facilities and pay for the thousands of health staff that have been on the front lines, battling throughout the lockdowns and the Delta and Omicron waves, unable to see their loved ones because they have wanted to protect their patients, their families and themselves.

I was on an online forum yesterday with workers from across New South Wales. I spoke to a number of them. One was a paramedic named Jess. She has not seen her family, who live 45 minutes away, for 12 months. She was talking about the method and steps that her and her colleagues have to undertake every single day to make sure that they, and their colleagues and patients, are protected. Everything is done methodically. Everything is done in a considered way to make sure that people are protected around them. They have not been able to see their families for 12 months. I urge the Premier to sit down with these workers and listen to what they have to say.

Every single member of my community supports and appreciates the hardships these nurses have endured and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts for their selflessness. The challenges they are facing now have been amplified by the pandemic but they have been enduring them for years. How many vacancies are still yet to be filled? I know that in my local hospital, Canterbury Hospital, the Government has left positions unfilled for six months or a year. No-one understands these hardships better than nurses, midwives and all health staff at Canterbury Hospital, who also joined the rally on Tuesday.

For years I have been saying that Canterbury Hospital needs to be redeveloped. The last major redevelopment was almost 25 years ago. My colleagues the member for Lakemba, the member for Summer Hill and the former member for Strathfield, my community and I have been calling on the Government for a very long time. The Federal members for Watson and Barton have also been calling on the State Government to invest in Canterbury Hospital. The population has increased. We have a number of illnesses and diseases. We have one of the highest rates of gestational diabetes. The Government is directing a whole lot of development in our community without the coordinated, considered and orderly infrastructure, particularly when it comes to the hospital.

Our nurses, midwives, paramedics, doctors, ancillary staff and all our health staff risk their lives every time they come to work. They are working double shifts. They are overtired, overburdened and understaffed in a hospital system that is unable to meet the increasing demands of a community rife with the pandemic. Our hospital has a lack of beds. It does not have palliative care. There is no capacity for renal dialysis, angiograms or MRIs. It is unacceptable that people in my electorate have to travel up to an hour to Concord hospital three days a week

for a six-hour dialysis treatment. Canterbury Hospital should have the facilities to look after these vulnerable people who have given so much to Australia.

In 2021 our hospitals saw a 48 per cent increase in emergency presentations from the year before, with 10 per cent of patients having to wait over seven hours before leaving the emergency ward. Nearly one in five people in my community are aged 60 or older, and our aging population means that there is a growing demand for palliative care that we do not have the capacity for. The population in the Canterbury-Bankstown local government area is projected to grow by 39 per cent by 2031. This Government is saying it supports frontline health workers and essential workers, and that it is prioritising our hospitals. I acknowledge Minister Hazzard, who came to visit at the end of last year. But now we need to see action, because the staff are stressed. They are tired and fed up. The burden is on their shoulders. At the same time there are limitations that our community has, particularly in terms of English language communication. We saw that during the pandemic. This is another stress for our community and health workers.

### **PARRAMATTA CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Corrections) (17:59):** Congratulations, Mr Temporary Speaker Layzell, on your elevation. It gives me great pleasure to bring to the attention of the House the great work that Parramatta Christian Church is doing. The last 12 months have been quite challenging for the community at the church, as they have been for many. Like so many other organisations, the changes to restrictions as well as the COVID pandemic have meant that it had to keep adapting the way it held its services and ministry throughout the year. Its members began 2021 being able to meet together in person, which was wonderful as they were able to reconnect with people that they had not seen for an extended period of time. The church was able to have many wonderful services during that time, including the Easter services.

One of the many great things that Parramatta Christian Church focused on during this time was providing pastoral care and support to the congregation and community. The leaders were intentionally making regular contact with people to check in and see how they were doing and to support them. They particularly focused on people living alone who were finding the isolation challenging. I thank all the leaders for their commitment. Many people from the church made time to catch up one on one with others, go for walks or exercise together when the restrictions allowed so that people were able to stay connected.

The Parramatta Christian Church also ran a FoodCare program, which sold discounted groceries, and it was able to partner with Foodbank NSW to provide hampers to overseas students. It was pleasing to see many of those in need embrace the appointment-based format and continue to access the services throughout both lockdowns. The church also discounted prices further on several occasions to provide extra support and help to people receiving Centrelink payments, refugees and others who were experiencing hardship during this time. One highlight from the last 12 months was that many people in the church embraced Project Love, an initiative introduced to encourage and challenge the church to look beyond itself and to think of practical ways it could show the love of Jesus to others. A couple of ideas that proved particularly successful were people sending meals via delivery services such as Uber and reaching out to neighbours with care packages. The church received great feedback from many people who felt encouraged and cared for throughout this project.

The Parramatta Christian Church also partnered with Ryde Hospital and their charity Dignity, which conducted a Christmas hamper drive to help and support those in the community who were experiencing homelessness. The church really got behind the project and was able to provide clothing and non-perishable food items to support it. One of the core values of the church is to partner with other agencies and community service providers to find ways that it can help the City of Parramatta and beyond. In light of this, the church was able to support the City Tattersalls Club's upcoming charity ride to raise funds for veterans through RSL LifeCare and those experiencing mental health challenges through Gotcha4Life.

The Parramatta Christian Church has done many amazing and wonderful things to help those in need. I acknowledge and thank all of its leaders and congregation members, who went above and beyond in generously volunteering their time and energy to care for, serve and support others during what has been a challenging time. It was great to catch up with the pastor in the past couple of weeks to look at his plans for the future. He has some great plans to partner with other community organisations to continue the church's service to the community. I have known the church for the past 10 or 11 years and it continues to do great work in terms of pastoral care.

The past 24 months have shown the church's depth of compassion and support for the community, which it delivers in practical ways and through pastoral care that is so needed during these times that many people have found challenging—as people did right across our country and the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. I look forward to working with the church and providing any assistance that I can as the member for Parramatta and any assistance that the New South Wales Government can to support the church's outreach programs, activities and

community events, which have proved to be very successful. I have seen the church going from strength to strength at its location in North Parramatta. It was visionary to locate there and it will continue long into the future.

### STOLEN GENERATIONS

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (18:04):** On these lands of the First People, it is with profound respect that I acknowledge Elders past, today's Elders, emerging leaders, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Gadigal country and across all of our electorates. Today and every day we must acknowledge the always present and never-diminishing pain and suffering caused to the Stolen Generations by governments and civil society institutions on these lands of the First Nations people. Children were placed into Aboriginal children's homes, such as Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home, Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home, and Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls. Some were placed into other government and non-government homes, placed into foster care or adopted.

On 13 February 2008, following the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, the Hon. Kevin Rudd, AC, the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, on behalf of the people of Australia, gave the Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, whose lives had been blighted by past government policies of forced child removal and Indigenous assimilation. This year was the fourteenth anniversary of that speech.

As shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, and on behalf of NSW Labor, I pay my sincere respect to the Stolen Generations survivors—those who were able to find their way home, those who are still on their journey, and those who sadly and tragically never made it. Today and every day we in this place, together with the First Nations people, should pause to reflect and remember. By doing so, we should desire to actively work and walk alongside—not ahead of, but with—Aboriginal peak organisations, such as Link-Up (NSW). Since the 1980s Link-Up (NSW) has supported the healing journeys of those removed from their families by delivering professional culturally sensitive and confidential research, reunions, and social and emotional wellbeing services to those over the age of 18.

I also acknowledge the work of the Stolen Generations Advisory Committee to support the implementation of the New South Wales Government response to *Unfinished Business*. *Unfinished Business* was the New South Wales Parliament General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3's report on its inquiry into Stolen Generations reparations, which was tabled in Parliament on 23 June 2016, making 35 recommendations leading to reparations. According to the Healing Foundation's *Make Healing Happen 2021* report, Stolen Generations survivors are more likely to not own a home, have worse finances, have experienced violence, suffer from a disability, and have a criminal record.

Additionally, rates of child removal in Australia have continued to rise over the last decade, with First Nations children 10 times more likely to be removed, with over 21,000 in out-of-home care as of December 2021. That makes the recommendations of the *Family is Culture* report so important. This number is projected to increase by a further 54 per cent by 2031. We are going in the wrong direction, and worse, we are doing very little about it. As Prime Minister Rudd acknowledged in the National Apology, our failure to listen to First Nations people and our failure to act when asked can cause profound grief. Unfortunately, these failures persist today.

If true reconciliation is to be realised, it is critical that current and future New South Wales governments stop, listen and act upon the desires and dreams of the First Nations people in areas including heritage, justice, health, education and a pathway to Treaty. Reconciliation requires a full airing of views and issues. It requires governments to listen to First Nations people and to seek to understand their aspirations and desires. The powerful *Uluru Statement from the Heart* calls for "Voice, Treaty, Truth". It asks all Australians to join with First Nations people "to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future".

I am pleased that the New South Wales and Federal Labor parties support the Uluru Statement, and rightly so. The future of First Peoples' lives, aspirations and recognition is not a historic reference or a myth—it is real and it is now. It starts with listening. The apology was, and shall remain, in the words of Linda Burney, MP, a "cultural moment shared by the country". She went on to say:

We should never leave it unstated just how long the reconciliation journey has been in our country.

That work continues, it never ends. As elected members of Parliament, we all have a responsibility to make sure that truth-telling and the lives of First Nations people are made better and enriched by better government policy that gives them more self-determination and a greater say in their own lives.

### TRIBUTE TO JOHN WESLEY OWSNETT

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (18:09):** I pay tribute to John Wesley Owsnett, who sadly passed away last year. Affectionately known as Wes to his many friends, he was the principal of his longstanding family

real estate business, Chambers Fleming Professionals in Padstow. John spent over 50 years working in the real estate industry. In my local community, he was known as Mr Padstow. Throughout the 21 years I have lived in Padstow, I would often see John when I was buying groceries at the local butcher or fruit and veg shop or while taking my girls to their dancing lessons. He always had a "hello" and a smile; he knew everyone.

John started his real estate career in his early 20s at an office in Bexley, before moving to Schloeffel and Sons in Padstow. He set up Chambers Fleming Professionals in Padstow after buying former mayor Carl Little's real estate office space, which was established in 1956 on the corner of Howard and Faraday roads, known to this day as Little's Corner. John was a well-known mover and shaker in the real estate industry and won several major industry awards, as has his office. It has been consistently ranked in the top three offices throughout Australia for the Professionals Real Estate group. He was also highly valued for his property market knowledge and often provided industry insight and commentary to various media outlets.

Being a registered valuer, auctioneer and justice of the peace ensured that John became a familiar face in our area, as well as becoming president of the Padstow Chamber of Commerce and president of the Padstow & District Lions Club and his involvement in many other local organisations. He was presented with the prestigious Lions Clubs International's Melvin Jones Award, the highest award in the world for the Lions movement. The award was bestowed on John in recognition of his fundraising efforts and tireless service to the community since 1973. Some of John's achievements include raising over \$500,000 in 1983 for the St Vincent's Hospital's Victor Chang Institute and more recently raising money for the Lung Foundation Australia.

John was born and raised in the local area and was a proud, active and committed member of the community, along with his wife, Joy, and his children, Belinda, Todd and Dean, who have all followed in the family tradition, each having an important role in the family business. His three children have listed and sold properties in our local area and are now all directors of the family business, a business that has grown substantially from the five staff members that John originally started with. John stood by the company motto, "Let our family take care of your family." I have read many of the tributes to John, and a common theme expressed by his former colleagues and employees was that he made them feel like part of the family. Liz Robinson, his commercial and accounts manager for 27 years, said:

He had a double lung transplant five years ago and was given five years to live. He certainly made the most of those five years and it was all about family.

Bill Kordos, John's sales agent of 19 years, said he owed all of his success to him. He said:

He was the absolute best mentor, appreciated hard workers and would always say, "Don't worry about what the competition is doing, just put your blinkers on and focus on what you do." He was also the reason I quit smoking and will be greatly missed always.

John also made a substantial contribution to various charities. Dr David Horton and the Knights of St George Heart Association wrote that they were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Wes. They said:

As a long time supporter of the Knights, Wes will be remembered as a committed member who donated generously to the Association to benefit the St George Public Hospital Cardio Thoracic unit.

Mark Brooke, the chief executive officer of the Lung Foundation Australia, wrote on behalf of the foundation, stating:

Wes is fondly remembered as a tremendous ambassador for lung health in Australia. A distinguished and eloquent advocate for increased funding for lung patient services and for lung disease research. His lung transplant story inspired many others and gave hope to Australians that better days were ahead. Wes twisted many arms to raise much needed funds for the Foundation and always did so with a devilish sense of humour. The lung health community has lost a tremendous friend.

One of John's greatest passions was the St George Illawarra Dragons. The club paid tribute to John following his passing, with former premierships-winning captain Steve Edge writing:

St George Illawarra recently lost one of its most loyal supporters in John Wesley Owsnett. Affectionately known as Wes, Owsnett was born in Peakhurst and grew up in a red V jersey. He would become a successful businessman, philanthropist, community-minded family man on top of being a Dragons tragic.

He also mentioned that the family's real estate business grew to be one of the top professional offices in Australia and that he was consistent with his generosity of time in fundraising for the many charities that he supported. Wes' support of the Dragons was unflinching and his family organisation has been a long-term, strong financial supporter of the club and its activities. Vale John Wesley Owsnett.

## **ILLAWARRA WOMEN'S TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTRE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (18:14):** Domestic and family violence services are vital to every single electorate across New South Wales. I call on the Government to fully fund the proposal to build a domestic and family violence trauma recovery centre in the Illawarra. The proposed standalone trauma recovery centre would focus on the holistic, long-term recovery of women and children who are experiencing trauma from

domestic, family and sexual violence, and would be the first of its kind in the world. In this country one in four women has experienced violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15 and one in five experience sexual violence across their lifetime. Australia currently has no integrated, comprehensive and long-term support models of recovery facilitation from domestic, family and sexual violence, and those statistics alone highlight the immense need for dedicated trauma recovery services in all our communities.

I was previously able to help secure \$50,000 in funding for the project after lobbying the Hon. Brad Hazzard, MP, the Minister for Health and former Minister for Medical Research. I thank Minister Hazzard for that \$50,000, which enabled us to kick off the project. The project includes establishing a design for the centre, a collaborative process with service providers, policymakers and women who have lived experiences of domestic and family violence. It is no secret in this House that I have been talking about domestic and family violence for a long time. The business case was completed in July 2021 by researchers at the University of New South Wales in partnership with the Illawarra Women's Health Centre in response to the *Fourth Action Plan: National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

The action plan highlighted an increasing recognition of the need to go beyond the crisis intervention model in order to further address the long-term impact of trauma. The point of the business case was for it to then be reviewed by NSW Health and inter-agency partners to reach a decision on whether to fund the project in its entirety. Unfortunately, and unsurprisingly, no decision has been made as of yet and the process has not been able to move forward. In its 2022-23 pre-budget submission Women's Health NSW recommends that the State Government support the Illawarra Women's Health Centre's proposal for a trauma recovery centre and that \$25 million be invested over an initial period of five years to facilitate the establishment of the centre. That would be \$25 million of taxpayers' money well spent.

Government members are very quick to talk the talk. Now is their opportunity to put their money where their mouths are. The centre, if fully funded, will finally give victims access to not only an adequate support resource but a physical place of care that focuses on long-term holistic recovery and rehabilitation. The establishment of a women's trauma recovery centre has been a long time coming and will provide an incentive for this new longer-term model of care to be adopted nationally. Dr Angelo Virgona has been behind the project from the get-go, as has Sally Stevenson from the Illawarra Women's Health Centre and Dr Karen Williams, who is a psychiatrist in the Illawarra. I have the utmost respect for all three of them. Dr Virgona says that he:

... backs calls for the NSW Government to be the leader in this initiative and fund the TRC. The trauma experienced by survivors of DFSV is primarily a health issue, so it is ultimately a State government responsibility. The strength of the model – cross-portfolio integration – has so far ironically also been its greatest weakness: despite establishing the TRC in the Illawarra being a key recommendation by the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence, and the NSW Government funding the business case for it back in July last year, neither the Federal nor the State Government has actually done anything more about making this a reality.

I urge the Government to make the assessment of and investment in this proposal a matter of priority, as women experiencing trauma related to domestic, family or sexual violence deserve equitable access to the best possible resources and standard of care that we are able to provide.

#### *Community Recognition Notices*

### **LOCKHART AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS WINNERS**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I congratulate Lockhart Shire Council's Australia Day awards winners for 2022. Lynette Hamson was named as both Citizen of the Year and the recipient of an Australia Day Award at a great event in Pleasant Hills. Mrs Hamson has a long, proud history of volunteering and community service. She has been involved with many festivals and events, visiting and assisting community members who are ill or recovering from illness and contributing her time to numerous local organisations. Kiara Reed, who was named the 2022 Young Citizen of the Year, made flower posies during the COVID-19 lockdown and delivered them to households in Lockhart, and the Woodhaven Hostel, to cheer people up. Sportsperson of the Year for 2022 Noah Vennell is captain of the under-17s football team for Lockhart Football Netball Club. A keen footballer, Noah has also competed in state-level cross country events. Rosslyn Nimmo, who was named an Australia Day Award winner, has also long served her community. Among her many activities is 28 years on the Murrumbidgee Local Area Health Committee. I wish to thank and congratulate the community of Pleasant Hills on hosting a wonderful Australia Day celebration this year.

### **LASKARIS FAMILY**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)**—I wish to acknowledge the kindness of the Laskaris Family to the Northern Beaches Womens Shelter. The Laskaris family reached out to the Shelter to donate a car that had belonged to their mother who had recently passed away. Jane Laskaris wanted to make sure that the car went to someone in need and the shelter was very appreciative of this gift. The family have

been so very generous as the car will now allow one of the women at shelter to be able to have more access to see her Children and gain more independence. Generosity like this is so important in our community and not only did they provide the Shelter with the vehicle, but the family donated \$500 which will pay for the upcoming registration and insurance. I thank the Laskaris Family for their kindness and generosity.

#### **HSC 2021**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)**—I ask this house recognise the five students from the Manly electorate who achieved the significant accomplishment in finishing First in Course for the State in the 2021 HSC. This includes Alysha Airey from NBSC Manly who topped the State in Japanese Extension, Also from NBSC Manly is Andre Stefan Mitchell who topped the State in Physics. Further congratulations to Esme Sergi from NBSC Freshwater who topped the state in Tourism, Travel and Events. Congratulations to Jordan Wysman of St Luke's Grammar who topped the State in Construction and congratulations to Zoe Lumby also of St Luke's who topped the State in Design and Technology. This is a superb achievement any year but to overcome a global pandemic to top your subjects is a true testament to the hard work and character of these students their support networks and their teachers. They make me so very honoured to represent the people of Manly and give me great hope for our future.

#### **BERT LE-MERTON**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to pay tribute to the late Bert Le-Merton who recently passed on the 6th of December 2021, aged 103 years. Bert was always committed to serving the local community and I offer my condolences to his family, children and grandchildren. In 1939, Bert was 21 and he was called up for full-time training in the military. While participating in the initial three-month training camp he enlisted in the Second Australian Imperial Force knowing that the war was going to be an important event in his life and the making of a safer and more secure Australia. After his initial training he returned to Sydney and was transferred to Ingleburn as a member of the 2/13th Battalion. During the course of World War II he fought at Tobruk, El Alamein, Borneo and Kokoda. He became a household name in 2020 walking around his local streets to an equivalent distance of the Kokoda Track, to raise funds for veteran support charity 'Soldier On'. His epitaph from the family states 'courageous to the end, he will be in our hearts always.' Rest in peace Legend of the Nepean, Bert Le-Merton.

#### **REGENTVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I am pleased to recognise that in my electorate of Mulgoa, Regentville Public School was a recipient of the ANZAC Community Grants 2021. Their project, which was allocated \$1,000 is an ANZAC-themed commemorative mural to support the education of students and the local community about the service of the often forgotten contributions that Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples made. They have worked with their local Returned Services League to identify and highlight the profiles of local Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples service personnel, past and present within the local community. Students from Kindergarten to Year 6 are investigating and understanding that events in our nation's history contain many stories of differing perspectives. Through this teaching, the aim is to form an even greater appreciation for the historical experiences of cultural groups within our society. This ANZAC community grant project creates a unique opportunity for students to construct a space that supports the comprehension and understanding of the experiences of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples servicemen and women in our local area. Thank you to Regentville Public School for carrying out this important work.

#### **LISA DONNELLY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—Whether it's taking your family to visit the many lights displays or sharing with the community your own creations, I would like to congratulate local resident Lisa Donnelly who has created the perfect group for lovers of all things Christmas lights, 'Glenmore Park Christmas Lights'. The Facebook group was formed in November 2021 dedicated to sharing the wondrous lights display we have in the neighbourhood. Lisa says she was motivated to start the group because her family loves Christmas lights. Every year in the two weeks leading up to Christmas, her family and many others from Glenmore Park drive around each night looking at the amazing lights displays and she noticed that there was no one place that was dedicated to posting the locations, making it easier to map out where to go each night. Lisa says the key to a good Christmas lights display is definitely the music, blow-up displays and interactive displays for the kids to get involved with or to get up close to touch. Congratulations Lisa on creating this group to share the magic of Christmas with the local community.

#### **SJH COMMUNICATIONS FINALIST**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I congratulate Shane Hamilton, Managing Director, and the team at SJH Communications who have been announced as finalists in the 27th Hunter Region Business Excellence

Awards. SJH Communications is a Hunter Valley based telecommunications service provider. The organisation has grown steadily since its commencement in 2013. The company deliver services for both domestic and business customers across a wide range of telecommunications systems and NBN/internet services. 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 Shane and his team the very best of luck as a finalist as they enjoy the Gala Dinner on 11th March 2022. Importantly I wish them ongoing success as we continue to move through the pandemic and navigate our ever changing communications environment.

#### **COMMUNITY SUPPORT FROM THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF TELARAH/RUTHERFORD**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—The omnipresence of the pandemic in our lives over the last two years has resulted in so much change for all of us in many ways. Many proudly self-sufficient people have had cause to seek assistance, perhaps for the first time. I am very proud that so many people in the Maitland community have risen to provide that assistance and to freely offer that helping hand.

One such group is the Anglican Parish of Telarah and Rutherford. Twice a week they have provided a drive-through Food Hamper service. This valuable, COVID safe service has been augmented by members delivering hampers to those unable to make their way to St Christopher's Church. The hampers have also included fresh fruit and vegetables grown in the community garden. The Parish acknowledge Oz Harvest and Slow Food Hunter as well as the Rotary Club: Rutherford as supporters of this work. I want to extend a hearty thank you to the volunteers of the Parish on behalf of the broader Maitland community and commend them for their selfless contributions to our city.

#### **ZARA RUSHFORD**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—Zara Rushford is 11 years old and started year 6 at St Aloysius Catholic Primary School this year. Zara is also currently fundraising for the Starlight Foundation by completing the Starlight Super Swim. The Starlight Super Swim is held across February each year, and aims to raise funds and awareness for the Starlight Foundation. In 2021, at age 10, Zara swam 29kms in 28 days, and raised an impressive \$2,020 for this excellent cause. This year Zara is aiming to swim 32kms in 28 days. That equates to 46 laps per day – a mammoth effort in my book: a mammoth effort for the benefit of others. Zara has set a target to raise \$2,500 in 2022. The Starlight Foundation works to bring fun, joy and laughter to sick kids who are facing the challenges of serious illness. They help kids of all ages, with injury, disability, or illness, because they believe happiness matters to the health of those kids. Many of us here today will know children and families who have benefitted from the selfless work of the Starlight Foundation and its family of volunteers. Outstanding community minded people just like Zara Rushford. Swim on Zara!

#### **PORT HACKING PUTTERS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I congratulate Port Hacking Putters Commodore Brad Whittaker, wife Fiona Bell-Whittaker and crews of 45 classic styled vessels on another successful Putt Putt Regatta on 13 February. Each year the dedicated crews turn out on our beautiful Shire waterways to pay tribute to our local boating history and raise awareness of boating safety. The colourful flotilla made its way from Hungry Point, around Gunnamatta Bay and Burraneer Bay to the finish line at Lilli Pilli sandbar. Passengers on the historic Tom Thumb III helped raise funds for Marine Rescue Botany Port Hacking, a great initiative of Cronulla Ferries and Dominelli Ford to help financially support operational running costs and the needs of our local volunteer Marine Rescue unit. Category winners were Swanee (best putter), Nudger (best dressed), Shabby Chic (pride of the port), Embee (Commodores call), Remember When (heritage award) and Tikki (ship shape award). The skipper of Millie was awarded the 'Commander's Commendation' for boating safety after logging on to the free Marine Rescue NSW smartphone safety app. Congratulations to the winners, all of the crews and the regatta team for contributing to a colourful and successful community event.

#### **THE HEALTHY BODY COMPANY - SUTHERLAND SHIRE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I congratulate The Healthy Body Company in Caringbah for winning the health improvement services category at the 2022 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. The Healthy Body Company is a family run business with a team of qualified health professionals including physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, remedial massage therapists and yoga and pilates teachers. The team works together not only to fix injuries but to provide expert advice to clients and help them and the broader community lead healthy active lives. Locals Trisha Cashmere and Stephen Cunningham have owned the Caringbah practice since 2017 and they are building on the 20 year legacy of the former Hardman and McCarthy Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Centre. Trisha says with many fantastic providers in the area, they were honoured just to be a finalist in the category. Well done to Trisha, Stephen and the team at the Health Body Company in Caringbah for being awarded the best health improvement service for 2022.

### NULLA ACCOUNTANTS - SUTHERLAND SHIRE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I congratulate Nulla Accountants of Caringbah on being awarded best new business at the 2022 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. Established in 2019, Nulla Accountants specialise in outsourced accountancy for small and medium businesses. The firm helps businesses succeed by virtually providing the expertise of an in house accounting department or chief financial officer. Led by Jana Meresova of Cronulla, Nulla Accountants says what sets it apart is expertise in business accounting and information technology, as the team combines the latest trends and apps to make work easier for clients. Jana says her commercial background has helped her understand what it's like as a business owner and she looks at her clients' money as her money. Well done to Jana and the Nulla Accountants team on being named the Sutherland Shire's best new business.

### SNOWY VALLEYS AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Snowy Valleys Council has honoured some of its hard-working residents at the 2022 Australia Day Awards. Raymond "Dossie" Carr was named Snowy Valleys 2022 Citizen of the Year. Mr Carr has long been dedicated to his community including more than five decades of involvement with the Tumut Blues rugby league club and the Tumut Town Band.

Young Citizen of the Year, Savannah Cooper, is one of the 2022 captains at Batlow Technology School. Savannah plays multiple sports and recently raised more than \$1000 for cancer research. Snowy Valleys 2022 Sportsperson of the Year Thomas Roche is a member of a wide range of sporting codes and has achieved significant accolades at local, school and state level. Martin Canteros-Paz, who was named as Snowy Valleys 2022 Environmental Champion of the Year, strives to improve the environment and make the planet more sustainable. Patricia Mangelsdorf, who received the Snowy Valleys 2022 Service to the Community award, works many unpaid hours for St Vincent de Paul in Tumut. She has been busy supporting the Batlow bushfire survivors. I wish to thank and congratulate all winners.

### MURRURUNDI COMMUNITY AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I would like to congratulate the following winners of the Upper Hunter Shire Council – Murrurundi Community Australia Day Awards 2022. Dayna Hynes, who was named Murrurundi Citizen of the Year. Sam Levik on being the recipient of the Murrurundi Achiever of the Year title. Montana Rando, who received the Murrurundi Young Achiever of the Year Award. Push 48 for being recognised as the Community Group of the Year. And, Doing it for our Farmers acknowledged for Excellence in Community Services. The recipients are to be commended for their community work within the Murrurundi community and I thank them for their contribution to the Upper Hunter electorate.

### SCONE COMMUNITY AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I would like to congratulate the following winners of the Upper Hunter Shire Council – Scone Community Australia Day Awards 2022. John Brooks was honoured with the Scone Citizen of the Year and Upper Hunter Shire's Citizen of the Year titles for his contribution to Legacy and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Support Committee. Emily Grainger was named Scone Young Citizen of the Year. Janie Jordan recognised as the Scone Achiever of the Year. Samuel Barry received the Scone Young Achiever of the Year Award. Dr. John Paradise was thanked for his Excellence in Health Services. And, Pauline Carrigan was recognised for Excellence in Mental Health Services for the 'Where There's a Will' education program. The recipients are to be commended for their community work within the Scone community and I thank them for their contribution to the Upper Hunter electorate.

### NOMINEES JUNIOR LIFESAVER OF THE YEAR

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Congratulations to the nominees for the Lower North Coast Newcastle Permanent Junior Lifesaver of the Year Gemma Eady- Muxlow and Finlay Elmer who were standout performers overall during the 2021 season. Junior lifesavers Gemma Eady-Muxlow and Finlay Elmer are outstanding role models and community leaders in their community. They have dedicated countless hours of service as members of the Crowdy Head Surf Life Saving Club and continue to lead by example inspiring others through their volunteering. The Lower Newcastle Permanent Junior Lifesaver of the Year award acknowledges members who have demonstrated a well-rounded contribution to patrols, education and surf sports as well as a commitment to their club and the community broadly. If successful, the winners will be invited to attend the Junior Development Camp in Sydney the following month, with a chance of being named the SLSNSW Junior Lifesaver of the Year. I wish Gemma and Finlay all the very best tonight at Cape Hawke SLSC in Foster and no matter what the outcome I know both candidates have a bright future ahead in surf lifesaving. Thank you for your service.

### **ROTARY CLUB OF DISTRICT 9650 YOUNG LEADERS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I proudly rise as a Rotarian to welcome the recently chartered Rotary Club of District 9650 Young Leaders, celebrated on Saturday 22 January at Panthers Port Macquarie. The Young Leaders Rotary Club was formed on 16 July 2021 from a mix of attendees who participated in the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards [RYLA]. They have a key focus on professional development and facilitating growth of the next generation of community leaders. Co-Presidents Caitlin Davey and Charlotte Moore are the driving force behind the Young Leaders who boast of 22 members based all over the state from Sydney, Tamworth, Port Macquarie, Armidale, Glen Innes and Coonabarabran. Already Encompassing the Rotary theme "serve to change lives" the Young Leaders have not wasted anytime in launching projects that build and strengthen communities. In 6 months they have hosted their first RYLA O Day event, planted 40 indigenous tree for core koala habitat, delivered "Book in homes" literacy program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the rebirth of RYPEN aimed at empowering our high school students to become future leaders. Rotary has indeed a bright future ahead thanks to inspirational efforts on the Young Leaders. Congratulations!

### **BONNY HILLS ART PRIZE EXHIBITION**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Congratulations to the winning artists of the Bonny Hills Art Prize Exhibition, presented by the Bonny Hills Progress Association and held at the Francis Retreat in January. Over 100 artists from Port Stephens to Coffs Harbour entered works with more than \$6,900 in prize money on offer.

Securing the major award was local Wendy Friend for a composition featuring 78 Australian landscapes painted together in a miniature. Rita Carosi won the small category section with a lifelike snapshot of coastal life title 'The Red Ball'. Artist Merle Maddock was commended and Terri Maddock was highly commended for their works in this category. Claiming the Pastel and Drawing category for a drawn photograph was Gwen Roberts entry titled "Still Life". Congratulations to Beric Henderson who received commendation. Myfie Coady won the mixed media and other category and both Jill Cairns and Judy Jelsma received commendation. Stu Doherty won the watercolour section, with Graeme Cox commended and Carol Simons highly commended. Congratulations to Penny Small on winning the oils and acrylic category as well as Vanessa Newell and Beric Henderson who both received commendation in this category. Congratulations to all winners and commended artists.

### **DANIEL GAUCHAT**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—Congratulations to Daniel Gauchat who was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his dedication to tertiary education, the arts and business. Mr Gauchat's life was changed by his own education and the opportunities it afforded him and now he is passionate about giving to others the same opportunities he received. Mr Gauchat arrived 'Down Under' as a teenager, studied commerce at UNSW and was awarded a full-time academic scholarship. He has worked in business for over 30 years including working internationally and has served as a director of the UNSW Foundation Limited since 2007. He has an Honorary Doctorate for services to the university and is the founding chairman of the Medicine Advisory Council. Both Daniel and his wife Helen together established the Daniel and Helen Gauchat Residential Scholarship for Rural Medical Students.

### **GRAEME BOND**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—Local commuters in the Southern Highlands, and particularly in my local township of Bowral, have been missing the familiar voice and presence of Graeme Bond, who was the manager of Bowral Train Station for 25 years. Mr Bond started working for the railroad after he finished school in 1978, beginning as a junior state assistant in Wollongong. He developed a reputation for being kind, helpful, friendly and reliable. He would often bypass the electronic recording and give the announcements himself with a friendly "good morning".

In addition to Bowral, Mr Bond was responsible for managing Yerrinbool and Mittagong Stations from 2009, and worked at Wollongong, Fairy Meadow, Helensburgh, Bellambi, Thirroul, and Bargo stations. I congratulate Mr Bond's 43 years working for the railways, a testament to his discipline, work ethic and service and I wish him a well-deserved and happy retirement.

### **HEATHER TREDINNICK**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—What a colourless world it would be without the joy of music! Bowral's Heather Tredinnick has dedicated much of her life to spreading this joy, and was recently awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] in the Australia Day Honours List for her service to music. Mrs Tredinnick's love affair with music has been lifelong, initially through church and community choirs, and then continuing as a music teacher over a span of 30 years. She has taught singing and worked as a choir conductor.

Locals residents know her through her role conducting the University of the Third Age [U3A] in Bowral, as well as her work with the Highland Singers, Southern Highlands Choirfest, and Bowral Uniting Church. Congratulations Mrs Tredinnick and thank you for your years of service to the community.

#### QSWWA

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I wish to put on record the achievements of the Queen Street West Woollahra Association. QSWWA has been operating since 1972, with passionate fights to protect the parklands, stop freeways through the residential area and maintain heritage buildings. The association aims to preserve and maintain the precinct's unique 'village' atmosphere, to strengthen community spirit and identity, and to support the village business centre. While in-person activities have had to be curtailed during the pandemic, QSWWA has an excellent track record of holding community events like Christmas Carols, painting competitions, clean up days, French Week, annual dinners and social events. The association holds regular forums to inform the community about projects and developments of concern so residents can speak out to maintain the features that make the precinct special, and the Village Voice magazine reports back to the community about events and activities. The group's coverage extends only a small way into the Sydney electorate, and this area moves to the Vacluse electorate from 2023. I thank the many actively involved community-minded citizens who have made the QSWWA an effective channel for action and celebration for 50 years.

#### LOU'S PLACE

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate I wish to put on record the extraordinary achievements of Lou's place. The Marmalade Foundation established and has operated Lou's Place since 1999 as Sydney's only daytime women's refuge. From a terrace house in Kings Cross, Lou's has provided basic needs for women in crisis, like home cooked meals, shower and laundry facilities, emergency clothing and toiletries. Staff help with crisis intervention, referrals, trauma-informed programs, free legal advice, case management and support clients with court or getting health needs met. They run life skills programs, along with activities like art, sewing, music, yoga, creative writing and jewellery-making, with groups providing social and peer support. The service was strengthened under more than four years' leadership of Nicole Yade and I acknowledge her work during a critical development period. The Marmalade Foundation has now carried out a massive fundraising project and purchased their own property in Redfern, giving stability to the organisation and allowing expanded services to women. I commend the Marmalade Foundation and all those associated with Lou's Place for their impressive work helping vulnerable women get back on their feet.

#### HOMELESSNESS NSW

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate I wish to congratulate Homelessness NSW for winning Diamond and GOLD LearnX Awards for 2021. LearnX Awards acknowledge excellence in learning, education, human resources and digital programs in the corporate, academia, public services, and not for profit sectors. Homelessness NSW's Specialist Homelessness Services Learning and Development Framework won the Diamond award for Best Talent Strategy – Career Development, the Diamond award for Best Talent Strategy – Organisation Development and the Gold award for Best Learning and Development Project – Leadership Development. The CIMS online learning developed by Homelessness NSW, Alison Serena and ID Crowd won the Gold award for Best Learning and Development Project – Technical skills. Homelessness NSW provides me with information and insight into homelessness and I value this leadership and advocacy. As a peak body, they contribute to improving policy and supporting effective service delivery initiatives. These awards recognise Homelessness NSW as an innovative and progressive organisation. I applaud Homelessness NSW and all involved for the programs and projects that have been awarded LearnX Awards and their continued service to our community.

#### WADE CAWLEY

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales congratulates Mr Wade Cawley of Berry on being recognised as Shoalhaven City Council's 2022 Young Citizen of the Year. I applaud his terrific involvement helping our local environment by repurposing waste and establishing his own e-waste business to upcycle and help to keep recyclable materials out of landfill. I also acknowledge Wade's contribution networking with local businesses and Local Government Areas to help ensure e-waste is suitably recycled using an electric van enabling him to collect obsolete items directly from businesses and local residents. I was very fortunate to be named Shoalhaven City Young Citizen of the Year in 2001; more than 20 years on, I am so pleased our Council continues to recognise dynamic and community-minded citizens like Wade. Congratulations and well done to Wade Cawley of Berry.

**MEGAN HASTIE**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales congratulates Mrs Megan Hastie on her appointment as Principal of Shellharbour Anglican College. A COVID-Safe Commissioning Service was held at Shellharbour Anglican College on Friday 11th February 2022, with The Most Reverend Kanishka Raffel, Archbishop of Sydney and the Chair Mr Rob Aubin and other members of the Shellharbour Anglican College Council. Since becoming Member for Kiama, I have attended Shellharbour Anglican College on many occasions including its annual Presentation Nights and I know it's a first-class educational institution with fantastic teachers, students and administration staff. Mrs Hastie brings a wealth of experience to this role and I know she will continue the strong academic and professional leadership for which this school is renown. Once again, congratulations to new Principal Megan Hastie and I look forward to attending Shellharbour Anglican College again soon.

**JENNY THOMPSON**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales congratulates Southern Youth and Family Services President Jenny Thompson who was recently awarded an Order of Australia Medal [OAM] in the 2022 Australia Day Honours List. This is a great honour and Jenny is incredibly deserving of this wonderful recognition of her service. Her Medal is for "Service to the community through social welfare organisations". Jenny has worked over 30 years supporting, advocating and helping local community organisations as a voluntary contributor including on boards, on advisory committees and also in her work in local government at Wollongong City Council, TAFE NSW and family planning. I am so pleased that a passionate advocate for social welfare has been recognised for her life-changing work.

**ASYLUM SEEKERS CENTRE**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate the Asylum Seekers Centre on their successful Community Building Partnership Grant and thank them for their outstanding work providing incredible support for people living in the community seeking asylum. The Asylum Seekers Centre will use this grant to increase efficiency and safety of service to vulnerable members of the community who are needing support and assistance. The Asylum Seekers Centre is underpinned by humanitarian values and works to empower and connect individuals to support and services, engage the community, and influence policy in the interests of the rights and dignity of refugees and asylum seekers. It is wonderful to have this service in our community and I thank the Asylum Seeker Centre team - including so many wonderful volunteers - for all their work and care.

**AUSTRALIAN FOUNDATION FOR DISABILITY**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate and acknowledge the work of the Australian Foundation for Disability. The foundation recently received a Community Building Partnership Grant which will go towards their converted new 12 seater vehicle with wheelchair access. The Australian Foundation for Disability is a not-for-profit organisation that provides incredible service to individuals with disabilities, providing high level support to help enhance the individual's lifestyle, learning and vocational opportunities. I thank the team at the Australian Foundation for Disability for their efforts providing support for those people living with a disability in our community.

**2022 GNOO BLAS CAR CLASSIC**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise the Gnoo Blas Car Classic. This annual event is organised by the Gnoo Blas Classic Car Club Inc., which is named after the historic Gnoo Blas road racing circuit at Orange, where Sir Jack Brabham started his racing career. The annual event this year, held at Jack Brabham Park, attracted almost 600 classic cars, motorbikes and trucks from a wide-range of makes and models. Due to COVID-19, last year's event was held virtually. This year's event however, was one of the largest in the show's history. Car, motorcycle and truck exhibitors attended from Bowral, Newcastle, Gosford, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, but there were also plenty of local vehicles on display at the show. Among them was one of the rarest cars in Australia, a 1974 Leyland Force 7V owned by Norman Julian from Mullion Creek. There were about 60 made and only 10 remain in existence. This year the club inaugurated an award named in honour of their late President Denis Gregory, who sadly passed away last year. The club has over 400 members, proof of strong local interest for classic vehicles. Congratulations to the club on hosting another successful event.

**KNOX GIBSON**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I recognise 14 year old Knox Gibson, of Orange. Knox is an amputee, and an advocate for raising awareness of people with a disability. Knox is a model, actor and influencer. He was chosen to participate in a commercial when he was 8 years old, which had a theme of inclusion – he was chosen

as he had a physical disability. He has since featured in short films, television commercials, music videos, segments for various children's shows and a voice acting role in a podcast. He was chosen as Junior Reporter for the ABC coverage of the 2018 Invictus Games and hosted his own show. Knox is also an athlete who competes in national level swimming, but is active in many sports, and aspires to represent Australia one day at the Paralympics. Knox stars in the NETFLIX short film titled *Forgive Us Our Trespasses*, which is being released today. The film is set in 1939 Germany and is about a farm boy with a disability who is pursued by Nazi soldiers after Hitler enacts Aktion T4, a program to euthanise people with disabilities. I congratulate Knox on his advocacy, accomplishments and being a role model for disabled young people.

#### **BANJO PATERSON FESTIVAL 2022**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I recognise the Banjo Paterson Australian Poetry Festival 2022, which now officially underway, coinciding with the 158th anniversary of Andrew Barton 'Banjo' Paterson's birthday, which is today. The Festival is run each year by the Rotary Club of Orange, and promoted by Orange 360 and Visit NSW. It's a festival of local events, providing entertainment and celebrating the Australian culture of bush poetry. Key events this year, are: Book launch at Buckinbah homestead ruins, Yeoval; Poetry in the pub, poetry brawl at the Freemasons Hotel, Molong; Poets' brunch, Yeoval; Poetry performances in local schools; Poetry on the pavers and BBQ breakfast, Orange Civic precinct; Lunch at the Ironbark Hotel, Stuart Town; Yarn telling competition and BBQ breakfast, Orange Civic precinct; Presentation of the Blackened Billy Poetry writing competition by Zoom link; Wrath of Grapes at Heifer Station Winery, Orange; Twilight Banjo birthday celebration at Banjo Paterson Park, Ophir Road, Orange; A family event in Robertson Park, Orange; Youth poetry competition at the Orange Conservatorium; Musos Paul Laszio and Ann Palumbo at Strawhouse Wines; Rotary family market day at Orange Showground. Congratulations to all involved for hosting another year of this unique drawcard event in Banjo's hometown.

#### **JANAYA ROSE**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—Speaker I congratulate Janaya Rose who has been selected as one of the 38 winners in the ABC's Heywire program. Heywire is a regional storytelling competition that encourages young people aged 16 to 22 to share their experiences, which are then featured across ABC's platforms. Janaya spoke about participating in the Indigenous Marathon Program, and how after it was done she felt there was nothing to work towards, until she began participating in Girls Academy. With help from mentors from the program, as well as an Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Traineeship, Janaya was able to get back on track, and last year became one of the first Dubbo College Senior Campus' cultural captains. Janaya is excited to share her experience to help others realise that if they're going through something, it's okay to reach out for help. She also hopes to encourage more people to apply to the Heywire program, so that they can have the opportunity to tell their own story. Congratulations Janaya, and all the best with your future endeavours.

#### **DOIN' IT FOR LIONEL**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—Speaker I wish to commend the family of Lionel McGuire, who have turned their personal anguish into something that will benefit others. Lionel tragically passed away in November last year, just months after it was discovered that what he thought was a hernia, was in fact a 22 centimetre melanoma. I extend my deepest sympathies to his family and friends. Lionel's passing has inspired wife Denise, and daughters Carin McGuire and Sally Everett, to take part in Mission Melanoma, a challenge to walk up to 10 kilometres each day throughout the month of March, to raise money for the Australian Skin Cancer Foundation. Already team Doin' it for Lionel has raised more than \$1200. Sally and Carin, along with their uncle, have pledged to get tattoos of the Australian Skin Care Foundation logo if they surpass their \$3000 goal. Sally said "we couldn't help dad, but we might be able to help others". Their message is simple: slip, slop, slap and if something doesn't look or feel right with your body, get it checked.

#### **MUDGEES MEMORIAL WALK**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—Speaker according to data from Dementia Australia, there are an estimated 157,000 people living with dementia in NSW alone. For Mudgee's O'Neill family, that number is more than just a statistic. On Saturday brothers Mikka and Adam, their mum Lois and other family members pulled on the joggers for Mudgee's first Memory Walk and Jog in Lawson Park, and the team's already raised close to \$3000 for vital research and support services. Mikka says they're doing the walk for his grandmother June, a "sprightly", 94-year-old, "bright, fiery redhead" who been a "fantastic mentor and teacher" for many people. Mikka says watching Dementia affect his grandmother has been difficult, but if the money and awareness they raise can help just one other person, then

"that's a win in our book". To Mikka, Adam, Lois, Kelly, Lenni, William, Jessica, Bella, Ben the Dog – and all those who took part in the Mudgee memory walk – well done! I'm sure June is one very proud grandma!

#### **CLR DONNA DAVIS, LORD MAYOR OF CITY OF PARRAMATTA**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I would like to congratulate the new Lord Mayor of City of Parramatta Council, Cr Donna Davis who was elected on 10 January 2022. Cr Davis is the third woman to lead the City in its 160 year history and this is a wonderful achievement. Cr Davis has been a councillor on City of Parramatta Council in the Epping ward since 2017. She is keen on improving sports grounds, libraries, pools, parks, playgrounds and is passionate about having more women on council. Cr Davis a strong advocate for the Western Sydney area and her priorities include improving community consultation, more affordable housing, preserving green space given the city's population is increasing. Cr Davis is a strong opponent of the plan to relocate the historic villa Willow Grove and also to downgrade Parramatta Park and I am pleased to have joined her with these fights. Cr Davis is a dedicated, hardworking and is committed to ensuring Parramatta flourishes into a healthy and vibrant city. Congratulations again Councillor Davis.

#### **CREATING CHANCES, HOLROYD HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—In December last year, I visited to Holroyd High School to observe the Creating Chances initiative. Creating Chances is an innovative youth program that uses sport to equip primary and secondary school students with life skills to reach their full potential. It is Australia's first social enterprise implementing youth development to make social impact through sport. The program keeps disadvantaged youth engaged with school and prepares them to be leaders of tomorrow. It works by building pathways for students that lead directly to further education and study. The program is running at more than 100 schools with over 20 000 participants over the last seven years across NSW. Holroyd High School has one of the largest programs in the state. My electorate is fortunate have Holroyd High School selected as a participating high school. On the day, I participated in team activities designed to promote inclusion among the participants. Well done Holroyd High School and Creating Chances on this great initiative. I look forward to witnessing the positive outcomes of this program achieved by the students.

#### **JOHNATHAN PRENDERGAST**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)**—I acknowledge Jonathan Prendergast of Como who was nominated for the Environmental Citizen of the Year at Sutherland Shire Council's 2022 Australia Day Awards. Johnathon is a community-minded individual with a passion for the environment. Alongside his business partner Jay Bayner, Johnathan established Sunny Shire with a vision to support people in making the change to renewable energy. With a background in the renewable energy industry, Johnathan helps others by providing free advice through social media, and arranging community energy discounts through local solar companies. Through initiatives such as the 'Rooftop Solar Bulk Buy' project, Johnathon has helped over 130 local families receive high quality and affordable solar whilst also supporting small businesses in our community. Importantly, Johnathon and Jay run Sunny Shire as volunteers through the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre. I congratulate Johnathan on receiving this nomination and thank him for devoting his time to this important community initiative.

#### **PUREBRED FITNESS**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)**—I acknowledge the wonderful team at Purebred Fitness in Caringbah, who were named Fitness Service of the Year at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards 2021. Established in 2017, Purebred Fitness has quickly grown to be a local fitness haven for members of our community. Conveniently located in the heart of the Sutherland Shire, the team at Purebred Fitness offer something for everyone. With over 60 inclusive classes from Mums and Bubs, to HIIT, Functional Training, Circuit, Body Building, Powerlifting, Boxercise, outdoor group classes and more, it is no surprise that Purebred Fitness is so highly regarded. Of course, Purebred Fitness would not have received this acknowledgment without such an outstanding team. I acknowledge Director and Head Coach Luke Maggiore, along with coaches Justin Seeto, Michaela Sargeant, Tam Kerr, Dave Farkas, Sarah Eardley, Lachlan Danise and Gary Warner, who together, hold decades of fitness expertise and bring passion to supporting our community members. I congratulate the Purebred Fitness team on their success at the Sutherland Shire Business Awards and extend my best wishes for the future.

#### **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)**—I acknowledge Enough is Enough Anti Violence Movement ("Enough is Enough") who are the successful recipients of \$33,000 from the NSW Government's 2021 Community Building Partnership Program. Enough is Enough provides crucial services such as offender programs, psychology and counselling and victim services to

those impacted by violence. By way of background, the organisation was formed in 1994 by the incredible Ken Marslew after his son Michael was tragically murdered during an armed robbery in Jannali. As a devastated father, Ken saw the need for better support for victims of crime, violence, anti-social behaviour and road trauma. To support Ken's mission, the grant funding will help build a multipurpose room, which will provide a new space to run group based therapies including victim support, offender rehabilitation and art therapy services, alongside the 'Michael Marslew Youth Foundation' leadership program. Of course, none of this would be possible without the dedication of Enough is Enough's Executive Committee including Ken Marslew, Simone Marslew, Melisa Kanisek and Daniella Luchi. I thank the wonderful team at Enough is Enough for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it makes in our community.

#### **RED MASS AT ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Thursday 4th February 2022, it was wonderful to participate in the 2022 Opening of the Legal Year Ceremony, Red Mass, at St Patrick's Cathedral. The Red Mass is a wonderful annual tradition held for members of the legal community, including judges, lawyers, barristers and solicitors. The Mass is a good opportunity to reflect on the important of law and justice in NSW and how access to justice is a vitally important element for a fair and democratic society. It is also a time to publicly reaffirm our commitment to act Christ-like as members of the justice system, to defend the rights of all and especially the oppressed and vulnerable. During the Mass, Bishop Vincent Long encouraged those of us in the legal profession to work towards God's vision of justice, mercy and fullness of life for all. I also had the privilege of undertaking the offertory procession with my wife and children. I would like to thank Bishop Vincent Long, the Diocese of Parramatta, Mr Michael McAuley, Barrister, Selbourne Chambers, and St Thomas More Society for organising this meaningful and successful ceremony.

#### **RED MASS AT ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Monday 31st January 2022, I was honoured to represent the NSW Labor Opposition at the 2022 Opening of the Legal Year Ceremony, Red Mass, at St Mary's Cathedral. The Red Mass is a wonderful annual tradition that has been celebrated at St Mary's Cathedral since 1931. The Red Mass takes its name from the red vestments worn by the celebrant, symbolising the tongues of fire that descended on the Apostles at Pentecost. It is a time to give thanks to the work of those in the legal profession whilst allowing participants to reaffirm their appreciation and commitment to the Church. I was joined by fellow Parliamentarians The Hon. Mark Speakman MP, Attorney General of NSW and The Hon. Fred Nile MLC. I was pleased to deliver Prayers of the Faithful during the Mass. Access to justice is a vitally important element for a fair and democratic society. I look forward to working with my legal colleagues this year. I would like to thank Bishop Danny Meagher, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, Mr Michael McAuley, Barrister, Selbourne Chambers, and St Thomas More Society for organising this meaningful and successful ceremony.

#### **VALE ROB JOHNSON**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker in December last year we lost a beloved member of the community unexpectedly, Rob Johnson. I want to recognise Rob for his outstanding contribution to North Shore. Rob was involved with the Balmoral Beach Club since he joined as a member in 1997. Since joining, Rob was an enthusiastic member and worked his way to being on the Board, eventually serving as the President of the Club for many years with exceptional leadership. Rob helped redefine the values of the Club through his vision and passion for community engagement. Along with expanding external activities such as charity swims and supporting the Nipper's Program, he has seen the Club through extensive planning and refurbishment, and was elected as a Life Member in 2018. Rob has no doubt had a lasting impact on the Balmoral Beach Club by helping shape it into the amazing group it is today, he will be missed. I would like to extend my condolences to Rhonda his wife, his family, and of course his friends in the community. Thank you, Rob, for being a pioneer of the Balmoral Beach Club and a champion for helping the community.

#### **REDLANDS YEAR 6 DEBATING TEAM WINS THE NATIONAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VIRTUAL DEBATING COMPETITION**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to congratulate the Redlands Junior School Year 6 debating team on their recent success. I acknowledged them last year for reaching the semi-finals of the National Independent Schools Virtual Debating Competition, and they have since gone on to win the entire competition. The Primary School Division featured 32 teams from around the country so every single one of the students in the team should be extremely proud of this accomplishment. It is amazing to see students from local schools performing so well on a national level, and I extend my congratulations to all of the teachers and parents involved in supporting the year 6 debating team throughout the competition. Debating skills have lifelong benefits and I hope the students continue to engage with debating and public speaking in the future whether it is

competitively or personally. I am sure they will all go on to do amazing things and I wish them well as they begin their high school journeys this year.

#### **NORTH SHORE STUDENTS SELECTED FOR 2021 HSC SHOWCASES**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to recognise all of the local young artists that have been selected for Showcases for their 2021 HSC body of works. North Shore students chosen for the coveted ARTEXPRESS showcase include Gerard Barrios from Mosman High School, Phil Javier from Cammeraygal High School, Chelsea Proutt from Queenwood, Reina Ann Wu Reilly from North Sydney Girls High School, Grace Shattock from Loreto Kirribilli, Jason Zou from North Sydney Boys High School, and Alexandra Angus from Wenona School. Gerard, Phil, Grace, and Alexandra's pieces are all being exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. For the OnSTAGE showcase, Maximilian Shanahan, Amelia Frost, Charles Cole, Oliver Duthie, Alexander Manchee, and Charles Dight were all selected from SHORE. For Shape 2021, Paloma Ploeg from Mosman High School, Lucy Forrest from Queenwood, and Isabella Stone from Wenona were chosen. Erin Miles from Mosman High School and Olivia Snodgrass from Wenona were selected for Texstyle. Congratulations to all of these students on their success, they should be so proud that their creative pieces have been chosen for showcases, and will be exhibited around the state.

#### **RANDWICK LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I would like to take this opportunity to formally wish people across the Coogee electorate and the Eastern Suburbs a very happy Lunar New Year. I hope that the year of the tiger brings happiness and prosperity to our community and to people across NSW. The year of the Tiger symbolises great change and rediscovering enthusiasm for life. What better message could there be after the hardships of the past two years. I was honoured to attend the Lunar New Year Celebrations organised by Randwick City Council. The festivities included music, interacting costumed tigers and a remarkable Lion dance. My thanks to everyone who attended the celebrations and to the guest speakers who shared stories of their lived experiences as Chinese Australians. A special thank you to Mayor Dylan Parker and Randwick City Council for organising the festivities and for inviting me to attend.

#### **SABAH SWADE**

**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 people, 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 2022 Canterbury-Bankstown Citizen of the Year is Sabah Swade. Sabah is an advocate for mental health, and is passionate about helping others who face mental health problems. Sabah is also an ambassador for the Australian Youth Advisory Network and volunteers at the St John Ambulance Bankstown office every week. Sabah has also volunteered with the Air League and Bankstown PCYC. Last year Sabah as also named as a finalist for the Western Sydney Young Woman of the Year awards, which recognise women who have made a significant contribution to their community. In primary school, Sabah raised funds for the Leukaemia Foundation by taking part in the World's Greatest Shave. Once again, I congratulate Sabah on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **TRICIA PARKER**

**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 people, 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 2022 Canterbury-Bankstown Volunteer of the Year is Tricia Parker. Tricia has been a volunteer for the South Western Sydney Local Health District since 1993. During this time, Tricia has contributed significantly to fields of research, policy and Models of Care which have helped to improve health care services. Tricia is also a strong advocate of improving care to people with palliative care needs. Tricia is the Chair for the South Western Sydney Local Health District's Consumer and Community Participation Network. Recently, she has worked with fellow colleagues on a project to improve the capacity of health professionals to lead and respond to end of life communication requests and needs. Once again, I congratulate Tricia on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **JOUMANA EL JAMAL**

**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 people, 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 2022 Canterbury-Bankstown Citizen of the Year is Joumana El Jamal. Joumana is the founder of Sydney Community Connect, which seeks to empower its members, particularly young women, by providing them with new skills and networking opportunities. As a successful business owner herself, Joumana is a strong advocate in supporting women launch their own business endeavours. Joumana has also participated in many charitable initiatives including her "Iftar Al Khair" project which aimed at offering 100 meals a day in Ramadan to any person or family in need in Sydney. Joumana has also raised money for Cancer Council NSW through her "Do it for fashion Cancer Fundraiser" which raised \$5000 in 2019 and \$7500 in 2020. Once again, I congratulate Joumana on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **BRUCE WOOD OAM**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—I would like to recognize my friend and local resident Bruce Wood OAM, who was recently awarded his Order of Australia Medal, "For Service to Cricket", in the Governor-General's Australia Day Honours List. I am well aware of Bruce Wood's tireless voluntary contribution to cricket at a grass roots level over several decades as a player, coach, umpire and administrator. Bruce was one of the founders and has been President of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai & Hills District Coaches Association since it commenced in 2010. He has umpired for 20 years in the local cricket association. He has held the positions of Vice-President, Secretary and Assistant Secretary on the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai & Hills District Cricket Association executive committee, serving on the association executive for 15 consecutive years. He was recognized with Life Membership of that association in 2013. Bruce is also currently the Umpire's Co-ordinator for the Associated Schools of NSW [CAS], and has been awarded Life Membership of Normanhurst-Warrawee CC and Barker CC for exemplary service to those cricket clubs. An OAM for Bruce Wood is a well-deserved recognition for his broad service to cricket across coaching, umpiring and cricket administration.

#### **DIANE BOWLES, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—I would like to recognize the effervescent Di Bowles who is a resident of Brooklyn, which is the heart of the Hawkesbury River community. Di has been highlighting issues in and around the Brooklyn village for many years. Before stepping down, at the December 2021 AGM, Di Bowles had been enthusiastically representing her community for the past six years as she served as President of the Brooklyn Community Association. In everything Di Bowles does her enthusiasm is clear and present, which always makes the target of her representation sit up and take notice. I have enjoyed working with Di as she has actively contributed to making her community a better place to work, live and play for both Brooklyn residents and visitors. I was especially pleased to work with Di and her colleges when I, as the local member, was able to secure funding to deliver long awaited Hawkesbury River Railway Station lift and associated upgrade. I congratulate Di Bowles for her six years of service in her role as Brooklyn Community Association President. I look forward to working with the Brooklyn Community Association newly elected executive.

#### **GALSTON RESIDENT TAKES SYDNEY THEATRE SCENE BY STORM**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—Today I would like to acknowledge a local Galston resident and former Northholm Grammar School Captain, Mitchell Old. When Mitchell finished high school, in 2019, he went on to study at Sydney Conservatorium of Music. In 2021, he produced and directed his first independent musical at Castle Hill's Pioneer Theatre – "THE LAST FIVE YEARS". Led by Mitchell, this production involved a talented group of local cast, crew and band members. Under the mentorship of another Northholm Grammar old boy and internationally acclaimed theatre director, Jason Langley, Mitchell Old is now producing and directing "HEATHERS: The Musical". This has been described by Time Out as a show that "will shake Sydney to its core". This musical is running at the ARA Darling Quarter Theatre and has created opportunities for many emerging artists in and around the local Hills area. I congratulate Mitchell Old, and I look forward to following his career develop further within the Sydney theatre industry and, hopefully in the footsteps of his mentor, on to the international stage.

#### **RENEE ALLARA**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—To receive an award during Campbelltown's Australia Day celebrations is certainly no easy feat. With more than 170,000 people in the Campbelltown Local Government Area and only a handful of awards on offer, to receive one really is a prestigious accolade. Now, Renee Allara can proudly say her name is on that coveted list. Renee was presented with the Disability and Inclusion Award at this year's awards due to her work with Australian Deaf Elders. Her work involved supporting those in need of interpreting services who were also ineligible for National Disability Insurance Scheme funding. There is little doubt that Renee's dedication and selflessness to the cause improved the lives on many, many people. Of course

it's also worth noting that Renee is a very accomplished artist – one of many in the Campbelltown area. Renee's bio on the Campbelltown Arts Centre website she 'works with ceramics and drawing that derive from microscopic images of insects, bacteria and genetic material'. The eye is also a recurring theme as it is representative of her main form of communications as a deaf person. Once again, congratulations on an award that was well deserved, Renee.

#### **ELLA WHAN**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the inspiring work and outstanding achievements of Ella Whan, a young leader driving change in Byron Shire. Despite only recently graduating high school, Ella has already contributed much to her local community. In 2017 she co-facilitated the School Strike for Climate in Byron Bay, bringing together passionate students from across the region for a climate protest and raising awareness of the consequences of inaction on climate change in Australia and around the world. Ella was a Rural Ambassador for the Northern Rivers and received the Academic Excellence Award, the Principal's Award and the Long Tan Citizenship Award upon high school graduation. In addition, she was recently awarded Byron Shire Young Citizen of the Year. She completed her schooling at Byron Bay High School, where her outstanding leadership and citizenship qualities flourished. As School Captain, Ella worked with the P&C committee to represent the needs of the student body and was instrumental in lobbying for funds to develop a dedicated senior study and recreation area. I congratulate Ella on her activism and leadership and I look forward to supporting her work in the future.

#### **RITAMBA ALLEN**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the compassion and innovation of Byron Shire woman Ritamba Allen and her response to the COVID -19 pandemic. Ritamba set up the Mullumbimby Flattening the Curve site on Facebook in 2020 in the face of the unprecedented challenges facing our community and to provide a focal point for those who needed support and care in isolation. The group now has more than 2500 members who support each other to stay well and to assist those in need. The group is committed to sharing productive, helpful and factual information. There is zero tolerance of bullying or hate speech. Ritamba also created the online Community Covid Support Byron Shire group, which has helped many people find Rapid Antigen Tests and organised food deliveries for people in isolation. The Covid Support group was also the basis for a "front up for the front line" fundraising effort that has delivered goods to exhausted health workers in the area. On behalf of our community, I congratulate Ritamba and the service she has given to help keep us all safe during the pandemic.

#### **MR AND MRS SIMMONS' 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Victor and Mrs Maria Simmons of Yarrowarrah on their 50th Wedding Anniversary which will be celebrated on the 19th February 2022. 50 years of marriage is a wonderful milestone and I hope they enjoy their gold anniversary. I wish them many more years of fun, enjoyment, happiness and good health.

#### **WESTFIELDS SPORTS – CREATING CHANCES**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I recently had the pleasure of visiting Westfields Sports High School to take part in a Creating Chances session. Creating chances is a youth development program which utilises sport to equip students with life skills in order to reach their full potential. The programs assist with keeping disadvantaged youths engaged in school and prepares them for continuous education or employment by building continuous pathways. They are designed to use sport as a way to build confidence, capabilities and encourage future-ready young people. The students of Westfields Sports High School enthusiastically welcomed me into their session and gave it their all throughout the activities. I commend Creating Chances for promoting a culture of positivity and hope amongst disadvantaged youth and I thank Westfields Sports High School for hosting the event.

#### **2022 AUSTRALIA DAY CELEBRATIONS – IRAQI AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATE FORUM**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—The Iraqi Australian University Graduate Forum in collaboration with the Association of Iraqi Academics and the Iraqi Australasian Medical Association hosted the online Australia Day celebration. The event is sponsored by the National Australia Day Council and promoted the theme of, "Reflect, Respect and Celebrate." This event is usually held with members of the community at Mounties to acknowledge HSC and Tertiary academic achievement. Over the past two years the event has also affirmed the efforts of medical staff and volunteers for their work during the pandemic. This event highlights the rich diversity and talent within the community. Although the community was unable to meet in person it still celebrated

multicultural success stories. I commend the online host Husam Shkara, Dr Bushra Alobaidi and the entire organising committee for their commitment to celebrating Australia Day.

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY CELEBRATIONS – ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE CHALDEAN DIOCESE**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—The St. Thomas the Apostle Chaldean Diocese in Australia and New Zealand celebrated Australia Day with an appreciation ceremony for the parishioners of the diocese. Under the Patronage of His Grace Archbishop Amel Nona awards were presented to volunteers from the parishes of St Mary's Assumption Chaldean Parish, Fairfield, St Joseph's Chaldean Parish, Mount Druitt and St Thomas the Apostle, Bossley Park. It was a pleasure to witness the presentation of certificates to volunteers for their work in youth ministry, choir, music, finance, liturgy, event logistics and community outreach just to name a few areas. My parliamentary colleague Senator Kristina Keneally and local government representatives from Blacktown, Cumberland, Fairfield and Liverpool had the honour to present the awards to the hardworking volunteers. I commend the parish for its dedication to not only preserving its religious and cultural traditions, but to also promoting the Australian ideal of friendship and service to others.

#### **TRIBUTE TO GREG ROBERTS OAM**

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport)**—I rise to pay tribute to the life of Mr Gregory Roberts OAM of Scotland Island, who recently passed at the age of 86. I knew Greg for many years, and had the great pleasure of working alongside him on a range of community initiatives. Greg's commitment and passion for Pittwater was unquestionable and unwavering, as was his dedication towards local community groups. These included the Scotland Island Residents' Association – where Greg performed many roles over more than 20 years of service – including as President. Greg subsequently earned widespread admiration and respect among the community. Indeed, Greg is affectionately known by staff in my office as "Lord Roberts of Scotland Island". Among his many projects and endeavours, Greg was pivotal in state-wide amendments for Water-Access-Only residents, securing offshore residents the same equity of access that mainlanders enjoy when traversing Crown Land to access their homes. Above all, however, Greg was a true gentleman; always genuine, kind and courteous. My heartfelt condolences to Louise and Greg's family. His friendship and enthusiasm will be missed by many.

#### **WAGGA WAGGA AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Wagga Wagga has honoured some of its hard-working residents at the 2022 Australia Day Awards. The Citizen of the Year was Deidre Tome, who has given her time to the community groups including Miss Wagga Wagga Quest committee, Legacy Club of Wagga Wagga, Wagga Wagga Bidgee Dragons, Rotary programs such as PolioPlus and the combined Wagga Wagga Rotary Clubs homelessness project. Young Citizen of the Year Chloe Hinds has been involved with many fundraisers in our community including the PCYC toy drive, the Forest Hill Fire Brigade and Koorinal High School's Year 12 versus staff trivia night. The Rotary Club of South Wagga Wagga was named Environmental Citizen of the Year for its members' hard work over 18 months to restore the city's Rocky Hill Reserve. Brian Robinson, who has been an integral part of the South Wagga Blues Cricket Club for nearly five decades, was named as the winner of the Ted Ryder Sports Memorial Award. Walk of Honour recipient Dick Green is an environmental sustainability champion, who not only worked for Greening Australia, but also volunteered with local community organisations such as Wagga Wagga Urban Landcare and Erin Earth. Congratulations to all winners.

#### **TOM GRIMES**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—I wish to pass on my best wishes to a lovely gentleman Tom Grimes from Kingscliff who is turning 100 years young. Tom, originally from Queensland, has been in the beautiful coastal town of Kingscliff since 1966 where he and his wife raised their 3 children. The Tweed coast areas were lucky to have Tom deliver their gas supplies to them for 25 years, but a major part of Tom's life was spent dedicating his time to volunteer and community service. A recipient of the Paul Harris Fellow Award back in 1987, Tom played an integral role in developing Life Education. The drug and alcohol education program, with Health Harold that still exists to this day. Tom, wishing you a wonderful birthday and hope your celebrations with your family are truly memorable.

#### **MR & MRS EATHER'S 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—Today I wish to congratulate two of my Kirrawee constituents, Bernard and his wife Susan Eather as they celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on 19 February 2022. I hope they enjoy all the beautiful memories that come with the celebration of a golden wedding anniversary. I trust they will be accompanied by their closest family and friends as they mark this wonderful milestone. I wish Bernard and Susan many more years of fun, enjoyment, happiness and good health.

### NSW TEACHERS' FEDERATION

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the ongoing #morethank campaign by the NSW Teachers' Federation. Currently, teachers work 55 hours a week or more to keep up with student needs and the ongoing clerical demands of their work. Last year, on December 7th I was proud to join striking teachers from local schools including Orange Grove Public School and Rozelle Public school to support their advocacy for fair wages and conditions for their profession, and by extension all the school students in New South Wales. On behalf of the residents of the Balmain Electorate, I want to thank our teachers for all that they do for our children and our community, especially during these difficult times, and for their continued advocacy for improved learning conditions for our children.

### MURWILLUMBAH OLD BOYS CRICKET

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Murwillumbah Cricket Club held the annual Old Boys Day at the Murwillumbah Cricket Club last Saturday, February 12th. It was fantastic to hear the great Silver Panthers were back out on the pitch. Proving that you're never too old to enjoy the great game of cricket. It was a day of fun, friendship, laughs and fitness. I commend the club and great Silver Panther himself Dave Reading for organising the day and getting everyone back together. On the invite Dave said "Anyone - man, woman, player, committee member, supporter or sponsor - who has been involved with Murwillumbah Panthers, or our origin clubs Tyalgum and South Arm Burringbar are welcome to attend." It is wonderful the Old Boys brought so many different people in our community together. The day was a great success and was followed by a BBQ and a beer at the bar whilst the Silver Panthers cheered on the next generation playing in the first grade match between Murwillumbah and South Tweed/Banora. South Tweed/Banora prevailed on the day but that did not dampen the spirits of the mighty Murwillumbah Cricket Club. I look forward to many more Old Boys taking to the pitch.

### JOHN BARNES AUSSIE DIGGER

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Ask anyone in Lismore where to get the best work wear, boots and camping gear you will always get the same answer – Aussie Digger in North Lismore. This well loved and respected shop was built through the hard yakka of my friend and beloved Lismore local John Barnes who has owned the store for more than 28 years. After a recent cancer diagnosis and surgery John at age 81 has decided to hang up the work boots. Aussie Digger is a Lismore icon and attracts customers from across the region. John says that people come from Murwillumbah and Byron, Evans Head, Yamba, and Iluka. Going west he gets people from Tenterfield and Dorrigo, Casino and Kyogle. Not bad for a business that started as an empty shed in North Lismore. Aussie Digger is a North Lismore institution. Over the years John has seen a lot. From regular floods, to the ever changing social landscape of Lismore John has survived it all. He updates his business to keep with the modern demands but always keeps that old school reliability. John says he's lucky he got the cancer early. I wish him a wonderful retirement out on the farm.

### SERPENTINE GALLERY NEW VENUE AND JANET HASSALL RETROSPECTIVE

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I congratulate Serpentine Gallery on the upcoming opening exhibition event at their new gallery right in the heart of the Lismore CBD. After 15 years in North Lismore the gallery has relocated to the buzzing Lismore CBD. The opening exhibition is titled Janet Hassall Retrospective. Sadly Janet passed in December 2021 but her family are putting on this exhibition as a celebration of her extraordinary talent and the immense contribution she made to art in our community. The Gallery has posted that "Janet radiated a calmness that made you feel at peace when in her presence. This retrospective offers a space where you can be with Janet and understand the beauty she saw in our region. Her peace and connection to the Earth was transformed into colour and life through her exquisite paintings. Janet's presence and talents touched many." A wonderful tribute to an extraordinary woman. The retrospective has nearly 100 artworks and I encourage locals to get on down. I acknowledge founding member Corrine Bat-Rawden, President Megan Moore, Vice President Beau Ravn, Secretary Julia Lincoln, Admin Extraordinaire Sonia Barton and previous President Fiona McConnachie and wish the newly located gallery well.

### CHRIS ROSE – BREAKING DOWN THE STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—I would like to acknowledge the work of Gundagai local Mr Chris Rose in the area of mental health. His advocacy in raising awareness of mental health issues is something to be greatly admired and appreciated. Through sharing his personal story, Chris raised over \$15,000 for the Black Dog Institute's 'Mullets for Mental Health' campaign last year. Residents in our small communities, at times, struggle seeking out professional help, so through our interconnectedness and mateship, our towns and villages take it in their stride to look out for one another. Chris leads by example through his strength in raising awareness to help others who may be experiencing what he has gone through and breaking down the stigma that is often associated with mental illness. I thank Chris for speaking

up and starting those tough but much needed conversations, and thank all those who contributed to his fundraising efforts.

#### **JOANNE JUDD 30 YEARS OF SERVICE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—I wish to recognise and extend my gratitude to Junee local, Joanne Judd, who has recently stood down as Secretary of the Junee Harness Racing Club following 30-plus years of service to the organisation. I understand Joanne first came on board as a member of Junee Harness Racing in 1991 and after three decades of service she has decided to focus on her business, Judd's Horse Supplies. Throughout her 31 years of service, Joanne has helped to organise a number of local events, in particular the Club's annual Carnival of Cups. It certainly takes a huge effort to pull these kinds of events together, so to have had a member like Joanne involved over the years has undoubtedly made a difference. Having had a pivotal role on the Junee Harness Racing Club Board, Joanne's commitment to the club is sure to be missed – so much so her contribution over the years has also been recognised by Harness Racing NSW. Congratulations once again.

#### **100 YEARS OF KATHLEEN SMITH OAM**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—Happy Birthday to Mrs Kathleen Meryl Smith OAM of Grenfell, who celebrated her 100th birthday in January. Born in Mooropna, Victoria, Mrs Smith served with the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force in World War II, attaining rank of Sergeant, which is where she met Flying Officer, Mr Noel Smith. They married in 1945, settling on the land near Grenfell after the war. Since then, Mrs Smith has been an integral member of the Grenfell community particularly as a Foundation Member of Grenfell Probus Club, held numerous roles with the Grenfell Branch of the Country Women's Association, active member of Meals on Wheels for over 30 years and launch of the Grenfell Food Hall. Mrs Smith has been recognised as a Life Member of the Grenfell Historical Society and the Henry Lawson Festival of Arts, is a past recipient of Grenfell's Australia Day Senior Citizen Award and has been awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 2009. Congratulations, and thank you to Mrs Smith for calling Grenfell home.

#### **OATLEY RSL YOUTH CLUB – GYMNASTICS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Oatley RSL Youth Gymnastics Club who have recently received a critical funding injection from the NSW Government. Thanks to the Local Sports Grants program, the organisation has received much needed funding to upgrade their website and allow more individuals to receive coaching accreditation. This is fantastic news for the Oatley RSL Youth Gymnastics Club as they are a growing organisation who are always welcoming new and energetic members. It was an honour to drop into one of their Tuesday night training sessions to announce the funding whilst also catching up with Janelle Bulmer, Katrina Holdsworth and the team. The Oatley RSL Youth Gymnastics Club is home to an array of up and coming sporting champions and this funding will allow the organisation to continue to grow and develop their elite performers. The Local Sports Grants program is continuing to deliver fantastic results for sporting organisations and local communities across the State. I look forward to providing more important investments in local sporting groups across the St George region again later this year.

#### **ANTHONY COOKE**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Speaker, I rise to thank former Superintendent of the St George Police Area Command, Anthony Cooke, for his dignified and professional service to the region. Anthony has been promoted to Assistant Commissioner and Commander of the South West Metropolitan Region which is an incredible achievement and one that is thoroughly deserved. I want to thank Anthony for playing such a critical role in leading our local police services over many years and for ensuring that community safety and personalised care were always at the forefront of their work. This promotion will mean that Anthony is able to play a greater role in the oversight of police functions across the broader south west Sydney area, which will bring confidence to many local families. Anthony is a leader in every sense of the word and I wish him all the best in his new role. I also want to congratulate Detective Superintendent, Jason Box, who will now be leading the St George Command. My office and I look forward to working with Anthony and his new team where possible in the future.

#### **ANZAC DAY – MORTDALE RSL SUB-BRANCH**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Speaker, every year the St George community gathers together in unity to commemorate the ongoing sacrifices made by Australian men and women at war. In 2020, dawn services were replaced with candlelight tributes on driveways and balconies, but in 2021, our local dawn services were back and better than ever. It was an honour to attend the

dawn service hosted by the Mortdale RSL Sub-Branch which saw men, women and children join together in support of the Anzac legacy at Memorial Park. This was an incredibly moving and inspiring ceremony that was well received by all involved. I particularly want to thank President John Delaney, Honorary Treasurer Doris Bailey and Honorary Secretary Royce Lockhart, for continuing to educate the next generation of Australians on the importance of our nation's military history. Organisations like the Mortdale RSL Sub-Branch ensure that our history is enshrined for generations to come and that is something that our community holds in the highest regard. Thank you again to the entire Mortdale RSL-Sub Branch team for all of your hard work.

#### **ORAN PARK ANGLICAN COLLEGE AWARD CEREMONY**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Last year, I had the privilege to attend and present the students of Oran Park Anglican College Year 6 and Class of 2021 their graduation certificates at the award ceremony. I recognise the efforts of the students, teachers, staff and families impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown who adapted to these changes and supported one another through this difficult time. The Class of 2021 in particular had a very tough two years of senior schooling but the students have come through stronger, more resilient and ready for their next adventure. I congratulate all these students and I wish them all the best as they move into the next chapter of their lives.

#### **MRS RUTH CORNHILL 104TH BIRTHDAY**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Congratulations to Mrs Ruth Cornhill on her 104th Birthday. Ruth celebrated her 104th birthday with staff and friends in her Paling Court home in December last year. Carrington staff including chief executive Raad Richards and care service manager Elizabeth Roodt presented Ruth with a bouquet of flowers to mark her special day. Ruth has three children and enjoys knitting, painting and spending time with her family. Ruth's secret to a long life is hard work, no drinking and no smoking. Happy birthday Ruth.

#### **AVA LANGHAM**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Congratulations to Ava Langham of St Gregory's College Junior School who successfully represented the College at the BRC Interschool Equestrian Competition in Berry.

Ava and her pony Rosebrook Rhythm n Rendition both had a very successful day, placing in the following classes: Best presented – 1st place; Rider – 1st place; Best educated – 1st place; Pony Hack – 1st place; and Handler – 3rd place. Congratulations again Ava on your incredible results representing your college. I wish you and Rosebrook Rhythm n Rendition all the best in your equestrian adventures together.

#### **INVERELL HIGH SCHOOL 2021 HSC RESULTS**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Inverell High School for its excellent results with the 2021 High School Certificate examinations. The results are important as an indicator of the excellent teaching and student engagement that Inverell High School provides. Sam Flood anticipates leaving for the University of Newcastle to study Mechatronics Engineering and Aerospace Systems. Grace Doyle aims for a degree in psychology. Together with Luke Bryant, Zachariah Campbell, Lachlan Hampton, Brock Holder, Emily Pischke and Oscar Rainger these students claim pride of place on the list of NSW's highest achievers and deserve to feel proud of their achievements. Getting through last year with the uncertainties of COVID restrictions was enhanced by the school's encouragement and individual student care. I congratulate teachers and staff at Inverell High School for their professionalism as indicated by the results of the 2021 High School Certificate exams. I commend Inverell High School for its student dedication throughout the challenges that the pandemic has presented to the entire school community.

#### **BEN MALAQUIN 50 YEARS OF CHRISTMAS JOY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Ben Malaquin, Inverell's Santa Claus for half a century. Preceding Ben was his father George who in 1971 had given Christmas joy for 30 years. As a family tradition, father and son have logged an impressive milestone of community contribution adding to the celebration of Christmas. Ben says that in giving there is receiving, and he speaks of the joy he receives from children of all ages, young and old, their smiles and cheer as he represents the meaning of Christmas. Any unsolicited donations are handed to charities and cancer organisations which at times has been a considerable amount. Santa has come to represent a special season and what better representative than Inverell's Ben Malaquin. I congratulate Ben on his commitment to presenting a splendid persona of Santa bringing the joy and love of the season to Inverell. I commend Ben for his aim to continue as Santa bringing such joy during the festive season and impacting so many lives.

**KERRIE GALLEY, COSTA TOMATO GUYRA FARM**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the efforts of Kerrie Galley, Grower Manager at the Costa Tomato Guyra Farm glasshouse, in bringing her expertise to the challenges of modern farming. Kerrie was raised in the country and began working in produce as a 14-year-old. Her love of farming took her to America where she gained experience in organic farming. When she returned to Australia it was to learn more about raising tomatoes and developing innovations and technologies involving glasshouses. Kerrie's viewpoint on future farming sustainability is dealing with the challenge of feeding Australia and beyond while doing it using less water and less resources. She finds her work rewarding in developing teams and the intellectual stimulation from product excellence. I congratulate Kerrie on achieving her position as part of the glasshouse expansion with Costa Group as Grower Manager at the Guyra Tomato Farm. I commend Kerrie on her passion for farming, the environment, and staff development.

**ROJECT - ECHUCA MOAMA**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—I would like to acknowledge and recognise the Dare to Dream project of Echuca Moama. This group of young women, in collaboration with The Committee for Echuca Moama, have created a short film focusing on issues affecting youth of the area. The short film shines a light on the issues of bullying and youth mental health. Awareness, acknowledgment and community engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members is a further focal point of the project. All five members of the group have drawn on personal struggles to inform the change they wish to see in the community. Their goals include improving youth mental support, raising awareness of the importance of TAFE and education to develop young people's skills, and increasing recognition of indigenous people and culture, and women with autism. I congratulate this group of young women for the positive impact they are having on the community, and on their ability to give a voice to people who are often underrepresented.

**JAMES TOSCAN**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—I would like to recognise James Toscan of Darlington Point, a valued member of the Griffith Swans Senior Team. At the early age of nine, James began his football career in the U12's team. Twenty-two years and two hundred games later, he is in his sixth straight year as the Senior Swans team captain. From the outset, James had high expectations of following in the footsteps of his father, Gerard Toscan, who'd also won over hundred games, and multiple best and fairest awards. Many years on, James's sporting highlights include his team's almost undefeated 2018 season, and his best and fairest award in 2019. James has an unrivalled level of commitment to the Club and his team, and I congratulate him on his dedication.

**DONNA LAYTON**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to Donna Layton, the General Manager of J Notaras and Sons Pty Ltd, who last year won the Shine Award for Dedication. This award "recognises rural women with passion, dedication, spirit, belief, grace of courage to make a real difference in her rural community or industry" and Donna fits this criteria to a tee. Donna has worked at the Notaras Sawmill for over 43 years and is one of a handful of women in this industry. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that the business has been able to continue to operate despite the challenges of drought, bushfires and then the COVID pandemic. Congratulations Donna for your dedication and commitment to your staff and the timber industry.

**GLENDALE EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS LEADERS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Glendale East Public School on their appointment. Glendale East Public School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Tim Lewis, the outstanding staff at Glendale East Public School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Today's Education for Tomorrow's World" by developing and supporting each student through their foundational years of learning. The kind hearted students at Glendale East 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 Glendale East Public School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, School Captain Erin, School Vice-Captain Jacob and Prefects Beau, Angel-Leigh, Logan and Zarli 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 Glendale East Public School.

**LAMBTON PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Lambton Public School on their appointment. Lambton Public School is a wonderful community. Its members pride

themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal David Holland, the outstanding staff at Lambton Public School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Courtesy and Truth" by developing and supporting each student through their foundational years of learning. The kind hearted students at Lambton 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 Lambton Public School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, Ava Prigg, Lucinda Shaw, Harvey Rogers and Finn Smith 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 Lambton Public School.

### **MINMI ROAD LIGHT SHOW**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)**—There is a house on Minmi Road—and in December it lights up like the rising sun! The house in Fletcher, belonging to Beau Gaudron and Stephanie Hinds, features 17,000 lights synced to music—and with some moving objects added in as well. This most recent Christmas season, the light show ran until 31 December 2021. Visitors could listen to the music playing from speakers on the lawn in order to see the lights synced up with music, or tune in to 91.2FM on their car radios. This exciting, innovative display of Christmas spirit did more than light up Minmi Road—after a year which had been so hard for so many, the Minmi Road Light Show brought smiles to visitors and helped inspire so much joy. My congratulations and thanks to Beau and Stephanie for once again hosting the Minmi Road Light Show. What an extraordinary thing to do to spread a little bit of holiday cheer!

### **LUNAR NEW YEAR COMPETITION**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—I am pleased to report to the House that the winners of the 2022 Kogarah Lunar New Year Card Competition were recently announced. Now in its third year, the art competition for school-age children in my electorate attracted more than 300 entries from across the electorate. I thank Ms Yin Cao, Jim West, Sarah Kalidis, for judging and presenting the Juniors and Seniors awards, and I acknowledge young Sophie Yang from CASS Chinese School who presided as Master of Ceremonies. The junior category winner was Hannah Xin from the Creative Arts Education Academy, Hurstville. The winner of the senior category was Lynn Wang from iArts Studio. Both winners were featured on my Lunar New Year card sent to constituents in the Kogarah electorate. I thank the following schools and community groups whose students entered the competition: Kogarah High School, Carlton Public School, CASS Chinese School, Victory Mandarin School, Sydney Yu Cai Chinese Language School, DGArtSmart, Red Sugar Art Centre, I Arts Studio, Creative-Arts Education Academy, Inkwell Art Studio and Advance Diversity Services. I wish everyone good luck, good health and prosperity in the Year of the Tiger.

### **CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—The Kogarah Christmas Card competition, an annual contest for Year 3 students in my electorate, attracted an amazing range of creative and imaginative artworks from many young and talented artists. It was a very close contest and my office received many excellent entries this year. I would like congratulate Alexis Cheah of Our Lady of Fatima, Kingsgrove for her wonderful colour pencil depiction of a kookaburra in a festive outfit. I know it brought a sense of joy and to the people of Kogarah as it landed in mailboxes at the end of last year. I thank the following schools whose students entered our competition: St. Raphael's, Carlton South Public, Our Lady of Fatima Kingsgrove, Carlton Public, Kogarah Public, St. Gabriel's Primary and Hurstville Public. Congratulations to Alexis and a big thank you to every student and school that entered my Christmas Card competition for 2021.

### **KINGSGROVE SHOPS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—I acknowledge the work of local shops in the Kingsgrove area during the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the help of Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre, senior residents in the area were afforded support and services when they needed it most. Through their food rescue list, Kingsgrove Woolworths partnered with Kingsgrove Community Aid Centre to provide surplus food to senior residents. Each day, bus drivers worked to pick up food and make it available to residents in need at the Aid Centre. I also commend Jihan and Jack Tahan from Joe's Quality Fruit and Veg. I am told their generous food hampers assisted seniors unable to purchase food due to the closure of banking services in the area during lockdown. Finally, I extend my thanks to Ryan and his team at Kingsgrove Seafood who put together warm, cooked meals for seniors in the area and made them available at generous discount. Seniors were among the hardest hit during the pandemic, and I am greatly indebted for the generosity and tremendous effort that businesses put in to support our community, even when faced with their own challenges and uncertainties.

**LUNAR NEW YEAR 2022**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—February 1 marked the 2022 Lunar New Year and the beginning of the year of the tiger. I recognise and congratulate all those in the Summer Hill electorate taking part in Lunar New Year celebrations this month. This year's tiger, the water tiger, only occurs once every 60 years and is associated with justice and bravery, something we should all be holding strong as our community recovers from the last two years of the pandemic. Events were held across the Inner West to bring in the new year, including a lion dance on the main street of Marrickville, Chinese bilingual storytelling at Ashfield Library, Zonghruan performances, Vietnamese bilingual storytelling at Marrickville Library and a Lion Dancing Workshop in Ashfield. These events are so important to recognising and celebrating both the rich diversity of our communities and the enduring contribution made to the Inner West by our local Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean communities, and all those who observe Luna New Year festivities. I wish everyone in the Inner West a safe and prosperous Lunar New Year.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:21 until  
Tuesday 22 February 2022 at 12:00.**