



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday 23 February 2022**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 23 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.

## *Bills*

### **CRIMES (ADMINISTRATION OF SENTENCES) AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

### **LICENSING AND REGISTRATION (UNIFORM PROCEDURES) AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

#### **Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of messages from the Legislative Council returning the bills without amendment.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

### **HEALTH LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL 2022**

#### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Brad Hazzard, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Health) (09:47):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I bring before the House the Health Legislation (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2022. The bill makes a range of amendments across the Health portfolio to ensure that legislation remains current and fit for purpose. I turn first to schedules 1.1 and 1.2 to the bill, which set out the amendments to the Health Practitioner Regulation (Adoption of National Law) Act 2009. This Act adopts, subject to any modifications, the schedule to the Queensland Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009, to which I will refer as the Queensland law, as amended from time to time, and establishes the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme [NRAS] in New South Wales. The bill will change the current approach of automatically adopting any changes to the Queensland law. Instead, a regulation will need to be made before any changes to the Queensland law apply in New South Wales.

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme is the national scheme for the registration and accreditation of health practitioners, such as medical practitioners, nurses, midwives and dentists. Under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, there are 15 national boards established for 16 registered health professions. The boards are responsible for registering health practitioners. In addition, in jurisdictions other than New South Wales, the boards are also responsible for dealing with complaints against registered practitioners. However, New South Wales is a co-regulatory jurisdiction and did not adopt part 8 of the Queensland law, which relates to the complaints process. Rather, New South Wales kept its own complaints processes involving the independent Health Care Complaints Commission and the health professional councils. The current approach in New South Wales of automatically adopting changes to the Queensland law lacks parliamentary oversight and can impact on the distinct nature of the complaints process in this State.

In addition to New South Wales not adopting the complaints process as part of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, it has also made modifications to the Queensland law from time to time. If changes to the Queensland law impact on how New South Wales handles complaints or amends provisions that New South Wales has already modified, New South Wales currently has to expressly pass legislation to modify the application of Queensland law to this State. Most States and Territories have adopted the Queensland law as updated from time to time; however, Western Australia did not adopt it and instead has mirror legislation. This requires Western Australia to pass identical laws whenever Queensland passes changes to the national law. This process can delay the implementation of changes to the national law.

South Australia, on the other hand, only adopted the Queensland law as in force from 1 July 2010, when the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme commenced. Since then, any changes to the Queensland law only apply in South Australia if there is a regulation adopting the changes. The New South Wales Government considers the South Australian approach to be preferable. Requiring a regulation that is disallowable to be made



before adopting changes to the Queensland law will ensure that New South Wales has time to consider whether the amendments are right for this State. If either House of Parliament does not support the regulation, a disallowance motion can be brought.

A regulation will also allow New South Wales to respond quickly to amendments to the national law, thereby maintaining the integrity of the implementation of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. Therefore, to enhance parliamentary oversight of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme while recognising that it is important to maintain relative consistency with it, the bill amends the Health Practitioner Regulation (Adoption of National Law) Act 2009 to provide that, from the commencement of the amendments in the bill, any amendments to the Queensland law by its Parliament will take effect only if a regulation is made adopting the changes, with or without modification. Either House of Parliament will then have the ability to disallow the regulation, giving Parliament greater scrutiny.

I turn to the amendments in the bill that relate to COVID-19 provisions in the Health portfolio. In 2020 a number of provisions relating to COVID-19 were included in the Private Health Facilities Act 2007, the Public Health Act 2010 and the Mental Health Act 2007 to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These provisions are currently due to be repealed on 26 March and 31 March 2022. The bill seeks to extend some of the provisions. New South Wales has achieved high rates of vaccination with two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and currently appears to have passed the peak of infections and severe health system impacts from the recent Omicron wave. However, there is still a risk of further waves of COVID-19 infection in New South Wales as a result of a combination of the possibility of a new variant of concern, waning immunity, increased social participation and seasonal impacts. This means that some of the COVID-19 provisions will need to remain on the statute book beyond March 2022.

Private hospitals have been an important part of the response to COVID-19 and have assisted the public system by caring for public patients, redeploying staff to the public system and caring for residents of aged-care facilities. The COVID-19 provisions in the Private Health Facilities Act 2007 are sections 12A and 70. Section 12A allows the Secretary of the Ministry of Health to impose such conditions considered necessary, having regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, on a private health facility licence relating to the coordination, comprehensiveness, safety or adequacy of resources of health services across New South Wales. Section 70, on the other hand, allows the secretary to exempt compliance with a condition on a private health facility licence where it is reasonably necessary to do so because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both provisions are currently due to expire on 26 March 2022. The bill extends these provisions until 30 June 2022, which will align with the National Partnership on COVID-19 Response.

Under the partnership agreement, the Commonwealth Government guarantees the viability of private hospitals should they be required to be utilised as part of the COVID-19 response. This guarantee will end on 30 June 2022. The bill also amends the Public Health Act 2010 to extend certain time-limited COVID-19 related provisions until 30 September 2022. These provisions are sections 112 and 118. They are currently due to be repealed on 26 March 2022. Sections 112 and 118 allow a police officer to be an authorised officer for the purpose of issuing an on-the-spot fine and allow them to require a person to provide their name and address. These powers have been used during the pandemic to allow police officers to issue on-the-spot fines to persons who have breached a public health order.

There are existing public health orders, and there may be a continuing need for such orders, assuming that the criteria is met under the Act. The Government, and I am sure many people in the community, is hopeful that there will be less need for health orders under the Public Health Act. While there are public health orders in place, it makes sense to ensure that police officers can assist with the compliance with and enforcement of them. The New South Wales Government has been progressively scaling back its suite of public health orders and will be continuing to do so as circumstances permit. For example, the Government recently announced the repeal of density limits, a relaxation of QR code requirements and an intention to relax mask restrictions. While we can never be certain about what the future may hold, we would hope that circumstances allow us to avoid reliance on public health orders prior to the scheduled repeal of these amendments.

The bill also extends the repeal date of section 203 of the Mental Health Act 2007. Section 203 allows certain mental health examinations to be carried out via audiovisual link, provided they can be carried out with sufficient skill or care and that the use of an audiovisual link is necessary because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Section 203 can assist in reducing the risk of transmitting COVID-19 to others by reducing the requirement to conduct face-to-face examinations where appropriate. It also supports mental health examinations to be carried out while a person is in isolation or quarantine. This provision is currently due to expire on 31 March 2022. The bill extends the operation of section 203 to 30 June 2022.

The COVID-19 and other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022 was recently introduced into the Parliament by the Treasurer. This separate bill, among other things, makes amendments to the

Mental Health Act 2007 to facilitate the broader use of audiovisual links. These separate amendments are not tied to audiovisual links being necessary because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill amends section 27A of the Act to enable more flexible use of audiovisual links when conducting mental health assessments on an ongoing basis and also repeals the temporary section 203. These amendments will only commence on proclamation, once accompanying guidelines are developed. At this stage, it is anticipated that the amendments to section 27A of the Act will be proclaimed to commence by June 2022. Therefore, to ensure there is no gap in the availability of audiovisual link assessments, the Health Legislation (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2022 proposes to extend the repeal date of section 203 of the Act to 30 June 2022.

I turn to the remainder of the amendments in the bill. The bill includes amendments to section 62 and section 79 of the Public Health Act 2010, following a statutory review of those sections. The bill makes amendments to clarify that taking reasonable precautions against spreading a sexually transmitted infection includes complying with a medical practitioner's advice given under the Act, clarify that any testing requirement under a section 62 public health order must relate to the condition being managed under the public health order, and require the authorised medical practitioner who makes a section 62 public health order to give the person the subject of the order information about the order. This information will include information relating to review rights. These amendments were all included in the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 but have been moved to this bill.

The remainder of the amendments in the bill are amendments of a minor nature. The bill amends the Health Services Act 1997 to update the name of the COAG Health Council and the Standing Council on Health. It also amends the Mental Health Act 2007 to update outdated references to the Mental Health Advocacy Service. Further, the bill amends the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020 to update the medical examination certificate used when conducting a mental health examination on an inmate. It also amends the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989 to extend the repeal date of the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 to 1 September 2024, as the Ministry of Health is currently conducting a review of the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 and the regulation. The amendments proposed in the bill are all aimed at ensuring health-related legislation is up to date and effective. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **COVID-19 AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REGULATORY REFORMS) BILL 2022**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 15 February 2022.**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (10:05):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. Over the past two years, the COVID pandemic has significantly changed the way we live, how we deliver services, the way we work and socialise and the importance of a well-funded and functional public health system. In particular, the pandemic has shown us how technology has accelerated to become a much more permanent fixture in every aspect of our personal and professional daily lives. Working from home, or WFH, is undoubtedly a permanent fixture in the way employees and employers engage in the workplace, and it is no different for the delivery of public administration. The use of technology for meetings, interviews, discussions, debates, and to conduct group meetings and ballots, is now much more common than it was prior to the pandemic.

The general thrust of the bill is that it makes permanent changes in allowing technology to be a permissible and legal way to conduct workplace and public administration activities. The bill covers a diverse range of portfolios ranging from strata management, environmental planning, mental health, retail leases, community land management, contract cleaning industry working arrangements and flexibility in accessing long service leave, just to name a few. The bill permits, for example, the use of technology to conduct formal meetings, hold public hearings, conduct interviews between parties, undertake assessments, vote and conduct ballots, lodge documents, manage records and indeed, under the Interpretations Act 1987, it allows the tabling of documents in Parliament even when the House is not sitting, but excluding when the Parliament has been prorogued.

Labor will not be opposing the bill, but it will be proposing some amendments to improve it. The proposed amendments are reasonable and aimed at minimising the risk of inadvertent adverse outcomes as a result of adopting the bill in its current form. The vast majority of the proposed changes are administrative and involve non-complex public administration functions or processes. This simplicity may not apply to the proposed use of technology for complex scenarios involving individuals in our community who are experiencing serious mental or emotional health difficulties. Further, the proposed changes to long service leave are significant and change the original intent of accessing and using long service leave. Whilst technology will continue to play a much greater role in our daily lives, both personal and professional, it should never be a first option or an automatic substitute

for face-to-face meetings, interviews or assessments for situations which are personally complex and involve the human frailties of people who are in very difficult personal, emotional or psychological circumstances.

For example, schedule 1.12 amends the Mental Health Act 2007 to allow a medical practitioner to use an audiovisual link as part of an examination or observation of a person's mental state. The findings from this examination or observation could result in that particular individual being placed under guarded public supervisory care for an unspecified period. This is a sensitive and significant outcome for any individual and their close family or personal support network. Whilst technology may be an option, in difficult and complex situations like this we should be careful and not instantly use technology as a replacement for face-to-face meetings. It may be more efficient to use technology, but that does not mean it is more effective.

An audiovisual assessment will present difficulties in taking into account the contextual nature of the examination and the individual's response. Full body language movements, close facial reactions, tonal responses and physical surroundings are important factors that create a more accurate understanding of what a patient is saying or not saying and provide clues as to why responses are being provided in a particular way. An inaccurate assessment could lead to an individual being allocated guarded public supervisory care. These are the issues that we have raised, and there will be ongoing discussions with the Government. Once those amendments are finalised, they will be presented to the Legislative Assembly and perhaps even to the Legislative Council. Given the complexities of the situation and the difficulties and challenges that the individuals involved are currently experiencing, this is not an unreasonable amendment.

We owe it to individuals and their families to ensure that the most accurate form of assessment takes place, rather than one that is technologically more efficient and timely. In agreement with the Treasurer's office, the Opposition will move amendments to include that a review be conducted within 18 months so that the proposed changes being put before the House operate effectively and efficiently, as originally intended. In addition, the amendments will require that the Treasurer table a report to the Presiding Officers of both Houses by 30 December 2023. As agreed with the Treasurer's office, schedules 1.4 and 1.5 and schedules 1.11 and 1.15 will be excluded from the review. Therefore, the amendment to the Constitution Act 1902 is temporarily extended until 26 March 2023. The amendment to the Interpretation Act is for clarification purposes, and the amendments to the Retail Leases Act 1984 are designed to preserve the protections that were granted to eligible tenants during the pandemic.

I also briefly refer to schedule 1.11 regarding long service leave. Historically, the purpose of long service leave was to allow an employee to take leave in blocks to ensure that they had a well-earned rest after long service. There was a distinct difference between long service and annual or flexible leave. The proposed changes are significant as they change the entitlement to any additional leave or perhaps an additional flexi day. But during the pandemic a number of employees accessed their long service leave to meet their specific personal circumstances. A number of workers felt that the flexibility in the changes to long service leave worked to their advantage. However, that flexibility already exists because an employer and employee can come to an agreement on when long service leave is taken. Labor will continue to monitor how the proposed changes to long service leave work to ensure that when they are adopted in future they will continue to benefit both employers and employees in creating a productive workplace. Labor wants to ensure that when employees take long service leave under this flexible arrangement, it is done in the spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit to both the employer and the employee.

During the pandemic frontline workers in our health system and transport sector—as well as teachers, carers and retail workers—worked hard to keep us all safe and our economy moving. Labor's amendments are based on good faith to ensure that the bill can be improved and does not inadvertently disadvantage workers. Creating productive workplaces ensures that the changes proposed operate effectively and efficiently, as they were originally intended. That is why the review requirement plays an important part in the amendments.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (10:13):** It is a pleasure to speak in debate on the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. On behalf of the Treasurer, the member for North Shore and Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer for COVID Recovery introduced the bill in this place on 15 February. She set out the intent of the legislation, focusing on the important aspects of the bill in her speech. I support the bill and commend that speech to the House but focus today on some aspects in the bill that enable business and consumer flexibility.

When the pandemic began in 2020, New South Wales rapidly introduced emergency measures to support businesses and consumers to respond to the challenges that they faced. Those challenges were present not only in the business and consumer space but also in the workplace, the education space, entertainment areas, travel and our day-to-day social interactions. The changes in respect of business and consumer responses included sensible regulatory change that gave consumers and businesses flexibility to adapt to the new ways that they were doing things. As a result, New South Wales businesses could adjust their settings based on those unprecedented circumstances and some businesses flourished, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Consumers were given more flexibility around when and how they accessed goods and services. Many of those changes involved switching from paper processes to digital delivery. Physical distancing was supported by the removal of a number of compliance burdens. The removals allowed small businesses greater flexibility to operate at home or to prepare food for delivery, which sometimes meant the difference between shutting up shop and keeping people in jobs. Some businesses flourished as they amended their practices. One which comes to mind in my electorate of Seven Hills is the Yummi Pet Products factory at Ballandella Road, Toongabbie, which I had the pleasure of visiting on Monday. It is an outstanding family business connected to the Pendle Hill Meat Market, which provides goods, such as meat, fruit, vegetables and other items, and services for the surrounding community and across western Sydney.

Pendle Hill Meat Market is also connected to a farm in the Southern Highlands that is held by the owner. The family business is almost running a circular economy. More importantly, the owners of Yummi Pet Products discussed with me the difficulties the business faced in staffing and sourcing supplies as well as the rapid increase in freight charges. They also mentioned how the Government's support helped them keep workers in jobs and helped them keep their business trading. The pet industry increased quite rapidly during the periods of COVID lockdown. In fact, ours was one family that bought a new pet during that time. I should put on record that the name of my pet is Oakley. The pet industry has been growing for a number of years, but it definitely grew during COVID. I say well done to the Yummi Pet Products factory at Ballandella Road, Toongabbie, for having the flexibility and agility to keep its doors open and keep people employed during those times.

Rigorous economic evaluation of stakeholder engagement has shown that retaining many of those changed measures will provide net economic benefits for the whole of the community. That evaluation is supported by feedback from stakeholders that a number of measures should be permanently retained because they promote flexibility. The bill seeks to make a number of those measures permanent. In total, the measures in the bill will deliver \$2.4 billion in economic benefit for New South Wales over the next decade. The *Productivity Commission White Paper 2021* recommended that COVID-19 regulatory reforms be retained, unless it could be shown that there was no net public benefit. The amendments in the bill will ensure that these regulatory reforms continue. They have proven to have net ongoing benefits to both businesses and consumers, supporting New South Wales in its COVID-19 economic recovery.

I turn to the measures in the bill that promote flexibility. The bill will make permanent a number of temporary provisions that would otherwise lapse in early 2022 and that will promote greater flexibility for both businesses and consumers. These include such things as allowing community associations, strata schemes and retirement villages to continue to be able to meet and vote electronically. This is an opportune time to give a shout-out to two of the villages in my electorate that have recently been using that option. One is the residents committee at the Willows Retirement Village at Winston Hills, which I had the opportunity of visiting just prior to the COVID period to see its new upgrades. I formed an understanding about what a great connection there is between the residents of the Willows village and their families who reside nearby, in both Winston Hills and Northmead. Likewise, the residents committee of the Constitution Hill Retirement Community on Centenary Road at Northmead has had the ability to meet and vote electronically, and I commend that village for its great work for not only the residents but also the surrounding community.

Another change is that mandatory questioning under a range of Acts will be able to continue to occur electronically. The change relates particularly to allowing interviews and questioning to be conducted remotely by audio link and audiovisual link under Acts such as the Biodiversity Conservation Act, the Crown Land Management Act, the Fisheries Management Act, the Mining Act, the Protection of the Environment Operations Act and the Water Management Act.

The bill will continue to provide flexibility for employers and their workers about how and when long service leave should be taken. Prior to 2020, when the temporary amendments came into operation, the Long Service Leave Act of 1995 was quite prescriptive about when leave could be taken. For example, unless there was an agreement between the employer and the worker to split long service leave in a manner specified in the Act, leave had to be taken in one continuous period.

The provisions in the bill will allow leave to be taken, by agreement, in multiple periods of no less than one day. They will also allow an employer and a worker to reach a mutual agreement about how much notice should be given before the taking of a period of such long service leave. Not only would that have economic benefits; one could also imagine the benefits that would bring to the employee and the employee's family. Economic benefits of \$1.9 billion will be delivered by allowing employees to access long service leave more flexibly, with benefits for both employees and employers. [*Extension of time*]

These benefits will largely accrue to employees from the value they get from taking their long service leave in the form that most suits their needs. Where employees take small parcels of time off, there can be fewer disruption costs to business. Greater flexibility regarding long service leave arrangements also allows employees

to take their accrued leave with the agreement of their employer rather than having to be stood down or made redundant.

These amendments bring strong economic and productivity benefits. In total, the measures in the bill will deliver \$2.4 billion in net economic benefits for New South Wales over the next decade. Some \$500 million worth of these net benefits will come from removing barriers to digital processes in areas such as electronic meetings for strata schemes and regulatory interviews. The greater flexibility in how meetings and voting can occur will deliver significant time and cost savings for meeting attendees, where virtual processes are used alongside or in place of in-person attendance. Digitalisation of processes will also promote social distancing during subsequent outbreaks that may occur across the State.

It is clear that sensible measures should be retained permanently for the ongoing benefit of all of the community. As we continue to deal with the ongoing economic effects of the pandemic, our regulatory settings must be fit for purpose and responsive. Most importantly, they must be flexible. Quality regulation ensures our economy functions optimally and consumers and businesses have the flexibility to adapt as the world changes. The bill will ensure that net ongoing benefits from these sensible regulatory changes are retained. With these amendments, consumers and businesses alike will enjoy the benefits that come with their permanent implementation. In summary, I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (10:25):** I speak in support of the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. At the outset of the pandemic, our work practices changed and became more flexible as people experienced working from home for the first time. By extension, so did the way in which many employees were able to access the use of their long service leave in a more flexible way to suit their needs. In response to the pandemic, the Government rapidly introduced amendments to the Long Service Leave Act 1955 to allow an employer and a worker to agree to take long service leave in smaller blocks, no less than one day. It also allowed an employer to give workers less than one month's notice to take their long service leave, but only by agreement. This supported the survival of many businesses across the State and allowed people to draw upon their hard-earned leave entitlements in a way that suited them and their families.

Prior to 2020, when the temporary amendments came into operation, the Long Service Leave Act was quite prescriptive about how leave could be taken. Unless there was agreement between the employer and the worker to split long service leave in a manner specified in the Act, leave had to be taken in a continuous period. Employers also needed to give one month's notice to employees when directing them to take long service leave. During lockdowns, many employees may have been stood down or made redundant rather than having the option of using their entitlements.

The prescriptiveness of the Long Service Leave Act reflects the historical purpose of long service leave, which was first introduced in Australia in the early 1800s. The original purpose of long service leave was to give long-serving public servants the opportunity to travel back to England, Europe or elsewhere for an extended period, safe in the knowledge that their jobs would be there on their return. Thankfully, it no longer takes 90 days to visit merry England. Along with the improvements in international travel, our workplace culture has changed. In recognition of the change in how we live and work, the way in which entitlements are able to be taken should change too. It is crucial that the legislation remains fit for purpose and meets the needs of the community as it stands today. For the Long Service Leave Act to continue to be relevant to the modern workforce, greater flexibility is needed to reflect how we live and work today.

The bill's purpose is to make permanent the temporary measures currently contained in sections 15A and 15B of the Act. The provisions in the bill allow for leave to be taken, by agreement, in multiple periods of no less than one day. This will apply to leave taken in advance and to accrued leave. It will also allow an employer and a worker to reach a mutual agreement about how much notice should be given before taking a period of long service leave. The bill also contains consequential amendments relating to the keeping of leave records and defining what a "day" is for workers who do not work a fixed number of weekly hours. Those amendments will provide more clarity for employers and ensure that they are paying their staff correctly under the new flexible arrangements. The amendments will not only help with the continued management of the pandemic and our longer term economic recovery but also, importantly, provide employers and workers with greater flexibility to make arrangements about how best to take long service leave.

Economic evaluation of the changes found significant net benefits of around \$1.9 billion over 10 years. Largely, those benefits will accrue to employees from the value of taking long service leave in the form that most suits their needs. That could involve an employee taking a day off every fortnight for family commitments or as part of a phased retirement. Employers can also benefit from increased productivity and lower absenteeism associated with employees working more flexibly. When employees take shorter periods of time off, business will experience lower disruption costs. For instance, employers would have to spend time and money hiring and training temporary staff to cover for employees who take long service leave in large blocks.

The public sector already enjoys those benefits of long service leave and it is time that private sector businesses and employees enjoy them as well. Employer organisations and unions alike support flexibility in how employees take their long service leave, as long as it is done by agreement. Many have had a taste of the benefits of greater flexibility and do not want to revert to former restrictive practices. The bill ensures that long service leave provisions in New South Wales promote greater flexibility for employers and employees alike. The bill also amends the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave Scheme) Act 2010, which entitles a worker to a pro rata payment instead of long service leave if they have permanently left the industry and have at least five years' credited service.

The proposed amendment shortens the waiting period for eligible workers to access a pro rata payment from 20 weeks to 10 weeks. That adjustment will support workers who have left the industry due to unforeseen events such as COVID-19. The bill inserts a new regulation-making power that will provide flexibility for the agency to prescribe a period shorter than 10 weeks for a worker to access their entitlements. That ensures that cleaners can access a pro rata payment faster should the need arise, particularly in the event of future pandemics or outbreaks. The time frame will be prescribed following the necessary regulatory impact assessment and stakeholder consultation. Removing the waiting period will allow cleaners faster access to their entitlements without undermining the objectives of the scheme. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (10:33):** On behalf of The Greens I am pleased to contribute to debate on the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. The Greens recognise that COVID has introduced great challenges and, in many situations, tremendous sadness because of the death and hardship that the pandemic has imposed on people. However, the bill presents an opportunity to take some positives by incorporating many of the elements that have been foisted upon us and recognising the accelerated trends that already exist, such as working from home and conducting remote meetings. I will address some of those positive elements introduced by the bill, but I also have questions for the Minister about issues relating to internet requirements and the challenges for people who may not be technologically literate or whose economic situation or proficiency with modern communication tools might be lacking.

The reduced waiting period to access long service leave is an important step forward in providing greater flexibility for employees and businesses and is acknowledged as a positive element. An issue raised by one of my constituents is the importance of enabling mental health examination or observation of people who have been detained in a mental health facility under the Mental Health Act 2007 to be done by audiovisual link. Obviously, where practicable we would like the medical professional to do it in person, but where that is not possible an audiovisual link would accelerate the procedure, which is very important for the family and the person undergoing the observation or examination. It can be distressing for an unwell person to have a lengthy wait to see a medical professional for assessment or observation, so allowing those to be conducted by audiovisual link is an important step forward.

It is important to my community and to communities around the State that planning panels and the Independent Planning Commission [IPC] are able to hold public hearings and meetings online. Many people prefer them to be held in person but being able to hold them online is important. Obviously online hearings require a different approach. There must be an opportunity for the procedure for an online IPC hearing or planning panel meeting to be clearly explained. I am not sure whether guidelines have been issued to the IPC or to planning panels to make clear how the online meeting process works. I have been part of online planning panel meetings that have been a little bit cumbersome at times.

Accordingly, has the Government considered whether clear guidelines will be issued to people holding those important online activities? Many matters considered at IPC hearings or at planning panel meetings are quite contentious. People want to be involved and have their say. Has the Government considered or produced a clear set of guidelines so that people who want to appear before those panels can be heard clearly and understand the process? I know a lot of that has been developed, especially through the planning process, but has the Government put its mind to such guidelines? I request that those processes be developed, given that the bill allows for hearings and meetings to be held exclusively online.

I raise the issue of strata committee meetings. Some people in our communities—sometimes but not always they are older people—might not know how to use Zoom or other online meeting mechanisms like Teams. How do we recognise those people and their contributions? How do we include people who are not internet literate in an online strata committee meeting? Has the Government considered that? Is the Government considering issuing guidelines or providing other support for people? Generally a real estate agent or some kind of manager will convene a strata committee meeting. Will any advice be provided to them? For example, will they provide a terminal or a place where people can go if they are not internet proficient or do not have access to an online meeting tool?

In my electorate, some older people cannot use Zoom or are not proficient with it but do not want to be excluded from their strata committee meetings. Even though some people on the strata committee would love to exclude them, how do we make sure those people are included? Has the Government thought about that? Will guidelines be issued to support the development of an inclusive online process? On balance, online processes are often preferred. While we can say someone who is not proficient with the internet may not be able to attend a meeting via Zoom or Teams, by the same token sometimes travelling quite long distances to a strata committee meeting could be a challenge as well. So it is all about finding the right balance.

That is why I ask whether Government members have turned their minds to how they can ensure that people who may not have a high level of internet literacy will not be excluded from these meetings and to make sure that they are able to fully participate in strata committee meetings. That is particularly important because now only 75 per cent of strata committee owners are required to vote to demolish their building and redevelop it. I want to make sure that in those circumstances every single person is able to participate in the meeting and to make sure that we have put our minds to that.

All in all, the bill is an example of how we can try to take some of the positives out of what was and continues to be a very tragic global pandemic. A lot of these elements are really important. I know that the Minister for Health has had the same consideration in a briefing that we received yesterday, and I acknowledge that this can make a very positive contribution. The modelling in the Minister's second reading speech talks about \$2.4 billion in benefit over the next decade—my goodness, those assumptions in the model must be pretty good. I do not doubt that there are net economic benefits but I am not sure if it is \$2.4 billion.

I am not going to ask the Minister to show us the modelling, but I think that it is pretty clear that there is a lot of benefit. This is why we as a country need good internet. Some of our friends representing rural and regional New South Wales have real problems with internet connectivity. High-speed internet will be the backbone of our economy and our communities in the future and that is why we need to be investing in it and supporting it. All in all, I acknowledge that the bill makes positive contributions. I simply ask that the Minister communicate to the House any thoughts that Government members have had around those issues of accessibility.

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (10:41):** The pandemic has caused many of us to change how we work and live, and it has certainly changed our lives in many ways—in the way we have meetings and contact with family. Many of these new ways of working and living were already possible; however, most people chose to meet face to face rather than via Zoom. But obviously the pandemic has caused these practices to be adopted now as part of our normal everyday lives. As part of its response to the pandemic and the changes it necessitated, the Government introduced a raft of regulatory changes to remove barriers to modern ways of working and living. This has assisted many community groups to meet when, for example, sometimes it would have been more difficult for parents with young children to participate in things like P&C meetings if they had primary school children as well as little ones at home. So it has improved the way that some groups meet. Now that we are returning to face-to-face meetings, they can do hybrid meetings and get the best of both worlds.

The community has moved on from paper or in-person processes to digital delivery. Long service leave could be taken in smaller blocks and with less notice, by agreement between the employer and employee. Social distancing has meant digital delivery of certain processes and greater flexibility to business, which had long been advocated for and, with the pandemic, became a necessity. Allowing documents to be handled digitally instead of through physical paper processes also supported physical distancing during the pandemic. It has also supported more modern and less costly ways of working amongst businesses, government and consumers.

The modern world has definitely changed rapidly, and the pandemic has revealed that our regulatory environment must also keep up with that changing environment. Fit-for-purpose regulation promotes innovation, competition and economic growth, and that was certainly evident with a lot of businesses which, during the pandemic, had to look at how they functioned and worked, and pivot their business. Innovation became key in managing the pandemic and their customers. Fit-for-purpose regulation promotes that innovation. We undertook a rigorous economic evaluation. Stakeholder engagement has shown that people were happy with retaining many of the measures that we had to put into place throughout the pandemic and continuing to manage some of those regulations moving forward, as it was more cost effective for their businesses.

Items in the bill also propose that there is that net economic benefit for the community of about \$2.4 billion over 10 years. We have listened to stakeholder feedback and heard loud and clear that these measures should continue in non-pandemic settings. As I mentioned earlier, we are now moving back to meetings in a hybrid form, where some are face to face in the room and others are involved over Zoom. These benefits also flow to business, employees and consumers, primarily from time savings and greater flexibility. As recommended by the New South Wales *Productivity Commission White Paper*, measures with a net public benefit should be retained. The bill helps to do exactly that.

The amendments modernise how we work and live and bring with them a host of economic benefits for the people of the State. The bill will make permanent a number of temporary provisions which would otherwise lapse in early 2022 and will also provide more modern ways of working and living for businesses and consumers. These include allowing community associations, strata schemes and retirement villages to continue to meet and vote electronically. I have spoken to many community groups in my electorate. Being able to now run their meetings in a hybrid way has proven to be very beneficial.

I use an example of a stroke group that meets in my electorate of East Hills. With COVID, meeting via Zoom was beneficial for them as a lot of their members obviously had compromised immune systems. To be able to hold their meetings by Zoom was beneficial. They have continued with that and also still meet in person for those that choose to meet regularly. Others who perhaps are not particularly well can still join the meeting via Zoom. Some of the ways in which we have changed have definitely assisted community associations to embrace their members and continue to meet. Being able to vote as an association via these new regulations will certainly be beneficial and allow for some of those community groups to continue.

Mandatory questioning under a range of Acts will be able to continue to occur electronically as an alternative to in-person questioning. Medical practitioners and specified accredited persons will be able to conduct examinations of mentally ill and mentally disordered persons virtually when an in-person assessment is not suitable to assess whether the person requires detention. The benefits from this greater modernisation are large. It is expected that retaining changes to enable digital processes will provide net economic benefits of \$500 million over the next decade for New South Wales through time and transport savings. For instance, an owner who wishes to attend a strata meeting will save time and transport costs where they attend virtually. They will have the option of dialling in from a location that is convenient for them and voting electronically.

One of the things I used to do before becoming a member of Parliament was manage the strata of business units in Milperra. They had chosen not to have a strata manager manage their property but to self-insure and self-manage, so I used to assist them with the requirements to undertake their AGMs and reporting required under strata management. The electronic changes that have now been put in place would have been of great benefit because businesses are obviously busy working and trying to manage their businesses. They had to attend strata meetings in person, on site, when they would like to be conducting their businesses. The changes are of great benefit to those strata owners because it means now they will be able to hold those AGMs in person, in a hybrid way or via the internet, and still be able to legally vote to maintain their AGM and strata requirements.

The bill will also continue to provide flexibility for employers and their workers about how and when long service leave may be taken during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the temporary amendments coming into operation in 2020, the Long Service Leave Act 1955 was quite prescriptive about how leave could be taken. The provisions in the bill will allow, by agreement, leave to be taken in multiple periods of no less than one day. It will also allow an employer and a worker to reach a mutual agreement about how much notice should be given before taking a period of long service leave. This would allow employees to take their long service leave in the form that most suits their own needs, promoting modern ways of working. For example, this could involve an employee taking a day off every fortnight for family commitments or as part of a phased retirement. The benefits from this reform for employees are estimated to be worth a staggering \$1.9 billion over the next 10 years.

Benefits will also flow to employers from increased productivity and lower absenteeism associated with employees being able to work from home in more modern and flexible ways. Where employees take smaller periods off there will also be fewer disruption costs to business. Our continued economic recovery requires that regulatory settings be adaptable to the changing pace of the modern world. The bill will contribute to New South Wales' economic recovery by making permanent a range of regulatory changes which promote more modern ways of working and living. The changes in the bill allow the community to continue to benefit from the opportunities by digitalisation and more flexible work practices. By making these measures permanent, businesses and individuals will continue to reap the rewards from the added productivity and modernisation that they bring. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (10:50):** I speak in support of the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. Almost overnight the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly changed the way people and businesses could work, live and operate. In many cases it accelerated trends already occurring in our economy, such as the shift to digital and online processes. Many of these changes were long-called-for reforms to align outdated rules to contemporary ways of working and doing business; for example, digital delivery replaced paper processes.

It also updated burdensome compliance rules to reflect modern ways of working. A number of associations and incorporations have been able to meet and vote electronically without having to meet in person to amend their constitution to allow electronic meeting and voting. Investigations and assessments under a range of Acts are now able to be done electronically in line with many other aspects of our lives. Stakeholder feedback has been



overwhelmingly in support of the continuation of these measures. The bill will make permanent the ability to use these technological changes so that New South Wales can continue to take advantage of digital options and the productivity benefits they bring for consumers and businesses.

As a member of Parliament I very much enjoyed the use of audiovisual links and telecommunications during this pandemic because it enabled communication and connection with the community when we could not physically meet and talk about issues. It also assisted my role in working with departmental and ministerial staff when we could not physically meet to continue to progress issues that I was working for or fighting for on behalf of my community. Without the access to technological advantages such as digital technologies, these issues, problems and challenges would have stalled. Thankfully, with technology as it is, we have been able to continue to work during the lockdown periods and to continue to progress these issues to find solutions and resolutions for members of my community and the associations I support.

After a thorough evaluation it is expected that retaining changes to enable digital processes will provide a net economic benefit to New South Wales of \$500 million over the next decade through greater flexibility and time savings. This includes changes to meetings and voting in a number of areas, including strata, community management associations, associated incorporations and retirement villages. Owners corporations and community land associations will also be able to keep and affix an electronic form of their seal, and electronic service of records will also be allowed more easily. This will save time and compliance costs for businesses.

Rigorous economic evaluation has found that making permanent the changes for strata and community land management associations will lead to net economic benefits of \$213 million over 10 years respectively. These benefits are largely from the time and cost savings of not having to arrange and attend meetings in person. For instance, an owner who wishes to attend a strata meeting will save time and transport costs where they attend virtually. They will have the option of dialling in from a location that is convenient for them and voting electronically. Likewise, a member of a community land management association can attend meetings remotely, again saving time and travel costs. If the meeting is held completely online the association will also save on venue hire fees. In addition, these amendments will permanently allow associations to use technology to conduct meetings and for members to vote on resolutions, even if the constitution of the association does not expressly allow such measures to be used.

The measure is expected to deliver \$236 million in net economic benefits over the next 10 years, largely from time and travel costs saved where incorporated association members attend meetings virtually. The constitutions of many associations do not make provision for the conduct of meetings or voting using technology. That is because many associations were constituted over the past 25 years and their constitutions were not updated when the capacity to hold meetings and vote remotely was introduced into the Associations Incorporation Act 2009. For example, these measures will enable association committees to authorise necessary payments to creditors or to comply with their statutory obligations even if they cannot conduct face-to-face meetings.

The proposed amendments will also provide a sensible solution for allowing members to vote via modern technologies, such as email or videoconferencing. This will provide long-term flexibility for associations and greater choice. It will save costs that arise from having to meet formally to amend a constitution. Regulatory officers will also be able to undertake questions via audiovisual link for the purposes of questioning under different natural resources legislation. Both regulators and interviewees stand to gain from the changes due to travel time and transport costs saved when interviews are conducted online. Depending on the location of the interview they may also save on other travel expenses, such as accommodation and meals.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979—the planning Act—is also being updated to allow planning bodies, including the Independent Planning Commission NSW and the Sydney and Regional Planning Panels, to continue to hold their public meetings and hearings, either online or by audiovisual means as well as in person, or a hybrid of these arrangements. This change again provides the necessary flexibility to planning bodies and how they conduct their hearings and other meetings. It also ensures that they can continue to carry out their functions safely in a post-pandemic world.

This functionality, this flexibility to either conduct their hearings in a hybrid model or fully online, is also helpful and important for members of my electorate, where a significant amount of planning and development is underway. It will enable people to participate in planning panels and the Independent Planning Commission processes, if not to make a submission in relation to the impacts of planning proposals on local communities or individual families, then to follow the proceedings online. If people are at work or for some other reason are not able to attend in person, they can still track the progress of the issues that impact their family or local community and follow them closely. [*Extension of time*]

Retaining this measure is estimated to lead to benefits of \$2 million over the next 10 years, largely due to attendees saving travel time and transport costs when they attend planning body meetings online. Each of these

digital process amendments will provide significant benefits and flexibility to the community. With most of these reforms it is regional New South Wales that will benefit most from this shift to digital and online. Many of the savings from greater use of digital options are likely to be largest in regional areas where, for example, members of the public may have to travel longer distances to attend a strata committee or incorporated association meeting. I urge this House to review its decision to cease the provision of online connection for members of Parliament to connect to their work.

I know the State is moving back to normal in all manner of ways after the crisis of the pandemic, but I feel quite strongly that this House should provide the opportunity for members who may be physically unable to come to Parliament to conduct their roles and fulfil their duties as MPs by connecting online to the operations of the House. For rural members, it could be due to some natural disaster in their electorate or inability to get flights or to travel, but it would also apply to any member who may be unable to come to Parliament because they may be feeling unwell or to a new mum who is on maternity leave and still wants to participate in her role as a member of Parliament.

I have begun discussions with members of the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee to raise my concerns and to request that they re-examine the decision to cease providing that option, because it is really important, no matter what happens in the future, that we have the opportunity to continue our roles as members of Parliament. Even if members are physically unable to be in this place, they can still perform their duties through online means, having been elected by the people of their electorates to do so.

While those processes bring added flexibility and productivity benefits, the bill contains a number of safeguards to ensure no-one is left behind, including those with low digital literacy. The amendments generally ensure that most meetings or assessments can be held via an in-person method, while still allowing for the added flexibility of a digital option. Consultation with key groups such as the Retirement Villages Association and the Property Council of Australia has ensured the legislation is fit for purpose. If any resident needs the in-person option, it will continue to be mandatory in this context. In addition, a managing agent in a strata scheme or secretary of an owners corporation or association must ensure that reasonable steps are taken so that each person entitled to vote can do so when the new amendments take effect. A medical practitioner or accredited person must not undertake questioning via audiovisual means unless satisfied that the examination can be carried out with sufficient skill and care.

The amendments in the bill provide much-awaited digital flexibility in a number of areas across the community. They incorporate safeguards to ensure no-one is left behind, as I have just articulated. The benefits will be far reaching: Meeting digitally will enable greater participation, particularly where long commute times are involved or for those in regional and rural areas. They are sensible next steps in our regulatory reform agenda, bringing savings in time and cost to the people of New South Wales. I urge all members to support the bill.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (11:02):** I make a small contribution to the debate on the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022, and my comments will address two aspects of the bill. The first aspect concerns changes to the Mental Health Act 2007 that will allow audiovisual links to continue to be used when assessments are being carried out for the purpose of detention. The use of audiovisual technology in the area of mental health has been growing, but slowly. It is an important adjunct to therapy, particularly in rural areas. In my area, we have had an access line for two decades and for the past 15 years we have had remote mental health assessments using audiovisual technology. That has enabled patients in communities that do not have access to psychiatric expertise to be assessed without having to travel into a major centre such as Wagga Wagga. It avoids travel and all the complexities of transport for someone who is distressed, and it provides care as close to home as possible.

Up until the pandemic, sadly, the assessments required by the Mental Health Act for the permanent detention of someone who is mentally ill or mentally disordered had to be conducted in person. That meant that people were required to be transported just for that reason. During the pandemic, we found that audiovisual links work just as well and that the assessments can be almost as effective—perhaps not in every case, but in most cases—and I welcome the fact that that will now continue. I believe it is a step forward in providing care for our rural and regional communities, and I congratulate the Government on taking that decision.

I add to that my distress that the Federal Government has wound back rebates for telehealth in mental health and psychiatry. During the pandemic, telehealth has been an avenue for people in rural and regional communities like mine to access mental health care at relatively low cost. That is now being wound back, which is something that we should look askance at. It is not right, and the Federal Government should look again at that issue. I have certainly taken it up with the local Federal member in my electorate, but I welcome the decision to extend those provisions under the Mental Health Act.

The second area I want to talk about is the changes to the Retail Leases Act 1994. As I understand it, the changes proposed in the bill to the Retail Leases Act mean that the protections that have been negotiated for lessees in commercial leases during the period of the pandemic under the Retail and Other Commercial Leases (COVID-19) Regulation 2022 will continue beyond 13 March, when the regulation will end. That is very welcome. There is no doubt the pandemic has made it very tough for many businesses, and one of the hardest hit industries that I have heard about is the motel industry.

The small mum-and-dad operators in motels in my electorate and throughout regional New South Wales have seen a very significant drop in tourism due to the restrictions on travel related to the pandemic and complicated by the sudden changes to the public health orders, which really played havoc with their ability to forecast their income stream and, frankly, to make a living. The provision for compulsory mediation, with the result that rents were waived and deferred and arrangements were made, has kept those businesses going. It is very important that what was negotiated at that time is not allowed to be wound back, so I endorse the fact that those protections will now be continued under the bill.

That highlights an issue that has come to the surface because of the pandemic. The pandemic exposed what I call the curse of the ratchet clause in commercial leases, particularly for motel operators. They are commercial leases, not retail leases, so they do not fall under the Retail Leases Act 1994. They prevent rent that is being paid by a lessee dropping below a certain level, despite the fact that an independent valuation might say that the rent should be significantly lower. Ratchet clauses do not operate in Victoria and other States, but they do in commercial leases in New South Wales.

They are a real curse for small motel operators, as has been exposed during the pandemic. Despite the fact that small motel operators, especially in rural areas, have suffered great drops in their income, the ratchet clause means they cannot get a commensurate reduction in the rent they pay when their rent is reviewed. We need to remove the ratchet clauses from commercial contracts involving those small businesses that are not protected under the Retail Leases Act. I have spoken on this issue before in this House, but I revisit it briefly because I have continued to receive representations on it. A motelier in Wagga Wagga approached me and said:

The possibility of New South Wales falling in line with the other States with the removal of this clause will have an enormous impact on our industry and allow a financial and, quite frankly, an emotional recovery to hopefully take place. We are just seeking a fair current market value. With the clause in place we are at the mercy of our landlords, who will be attempting to increase rental to recoup some of their begrudgingly lost revenue.

Another regional New South Wales motelier wrote to me from outside the Wagga Wagga electorate—of course, this issue has ramifications throughout rural New South Wales—and again said that ratchet clauses were a significant additional burden that has come after the increased competition they are facing not just from other motels but from the Airbnb market, and with reduced travel during the COVID pandemic. This motelier told me that by far his largest cost is rent. Unfortunately, while his lease has a provision for a market review of rent, it is overridden by the ratchet clause, which effectively puts a floor in the rent. If this motelier's income was holding steady, or indeed rising, it would not be a problem, but in the current situation it is causing enormous difficulties to the point where, in this particular case, the rent is now more than 30 per cent of gross income. This business operator's attempts to negotiate with the landlord have met with little success, he told me, and it is likely that annual rent rises will continue to be applied, regardless of market conditions. He said:

The ratchet clause is a very unfair instrument and only benefits the landlord and at a heavy cost to the tenant. A market review is not only fair but would also benefit the landlord in an improving market and takes away the opportunity for one party to bully the other.

I have also been informed by an industry representative that the impact of the ratchet clauses in New South Wales "places an additional burden on the industry that curtails investment, modernisation and the incentives to add value to the tourism experience of guests". This representative went on to say:

Currently, unlike retail shops in New South Wales and typical commercial leases, motel leases are not covered by the retail tenancies legislation and do not have the ability to have fair market rental review adjustments to the rental paid.

He went on to say:

Unlike retail and commercial tenants, motel businesses are purpose-built facilities that are not easily relocated next door.

It is not like, having signed a 25-year lease, you can say, "That is not enough. I am going to move to another town and set up again." Unfortunately, the situation is that these operators are often effectively locked in. Again I make the point that motels play an important role in regional communities. In some of the towns in my electorate there might be only one motel. They often give back to their communities through sponsorships and donations to schools and sporting clubs. They are very much part of the fabric of small rural communities, and small rural communities that have motels take pride in them because they make them a destination that can be visited. I request a small amount of additional time. [*Extension of time*]

I thank my colleagues for their enthusiastic endorsement. To recap, the ratchet clauses mean that rents never go down, even when market conditions mean that the rents being charged are far too high. Ratchet clauses mean that rents only go up, regardless of the harsh realities faced by small motel operators. Since investigating this issue I have discovered that in fact there are other businesses, in particular bars and hospitality venues, that are suffering the same situation. I received that information from the Small Business Commissioner. The answer would be to amend the Retail Leases Act and to include small motel operations and other businesses that are suitable under this Act, where ratchet clauses are prohibited.

I have approached the Government on this matter. I met with Minister Tudehope last year. He was very sympathetic and certainly my view is that there was acknowledgement that something should be done on this issue. At that stage the direction was to wait for a review of the Retail Leases Act, which was apparently going to happen within the next 12 months. It has not begun, which is very disappointing. I understand and acknowledge that there has been a lot on the Government's plate in one way or another with the pandemic, but businesses in this particular situation cannot wait another 12 months for a review of the Act, and that means we need to look at other solutions.

I have approached the Small Business Commissioner. I understand that there is an action that the Government could take right now that would help, at least partly, in this situation, which is that the Government could extend the current regulation or create a new regulation that would make mediation compulsory. Under the regulation that we are talking about today, mediation was made compulsory and there were requirements about rent deferral and rent waiving. In this particular situation we are not talking necessarily about rent deferral, but we are talking about going to compulsory mediation. That would not eliminate the ratchet clause but it would open up a process to a much fairer settlement. It would also allow negotiation that would take into account a range of factors that impact on the lease, so you would get a much more creative—and I think much fairer—outcome. This is much better than going to a tribunal and getting lawyers involved on a single issue, which can be expensive and takes time, and because it concentrates on only one issue you may not be getting the value you would in a negotiation or mediation situation.

My information from the Small Business Commissioner is that the mediation processes have been successful. They have led to good outcomes, with agreements negotiated. The requirement for businesses in this particular situation to undergo compulsory mediation would be at least something we could do to avoid this unfair situation where small businesses in this category are facing unfair rents. We can develop solutions that are fairer and that, frankly, create more value. A by-product would be that it would allow the Government to determine in greater detail the issues that are faced by small operators with commercial leases prior to the much-promised review of the Retail Leases Act. Most importantly, it would give small businesses in rural communities operating motels and hotels—the mum-and-dad businesses that are providing such an essential service—a fair go. That is an extremely important thing. In the meantime, I support the bill and particularly the extension of the protections that were negotiated under the commercial leases Act.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (11:16):** I too speak to this important bill, the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022, and recognise the benefits to our community, but I would also like to speak about the importance of continuing the policy that allows workers across New South Wales to work from home. We can do more work to support regional and rural communities by allowing, and facilitating through policy development, our workers to work from home. We have clearly seen that this increases the productivity of human beings. It has been a great opportunity, especially for people from the Central Coast. I did a survey leading into the very first lot of COVID—it was a little tick-a-box for one to two, two to four, four to six and over six hours—which indicated that we had people from the Central Coast spending more than six hours a day commuting to their workplace. This extends to the place of Greater Sydney and traffic congestion. We are spending so much money building expressways and freeways, whereas if we shapeshift our workplace we free up the congestion that is clogging our great city and stopping or decreasing productivity.

I believe the benefits of this legislation are fantastic. It allows inclusion in consultation of key groups, who do not have to attend various meetings and situations to have input. I thought the member for Balmain spoke very wisely, because not all of our seniors have equal access to the internet to be able to contribute to their strata—or whatever their organisational structure is—when not attending the meetings in person. I need to say that—and I am sure the member for Barwon will reiterate this—the working from home movement has given my community an incredible quality of life that we, as members of Parliament, should be pushing to continue. Families should be able to continue within communities. The hybrid model of working from home has been successful and surveys have shown that people want to continue working for two or three days in the city and two or three days at home. As I said, losing six hours a day is massive, along with the cost of Opal cards, parking, wear and tear on the car, and fuel. The emotional contribution as a result of people spending six hours more with their family is so important.

The hybrid working from home model has incredible benefits for people with disabilities. Having access to our workplace, even here in the Parliament, has been challenging. Getting on and off public transport, getting parking and getting into buildings, or sitting at workspaces that are not accessible can be hard. People with disabilities can contribute from their home, which is perfectly designed for them. They are able to transfer work to their home, rather than trying to come into a new workplace and go through all of those barriers again.

Women have also benefited from working from home. Women continue to take on carer and childminding roles. The ability for Jo, in my office, to be able to pick up her kids, continue her work and contribute to our team has been incredibly important. I do not think Jo is the only woman in New South Wales who appreciates the ability to work from home. It is not only benefitting emotional and human wellbeing; the financial contribution to our economy by working from home has been fantastic. Every single day 40,000 commuters were heading down the expressway to Sydney and spending \$440,000 in the city, which is great for the city economy. But, at the beginning of COVID, we had an absolute boom in our local retail. People were buying coffee, spending money in restaurants, getting their hair cut and doing their dry-cleaning in their local communities. It was fantastic. The benefits to regional and rural communities are really important.

The *Closer to Home* report by Business Western Sydney highlighted the benefits of hybrid workplaces in western Sydney. It stressed that we need a balanced city, where we can support both the rich and poor alike. London is doing a great job focusing on this and not forcing people to move for work when they can effectively work from home. We currently have a city that empties out of western Sydney and moves, which is financially not sensible. We are spending so much money on transport links and shifting the bottlenecks, but the congestion impact remains. That comes at a huge economic cost, where the movements of our goods and services across the city are being strangled by the transport of people to and from work when we can be working from home.

The environmental benefits of not getting in a car every day are huge. Our community car parks are not clogged to the brim and it is not a stressful battle to get onto trains. The environmental benefits of not having 40,000 people heading down the expressway every day are massive for the long-term future of the planet. As well as that, there are time and quality-of-life benefits. With people working from home, members of Parliament have the ability to invest differently in community infrastructure and wellbeing. Parents have got the time to contribute to sport in the evening rather than just being the crazy taxi transport that happens on the weekend.

The working from home movement is important, but the Liberal Federal Government has failed to deliver on the NBN. I am sure it has happened in rural communities such as Barwon, but the mountain districts have highlighted the absolute failure of the Federal Government. People in those communities are not able to do the work they need to do from home. There are also cost-of-living benefits. As the cost of living increases, the saving of travel costs is really important to mums and dads across our communities. We have already seen pockets hit hard as the cost of fuel increases.

The other challenge we, as members of Parliament, face with the working from home movement is the changing shape and cost of housing in regional communities. The Central Coast has seen the biggest increase in rental costs and an absolute lack of available rental properties, as well as housing market prices going through the roof. What was a \$500,000 or \$600,000 fibro shack pre-COVID now costs over \$1 million in my community, which is devastating for young locals. The failure of the Government to deliver additional supportive public housing and affordable social housing solutions is disappointing. It is something that my office deals with every day. Sydney is also the highest tolled city in the world. The saving of up to \$80 a day from tolls to people's pockets is a huge benefit.

I briefly add to the comments of the member for Mulgoa. It is important to have flexibility when situations arise that mean that we cannot attend Parliament. It is a great consideration to be able to include us in the decision-making if we are unable to get here because of whatever complex responsibilities or health issues we have at home. I also support the words of the member for Wagga Wagga on the importance of allowing mental health examinations and observations for persons detained in mental health facilities to be conducted via audiovisual means. I am sure I speak on behalf of anyone in a regional or rural community about the lack of psychiatric support in our communities.

Anything we can do to free up the psychiatric system to be able to support people living with mental illness is really important. Allowing this to occur without the complexities, organisation and cost of travel by doing things via telehealth, rather than in person, is important. In closing, I reiterate my disappointment in the Federal Government. Dr Gordon Reid is the Labor candidate for the Federal seat of Robertson. On numerous occasions, we have spoken about the Federal Government's winding back of access to digital health, especially for people who need it for mental health.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (11:25):** In speaking to the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022 I am reminded of how extraordinarily the people of New South

Wales, Australia and the world have responded to this pandemic. How quickly our bureaucracies in New South Wales were able to respond and react to it needs to be appreciated and recognised. A dark side to the pandemic was the tragedy of people not being able to be with their loved ones. My mother was unable to spend the time she wanted to with her dying sister in the last three weeks of her life. But the positive was how quickly we moved to change as a society. I truly appreciate how hard our public servants worked on this front. We can be proud of the way we have led this State.

Whilst this legislation will bring back some of those changes, some are going to stay for good. They are good changes. Before I go into detail, I pick up on some of the comments made by the member for Gosford. On the whole, they were good comments. The pandemic has shown us that we can work differently but, having been in small business and in charge of staff, chefs, wages and bookshops, it is hard to do that from home. There is a class of workers that can work from home, but it does not suit everybody. You cannot be a hairdresser from home unless you have got local government approval and a salon constructed in your backyard.

We have seen an incredible increase in the cost of real estate in regional areas, which is putting enormous housing pressure on us all, through this pandemic. People now know that they can live in paradise. They have finally cottoned on to what the National Party has been saying for a long time. If you get the balance right, you can have a better life, which is putting pressure on housing prices at the moment. We are working through policy solutions for that, which we need to do as a society.

I also pick up on the member's comments about telecommunications and acknowledge that we were the first State government in Australia to put mobile towers into regional areas. Sadly, they are not going to be the answer for every home in remote and more difficult-to-get-to areas, but I remind people about the new capacity within Sky Muster that Telstra puts out. It is heavily subsidised. I thank the National Party for fighting for that at the Federal level. Customers can be paying \$34 a month and for that money they can stream Netflix, do their business and have audio and telemeetings. It is easy for us to talk about the negatives, but there are some solutions, and if we have those solutions we should talk about them.

I will also pick up on comments made by the member for Wagga Wagga. It is very important to acknowledge that the failure of service delivery through the regions—whether it is in psychiatric services, other specialties or GPs—should be put at the feet of the Australian Medical Association and the medical colleges who decide who gets to be a specialist and where they are pulled from. The problem is that these colleges are based in Sydney. They are based in capital cities and their decisions are made based on who knows who and what. We know it. We tried to reform this area. Over time, many governments have tried. It is a formidable job for any government to carry out that reform.

I will not have anyone speak down about telehealth. I acknowledge the comments of the member for Wagga Wagga on that front. I was sitting on the bench during a basketball tournament at Tamworth, talking to another mother. We were meant to be watching the clock, but we got chatting. She told me that her son was saved by telehealth, provided by Royal Far West. He was able to access psychiatric services before his issues escalated. I give that very personal example of how telehealth can be a great service, because there is such limited ability to access medical services in our regions due to the way the colleges and the AMA train medical practitioners and where they decide they should go. I think that needs to be said.

A raft of sensible regulatory changes were made at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We switched from paper processes to digital delivery. Yes, it is important that we stay the course with digital delivery, but we must also acknowledge that some people, like my parents, are very stubborn and will not be part of those modern processes. I get quite cranky with my parents because they are very bright and quite capable of using technology, but they remain stubborn. Some people do not have the capacity to use technology, so we need to ensure that they have other options. Interviews and investigations were able to be conducted electronically via audiovisual link [AVL]. We were able to validly hold and vote at strata meetings via AVL. This was really important. While some estimates show that over 90 per cent of the New South Wales population have access to the internet, the bill contains appropriate measures to ensure that these new and improved processes do not exclude certain people from participating in community processes.

After thorough evaluation, it is expected that retaining changes to enable digital processes will provide net economic benefits of half a billion dollars for New South Wales over the next decade. The majority of those benefits will come from both time and travel cost savings. The ability to meet digitally has substantially cut commute times and the costs that come with commuting. But as we adapt to a more modernised and flexible world, safeguards must be in place for those without the necessary technological skill and knowledge. In an increasingly digitised world, we must remember those with low IT literacy—like my parents. Consultation with a number of stakeholders informed the development of permanent amendments to account for those needs. The amendments generally ensure that most meetings or assessments can be held via an in-person method, though still allowing for the added flexibility of a digital option.

Voting in retirement villages can still be done in person, in addition to electronically. Consultation with key groups such as the Retirement Villages Association and the Property Council of Australia has ensured that the legislation is fit for purpose, meaning if any resident has the need for the in-person option it will continue to be mandatory in this context. A managing agent in a strata scheme, or secretary of an owners' corporation or association, must ensure that reasonable steps are taken so that each person entitled to vote can do so when the new amendments take effect. The bill will also include a regulation-making power to prescribe the minimum reasonable steps that must be taken if electronic voting is to be used in either of those circumstances, which the Government will consult with the sector on. In addition, pre-meeting electronic voting has been removed from the new amendments to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged by that process. Stakeholder feedback was heard loud and clear on that topic.

Pre-meeting electronic voting may occur but only if a general resolution is passed by the members of a strata scheme. This is to ensure that there is transparency and fairness in the voting process, and to lower the risk of fraud. It will put the necessary safeguards in place so that all interested parties may have their voices heard in the appropriate manner, unless the scheme deems pre-meeting electronic voting the most suitable method for all members. In contrast, a resolution will not need to be passed for general meetings and voting via an electronic method, as there was little stakeholder concern in this area. Prior to COVID-19, medical practitioners were already permitted to undertake audiovisual assessments of mental health patients—as they should be and as we need them to be. The amendments will allow an accredited person to conduct an assessment via audiovisual link, and will remove the requirement that to use AVL a medical practitioner has to be in a different facility to the patient. But a medical practitioner or accredited person must not undertake questioning via AVL unless satisfied that the examination can be carried out with sufficient skill or care.

The benefits of AVL are not limited to mental health assessments. The bill also gives regulatory officers the power, under several pieces of natural resources legislation, to undertake investigations and interviews via AVL. Prior to the temporary COVID-19 measures, this was not possible. Regulatory questioning via AVL is an additional option. I seek an extension of time. [*Extension of time*]

Going forward, it is expected that these amendments will lead to around 25 per cent of interviews taking place electronically, particularly where lengthy travel is required in our regions. Industry stakeholders did not perceive that questioning via AVL compromised fairness, meaning we can be confident that integrity during electronic questioning will be maintained. Numerous other safeguards will be in place, with the procedural requirements laid out under each relevant Act. Again, I point out that we have one of the highest ratios in the world of doctors per head of population. Too many of our medical professionals are sitting in the capital cities and there are not enough of them in our regional communities. But this bill proposes sensible changes for the long term. I acknowledge that the member for Barwon represents a very large, complicated and diverse electorate. This bill makes changes that will benefit people in electorates such as his.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 is also being updated to allow planning bodies, including the Independent Planning Commission and the Sydney District and Regional Planning Panels, to continue to hold their public meetings and hearings online or by audiovisual means, as well as in person, or a hybrid of these arrangements. Prior to COVID-19 those bodies were able to hold their meetings only in person. The bill will provide the necessary flexibility to planning bodies in how they conduct their hearings, although they will not be forced to hold online-only meetings.

Where planning bodies conduct meetings or hearings entirely or partly online, they must ensure that the meeting is recorded and made public. The final digital process amendment in the bill concerns incorporated associations. Many incorporated associations were constituted over 25 years ago, meaning they are well out of date. Under prior legislation, incorporated associations had to explicitly state in their constitution that meeting and voting electronically was permitted. The bill will allow for this to take place, even without amendments to the constitution of an association. To protect those without the means of joining electronically, an incorporated association will not be forced to hold meetings or vote via electronic methods.

The bill will provide the greater digital flexibility that has been long called for by the community. Crucially, these amendments will ensure that the net ongoing benefits of these measures are not lost. Most importantly, consultation has ensured that the legislation remains fit for purpose and inclusive. As a result, the necessary safeguards are in place for those with low IT literacy, ensuring that they may continue to have their voices heard in the community. Again, I thank all public servants who acted quickly to implement digital processes during the pandemic.

Ironically, as I said earlier, digital processes will ultimately save this State about half a billion dollars in years to come. When the pressure was on, we were able to pivot and change the way we did things. I thank all of the industry bodies who participated in the consultation process, such as the Retirement Villages Association and the Property Council of Australia, and all of the other groups who have been involved in conversations to bring

about these changes. It would have taken years, if not decades, to have achieved these changes without COVID. I am very proud of everyone who has worked in this space. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (11:39):** I will make a brief contribution to debate on the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. When all this started, the Parliament granted significant powers to the Government. We were dealing with an unknown enemy; we did not know how the virus would behave or what would be the impact on our society. That power was granted in good faith, acknowledging the seriousness of what was ahead. My colleagues and I have no objection to changes that allow ongoing efficiency or reduce costs. One of the few silver linings to the pandemic has been the modernisation of work practices—work from home, use of online platforms and teleworking potential for regional New South Wales. Given the costs of the pandemic, we need to take all the benefits we can.

On the issue of teleworking, members would be aware that in November 2020 I introduced a bill to this House to enable regional public servants to work remotely with a view to attracting people from the city to work and live in regional New South Wales. Unfortunately, that bill was not successful. However, in January the following year the Government implemented something very similar to my proposal. But on the ground in regional New South Wales public servants do not have that ability to work remotely—something that I urge the Government to move forward on.

I ask the Minister in his reply to address the inequity that exists for many regional areas and their limited connectivity to data, or the people who do not use technology easily and, therefore, their ability to take advantage of some of these provisions. People should have a choice to participate; they should never be forced onto online platforms as that simply will not work with current digital connectivity levels and technology literacy in the west of New South Wales. What concerns me—I want to ensure that this legislation does not do this—is that we are giving this Government extraordinary and ongoing power to create and change rules without the scrutiny of the Parliament. Regional New South Wales was frequently thrown into turmoil when city-centric changes were made. It took days to resolve and created further confusion when flawed rules were necessarily changed. I cannot see anything like that in this bill.

My support for these provisions is limited to those circumstances in which procedural fairness and the quality of service provision are not compromised. That should be assessed on an ongoing basis. I ask the Minister in his reply to address the concern that procedural fairness and the quality of service provision are never compromised. I thank the Minister for these changes and for an opportunity to discuss them. Elected representatives need to be part of the decision-making process as it leads to better outcomes.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (11:42):** I support the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. A raft of sensible regulatory changes were made at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic to give people in New South Wales the freedom and flexibility they would need to adapt and survive. Our State rapidly switched from paper processes to digital delivery and we have seen some paradigm shifts in the way in which we live and work. A number of associations and incorporations have been able to meet and vote electronically. Interviews and investigations were able to be conducted electronically via an audiovisual link. While these processes bring added flexibility and productivity benefits, the Government has also accounted for those with low IT literacy when making these amendments permanent.

While some estimates showed that over 95 per cent of the New South Wales population have access to the internet, this bill contains appropriate measures to ensure that these new and improved processes do not exclude certain people from participating in community processes. We know of the challenges within regional New South Wales of getting good and reliable internet and we are aware of people's IT literacy levels. This bill will try to ensure that no-one is left behind and the benefits of these technology improvements are felt by all as we progress forward. After a thorough evaluation it is expected that retaining changes to enable digital processes will provide net economic benefits of \$500 million over the next decade for New South Wales. The majority of these benefits will be a result of both time and travel cost savings. The ability to have meetings digitally has substantially cut commute times and the costs that come with those. But as we adapt to a more modernised and flexible world, safeguards must be in place for those without the necessary technological skills and knowledge.

In an increasingly digitised world we must remember those with low IT literacy. Consultation with a number of stakeholders informed the development of these permanent amendments in order to account for these needs. These amendments generally ensure that most meetings or assessments can be held via an in-person method, although still allowing the flexibility of a digital option. For instance, voting in retirement villages can still be done in person, in addition to electronically. Consultation has been undertaken with key groups such as the Retirement Villages Association and the Property Council of Australia. That has ensured the legislation is fit for purpose, which means that if any resident has the need for an in-person option, it will continue to be mandatory in that context.



In addition, a managing agent in a strata scheme or a secretary of an owners corporation or association must ensure that reasonable steps are taken so that each person entitled to vote can do so when the new amendments take effect. The bill will also include a regulation-making power to prescribe the minimum reasonable steps that must be taken if electronic voting is to be used in either of these circumstances, and the Government will consult with the sector. In addition, pre-meeting electronic voting has been removed from the new amendments to ensure no-one is disadvantaged by the process.

In this regard stakeholder feedback was heard loud and clear. Pre-meeting electronic voting may occur, but only if a general resolution is passed by members of a strata scheme. This is to ensure transparency and fairness in the voting process and a lower risk of fraud. It will put the necessary safeguards in place so that all interested parties may have their voices heard in an appropriate manner—unless the scheme deems pre-meeting electronic voting the most suitable method for all members. In contrast, a resolution would not need to be passed for general meetings and voting via electronic method, as there was little stakeholder concern in that area.

I turn now to the important matter of mental health. Prior to COVID-19, medical practitioners were already permitted to undertake audiovisual assessments of a person in a mental health facility if they were in another location. The amendments will allow an accredited person to conduct an assessment via an audiovisual link and remove the requirement that a medical practitioner has to be in a different facility to use audiovisual links. The medical practitioner or accredited person must not undertake questioning via audiovisual link unless satisfied that the examination can be carried out with sufficient skill or care. The benefits of audiovisual links are not limited to mental health assessments. The bill also gives regulatory officers the power under several pieces of natural resources legislation to undertake investigations and interviews via audiovisual links. Prior to the temporary COVID-19 measures that was not possible. Regulatory questioning via audiovisual links is an additional option and, where it is unreasonable for one or both parties, an in-person interview can occur.

It is expected that going forward these amendments will lead to about 25 per cent of interviews taking place electronically, particularly where lengthy travel is required in our regions. Industry stakeholders do not perceive that questioning via audiovisual links compromises fairness. That means we can be confident that integrity during electronic questioning will be maintained. Numerous other safeguards will be in place with the procedural requirements laid out under each relevant Act.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979—the planning Act—is also being updated to allow planning bodies, including the Independent Planning Commission and the Sydney district and regional planning panels, to hold their public meetings and hearings either online or via audiovisual means, as well as in person or as a hybrid of these arrangements. Prior to COVID-19, these bodies were only able to hold their meetings in person. The bill will provide the necessary flexibility to planning bodies in how they conduct their hearings, although they will not be forced to hold online-only meetings. Where planning bodies do conduct meetings or hearings entirely or partly online, they must ensure the meeting is recorded and made public.

The final digital process amendment concerns incorporated associations. Many were constituted over 25 years ago, meaning these are now well out of date. Under prior legislation, incorporated associations had to explicitly state in their constitutions that meeting and voting electronically was permitted. The bill will allow for this to take place even without amendments to the constitution of an association. To protect those without the means of joining electronically, an incorporated association will not be forced to hold meetings or vote by electronic methods.

The bill will provide greater digital flexibility, which has been long called for by the community. Crucially, these amendments will ensure the net ongoing benefits of these measures are not lost. But, most importantly, consultation has ensured the legislation remains fit for purpose and inclusive. As a result, the necessary safeguards are in place for those with low IT literacy, ensuring they may continue to have their voices heard in the community. I encourage all members of this place to support this timely bill.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (11:51):** I make a contribution to debate on the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. As we have heard from a number of speakers, this is a reflection on progress made over two years of rapid learning and nimble responses to the various challenges presented to the community and the Government by the COVID-19 pandemic. As we recall, a number of pieces of emergency legislation were put through this place in an attempt to protect the community and allow us to continue to function at the same time as being protected by amending the way in which we did business and other things in society. Just as businesses themselves had to pivot quickly and find other ways of operating, so too regulatory authorities had to be nimble enough to recognise the changed landscape and provide ways in which the community could continue to go about its daily life, to the extent possible, but doing it differently. The legislative reforms that occurred over that time were quite numerous.

The learning on the part of the Government and the community is that many of the changes that were introduced are worthy of continuing and that, beyond the pandemic, there are gains to be made through greater flexibility in the way we operate and greater flexibility in freeing up some existing regulatory and statutory rules relating to employment, leave, leases and so on to allow the community to operate more productively in the future, even beyond COVID. That is not to say that all the emergency measures are being continued. In fact, this package reflects the fact that many measures are expiring. They have reached their end date, their time has come to pass and they will no longer be continued. But others are specifically being extended or being made permanent, for experience has taught us that they are useful measures.

A whole range of Acts are being amended: the Associations Incorporation Act, the Community Land Management Act, the Strata Schemes Management Act, the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave Scheme) Act, the Long Service Leave Act 1955, the Biodiversity Conservation Act, the Crown Land Management Act, the Fisheries Management Act, the Mining Act 1992, the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, the Water Management Act, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, the Mental Health Act and the Retirement Villages Act 1999, among others. Clearly these sensible, discrete and finite measures apply in a wide range of areas, and it makes sense to identify those opportunities to continue the benefits that the changes delivered.

As previous speakers have pointed out, many of the improvements simply allowed for electronic or online communication in place of what previously had to be in-person meetings or communication. By making that simple change, we allowed people to maintain physical distancing during COVID and to continue to operate. We found that in many circumstances it makes sense to allow that opportunity to continue. That does not prevent people from meeting in person in those contexts in future, but it does allow online or remote meeting and communication as alternatives in an ongoing, legal manner. We have heard that this occurs in different contexts—for example, strata community meetings, mental health assessments or regulatory officers asking people questions for the purposes of enforcement under various Acts. In each context where it has proved useful, convenient and productive to allow remote communication to continue, the legislation proposes to permit it.

One of the few benefits of COVID is that we have been forced to review the way in which we do things and, in some cases, identify that we could have been doing them in a smarter way all along. I have heard some discussion today about the learning around working from home. We have all had to do it. We have all had to find the joys or downsides of working from home. There are some of both. Working from home certainly has had its advantages in terms of reducing travel time and reducing cost. But I think we all recognise that there are also some limitations to working from home. Many people craved the contact with other human beings that comes from being back in the workplace. But I point out, as a member for a rapidly urbanising area in the peri-urban fringe, that the ideal may not be working from home so much as working near home. One goal of town planning in our city ought to be to create opportunities for workplaces to be located near residential areas, not at great distances from them, and that new development precincts should have employment centres as well as residential components.

If we can reduce the daily commute from west to east in the morning and from east to west in the evening—which has been a long-time aspiration for people in western Sydney—then we can improve the way in which the whole city operates. That requires investment in employment-generating opportunities in western Sydney; it is a broader principle about locating workplaces nearer to homes and not separated by vast distances. I think the pandemic has underscored that. It has shown how important it is to have that opportunity. Yes, many of us have worked at home for a long time, but the sweet spot—the ideal spot—might be to work quite close to home, still be able to separate the home from the workplace and still be able to have contact with other people during the day, but not have the long commute and not have the expensive infrastructure requirements that those distances create. I will focus for a few moments on the long service leave component of these changes. It is true that the Long Service Leave Act used to be very prescriptive. [*Extension of time*]

The Long Service Leave Act was quite prescriptive about the manner in which leave could be taken and the timing of that leave. Even with agreement between worker and employer, there were constraints around that. The changes made in response to COVID have significantly increased the level of flexibility. It still requires the agreement of employer and employee, but it means they can agree to a wider range of measures and opportunities. That is an important step forward.

Obviously, long service leave is intended to be available after a period of time so that an employee can refresh, recuperate and experience a different side of life. But the prescriptive rules that made it so hard to take that leave other than at prescribed times proved to be cumbersome and ineffective during a pandemic. It has been helpful to people to be able to alter their pattern at relatively short notice and for smaller periods of time than the Act would have required. Going forward, retaining that greater flexibility, while still requiring agreement between the employer and employee, will benefit all those in the workplace. It is a principle that should be extended: Where

employers and employees can talk to each other and come up with mutually agreed positions that work for both of them, the law should not get in the way unnecessarily of those agreements.

I will discuss the protection for tenants put in place by the emergency COVID measures and the bill's preservation of some of those accrued protections whereby tenants are not forced into immediate and great difficulty because of a sudden end to available support. It is a valuable thing that the bill preserves what was gained. Tenants, many of whom are small businesses in our communities, have faced great difficulty. I have talked to a number of people in shopping centres in my electorate of Riverstone. It has been tough. At times foot traffic has vanished. The lack of certainty due to frequent changes, subsequent waves and the necessary responses of governments has made it very hard for businesses to plan, to replenish stock and to know what to order and when. Staffing rosters have been thrown into chaos at different times. It has been a challenging time.

Where commercial tenants and particularly the small businesses in our community have been able to get some protection, we would not want that to be immediately lost and frittered away. So I am pleased that the bill preserves those gains. Clearly, landlords need certainty too. Everyone needs certainty. No doubt, the sooner we can return to a predictable landscape, the better for all of us. This bill is a step in that direction in providing the certainty that people need to enable them to plan what they will do next. The measures in the bill will assist in that process at least. Hopefully, the broader landscape of the progress of the pandemic will not prevent that from occurring and there will be greater certainty going forward so that all parties in these commercial transactions will know where they stand.

The numerous remote and online meeting and communication strategies set out in the bill are great advances for the community generally. We have all learnt to make better use of technology and to get up to speed with what is available—even somebody of my generation. Minister Dominello, who is in the Chamber, is way ahead. He is online at this very moment. We have all had to adjust, which has been a good thing. It was a shock to the system and very sudden. I reflect on the experience of schoolteachers who had to go through the huge revolution of teaching children remotely, not quite at a moment's notice but it was not much more than that. All parts of the community have had to make those adjustments. It would be a shame if we lost the gains that came from that. We will not necessarily go back to doing things in exactly the same ways. Let us hope that some of the learnings and gains can be preserved for the benefit of the community going forward so that our laws, in this case, can reflect the benefits of the flexibility that we have learnt during the pandemic. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (12:04):** I support the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022. In 2020 when the pandemic began, New South Wales rapidly introduced emergency measures to support businesses and customers to respond to the attendant challenges. They included sensible regulation changes that gave customers and businesses the flexibility to adapt to new ways of doing things. As a result, New South Wales businesses could adjust their settings based on the unprecedented circumstances. In some cases, they flourished, despite the challenges imposed by the pandemic. In my electorate of Wollondilly, it was almost a tale of two cities. We have Wollondilly local government area [LGA], which is in Greater Sydney, and Wingecarribee LGA, which is in regional New South Wales. When the lockdown occurred, people were travelling from a regional area into Greater Sydney and from Greater Sydney into Wingecarribee. When certain rules were imposed, some streets had one side in Greater Sydney and the other side in regional New South Wales, so different restrictions applied.

Throughout the pandemic it was always an interesting day in the electorate office when I had to explain the different rules that applied in the electorate. That made it hard for businesses but, as I said, some businesses flourished. For example, a business called Send Eats, which is a bit like Uber Eats, has been set up in the Wingecarribee area. It started with one driver and now has three or four drivers to provide people with meal deliveries. In my electorate of Wollondilly, especially in the Wingecarribee area, close to 50 per cent of residents are over the age of 65. Obviously, they are in the group that is more vulnerable to COVID, so they were getting a lot of takeaway meals and grocery deliveries. So some businesses flourished but others suffered big time. The New South Wales Government and the customer service Minister did a magnificent job. Service NSW received thousands of calls and requests every day. It was a mighty effort to get our community through it, and businesses are now surviving because of the great work of Service NSW.

Customers were also given more flexibility in accessing goods and services, which often involved switching from paper processes to digital delivery. Physical distancing was supported via the removal of a number of compliance burdens. Allowing small businesses greater flexibility to operate at home or prepare food for delivery sometimes meant the difference between shutting up shop and keeping people in jobs. Rigorous economic evaluation and stakeholder engagement has shown that retaining many of those measures will provide net economic benefits for the community. Feedback from stakeholders supports the permanent retention of a number of measures because of the flexibility that they promote. We had the same response from participants in the virtual town hall that the Minister and the Small Business Commissioner conducted for Wollondilly businesses over

Zoom. Randall Walker, who runs the Southern Highlands Key Stakeholders Group, was a magnificent facilitator. The Minister heard directly from community members who run small businesses about the good things and the things that could improve, which was great feedback for the Small Business Commissioner and the Minister.

The bill seeks to make a number of existing measures permanent. In total, those measures will deliver \$2.4 billion in net economic benefits for New South Wales over the next decade, which is huge. The *Productivity Commission White Paper 2021* recommended that the COVID-19 regulatory reforms be retained unless it could be shown that there is no net public benefit. The amendments in the bill will ensure that those regulatory reforms continue. They have proven to have net ongoing benefits for business and consumers, supporting New South Wales in its COVID-19 economic recovery.

I turn to the measures in the bill that will promote flexibility. The bill will make permanent a number of temporary provisions that would otherwise lapse in early 2022. They will promote greater flexibility for businesses and consumers and include allowing community associations, strata schemes and retirement villages to continue to meet and vote electronically. The bill enables mandatory questioning under a range of Acts to continue to occur electronically. The bill will also continue to provide flexibility for employers and their workers about how and when long service leave may be taken. Prior to the temporary amendments coming into operation in 2020, the Long Service Leave Act 1955 was quite prescriptive about how leave could be taken. For example, unless there was an agreement between the employer and the worker to split long service leave in a manner specified in the Act, leave had to be taken in one continuous period. The provisions in the bill will allow leave, by agreement, to be taken in multiple periods of no less than one day. It will also allow an employer and a worker to reach a mutual agreement about how much notice should be given before taking a period of long service leave.

The economic benefits of \$1.9 billion will be delivered by allowing employees to access long service leave more flexibly with benefits for both the employers and employees. These benefits will largely accrue to employees from the value they get from taking their long service leave in the form that most suits their own needs. Where employees take smaller periods of time off, there can also be fewer disruptive costs to businesses. Greater flexibility regarding long service leave agreements also allowed employees to take their accrued leave with the agreement of their employer, rather than having been stood down or made redundant.

In conclusion, as we continue to deal with the ongoing economic effects of the pandemic, our regulatory settings must be fit for purpose, responsive and, most importantly, flexible. Quality regulation ensures that our economy functions optimally and customers and businesses have the flexibility to adapt as the world changes. The bill ensures that the net ongoing benefits from these sensible regulatory changes are retained. With these amendments, customers and businesses alike will enjoy the benefits that come with their permanence. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:11):** On behalf of Mr Matt Kean: In reply: I thank all members who have contributed to debate on the bill, which seeks to permanently retain a range of COVID regulatory reforms that have proven ongoing economic benefits for businesses and individuals. I thank the members for the electorates of Macquarie Fields, Seven Hills, Heathcote, Balmain, East Hills, Mulgoa, Wagga Wagga, Gosford, Oxley, Barwon, Upper Hunter, Riverstone and Wollondilly. It reflects the interests of members of the House in ensuring not only that we respond to the challenge of COVID but also that we deliver regulatory outcomes and make changes where necessary to improve circumstances for businesses, employees and members of the community.

I respond to some of the comments from my colleagues in the debate on the bill. I thank the member for Macquarie Fields, who is in the Chamber, for his contribution to the debate and welcome the Opposition's support for the bill. The member spoke rightly about the impact of COVID-19 on the way that we live and work and the need for our legislation and regulations to be responsive and flexible to these changes, which we agree with. I acknowledge that the member for Macquarie Fields has identified that he will move an amendment to the bill. The Government will consider any of the amendments that are proposed during the consideration in detail phase of the bill.

I note the member's concerns about long service leave flexibility and the potential transfer of liability from employer to employee. I reassure the member for Macquarie Fields that the proposed changes promoting flexibility in workplaces about how and when long service leave may be taken can be only by agreement between the employer and employee. It is not the intention of the Government to provide an employer with an unfettered ability to direct workers to take leave in shorter periods. Whether or not they enter into these types of arrangements is a matter for each individual employee. These changes are about providing greater flexibility for employers and their employees, and they will allow employees to take their leave when it best suits their needs.

With respect to concerns about mental health assessments, I reassure the member that the amendments will facilitate additional alternatives only where it is not reasonably practicable for a medical practitioner to conduct

an initial in-person assessment. Where assessments by audiovisual link [AVL] occur, extensive existing safeguards are in place under section 27 of the Mental Health Act 2007. For example, this initial assessment is only the first step in a process under the Mental Health Act 2007 that requires at least two examinations—or in some cases three examinations where there is a difference in opinion between the first and second examinations—to determine whether the person requires detention.

The amendment extends the option of AVL to accredited persons. These are senior mental health clinicians who are already able to conduct initial assessments in person under section 27A of the Mental Health Act and where it is not reasonably practicable for the assessment to be conducted in person by a medical practitioner. Benefits of the amendment will accrue to regional and rural areas in particular in the form of avoided ambulance costs and avoided costs to patients from time spent travelling to another facility, waiting at a facility to be assessed and then returning home. To ensure that there is continuity of high-quality care, I understand that NSW Health will be consulting with stakeholders to set guidelines for assessments via AVL, which will be of benefit to all relevant clinicians, including accredited persons.

I note the contribution of the member for Balmain and welcome his support for the bill. The member spoke about the importance of long service leave flexibility and the practical benefits of having the option of mental health assessments via audiovisual link. The member also spoke about the benefits of having the option of online meetings and raised concerns about guidelines for enabling access for people who want to be involved. This was in relation to online meetings for planning bodies. Let me reassure all members that a thorough process of stakeholder consultation has ensured that there are appropriate safeguards in place to enable access and participation as part of these amendments. For example, particularly for online meetings of planning bodies, the legislative provisions ensure that if an Independent Planning Commission [IPC] public hearing is held online, it must be live streamed so that members of the public can listen to or view it.

If a planning body carries out its business at a meeting held electronically, members who speak during the meeting must be able to be heard by other members. Recordings of meetings conducted online that are required to be held in public must be made publicly available on the website of the planning body. I also note that the IPC has several guidelines to promote community participation, including its 2019 community participation plan and public hearing guidelines. I understand that the IPC has also prepared an addendum to the public hearing guidelines to provide additional details regarding public hearings and public meetings held during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the addendum clarifies that the technology to be used for each hearing or meeting is selected to maximise its effectiveness for participants based in the area where the project is located. It also includes the requirement that proceedings of these hearings and meetings be streamed live online and a transcript published on the commission's website.

The member for Balmain also spoke about safeguards for strata committees. For strata schemes, the amendments will include provisions so that when meetings are conducted electronically and voting takes place, the managing agent in a strata scheme, or secretary of an owners' corporation or association, must take reasonable steps to ensure that each person who is entitled to vote at the meeting can participate in and vote at the meeting. The bill will include a regulation-making power to prescribe the minimum reasonable steps that must be taken if electronic voting is to be used in either of these circumstances, which the Government will consult with the sector on. Examples of reasonable steps include ensuring that the technology chosen is easily accessible to all lot owners and that its use does not incur excessive costs.

I thank the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Gosford for their contributions to this debate. I welcome the support of the member for Wagga Wagga for remote mental health assessments via audiovisual link, which was particularly impactful considering his own professional experience in representing regional health. I also welcome the support of the member for Gosford for these amendments, which will enable the options of online and digital processes to the benefit of businesses, communities and individuals. I welcome the contribution of the member for Barwon. He pointed to the need for ongoing assessment of these new changes and ensuring that we have adequate safeguards to enable in-person participation alongside digital or remote options. The Government agrees with those comments and I reassure the member that the bill contains appropriate measures to ensure that the new and improved processes do not exclude certain people from participating in community processes, that no-one is left behind and that the benefits of those technological improvements are felt by all.

Consultation with a number of stakeholders informed the development of the permanent amendments, accounting for those needs. The amendments generally ensure that most meetings or assessments can be held via an in-person method, though still allowing for the added flexibility of a digital option. For example, voting in retirement villages can still be done in person, in addition to electronically. Consultation with key groups, such as the Retirement Village Residents Association and Property Council of Australia—as referred to by some of my

colleagues—has ensured that the legislation is fit for purpose, meaning if any resident needs the in-person option, it will continue to be mandatory in that context.

Once again I thank all members for their contributions to this debate. As we continue to deal with the ongoing economic effects of the pandemic, our regulatory settings must be fit for purpose, effective and flexible. I welcome the support of those opposite for the bill, which ensures that the net ongoing benefits from the sensible, practical regulatory changes made during COVID are retained. With the amendments, consumers and businesses alike will enjoy the benefits that come with their permanence. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Anoulack Chanthivong.**

### **Consideration in Detail**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in one group of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2, and schedule 1 be agreed to.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (12:21):** I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2022-012B:

No. 1 **Report on amendments made by COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Act 2022**

Page 2. Insert after line 10—

### **3 Report on effectiveness of amendments under COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Act 2022**

- (1) The Treasurer must, within 18 months after the commencement of this Act, conduct a review of the amendments made by this Act, other than the amendments made by Schedule 1.4, 1.5, 1.10 and 1.15 of this Act.
- (2) The purpose of the review is to determine whether the amendments continue to —
  - (a) operate effectively and efficiently, and
  - (b) achieve the intended policy objectives underlying the amendments.
- (3) The Treasurer must, by 31 December 2023, give a report about the review to the Presiding Officer of each House of Parliament.
- (4) A copy of a report given to the Presiding Officer of a House of Parliament under subsection (3) must be laid before the House within 5 sitting days of the House after it is received by the Presiding Officer.
- (5) This section is repealed on 31 January 2024.

The amendment speaks for itself. It is a review clause to ensure that we monitor the changes and that they operate effectively as originally intended.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (12:24):** The Opposition amendment would require the Treasurer to review the effectiveness of the amendments made by the bill within 18 months of its commencement. The Treasurer would then need to table a report about the review to the Presiding Officer of each House of Parliament by 31 December 2023. The purpose of the review would be to determine whether the amendments continue to operate effectively and efficiently, and achieve the intended policy objectives.

Schedule 1.4, schedule 1.5, schedule 1.10 and schedule 1.15 to the bill are excluded from the review on the grounds that the amendment to the Constitution Act 1902 is a temporary extension until 26 March 2023; the amendment to the Interpretation Act 1987 is to clarify requirements for the tabling of documents when a House of Parliament is not sitting; and the amendment to the Retail Leases Act 1994 is to preserve protections granted to eligible tenants during the pandemic for the time they were in place and do not represent substantive change. The amendment is supported by the Government as it is consistent with ensuring that the legislation remains fit for purpose, inclusive and achieving its objectives.

The amendment is also consistent with the Government's approach to those measures to date. Last year the Government undertook a rigorous evaluation of a number of temporary COVID-19 measures in line with the recommendation in the New South Wales *Productivity Commission White Paper* that included thorough stakeholder consultation. That evaluation found that retaining the measures in the bill permanently would deliver net economic benefits of \$2.4 billion over the next decade. Quality regulation ensures that our economy functions

optimally. The proposed review of the measures within 18 months will ensure that the measures in the bill continue to provide ongoing benefits for businesses and communities in a post-pandemic world.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet c2022-012B be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** 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**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** On behalf of Mr Matt Kean: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

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

### **Amendments**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Legislative Assembly's amendments.

### *Budget*

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

**Debate resumed from 22 February 2022.**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (12:25):** Budgets are about more than figures on a spreadsheet. A budget is the chance for a government to chart a course for the State, set the agenda and priorities, and update the electorates on the progress being made. At their core, budgets are about people. The State is emerging from one devastating lockdown after another, including the shadow lockdown imposed by the poorly managed Omicron wave. People have suffered. They have lost jobs and have missed opportunities. They have been isolated from friends and family. Stay-at-home orders were necessary for the protection of the public health, particularly in the face of the vicious Delta and Omicron strains, but we cannot ignore the impact that they have had on individuals, families, businesses and the community as a whole. While COVID has presented what will hopefully be a once-in-a-lifetime challenge, it also offered what may have been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The 2021-2022 budget could have been about resetting the system, about building a diverse and resilient economy. The budget could have been about properly investing to meet the important social needs of the State, but instead what we got was a small-target budget, a budget of the status quo, not the inspirational or big-picture approach we had the opportunity to take. It is par for the course for the Government and par for the course for the Treasurer who handed it down. That Treasurer is now the Premier and if his budget is any indication of where he intends to take the State, I fear that the course of "steady as she goes" is taking us right towards an iceberg.

The Government's budgets have always been propped up by the sale of State-owned assets. Even as the State has been going through the COVID crisis, the Government has been looking for which pieces of public-owned treasure it wants to flog off at bargain-basement prices for a quick hit. The Hunter, even as it contributes massively to the State's coffers, is hit time and time again by unwanted asset sales, which are then used to fund overpriced boondoggles in Sydney. Throughout his time as Treasurer, the Premier was the chief architect of the program of asset sales. Even income-generating assets, such as the Port of Newcastle and the poles and wires, have been sold off. This program of robbing Peter to pay Paul has fundamentally undermined our State's capacity to grow in the long term.

Perhaps the most shocking example of the program was the privatisation of Newcastle buses. Instead of the carefully considered timetable restructure the public was crying out for, the Government, driven by the ideology of the Premier, simply sold off public transport, which disadvantaged people across the Charlestown electorate: Some saw their commute times balloon and others lost access to public transport altogether. Even though my colleagues and I presented several 10,000-signature petitions to the Parliament calling for the reinstatement of old routes and a fairer approach for the public, the Government failed to listen, driven by the then Treasurer, now Premier's blinkered ideology.

That ideology was on display again during the recent COVID-19 crisis. The New South Wales Government's support for small business, another policy designed by our new Premier, was almost entirely focused on supporting Sydney businesses through the worst of the lockdowns. While the stay-at-home orders were necessary to save lives and to keep COVID from spreading too widely and too rapidly, it is difficult to overstate the damage that has done to business and workers across the State. That is very keenly felt across the Charlestown electorate. Charlestown is home to the two largest retail precincts in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie and countless small businesses that, even if they did not have to close under the public health orders, were faced with enormous challenges. In the absence of Federal support, businesses were forced to turn to the State Government during the lockdown. Many reported that the application process was confusing and byzantine and that the policy seemed designed not for regional businesses and their needs but to support Sydney businesses.

All of this indicates to me that our new Premier has no interest in taking the needs, the wants and the aspirations of people in my electorate into his consideration. This Premier changed parliamentary seats to cut down his daily commute, so how can he understand the regions? Now we come to what was to be the jewel in our new Premier's crown, Insurance and Care NSW [icare], which has been plagued by scandal. Due to serious financial mismanagement at the highest levels, Treasury warned that icare was heading for disaster. There have been continual losses, even before COVID. Despite that, executives still received bonuses and the Premier is on record as praising the icare board. The chair and co-chair resigned under a cloud but, due to the Premier's staunch support for the board, it was up to the Opposition to introduce the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (Employees) Bill, which would have limited the payment of bonuses. That bill passed through the other place with crossbench support.

There have been dodgy dealings galore, with massive contracts handed out to businesses linked to senior managers: an \$11 million marketing contract given to a company owned by a manager. There have been questionable tender practices: a \$140 million contract handed out after a one week long tender process. There has been nepotism: The CEO had his wife hired at icare. That is compounded by the cosy relationships that icare has enjoyed with Liberal Party donors: \$6 million in contracts went to Korn Ferry, a business with close ties to the Liberal Party; \$18 million went without tender to IVE Group, the Liberal Party's printing company, which is a major Liberal Party donor and is led by a former State party president. That is not even touching on the other strange staffing arrangements. Political staffers paid by icare were seconded to the Treasurer's office, including a US Republican operative. That operative cost icare nearly \$1 million, including the use of a labour hire company and the possible rorting of visa arrangements.

The Premier knew about the rot at the heart of icare for a long time before it was brought to the public's attention and had been made aware of some elements of the problem as early as 2019. His own department abandoned an investigation into icare in September of that year. All of that has been disastrous for injured workers. As many as 52,000 workers were underpaid by as much as \$80 million, the largest incidence of government wage theft in Australian history. That paints a picture of someone who is not capable of understanding the lived experiences of those people doing it tough, and the 2021-22 budget reflects that.

The budget does not include enough funding for a State where police respond to more than 140,000 domestic and family violence incidents every year—nowhere near enough when every nine days a woman in Australia is killed by a current or former partner. Frontline domestic and sexual violence services across New South Wales were already stretched to their limits before COVID-19, and the most recent round of lockdowns pushed them to breaking point. Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children, and yet accessing the Staying Home Leaving Violence funding is still a postcode lottery, with nowhere near enough funding to meet demand.

Where is the recurrent funding to keep domestic and family violence services adequately staffed? The staff are all on short-term contracts. How many refugees will be forced to close down or slash staff to keep operating, as they have to compete for funding time after time? What happens to victim-survivors then? The sector needs more confidence in long-term funding, and the State needs a more holistic approach to the issue of domestic violence and the prevention of sexual assault. Some of the State's men's behaviour change programs have waiting lists of up to a year. How many perpetrators could have been deterred from committing domestic and family violence but have gone on to offend again while on those waiting lists? When it comes to domestic and family violence, we need deterrence, education and, most importantly, support for victim-survivors. The domestic violence sector is telling the Government what it needs, but is this Premier able to deliver it on an ongoing basis? This budget suggests otherwise.

For another vulnerable population, the State's older persons, things do not look much better. The Regional Seniors Travel Card program has been extended for two years. It helps alleviate the cost of living for older members of our community, enabling them to offset the costs of transportation, but the scheme still leaves out residents of the Newcastle and Wollongong local government areas—much to the dismay of Madam Temporary



Speaker, the member for Wallsend, and MPs in my local area. The Charlestown electorate crosses the border between the City of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie City Council. It is absurd that in suburbs like Adamstown, Highfields and Kotara, people on the side of the street that happens to be in Lake Macquarie can access the card and their neighbours across the road in Newcastle cannot. That unfairly divides communities, and it remains unclear why the distinction has been made.

The unfair division of communities seems to characterise the Government's approach to seniors; we need only look at the approach taken to retirement village exit entitlements for proof of that. The pandemic has had an enormous impact on the State's seniors, and the Government's ad hoc approach to this area of policy is only making it worse. The social impacts of stay-at-home orders, which have disproportionately impacted the elderly, have been compounded by a lack of economic support. Less well-off seniors who might be living in public housing are watching their homes decay around them, and others are having to tighten their belts more and more. Social housing is where those two demographics overlap, and building new properties and repairing existing stock presents a way for the Government to both build the State's economy and take care of our most vulnerable.

Housing and homelessness are major issues for the State as a whole and for the Charlestown electorate specifically. Homelessness is on the rise, and the State is in the middle of a housing crisis. Rental vacancies are at historic lows, house prices and rents are skyrocketing and there are reports of people renting cars just to have somewhere to sleep. The past decade has seen a 37 per cent increase in unmet priority social housing demand and a 70 per cent increase in homelessness across New South Wales. It is projected that unmet demand for Aboriginal housing alone will result in an undersupply of more than 12,500 homes by 2031.

The Regional Australia Institute recently commissioned Shelter NSW to provide a report into New South Wales regional housing need, and the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie local government areas were certainly towards the top of that list of areas of housing need. Newcastle, in fact, is the area with the fourth highest level of housing need in New South Wales. The report said that Newcastle has a large proportion of low-income households that are in mortgage and rental stress. In addition to that, the number of people on waiting lists for social housing is high, at 1,911 as at 30 June 2020, and wait times range from five years to 10 years. In relation to Lake Macquarie, the report says that households with a mortgage and those renting are experiencing significant housing stress. Lake Macquarie has the second longest waiting list for social housing, with 2,488 people, and the wait times are again from five to 10 years or more.

With the exception of stay-at-home periods when the contacts made with my office related overwhelmingly to COVID-19 restrictions, the majority of matters that my staff and I assist the electorate with relate to public housing. Reports from residents indicate that many of these properties, which are State assets—they are owned by the people of New South Wales—have not been well maintained by Government. The range of problems brought to my attention is staggering. Some properties are experiencing significant structural issues requiring large-scale remedial works, including houses with leaking roofs, which generate persistent mould and rot issues; properties where under-maintained pipes cause sewage to back up and leak; and aged amenities, such as bathrooms and kitchens, which are no longer fit for purpose. In 2020 I made a submission to the inquiry into public housing maintenance contracts which showcased just a handful of the horror stories I hear from my constituents on a weekly basis.

Providing vulnerable people with a safe and stable place to live is important to enable them to overcome other issues. Stable low-cost housing can be the key to addressing issues such as chronic and/or generational unemployment, mental health or substance abuse issues and support for those escaping traumatic or abusive family situations. I note that the domestic and family violence prevention funding announced on 19 October included \$52.5 million over four years for the Community Housing Innovation Fund, which is a partnership with the community housing sector to deliver 200 affordable housing properties for women experiencing domestic and family violence. That investment is welcome, but it is a drop in the ocean of demand for safe, secure and affordable housing.

The NSW Council of Social Service and many in the housing provider sector have been calling for 5,000 new social housing properties to be built every year for the next 10 years, and that is just to meet current demand. That is 100 times more than what is being proposed by this announcement. Again, this Premier's ideology threatens to make a bad situation worse. His commitment to so-called "asset recycling" is well known. In response to questions on notice lodged in the other place last year regarding the sale of public housing stock, the housing Minister replied:

All sales proceeds are reinvested in Land and Housing Corporation's capital programs, including capital maintenance, upgrading and new supply.

But the figures indicated that in every financial year since 2014-15 the revenue generated by the sale of public housing properties has far exceeded the funds invested in new stock. This has to mean that the remainder of

revenue generated is being invested in capital maintenance and upgrading, but if properties are being sold at a rate higher than new properties are being built or otherwise acquired, what does the approach to asset recycling championed by the Premier mean for public housing? Looking to the long term, it means that more capital maintenance and upgrade funds will be available for fewer and fewer dwellings—a cycle of diminishing returns until the New South Wales Government will simply no longer maintain a portfolio of public housing properties.

What will happen to stock in areas where property prices have remained stable? Will they be left to decay, as so many homes in Windale have been, because this ideologically driven Premier does not see the point in investing in maintaining an asset he cannot recycle for a high enough price? The funding announced for new properties on 19 October does not come anywhere near the level of investment we need. This is a humanitarian crisis and the Premier's approach to it has so far been abysmal.

### **Business interrupted.**

### *Committees*

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Reports**

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

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (12:44):** I address the House regarding the Legislation Review Committee's thirty-ninth digest for this Parliament, tabled on 22 February 2022. In this thirty-ninth digest the committee examined three bills introduced in the sitting week beginning 23 November 2021 and two bills introduced in the week beginning 15 February 2022. The committee also commented on 11 statutory instruments. I will now draw attention to some of those issues raised in our reports.

The Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 amended nine environment-related Acts to address evolving environmental issues and related criminal behaviours made by corporations or executives that may benefit financially from those crimes. We noted that the bill significantly increased the maximum monetary penalties for offences, such as penalties for non-compliance. In some cases these were increased two to 15 times the current maximum penalties. Additional penalties could also apply, such as fines for each day that the offence continues of up to \$120,000 per day for corporations and \$60,000 per day for individuals. We noted that this may impact the criminal justice principle of proportionality if individuals receive much harsher penalties than those given for previous offences. However, we acknowledged that these increases are designed to deter criminal activity and reflect the significant public harm caused by environmental contamination offences. In the circumstances, the committee made no further comment.

I turn now to a private member's bill introduced in the Legislative Council, the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Family is Culture Review) Bill 2021. This bill amends a number of Acts and regulations to give effect to the recommendations in the 2019 *Family is Culture: Independent Review of Aboriginal Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care*. The recommendations addressed the impacts of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system of New South Wales. Under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 it is prohibited to publish or broadcast the names of children and young people in any Children's Court care proceedings until they reach the age of 25 years. This is a strict liability offence as it does not require the mental element of intent.

The bill introduces a defence for this offence if the accused can prove that they acted in good faith and promoted the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child or young person, or that it was otherwise in the public interest. This may create a reversed onus of proof as the accused may be required to prove that they have a mental element of acting in good faith to justify their conduct. A reversed onus may undermine a person's right to the presumption of innocence. However, the committee noted that there are no defences otherwise available to accused persons charged with this offence and that it provides an accused person with an avenue to prove their conduct was not unlawful. In the circumstances, the committee made no further comment.

The committee also examined the Local Government (General) Amendment (Elections) Regulation 2021, which amends the Local Government Regulation 2021 to provide for the conduct of local government elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. This regulation is made under the Local Government Act 1993. Among these amendments, it provided that risks to public health related to COVID-19 would count as a reason for an election manager to temporarily suspend voting at a polling place on election day.

This may mean that voters are unable to cast their ballots in elections for councillors and mayors for an unknown period of time and it may impact their right to vote. However, we noted that these provisions are an extraordinary measure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and that they are intended to protect public health. The committee further acknowledged that this regulation does not alter an individual's right to cast a ballot and,

in the circumstances, the committee made no further comment. That concludes my remarks on the *Legislation Review Digest No. 39/57*. I thank committee members for their contributions to the digest and the secretariat for their hard work and support. I commend the digest to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:50):** It gives me great pleasure to make a contribution to the take-note debate on the *Legislation Review Digest No. 39/57*, dated 22 February 2022. The report records the committee's examination of five bills, which are the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Family Is Culture Review) Bill 2021, the COVID-19 and Other Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reforms) Bill 2022, the Electronic Conveyancing (Adoption of National Law) Amendment Bill 2022, the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 and the Motor Sports Bill 2021. I encourage members to refer to the committee's comments on those bills in their deliberation of the bills, all of which are currently before one of the Houses.

The committee also examined 44 regulations, of which 12 were reported on. The details of those reports are contained in the digest. Members should be aware that a list of all of the regulations considered is now included in the digest, either as a report or as an appendix at the back of the digest, so that the complete work on legislation and regulation before both Houses of Parliament is now contained within the pages of the digest for members' reference. Members may be interested in referring to the comments of the committee about the Fair Trading Amendment (Code of Conduct for Short-term Rental Accommodation Industry) Regulation (No 2) 2021 and to the new code of conduct for that industry. That concludes my comments on the digest. I thank my fellow committee members and the secretariat that supports us. I commend the digest to the House.

**Report noted.**

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

*Members*

#### **MEMBER FOR SWANSEA**

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Swansea has a birthday today. I wish her happy birthday.

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from Her Excellency the Governor convening a joint sitting of the members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly on Thursday 24 February 2022 at 10.30 a.m. for the purpose of the election of a person to fill the seat in the Legislative Council vacated by the Hon. Trevor John Khan. I direct that the joint sitting with the Legislative Council for the election of a member of the Legislative Council be set down as an order of the day for 10.30 a.m. on Thursday 24 February 2022, as appointed in Her Excellency's message dated 23 February 2022.

*Question Time*

#### **RAIL SERVICES DISRUPTION**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:17):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Did the Minister's department get his or his staff's agreement to shut down the rail network on Monday morning, as it is legally required to do?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Veterans) (14:17):** I must say, the day after the Leader of the Opposition gets questioned about largesse from the Chinese Communist Party, he is more worried about—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** Come on! I haven't started.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Asleep at the wheel, weren't you, mate? My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The Minister was asked a specific question.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** They were introductory remarks.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** They were not introductory. It was not an explanation. The Minister was off on some other irrelevant topic. He is about to embark on a breach of Standing Order 73.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** They were just introductory remarks thanking the Leader of the Opposition for his question and just noting that yesterday, on the front page of the newspaper, he was questioned about the largesse he received from the Chinese Communist Party. I find it extraordinary that his biggest concern—

**Mr Ryan Park:** What about today's front page, mate? You go to sleep too much.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** You haven't woken up in the 10 years you have been here.

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

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** To answer the member for Beijing's question, Transport has an obligation to—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: The Minister could at the very least comply with Standing Order 75 and refer to the Leader of the Opposition by his title.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. The Minister will refer to members by their correct titles.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** As the Leader of the Opposition would know—because obviously he gets most of his questions from the media—Transport has an obligation to notify me in relation to any significant developments in activities. Transport considered it had discharged that obligation. However, my office remained of the view, until approximately 1.30, that there would be a significant disruption to services but not a total network shutdown. What is clear is that the communication between the department and my office was not sufficiently precise. I have today met with the—

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

That is one hell of an observation, isn't it?

**Mr Chris Minns:** So you were told. You were told.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Your poor chief of staff.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** You were so good as a Labor chief of staff they had to make you a member of Parliament.

**Mr Chris Minns:** You were told. You were told.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I just said that I wasn't. I just told you I wasn't. Today I met with the Premier—

**Mr Chris Minns:** I just heard what you said. Your department is going to say they told you.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The member for Guangdong keeps on interrupting me. I ask you to call him to order, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will continue.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I am sure the dim sims will be served soon enough. I met with the Premier and my department secretary today. The Premier directed that in future any significant developments in the activities of the department must be the subject of a written briefing and written endorsement. That will ensure that there are no further incidents of this nature in the future. But let me be clear: Whatever process shortcomings occurred on Sunday night, the ultimate outcome would not have changed. That is an important point for the Opposition to understand. I hope if any Opposition members are ever in the position that we are in that they understand there is a difference between operational governance and the governance of the Parliament.

But let me be clear. As I said, those shortcomings would not have changed the outcome. Transport's advice was unequivocal: It was unsafe to run services on Monday. Make no mistake, this was because of a decision taken by the friends of the member for Kogarah in the union movement. Of course, the Premier has now made the priority clear. We will get services back on track—indeed, I can announce to the House that services went from 25 per cent to 30 per cent today—and we will do that further as quickly as possible.

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

### COVID-19 AND SCHOOLS

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (14:22):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is working to ensure that kids can get back to school and maximise their educational outcomes?

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:23):** I thank the member for Mulgoa for her question, and her interest in and understanding of the importance of getting our kids back into the classroom, day one, term one—and that is exactly what we have seen. We made that announcement many weeks ago. A scare

campaign was run by those opposite and other people in relation to the safety of classrooms, but I think we can all say that here in our State it has been a complete success. It is incredibly important. We know that for many of our children across our State there has been two years of disrupted learning. We have had some young children, particularly in year 2 and below, who have lost a quarter of their face-to-face learning time. Yes, we are in a health pandemic but there are significant other issues that face the State—whether that is keeping people in work, keeping businesses open, but also the mental health impacts and education impacts that are facing our children.

Whilst there was opposition, what we can see in terms of the return to school here in our State is that transmission in schools has been incredibly low. Not one single school was closed. Last year at the end of the Delta outbreak, as we returned kids back to school early, we saw many schools during that period close. What we have seen over this period of time is not one school close. We have obviously seen some disruption as children have caught COVID and have had to isolate for seven days. But that is a much better position in having to isolate for seven days and have that remote learning for that period of time rather than for entire schools to be closed and ultimately for remote learning to have occurred throughout the year.

We have seen 3 per cent to 4 per cent of people exposed in schools. That is compared to 70 per cent in residential settings. I thank the education Minister for the work that she has done, and the Department of Education and the health department for coming together and working tirelessly from the outset to ensure that we were able to procure those rapid antigen tests. I thank the jobs Minister and the Treasurer for the procurement of those rapid antigen tests and the distribution of those tests to over 3,000 schools across our State, plus 5,000 early childhood and childcare centres. In addition to that we made an announcement earlier in the week to bring an end to surveillance testing. I thank parents across our State who have gone through that process. We are providing the equivalent of those tests for weeks 5 and 6. That is from next week. Ultimately, that will be up to parents to use their discretion for peace of mind and obviously to monitor for symptoms in their children. In addition to that, we are providing a family pack of an additional four rapid antigen tests per child to parents across our State going forward.

Today we have also made some further changes. From next Monday the cohort requirements and activity restrictions will be relaxed. That is important, because we know for many young kids at school the mentor programs or other activities they get engaged in with other years of school will be back on Monday. Schools will also be able to welcome more visitors onto school grounds, including parents. School camps will return, as will other activities such as assemblies. In relation to masks, those requirements will be lifted on Monday for high school students and teachers. From the following Monday, mask requirements will be lifted for primary school and early education staff. Staff in schools for specific purposes for more vulnerable children will continue to be required to wear masks based on health advice. We are getting back to normal here in our State. I think it has been a great result, getting kids back in the classroom in a very safe way. They can get back to the subjects they love—whether that is maths, science, economics, history, English, even Mandarin.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Compulsory.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Not compulsory, but whatever floats your boat. We will continue to build the schools right across our State, 170 new schools, and ensure the services are there. I once again thank the education Minister and the entire Department of Education for the work they have done in ensuring we have the best education opportunities for children across our State.

#### RAIL SERVICES DISRUPTION

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:28):** My question is directed to the Premier. Today the Premier was asked in relation to the train lockout by a journalist, "But who gave the final sign-off?" The Premier said, "We will work through that." The journalist asked, "You still don't know that yet?" Then the Premier said, "Well it looks like"—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: The member can ask the question. This is question time. It is not statement time. It is not reading time. It is question time. This is not necessary for the question. The member should ask the question.

**Mr Ryan Park:** To the point of order: What is the standing order?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** To the point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I will hear from the member for Heffron to the point of order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Mr Speaker, I invite your attention to Standing Order 128 (2) (a).

**The SPEAKER:** I cannot hear the member for Heffron. There is too much audible conversation. The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Mr Speaker, I invite your attention to Standing Order 128 (2) (a). It permits sufficient facts to be put to make the question intelligible. Unless the Premier's words are put to him, which are reasonably brief, the question becomes unintelligible. The question is relatively brief. It has two short statements of fact and it enables the Premier to amplify brief comments that he made this morning.

**The SPEAKER:** I am satisfied from what I have heard to date that it is putting the question in context, but I expect the member for Londonderry to come directly to the question, because I have heard enough.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** My question is directed to the Premier. Today the Premier was asked in relation to the train lockout, "Who gave the final sign-off?" "We will work through that." "You still don't know that yet?" Then the Premier said, "Well, it looks like it's come through the department, but Minister Elliott was not made aware". We are three days—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. I have ruled on that matter.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Talk about being sensitive about this, guys!

**The SPEAKER:** The member will read the last part of the question.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. We are three days into this commuter chaos. Is the Premier seriously saying he has no idea who approved the decision to shut down the rail network?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:31):** I thank the member for Londonderry for her question. Obviously what we saw on the train network on Monday was chaos. It was pathetic. It was completely unsatisfactory. The reality is that that action would not have occurred on Monday but for the actions of the union on Sunday.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is answering the question. Members will remain silent. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** On the Saturday in the Fair Work Commission an agreement was reached between Transport and the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, which was then subsequently reneged on on the Sunday. Over the course of that period of time, what became clear to Sydney Trains—just so members opposite are aware, it is not the union movement that runs the operations of the network; it is Sydney Trains who have that operational responsibility to ensure commuters right across the network are safe. The decision to then return to the Fair Work Commission, which the unions did not attend on Sunday night, clearly led to a position where Sydney Trains had to make a decision in respect of the safety of commuters across our network. That decision was made—

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** —in the late hours of Sunday evening into the early hours of Monday morning. Ultimately, based on the advice that I have received, I completely support the decision that Sydney Trains made.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** So what was the safety problem?

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** There were a number. I am going through the report and the matters raised by Sydney Trains. It would have been completely irresponsible, completely inappropriate, for Sydney Trains to run services in the circumstances based on the timetables that have been arrayed that were disagreed by the union movement on Sunday. This entire situation would have been avoided but for the actions of the unions on the Sunday.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** To sit there and somehow suggest that the decision for the trains to not be operating in circumstances of clear advice saying that the system was not safe for commuters is completely the wrong approach to take.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Prospect to order for the second time. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the second time.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The decision of the unions—the premeditated decision—to walk away from the agreement that had been entered into in the Fair Work Commission on the Saturday, based on the timetable that had been published on 10 February, according to Sydney Trains, would have created a substantial

safety concern on our network. I will tell you this: The decision of Sydney Trains and the advice that Sydney Trains has provided and what I have reviewed has satisfied me without a doubt the decision was right. The decision was right. It is unsatisfactory in terms of the approach that the union movement has taken. That is encouraged, supported and inflamed by those opposite. They have not even hidden, at any point in time during this entire process, their view here in our State to cause massive chaos in industrial issues across New South Wales. That is not the Liberals and Nationals saying it. That is not a conspiracy. That is the union movement coming out and saying it.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I will make this point: This is disputation we are not seeing in any Labor State across the nation, in circumstances where there are only two States in this entire country with a 2½ per cent pay increase—Queensland and New South Wales. Everyone else has wages policy well below that, including Labor States. Are they protesting in the streets? Are they shutting down the rail network? Of course they're not. This is all about politics.

### WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (14:36):** My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the Government is creating better economic opportunities for women and families?

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy) (14:36):** I certainly will. I start by thanking the member for South Coast for her question and acknowledge her work as the first female Speaker to serve this Parliament. I acknowledge that she has been a trailblazer who led through her advocacy and by her example. I acknowledge the enormous contribution she has made to the Parliament, to the Government, to her community and to New South Wales. Currently female participation in New South Wales lags significantly behind male participation in the workforce. In fact, women's participation sits at about 61 per cent, compared with the male participation rate, which is at about 70 per cent. The impacts of this flow right through our society and community, with women retiring with two-thirds the superannuation balances of men, women making up about 30 per cent of our top ASX-listed company boards and many women struggling to re-enter the workforce after having children.

We know that lifting the female participation rate in New South Wales and increasing the time women spend in the workforce is not only the right thing to do by our community but also the right thing to do by our economy. If we were to reach parity in participation rates by 2060, the New South Wales economy would be 8 per cent larger than it currently is. This is not only the right thing to do by our community and our society; it is the right thing to do by our economy. Those benefits flow right across our society. If we were to bring the participation rate to parity, the average household income would be expected to grow by \$22,000 per annum.

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

**Mr MATT KEAN:** These issues need to be addressed, which is why I have commissioned the outstanding Sam Mostyn to help us in developing a strategy to increase women's economic opportunities in New South Wales. We know that there are a range of barriers to women entering, re-entering and staying in the workforce. We know that a lot of women leave the workforce after they have children. We know that a lot of women find it harder to focus on their careers in the same way that men are able to because women often take on greater responsibilities for caring for children or caring for families.

That is why it is absolutely critical we do everything that we can to ensure that there is affordable and accessible child care right across New South Wales. That is why it is important that we help women to update their skills if they have left the workforce for a period of time. That is why it is important that we focus on job design and flexibility to ensure that our workplaces are as family friendly as possible. It is also why we need to create leadership opportunities for women right across the State, right across our workplaces and right across our Parliament.

**Ms Jo Haylen:** How did that go in Willoughby?

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Summer Hill. I note that not one of the handpicked candidates of the Leader of the Opposition was a female. Not only are our people this State's greatest asset, and not only is it right that we ensure that all our people have the opportunity to pursue their dreams and aspirations, but also our State is at its best when we harness the skills, talents and experience of every single person that we can. We also know that the early years of a person's life make the biggest difference to their life trajectory. We know that, if we can set kids up for success in their first five years, they will benefit from that for

their entire lives. So this is not only about participation rates; it is about improving productivity right across our economy.

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

**Mr MATT KEAN:** We are looking at finding ways to ensure that we have accessible, affordable child care. We are also looking for a way to ensure that we take advantage of early childhood education as well. *[Extension of time]*

I am confident that, with the expert panel that we have assembled, we have the skills and the expertise that we need to address these challenges. That is exactly what we need to focus on. We need to address structural and societal issues because it is the right thing to do by our community and it is the right thing to do by our economy. There is a huge dividend for our entire State—indeed, our entire nation—if we can tackle this challenge.

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

**Mr MATT KEAN:** That is what we on this side of the House stand for. That stands in stark contrast to the Leader of the Opposition, who we know stands for nothing. He was once the person that said he would curtail the power of unions. Now he is completely owned by them.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**Mr MATT KEAN:** We know that he was once the great champion against tolls.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Do something for the energy workers in the Hunter, will you?

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

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. Complaining about the Leader of the Opposition has absolutely nothing to do with the subject matter.

**The SPEAKER:** I will give the Treasurer some leeway. The member for Heffron will resume his seat.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** We know that the Leader of the Opposition once said that he hated tolls. But we also know that, when he had an opportunity to do something about it as the former chief of staff to the roads Minister, he enthusiastically forced cars into those tunnels to use those tolls.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. We are happy to hear the attack, we are happy to have the debate, but let us do it through substantive motion.

**The SPEAKER:** I am happy for the Treasurer to continue. That was an attack on the Opposition, not a personal attack. The Treasurer has the call.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** We also know that, immediately upon returning from an all-expenses-paid junket from the Chinese Communist Party, the Leader of the Opposition wanted to force every child in New South Wales to learn Mandarin. *[Time expired.]*

#### RAIL SERVICES DISRUPTION

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (14:44):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Earlier in question time, the Minister revealed for the first time that "Transport has an obligation to notify me in relation to any significant developments in activities. Transport considers it has discharged those obligations." Is the Minister now confirming to the House that his department considers that he or his staff were told of the shutdown on Monday?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Veterans) (14:44):** I think the shadow Minister has just asked me if I, for the first time, explained or indeed admitted to section 36I of the Transport Administration Act, because that is all I have done. Section 36I of the Transport Administration Act says quite clearly that the Department of Transport has to inform me of any significant matters, which obviously would include a shutdown. I do not know who is doing your research, Jo, but I would not be paying them too much. I must say that these conspiracy theories—

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Point of order: That is the second time that a Minister of the Government has referred to a woman in the Chamber as "she" or "her" or by their first name. I ask that Ministers refer to members in the Chamber by their correct titles rather than by pronouns.

**The SPEAKER:** I am satisfied that pronouns can be used when the original reference is to the member. The Minister will make a proper reference, after which pronouns can be used.



**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I got a medal in the pronoun wars. I am terribly sorry; I do apologise for identifying a female in the House.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Point of order: The Minister referred to the member for Summer Hill as "Jo". Earlier the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was referred to as "her" by the Leader of the House. I ask that there be some level of respect shown. "She" and "her" can be used in context.

**The SPEAKER:** I have upheld the point of order to the extent that the Minister should have referred to the member for Summer Hill by her proper title. After that, he may use pronouns.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** Oh, I can use pronouns. They are not banned. We have not banned pronouns; that is a relief. The shadow Minister's observation and question shows a complete ignorance of the process that the Transport Administration Act sets out for the way the relationship—

**Ms Jo Haylen:** Point of order—

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** If it is 129, I tell you—

**Ms Jo Haylen:** It is 129. My question was very clear. I quoted the Minister directly. Transport considered it had discharged its obligations. The Minister is seeking to interpret that in relation to the part of the Act that he is referring to.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not want the member to make an argument. What is the point of order?

**Ms Jo Haylen:** My question was very specific. Is the Minister now confirming to the House that his department considers that he or his staff were told about the shutdown?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister is being relevant to the question he was asked. The Minister has the call.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I love these conspiracy theories because I have a few myself. My conspiracy theory is that the member for Manchuria here, the guy who went off to China—

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order—

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** —with all expenses paid and with all the largesse of the Chinese Communist Party—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr David Harris:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 72 and Standing Order 74, and the point of order that was taken by the member for Newtown yesterday. I draw to the attention of the House that it should take into account that racial stereotyping through linguistic appropriation can be considered to be racism. Therefore, members should be careful not to use language that can be interpreted as racial profiling or stereotyping, which may cause offence to particular ethnic groups.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I will withdraw whatever remark—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has withdrawn the remark and will continue.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I withdraw whatever remark you believe was racial profiling, but you better tell the member for Maroubra because if there is a member in this Parliament who is guilty of racial profiling, it is the member for Maroubra.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, Standing Order 73 and Standing Order 74. I ask you to intervene, Mr Speaker. It is not appropriate for the Minister to stand at the table and shout and point at the member for Maroubra about some comment the member for Maroubra may or may not have made.

**The SPEAKER:** If the member for Heffron wants to speak about a particular point of order, rather than three, I am happy to hear what it is. The member will give me an argument on one point of order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** It is Standing Order 129. First, the Minister is not being relevant to the question asked by the member for Summer Hill. The question was not about what may or may not have been said by the member for Maroubra. Secondly, it is disorderly for the Minister to be shouting across the table and pointing at the member for Maroubra while not complying with Standing Order 129. Thirdly, the Minister is making personal reflections on the member for Maroubra, which is disorderly, as stated in Standing Order 73. We are happy to debate that matter if the Minister wants to move a suspension of the standing orders.

**The SPEAKER:** The only point of order I will uphold is that the Minister should make his comments through the Chair.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I must say, I have not had that many charges thrown against me since Ron and I got kicked out of the officers' mess.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** For pretending to be a copper, you mean?

**Mr Michael Daley:** So maybe just pretend to be a police officer.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I did not even hear that, but I am sure it was completely underwhelming. As I said, these conspiracy theories are starting to bore us because members opposite have more conspiracy theories than a Mississippi—

**Mr Ryan Park:** Hartman said they discharged their duties.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** Yes, they discharged their duties. That is right. They told us—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will remain silent.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The member for Keira over there is an expert on transport. When he was 17 he was deputy director and only went up from there.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Keira is on his last warning. He is on three calls to order.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** What is the point of order?

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** It is Standing Order 79 and Standing Order 74. The Minister is debating the question across this Chamber, and you must stop him doing that. Personal attacks on the member for Keira are not relevant to the question. The Minister must come back to the question he was asked.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will make his comments through the Chair.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The member for Maroubra and the member for Keira interjected. Of course I will respond. Thanks, Hugh, you have burnt my time. I am sure that was the plan all along.

### SKILLS TRAINING

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (14:51):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology. Will the Minister disclose to the House how the Government is helping people get the skills and training they need for the jobs they want?

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (14:51):** I thank the member for his question and acknowledge his strong interest in the Government disclosing its important work in the skills and training area. The member for Wollondilly is not only a hardworking local member but also, prior to entering Parliament, he was a hardworking licensed plumber and small business owner who studied at TAFE NSW. It is understandable that the member would be interested in me disclosing what we are doing in skills and training. I was happy to hear that we are on a unity ticket with Labor because its leader said yesterday that he too was interested in disclosure and transparency. It is just that his idea of disclosure is to ask the Clerk if he can conceal a five-day junket paid for by mysterious parties.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 73. The Minister cannot impute improper motives other than by substantive motion. He can make reference to a particular fact, but he is imputing impropriety to the Leader of the Opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Even Chris Bowen, the worst Treasurer in Australia, could scratch a few sentences in his parliamentary disclosure about that junket to China, but apparently the Leader of the Opposition cannot.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order—

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Here is a discretionary disclosure form. Do you want to fill one out? Do you want to borrow my pen?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Ku-ring-gai will resume his seat.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Here is the disclosure form. Do you want to borrow my pen?

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Ku-ring-gai to order for the first time.

**Mr David Harris:** Mr Speaker, the Minister is refuting your last ruling. Given the fact that the member sought advice from the Parliament and is now impugning the parliamentary—

**The SPEAKER:** The earlier reference was a breach of Standing Order 73; the latter one was not.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I acknowledge that that was somewhat unfair because Sergeant Schultz here would have to work out who paid for his trip before he could fill out the disclosure form.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order—

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Was it the Communist Party? Was it Mr Wang? Who was it?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** It is Standing Order 129. The Minister is supposed to be talking about skills and training for young people, which I am very interested in. I would expect that a new Minister would be able to advise this House on what his plans are instead of the rubbish that he is tossing across the Chamber.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I voluntarily and fully disclose to the House that the member for Wollondilly is in fact a graduate of the TAFE NSW campus at Meadowbank, which is currently being redeveloped into our first institute of applied technology [IAT]. This new facility will deliver a new model of education where TAFE NSW is partnering with industry and universities to provide a fully integrated learning and training environment. The institutes of applied technology will reshape the way that people access skills and tertiary education by seamlessly integrating vocational education, training, higher education and industry, and the New South Wales Government is funding it. It may be a mystery who paid for the Leader of the Opposition's trip, but we are certainly paying for the Meadowbank IAT. This project is another example of the New South Wales Government delivering on the recommendations of the Gonski-Shergold review into the training sector.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** The New South Wales Government is supporting people all over the State by helping them get their first job, a new job or a better job. We are investing in JobTrainer, alongside the Commonwealth Government, which offers free and subsidised courses for people so they can get the skills they need for the jobs they want, and New South Wales is leading the way in JobTrainer enrolments.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I disclose to this House that we have more than 168,000 enrolments so far. That is 100,000 more than the next best State. We are training more than 80 per cent of the State's hardworking apprentices. The people whom we are training at TAFE are the workers that Labor has forgotten. We encourage hard work; we are not for freebies. Labor members' disclosures are as non-existent as their policies on training. Their claims are transparently farcical but, because of this Government's record investment in TAFE and infrastructure, we have created jobs and real economic prosperity for the hardworking people of New South Wales—and it is important to disclose all of this on the public record. We are prepared to disclose that this Government is helping people get skills.

#### RAIL SERVICES DISRUPTION

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:56):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** At 10.43 on Sunday night the Minister's staff member said in a text to a Transport official, "The Minister has been briefed and he's happy with our position." At 1.43 a.m. on the same night the same staff member signed off on a Transport for NSW statement announcing there would be no trains that day. Earlier in question time, the Minister said Transport has considered that it has discharged its responsibilities. Will the Minister finally admit that he or his staff were aware that there would be a shutdown on Monday morning?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Veterans) (14:57):** Finally, a specific question from the Leader of the Opposition. I apologise for the last answer. I got distracted and I could not finish my answer. But, to clarify, at 10.43 Transport for NSW advised my staff that there would be a significant interruption—no mention of cancellation. I know the Leader of the Opposition wants to make this up, but there was no mention of cancellation. I am pretty sure most media outlets in the last 48 hours

have conceded that—definitely the union movement has and certainly Matt Longland from Transport for NSW has conceded that. That communication had no reference to cancellation or lockdown or shutdown. It was all about significant interruption, and I think the Leader of the Opposition has already conceded that in one of his questions yesterday.

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

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** My office first found out about the shutdown at 1.28. That is already on the public record as well. That had already been done; the shutdown had already been done. They advised my office. I refer to my first answer, where I believed there had been an error made in relation to section 36I of the Transport Administration Act. But Matt Longland, the CEO of Sydney Trains, has already identified that he made the decision at 1.00 a.m. without any reference to me. So the Leader of the Opposition needs to do his time and space. I know when he is going on his overseas holidays he likes to enlighten himself about other ways of thinking, but I would have thought somebody who the workers of New South Wales paid to get through Princeton University would understand about time and space. But he clearly does not.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** He's going off the rails.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I think there is a bit of confusion going on, yes indeed. As far as the New South Wales Government is concerned, the process and the timing is absolutely unacceptable, because we were not told about the shutdown in accordance with section 36I of the Transport Administration Act. My staff had only been told at 10.43 about the significant interruption. This might be inconvenient to the Leader of the Opposition. It might be an inconvenient truth to him—just like the fact that his mate Jamie Clements was taking money from Chinese businessmen to pay for his illegal bills. It might be inconvenient for him. Just like he forgot to disclose an overseas holiday paid for by the Chinese Communist Party, this might be inconvenient for him. Just like the Labor Party has not paid back the Ron Medich money—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Captain Snooze, take your seat. This is not only obtuse but also a breach of Standing Orders 129 and 73. You were asleep at wheel. You are in charge of the transport department and you were asleep at the wheel.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time. That is not the way to take a point of order. The Minister will continue.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The member for Maroubra is an institution in this city. That is the timetable. It has been on the public record for 48 hours. I do not understand how the member for Kogarah—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Rockdale will cease interjecting.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** From 10.45 to one o'clock a decision was made without any reference to me to put the railways into lockdown. My office was advised at 1.30. Any suggestion otherwise is a fallacy. Any suggestion that I had, the Premier had or my staff had failed to identify the fact that the shutdown had not gone through the appropriate processes is just plain wrong. But let us remember we would not be having this discussion if it was not for their puppetmasters in the union movement. I have a few conspiracy theories myself.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Point of order—

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I want to know what communication you had with the union movement to pull on this late strike.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Baulkham Hills to order for the first time. What is the point of order?

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** My point of order is under Standing Order 59, tedious repetition.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** And after that outburst, I refer to Standing Order 74.

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

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I forget who asked the question but I hope they will give me an extension of time. [*Extension of time not granted.*]

#### CENTRAL COAST FLOODS AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (15:02):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I cannot hear the member for Tweed. He will be heard in silence.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** Will the Minister update the House on how floods and storms are impacting communities across the State and how our emergency services are helping communities to build resilience?

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience) (15:03):** I thank the member for Tweed for his question, and I congratulate him on his wonderful work and the contribution that he has made to this place, and also for his record of delivery in the Tweed area. As members know all too well, every corner of our State has faced the worst from Mother Nature in the past few years—droughts, fires, storms, floods, a mouse plague and so much more. It has also been a very wet summer, influenced by the prevailing La Niña weather pattern. At the outset, I thank all of our SES crews and other emergency services personnel who have been working around the clock in response to the current storm event.

This morning with the shadow Minister I visited the Bureau of Meteorology [BoM] for a briefing on the current weather event, to receive an update on its impacts across New South Wales and to see how the BoM uses technology to inform our agencies and the public about weather conditions and events. It was great to see the BoM working so closely with our emergency services, providing the best available information in real time, ensuring we can do all the necessary planning possible to keep our communities safe. Unfortunately, we still have a couple of days of wild weather ahead. A coastal trough is causing significant rainfall over the North Coast this afternoon, and that will continue into tomorrow. Moderate to heavy rainfall—50 millimetres to 100 millimetres—is possible north of Coffs Harbour. The SES has warned—

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order—

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

**Mr David Harris:** I am loath to do this, but a discussion is taking place on the other side of the Chamber. My electorate is flooding and I want to hear what the Minister has to say.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Hornsby and the member for Penrith have had a point of order taken in relation to them and have talked all the way through it. They will cease talking. The Minister will continue.

**Ms STEPH COOKE:** The SES has warned that there is potential for life-threatening flash flooding in the Northern Rivers area, and heavy rain and damaging winds have been observed across the State. Yesterday at Wyong 143 millimetres of rain was recorded in three hours, and at Marrickville 76 millimetres of rain fell in an hour. In the past 24 hours the SES has received 1,323 calls to its State Operations Centre. The majority of the requests for assistance relate to damaged and leaking roofs, flash flooding on roads, and trees down. The SES has worked with the other emergency service agencies to carry out 21 flood rescues and evacuate 40 children from a childcare centre in Marrickville.

Thankfully, at this stage there are no reports of significant damage or major effects on critical public infrastructure, which is good news. There is widespread flooding on roads in Sydney and the Central Coast. I respectfully remind the community never to drive, walk or play in floodwaters. The multi-agency response continues today. A RFS helicopter departed Sydney this morning for Coffs Harbour. It is being pre-positioned there ahead of the forecast rain to assist if required. Fire and Rescue NSW has also been involved, having responded to 114 storm-related incidents in the past 24 hours. My thoughts are with everyone impacted by the wild weather this week, and I hope everyone stays safe.

It is not just Sydney experiencing this extreme weather. Across western New South Wales a slow-moving flood event is now in its fourth month. Towns stretching from Bourke to Wilcannia and Menindee to Tilpa have all been impacted. Since November 2021 there are now 65 local government areas subject to natural disaster declarations. Each of these declarations triggers a range of assistance, including help for people whose homes or belongings have been damaged and support for councils, small businesses, primary producers and non-profit organisations. I encourage any member to reach out to me if they would like more information about the natural disaster declaration process.

Looking to the future we know that New South Wales and Australia will continue to face significant events like those we have experienced over the past three years. That is why the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments have co-funded \$4.5 billion for bushfire recovery and preparedness projects and \$790 million for recovery following the flooding in March 2021. This funding will continue. This Government is employing 100 extra regional hazard reduction mitigation crew members, taking the total number to 270. We are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in SES, Fire and Rescue NSW and RFS fleet upgrades. Once again I thank all of our first responders who are on the ground right now in western Sydney, the Central Coast and the North Coast and hope they keep safe. I also thank everyone who has been involved in responding to disaster after disaster that our State has faced in recent years.

### HOMELESSNESS AND REGIONAL YOUTH SERVICES

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (15:09):** My question is directed to the Premier. Today a number of MPs heard moving stories directly from young people who experienced homelessness, trauma and stress leaving New South Wales State foster care. We learnt that 30 per cent of children end up homeless within one year of leaving care at the age of 18 because of the lack of New South Wales Government support. Will the Government therefore commit to extending financial support in the upcoming budget for all children leaving foster care until the age of 21?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (15:10):** I thank the member for Murray for her question and her interest in this matter. As part of the budget process we look at all aspects, particularly in relation to social services, where we can provide extra support for those who are vulnerable. I have not heard the stories that the member referred to, but there is no doubt that many young people leaving foster care need greater support. We will always provide more support through the budget for vulnerable people right across the State. That is exactly what we have done. The Government has provided significant support, particularly through COVID, where we know that sleeping rough and homelessness has become a more substantive issue, not just in New South Wales but around the country. Many of the programs that I have seen firsthand, particularly in my former role as Treasurer, provide support through that system.

As the member for Kiama knows very well from his previous roles, the initiatives that we took in New South Wales ensured that many people who were sleeping rough across our city, and particularly in regional New South Wales, were given support not just to get into housing but to have the wraparound services available. This ensured that they were not only able to have a home but also ultimately to have those services to get them back into work for the very first time. They have been incredibly successful and we continue to build on the work of the past. Where programs have not been as successful over many years, we will continue to adjust them to focus on the ones that work. In relation to foster care and providing support for vulnerable children, where there is an opportunity to do more, we will. We will take the evidence and information that is available to us and run through that as part of the budget process.

### NATIONAL PARKS INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (15:12):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Environment and Heritage. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government's record investment in national parks infrastructure is providing visitor opportunities for families across New South Wales?

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (15:12):** I thank the member for East Hills for her question and acknowledge her outstanding role as a champion for her community, and also thank her for the invitation to visit Georges River National Park—

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

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** —and meet with her and the park's manager, Brendan. Georges River National Park, like so many across the State, experienced a massive increase in visitation over the past two years. The past two years have underscored the direct relationship between healthy citizens, quality of life and the national park estate. As a result of not being able to travel many people across the State discovered their national parks for the first time. This drove a 150 per cent increase in visitation to national parks since 2019. To that end we have committed to the largest ever investment in national park infrastructure in the State's history. This includes the delivery of more than 200 visitor infrastructure projects. Last year's capital expenditure on visitor infrastructure was more than three times the 10-year average. I feel obliged at this point to acknowledge a very special person in this place.

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

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** He is very special; his humble nature and reserved manner obligates me to acknowledge my predecessor for his outstanding work. If it were not for me to acknowledge his great work, who

would? National parks are both the cornerstone of conservation and a great place for families to enjoy nature. In the past eight weeks or so, since being appointed the Minister for Environment and Heritage, I have had the privilege of seeing firsthand the massive transformation taking place in our national parks.

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

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** From Narrabri to Bourke and Coonabarabran to Cobar, the investment in our parks doubles as both a bolstering of conservation efforts and a multiplier of local investments and jobs in rural and regional towns. Out west, I visited Gundabooka National Park to see upgrades to the Dry Tank camp site, which is employing local trades. I inspected the upgrades at the Warrumbungles; visited one of seven fenced, feral-predator-free areas that the Government is building and delivering in the Pilliga; toured the Macquarie Marshes and the Toorale National Park, south of Bourke; and met with local Aboriginal Elders, whom the Government is working closely with to deliver outstanding conservation on that site. In Sydney, I joined with the Attorney General to inspect the Meeting of Two Cultures project at Kamay Botany Bay and open the new track at Malabar Headland.

In all of those places, whether on the coast or in the regions, two things have been clear. The first thing is the enormous professionalism and pride in the parks uniform. I pay particular tribute to Rob Smith, the executive director of park operations inland, and his team for their efforts in covering such a vast tract of land. The second thing that is clear is the economic benefit that those programs are providing to local trades, suppliers and businesses, particularly in rural and regional towns. Not only are more than half of our national parks free to access but also park visitation is a huge driver of the New South Wales tourism economy. It generates almost \$18 billion of economic activity and supports over 74,000 jobs annually, and the Government is building on that with new and upgraded infrastructure across the State.

By increasing nature-based tourism, the Government supports regional economic recovery and assists communities that have endured drought, bushfires, floods and a pandemic, which have impacted tourism sectors and local jobs. The Government is delivering more than 750 kilometres of walking tracks, multi-day world-class walking experiences, improved visitor areas, 36 new campground upgrades and new mountain biking tracks. On the South Coast, the Government is delivering the new Great Southern Walk and working hard on the Illawarra escarpment mountain bike network and the upgraded Minnamurra Rainforest Centre. Up north, there are the Tweed Byron Hinterland Trails; in the Blue Mountains, new visitor infrastructure; on the Central Coast, upgrades to Somersby Falls visitor areas and the Bouddi Coastal Walk. In the west, the Government is delivering new and improved facilities including a new camping area at Narriearra and a day-use area at Mount Canobolas. In the southern ranges, it is delivering the Snowies Alpine Walk, the Thredbo Valley track expansion and upgrades to the Kosciuszko walk and summit walk.

I am not familiar with the national parks of Hong Kong or Beijing, but why would one bother visiting a national park in any other State or country beyond New South Wales, given everything that we have to offer? On top of the investment in great infrastructure, the Government is delivering a range of initiatives to conserve our natural environment and native species.

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

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** They include establishing a network of feral-predator-free areas in our national parks, which to date has resulted in the reintroduction of eight species previously extinct in New South Wales.

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

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN:** It was a Coalition government that founded both the Environment Protection Authority and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and this Government will continue to deliver great conservation efforts across the State.

#### *Business of the House*

#### **BUSINESS LAPSED**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105, general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 2971 to 2997 will lapse tomorrow.

#### **REORDERING OF GENERAL BUSINESS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (15:18):** I move:

That general business order of the day (for bills) No. 7 relating to the Fiscal Responsibility Amendment (Privatisation Restrictions) Bill 2021 have precedence on Thursday 24 February 2022.

This is important because the bill goes right to the heart of the Government's economic management. The Opposition calls on the Premier to abide by his predecessor's commitment at the last election in the *Sky News* leaders forum on 20 March 2019. David Speers spoke to the former Premier and said, "Premier, let's start with you. Will you sell any further assets?" Berejiklian replied, "We've said no." Speers said, "Sydney Water, you won't sell?" Berejiklian replied, "No, no." Speers asked, "The rest of electricity, you won't sell?" Berejiklian replied, "No, no, and if we were, we would have told you up front."

The problem is that in recent weeks, the Premier has said everything is on the table when it comes to what he terms "asset recycling", which of course would make Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] Chair Rod Sims very concerned. On 26 July 2016 it was reported:

Selling public assets has created unregulated monopolies that hurt productivity and damage the economy, according to Australia's consumer and competition tsar, who says he is on the verge of becoming a privatisation opponent.

In a blistering attack on decades of common government practice, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chairman Rod Sims said the sale of ports and electricity infrastructure and the opening of vocational education to private companies had caused him and the public to lose faith in privatisation and deregulation.

In addition to that, the Government has created a 100 per cent privately owned toll road monopoly in the most tolled city on the face of the earth. One company owns all or part of the M2, the M4, the M5, the M5 East, the M7, the M8, the Cross City Tunnel, the Lane Cove Tunnel, NorthConnex—all of them. That company is presided over by private interests and was sold by the former Treasurer and now Premier, in direct contravention of the promise that his predecessor made at the last election.

The bill does not provide for the Government to stop privatisations, but it would require the Government to bring a bill to the House and seek democratic support if an asset was to be sold. What is wrong with that? That is what those opposite took to the last election; that is what the former Premier said. The ACCC is against such changes. New South Wales was on track for the largest net debt position in the State's history, in both absolute and percentage terms, even before COVID approached these shores. This House needs to stop the long-term sale of the assets that the State needs, presided over by Dominic Perrottet. This is reasonable legislation and should be debated tomorrow.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (15:21):** It is quite clear that no grounds have been sufficiently established by the Leader of the Opposition for why the application to reorder that has been given—which we have been given no notice of—is of any urgency over and above the other matters of private members' business. If this were anything other than a transparent stunt by the Leader of the Opposition to try to deflect attention away from his outrageous failure to disclose a five-day junket in China then Government members would have been given notice and asked whether they consented to the reordering.

It is typical of someone who cannot disclose something like a five-day junket to China and Hong Kong, paid for by Mr Wang and the Chinese Communist Party, that he would not exercise the ordinary courtesy to Government members of giving us some notice of this application to reorder. It is regrettable that standards have slipped so low, and that the Leader of the Opposition has stooped so low, that those opposite cannot even give the very basic courtesies of disclosing their intention to reorder the private member's business. Maybe he forgot, like he still cannot remember who paid for his trip to China and Hong Kong. How many Labor MPs are flying around the world who do not even know who paid for their trips?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. The Minister continues to try to impute improper motives and is not being relevant to the motion that is before the House. It is hardly a secret; the bill has been approved by the other place. It is sitting in his office. If he read the bill like he reads the standing orders, he might actually know something about the issue.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** It is No. 7 on the list.

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. I am happy to allow the member to refer to raising this matter as a distraction, but he does not need to go a step further in attacking the member for Kogarah beyond that point. I ask the member for Ku-ring-gai to come back to the question before us.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I was merely making the point that there had been no disclosure about this application to reorder, similar to the fact that there had been no disclosure about who paid for his trip or whether he went on a trip. There was no social media—completely concealed from all public record that he went on that trip. It is just a course of conduct—

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to Standing Order 74. I request that you intervene on those opposite, particularly in terms of disorderly and offensive behaviour, and quarrelsome debate. It is very clear that members opposite are engaging in that, and they did so throughout question time.



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

**The House divided.**

*[In division]*

**The SPEAKER:** Can I confirm with the member for Kiama how he is voting?

**Mr Gareth Ward:** I am voting with the noes.

**The SPEAKER:** That is fine. I wanted to clarify because there seemed to be some confusion. By consent, we are curtailing division time.

Ayes .....41  
Noes .....41  
Majority.....0

#### AYES

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, R  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Dib, J  
Donato, P  
Doyle, T

Finn, J  
Greenwich, A  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Hornery, S  
Kamper, S  
Leong, J  
Lynch, P  
McDermott, H  
McGirr, J  
Mehan, D (teller)  
Mihailuk, T

Minns, C  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Parker, J  
Piper, G  
Saffin, J  
Smith, T  
Tesch, L  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A (teller)  
Zangari, G

#### NOES

Anderson, K  
Ayres, S  
Clancy, J  
Conolly, K  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Crouch, A  
Davies, T  
Dominello, V  
Elliott, D  
Evans, L  
Gibbons, M  
Griffin, J  
Gulaptis, C

Hancock, S  
Hazzard, B  
Henskens, A  
Kean, M  
Layzell, D  
Lee, G  
Lindsay, W  
Marshall, A  
Pavey, M  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D

Sidgreaves, P  
Sidoti, J  
Singh, G (teller)  
Smith, N (teller)  
Speakman, M  
Stokes, R  
Taylor, M  
Tuckerman, W  
Upton, G  
Ward, G  
Williams, L  
Williams, R  
Wilson, F

#### PAIRS

Cotsis, S  
Lalich, N  
Scully, P

Toole, P  
Bromhead, S  
Perrottet, D

**The SPEAKER:** There being 41 ayes and 41 noes, I exercise my casting vote against the motion. The motion is therefore lost.

**Motion negatived.**

*Addresses***HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINUM JUBILEE****Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (15:33):** I move:

- (1) That this House agrees to the following Address to Her Majesty the Queen conveying the congratulations of the Legislative Assembly to Her Majesty on the completion of the seventieth year of her reign, and authorises the Speaker to sign such Address on behalf of the Legislative Assembly:

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty—

May it please Your Majesty—

We, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, in Parliament assembled, desire to offer to Your Majesty our sincere congratulations upon the seventieth anniversary of your accession to the throne and to express our appreciation of your service to our State, to Australia, and to the Commonwealth of Nations. We assure Your Majesty of our loyalty and extend to you our good wishes for continued health and well-being.

- (2) That Her Excellency the Governor be requested to forward the above Address to Her Majesty.

With this jubilee, Her Majesty has become the longest reigning British monarch in history. That is a remarkable achievement. It marks 70 years of tireless public service to the people of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, including Australia. She is a woman who is devoted to service. This anniversary is about so much more than the sum of the years Her Majesty has reigned; it is the celebration of an iconic woman who has dedicated her life to the service of others. It is her unquestionable devotion to duty that defines Queen Elizabeth. It has earned her the respect, admiration and affection of the people she serves, as well as people all over the world. It is the hallmark of the woman and the monarch.

Public service was the life she was born into, and it is a destiny that she has embraced with dedication and grace. That dedication and devotion shone brightly from a young age, during the Second World War. Like so many other British children, she was evacuated to the countryside to escape the bombing raids that had become part of daily life in London, but the young princess was not going to sit by and do nothing. Broadcasting a message of comfort and hope on the BBC's *Children's Hour*, she became an ally and a role model for millions of children who were separated from their parents. It was the voice of a child speaking to other children about the loss, bewilderment and heartache that they all shared, but they were also the words of a young queen in waiting.

In 1944, as soon as she turned 18, Princess Elizabeth joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service, which was the women's branch of the British Army. There, on the insistence of her father, the King, she was given no special rank and served as any ordinary young woman. She trained as a mechanic and a driver, affectionately dubbed "Princess Auto Mechanic" by newspapers, which gave her a love of Jeep driving that continues to this day. The princess served alongside hundreds of thousands of other young women, doing her bit for the war effort on the home front. When the war in Europe ended on 8 May 1945, the princess—in uniform, with her cap pulled low over her eyes—slipped out of Buckingham Palace to spend the evening among the crowds.

In 1985 Her Majesty spoke fondly of the "lines of unknown people linking arms and walking down Whitehall, all of us just swept along by tides of happiness and relief". She said, "I think it was one of the most memorable nights of my life." This story sums up the unique role and personality of Her Majesty, at once apart from the people she reigns over and very much a part of the people she serves. The last 70 years has been a period of unprecedented and rapid change in our world. Throughout, Her Majesty has been a woman of her time. She has shown a capacity to accommodate and to adapt. That is the hallmark of her resilience. On her twenty-first birthday, Princess Elizabeth made the speech that would later come to define her as a monarch and a leader. In a message broadcast to the Empire, she called upon the motto of her ancestors—"I serve"—saying:

I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong.

At that time, Britain was only just emerging from the deprivation of six terrible years of war. For a traumatised nation, the young princess was an inspiration and role model. Post-war austerity applied to royals just as much as it did to any other Briton. On a dull November morning in 1947, the future Queen of England married a man of her own choosing, which was a significant break from tradition. It was a family wedding, but it was embraced by the entire country, the Commonwealth and much of the world. The wedding dress was certainly fit for a queen but, like anyone else, the princess had to use clothing ration coupons to purchase the silk for her dress. Brides-to-be from all over the country sent their own coupons to help her out. Those had to be returned because it was illegal to give them away, but it says a great deal about how much Elizabeth was loved by her people.

That love went well beyond Britain's borders. Princess Elizabeth's seven-tier wedding cake was made with ingredients supplied by the Girl Guides of Australia. Seven crates worth of ingredients were sent from our shores, including powdered milk, sugar, flour, spices, dried fruit and a bottle of the best Australian brandy. The

Girl Guides contributed pennies to buy the ingredients. Just over four years later, with the loss of her beloved father, she assumed the weight of the crown. In the midst of her grief, she was called upon to make good on the promise that she made on her twenty-first birthday. Taking the throne may have been the day that she had been preparing for since she was 11 years old, but it was clearly more bitter than sweet. Her official declaration at the time gives some insight into the devastating loss that she suffered in the passing of the father that she adored. She said:

My heart is too full for me to say more to you today than that I shall always work, as my father did throughout his reign ... to advance the happiness and prosperity of my peoples ...

The newly appointed Queen was also a child in mourning for a parent who had gone too soon. More than 20 million people watched the live broadcast of her coronation on 2 June 1953. They gathered with friends and neighbours and watched in cinemas and even at the pub—the most English of gathering places. It was a landmark event that helped catapult television into a mainstream medium. More importantly, it marked the shift towards modernisation within the monarchy, driven largely by the Queen, who famously gave her permission for the broadcast against official advice.

Her Majesty's willingness to listen and move with the times has won her admirers across generations and continents. Her own marriage was a love match. In some ways, this royal couple were also well ahead of their time. Her beloved husband was the first royal to be present for the birth of his child. It might be the norm now but, in 1964, fathers being present at the birth of their children was pretty radical. Today, Her Majesty's grandchildren, including the second in line to the throne, have had her blessing to marry outside of the traditionally narrow aristocratic royal circles. This was unthinkable just a few decades ago.

Her Majesty's embrace of popular culture has won many hearts around the world. She is the star of one of the most memorable and defining moments of the 2012 London Olympic Games. Many will not forget her entrance to the opening ceremony, apparently "skydiving" into the stadium alongside that other British icon, James Bond. By all accounts, Her Majesty did not hesitate when asked to appear in Danny Boyle's short film, which saw her being escorted by 007 through the skies of London in a helicopter. It is the kind of episode that speaks to Her Majesty's sharp wit, sense of adventure and cheeky sense of humour.

Every human story is a journey of highs and lows, joys and sorrows, and achievements and challenges. In a world of 24/7 media and public attention, Her Majesty has travelled that path in the public eye, with her every step scrutinised and every stumble amplified. It is a testament to her strength of character and her dedication to service that, in all that time, Her Majesty's grace under pressure has never faltered. As well as being a dedicated public servant, Her Majesty is a devoted mother. In one of many firsts, Queen Elizabeth is the first British monarch to bear a child during her reign. She raised four children and is adored by her eight grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. I am sure that, like many matriarchs, she will count this achievement among her greatest.

In Australia, Her Majesty will always hold a special place in our hearts. She has visited our shores no fewer than 16 times. Her first was just two years after her accession and was the first visit by a reigning monarch. On 3 February 1954, an estimated one million people gathered for her arrival at Farm Cove. To put that in perspective, Sydney's population at the time was just over 1.8 million people. Back then, the royal visit was the single biggest event ever planned in Australia. Her Majesty spent 10 of her 58 days in Australia in New South Wales. From watching surf lifesaving demonstrations on Bondi Beach to inspecting sheep in Dubbo, from chatting with a young mother across the airwaves from the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Broken Hill to the opening of this very Parliament, greeted on the footpaths outside by 35,000 people, the young Queen formed a bond with people wherever she went.

On another visit nearly 20 years later, more history was made. On a blustery spring day in October 1973, the Queen officially opened one of the greatest buildings of the twentieth century: the Sydney Opera House. The Queen described this architectural wonder at the time with these words, "The human spirit must sometimes take wings or sails and create something that is not just utilitarian or commonplace." I understand that it was Her Majesty's wish not to attract too much fanfare on the occasion of her platinum jubilee. But I do hope that it gave Her Majesty great pleasure, and a sense of our enduring affection and appreciation, to see the sails of the Sydney Opera House lit purple in her honour on 6 February 2022.

Later this year, in June, the people of New South Wales will join people from Great Britain and the Commonwealth in celebrating Her Majesty's many, many achievements over the past 70 years. We look forward to those official celebrations, which will be a fitting tribute to Her Majesty's extraordinary period of service. In the meantime, on behalf of the Government and the people of New South Wales, I again offer our sincere congratulations to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, upon the seventieth anniversary of her accession to the throne. I express our deep and enduring appreciation of her service to our State, to Australia, and to the Commonwealth of Nations.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (15:45):** I join the Premier in congratulating Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the seventieth anniversary of her accession to the throne. Today, this House celebrates a lifetime dedicated to public service; a lifetime of commitment to the wellbeing of the people of Australia and other Commonwealth nations as a respected statesperson, a diplomat, an adviser and a counsellor to world leaders; and a lifetime as a public figure whose presence has provided stability, continuity and hope during the tumultuous events of the twentieth century and the first decades of this century. Born in 1926, the eldest of the two daughters of Prince Albert and Lady Elizabeth Bowers-Lyon, Elizabeth's path was irreversibly altered by her uncle Edward VIII's abdication. With her father's accession as King George VI, the young 10-year-old Elizabeth became heir to the throne of Great Britain and the heir presumptive of Australia.

Her marriage to Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten was announced in 1947, with the wedding taking place later that year. The princess and her husband were en route to visit Australia in 1952, but events intervened. On 6 February that year, Elizabeth was some 10,000 kilometres from her home, staying at a fishing lodge beside a trout stream in the foothills of Mount Kenya. It was here that her husband informed Elizabeth of her father's death. The 25-year-old was a princess no more; indeed, she was the queen regent of seven independent Commonwealth countries—the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon, as well as head of the Commonwealth. She immediately flew back to England. For now, Australia would have to wait.

Queen Elizabeth II's coronation was held at Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953. In 1954, Queen Elizabeth II fulfilled her promise to come to Australia. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived in a royal barge in Sydney. In doing so, Queen Elizabeth II became the first queen of Australia to visit Australia during her reign. While here, Queen Elizabeth II presided at the opening of the New South Wales Parliament, attended a Lord Mayor's ball at Town Hall and observed a surf lifesaving display at Bondi Beach. People turned out in their millions to see the young Queen and the duke. It is estimated that three-quarters of the population saw the royal couple during their two-month visit to the country. Over a period of 57 days, Queen Elizabeth II attended 250 formal engagements—a workload an opposition leader or premier would be proud of. The Queen's visit ended when she boarded the royal yacht *Gothic* in Fremantle, cheered on by a crowd of 40,000 people. Her parting words:

And now I say goodbye—God be with you—until next time I can visit Australia.

Through many political controversies, events and even wars, Her Majesty never stopped in her dedication to the role assigned to her by history. Of course, we will never know the details of the conversations she had with prime ministers, presidents and world leaders, guiding and helping each as they faced the great events of their day. What we do know is that Queen Elizabeth II is universally respected as a statesperson and counsellor. Perhaps her most famous confidant, Winston Churchill, summed up her role best when he said:

The monarchy is so extraordinarily useful. When Britain wins a battle she shouts, "God save the Queen"; when she loses, she votes down the prime minister.

Whether a monarchist or a republican, like I am, one could not help but be moved by the image of the Queen at the funeral of her husband. It was one of the most enduring images of the COVID-19 pandemic seen anywhere in the world. We congratulate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the seventieth anniversary of her accession to the throne.

**The SPEAKER (15:49):** I will make a couple of very brief comments, obviously acknowledging that 6 February 2022 marked 70 years for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the throne. I note, as I have previously in this Parliament, that we celebrated the occasion at a special lunch on 7 February 2022, which was convened by the New South Wales branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I have also previously highlighted that a special commemorative photo board of the Legislative Assembly is now hanging in Parliament House's entrance.

There is also an excellent, relevant jubilee exhibition in the entrance to the strangers' dining area of Parliament House, which will stay in place until June of this year. For those members who have not seen it, I urge them to do so, and to encourage members of the public to visit Parliament House to see what is a fitting tribute. A small gift will be delivered to Her Majesty from the New South Wales Parliament to mark the occasion. Her Majesty's dedication, style, enduring service and strong commitment to New South Wales, to Australia and to the Commonwealth have been extraordinary. I join the House in expressing my deep appreciation and admiration to The Queen on the occasion of her platinum jubilee.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (15:50):** I acknowledge 70 years of The Queen's reign. It is important to note that both the Federal and New South Wales constitutions are examples of the Westminster system of government. Each constitution is an example of a system of government called a constitutional monarchy, which has an apolitical apex of the Executive Government called the Crown. The Crown is represented on a day-to-day

basis in Australia by the eminent citizens who have been appointed to the role of Governor-General, or Governor in our States. But in the United Kingdom, Her Majesty has performed those day-to-day roles with regard to the United Kingdom Crown under the Westminster Parliament for 70 years.

The tribute today is because Queen Elizabeth II has sat at the apex of this State's Constitution for an unprecedented 70 years as head of the Executive branch of the New South Wales Government. Our Federal Constitution was put together very carefully over 100 years ago, with all of the provisions of the Constitution being approved by a majority of citizens from a majority of the now Australian States, through several referenda. It is a document that served our nation well. It was then followed by the New South Wales Constitution, which was updated. This system of government, one of constitutional monarchy, has served our nation very well—and you do not just have to accept my word for it. Freedom House, an independent body based in New York, monitors all countries in the world and publishes the leading comparative assessment of global political rights and civil liberties, derived largely from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It gives Australia an annual score out of 100 for how free our country is.

Out of the 193 member nations of the United Nations, Australia is, and has for many years been, in the top 10 free countries in the world according to Freedom House. Although 46 per cent of all United Nations countries call themselves republics, there are only two republics—or 20 per cent—in the top 10 free countries. By contrast, with only 22 per cent of United Nations countries having a constitutional monarchy, they are overrepresented, with 80 per cent of the top 10 free countries being constitutional monarchies. Of note, three of those top 10 free countries—Australia, New Zealand and Canada—have Queen Elizabeth II as their monarch. Not only are we very free but we also have one of the most democratic constitutions in the world.

Our Federal Constitution is unique amongst countries with a similar heritage. Unlike the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada and New Zealand, Australia can only change its Federal Constitution—including, for example, the abolition of the monarch to install a republic—by a special majority vote by its citizens. In those other countries, the elected politicians alone decide changes to their Constitution, without any referendum of the citizens. Properly described, the true sovereign of Australia is its citizenry. Queen Elizabeth only holds her position at the apex of our Executive Government because a special majority of voting citizens can abolish her constitutional position at any time by a Federal section 128 referendum that in practice would have likely flow-on effects for the States. Therefore, I give this tribute to Her Majesty today not as a fawning royalist but as a strong believer in the political stability and freedom provided to our nation by its constitutional monarchy.

An aspect of that freedom relies upon the apolitical aspect of the monarch, which is unlikely in a republic where the position of the Governor-General and State Governors would almost certainly be filled by politicians rather than their current incumbents. By contrast, republics can produce leaders like Donald Trump in the republic of the United States of America, Vladimir Putin in the Russian republic and Xi Jinping in the People's Republic of China. In recognising the great contribution of stability and freedom that is provided by our constitutional monarchy, we can more greatly appreciate this motion commemorating the platinum jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and I do so calling to mind the words spoken in a radio broadcast to the British Empire by the then Princess Elizabeth in 1947 on the occasion of her twenty-first birthday:

I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family, to which we all belong.

When Her Majesty uttered those words, the young princess was still six years away from becoming sovereign and seven years away from her coronation. While the intent behind Her Royal Highness' words was obviously genuine and heartfelt, it is hard to believe that she could ever have imagined the changes that would occur throughout her reign. The great imperial family would become a Commonwealth of Nations and her life, far from being short, would be quite long by anybody's standards—something for which we can all be very thankful and which we celebrate here today. It is beyond doubt that the fulfilment of then Princess Elizabeth's promise that her whole life would be one of devotion and service to her people has been made out.

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was born on 21 April 1926, the first child of the Duke and Duchess of York, who would become King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. At the time of her birth, it was not imagined that she would become sovereign. However, when she was 10, her uncle King Edward VIII abdicated, making Elizabeth the presumptive heir to the throne. Her Majesty first met her future husband, Philip Mountbatten, in 1934, and then again at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, as a 13-year-old in 1939. An exchange of letters began and with it a courtship of eight years, culminating in the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh at Westminster Abbey on 20 November 1947. A year later, Princess Elizabeth gave birth to her first child, Prince Charles, heir to the throne.

Three years later, on 6 February 1962, His Majesty the King died in his sleep at Sandringham House in Norfolk. At that time Princess Elizabeth was on a royal tour of the empire. In fact, she was on her way to Australia

when she received the sad news of her beloved father's death, which was also the news of her accession. To paraphrase the traditional proclamation, the King was dead and people said, "Long live the Queen". With the nation and the empire—which was rapidly dismantling and become a commonwealth of independent nations—in mourning, the coronation was delayed until 2 June 1953, with Queen Elizabeth being crowned the Queen of the United Kingdom, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon, and all of her possessions and other territories. On the evening of her coronation, the Queen reflected on the events of the day in a radio address broadcast throughout Britain and, indeed, the empire. She noted that she had sincerely pledged herself to the service of her people and said:

Throughout all of my life and with all my heart I shall strive to be worthy of your trust.

Throughout all my life, the Queen has been a constant in the life of our nation and its people. It is often reported that she has seen 14 British Prime Ministers—her first being the Second World War leader Sir Winston Churchill, right through to the current incumbent Boris Johnson. Her Majesty is also styled the Queen of Australia. In that capacity she has seen 15 Prime Ministers, her first being Sir Robert Menzies. She has been the Queen for 16 Governors-General. In New South Wales, the Executive comprises Ministers of the Crown. So the Queen has seen 18 Premiers—her first being Joseph Cahill—and 10 Governors. So whether you take Britain as the example or Australia, Canada or New Zealand—or even more narrowly, the State of New South Wales—we have in Queen Elizabeth II a leader who is a model of not only longevity but of dedication, duty, service and trust. Her dedication to her people of whatever country is, quite frankly, legendary.

As members of Parliament, we often consider ourselves on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week—and that is appropriate for the privilege to hold the positions that we do—but four-year electoral terms are a very different proposition to 70 years or seven decades of service. The Queen's famous red dispatch boxes are a byword for her rigorous work ethic, transporting wherever she goes the briefings, instruments and other documents of State. Her Majesty is also patron, visitor or honorary president of approximately 575 charities from Britain, the Commonwealth and around the world. They cover everything from animal welfare, the arts, the professions, the military, the environment, education, and science and technology. In Australia alone, she is patron of the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Physiotherapy Association, the Australian Racing Museum, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, the Australian Institute of Engineers, the Scout Association, the Returned Services League, or RSL as it is more commonly known, and the Royal Australian Infantry Corps, amongst others.

I have not met the Queen, but those who have tell me—and it is often reported—of her gentle kindness, her genuine interest in people and their lives, her love of her family, art, country life, history, horse racing and the armed forces, and her cheeky, bordering on wicked, sense of humour. Upon being pelted with an egg on a royal visit to New Zealand in 1986, she nonchalantly commented that while she did very much enjoy New Zealand eggs, she would rather prefer them for breakfast. Or at last year's G7 Summit in Cornwall, where she had been asked to cut a giant cake to mark her official birthday, giggling away with the Duchess of Cornwall and Duchess of Cambridge, she ignored the official instructions and insisted on using a full-sized ceremonial sword rather than the knife provided. Or the very fact that—and this is my favourite—she made that most wonderful video for the London 2012 Summer Olympics with Daniel Craig as James Bond. The video ended, you may recall, with Her Majesty—or at least a royal stunt double—parachuting into the Olympic Stadium to the James Bond theme tune before she was formally introduced as the host nation's Head of State for the opening ceremony.

The hilarity of such moments is perhaps magnified by the dignity and grace with which the Queen has conducted herself throughout her reign. She has remained above politics and above controversy. She has brought people together, unifying even nations through trials, tribulations and their darkest hours, and she has been the great stabilising force of our Westminster system of government, with the democracy and freedom that we so often take for granted. Understandably, Her Majesty the Queen has never celebrated a jubilee or any anniversary of her accession. Remember, of course, it is not the anniversary of her coronation but of the death of her father, George VI, upon which she became sovereign.

The day of 6 February 1942 must have been very hard, especially early on for the young Queen, newly married with her two infant children, who was no doubt wishing she had an additional few years or just an additional few days with her father, the first man she loved. However, this jubilee is no doubt especially poignant as it is the first accession day without the other man she has loved, Prince Philip. He was the handsome midshipman whom she had fallen in love with. He was the devoted husband who broke the news to her that her father had died and she was now Queen. He was the man of whom she would say on their golden wedding anniversary:

... he has, quite simply, been my strength and stay all these years, and I, and his whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim, or we shall ever know.

That is a telling remark from a stateswoman known for her own strength and to whom we owe such a debt. Members are aware that in the past few days the Queen was diagnosed with COVID-19 and, we are told, is

experiencing mild cold-like symptoms. For many of us, a diagnosis of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 has been a relief at it only having mild symptoms, which were not of concern. However, for a 95-year-old, it is a bit more worrying, perhaps especially for someone who is known for her stoicism.

William Shakespeare wrote in *Henry IV, Part 2*, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." The bard meant this as a maxim for all times, relevant to anyone who is in a position of responsibility. One can only imagine the unease experienced by Her Majesty at various times throughout her life and the unease, physical and emotional, that she must be feeling at this time. I acknowledge this historic moment in the life of our State and our nation, and indeed the world, as Her Majesty has become the first sovereign in British history and in Australian history—a much shorter time—to reign for 70 years. It is telling to reflect that Her Majesty has reigned for more than half of the history of the Australian Commonwealth, which began in 1901. On behalf of the people of Ku-ring-gai and the citizens of New South Wales, I offer our Queen our congratulations. I know that all members will join me in wishing her a speedy recovery, long to reign over us. God save the Queen.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (16:06):** I add my congratulations to Her Majesty the Queen on the completion of the seventieth year of her reign. It is indeed remarkable to celebrate her platinum jubilee. Her Majesty has witnessed and participated in many significant events, including wars, Commonwealth and Olympic games, the opening of countless sessions of Parliaments across the world and the evolution of the Commonwealth, and dealing with countless world leaders as host in various world-significant forums. Whilst I acknowledge the many achievements and events in Her Majesty's life, I could not do her any justice in giving my view or biography of it. I will address the interaction between Her Majesty and the people of Blacktown and western Sydney.

The Queen plays important ceremonial and symbolic roles. The coronation of Elizabeth II took place on 2 June 1953 at Westminster Abbey. Some 16,987 kilometres away, schoolchildren from Blacktown Public School celebrated the coronation in Francis Park, Blacktown. Many activities were undertaken, including Scottish dancing and other performances and, no doubt, the singing of *God Save the Queen*, the anthem of the day. It is of particular note that in 1953 the shire of Blacktown population was approximately 31,000, which is a lot smaller than today's 400,000. Blacktown's 1950s growth was based on people coming from war-ravaged countries across Europe, torn apart by communism, or from western European nations such as Holland, Malta, Greece and Italy, looking for a new start for themselves. The students that gathered at Francis Park back in 1953 dressed in their national costume, as people from across the world celebrated Her Majesty's coronation.

Queen Elizabeth II fleetingly visited Blacktown on her tour in 1954. She waved from the back of her train carriage on her way back to Sydney. Hundreds of people gathered along the railway line and watched the Queen and waved to her as she went by. On Monday 11 October 1982, Her Majesty visited Mount Druitt. The official opening of Mount Druitt Hospital was by Her Majesty the Queen in the presence of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, accompanied by the New South Wales Premier, the Hon. Neville Wran. The official opening occurred at 11.30 a.m. It marked a vital move towards equity and social justice for the people of Sydney's west. Some 28 years after her first fleeting visit when Blacktown was a shire, it has moved to become a city and has welcomed some 150,000 extra residents. Deputy Premier, and Minister for Health, the Hon. Ron Mulock spoke of the vital role the hospital played and its focus on delivering for adolescent health needs through lifestyle educational services. Blacktown City then, as today, was one of the fastest growing population centres in Australia and accommodated new migration, including many refugees.

The Queen has visited Australia on some 16 occasions and also visited western Sydney for a number of occasions, including the opening of Parramatta Stadium on 5 March 1986 as well as inspecting the Sydney Olympic site in the year 2000. Her presence in western Sydney cannot be underestimated. Her Majesty has provided service and uplifting encouragement for many people. In western Sydney we have challenges with health, education, mental health, diabetes and all sorts of issues. To have people like Her Majesty and others visit Blacktown, including other nations' presidents and prime ministers, gives a bit of hope and encouragement to locals. No matter where you live in Australia, including in Blacktown, you can have the opportunity to meet world-significant leaders. Once again I thank Her Majesty for her wonderful service and the commitment and grace she has shown in all her duties. The people of Blacktown appreciate that in her long reign she has spent some time visiting us and providing an opportunity for everyone to benefit from her reign. God save the Queen.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Planning, and Minister for Homes) (16:12):** Today in this House I acknowledge 70 years of female leadership of Australia, the Commonwealth and indeed internationally. That is the platinum jubilee of Her Majesty Elizabeth II, the Queen of Australia. I humbly remind the House that her title, Queen of Australia, is a title formally bestowed quite rightly upon Her Majesty by a Federal Labor Government in 1973. It is an amazing fact that Elizabeth II has been the sovereign for 70 of the 121 years of Australia's existence as a formal and independent nation-state. They are 70 years of service and 70 years of exemplary leadership by a woman. We all know the story of her father, who, after the strain of a world

war and a crown he was never meant to bear, died at too young an age. The result was a girl who was perhaps too young becoming Queen but who made the role her own—so much so that many cannot imagine the crown or a world without her.

Like Victoria, Mary II and Elizabeth I, Elizabeth II showed the role that tradition, law and fate can afford a young woman and, in doing so, inspired, through service and duty, both men and women across the world. With the recent passing of her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, whose marriage to Elizabeth is one of the world's great and true love stories, we may well reflect on her ongoing duty and all that has come before. That is Her Majesty's 70 years as a multinational sovereign on the international stage and her 95 years in the world's public eye. Elizabeth II is past what is regarded as the formal retirement age in many countries, including in many countries of which she is sovereign. However, it is clear that she views her role in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and many other nations as a duty, not a vocation. Elizabeth II, and the high international office which she represents, is above petty and partisan politics. That is something special now more than ever in what we can all agree is a hyper-partisan age. For many decades in Australia both sides of politics have respected it.

I share with the House words that represent the diversity of Australian politics. During the 2011 royal visit to Australia, Julia Gillard, AC, as Labor Prime Minister, spoke the following words to the Queen during a reception at Federal Parliament:

Your Majesty ... in this home of Australian democracy, you are a vital constitutional part, not a guest.

Just as in this nation, you can only ever be welcomed as a beloved and respected friend.

John Howard, OM, AC, as Prime Minister, welcomed the Queen several times to this nation. As Liberal Leader of the Opposition at the opening of the new Federal Parliament in 1988, when acknowledging Her Majesty's presence, he said it best:

... through your own presence, Ma'am, as with your father and your grandfather successively present at Melbourne and in Canberra in 1927, you with your presence remind us of the integral role that the Crown has played in the development of our parliamentary system of democracy.

Who can forget the words of Gough Whitlam, AC, QC, in 1977 at a white-tie State dinner in Canberra in honour of what was then her silver jubilee? He said, "Ma'am, we greet you as head of the Commonwealth, as part of the Australian Parliament, as guide, example and friend to the people of many realms. Long have you reigned. Long may you reign." As befits a liberal democracy with a healthy political battle of ideas, there are those who want this nation to move from a constitutional to a presidential model of government. But times have changed since the nineties. I remind this House of the words of the political scientist Luke Mansillo, a contributor to *Guardian Australia* and a member of the Australian Labor Party. In the conclusion of his 2016 academic treatise *Loyal to the Crown: Shifting public opinion towards the monarchy in Australia, 1967-2013*, Mr Mansillo notes:

Monarchy has become more popular in a country that is better educated ...

Indeed, polls indicate that, and it is in no small way due to the service and example of Elizabeth II, of which I speak today—that is, leadership beyond politics. The late historian and former British parliamentarian Robert Rhodes James wrote a biography of the Queen's father, George VI, entitled *A Spirit Undaunted*. I hope future historians will title a biography of our Queen, whose platinum jubilee we celebrate and honour this year, "A Duty Unparalleled". I join with all members in this House and everyone across this great State of New South Wales in wishing Her Majesty hearty congratulations on 70 years of service and duty to us all. God save the Queen.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (16:18):** I am pleased to make a contribution to this public interest debate. The member for Blacktown often tells us about great things that happen in Blacktown. He mentioned that Her Majesty the Queen made a fleeting visit past Blacktown. However, she came to Bankstown and declared it a city on 27 May 1980. She is a signatory in our visitors book, which sits quite proudly in Bankstown. I speak in the same vein as many members before me. First and foremost we congratulate Her Majesty the Queen not only on the achievement of her Platinum Jubilee but also on the manner in which Her Majesty has conducted herself over the past 70 years.

My colleague the member for Ku-ring-gai referred to Shakespeare's line "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown". What an enormous skill it is to carry the crown with the dignity and grace that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth has been able to do. Another member mentioned local issues to do with republican models and constitutional monarchy. Although I do not believe that this is the time for that discussion, whichever side of the argument members fall on, it is clear that the Queen has been a role model and symbol of the type of servant leadership that we expect from leaders.

A short while ago my mum and I had a slight disagreement—I would not say argument—while we were watching television. When Her Majesty came on screen, my mum said how much she loved her. I did not realise



that. I said, "Mum, people are talking about a change," and she said, "I don't agree with that." She absolutely loves the Queen. I thought that was special because my mum came to Australia unable to speak a word of English. She came from a place where there was war and no rules, where people did not have the opportunity to live their best lives. Coming to Australia opened up opportunities for us, including her eldest son becoming a member of Parliament. Rightly or wrongly, she puts that down to the Queen. She says that the Queen, as the head of state, made those things happen. Like any good son, I do not argue with my mum. I just accept what Mum says and agree with her.

It is important to remember that over her 70 years of the Queen being head of state, so much has changed. She has dealt with many prime ministers, world crises and different incarnations over time of what people think is right. The one constant has been the Queen. She has never changed. She has always been stoic and determined, and has never given anything away. I have never seen emotion from her that would indicate a preference for one prime minister over another. That is where respect for her comes from. People see her as someone to look up to, given some of the disasters that she has had to live through. Particularly in times when other members of the royal family may have brought themselves into disrepute, the Queen has stood stoic and has been an example of what is possible. I do not think there is anyone in the world who would not have shed a tear or felt for the Queen as she sat alone and stoic at her beloved's funeral during the height of the pandemic. I will never forget that image.

When we consider leadership, title does not matter; it is the way a leader carries and wears their title that matters, or, as Shakespeare said, the way a person wears a crown. It is heavy and uncomfortable, and comes with a lot of responsibility. But observing the act of leadership, a lot of people can be inspired to be better than they are. In that moment, having lost the love of her life while the whole country was shut down in the face of a global pandemic, the Queen was stoic as a rock. I cannot imagine what she would have been going through, but she kept a stiff upper lip. She showed a little bit of emotion and everyone's heart was with her on that day. Of all images, that is the one I will remember as the most difficult scenario.

We respect people who never let you know what they are thinking. Like so many people, I do not know the full truth. However, the series *The Crown* gave me a little understanding, even though a lot of it would not have been correct. Watching that, I developed a greater respect for the role and the service of Her Majesty, given the challenges she has faced. I cannot imagine being in a position where I could not be me. We hear the stories of those who have interacted with Her Majesty, and they consistently mention her humour and wit. It is a pretty cool grandma who can jump out of a plane with James Bond to open the 2012 Olympic Games. She is impressive. I offer the Queen not only my heartfelt congratulations but also my deep thanks for being a rock through some difficult times.

The waves have crashed over her but she has been there. The Queen has not only conducted herself, but also taught us to carry ourselves, with elegance, grace, dignity and stoicism. I know that at the moment a lot of people are praying and hoping for the best as she battles through COVID. Hopefully she will get through this and make a full recovery sooner rather than later. On behalf of my community, the electorate of Lakemba and my mum—who I am sure would want me to say this—I pass on my very best congratulations. I thank the Queen very much. May she live long and happy.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Lakemba and I thank him for passing on his mother's wellwishing also.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (16:25):** It is my great honour to contribute to this debate and message to Queen Elizabeth II on the commemoration of her 70-year reign—her jubilee. It is an incredible and profound occasion. I pick up on some of the words and themes articulated by the member for Lane Cove about an incredible woman who has served her Commonwealth with such graciousness, sacrifice and dignity. It would be remiss of me as a woman not to acknowledge the argument that the three best monarchs of the British Empire were women: Elizabeth I, and her 44-year reign from 1558 to 1603; the incredible Queen Victoria, who ushered in the Victorian era, and her 63-year reign from 1837 to 1901—a reign that brought a cultural expansion and an awakening to Britain before we went into the dark days of World War I and World War II—and Queen Elizabeth II, who was meant to be just a princess but who became so much more than that.

Her father trained and taught her well, with such love and respect. She wore the mantle of that heavy crown with such honour and dignity. She was born into privilege; she was born into royalty. But she did not ever expect to be asked to be Queen. When she received that phone call in 1952 when she was in Africa on her honeymoon her life changed irreparably, and the world has changed since that time. In 1952 it was a landline phone call. If that message were delivered today, it would probably be on FaceTime received via satellites and everything else. Queen Elizabeth has counselled the British prime ministers she has served with from Winston Churchill through to Boris—what a difference in prime ministers. The weekly or fortnightly counsel that she gave those prime ministers showed the deft touch of a mature, sensible, experienced woman.

I appreciated the contribution by the member for Lakemba and his reference to his mother. While many of us come from different perspectives and different cultures, the monarchy and our system of government have given us a sense of stability that is the envy of other nations all over the world. I used to say all the time to the former member for Murrumbidgee, Adrian Piccoli, "You can have Italy with all that mess. I will have our constitutional monarchy with all the security and the benefits it gives our democracy and our communities."

I note that the member for Coffs Harbour is in the Chamber. He was not born, and I was maybe one year old but not in Coffs Harbour, when the Queen visited on her ship *Britannia*. She would have gone to Kempsey but I do not think the *Britannia* would have made it up the Macleay River. At the time it was a very profound visit. During that 1970s trip the Queen travelled all over, from rainforests to the outback. She has had something like 14 visits to Australia. My parents wax lyrical about her visits to country towns on the train she toured on. I think it went from Sydney to Melbourne and stopped at every town. Schoolchildren still have memories of seeing her and waving the flag.

The Queen is an incredible leader for the Commonwealth, for women, for democracy and for the rights of people throughout the Commonwealth. She has done such an incredible job not just for this country but also for the entire Commonwealth. I am proud to contribute to debate on this motion. I wish her all the best during her current ill health and thank her for her service.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **DANCE MAKERS COLLECTIVE**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:31):** I acknowledge the Dance Makers Collective, which is western Sydney's dance organisation with a mission to build dance communities and transform people through dance. It was fantastic to see the Dance Makers Collective receive \$28,000 through the Create NSW Creative Capital minor works funding program. The Dance Makers Collective intends to use those funds to refurbish its new studio space in Seven Hills. It is always great to see local organisations who do a great job in the community being awarded grants to upgrade their facilities. The money will go to establishing an office space and kitchenette, upgrading the bathroom facilities and improving the dance rehearsals spaces. The venue requires minor refurbishment and suitable equipment to convert it into a usable dance space where the Dance Makers Collective can rehearse its productions and host residencies and other community groups. I thank Carl Sciberras for his leadership on this project, and I look forward to seeing the result of the Dance Makers Collective's new premises in the electorate of Seven Hills.

#### **ROBIN MURRAY**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:32):** Today I celebrate a woman in my electorate named Robin Murray. Robin is nothing short of remarkable. In her work with the Knitting Nannas, Robin continues to be an incredible advocate for our environment and the vulnerable species that inhabit it. She has also been involved in campaigns calling for better care and services in our aged-care system. Everything about Robin tells us a little more about the type of person she is—compassionate and caring, and someone who is brave enough to stand up and speak out for the most vulnerable amongst us. Robin has been reaching out to my office for years now and in that time my team and I have enjoyed the opportunities we have had to engage with her. She is thoughtful, intelligent, insightful and good humoured. Some of the issues Robin stands up for are difficult ones and it would be easy to lose heart, but Robin never does. She keeps going and keeps fighting, fuelled by an underlying belief that there is always hope. Robin is an inspiration to us all. I thank her for all she does and for her big smile.

#### **JESS RAGUSA**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:33):** I acknowledge an incredible Central Coast local whom I had the pleasure to meet recently. Jess is 27 and was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at birth. When she was 18 she was given six months to live. Nine years later, she is fiercely advocating for herself and other patients like her who are living with cystic fibrosis. Jess started a petition to the Australian Government to speed up the process of adding a life-changing drug, Trikafta, to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. She needs 35,000 signatures before 9 March. Jess is self-funding the medication at a cost to her family of \$21,375 each month. Through my Facebook page I have shared Jess' story, and I encourage residents from across the Central Coast who follow my page to take two minutes out of their lives to help Jess keep hers. I thank Jess for sharing her story with me and encourage everyone on the Central Coast to sign Jess' petition and support this incredibly worthy cause.

#### **MARINE RESCUE PORT STEPHENS**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (16:34):** Last weekend I was delighted to attend the postponed Marine Rescue Port Stephens Christmas party where some wonderful members were recognised for

their service. I recognise them in the House today. Watch Officers Jenny Fitzsimons and Ross Debenham received certificates of appreciation for their many years of service, especially as part of their involvement with the Lighthouse and Rescue Station Reserve Trust committee. I also congratulate Watch Officer Lee Ryman and Marine Radio Operator Loris Webster, who received unit commander citations for their service. Perhaps the highest honour the unit can bestow is that of life membership. I place on record the outstanding service of the following members who were recognised for their impressive achievements: Marine Radio Operator Brian Richardson, 11 years of service; Watch Officer David Rogers, 17 years of service; Watch Officer Ken Ross-Sampson, 23 years of service; and Coxswain Harold Gibson, an incredible 36 years of service. I recognise all Marine Rescue Port Stephens volunteers and thank them for the significant amount of time they give to keeping our waterways safe. I am a very proud patron.

#### **TRIBUTE TO LAURIE BARBER, OAM**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:35):** It is with sadness that I convey to the House my condolences to the Barber family on the loss of Laurie Barber, OAM, who passed away peacefully on 16 February 2022 aged 81. Laurie was a strong community advocate who dedicated much of his life to service above self. This brilliant man was farewelled today in Port Macquarie. Friends and family members gathered to remember and pay respects to a true gentleman who made a lasting imprint on so many lives. Laurie joined the *Port News* as a journalist and editor in 1982, and spent over 23 years reporting local news and events. Laurie's passion was Rotary International and he served in many prominent positions, including as district governor for district 9650, as well as on the board of Australian Rotary Health. In 2008 Laurie travelled to Tanna in Vanuatu, volunteering his time to paint and repair the local schools. A former Country Press NSW deputy president, his love of writing developed into a local newspaper column titled "My Word". In 2014 Laurie was named Port Macquarie-Hastings Senior Citizen of the Year and in 2020 his service to community and Rotary was acknowledged with an Order of Australia Medal. Vale, Laurie Barber, OAM.

#### **DOT HENNESSY, OAM**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (16:36):** I congratulate Dot Hennessy, OAM, who was recently awarded Wollongong Senior Citizen of the Year. Mrs Hennessy devotes much of her time to volunteering and notably was the first female president of the Rotary Club of Wollongong. One of her major achievements has been helping to create Greenhouse Park, just south of the Wollongong CBD, which was a former waste site. Mrs Hennessy and other Rotary club members are upgrading the site for public use. She has also had three scholarships dedicated to her name, which he says are humbling: a scholarship for young volunteers in emergency services, a vocational training scholarship and a PCYC scholarship. On behalf of a very grateful community and region that I represent, I congratulate Dot Hennessy on a lifetime of service to our region and the people who make it so good.

#### **TRIBUTE TO BRYAN "WIMPY" KIRKLAND**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (16:37):** I bring to the attention of the House the sad passing of Bryan "Wimpy" Kirkland of Singleton. Bryan was a wonderful contributor to the Singleton Greyhounds Rugby League Club and to the Upper Hunter rugby league community. He was a great supporter and the lifeblood of the club for many years—a person who did everything from whipper-snipping to managing teams. Bryan, the "grandfather" of Group 21 Rugby League, lent his name to the Bryan Kirkland Cup, a popular tournament based in Singleton featuring teams from schools across the upper Hunter, including schools from Muswellbrook, Scone and Denman. My condolences to the family, Katrina and Bronwyn and their respective families. Bryan's contribution to the community is to be admired and I am sure he will be sorely missed. Vale, Bryan Kirkland.

#### **INNER WEST FLASH FLOODS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (16:38):** Residents across the inner west are mopping up today following flash flooding in yesterday's storms. The Bureau of Meteorology reported that Marrickville Golf Club was the "wettest place in the State" with over 165 millimetres falling in just 24 hours. A month of rain fell on Marrickville in just two hours. I especially acknowledge the extraordinary volunteers from the Marrickville SES unit and Ashfield-Leichhardt SES, as well as first responders from our local police, fire and ambulance, who worked tirelessly to keep residents safe. There has been significant damage to homes, vehicles, businesses and sporting fields and while Marrickville, Tempe and Dulwich Hill residents are no strangers to flooding, emergency workers are reminding locals to please not drive, walk or enter floodwaters. Rain is set to persist throughout the week and I remind local residents to call the SES on 132 500 if they need assistance or to call 000 in an emergency. We are a resilient community. We will get through this, as we have done with so many past flood events.

#### **MILO RITCHIE**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (16:39):** I congratulate local Cranbrook School, Bellevue Hill, student Milo Ritchie who graduated with his HSC last year. Milo is a future creative and performing arts star, with

his visual arts major work, *Contact*, selected to exhibit in this year's ArtExpress exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. *Contact* is a stop-motion short film about an astronaut accidentally crashing to earth. It was cleverly shot, filmed and edited by Milo. Milo's drama major work film, *Diary of a Drama Student*, was also included in this year's OnSTAGE program at the Seymour Centre. It is a rare and fantastic achievement to have two bodies of work chosen for the HSC Showcases and I strongly commend Milo for this accomplishment. I also acknowledge the support provided by Cranbrook School, including headmaster Nicholas Sampson and the drama and visual arts department. Well done, Milo.

#### WALK 4 AWARENESS

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:40):** I take this opportunity to highlight the incredible efforts of Samantha Carmont and her team at Walk 4 Awareness, an initiative that looks to shine a light on coercive control. Samantha's goal was to walk 60 kilometres a day for 31 days. By traversing the Eastern Suburbs, Samantha was able to bring important conversations to our local streets, raising funds and awareness at the same time. Counteracting coercive control is one of the key elements of ending domestic violence in New South Wales. Along with the introduction of new legal protections, Samantha's work is vital in helping to shift how society identifies and acts on controlling behaviours. Samantha was able to raise over \$13,000 for Women's Community Shelters and Domestic Violence NSW, whilst covering an amazing 1,800 kilometres on foot. I congratulate Samantha on her incredible effort and thank her for her valuable work in our local community.

#### JONES BEACH

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:41):** I acknowledge the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club, which has helped secure funding from the New South Wales Government towards a new state-of-the-art radio and patrol tower, which I inspected when it became operational in January 2022. Swimmers at Jones Beach now have the reassurance that lifesavers and lifeguards are now finding it much easier to keep a watchful eye on them. It is located in the middle of Jones Beach but is able to be dismantled and moved to other locations if required. Whilst the surf club owns the tower, Kiama Municipal Council's lifeguards will also use it during the busy summer season. I also acknowledge and thank Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club president Brett Schweitzer and Kiama Municipal Council councillors, in particular my very good friend Mark Croxford, as well as councillors Kathy Rice and Stuart Larkins, who were in attendance on Australia Day at Jones Beach to witness the inspection of the new tower and be part of the celebrations. I am sure all members of the House will join with me in acknowledging the great work that our surf lifesavers do across the State, but particularly in my electorate of Kiama.

#### GURUSWAMY JAYARAMAN, OAM

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (16:42):** I acknowledge the 30-year service of Guruswamy Jayaraman, OAM, a resident of Glenwood in the Riverstone electorate. He spends most of his free time helping others, from refugees to new immigrants and elderly people, and is also heavily involved with community groups. In 2017 Jay, as he is generally known, received an Order of Australia Medal for his service to the Indian community in western Sydney that he has been helping for many years. He has been busy in roles such as chair of Auburn Diversity Services; treasurer of the Hindu Council of Australia; founder of the Sri Om Adi Sakthi Ashram, a not-for-profit health support system for the elderly; and president of Sewa International Australia, a community volunteering organisation; among others. I know Jay from his work with the elderly from the Indian subcontinent in the north-west of Sydney through Sri Om, a cause in which he has been instrumental in making a huge difference to the lives of so many people in our community. I commend his service.

#### NANCY NGUYEN

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (16:43):** I congratulate Ms Nancy Nguyen on receiving the 2022 Young Citizen of the Year award at the Australia Day community awards and citizenship ceremony at Fairfield City Council. Nancy has been a field team leader and deputy training coordinator in the State Emergency Service since 2018. As well as community education and engagement, Nancy is also involved in search-and-rescue missions, flood rescue and assisting people who have been affected by storm and water damage. As a member of the SES, Nancy has assisted the community with doorknocking during emergency weather conditions, conducting land searches, and assisting with traffic control and other duties at local festivals. Nancy is also a volunteer at St Vincent's Care Services in Yennora. I congratulate Nancy once again on her award and wish her all the very best in her future endeavours.

#### MONIQUE PIRRONE

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (16:44):** Many in the Camden community were recognised on Australia Day for their contributions towards making our community a great place to live. We are blessed to have

so many dedicated individuals living amongst us, and I am delighted to speak about one of those people today. The Sports Achievement Award was presented to Monique Pirrone. Monique has been a massive supporter of getting parkrun off the ground in Camden. Over the course of over 101 parkruns, Monique has been there on a weekly basis. She is also an active local ambassador for Running Mums Australia. During the COVID pandemic, Monique was able to continually inspire community members to be active and stay connected. Camden is very lucky to have Monique, and I congratulate her on her acknowledgment.

#### **LISMORE ITALO-AUSTRALIAN CLUB**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (16:45):** It was fantastic to pop down recently to the newly renovated Italo-Australian Club in North Lismore, affectionately known as the Italo Club. It has been a hub for the Lismore Italian-Australian community and those who love them since 1963, hosting everything from live music to soccer—or football. Last year we were devastated that the club might have been facing closure, but at the last minute Club Marconi along with the locals helped saved the club. I cannot express enough to the House the relief and elation in our community when the news broke that the club was coming back better than ever. It was buzzing down at the club, with many coming in for a drink and a meal—a great menu of authentic food with something for everyone. I thank outgoing president Americo Melchior for his decades of service and leadership. It was wonderful to meet manager Jamie Bressan and the team and sign up again as a member. I thank Club Marconi CEO Matthew Biviano—I note that the member for Fairfield taught him and his three brothers—and chair of the board Morris Licata.

#### **ANGLICARE MOBILE COMMUNITY PANTRY**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:46):** I commend and thank Anglicare and Kurrajong & North Richmond Anglican Church for an initiative in which they are offering heavily discounted shopping packs through a mobile community pantry to Hawkesbury locals who are struggling financially. Our community is grateful to all involved in this wonderful initiative, including senior minister Peter Wood of the Kurrajong & North Richmond Anglican Church, assistant minister Robbie Nichols, Anglicare mobile community pantry coordinator Aaron Li and Anglicare western region partnership development officer Stephen Kuo, as well as the many faithful from the church who volunteer their time and effort. Not only does the initiative help those who are in difficult financial circumstances to put food on the table but it also allows them to connect with people and know that they are cared for and valued. I extend my gratitude to retailers and suppliers who donate their products to Foodbank, from whom Anglicare purchases approximately 70 per cent of the groceries.

#### **BANKSTOWN DISTRICT AMATEUR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) (16:47):** I acknowledge the efforts of the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association [BDAFA] in promoting sport in the Canterbury-Bankstown local government area. Like many other sporting clubs across the local area, last year BDAFA had to cancel the remainder of its season due to the pandemic. This season, to encourage continuing players to resume their participation in competitions, the BDAFA board established a fund of over \$100,000 to be used by its member clubs to discount registration costs for participants seeking to play in the 2022 BDAFA winter season. Additionally, BDAFA has continued to heavily invest in the local football community, prioritising the growth of the Women's Premier League. Bankstown District Amateur Football Association has provided \$25,000 in the past three years to increase female participation in soccer. This year BDAFA is offering standalone grade 6 and grade 7 competitions in response to demand. I acknowledge the board for their outstanding service: chairman Dimitri Hursalas, deputy chairman Laurie Warner, general manager Leanne Millar and all of the directors.

#### **JOSEPH GORAIL**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (16:48):** I acknowledge seven-year-old Joseph Gorail, a Casula resident who has started his own business: Joseph's Can and Bottle Adventure. Since starting in October he has collected more than 30,000 bottles and cans. He began doing this during COVID lockdown and it has now turned into a big operation, with more than 70 dedicated blue bins set up around Casula and all around Sydney. Joseph uses some of the 10c refunds he gets from the New South Wales Government's Return and Earn scheme to help those in need. He is committed to helping homeless people, so he uses some of the money to buy ingredients so that his mother, Vicki, can help cook meals that are then distributed through Swag Family Sydney. The charity supports vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the community every second Tuesday. Joseph has also donated to the Bear Cottage children's hospice and plans to donate regularly. His goal is to have more Joseph bins circulating around the community so he can continue to help those who are less fortunate. I congratulate Joseph on starting this amazing initiative and on his and his family's charitable nature.

### KU WINDALE PRESCHOOL

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (16:49):** Last year I acknowledged the part KU Kahibah Road played in celebrating the 125th anniversary of KU's establishment in 1895, but it was not the only KU centre in the Charlestown electorate to get involved in the festivities. The wonderful staff and community at KU Windale Preschool marked the milestone in December last year with gardening, baking and good deeds. The three- to five-year-olds who attend the preschool made different baked goods each day for two weeks using produce from the centre's garden. The goodies were then ready for sale when parents and guardians arrived to pick up their children. The sales helped raise funds for local charity Centre for Hope. The local Bunnings helped out, visiting the preschool during lockdown last year and donating lots of different herbs and vegetable plants, which were planted and cared for in the centre's garden. I thank centre director Nicole Dean and her staff, as well as the students. I also thank Bunnings at Bennetts Green for its involvement.

### ROB AITKEN

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:50):** I recognise Rob Aitken, a member of UTS North Sydney Bears cricket club, who celebrated 500 first-grade appearances in the 2021-22 season. Of course you are impressed, Madam Assistant Speaker. That monumental achievement makes Rob the first player in NSW Premier Cricket to ever reach that target. It is not the first great cricket milestone that Rob has surpassed, having also been the first player in Australia to play 100 First Grade matches in Premier Cricket. Cricket NSW hosted a ceremony for Rob to celebrate the accomplishment, and I echo the congratulations. The Bears president, Pat Lindsay, described Rob as a once-in-a-lifetime player and an integral part of the club's history. The Bears have a rich history as one of the oldest and most successful cricket clubs in Sydney, having been founded in 1893 and with notable players including Sir Donald Bradman, Trevor Chappell and Kerry O'Keeffe. I congratulate the Bears—special congratulations to Rob Aitken—and thank them for all the work they do for our community.

### ABEL TROPHIES

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (16:51):** I commend Jeff Whelan from Abel Trophies in my electorate. Thirty-eight years ago, when Jeff was granted custody of his four young children, it was on the condition that he give up his full-time role to live off the single parent pension, but he soon realised that he could not survive on that income and would have to find another way to support his growing family. His involvement in a local baseball club led to him opening Abel Trophies. When he discovered that the club had no funds to present players with a trophy, he came up with the idea to engrave pieces of wood as awards. Today he has a large range of trophies, and his customers include corporates, sports clubs, schools and me. At 74 years of age, Jeff still has no plans to retire. He continues to offer good old-fashioned service, where no job is too small. I emphasise how essential small businesses like Abel Trophies are for our local recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We should always support our local businesses, because more often than not it is those in our local community who have supported us in the most difficult times.

### KOSCIUSZKO WINES

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:52):** I congratulate Kosciuszko Wines and proprietor Bill Mason and the team for winning a trophy for Best Sauvignon Blanc in New South Wales at the State Wine Awards ceremony held at the International Convention Centre at Darling Harbour in Sydney late last year. Mr Mason acquired the business in 2004 and has seen an increase in the recognition of wines from Tumbarumba. The fruit for Kosciuszko Wines is grown at the Excelsior Peak Vineyard on Jingellic Road, Tumbarumba. Juliet Cullen, a member of the Tumbarumba Vignerons Association, is responsible for growing those high-quality grapes. I also congratulate Juliet for the viticulture practices behind such award-winning produce. Once again, the wine industry at Tumbarumba has shown its quality and finesse against the best in the State.

### PONGAL FESTIVAL

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:53):** On Tuesday 15 February 2022 it was great to attend the 2022 Pongal festival at the Parliament of New South Wales. Pongal is a wonderful multi-day Hindu harvest festival celebrated by Tamils throughout the world. It is celebrated to thank the sun, Mother Nature and the various farm animals that help to contribute to a bountiful harvest. Celebrated over four days, Pongal also marks the beginning of the Tamil month called Thai, which is considered a favourable month. This year the celebrations were vibrant, colourful and filled with dance. We enjoyed several performances from talented members of our Tamil community. We also heard presentations from the Speaker, the Hon. Jonathan O'Dea, former multiculturalism Minister, the Hon. Dr Geoff Lee, and Leader of the Opposition, Chris Minns, who welcomed guests to the festival. We were kindly given pongal to take away with us, which is the dish made and eaten during the festival. It is a mixture of boiled sweet rice, spices and fruits. It is derived from the Tamil word "pongu", which

means to boil over. I thank Anagan Babu, president of the Tamil Arts and Culture Association, for organising an enjoyable event.

### THE LUCKY BEE

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:54):** On the Central Coast we are spoilt for choice with world-class food and dining experiences. I congratulate local restaurant The Lucky Bee at Hardys Bay, which was featured in *The Sydney Morning Herald* summer 2022 edition of *The Good Food Guide*. Matty Bennett and Rupert Noffs first opened The Lucky Bee in New York in 2015, but brought it with them upon their move back to Australia. The Lucky Bee has now been serving delicious South-East Asian food to Central Coast residents and visitors for 3½ years. I recommend that locals and visitors to the Central Coast pay a visit to The Lucky Bee. My wife, Jill, and I have had the pleasure of enjoying some amazing food at the Lucky Bee. I also hear that its Sunday yum cha is absolutely worth the trip. It is a great achievement to be recognised by some of the top food critics in the country and I wish both Matty and Rupert all the best for the rest of 2022. I congratulate them on the great work they do and the great food they provide at The Lucky Bee in Hardys Bay.

### ZELDA CHAMBERS

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (16:55):** Today I recognise Zelda Chambers of Booligal. Zelda is an inspirational young woman who has chosen to dedicate her time and career to the promotion of rural Australia. Zelda grew up overseas before moving to Australia to begin a journalism career in Adelaide. Her next move saw her relocate to an isolated farm of over 14,000 merino sheep in New South Wales. Zelda now balances her work as a publicist for The Regional PR Co. with learning all things farming, including mustering, trough runs and stock work. Zelda's passion lies in creating opportunities for rural businesses and primary producers to discuss the unique challenges they face on a daily basis. She also promotes rural businesses through storytelling in her role as a publicist. I commend Zelda for her dedication to and promotion of rural Australia, and for her ability to find the synergies between publicity and farming and to share them with the world.

### WOLLONDILLY TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:56):** I thank and congratulate Ken Harkness, who has brought the wonderfully fun and inclusive game of table tennis to Wollondilly. I was very glad to attend the launch of the Wollondilly Table Tennis Association last Saturday with my daughters.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Did you play?

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH:** Yes, I did. I look forward to seeing the positive impact this organisation will have on the community. Ken is a local solicitor from Thirlmere who established the Wollondilly Table Tennis Association to fill a need he saw for more activities for young people in the area. He found support from the local Anglican church in Thirlmere, which generously offered its hall as a venue for the games. Although Ken set up the organisation with our young people in mind, table tennis is a fantastic game for people of every age, stage and ability. The association will run programs for kids, adults and seniors starting this week with social games as well as table tennis competitions. I thank Ken and his team for their magnificent effort in setting up this organisation.

### LEVEL CROSSING SAFETY

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:57):** Today, 23 February 2022, marks 12 months since Ethan Hunter and Mark Fenton were tragically killed in a level crossing accident at Eurabba Lane near Grenfell. I thank Maddie Bott and the Hunter and Fenton families for the work they have done to raise the issue of level crossing safety across our nation. Maddie's petition raised this issue and brought a debate to this Parliament where members on all sides of politics raised their concerns about the safety of passive level crossings and the lack of action in the 20 years since the tragic accident at Five Mates Crossing at Wagga Wagga. Families from Western Australia have also joined Maddie's campaign. At 5.15 p.m. today we will be lighting a candle for the Eurabba heroes and I urge everyone who is watching to do that as well. As Maddie says, we need to address this issue one track at a time [#OneTrackAtATime] and be transparent about which crossing next [#WhichCrossingNext].

### NORTH SYDNEY ELECTORATE FRONTLINE WORKERS

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:58):** Madam Speaker, I know that you will join me in recognising the 203 new graduate nurses and seven new graduate midwives who are joining the Northern Sydney Local Health District this year. Of these, 101 nurses and five midwives will join the team at the Royal North Shore Hospital—the very team that helped me welcome my son into the world in 2020. This is part of the New South Wales Government's record investment of \$2.8 billion to recruit a total of 8,300 frontline health staff over four years from the 2019-20 year, with 45 per cent located in regional New South Wales—areas that the Deputy Speaker is quite aware of. As a result, there are now more nurses and midwives in New South Wales public hospitals than ever before. In these unprecedented times we can all appreciate the need to support our

frontline workers. Royal North Shore Hospital has long been the central public care location for residents in my electorate and is vital to the community. This increase in staff is a win for the hospital and for the community, and provides staffing relief. Congratulations to all of the graduates and thank you for the service you will provide.

### GREAT SOUTHERN NIGHTS

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (16:59):** I recognise some local venues for their involvement in some of the New South Wales Government's Great Southern Nights shows. Great Southern Nights is a live music initiative running from 18 March to 10 April with Australian artists performing at venues across New South Wales. Lara Dabbagh, a finalist on *The Voice Australia*, will be performing at the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre on 9 April, and Liverpool Catholic Club will be hosting three shows across March and April featuring Never Ending 80s, Karise Eden and a live INXS show. It is fantastic to have these shows come to local venues to display some of Australia's great talent: This will create jobs for artists and crew, and bring some life back into the music industry, which has been hit so hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. I encourage residents of the Holsworthy electorate to purchase tickets and get involved, support some local venues and enjoy some live music again. I commend the New South Wales Government for supporting the live music industry through the Great Southern Nights shows and I hope everyone involved has a wonderful time.

### OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (17:00):** I bring to the attention of the House that this month is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Ovarian cancer is an insidious disease and something that many women catch when it is too late for something to be done to save their lives. We have seen terrible situations where very young women have suffered and succumbed to this disease. The point of this month is to raise awareness and we, as parliamentarians, have to do everything within our power to tell women to report any sort of gynaecological issues to their doctors as soon as possible to ensure that they have the best opportunity for early treatment. I congratulate all the researchers who are working in this space. It is an important area of women's health and one where we can do so much more with more funding and more support from government.

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (17:01):** I acknowledge and speak in support of the International Women's Day event being held by the Manly Business Chamber, which will see the president of the business chamber, Charlotte Rimmer, interview two outstanding local women, Alexandra Sloane, who is the director of marketing at Meta, and Irene Falcone, who is the founder and director of Sans Drinks. The event will be held on Tuesday 8 March at the Manly Pavilion, which will be a wonderful scene for an important event that is proudly supported by the New South Wales Government. I congratulate the Manly Business Chamber on organising this event and look forward to attending, along with many members of my community, in support of the work of the business chamber and in acknowledgement of the important event that is International Women's Day.

### *Public Interest Debate*

### STATE TRANSPORT NETWORK

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (17:02):** I move:

That this House calls on the Government to do its job and end the chaos across the New South Wales transport network.

It is critical that we debate this motion today because passengers right across New South Wales were blindsided on Monday by an unprecedented event in the history of this State. Their own Government shut down the entire train network. Every train line, every service from Newtown to Newcastle, Wollongong to Woollahra, Bankstown to Blackheath, Panania to Penrith—all shut down by the Government in the middle of the night. Thousands of passengers were abandoned on train station platforms. Workers lost wages because they could not get to work or they had to spend the equivalent of an entire day's wage just to get to work. Businesses lost revenue because their staff could not get to work and their customers could not get there to buy their products. Thousands of people were stuck in traffic for hours as the road network ground to a halt.

All the while, rail workers—who the transport Minister insulted all morning—were standing by their trains ready to work, on platforms and in tea rooms across Sydney, Newcastle, on the Central Coast through to the Illawarra, ready to get passengers to work and home from work, ready to get students to school and home from school. But the transport Minister and the Government refused to budge. They refused to end the chaos that they had caused by shutting down the entire train network. Not a single train ran over the entire 24-hour period.

How did we get to a situation where the Government locked out its own employees and shut down the entire train network? The Minister for Transport claims that the chaos caused by the shutdown of our entire train network on Monday had nothing to do with him. In fact, he claims that he slept through the whole thing. He is



very keen to pin the blame for this chaos on his public servants. Who honestly believes the excuses bandied around by the Minister for Transport and the Government?

The dossier done up by the Premier this morning shows, beyond doubt, that it was the Government that shut down the train network on Monday. That has been reported in the media; it is beyond doubt. The Minister for Transport has given differing explanations as to whether he was made aware of the shutdown, but we know that the Minister's office told a public servant at 10.43 p.m. on Sunday that "the Minister has been briefed and is happy with our position". We know the Minister was yet to change into his nightgown and fluffy slippers at around 11.10 p.m. on Sunday because he was furiously tweeting about some of his favourite topics: the police, Mardi Gras and the Catholic Church. We know that, at 1.50 a.m. on Monday, the same staff member who briefed the Minister signed off on a media release that announced the shutdown of the entire train network. The Minister then expects the public to believe that, when he woke up, the whole thing was simply a *fait accompli*, it was not a problem, that he slept through it and that the outcome was going to be the same.

Let us be honest here: It is simply implausible to suggest that a decision to shut down the entire train network would ever be left to an unelected public servant or to a bureaucrat alone. No such decision would ever be made without the Minister's knowledge, yet he still claims ignorance. This means that there are two options: The Minister is either completely incapable of running his own department or he has repeatedly misled the public and the Parliament about his role in the transport chaos that gripped our city for an entire day and continues to inconvenience people, meaning that people are losing wages and kids cannot get to school. To be frank, none of these possibilities are likely to inspire much confidence in the travelling public across New South Wales, nor are the Minister's and the Premier's increasingly desperate and bizarre conspiracy theories about the cause of the transport chaos across the rail network on Monday.

The thousands of passengers who had their work and school plans thrown into chaos know exactly what happened. They know that the Government shut down their train services and that rail workers were ready to work. That is the most disgraceful thing about what happened on Monday. The Government had ample time to observe the consequences of its shocking decision to shut down the train network. It could see the lines of people and the consequences of the Minister supposedly snoozing through the whole thing. The Government had the time to fix it. The workers were ready to run those services and to get people back home in the afternoon on Monday, but the Government refused. It let the chaos spread across the entire train network, which flowed onto our road network and slowed it to a total crawl. The consequences of that decision were seen by everybody across the State.

Why is this happening now? A couple of things have changed. There is a new Premier and there is a new Minister for Transport. Let us remember that under the former Premier, who was also a former Minister for Transport, there was a decade of relative industrial peace. There was not always agreement, but there was a level of respect. There was nothing like the transport chaos that we have been subject to this week. The leadership of New South Wales has changed, and the people of this State have been subject to the chaos, confusion and mismanagement of this ideological Premier and this incompetent Minister for Transport.

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:09):** I am delighted to speak on the motion brought by the member for Summer Hill. I thank her for bringing this important motion before the House; however, it is disappointing that there was such negativity in her contribution. I take this opportunity to speak about some of the positive aspects of the rail transport network in New South Wales. I speak about the positivity that the Liberal Party and The Nationals have brought by fixing the transport network since coming into government. Our Government has and will continue to deliver projects for commuters that they could have only dreamed of under the previous Labor Government.

Labor promised 12 railway lines, had nine master plans and had six transport Ministers but only managed to deliver half a railway line. Our Government is delivering train stations with better accessibility, better amenities and better safety outcomes for all commuters. Our \$2.2 billion Transport Access Program is ensuring that those with disabilities, those with limited mobility and those who have prams or bikes can commute right across our network with great ease.

Some of the great examples of the Transport Access Program include Seven Hills railway station, where there are new amenities, better toilet facilities, better cover from the rain, better car parks and even bike lockers for those with Opal cards. Toongabbie railway station has also had an excellent upgrade, with lifts now in place, excellent lighting, safer walkways to the car park and increased car parking spaces. There is even artwork from The Hills Sports High School now prominent on the bus kerb. Pendle Hill railway station has had a great upgrade, where the ramps were removed and replaced by lifts. I am sure the member for Prospect enjoyed that. The lifts connect the shopping centre right across to the industrial side and the hotel on the other side of the road. The opening of it was fantastic, with the former transport Minister attending. We also upgraded the Wentworthville railway station after 50 years. That station sat there with holes in the walkway across the railway line. There are now excellent lifts there. It sits right in the heart of Wentworthville, opposite the new police station that was built

by this Government and down the road from Darcy Road Public School, which is about to receive another outstanding upgrade from this Government.

Our Government's commitment means that almost 90 per cent of customer journeys begin from accessible stations. The 2021-22 budget will commit \$365 million to continue this successful program. The project continues to make the lives of commuters easy, and more than 470 projects have been completed or are underway. Some of these projects include the improvements at Blacktown station, with a new footbridge connecting the Richmond line concourse to the main concourse area, lifts and stairs connecting platform 3 with the new footbridge, stairs and weather protection canopies to platforms 1 and 2 and changes to the station facilities to improve customer flow. The opening of it was great. The member for Riverstone and the member for Oatley, the then Parliamentary Secretary, was with me when we opened that upgrade for the residents surrounding the Blacktown area.

The improvements to Glenbrook station include a new lift to provide access to the footbridge, a new accessible kiss and ride on the road next to the station, new toilet facilities, upgrades to CCTV, wayfinding and lighting. The improvements to Harris Park station, near the electorates of the member for Parramatta and the member for Granville, include a lift to access the platform, new accessible family toilets, upgrades to the lighting and new CCTV that boosts access and security, just to name a few. Our Government is ensuring that stations provide better amenities to commuters through its investment in better network infrastructure across the State. The Government has built new mobile towers and tunnel upgrades that provide new in-train commuter coverage, with 24 of 26 already having come on line. Mobile coverage improvements and new wi-fi coverage has also been enabled at all 19 stations between Hornsby and Wyong. These are some of the fantastic pieces of work being done by this Government to fix our transport network, making it better for commuters in New South Wales.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:14):** What an absolutely pathetic, sorry and miserable excuse for a transport Minister we now have in New South Wales. Members will recall that I have been on a public transport crusade for the seven years I have been in this Parliament, and for most of that time the target of my anger was Andrew Constance. I have described former Minister Constance as incompetent and hopeless many times, but his record of failure and mismanagement pales in comparison to the blundering oaf from Baulkham Hills who now occupies the role. This is a government that bought trains that did not fit the tracks in the Blue Mountains. Those trains are now three years overdue because the tracks, tunnels, platforms and signalling equipment are still being rectified to make those fat trains fit. I gave Andrew Constance a hard time. But, truthfully, many of the mistakes were actually owned by Gladys Berejiklian, so I take this opportunity to correct the public record.

In the way of these things, the history books will say that she was a hardworking, competent administrator who was let down by an error of judgment in her personal life. The truth is she was actually incompetent as well. She was the transport Minister who originally signed off on the intercity trains order for an off-the-shelf design from overseas that doomed the intercity fleet to failure. She was the Treasurer who led a cost-cutting agenda that prioritised cheapness over quality. That is why our ferries are junk and our trams are falling apart. That is why our trains do not fit the tracks. So Andrew and Gladys laid the groundwork with many, many years of incompetence, mismanagement and ideological stupidity that put us in a terrible position to start with. That is why I would have thought our new Premier would take the opportunity for a fresh start and put someone good in there to quietly clean up their mess. Instead, he gave a massive, vitally important portfolio to a man who has an even poorer track record than his two predecessors.

As Minister for Emergency Services, he deserted our firefighters amidst the Black Summer bushfires and went on holidays—just like the Prime Minister did. He was the Minister for Corrections who illegally fired a prohibited weapon. He was the police Minister who impersonated a cop and abused a child. As the member for Baulkham Hills, he has boasted about driving around his electorate at night bullying local kids in the park. Time and time again this boofhead has been found guilty of misbehaviour and incompetence. It is staggering how often he is forgiven in the Liberal party room by the cowards sitting opposite. Now he has used the city's mass transit system and the livelihoods of millions of Sydneysiders and beyond as a battering ram in a low-level industrial dispute with some of New South Wales' most hardworking and devoted public servants—our transport workers.

Those people have turned up and done the work of keeping Sydney moving during COVID. They deserve a pay rise. They deserve job security. They deserve to be safe at work. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect by their employer. I stand with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union [RTBU] and all railway and transport workers, including those represented by other unions such as the mighty Australian Services Union and the Electrical Trades Union. I stand with RTBU NSW secretary Alex Claassens and I respect his expertise. Clearly, Alex Claassens is the only person at the negotiating table with any concept of how to run an efficient, safe and reliable public railway.

The Minister, on the other hand, is an inept, hopeless and reckless buffoon. He is a liability, not just to this Government but to the people of New South Wales. He probably should not be in this Parliament, but at the very

least he has no business in the Premier's Cabinet. It is not just that he does not deserve to be paid the salary of that office, it is that every day he remains in the position he puts the reliability and safety of our public transport system at risk. Gladys Berejiklian did not have the guts to sack this imbecile when she had the chance, but now Dominic Perrottet must.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members that under Standing Order 75 members are to be referred to by their title, office or electorate.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (17:19):** I welcome the opportunity to discuss the relative records of the two sides of this House when it comes to delivering public transport. I would be embarrassed to bring on a debate about public transport if I had the Opposition's woeful record. Since coming to government, we on this side have delivered transport projects that have changed our city. Sydney Metro is Australia's biggest public transport project, with the Sydney Metro Northwest project successfully delivered for \$7.8 million and transforming the way that the north-west works. Let us not forget that was a project Labor promised—and then unpromised and then promised again—but failed to deliver. The Opposition never delivered on the hopes that it raised in the north-west.

The Metro North West Line has 13 metro stations supported by over 4,000 commuter car parking spaces. The project created more than 22,000 jobs between 2013 and 2019. Opening to customers in May 2019, the Metro North West Line saw more than 140,000 people enjoying the new line on its first day. On 9 June 2019—two weeks after opening—the Metro North West Line achieved one million commuters. By the end of 2021, it had carried 38.6 million passengers on more than 270,000 services. Clearly, this project was needed. It is popular and has served the people of the north-west wonderfully. It was delivered by the Liberal-Nationals Government, after many years of failed Labor promises. But that is not all. The Government continues to work on projects that will make the lives of commuters across Sydney and New South Wales that little bit easier. In 2024 Sydney Metro will be extended from the north-west, under Sydney Harbour, through new CBD stations and beyond to Sydenham and Bankstown. Sydney will have 31 metro railway stations and a new 66-kilometre standalone metro railway.

This is an example of the Government's track record and infrastructure vision for the people of Sydney. The Sydney Metro project will not only create thousands of jobs but also reduce travel times, allowing families to spend more time with each other. By comparison, the Opposition's track record is not quite so impressive. Labor handed \$81 million back to the Commonwealth for west metro, which was promised in 2009 and never delivered. It wasted \$412 million on the Rozelle metro, promised in 2008 and never delivered. And let us not forget the North West Rail Link, also promised in 2008—cancelled, promised again, cancelled again—and never delivered. The people of New South Wales know that under a Labor government public transport suffers and commuters spend more time on the road and on rail than at home with their families.

Right across the board, this Government has delivered. No doubt the reason we hear complaints from Opposition members is that they cannot talk about Labor's record. They cannot boast about anything Labor has achieved. But let us look at the particular circumstances that bring us here today. We are all deeply concerned about the sustained industrial action affecting our commuters. Today we continue to see the effects of this action, with reduced services for commuters. Sadly, the industrial action is a sign of more things to come. The union movement made that clear on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* earlier in the week when it boasted that 2022 will be the year of strikes. It was a naked statement of intent, absolutely clear to all who look that it is a deliberate strategy.

We heard from the member for Blue Mountains just how strongly she stands beside all the unions doing that. If the Opposition was really concerned about ending the "chaos" in public transport, then it knows who to call and say, "Back off. Call off the restrictions. Stop the limitations. Allow the service to work." The union changed its position on Sunday. An agreement was reached in the Industrial Relations Commission on Saturday but the union reneged late on Sunday, causing Matthew Longland of Sydney Trains to make a decision at one o'clock Monday morning that it was no longer safe to run services. With the union's restrictions, bans and limitations, safe travel could not be guaranteed.

That is what happened and the decision, as Matthew Longland said on radio, was made at one o'clock in the morning on Monday. The Minister's office became aware of that at about 1.28, I think, on Monday morning. That is all on the public record. It is not difficult to understand the sequence of events. It is not difficult to understand that the Minister has been absolutely clear that on Sunday, while the negotiations were continuing on the basis of an agreement reached on Saturday in the commission, things seemed to be on track. By one o'clock in the morning—[*Time expired.*]

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (17:24):** I could not agree more with the member for Summer Hill and I applaud her for bringing this motion to the House. Clearly our State has been a disgrace this week and I am very disappointed that the Minister is not in here to debate this matter. Clearly he is trying to find the next person

to blame. Commuters right across regional New South Wales were brought to their knees on Monday when they woke up to find out that their Government had cancelled the trains that they use to get to work, to get to school and all of those things that we rely on them for. But what did we see from the Minister? Well, we saw the blame game at its best. He blamed the secretary, he blamed the deputy, then he blamed the next deputy secretary. He blamed the workers. I am surprised he has not tried to blame the commuters themselves, in actual fact. But the real cracker was today when he actually tried to throw his chief of staff under the bus. That is a real winner. He will not be there for long. Watch this space.

This is a government that has the worst track record on public transport infrastructure that we have seen. We have seen 10 long years of bad decision-making. Let us recount. This is the Government which bought the trains from South Korea. They do not fit the track. They cost a whopping \$2.88 billion. It bought trams from Spain. They are cracking and falling apart. We paid a cracking \$3.3 billion for them. Even in my own home town, we have a tram with a gearbox that is dodgy and completely unreliable. It bought buses from Malaysia and it bought trains from China.

This Government has imported public transport and exported jobs. That is all it does. It has presided over massive waste and mismanagement of public funds as it buys this junk equipment that is unreliable, unsafe and certainly unsuitable. It bought ferries that did not fit under the bridges. It illegally imported those ferries with asbestos in them and, quite frankly, border security should investigate that. It is illegal to import asbestos into this country. The Government broke the law. These ferries do not go into reverse without stalling. They cannot operate safely at night and we know they cannot cross the Sydney Heads in a little rain shower. I read that report: On Friday night just gone they had to cancel services yet again. It is just cancel, cancel, cancel all the time.

Do not even get me started on the intercity fleet. It is a shame the transport Minister is not here because for his benefit I wanted to provide him an update on the intercity fleet. Perhaps those opposite can pass this on to him. I went up to Kangy Angy with my Labor colleagues from the Central Coast who are here—as usual, always supporting the team—and the Leader of the Opposition came up as well. I can tell you the fleet is very safe up there, just rusting away as a rust bucket—great use of taxpayer funds. The transport system in New South Wales has been in disarray for many, many years, as the member for Blue Mountains has just described. David Elliott is incompetent but so were his predecessors. Of course we know who they were: Andrew Constance and Gladys Berejiklian. They were both hopeless too—do not worry about that—but it seems that, just like the transport infrastructure, each Minister is less reliable than the last.

I have further evidence to prove that, and I thank the member for Maitland for bringing this to my attention. The Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Sam Faraway, MLC, made the embarrassing admission in the New South Wales Parliament today that he only heard about the Government's train lockout, which shut down public transport right around regional New South Wales, "on Monday morning at 6.00 a.m. when I watched the news." What a surprise! He must have nearly choked on his coffee. The really surprising thing is he has the sleep disease that the Minister's got, because his own agency put out a text at 3.45 a.m.—another one missed that train. Anyway, on we go.

David Elliott, quite frankly, should just go back to Baulkham Hills. What we see from this Government is a conga line of incompetents from the NSW Liberals when it comes to public transport and this week the whole show has just come crashing down around them. I say to the Minister: Head back to Baulkham Hills. Get a ride on the north-west metro train to get there—the one that is built on faulty concrete spans, built by his good friends Salini Impregilo, which cracked and buckled and needed extensive rectification work. Everywhere you turn, transport in New South Wales is a perfect illustration of the failure and folly of the Liberal Government cost cutting and outsourcing. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (17:29):** Commencing with this particular motion, a Labor member has moved a public interest motion in this House with the wording "fixing public transport". That is a contradiction in terms because no greater example of failure to deliver public transport services was seen than during the four terms of the Labor Government that preceded us until 2011. It has already been placed on the record quite firmly that the greatest lie ever perpetrated to the people of New South Wales and particularly the people of north-western Sydney was in the non-delivery of a North West Rail Link, promised at the 1999 election, the 2003 election, the 2007 election and the 2011 election—all lies perpetrated by a Labor Government. Not one sleeper was delivered on the North West Rail Link. It was left up to a Liberal-Nationals government to deliver that project which is now carrying millions of passengers—one million passengers in the first two months of service.

No greater example of the failure of Labor in government to deliver public transport services was seen than in 2009 under Premier Nathan Rees—one of a myriad of Premiers of the Labor Party, thrown in and thrown out. Nathan Rees tried to deliver a train timetable. As someone who has spent 22 years in the public transport system, I know how difficult that can be. I know how important communications can be. When you are delivering a train timetable you need to ensure that your bus services coincide with that train timetable, that the taxis are aware, that

schools are aware, because everything changes around the delivery of a train timetable. One thing that was never offered in all the time that that particular timetable was proposed was any communication whatsoever, and do you know why? I will tell you why. Because it slashed over 100 bus services in our region. In my electorate alone, 25 services were slashed in a day. Not one commuter was advised. No-one was advised. No community in north-western, western or south-western Sydney was advised. I continued to prosecute that particular argument.

That morning on the side of the road we had parents with their children, people with disabilities and workers waiting for the normal bus services to operate. In 2009 Labor slashed over 100 bus services. It slashed the first 25 services in my electorate, then known as Hawkesbury, which is The Hills area, and is currently Castle Hill. Then it slashed services in Londonderry and we prosecuted that particular complaint. Every day I was on 2GB with Alan Jones talking about the loss of our bus services until we got every one of them back. I prosecuted that in Riverstone, in Londonderry, in my own electorate at that point in time, which was Hawkesbury, and in the electorate of Mount Druitt. In Mount Druitt they lost services around the Whalan area, where pensioners and people with disability could no longer get a bus to their important services such as hospitals and shopping centres, which had been in place for 40 years.

This is what the Labor Party did with one changing of timetable in 2009. It was a complete and utter disaster which went on for three months until we got back every bus service that had been slashed at that time. I invite people to view my YouTube channel—one of the greatest watched YouTube channels of all time—because I was more than happy for Channel 9, Channel 7, Channel 10 and the ABC to follow me around while I spoke to every one of those individuals and communities who stood by us in 2011, who were happy to stand on booths to replace their sitting Labor members. That is why we won eight out of nine seats in western Sydney.

I was more than happy to work right across that area of western Sydney, ensuring that they changed members. I will tell you why. Since we have been in here, we have put back thousands of bus services. Every person across New South Wales knows that Labor in government offers a complete failure of public services. Labor members should be responsible and do the right thing, but a Labor member had the audacity to put forward a motion that says "fixing public transport". The one thing we have not heard from Labor members in this entire debate is a single way they are going to fix public transport. They just ridiculed our Minister and ridiculed our Government. They have not put forward one policy. I will tell them what the people of New South Wales want. All they want at this point in time is for rail workers to get back to bloody work and take the people back and forth as they deserve.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I seek leave to contribute to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (17:35):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to this very important debate. On this side there were many more speakers who wanted to contribute, because every electorate has been affected and they have received hundreds of representations from passengers that have been left stranded on platforms across New South Wales. I thank the member for Seven Hills. It is good that he presented us with the department notes, which were provided to him. That is very useful. It is good to hear about a range of train stations with recent upgrades. But, to be honest, those are not very useful if there are no trains.

I thank also the member for Blue Mountains. She really told us what she thought about the Ministers and the former Ministers. It is good to let it rip. The member for Blue Mountains was in her usual style. I have to give credit to the member for Riverstone for trying to explain the unbelievable time line supposedly explained to us by the Minister for Transport during question time. Unfortunately, he ran out of time. I thank also the member for Swansea. She brought that usual Hunter passion and sass to the debate and reminded us that this Liberal-Nationals Government imported transport duds and exported thousands of jobs from New South Wales.

I thank the member for Castle Hill, who gave us a history lesson and his interpretation of things that are far into the past, but he also belled the cat. He has swallowed the conspiracy theories that have been bandied about by the Premier and the transport Minister now for days, insulting transport workers and offending the intelligence of the people of New South Wales, who have been left abandoned by this Government. Passengers were left standing in the rain, trying to get to work, trying to get to school and trying to get to doctors' appointments. Businesses lost incomes. Kids could not get to school.

The transport workers stood ready and willing to work. But instead the Government decided to insult them. These are the workers that have been on the front lines of this pandemic for the past two years. They stood ready to work, and what did this Government do? It locked them out. As a result, every single passenger and commuter across New South Wales has suffered and transport chaos has ensued. The member for Castle Hill has just belled the cat. If he wants to swallow the conspiracy theories, that is all fine and well, but the people of New South Wales know what the truth is.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....40

Noes .....41

Majority.....1

#### AYES

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, R  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Dalton, H  
Dib, J  
Donato, P  
Doyle, T

Finn, J  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Hornery, S  
Kamper, S  
Leong, J  
Lynch, P  
McDermott, H  
McGirr, J  
Mehan, D (teller)  
Mihailuk, T

Minns, C  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Parker, J  
Piper, G  
Saffin, J  
Smith, T  
Tesch, L  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A (teller)  
Zangari, G

#### NOES

Anderson, K  
Ayres, S  
Clancy, J  
Conolly, K  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Crouch, A  
Davies, T  
Dominello, V  
Elliott, D  
Evans, L  
Gibbons, M  
Greenwich, A  
Griffin, J

Gulaptis, C  
Hancock, S  
Hazzard, B  
Henskens, A  
Kean, M  
Layzell, D  
Lee, G  
Lindsay, W  
Marshall, A  
O'Dea, J  
Pavey, M  
Petinos, E  
Preston, R  
Provest, G

Roberts, A  
Saunders, D  
Sidgreaves, P  
Sidoti, J  
Singh, G (teller)  
Smith, N (teller)  
Speakman, M  
Stokes, R  
Taylor, M  
Tuckerman, W  
Upton, G  
Williams, R  
Wilson, F

#### PAIRS

Cotsis, S  
Lalich, N  
Scully, P

Toole, P  
Bromhead, S  
Perrottet, D

**Motion negatived.**

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **WILBERT "DARKY" THOMAS HUDSON**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:46):** I commemorate and remember the eightieth anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. The day of 19 February 1942 marked a new chapter in Australia's history, when Australia's mainland became a battleground of the Second World War. Darwin, the largest population centre in Northern Australia and a vital asset in Australia's defence, was bombed by more than 240 Japanese aircraft. More bombs were used in that deadly air raid than in the attack on Pearl Harbor only two months earlier. Tragically, on that day at least 252 Allied service personal and civilians lost their lives and more than 400 people were injured. The attack was the first of some 64 air raids across northern Western Australia. The air raids continued for another 21 months until November 1943. The devastation suffered was profound.

On the bombing of Darwin day we reflect and pay tribute to all Australian armed forces, Allied personnel, merchant seamen and civilians who courageously fought in northern Australia. As we reflect and pay tribute, I mention one special local family in the electorate of Prospect who continue to remember the bombing of Darwin in their own unique way. The Hudson family make a regular trip to Darwin to commemorate their father's incredible bravery during the Japanese bombing of the city. Wilbert "Darky" Hudson was a gunner with the Australian Army during World War II. Born in Merrylands in 1920, he was called Darky by his mates because of his dark tan. During February 1942 Gunner Hudson was stationed at the military encampment in Berrimah, a suburb of Darwin. On the morning of the Darwin bombing, while he was in the shower Hudson heard the sounds of the first bombs drop. In response, Hudson raced to his bunk and grabbed his machine gun while wearing nothing but boots, helmet and a towel. Hudson could not get to the right elevation for his weapon, so he placed his gun on his mate's shoulders and they went out into the open, which was extremely dangerous.

In the resulting action, Hudson shot down an attacking enemy bomber—the first enemy aircraft to be shot down on the Australian mainland. After the battle Darky realised he had lost his towel and had fought stark naked, apart from his boots and helmet. His army mates nicknamed him "the Naked Gun". For Hudson's fast and incredibly heroic actions, the 20-year-old western Sydney local was awarded the Military Medal for bravery against the enemy on Australian soil. Hudson's memorable stories continued later that year. In June 1942 Hudson was stationed on a naval oil tanker in Darwin, which came under intense bombing by Japanese forces. As a result, Hudson sustained third-degree burns to most of his body. Many months of rehabilitation followed, and he was honourably discharged from the army.

After Darky returned from the war, he married June, and they moved to Greystanes to raise their family. The family still lives there today. Wilbert Hudson's family say that he went through many years of rehabilitation and struggled with his burns, but he never went into explicit detail about what he experienced during his time in war. He never wanted to make much of a commotion about it and typically kept to himself. Darky and his wife, June, have since passed away, but their family have continued the annual commemorations. Wilbert's daughter, Wendy, stresses the importance of marking the anniversary so the history does not disappear. Wilbert's son, Robert, also makes sure to visit the memorial where the enemy aircraft was shot down in Darwin. Our western Sydney community is incredibly proud of the efforts of Wilbert "Darky" Hudson and his comrades during the Second World War.

On the eightieth anniversary of the bombing of Darwin, the Merrylands RSL sub-Branch held a remembrance service for our local heroes and a rededication of the Wilbert Thomas Hudson Military Medal Memorial at Charles Mance Reserve, Merrylands. As the Hudson family says, we must continue to remember and mark anniversaries of our Australian veterans and all those who have tragically lost their lives in war. Most veterans who served in World War II are now aged in their nineties, and their number is diminishing. We must continue to tell their stories and never forget. Eighty years since the first bombs were dropped over Darwin and the battle for Australia commenced, I ask this Chamber to remember, reflect and pay tribute. Lest we forget.

### TEMORA SHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience) (17:51):** In the heart of the Cootamundra electorate lies the Temora shire. Despite its vast landscape, it has plenty to offer. The region has a rich history, including being home to the Temora Aviation Museum, which has one of the most impressive warplane collections in the world. As one of the largest wheat, canola and wool producers in the State, the area also plays a huge part in the country's agricultural industry. I am proud of the assistance the New South Wales Government continues to provide to the Temora shire, empowering our towns and villages to carry out vital projects that enable them to continue to flourish. Late last year I had the honour of joining Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Paul Toole, in announcing an incredible \$80 million redevelopment of Temora Hospital. It will be one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the town's history. The investment will be a game changer in the delivery of health services to people across the Temora shire and beyond, and will ensure Temora's hospital will serve the region for years to come.

I want our patients, their families and friends to have a fantastic local hospital that will not only deliver the best health outcomes but also attract clinicians to work in Temora in what will be a big win for the whole community. The new state-of-the-art facility will continue to provide emergency department services and modern inpatient accommodation for rehabilitation, palliative care and maternity patients. It will enhance community health services, including hospital avoidance services, radiology and pathology. Residents' level of excitement about the project is indescribable and their gratitude to the New South Wales Government for listening to their calls for a new hospital is immeasurable.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with Health Infrastructure NSW, the local community and hospital staff on the project. Although the township of Temora is the main hub of the area, it is surrounded by beautiful villages, including Springdale, Sebastopol, Gidginbung, Narraburra, Wallundry and Ariah Park, just to

name a few. Given our communities' interconnectedness, the maintenance, repair and upgrades of our roads is crucial. That is why the New South Wales Government has invested over \$4.3 million in the area under the Fixing Local Roads program, which is improving a mix of main roads, major highways and rural lanes to deliver safer trips around the region. Sport is a major way of life in the district. A multitude of codes is played by residents, including cricket, rugby league, netball, and Australian rules football.

Although Temora and its surrounding villages are quite small in size, they have had major success in producing some of the country's greatest athletes at all levels, including three-time world champion and Paralympian Scott Reardon. With sport continuing to be a major pastime, the New South Wales Government is investing in upgrading the active spaces in the area, including more recently \$70,000 to modify the existing storage room at the Temora Recreation Ground; \$50,000 to provide upgrades to the Arianah Park Recreation Ground, involving modifications to the junior netball change rooms, widening of the netball court, provision of additional seating and shade, and construction of an outdoor gym; and \$54,141 to install shade sails at Nixon Park and Lake Centenary, as well as installing solar lighting at Lake Centenary.

Just a few weeks ago I announced the New South Wales Government's \$518,078 investment in the Bob Aldridge Park under the Regional Sporting Facilities Fund. I made this announcement at the park surrounded by local children, with bright smiles and full of energy. Little do they know that projects like these are ultimately for them. They are our future, so it is important that the facilities in our towns reflect that. Investment also extends to ensuring that our towns reflect the nature of our people—welcoming, vibrant and prosperous—which is why we have invested \$50,000 in the beautification of the Arianah Park main street and \$120,000 for the beautification of the town centres in Temora.

The success of a town is only as good as its leaders, who speak up and drive change—which is exactly what the people of the Temora shire do. I am extremely glad and proud of the cooperation between the Temora Shire Council, the community and the New South Wales Government, and what we have achieved together. These unbelievable investments are being made possible and it is fantastic to see this community and shire go ahead.

#### **SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (17:56):** I acknowledge and congratulate recipients of Australia Day awards across New South Wales on their tireless dedication and work throughout our local communities. It is always terrific to see so many individuals being recognised for their community engagement and service on a day like Australia Day. I am fortunate to have an electorate with individuals spanning three councils, including Blacktown, Parramatta and The Hills. I recognise awardees across those councils, beginning with Blacktown City Council and its 2022 Australia Day award recipients. I recognise the Citizen of the Year, Sue Hunter Lawrence, for her tireless work in the Riverstone area during 2021. Sue is to be acknowledged for her work during the devastating 2021 floods, when she coordinated a flood relief furniture and non-perishables initiative for those affected. Over the past year Sue has organised numerous community events in order to promote community spirit and support local businesses.

I also acknowledge Blacktown City Council's Young Citizen of the Year, Bryleigh Clark, who is a five-year-old who made a great difference in the community of Lalor Park. Bryleigh has raised almost \$3,000 over the past six months for different charities including the Luke Priddis Foundation, which supports families with autism. In addition, Bryleigh donated money to the Christmas appeal at the Common Groundz Cafe in Lalor Park, which helped local families who were doing it tough over the Christmas period. I thank Bryleigh and her family for their generosity and commitment to helping locals within my electorate.

I also recognise Blacktown's Environmental Citizen of the Year, Sanjeev Kumar, for his work with local correctional centres to implement sustainable practices and educate inmates on environmental issues. Sanjeev is passionate about teaching younger generations about the environment and is actively engaged with local schools to teach students how to plant gardens and the importance of green spaces for health and wellbeing. I also recognise the Council of the City of Parramatta's Citizen of the Year award recipients. First, I congratulate and acknowledge Amar Singh on being named the Council of the City of Parramatta's Citizen of the Year. Amar is the founding president of Turbans 4 Australia, which is a Sikh charity organisation based in the Parramatta local government area. Amar is passionate about breaking down the barriers of fear and misunderstanding, while following the core Sikh values of equity, respect and service.

The Young Citizen of the Year, Alicia Judge, is to be acknowledged for her role in inclusion and diversity as the manager of Scribbles and Giggles childcare centres. Alicia does a fantastic job supporting and guiding families to best meet their children's needs. She also mentors 18 employees to ensure that they are well educated and informed about how to make the same impact on families within our community. It was terrific to see the Homicide Victims' Support Group awarded the Community Group Award in recognition of its partnership with



New South Wales police to provide education and support to those affected by acts of homicide. This group has provided services and support to over 4,000 people since its establishment. I also acknowledge its establishment of Grace's Place, which is a trauma recovery centre that will serve children and young people who are in the process of overcoming their grief.

Lastly, I recognise The Hills Shire Council Australia Day award winners. I congratulate and thank Mercedes Durante, who was awarded Citizen of the Year for her active volunteering in areas supporting mental health. Mercedes also works very closely with The Hills Women's Shed, which is an organisation that works to provide a safe and welcoming community space for women across The Hills area. Mercedes is also the president of the Norwest Sunrise Rotary Club and works with St John's Ambulance on the weekends. I acknowledge the Young Citizen of the Year, Scarlet Bradatsch. Scarlet's year 6 project on women's rights and gender equality was acknowledged by the Football Federation of Australia for its merit. Scarlet is passionate about helping women and children who have been impacted by domestic violence during the lockdown. I congratulate all the award recipients and thank them for making our community a better place. I recognise all the work of all the nominees and thank them very much.

### TRIBUTE TO STAN NEILLY

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (18:00):** I pay tribute to one of Cessnock's greatest ever individuals, a gentleman by the name of Mr Stan Neilly. As I will get to, Stan was a member of this Parliament. But that is not what made Stan great. Stan was going to be great—a great servant to the community—whether he entered this place or not. Stan spent his entire life before he was an MP, during the time he was an MP and after he was an MP—right up until his death—helping community groups. I should note that Stan's father was also a member of this Parliament and a member of the other place—he was both an MLC and an MLA. Stan was raised in and around the Parliament. His studies took him to university, where he studied accountancy and became a qualified CPA accountant.

Stan not only toiled as the clerk of Cessnock council but also offered his services to dozens of community groups whose books needed auditing each year, as required under various Acts. Stan would give his time to those community groups and there was never any consideration or thought of him receiving a dollar or a cent for his countless hours of work. Stan did this for some organisations for almost 60 years, and he was the auditor for dozens of other organisations for well in excess of 40 years. He volunteered to serve various community groups for more than 40 years—that was Stan Neilly. Barely a week would go by when Stan was not auditing the books of one, two or three community clubs. We know, having been involved in various social clubs, that sometimes the person who takes on the role of treasurer is not necessarily the most qualified or skilled for that role. Sometimes they are just the last person to step back. Reconciling the books of any community group or organisation can be difficult at times, but Stan gave of his time tirelessly.

However, that was not the only string to Stan's bow. He also spent countless hours supporting disability groups in our area, making sure that they had the transport options and services they needed. Stan worked with other community-minded members to establish our own local registered training organisation, to offer some of the facilities, services and courses that our local TAFE did not. It operated for somewhere in the vicinity of 40 years before it was wound up early in the term of this Government, which decided not to fund organisations like that any longer. Stan also worked for and assisted senior citizens' community transport groups. He spent some time at the local showground and helped keep it afloat, making sure it was running well and, indeed, assisting with the bookkeeping during his earlier days. Stan had an enormous brain and a great capacity for numbers and figures and for making the difficult look incredibly simple.

As I mentioned, Stan spent some time in this place. He was elected for the first time in 1981, and served from 1981 to 1988. Unfortunately, he was swept out as Nick Greiner came to power. But Stan was not swept out because of anything he had done; it was the very unpopular Barrie Unsworth gun laws that had been introduced by the Labor Party, which was about to get tipped out of power. Folklore goes that countless people approached Stan on the street, and even at the polling booth, to say, "Look, Stan, we are really sorry, mate. We are really, really sorry. We love you. You are fantastic. But we cannot vote for a party who is introducing these laws." To his credit, Stan continued to be the patron, supporter and associate of many gun clubs in my local community. He was re-elected in 1991, and served here until 1999. Stan was struck down early with polio as an 11-year-old. Towards the end of his life he was frustrated with anti-vaxxers who will not adhere to modern medicine advice. He was a champion and a great, great man. That word sometimes gets overused, but not in this case. Vale, Stan Neilly.

### URUNGA MURAL AND COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (18:05):** I acknowledge that very warm and lovely tribute to Stan. I remember those times. I was very young but I think it is a problem when city-based politicians get overtaken by inner city vibes and forget about our country people.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** No argument there.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY:** No argument? Thank you, member for Cessnock. I talk tonight about something incredibly important to the community that I so proudly represent. Urunga's mural, which brings the old town of Urunga back to life, has been voted as one of the best public art experiences in the nation by the Australian Street Art Awards judges. The enchanting mural by artist, illustrator and printmaker David Bromley has been short-listed for the Australian Street Art Awards' Best External Mural gong. When Urunga was bypassed it was a wonderful day and a wonderful thing has happened to our community. The Department of Trade and Industry made some funds available for public art to enhance visitor appeal and bolster community pride. David applied and was commissioned to paint his first mural.

The mural captures the essence of local history and Indigenous history and, in a sign of things to come, the first person he painted was then local pharmacist Steve Allan who is now Bellingen shire mayor. Congratulations, Steve. There is also a local character, Herbie, a young Vietnamese girl, and her grandfather, and three generations of the fabulous Kelly family, the custodians and traditional owners of the local land. The painting took far longer than David guessed. There were many Michelangelo jokes, days of research or days spent on top of a ladder, hours spent lying down painting somebody's shoes or the detail at the bottom of shopfronts. The end result is a locally adored masterpiece that stretches along the streetscape of my home town. The Australian Street Art Awards are designed to educate travellers about the magnificent array of outdoor art that can be found in every corner of Australia and to encourage them to see Australia first. The finals are to be announced in an online ceremony on 4 March. I send my best wishes to David and hope that the Urunga mural comes out on top. If it does not, it is still on top as far as we are concerned.

Congratulations also to the Country Women's Association. The Urunga branch was first out of the blocks to celebrate 100 years of service of the CWA, a century of activism where behind the scenes a quiet army do much more than just bake scones. Road safety initiatives, health initiatives, day care centres and childcare nurses are very much at the heart of what the CWA has been able to achieve over the past 100 years. The CWA of New South Wales had its beginnings at the Bushwomen's Conference, which was held in conjunction with the Royal Agricultural Show in Sydney in April 1922. The conference was initiated by Dr Richard Arthur, MP for North Sydney, and Miss Florence Gordon, who ran the home page of *The Sydney Stock and Station Journal*. I cannot quite believe that a male MP from the North Shore was very much a foundational spirit of the CWA. I thank him for giving the women that came to him the voice they needed to establish this incredible organisation.

Mr Arthur had been highlighting the need to improve conditions for rural women and Miss Gordon had published a plan in 1921 for a "Country Women's Union of Help." It may have been a good idea that they dropped the word "union" from the name. At the conference the organising committee was formed, including Miss Gordon and Mrs Grace Munro of Bingara, who became the foundation president of the CWA of New South Wales. The CWA was focused on fighting isolation and a lack of health facilities, and members immediately started work on setting up baby healthcare centres, funding more bush nurses and building and staffing the likes of maternity wards, hospitals, schools, rest homes and holiday getaways for rural and remote families.

These women were initiators, fighters and lobbyists, who were passionate about making rural and regional New South Wales the place it is today and a better place for all families and communities. In the 100 years since the CWA of New South Wales has been in existence members have helped bring about some major changes across the State. They have been there to help regional communities make sure local politicians listen to what the communities want. I thank in particular Urunga CWA president Margaret Grice-Little for organising our special garden party last week. It was an important time to reflect on the success of the association and to thank our stellar women on their incredible efforts. Old people and many young people are coming to the organisation. I thank every woman who attends the CWA for their time and commitment to their communities. I believe the CWA has a very big part to play in improving the lot of country women across New South Wales for 100 more years to come.

### HORNSBY SHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy) (18:10):** Today I recognise one of the most important community organisations in my electorate: the Hornsby Shire Historical Society, which was formed on Sunday 25 September 1966 in the home of Ralph and Catherine Farrar at Hornsby. Prior to the formation of the society some members of another newly formed organisation, the East Hornsby Progress

Association, were concerned by the destruction and disappearance of landmarks in the area such as the old woolwash—all traces of which have now vanished under the roadway at the junction of Sherbrook, King and Bridge roads, Hornsby. The remains of the old brick wall were once able to be seen at the creek crossing, a reminder of the earliest days of settlement when shepherds used to take their fleeces of wool to the creek for washing. A small group was formed within the progress association for the purpose of producing a written history of the district before it was too late. This committee became the Hornsby Shire Historical Society.

At their second meeting Joseph Collingridge joined the group. Joe was the youngest child of George Collingridge, one of Hornsby's most influential early citizens and a brilliant artist who established Hornsby's first newspaper. Joe was born in 1897 at Jave-la-Grande, the family's sandstone home, which today is preserved as the chapel at Hornsby hospital. Joe Collingridge had been interested in history since he was a child and he became an active member of the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1918 as a 21-year-old. At his death, Joe held the record for the longest serving male member of the RAHS—with 58 years of membership. Joe later became the president of the Hornsby Shire Historical Society, the position he held at the time of his death in June 1976. He had an extraordinary collection of local historical knowledge and items, including rare photographs, that he freely made available to the society. Joe Collingridge's daughters, Winsome and Edith Collingridge, are both current members of the historical society. They are wonderful friends of mine and they contribute a great deal to our community, in particular to my local parish, Our Lady of the Rosary at Waitara.

For the first six years the Hornsby Shire Historical Society was without a home and held its meetings at various locations, including Pennant Hills Community Centre, Willow Park, members' houses and the CWA building near Hornsby pool. In 1971 Hornsby Council relocated the old Drill Hall from Hornsby to Kenley Park, Normanhurst. Once set in place, the hall—which was built in 1900—was repaired and restored before becoming available for the Hornsby Shire Historical Society on 6 May 1972, when it was officially opened. In 1976 the old Drill Hall was renamed the Joseph Collingridge Hall to honour their most active early member. Today, the Joseph Collingridge Hall is a unique museum with period displays of early life in the Hornsby shire. As well as historical photographs and other local history displays, many of the rooms are set up with period themes, including an early primary school classroom—complete with a teacher's cane—a laundry, general store and a kitchen. The museum attracts members of the general public as well as many pre-booked excursions—from cub groups to primary schools. Many groups are based locally, but some venture from as far away as the Central Coast and south-western Sydney to see the displays in this unique museum.

To create further interest in local history, the society created a regular publication called *Local Colour*. It was first published in 1971 as a quarterly magazine and in recent years it has been reduced to biannual publication. *Local Colour* is compiled from various local history articles contributed by Hornsby Shire Historical Society members and friends of the society. The early *Local Colour* contributors included Lorna Ollif, Heather Schweikert, Thelma Bunyan, Edith Parrish, Wilga Pierson, Tom Richmond, Ralph Hawkins and Joan Owen. It has been continuously produced for more than 50 years and the modern editions provide a stark contrast to their ancestors, being highly professional publications. Those who have kept collections have a magnificent source of local historical information. I have a number of recent *Local Colour* issues in my electorate office and often refer to them. In addition to the regular *Local Colour* magazine, the Hornsby Shire Historical Society and its members have compiled and published a long list of local history books. Copies are available for purchase at cost or can be borrowed from local libraries.

The objectives of the Hornsby Shire Historical Society are to foster an interest in the history of Hornsby Shire, to compile authentic records and to collect, preserve and exhibit objects that reflect the lifestyle of Hornsby Shire residents, both past and present. The society holds monthly members' meetings, which include a presentation from a guest speaker on a local historical subject. Guests are always welcome and the meetings are always well attended. I recognise and sincerely thank the members of the Hornsby Shire Historical Society for their enthusiastic willingness to assist my electorate office when I am drafting information to recognise one of Hornsby's many community-minded individuals or organisations. I specifically thank the members of the society for their outstanding contributions to preserving the rich history of the Hornsby area, including current president Julie Debray, Mari Metzke, Elizabeth Roberts and Robert Green. I also mention my friend and long-serving former president Pat Dewey for her efforts for the society over many years and her continued work in inspiring interest in Hornsby's rich history and heritage.

#### BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE HOSPITALS

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:16):** It has been four long years and the Blue Mountains community is still waiting for the New South Wales Government to make good on its promise to begin the new hospital to replace the dilapidated Blue Mountains District ANZAC Memorial Hospital. While we wait, hardworking staff struggle to work with outdated equipment crammed into a haphazard collection of worn-out

buildings, while many residents are forced to travel up to two hours out of the area to access the medical care they need.

The Blue Mountains has a growing population of more than 80,000 people. It is also an ageing population, significantly older than that of Greater Sydney and therefore requiring access to a wide range of health services in the local area, yet 73 per cent of Blue Mountains residents travel out of the area in order to access the services they need. Further, a staggering 90 per cent of residents requiring surgery currently travel out of the area for their procedures, and 45 per cent of Blue Mountains babies are born at Nepean Hospital. Those damning statistics, and multiple submissions to the upper House regional health inquiry, sound the alarm that our hospital is no longer fit for purpose.

Despite the Government claiming a new hospital was a priority during the last election campaign, we have heard nothing about it from them for years—no funding, no progress and no plans. In fact, Blue Mountains is one of the few hospitals that has not received major reinvestment and infrastructure capital works upgrades in recent years. Almost 100 years old and with leaky roofs and ageing equipment, Katoomba hospital continues to be neglected by the Government. The inadequacies include the lack of an MRI—meaning there is no capacity for MRIs between Bathurst and Penrith—inadequate orthopaedic and rehabilitation facilities, no critical care unit, no intensive care unit, no resources for 24/7 emergency surgery, and inadequate mental health and palliative care facilities. The hospital is also unable to provide cancer services, cardiology, respiratory care or neurology—and the list goes on.

A constituent recently shared with me his shock at the substandard facilities his frail, dying 80-year-old mother endured when placed in one of only two palliative care rooms. He was forced to repair a broken door latch so that an oxygen tank that was propping the door open could be taken away so as not to be a hazard to his mother. Staff thanked him for the basic maintenance they did not have the time or resources to attend to. Hospital visitors should not have to repair broken facilities, and community groups such as the hospital auxiliary and the Leura Gardens Festival should not have to fundraise to pay for essential equipment. But Katoomba hospital could not function without those fundraising efforts, which have raised more than \$3 million for new equipment and improved facilities such as an ultrasound machine, a lung function box and the establishment of a five-room outpatient clinic. Those projects should have been funded by the Government; the fact they were not is a damning indictment.

This week I launched an ePetition and I will work in collaboration with others as part of a new community alliance to lobby the State and Federal governments for a new, modern hospital for the Blue Mountains. There is overwhelming community support, and the case is irrefutable. Our community is geographically dispersed and not easily able to access the major hospitals in Sydney. We host millions of tourists every year, who also need to use the hospital at times. We suffer regular inclement weather that causes significant accidents on the Great Western Highway and sometimes forces it to close completely. Our current hospital is so dilapidated that parts of it are uninhabitable. Annual maintenance and repair costs are excessive, yet still fail to bring the hospital to an acceptable standard. There is an urgent need to pursue what can be done immediately to improve service delivery within the constraints of the current building and while construction is underway. The hospital should be restored to its previous peer group status as a universal facility.

My Federal counterpart, Susan Templeman, and I, along with Blue Mountains City Council and many community leaders, health professionals, businesses and citizens are committed to doing whatever we can to expedite the new hospital's construction. It is an issue of public health and safety. We seek the commitment of the Premier and the Minister for Health to fund construction of a new, purpose-built, modern public hospital for the Blue Mountains, with a full range of clinical services. The identification of a suitable site and a clear plan, with allocated funding and time frames for completion, must be released for community consultation as soon as possible. The Government has had more than 10 years to act on the issue, and I will hold members opposite to account until it is done. I yet again call on the Government to deliver on its promise; its failure to do so is putting the long-term health of Blue Mountains residents and healthcare workers at risk.

#### **PENRITH MAYOR TRICIA HITCHEN**

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Minister for Tourism and Sport, and Minister for Western Sydney) (18:21):** I offer my remarks in support of Tricia Hitchen, who has just been elected mayor of Penrith. Tricia's ascension to this fantastic role in our community makes her the first female Liberal to be elected mayor in the history of our fantastic city. Tricia was first elected to the council in 2012 and was elected mayor by her peers after the most recent council elections.

Tricia brings a fantastic amount of public service experience to this role. Prior to being on the council she was a distinguished police officer, serving across a number of different locations in western Sydney. During her time in the NSW Police Force, she was recognised for bravery. Alongside her husband, Trevor Hitchen, she runs

a fantastic removalist business and continues to give back to the community. Tricia is exactly the type of person that we need leading local communities right across the State. She brings real-world experience to this role, and she is a consensus-builder across the community. Tricia is also currently on the board of The Haven, a women's refuge in western Sydney. She holds women's safety dear to her heart and she will bring a strong focus to the issue during her time as mayor of Penrith.

Tricia is Penrith through and through. She is a passionate Panthers fan, and she is always looking for ways to give back to the community. I am so pleased to see someone like Tricia, who has been so dedicated to her community over such a long time, being given the support of that community through the recent elections and then the support of her colleagues at the mayoral election. Members know that taking on a public role places a degree of burden on one's family, so I thank Tricia's family, and Trevor in particular, for allowing Tricia to participate in this role. Having his support is really important to her, and I know that he has been a massive supporter over such a long period of time, particularly when she made the choice to give back to the community through this form of public service.

Her son Ryan is also a serving police officer, and I thank Lauren and Ryan for backing in their mum. I am really pleased that they have been able to support her through this. I give a special callout to Liam. I know Liam watches a few parliamentary speeches, so this one is absolutely for him. Liam is such a special guy; his mum loves him dearly. The fact that she has been able to support him through everything he has done in his life and has stepped up to the plate of being the mayor of Penrith is something of which he should be immensely proud.

I have said that this is a person who is Penrith through and through, whether through her service in the NSW Police Force or her ongoing service to Penrith council. The opportunity now for her not just to be a representative of the people but also to lead our city is something I am incredibly excited about. I am really looking forward to working with Tricia on making sure that we improve amenities right across the Penrith community, open up opportunities for new park spaces and new sporting fields, and improve our local road network. I know that Tricia is immensely passionate about the St Marys community. Whilst not strictly in my electorate, we know that a strong St Marys means a much stronger Penrith and with the onset of the new Western Sydney Airport rail line and connections to the airport, the role of St Marys will be increasingly important in how Penrith as a city continues to function.

It would be remiss of me if I did not acknowledge John Thain, a long-term Labor representative on Penrith council who has also been elected as the deputy mayor. I know that both Tricia and John have Penrith and the citizens of Penrith as their main focus. They are two genuinely beautiful people, focused on our community, and I am really looking forward to working with both of them. It is great to have two people so committed to our community working across the political divide to put citizens first. It is what they expect; it is what both Tricia and John have done through their entire time on Penrith council; and now they have the opportunity to work together to put citizens first and to make Penrith the best city that it can possibly be. I will be with them every step of the way helping them out.

## RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) (18:26):** I have a son who I thought would always support the mighty Dragons, but tragically he was walking around the other day in my backyard with a pink Penrith jersey on. I do not know how that works, but we are in trouble—we are in real trouble. Not long after I was appointed shadow Minister for Health back in 2019 I began receiving emails and correspondence from people living in towns and villages across regional and rural New South Wales about concerns they had regarding the adequacy of health care in their communities. I took the time to speak to many of these people—a whole heap of them, to be honest—and to meet them directly, as well as meeting doctors and medical professionals in far western New South Wales. I realised that we needed to do more than just forward their concerns to the Minister or their local health board, so I made a commitment that I would do everything possible to establish a parliamentary inquiry into health and hospital services in regional and rural New South Wales.

Most parliamentary inquiries in this place are lucky to receive 100 submissions from individuals and stakeholders. This inquiry received over 700 and, as someone who has taken the time to read the submissions and sit through many of the public hearings, it has become evident that governments, past and present, have not prioritised the health care of those living outside our major centres. In the thousands of pages of submissions and the hours of recorded testimony, several distinct areas for improvement emerged. First, in my view, there is a lack of meaningful engagement and consultation between many local communities and their health boards and districts. Residents spoke in frustration about services being removed from their local hospital without the community being given an opportunity to have their say.

This is an area that can and must improve with real community engagement—not just posting something on a website, but where plans are discussed and proposals debated and explored. This must form part of a CEO's

performance reporting going forward. Second, there must be greater collaboration between the Commonwealth and New South Wales governments around the provision of services, particularly general practitioner [GP] and visiting medical officer [VMO] roles. Losing a GP can be disastrous for a community, both socially and economically. The inquiry frequently heard from medical professionals who did not feel supported or valued in their roles, despite often making considerable personal sacrifices to work in more remote settings. Going forward, a New South Wales Government of any colour or political persuasion must work closely with its counterparts in Canberra to look at what incentives and support structures work and what do not. Cultures in local health districts that work against medical professionals establishing practices in their towns and villages must be removed, and done so swiftly, before they become corrosive and act as a disincentive to attracting professionals to those communities.

Properly resourcing rural and remote hospitals was a concern many residents and professionals raised. In all of the discussions I had with community members during the inquiry, as I travelled across the State, none of them expected every country town or village to have a Westmead Hospital, but they rightly felt entitled to a hospital that did not run out of painkillers, where there were adequate numbers of trained staff to care for patients and where they did not wait hours to access emergency paramedic care. Clearly there needs to be an increased investment into these small hospitals by all governments so that the community can be confident in the care they receive.

I am looking forward to the recommendations being handed down from what has become a landmark inquiry. A spotlight has been shone into some very dark corners of healthcare delivery in New South Wales. I hope the recommendations act as a pathway for all governments to follow to ensure that those residents who call rural and regional New South Wales home have access to the health and hospital system they need and deserve. I thank a number of people—the Hon. Greg Donnelly and the Hon. Walt Secord, who have led the charge on the parliamentary inquiry for so long and who have worked so hard to bring many of these stories to light; and Jenelle Rimmer who runs my office but who has been working tirelessly behind the scenes to support stakeholders, gather information, provide questions to the committee and support the work of the community. I thank also all those people across regional and rural New South Wales who have shared their stories. I can assure them that the NSW Labor Opposition has listened.

#### JOHN ALEXANDER, OAM

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government)**  
**(18:31):** "I have a lifelong devotion to public service" is the quote that embodies the life and service of John Alexander, OAM, who has been serving the nation since the 1960s in careers that have found him continually putting Australia first. John's career began as one of Australia's most prominent tennis players. Not only did he win over 30 titles, including his incredible victory at the 1977 Davis Cup where he won the decisive singles match at White City, Paddington; he also captained the Federation Cup team in 2005. I remember the 1977 Davis Cup match because Australia played Italy. I was only about 10 years old and was in the lounge room with my dad watching the Davis Cup. Obviously it was a great outcome, even if Italy came second.

After an illustrious career in the sport he loves, John continued to put Australia first when he became the member for Bennelong in 2010. John and I have worked closely together since his election in 2010 and I am continually impressed by his dedication and drive to ensure the greatest outcomes for his community. Since being elected, John has been the chair of eight different committees, including the inquiry into options for financing faster rail, for which John has passionately advocated for many years. In the local community John has never shied away from a battle, working tirelessly in order to get the best outcomes for his constituents. He has made a huge impact in every area of the community, starting with the Bennelong table tennis tournament, which afforded every school in the local area an opportunity to compete against each other. John also provided each school with tables and relevant equipment to ensure that students and teachers could continue to enjoy the sport outside of tournaments.

John was crucial in the Stronger Communities Program, which allowed local groups to invest in the broader community. The program facilitated the creation of several community gardens that are now enjoyed and utilised by the entire electorate; and it provided IT equipment for the Eastwood Chinese Senior Citizens Club, ensuring no members of the community were ever left disconnected. Even at the beginning, John was there when I asked for assistance when we fought to save the Tennis World site and stop overdevelopment in the community.

John has always fought for the community. He continued to put in the work for Bennelong by creating Bennelong Village Businesses, which was designed to reinvigorate community shopping villages and ensure the continuation of small businesses throughout the electorate. Bennelong Village Businesses culminated in a promotional campaign that allowed opportunities for small businesses and provided reassurances of John's personal support. This initiative was instrumental in assisting small businesses to bounce back from the global financial crisis and, more recently, following COVID-19. In 2000 John was instrumental in creating the

Ryde Aquatic Leisure Centre for the Sydney Olympics. The centre continues to provide services for over 1 million people annually. This initiative was spearheaded while John was the managing director of Next Generation Clubs Australia, where his passion for fitness and sport and his drive for public service was discernible.

On a personal level, I have the utmost respect for John and admire his dedication and passion for the community that we both love so much. I was one of the first people to work with him during his 2010 campaign, and our relationship has only grown over the past 11 years as we have stood side by side, serving our community. Through our support and collaboration, John and I have always strived to do what is best for our community, and I am eternally grateful for our friendship and his leadership over the years. Thankfully, it is a friendship that will continue well beyond politics. I wish John every success and happiness in the chapters that follow, post-politics. I thank him from the bottom of my heart for serving Bennelong and Ryde and for all that he has done to help me on my political journey. I will genuinely miss him as my Federal MP, but I will not miss him as a friend because that will continue.

### **EASTERN SUBURBS PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (18:36):** I speak about the state of public transport in the Eastern Suburbs and the implications of the outrageous cuts that were imposed on my community. There was a very small glimmer of hope that things could be different when there was a change of transport Minister. Having learnt that this Minister sleeps through critical moments of communication, that hope is diminishing. There are a small number of Ministers in this place who pick up the phone at any time of the day, and to find out that the Minister for Transport is not one of them is deeply disappointing. Not all Ministers are in that boat. Many of them are, and I have conversations with Ministers at 1.00 a.m., so to find out that this is a Minister who misses critical communication in the wee hours of the morning is quite alarming.

This week we have seen large-scale transport failure from the Government. I make it clear that the Government's lack of ability to run a transport network is not limited to that failure, because it is also completely and utterly incapable of running a bus network. I remind the House that late last year the Government made outrageous decisions to remove 26 bus routes and at least 50 bus stops across the Eastern Suburbs. This is in addition to six bus routes that had already been removed. In the past four years, 31 bus routes have been removed from the Eastern Suburbs. We now know that, from 3 April, the last remaining publicly run buses in Sydney will be put into private hands. Under this Government, there is no such thing as public transport. It is private transport. It might come as a bit of a shock to the Government, but one of the core responsibilities of State governments is to provide critical services like education, health care, housing and public transport. It is a responsibility that the Government is now shirking.

These cuts came into place on 5 December and, since then, my office has been inundated with calls, emails and letters from locals because they can no longer get where they need to go. Bus routes and bus stops have been removed because the Government has streamlined the service to force people onto the light rail and fatten it up, so that it can sell it off to a private provider. With the additional removal of these 26 routes, it is harder for people to get to where they need to go, it is less accessible, there are less bus stops and people are now walking up to a kilometre to access a bus stop. The journeys are now longer. What was once a 20-minute journey now takes 40 minutes. We also know, after hearing from commuters, that it is costing them more. These cuts are literally leaving people behind, including the elderly and vulnerable, kids who cannot get home and professionals who are unable to get home from work.

There are stories of people like Frank, a 72-year-old who lives in Bondi Junction. He was travelling to drop his car off at the auto electrician on Frenchmans Road in Randwick and had planned to catch a bus home from the stop across the street. He waited for 15 minutes for a bus before he noticed a very small sign that told him two things: The bus that he intended to catch no longer existed and that no buses of any kind would be stopping at that bus stop because it had closed. The Government has removed this bus that Frank used to use, and he tells me that he can no longer get to Alexandria. It is much harder for him to maintain a friendship that he has had with someone for 54 years because there is no longer a direct bus route there.

It is not just Frank. I have been inundated by seniors' groups telling me that there are elderly people who are no longer turning up to meetings because the bus stop that was once outside their house no longer exists. People have bought apartments to be near these bus stops. I want the Government to think about the long-term costs and implications for people's mental health because of the isolation that they are causing. I am proud of Labor for securing an upper House inquiry into the privatisation of bus services. I encourage everyone in my community to participate in the inquiry and put on the record that the Government is outrageous, tired and does not care about people. This inquiry means that we can hold the Government to account over these outrageous cuts and for what they are doing to us.

### ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (18:41):** On Saturday 19 February I was pleased to attend a mass at the St Aloysius of Gonzaga Church in Cronulla commemorating the centenary that day of the St Vincent de Paul Society in the Sutherland Shire. I acknowledge the wonderful contribution of the St Vincent de Paul Society to our Sutherland Shire community over the past 100 years. The selfless and enthusiastic service of members to help others has made us a better society, and we can be thankful for the vision of those who formed the local conferences, starting in 1922. The society aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy and by working to shape a just and more compassionate society. Visiting people in homes, hospitals, institutions or anywhere that people are in need of aid or comfort was the basis of their ministry 100 years ago. It continues to be the core activity of the local conferences of St Vincent de Paul in the Shire community today.

The report from the first year of operation of the St Aloysius of Gonzaga conference in 1922 noted that there was practically no local distress in the Cronulla district during the first year of operation. Members made up for this by going further afield to cheer up patients at Waterfall hospital with gifts of reading matter, tobacco and clothing. Over 100 years, there would be tens of thousands of visits and gifts from the society that members of the Shire community have enjoyed. In the early days, members did not have the benefit of the road network of today, and they showed great commitment to get to people in need. For example, vehicle travel to and from Kurnell was difficult, so travel involved walking or riding along the water's edge carrying food and gifts.

Clients have benefited not only from gifts when members visited but also from practical help. Bernard McMahon joined the Cronulla conference in 1959 and recalls that some of the members were very good at fixing things, especially TV sets. He recalled that, in those days, TVs were always breaking down and that another member, Harry Battam, and his two sons visited clients and got their TVs running again. Fundraising, clothing drives and Christmas hamper deliveries have been part of the regular work of local members, as well as their normal activity of visiting clients.

Local conferences have also contributed to the Sutherland Shire community by providing facilities to help those in need. This includes the purchasing of a property at Burraneer in 1958 to provide low-cost housing for seniors. This vision of local members has made a difference to many lives, with the Mount St Vincent Village being expanded and modernised over the years before a redevelopment opened in 2020. Another special project supported by local members was Margaret House Respite Care Services at Gympie. The cottage was purchased in 1989 and Vincentian volunteers helped provide respite accommodation at weekends for children with physical and intellectual disabilities to give their parents a much-needed break. Years later, it is now an official provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme and is continuing to make a difference.

A prominent work of local members around 1990 was the establishment of the Vinnies store in Cronulla, which continues to provide affordable goods to our community with the support of volunteers. Like many organisations, the local St Vincent de Paul faces dwindling membership in our busy society. I commend its work to anyone who is interested in helping people in need in our community. I thank all the current members of the Sutherland Shire conferences for their dedication and commitment to helping others. I recognise regional president Pat Cudmore and all the local conference presidents: Paul Morahan, Fran Postill, Robert Van Den Nouwelant, Tony Cranney, Chris Watson, Frank Tierney, Margaret Fowler, Christine Northam, Imelda O'Neil and John O'Neil. May St Vincent de Paul continue its valuable work in the Sutherland Shire for another 100 years and beyond.

### UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE GRANTS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (18:45):** I reflect on the NSW Nationals investment in the Upper Hunter electorate through the Community Building Partnership [CBP] program. During the Government's current term \$1 million has been invested in community projects from Gloucester to Merriwa and from Quirindi to Clarence Town. In 2019 some \$300,000 was invested in 19 Community Building Partnership projects. In 2020 another \$300,000 was granted for 20 projects. Late last year I had the opportunity to both announce and meet with many of the community groups behind the 25 projects that shared in the \$400,000 allocated to my electorate.

To deliver that good news to those groups so that they can progress with their plans, dreams and aspirations I found a truly humbling yet inspiring experience. The CBP is the New South Wales Government's program to invest in infrastructure projects that deliver positive social, environmental and recreational outcomes while promoting community participation, inclusion and cohesion. Incorporated not-for-profit community organisations and local councils are eligible to apply for the grants. The 64 Upper Hunter electorate projects that have secured CBP funding over the past three years have benefited many people in our community and will continue to do so.



In education, for example, preschools, high schools, public schools, Catholic schools and independent schools have all been grant recipients. Projects include construction of sunshade structures to reduce ultraviolet light and extreme heat at Gloucester preschool, beautification at Singleton High School, and a contribution to the school hall upgrade at the Australian Christian College in Singleton. The Country Women's Association, which is a great contributor to our communities in so many ways above and beyond tea and scones, has been able to make improvements to facilities at Scone and Murrurundi, with more work in the pipeline for the Dungog-Clarence Town CWA branch.

Sport is another community activity that members may not realise has benefited from the Community Building Partnership grants over the past three years. Aberdeen Golf Club received \$20,000 towards its fairway watering system, courts at Muswellbrook Park Tennis Club received money for resurfacing and Olympic Park Tennis Club was able to upgrade one of the courts to a synthetic surface. An application to provide lighting for a new mini field at Denman Oval resulted in Denman Sandy Hollow Junior Rugby League receiving over \$16,000. While we are in Denman, the pony club also received \$20,000 from the CBP. Community organisations that have received a helping hand include Dungog Memorial RSL Club, which received \$2,500 to install a defibrillator at the venue; Gloucester School of Arts, which received \$20,000 for disability access at the gallery; and Elderslie community hall, a focal point for the small community, which received \$20,000 for refurbishment work.

Earlier I mentioned being able to be the bearer of good news late last year for the 2021 Community Building Partnership recipients. I am excited about the projects that will be rolled out across the Upper Hunter electorate. I can go to one of my local football grounds and hopefully watch the Clarence Town Cobras rugby league club post an impressive score on its new electronic scoreboard. The primary school at Gloucester will be getting ninja climbing equipment for the playground, whilst outdoor classrooms have been funded at the high school. Our PCYCs are also set for improvements: Muswellbrook will get an upgrade of the male and female bathrooms and the dojo room at Singleton will get a refresh. The air will circulate much better with the fan being installed at Scone Basketball Stadium.

As we all get busy in 2022, I encourage community groups and local councils in the Upper Hunter electorate to start crystallising ideas for projects that they would like to put forward for this year's funding round. I urge them to decide on a project, get quotes so they have good guidance on price and, where necessary, talk with the landowner or land manager so they have an understanding of the proposal. The best way to keep informed of when applications open this year is to register an organisation to receive alerts about the Community Building Partnership program. I am looking forward to the Upper Hunter electorate achieving more of its plans, dreams and aspirations this year through the Community Building Partnership.

### **LISMORE ELECTORATE FLOOD MITIGATION**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:50):** Today my electorate of Lismore is watching and waiting with bated breath to see whether we will have another flood. Lismore, the city in which I live, is known for great things and for floods. It floods in all areas across the electorate. We need urgent flood protection measures and resources, including fixing the drainage system. These are not new needs or new matters, but they have not been properly attended to over many, many years. Although our State Emergency Service does fantastic work, it is under-resourced and made up mostly of volunteers. It needs paid line officers to fully support those volunteers.

The SES in Murwillumbah does not have a decent shed to call its headquarters because it shares premises with the Rural Fire Service. I have sought funding urgently because its headquarters is not fit for purpose. It is toxic, actually. It is mouldy in the extreme, has collapsed floors and more. Lismore and Murwillumbah suffered catastrophic damage during the floods that resulted from Cyclone Debbie in 2017. It did not receive funding to match the catastrophe that took place. The State did not seek category D assistance from the Feds, which would have meant extra public funding. The roads have not fared well since. They were already in a parlous state, which we know from the NRMA report of 2016-17, among other things. Under the natural disaster assistance rules, roads and other infrastructure cannot be built to a better standard. I understand some of the thinking around that, but it is nonsense because we want to continually improve our roads and build them to a better standard. We should be doing that and, of course, making sure that it is forensically acquitted.

I have been in conversation with at least three of the local councils in my electorate—Tenterfield, Kyogle and Lismore—and know what their flood protection needs are as well as the engineering solutions. Some of those councils want nature-based solutions. Tweed Shire Council covers Murwillumbah, Tweed Valley and some of Tweed, which is in the member for Tweed's electorate. It has nine projects, and \$2,950,000 would kickstart some of them. Then it will need \$27 million later for the homes. Its needs are quite extensive across that area. For Kyogle there are seven projects, which would be \$13 million. Two of them are voluntary house purchase schemes and two of them are voluntary house-raising schemes. There is the Bruxner Highway, Woodenbong Road and Capeen Street floodway. In Lismore, 18 projects, 15 of which have been costed at \$5,222,000, would do a lot to give some of the protection needed. I also wish to talk about the overflow of drains at a hint of rain, and furiously

overflowing drains. Today my office has literally been deluged with calls about drains and it is getting worse. Cam Latimer, president of the Lismore Thistles Soccer Club, has had a four-year battle trying to get the club's drainage fixed because it causes damage and loss of income and stops matches. The club is part of the Far North Coast zone. I have taken up the matter with the council. Let us hope that we get some action.

Another group of residents contacted me over the same issue—drains—and they were in desperation. For years they had been asking for the drains to be fixed at Sherwood Drive and Ballina Road but had received little attention. The focal point contact is Mrs Delma Rigby. I have visited the site and I have seen the rain run torrents of water and create flash flooding that ripped through the gardens and houses in that area, causing damage to homes and gardens. I said to the council, "Let's sit down, work out who's responsible, and then we can have a plan." That is what I have been seeking—to make sure that we all work together—but the residents are really frustrated and I do not blame them. Hopefully, now that we have taken it up with the new council we will be able to work with it. In the previous council I took it up with some councillors, Councillor Cook and Councillor Lloyd, who put in a request for maintenance, but we still need a lot more done there.

#### **MARGARET O'NEILL, OAM**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (18:55):** I pay tribute to Mrs Margaret O'Neill, OAM, a former mayor and councillor in my electorate of Goulburn. Margaret was first elected to Goulburn City Council in 1983 and, looking back, recalls "feeling a sense of pride at having been elected as a third generation councillor". In 1984 Margaret was instrumental in establishing the Ray Harvey Sports Foundation Award; an award for promising young sportspeople, helping them financially with coaching fees and providing assistance with costs associated with competition experience outside the Goulburn Mulwaree local government area. To date, that foundation has awarded over \$400,000 to young local sporting talent and their families.

From 1987 to 1993 Margaret was the deputy mayor of Goulburn City Council before serving as mayor from 1993 to 1999. During this time, Margaret chaired the New South Wales Local Government Drug Committee, which was tasked with combatting illicit drug use that was devastating local communities. In August 1992 the Goulburn Sporting Hall of Fame was founded by Margaret. The award acknowledges the contribution made by local athletes who are, or have been recognised as, Australian champions or international champions in any nationally recognised sport. Margaret is well known for her love of sport and her deep appreciation for the Wests Tigers Rugby League team.

During 1993 Margaret was part of a working group that majorly upgraded the Goulburn harness racing track and was also instrumental in the relocation and redevelopment of the new Goulburn Race Club with the then New South Wales Premier, John Fahey. The Goulburn Rose Festival was also established that year. In 1995 Margaret was named Goulburn Citizen of the Year and, in the following year, established the Sister City with Shibetsu, Japan, and Jiangdu, China, and led the delegation. In 2000 Margaret received an award for sporting achievements by the then Prime Minister, John Howard. With a newly amalgamated council, Margaret was again elected in 2004 to the Goulburn Mulwaree Council.

After 32 years of service Margaret received the Local Government NSW Outstanding Service Award and Certificate of Service to the people of Goulburn Mulwaree and was recognised as the longest serving female councillor in local government in New South Wales. Margaret received an Order of Australia Medal in the Australia Day Honours List in 2017 for her service to local government and to the community of Goulburn. It would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to also acknowledge Margaret's influence on the following organisations: Goulburn & District Racing Club, as a director; St Patrick's College P&C and St Joseph's P&C, as a former president; chairperson of Ray Harvey Sports Foundation; the Sports Council; Recreation Area Committee; and the Sporting Hall of Fame.

Margaret has also been the patron of the Goulburn District Junior Rugby League, of which she is a life member; Goulburn Basketball; Goulburn hockey club; Goulburn Strikers Football Club; the Goulburn Greyhound Racing Club; Goulburn Junior Tennis Club; Goulburn Pony Club; Goulburn Police Boys Club; Goulburn Harness Racing Club; and Goulburn McDermott Centre. By Margaret's own admission, she credits a lot of her success to her late husband, Barry, who passed away in 2002, and to her children, Cheryl and Michael, for their love and support. Margaret has dedicated a large portion of her life to the community of Goulburn. Currently Margaret is the CEO of the Goulburn Challenge Foundation, a role she has held since the 1980s. The Challenge Foundation provides essential services and options for people with disabilities and family members of people with a disability.

If I were to describe Margaret, I would say she is ferociously passionate, determined, and a proud Australian with a deep sense of what is right and wrong. She will stand up for the underdog every time. In December 2021 Margaret was quoted as saying, "I still enjoy it and as long as I breathe, I'll fight for Goulburn."

I publicly thank Mrs Margaret O'Neill, OAM, for her dedication and hard work over the past 39 years to this community, and wish her all the very best for the future.

### REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (19:00):** What a three-year period it has been for our regional and remote communities: the worst drought in living memory, a nightmarish mouse plague, damaging floods and two years in the dark shadow of a pandemic that brought our economy to its knees and knocked around physical and mental wellbeing across our communities. It has been three years that I do not think any of us will forget. It was hard to know if or when we would turn a corner and hear some good news. I think we are there. Regional New South Wales is on the verge of what may be a golden era. Agriculture is hitting its straps, teleworking has opened up potential for many to make a tree change and money has started flowing into projects in regional New South Wales, which is beginning to address decades of neglect.

As COVID recedes, tourism has the opportunity to flourish again. All of this comes back to making our towns good places in which to live, run a business or raise a family. If we really want to see regional New South Wales shine as bright as it can and be that "good place to live", there are still areas that require homework on the Government's part. People will not move to, or stay in, regional New South Wales without a decent health service. We will not attract or retain medical staff if we do not look after those valuable employees. We do not expect a neurosurgeon on every corner but, at the very least, things like setting bones or getting stitches should not mean hours of travel past a local service. COVID has shown we cannot rely on other States to deliver health services to New South Wales citizens. Our health services must be able to respond to community needs. We need a structured approach to drought and to make clear what assistance will be available at different stages going into drought and what recovery measures will be on the table coming out of drought.

Families will not bring their kids west unless we can offer quality education for young people. That will not happen without teachers in our schools. Creating an environment that delivers attractive employment opportunities for people who want to work will help to get them west. I asked the former Treasurer, now Premier, to abolish payroll tax in regional areas that need an extra carrot to get new businesses to set up and invest. Yes, it would create an uneven playing field, but that is what we have been facing for a long time—but in the past, it was skewed against regional areas. Government should reinstate a transferred officer allowance for public servants who take up jobs in certain regional areas but only one way—only if they are leaving the city or a well-developed area to move west. Despite the announcement in January 2021 that teleworking for public servants would be made available for suitable roles, not much has changed on the ground.

I gave the Government a process in November 2020, so please just pick it up and use it. Water, our most precious resource, has been surrounded by uncertainty for too long. For the sake of communities, industry and the environment, we need all forms of take to be metered and within plan limits. We need a commitment to reinstate the most important rock weirs in the Darling to maintain a body of water at Menindee for the many reasons we know and, importantly, to protect the Lower Darling. That Federal royal commission the Government requested into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan has not gone anywhere. Again, I gave the Government terms of reference, reflecting what needed to be looked at, but I have not seen any action from the New South Wales Government to pursue a royal commission after the initial request.

We have to pay our way with regional press. The "local rag" or the small radio station is still how many people get information. They have been impacted severely with reduced business advertising throughout the drought and COVID. Regional papers, radio and TV should not be expected to run government ads for free. The Government should send some of the \$1.4 billion it mostly gives to metro outlets to those out west. More will be heard about that later in the year.

It would not be homework if I did not talk about connectivity. Education, business, banking and social contact all need connectivity. Increasingly, the Government requires the people of New South Wales to use online forms to interact with the State. We have lost a swag of banks from our towns, making online banking a necessity for many. That does not even touch the safety aspect of needing to be able to call for help when someone is hurt or seriously ill. This needs to be a State and Federal government priority.

This is not an exhaustive homework list and, frankly, I do not think that the requests are unreasonable. The people of regional New South Wales and I will be grading the Government on this work. It is up to the Government if it gets an A or an F. I acknowledge that I have taken many issues to Ministers over the past few years where they have been responsive and taken action, and for that I thank them. Given the recent changes in ministerial portfolios at what is a critical time for regional New South Wales, I hope that politics are cast aside and that everyone in this place is working towards the betterment of the whole State, but giving an extra hand to regional areas—members know they need it.

**MILTON-ULLADULLA BYPASS**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (19:05):** It is nice to see the member for Sydney in the chair. I have been the member for South Coast since 2003 and before that I was a councillor on Shoalhaven City Council for 17 years, representing the southern ward stretching from Sussex Inlet to North Durras. While I was a serving councillor I was also a high school teacher at Ulladulla High School. I state this short history to convey to the House that I have been successful in nine elections over the past 40 years of local representation, which leaves me in the privileged position of, I think, understanding my electorate very well. South Coast people are honest, hardworking and tolerant, and I have been honoured to represent them for such a long time. In case this sounds like a valedictory speech, it is not—just yet.

Despite diverse views on a number of issues, I know when my community is divided. In the case of this address to the House, the southern part of my electorate is bitterly divided. While I will raise a number of issues I would like to see resolved over the next few months, there is one issue which concerns me more than any other in terms of the bitter division of the usually congenial people of the South Coast—more than I have ever seen before. That issue is the ongoing saga of the Milton-Ulladulla bypass, for which a dedicated route was gazetted in 1997. Of course, after 16 long years under State Labor governments, nothing was progressed—indeed, no road projects at all were progressed—and it was left to the incoming Coalition Government to pick up the pieces and move forward to land acquisition, funding and the review of the 1997 route.

The former Roads and Maritime Services' [RMS] preferred route appeared not to have changed since 1997, and much of the route is an appropriate way to bypass the gridlocked towns of Milton and Ulladulla, particularly in holiday times, all weekends and recently on most days of the week. However, the incredible growth in the southern areas of the electorate needs to be recognised. The current route will impact the lives of residents in Burrill Lake, Dolphin Point and Lake Tabourie as the route will divert traffic around Milton-Ulladulla and enter the highway at Canberra Crescent at Burrill Lake. I have raised that time and time again as problematic for the residents of the area. The aforementioned villages have witnessed huge growth since 1997 and the bypass must take into consideration this growth.

This Government has constructed a new bridge over Burrill Lake and traffic conditions have changed dramatically. There is currently an impasse between the residents of Milton-Ulladulla and the residents of the more southern villages and a disturbing amount of vitriol and ill feeling between them, which as I said before concerns me deeply. There have been many meetings with residents, the former RMS and the former regional roads Minister, but at the moment there appears to be a wall of silence despite funding allocated for construction to begin. There appears to be no urgency to resolve the impasse from Transport for NSW and no appetite to think laterally and design an exit point which does not involve the residential areas of Canberra Crescent and Burrill Lake.

Andrew Constance, the Liberal candidate for the Federal electorate of Gilmore, shares my concerns and he has been out in the community talking to residents, going to public meetings and listening to what the community is saying. He is equally concerned about the bitter divisions between those who want it to start immediately and those who want it paused briefly until the southern exit route is fixed. He knows that this issue needs to be resolved urgently and not left to languish in the too-hard basket, because it is hard. I know that we need to bring the community together and design a bypass for the future, not for 1997—a design that Labor governments completely ignored.

I will request a briefing from the new Minister and will make it clear to him that this issue, more than any other, is a crucial one to resolve urgently for the people of the electorate of South Coast. Finally, after almost 40 years of representing my community, I implore the Government to take seriously the issues I have raised tonight and many times before in public meetings, meetings with Ministers and meetings with the RMS; otherwise there may be serious electoral consequences.

People are angry as I have never seen them before on the South Coast. As I said before, they are normally congenial and tolerant and lovely, and I am feeling their anger as I have never felt it before. Over the past two years the people in my electorate have been impacted as a result of the bushfires, which hit my electorate so badly. We need to lift their spirits through a resolution of this issue and others that I will raise in the coming weeks and months. I am almost heartbroken thinking that my community is divided in such a way over the issue of the rural bypass. I notice the member for Lakemba in the Chamber. He knows the area very well too. He knows that community is rarely divided.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** It is a beautiful community.

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK:** They are a beautiful people. We have a beautiful electorate; we know that. But we have had it tough; we have been doing it tough. I ask the Government to please resolve the issue. It needs to be resolved or I do not know what I will do or say.

#### SYDNEY MUSLIM WRITERS' FESTIVAL

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (19:10):** The Sydney Muslim Writers' Festival was held on 12 and 13 February 2022 at the Bankstown Knowledge Centre. It celebrated the achievements of Muslim authors and articles, highlighting how Australian literature is successfully diversifying. During my speech at the festival I said that I did not often have the opportunity to read voices that were similar to mine or to see people who were similar to me around different parts of Australia. A few days ago I said that when we look at diversity across all of its ranges, we need to be able to see young people and people who look like them, sound like them and are reflective of them so that they know they can aspire to that too. That is such an important thing. While it was the first Sydney Muslim Writers' Festival, I am sure it will not be the last. I thank the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia for organising the event and people like Dania Roumieh who worked so incredibly hard.

The young and up-and-coming writers were absolutely brilliant. They talked about an Australia story and a migrant story and about the challenges of growing up where culture and faith are sometimes so different and the many complexities that brings. I love that rawness and genuineness. In my speech at the festival I said that as a kid I did not have books like *Does My Head Look Big in This?* or *The Lebs* or *The Tribe* to read. I did have *Looking for Alibrandi*, and even though it was completely different—it had a female protagonist—it still told a migrant story. I am really happy to see different voices being reflected in different ways. Mr Speaker will be pleased to know that my speech was the worst on the opening night of the festival.

I was absolutely inspired by a few of the opening speeches I heard. Omar Musa gave a spoken poem; I have so much respect for people who can do spoken poetry. He talked about the Christchurch massacre and what it was like when he visited the city. Not only was it enough to make the hairs on your neck, arm or wherever you have got hairs stick up, it actually made people cry because he spoke with such raw emotion. Osamah Sami, whom some of you might know from *Ali's Wedding*, spoke about his experience as a refugee. It went for about 20 minutes, but there was not one moment when anyone seemed distracted or was not into it.

These are new Australian stories. The experiences of refugees were highlighted recently at the Australian Open when a tennis player was able to leave hotel detention fairly soon but refugees are still stuck after nine years. That was very pertinent and it spoke to the nation's values. Sara Mansour, whom some of you may know well, is incredible. She is a young lawyer and is brilliant. She wears her hijab with pride. She spoke about an article that she had written that day, which detailed how the hijab is not allowed in parts of France and India, yet on the cover of *Chic* magazine, someone was wearing a head scarf and it was described as being a fashion statement. I thought that was really great. It is not just about fairytales and romance stories; they are of course part of it. It is also about lived experiences, where people sitting in the room can say, "I know this." The Sydney Muslim Writers' Festival was not just for Muslims and Muslim writers, but they were of course the primary group there. I have spoken about one of the panellists, Dr Michael Mohammed Ahmad, before. My greatest claim to fame is that he was a student at Punchbowl Boys' High School and when I read his book *The Lebs* it was very close to the mark. He spoke at the festival with incredible intellect about the things that matter.

Other panellists and authors present were Sara Saleh, Amani Haydar, Jihad Yassine—who published his first book at age 18, and a young lady named Anhaar Kareem. Members may know of Anhaar. She is an impressive 14-year-old writer and a Premier's Award winner, who has recently had an article published in *The Guardian*. She is telling her story. I come back to this idea: Whether it is in the Parliament, our boardrooms or our newsrooms, when what we see presented is reflective of every bit of our Australia—gender, faith, race, sexuality—that is when we say to people, "Everybody here belongs. There is a place for everybody." I congratulate ISRA and thank all of the people involved in putting on this event. Next year I will try the henna tattooing—I could not do it this year. I thank all of the festival participants and I want to encourage anyone who has a desire to write to do so, because we all have a voice—we just need an opportunity to use it. Again I thank Dania Roumieh for her incredible work.

#### MURRAY ELECTORATE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:15):** Across regional New South Wales, suicide rates have been skyrocketing. The suicide rate in my electorate of Murray is twice as high as it is in Sydney. Ten years ago the rate was the same as Sydney but it has gone up 60 per cent since this Government was elected in 2011. This is an astonishing trend. I asked the mental health Minister if the Government has done any research on why this has occurred. The Government has done nothing—no studies, no research. The mental health Minister did not even know this trend was happening. So I decided to do my own research. I will present it to the Government in the coming weeks. I reached out on social media, asking people to share their experiences of mental health service provision in the Murray electorate. Over 100 people contacted me via phone, email and social media messages.

I also interviewed mental health experts, psychologists, parents and young people, to learn about their experiences and listen to their suggestions for change.

It is clear to me we have a number of excellent mental health professionals in the Murrumbidgee, working excessive hours, doing a stressful job for less money than they could earn in the big city. It is important to recognise that these professionals are doing their best. They are not the problem, but our health staff are hampered by a chronically underfunded system. People in the bush seeking mental health services find it difficult to get an initial appointment and even more difficult to obtain meaningful, ongoing support. They have to wait several weeks or months for an appointment with a mental health professional. Often their next appointment is with someone completely different, so it is impossible to build trust or obtain any continuity of care. Patients are left waiting several hours for a telehealth appointment or transferred to Wagga Wagga to be treated away from their family or support networks.

The shortage of mental health professionals in rural areas is created by a number of New South Wales Government barriers and disincentives that discourage mental health professionals from working in small towns. The Government complains that professionals do not want to move to the bush. In fact, the Government puts up roadblocks and bureaucracy that stop them from moving. Mental health professionals are better supported and they can earn much more money living in the big cities. Moreover, in rural areas they are often required to upskill themselves and maintain accreditation requirements at their own expense. Most medical training is based in the big cities. Given that studies can take up to a decade to complete, professionals are well settled in these big cities and unlikely to want to move to less equipped rural areas once fully qualified.

Our schools are not properly resourced to address mental health issues. There are not enough counsellors in educational facilities. In 2019 the New South Wales Government promised to place two dedicated mental health workers in every school. They have failed to deliver on that promise. Many schools in my electorate do not even have one full-time counsellor. The Government has sought to recruit a number of school psychologists in rural areas, but it offers them low pay and terrible conditions. The attrition rate is enormous. The solutions to mental health problems and high suicide rates are complex and multifaceted. But there are a number of practical things the Government can do to address this chronic shortage of mental health professionals working in the bush.

We need to increase the Medicare rebate for mental health professionals in regional areas to make treatment more affordable. We should establish mental health inpatient units in our rural public hospitals. We can also reduce university debts for mental health professionals who choose to live in regional areas for a certain number of years. We can offer professionals permanent jobs rather than temporary ones, with pay rates higher than those offered in Sydney. But the first thing the Government can do is acknowledge that we have a serious problem in rural areas, rather than always trying to cover it up. Once it does that, I would love to be able to work with Government members to address the mental health crisis in regional New South Wales.

### OFFSHORE EXPLORATION MINING

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport) (19:20):** I am absolutely stoked to inform the house of the Government's landmark policy to ban commercial offshore mineral, coal and petroleum exploration and mining in New South Wales coastal waters. How amazing is that? Just 20 years ago the idea of gas and petroleum exploration in New South Wales coastal waters was considered innovative, even progressive. But two decades of emerging awareness of the climate emergency and of the lived experience of catastrophic failures of offshore gas and petroleum platforms has led to a revolution in community sentiment. I was having a surf at Mona Vale one day when I saw a paddle-out against the offshore Petroleum Exploration Permit 11 [PEP 11]. I was delighted to be able to join my community in the water to protest against an absolutely harebrained, amazingly offensive proposal to permit commercial exploration and potential exploitation of a gas field 4.5 kilometres off the coast of the northern beaches and Central Coast of New South Wales, covering an area of 4,500 square kilometres.

That is right: gas wells just off the coast of one of the most beautiful and biodiverse global cities on earth, with a population of five million people. Genius—if you are a complete moron, that is, which is why it was so puzzling that the Federal Government took so long to recognise what the local community knew immediately, and what the New South Wales Government has been saying consistently. Do not get me wrong: I think it is awesome that the Federal Government determined to end the PEP 11 licence. I am just amazed it took so long. For more than a year my community of Pittwater had fought fiercely against the potential renewal and expansion of the PEP 11, which could have resulted in drilling platforms situated at various points just off the New South Wales coast and the great city of Sydney. For me, the paddle-out was a family affair as we all joined hands in the water around a mock-up gas rig. I noticed my niece, Lucinda Cook, out in the surf and was able to join hands with her as she stood up for the interests of future generations in supporting renewable energy and ocean health over fossil fuels and oil spills.

This is a fantastic win for my community of Pittwater, and for other coastal communities of New South Wales, who together have fought tirelessly to protect our incredible marine environments. In New South Wales we understand that to achieve the New South Wales Government's strong climate targets of a 50 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050 we need to secure sufficient transitional energy sources to enable the decommissioning of coal-fired power stations and support the ongoing introduction of, and improvements in, clean energy. Offshore drilling platforms are completely inconsistent with the Government's vision. We know that offshore exploration and mining has the potential to disrupt the migration patterns of marine animals such as whales and dolphins. It can also present an increased risk of contamination to our sensitive marine ecosystems and, frankly, is a blight on our pristine seascapes.

Thirty years ago there were fewer than 300 humpback whales traversing the east coast of Australia in their annual migration in search of food or warmer waters to give birth to a new generation. Now there are more than 35,000 a year. How we could put this remarkable turnaround at risk is simply beyond me, let alone add to the more than \$50 billion estimated clean-up cost already required to deal with the detritus of existing and historical offshore mining activities around the Australian coast—a clean-up bill left to future generations to pay.

Today, the Government announcement is unequivocal and provides certainty for Pittwater and all other coastal communities in New South Wales. We will not allow commercial offshore exploration and mining for minerals, coal or petroleum. This outcome is indeed the culmination of incredible team effort by locals across a broad spectrum and across all sides of politics. I thank the northern beaches Surfrider Foundation, particularly the indefatigable Rowan Hanley and the surfing barbarian himself, Brendan Donohoe, who helped carry this important campaign through its many challenges and setbacks and now in this incredible victory.

I also thank the local surfing community and great ocean advocates, such as Layne Beachley and Tom Carroll, and other volunteers who were involved in paddle-outs and other events to raise awareness of this issue. I thank everyone who has signed a petition, who has cared about future generations and about inheriting our magnificent and beautiful marine environment. Every representative in my coastal area in Sydney's northern beaches, other members from all sorts of parties, those of no party at all and others across the coast have presented a united front on this important issue. It is important also to recognise the previous work on this issue by former Deputy Premier John Barilaro and the new Deputy Premier, and Minister responsible for resources, Paul Toole, who formalised the New South Wales Government's position into policy. This is a great day for Pittwater and for coastal communities across New South Wales and I thank everyone involved.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (19:25):** Inner westies are passionate about their local environment. From our parks, to our tree canopy, to the beautiful Cooks River, we know that the work of creating a cleaner, greener world for future generations begins in our own backyard. Our suburbs are home to visionary organisations in the circular economy—such as Reverse Garbage, Dress for Success and The Bower—with new organisations such as Among the Trees, who repurpose reclaimed timber, opening up all the time across the inner west. Across the inner west passionate residents volunteer for community groups, such as the Inner West Environment Group, Mudcrabs and Boomerang Bags, who are all doing their little bit to make a difference to our global challenge. We are embracing new initiatives such as the GreenWay, which is a magnificent project with world-class cycling and pedestrian infrastructure that will link the Cooks River to Iron Cove, and the Cooks River Litter Prevention Strategy, which will dramatically reduce the amount of litter entering the river.

We have embraced the expansion of food recycling across the inner west, in an effort to reduce the amount of food waste that ends up in landfill, and the planting of micro-forests, which dramatically improve urban biodiversity. This is leadership. Residents of the inner west are not afraid to make fundamental changes and to do our bit to reduce our environmental footprint. Local communities step up when they are being failed by State and Federal governments. Thanks to the Environment Protection Authority's *NSW State of the Environment 2021* report, which makes for damning reading, we now have a full picture of just how much we are being failed by this State Liberal-Nationals Government. Here is the takeaway: Of the 38 environmental indicators that show how we are travelling in New South Wales, 18 are getting worse and 12 are stable.

The impacts of climate change are being keenly felt, with drought and bushfires posing genuine, massive threats. Bushfires have burned 5.5 million hectares, and 62 per cent of our State's vegetation is under threat of burning. Tragically, three billion vertebrate animals were killed in the fires. Across New South Wales, 116 species are listed as critically endangered, meaning they face extreme risk of extinction. The total number of species in New South Wales at risk of extinction is 1,043, and in the past three years 18 more species were listed as threatened. Native fish and bird populations are in decline, and over 90 per cent of Murray Darling River valleys are rated poor or worse for fish health. The impact of invasive plant and animal species is widespread, costing the New South Wales economy \$2 billion a year. In fact, 70 per cent of our endangered fauna and flora are imperilled by invasive species.

The volume of waste created per capita has increased by 9 per cent over three years and the total amount of waste created has increased by 17 per cent. Transport emissions continue to rise, despite the rhetoric from the Government stating otherwise. Soil acidification due to land use pressures remains a problem and, appallingly, land clearing rates have tripled from 13,000 hectares per year to over 35,000 hectares per year. Increases in the permanent clearing of shrub and grasslands are even worse. That is not surprising given the land clearing we have seen from the Liberals and Nationals over the past 11 years. The hard reality is that no-one could read that report and think that we are on the right track when it comes to delivering a better and cleaner environment for our kids.

Sadly, the report confirms what the community already knows—that the New South Wales Liberals talk a very big game on the environment but just cannot put the runs on the board. We see announcements and spin, backslapping and self-praise, but we are going backwards where these key indicators count. The former environment Minister, now Treasurer, is one of the best self-styled environmentalists that the conservative side of politics has ever produced. But the fact is, this document is a report card on his tenure and it has delivered a clear message that he has failed, which is made worse only by the fact that this judgement comes from his own agency.

Communities like the one I represent see through the spin and they want real, meaningful action on the environment that delivers results. When the Government states it is delivering electric vehicle charging infrastructure in our communities, we want to see it. When the Government announces it is buying electric buses, we want to see more than a paltry number. This report shows that the Treasurer has left his successor a raft of problems and the environment in New South Wales is on the brink. To turn this around and make a real difference, the new environment Minister would do well to go back to basics and listen to local communities like mine. That is where the real work is being done to hand our kids a cleaner, greener and safer world.

### STATE TRANSPORT NETWORK

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (19:31):** Mr Temporary Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment. I speak tonight for people in our regional communities who have been let down this week by the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. I call on him to make an apology to the thousands of commuters who were stuck in transit on our regional road networks because of the transport chaos that ensued this week. I make this contribution in private members' statements not only because of the impact that chaos had on people in my electorate of Maitland but also as the shadow Minister for Regional Transport and Roads.

I sought leave today to contribute to the public interest debate in this House that was moved by the member for Summer Hill, but it was denied by the member for Wollondilly. That is a great shame because I know that people in the Wollondilly electorate were also significantly impacted by the transport chaos this week. He obviously did not want to hear about it, but I have to give the member for Wollondilly a little bit of credit because he turned up for the debate. However, not one MP from The Nationals did—not one. I note the non-verbal interjection of the member for Coffs Harbour. He was sitting in the Chamber, but not on the Government benches. He was sitting in the Chamber attendant's seat while waiting to take his turn at House duty. That is the lack of commitment that The Nationals showed to regional transport in our State.

I can understand why The Nationals are feeling a little bit sensitive about this subject. Today their newly minted Minister made a very embarrassing admission to the New South Wales Parliament in the other place. He said that he heard about the Government's train lockout, which shut down public transport not only in Sydney but also around regional New South Wales, "on Monday morning when I watched the 6.00 a.m. news." I will give the Minister a hot tip—if he had gone on Twitter, he would have seen the tweet by his agency, TrainLink, advising of the lockout at 3.45 a.m. But maybe he was asleep. That is what the Minister for Transport has been saying. Earlier today when the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads was asked by members in the other place about what action he had taken to address the impact of the shutdown on regional communities and commuters, he could not describe one specific action he had taken, despite saying, "I am responsible for the intercity services." That is great—tick. He knows what he is responsible for, but he did nothing for three days.

In fact, he even boasted about the intercity services to his home electorate of Bathurst, which go to Lithgow. So why did he not organise rail replacement buses for people in Lithgow and other cities that are serviced by the intercity fleet? That was his responsibility. People were contacting me, outraged because it was taking 25 minutes to drive from Thornton, in Maitland, to Newcastle. People had to drive their cars for five hours on the M1 to Sydney to attend essential medical services because they could not take the train. The Minister's admission today has raised serious questions about who is really running regional transport and it has highlighted the complete lack of concern that this Government has for the impact its decisions have on people in the regions. It is unacceptable that the Minister for Transport, who is from Sydney, can bring transport in the regions to a standstill without any intervention or, indeed, interest from the regional transport Minister. Obviously, if the transport Minister is asleep at the wheel—as he repeatedly claims to have been in his half-hearted attempt to cover up this outrageous lockout—Minister Far Away is snoozing way down the back of the carriage, and someone forgot to



wake him to tell him the trains had not left the stations. Sorry, I should refer to him as Minister Farraway, but he is far away when it comes to transport and the issues that he needs to look after in his own portfolio.

The Nationals say they stand up for regional New South Wales, but the Liberals continue to make snap decisions that impact on our regional communities without even telling them. It is time The Nationals stood up for regional commuters and stopped letting the Liberals play politics with regional transport. What even is the point of having a regional transport Minister if he was not at the table when such a decision was made or, as it appears from today, when he was not even briefed that a major shutdown of the network—with no contingencies for people who are already in transport poverty to get to work, schools or essential medical appointments—was going to occur? That is not acceptable.

I note that the member for Coffs Harbour has sought to respond. He will probably get to his feet and do what members did in the other place, which is talk all about the fantastic regional seniors travel card. I ask him in advance what the point of a regional seniors travel card is if there is no bus or train to use it on. We know that fuel prices are going up. There has been no adjustment for that cost. Labor argued for veterans and seniors with disabilities to be paid for that. Once again, with the Government asleep at the wheel and asleep at the back of the carriage, this train is going nowhere.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:36):** I will correct the record. First, the member for Maitland said there were no Nationals members in the Chamber. That is certainly untrue. The second correction is about the XPTs. The XPTs in regional New South Wales were running, albeit with slight delays. So the train system in regional New South Wales was running. The member brought up the regional seniors travel card, and I bring it up also because the Labor Party or the Country Labor Party—whatever it is called—absolutely opposed the card. I believe the party still opposes it. After listening to feedback from various communities, including our own—and, yes, including from some Labor Party members as well—changes were made to that program to increase the availability of the card. It is a wonderful program, backed in by The Nationals and brought in by The Nationals in government in New South Wales.

#### **PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) (19:37):** Every member in this House has heard me speak about the need for a public high school in Medowie. I know I am like a broken record. Trust me when I say I too am sick of having to speak about it. But I will keep on doing it for as long as this Government keeps failing to deliver on its promise to the community I represent. Unlike some in this place, I did not come here via university politics. I was a mum on the local P&C that wanted a public high school for our kids, and I have never strayed from that goal. I moved to Medowie in 2006 with young children and one on the way. Now my youngest, who was on the way then, will soon finish high school. But the need for a local public high school has not ended like her schooling will soon. Instead, the need has only increased significantly.

In 2006 I was part of a Department of Education working group that looked into the provision of secondary schooling in western Port Stephens. Since the recommendations of that working group were ignored by the Government and since the former Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, came to Medowie in 2011 and said, "We will make this project shovel-ready", Medowie and surrounding towns have continued to grow. Meanwhile, the land for the high school, which was purchased in 1983, remains untouched.

Student numbers at the primary schools in Medowie and Tanilba are exploding. Recently a Catholic high school opened in Medowie. Each morning—it has been happening for a number of years—more than 1,000 kids are bussed across the region to get to high school. And it happens all over again in the afternoons. Local high schools are over capacity, and the Government's Hunter Regional Plan lists Medowie as a housing growth area. The council's planning strategy expects an additional 7,000 dwellings in Medowie by 2036, and many of those have already started construction. Instead of addressing an obvious need and building a public high school in Medowie, the Perrottet Government has decided to expand the feeder high schools so that they can accommodate over 1,000 extra students between them.

From a response to a question on notice, I learnt that the promised capital works will create 1,100 additional student places in those schools. That is more than 500 more students being squeezed into Hunter River High School and Irrawang High School, which is in Raymond Terrace. The Perrottet Government decided it had a choice: to build a public high school in Medowie or squeeze 1,100 additional students into Hunter River High School and Irrawang High School. The expansions of those existing schools come at a cost of lost playgrounds, fewer opportunities for students, denser year groups, more pressure on existing resources and teachers, and a greater risk of students being lost in the crowd. All that is in a community where students need all the support they can get to even turn up to school, let alone stay there.

I want to be clear: Irrawang High School and Hunter River High School need upgrades desperately. Those schools had some of the biggest school maintenance backlogs in my electorate, so the capital works to fix the classrooms are welcome, but the decision to squeeze over 1,000 additional students into those schools will only exacerbate existing issues. Let us be frank: This decision is designed to give the Perrottet Government an excuse to never deliver a public high school in Medowie, where it is actually needed. The plan will continue to see our kids being bussed to school every day. The decision has been made without any consultation with our community and it fails to put students' interests and their educational outcomes first.

In frustration, I sought a briefing with the education Minister and the department to discuss their plan. On 3 November last year I wrote to education Minister Sarah Mitchell asking for a briefing. I have not received a response. I get that she has been busy, so I followed up last week, on 16 February. I still have had no response. Almost four months since I first asked for a briefing, there is no response. The Minister might not want to discuss the issue, but the parents of Medowie really do. That is why I will be hosting a public meeting on Thursday 17 March at 6.00 p.m. at Medowie Social so that my community can understand the history and start working out a way forward ourselves, because this Government is just not listening.

In the years since the campaign started, we have gained some useful allies: Federal member for Paterson Meryl Swanson, the NSW Teachers Federation and local Labor councillors. But we need the Government to start acting. Medowie has a population of over 10,000 people. The Government does not listen to them. We have no public high school. It is about time the Government started fulfilling its responsibility to deliver public education where it is needed most.

#### *Community Recognition Notices*

#### **GOULBURN MEDICAL CLINIC**

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

#### **CLINTON MEDICAL CENTRE**

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

#### **MARIMA MEDICAL CLINIC**

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

#### **DON HEWITT – A LIFE OF SERVICE**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Armidale resident Don Hewitt OAM for his tireless voluntary contribution to the community. A co-founder of Freeman House with more than five decades of membership and a dedicated member of Armidale St Vincent de Paul Society for 55 years, Don believes his

real social work was visiting people in their homes. At an early age Don took every kind of manual arts course which set him up as the one on call for practical service. Adding to his recently being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, Don was recognised for his community service with the Australian Senior Citizen of the Year in 2017 and was nominated for a National Australian of the Year Award in 2021. In that same year he also received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice (Cross of Honour) – a decoration of the jurisdiction of the Pope). I congratulate Don on the recognition he so richly deserves in being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. I commend Don for his passion and devotion for selflessly giving his time to assist those in need.

#### **TIAN HARRIS – A BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Tian Harris for her passion and drive for the Moree community, its heritage and its future. Tian has been volunteering in the community since she was just 15 years old. As it stands, Tian is an active unit member of the SES and has been for eight years. During the 2021 floods, Tian hosted visiting SES dignitaries to showcase Moree and its history. Tian is also the youngest member of the Moree View Club and their biggest advocate where she volunteers to collect members who don't have transport, sells raffle tickets, arranges meetings and completed welfare checks on members during the Pandemic. Tian is also involved in the RSL sub-branch. So it comes to no surprise Tian being awarded the 2022 Citizen of the Year and has also been nominated for the 2022 NSW Heritage Blue Plaque Award. I congratulate Tian on her selfless efforts of making Moree a better place while creating an attractive society as well as becoming a great inspiration for others. I wish Tian all the very best in the upcoming Blue Plaque Awards.

#### **SUJANA ADAPA, ALISON SHERIDAN, SUBBA REDDY YARRAM**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise authors Sujana Adapa, Alison Sheridan and Subba Reddy Yarram for their intense and comprehensive publication, *Entrepreneurship in Regional Communities: Exploring the Relevance of Embeddedness, Networking, Empowerment and Communitarian Values*. The University of New England's SMART Region Incubator site, NOVA, supports and contributes to regional business and economy making it the perfect venue to launch *Entrepreneurship in Regional Communities*. Through extensive data gathering, the authors clarify the context in which regional businesses develop from inspiration to operation, networking, and community values including facets of gender studies. This text offers valuable resource material for both academics and business stakeholders seeking effective strategies for innovative business growth. I congratulate Sujana, Alison, and Subba on the publication of this extensive research into regional business enterprise. I commend the authors for their dedication to research and factual presentation on how regional business evolves, its impact on community, and the developments in gender culture.

#### **WALLSEND PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Wallsend Public School on their appointment. Wallsend Public School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Ricki Metcalfe, the outstanding staff at Wallsend Public School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Knowledge Is Power" by developing and supporting each student through their foundational years of learning. The kind hearted students at Wallsend South Public School never fail to approach every opportunity with positivity and diligence, helping uphold the wonderful culture that the school community shares. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, Prime Ministers and Ministers for Education Paige Gibbs and Kaidyn Childs, Ministers for the Environment Isabelle Streete and Joseph Wallis, Ministers for Sport and Recreation Alexis Grieve and Keisha Rangi-Garnham and Ministers for Functions and Events Imani Rah and Ava Figgison 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 Wallsend Public School.

#### **PLATTSBURG PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Plattsburg Public School on their appointment. Plattsburg Public School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Ellen Bax, the outstanding staff at Plattsburg Public School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Festina Lente - Hasten Slowly" by developing and supporting each student through their foundational years of learning. The kind hearted students at Plattsburg 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 Plattsburg Public School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, School Captains Payton and Marni, Vice Captains Agook and Harrison, and Prefects Amelia and Skylah 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 Plattsburg Public School.

### **PAM COMERFORD OAM**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Every Australia Day, ordinary individuals are recognised for their extraordinary achievements and commitment to the broader community. In this year's Australia Day Honours, Pamela Comerford, the co-founder of Hunter Brain Injury Respite Options Inc, now known as I Am Here, was awarded an OAM. This award is a recognition of Pam's 30 year journey of self-sacrifice and fierce determination to create a place that gives people who have experienced the trauma of an Acquired Brain Injury and their carers a real break and an opportunity to rejuvenate. Her journey was inspired by the catastrophic brain injury suffered by her son Jason, now 52 years old, following a rugby league accident just prior to his 18th birthday. I was lucky enough to work with Pam at I Am Here, prior to entering Parliament. During that time I witnessed Pam's advocacy and determination for those with a disability. Pam's character and courage are embedded in the guiding principles on which I Am Here is built. This is her legacy. Congratulations Pam on this well-deserved recognition.

### **RICHMOND RIVER HIGH SCHOOL TOUCH FOOTBALL SUCCESS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I congratulate the fantastic Richmond River High School touch football team on their recent success at the under 15's Zone Touch Football Trial/Gala Day. Coach and TAS teacher Mr Ben Miller proudly detailed the team's success on Facebook. Their sporting success, in their words, deserves to be on the parliamentary record. "Last Tuesday twenty students from Years 8 to 10 visited Woodenbong for the under 15's Zone Touch Football Trial/Gala Day. Both teams played 4 games against other teams in our zone." "The boys played Alstonville first and came away victors after a very tough and fast-paced game which was the match of the day. The boys then played another two games winning convincingly before running out of steam against Casino going down 3-1." "The girls started strongly and finished superbly all day. Going into the first game nervously, the RRHC girls beat Casino convincingly before continuing the outstanding form against Kadina, Kyogle, and Alstonville. Congratulations to Natalia, Lailah, Sione, Tyler, and Elijah who were all selected to participate at the next level in their Zone teams. Congratulations, also, to Zariah and Krystal who were selected as shadow players for their Zone teams."

### **KYOGLE GARDEN CLUB**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—It was fantastic to read in the Northern Rivers Talking Turkey this week about the Kyogle Garden Club's first meeting of the year which happened in January. The Garden Club are a fantastic, creative, talented and dedicated group of locals from Kyogle and Villages who play a big part in the reason Kyogle is one of the most beautiful towns in NSW. The Kyogle Garden Club have already made their mark this year with their outstanding work decorating the stage of the Kyogle Amphitheatre for Kyogle Council's Australia Day celebration ceremony. Many locals have commented to me about how fabulous the stage looked and how it just made the ceremony that extra bit special. In the pictures, I could easily see how spectacular the stage looked. I have been fortunate enough to see the talents of the club myself at their annual Flower and Foliage Display in April last year which was held at St. Brigid's Hall in Kyogle. Tamar Cohen from Landcare was there at the meeting as guest speaker and enlightened the group about the battle against cane toads, one of our local and growing issues. I hope to catch up with the club soon.

### **THE HUB HAMPERS MURWILLUMBAH**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Over the Christmas and holiday period so many local churches and organisations in the Lismore Electorate went above and beyond to help those in need. A stand out was the Hub Baptist Church in Murwillumbah which collated and distributed 41 hampers to people in need in Murwillumbah and surrounding villages. Hub hamper coordinators Jo and John Harris did a stellar job coordinating the end of year effort. The hampers were very substantial and included essentials, three meals and Christmas goodies. How lovely that whilst giving people what they required the Hub volunteers also added some a hand up and Christmas cheer, after such a tough year. Jo Harris commented recently in the Tweed Valley Weekly that there was a huge need amongst the community this year following lockdowns and the border closure. As a result of the border closure with Queensland the Hub volunteers provided many of the Queenslanders who were staying at the Murwillumbah Showground, practical and emotional support. The hampers were prepared lovingly with a combination of food and goodies donated from the Hub Church volunteers and from Ritchies IGA in Murwillumbah who donated gift cards.

### **NSW TOURISM AWARDS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I am excited today to announce the renowned Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail has won Gold in the Cultural Tourism category at the NSW Tourism Awards held on 3rd February at Luna Park, Sydney. Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail continues to reach new heights across the Port Macquarie electorate for its unique reflection of various themes through individual, hand-painted, one-metre high koalas showcasing the region's history and wonders through our most treasured marsupial. The artistic designs

encapsulated on each sculpture ooze of talent and intrigue encouraging tourists to partake in a journey of the Hastings prominent and pristine locations seeking out each Hello Koala. I am thrilled for project director Margaret Meagher for claiming yet another accolade in her efforts to enhance the tourism sector in the Hastings. I also commend her team that continue to support the Hello Koala project with new ideas that engage and capture the communities' appreciation of our native koala population. The next watershed moment for Hello Koala will be the highly-anticipated launch of the big koala at Cowarra State Forest tourism precinct which I will go as far to say will arguably cement our status as the koala capital of Australia.

#### **2022 NEWMAN SENIOR TECHNICAL COLLEGE SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I welcome the newly elected Student Representative Council for Newman Senior Technical College entrusted to lead and mentor the student body throughout 2022. It is often said that our students are the future leaders of tomorrow who ultimately build and shape our State for the next generation. The New South Wales Department of Education defines student leaders as a student voice that actively participates in decision-making at school on things that shape their educational experiences. "Student voice" is more than just students having a say and being heard. To be successful, schools must value the perspectives and opinions of students and act on them in a way that genuinely shapes learning and decision-making at the school. Today, I congratulate the following students on their recent induction and appointment as student representatives; Captains: Jolie McKellar and Brae Dose; Vice Captains Rebecca Thresher and Lincoln Thomas; Council Members: Alejandra Tuite, Amelia Giumelli, Cian Cowdrey, Jezmond Clifton, Jordan Guest, Madison Byfield, Patrick Guilfoyle, Samuel DeSilva, Summer Coubrough and Xander Potts. May you all achieve your dreams and aspirations as you prepare for your final year of secondary school.

#### **THOMAS CRUNDWELL & KASHIA MCGRATH**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I congratulate former students Thomas Crundwell and Kashia McGrath from Port Macquarie on placing first in the State in Software Design and Development and Religion for the 2021 High School Certificate [HSC]. Both students have excelled in academic excellence and cemented themselves in the elite group of number one achievers in New South Wales when the HSC results were announced in January. Described as a bright and talented student, Thomas Crundwell from St Columba Anglican School placed first in Software Design and Development, achieving a high ATAR score of 96.3. Thomas equates his experience in website construction, electronics projects and the schools robotics team providing that extra edge to secure the number one ranking in the State. The second student in my electorate who was honoured among the best of the best in the State was Mackillop College's Kashia McGrath for her outstanding results in Religion. Not only did Kashia top NSW in religion but she scored a phenomenal ATAR result of 99.85. Thomas will now focus his sights on a career in software engineering or robotics engineering while Kashia hopes to study medicine. Congratulations and best wishes to you both.

#### **FINLEY HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to congratulate the following distinguished achievers of the 2021 Year 12 cohort at Finley Regional High School for outstanding results in their HSC - Cassandra Renneberg and Larshya Sutharsamohan. The disruptions of last year presented many challenges that, together, these students worked to overcome. From home-schooling to multiple changes to exam date they have shown real resilience in the face of adversity, and demonstrated that hard-work and determination really do pay off. They are role models to their school community and their success during such a disruptive period in our history makes their achievements even more commendable. I congratulate Cassandra and Larshya on this fantastic accomplishment.

#### **DENILQUIN HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to congratulate the following distinguished achievers of the 2021 Year 12 cohort at Denilquin High School for outstanding results in their HSC - Adrian Mulham, Bayden Thompson, Calypso McKenzie, Duncan Hughes, Edwina Barclay, Eliza Baker, Ella Harvey, Molly Shaw, Roisin Schofield, and Rosie North. The disruptions of last year presented many challenges that, together, these students worked to overcome. From home-schooling to multiple changes to exam date they have shown real resilience in the face of adversity, and demonstrated that hard-work and determination really do pay off. They are role models to their school community and their success during such a disruptive period in our history makes their achievements even more commendable. I congratulate Adrian, Bayden, Calypso, Duncan, Edwina, Eliza, Ella, Molly, Roisin and Rosie on this fantastic accomplishment.

#### **FREDERICK DENNY OAM**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—I wish to congratulate Frederick Denny, who was honoured for his service to veterans and families and awarded an Order of Australia Medal [OAM] in the Australia Day

2022 Honours List. Mr Denny, a much respected Thirlmere local, was congratulated on Facebook by the Picton Thirlmere Bargo RSL Sub Branch, of which he has been a member since 1946. A Sub-Branch spokesperson said that, "there is no gentleman more deserving of this honour". Mr Denny has a heart for service. He served in WWII with the 55/53 Battalion, and is a frequent and willing volunteer with the RSL, ready to lend a hand wherever it is needed. He is also a local resident who has helped shape the Wollondilly landscape, having worked on the construction of the Warragamba Dam many years ago. Mr Denny has been a welfare officer for more than 50 years and is a founding member, and now life member, of the 55/53 Battalion Association. I thank Mr Denny for his generous service and wish him a happy and safe year ahead.

### HSC SHOWCASE

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—Each year, the HSC Showcases a display of a selection of top major works from students across visual arts, performing arts and technologies. This year the following five students from the Wollondilly Electorate have been included in the showcase: Daisy Tosh of Bowral High School in ARTEXPRESS; Anneliese Wansey of Oxley College in OnSTAGE ; Arlo Berry of Oxley College in Shape 2021; Hophnie Noblett of Wollondilly Anglican College in Shape 2021; and Brianna Grace Nance of Wollondilly Anglican College in Textstyle. These students should be so proud of what they have achieved – not only completing the HSC in a year like no other, but producing work of such high quality. To see their work up on display should fill them with pride and confidence – it is no small feat to be included in an HSC Showcase. To Daisy, Anneliese, Arlo, Hophnie and Brianna: your work is a tribute to yourselves, your families, your schools, and your community. I congratulate each one of you on your achievements and encourage you to keep applying your creative talents.

### PETER SCOTT

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—Bowral local Peter Scott was awarded Friends Life Membership with the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens last December for his many years dedicated volunteering. According to the SHBG Chairman Charlotte Webb, Peter is their right hand man, and is always there ready to lend a hand year after year, in the gardens and at all their events. He willingly wears the teddy bear suit to the Teddy Bear's picnics, and recently got his Responsible Service of Alcohol certificate so that he is able to help at the SHBG bar. Peter manages their advertising and works on maintaining the gardens, and he even opens up his own garden with his wife Carol for the Autumn Open Garden Weekend. I want to thank Mr Scott for his generosity with the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens and congratulate him on the Life Membership award.

### DUBBO TOURISM AWARDS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—Dubbo is home to the best tourist attraction in the State—and don't just take my word for it! Taronga Western Plains Zoo claimed gold in the Major Tourist Attraction category at the recent NSW Tourism Awards, beating the Australian Reptile Park and BridgeClimb! Zoofari Lodge also claimed silver in the Unique Accommodation category – only beaten by another business from my electorate, Sierra Escapes! Congratulations to every single one of the zoo's team members who contributed to this success, from keepers and vets to cleaners, landscapers and hospitality staff, and everyone in between. A shout out to director Steve Hinks and Mandy Turner, Jo Fitzgerald and Shallon McReaddie for putting the award submission together. The guests also play a role – as a not-for-profit, the support of the zoo's guests is critical and makes Taronga's vital conservation work possible. And of course, the animals! Day in, day out, the zoo's animals provide constant inspiration to the team and guests as ambassadors for their wild counterparts around the world. Well done to everyone involved in these awards!

### RAINBOW COTTAGE 30 YEARS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—I want to congratulate all the staff and families that have been a part of the community of Rainbow Cottage, which recently celebrated its 30th Birthday! The Dubbo preschool was opened in 1992, a joint project of the Commonwealth and NSW governments and the then Dubbo City Council, to cater for the needs of a growing city. Over the years it too has grown, and it can now accommodate 58 places over 4 classrooms. Rainbow prides itself on being a family away from home for the children, and I want to commend all the staff who have contributed to its success, including: Myra Wells, who worked there for 12 years before continuing her career as an advocate for children; Ann Keen, who started as an untrained educator in 1996 and has risen through the ranks to coordinator; Janette Kleinig – 24 years; Marg Delyall – 22 years; Ronda Finlay – 20 years; Rebecca O'Hara – 17 years; Brianna Merchant – 14 years; Rebekah Dowling – 13 years; Kylie Sutherland – 10 years; Melissa Attwell – 7 years; Emily Ferrari – 7 years; Renee Stanley – 4 years. Congratulations, and here's to another 30 years!

**SAMANTHA SUTHERLAND**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—I want to congratulate Mudgee's Samantha Sutherland who was recently awarded an AgriFutures Rural Women's Acceleration grant. Samantha is passionate about the region's wine industry, and will use the grant to further her research into the use of alternative wine storage vessels called amphora. The use of amphoras – essentially huge clay pots – dates back to the early Greeks and Romans. They've been used to ferment and age wine for thousands of years ... and the technique is enjoying a bit of a resurgence. The clay allows in less oxygen than oak barrels, but more than stainless steel. Samantha hopes to unite other young innovators interested in amphoras and make a positive impact on the wine industry in rural and regional areas, by creating jobs, meaningful collaborations and ultimately making these vessels more accessible. Congratulations Samantha, and best of luck with your continued research!

**SUN RUN**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)**—I ask this House recognise the 4,300 runners who participated in the Dee Why to Manly Sun Run on the 5th of February. This was a significant fundraising event with \$63,850 being raised for charities. With the top charity being the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter, which received \$12,516 dollars. This is the charity that me and Manly Vipers running club fundraised for when we participated. A special congratulations goes to Women's Shelter board member Orla Keane who raised an impressive \$3,251. Further I would like to congratulate Kieren Tall who won the 10km men's race with a time of 31:43. I would also like to congratulate Aynslee Van Graan who won the women's 10km race with a time of 35:34. I would further like to congratulate Will Austin-Cray who won the Men's 7km race with a time of 23:53. Finally congratulations to Kristen Piper who won the Women's 7km race with a time of 30:16. A big congratulations and thank you to all participants.

**MANLY LAGOON FRIENDS**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)**—I would ask the House to recognise the newly formed Manly Lagoon Friends. This a vital community organisation focused on the eco-health of Manly Lagoon. They will act as conduit between the community and all parties invested in the health and management of the lagoon. A special thanks goes to Mel Koeman of Queenscliff who has founded this organisation. I look forward to working alongside them in both my role as Member for Manly and Environment Minister. I ask the house to commend Manly Lagoon Friends and Mel Koeman.

**KAY BOLTON**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—I wish to congratulate an extraordinary woman from Fingal Head, Kay Bolton. This year Kay was recognised for her commitment to preserving and restoring native habitats with an Order of Australia Medal. I have known Kay for many years now and I'm delighted that her dedication to the environment has seen her nationally recognised. A well-known local, Kay held the role of the president of the Fingal Head Coastcare since 2003 after spending many childhood years holidaying in the beautiful small beach town. Fingal Coastcare originally started in 1986 removing bitou bush, and now maintain 32 hectares of Crown Land. The group is currently working with the Tweed Byron Aboriginal Land Council to ensure the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage of the area. A major project being delivered, will see low key pathways installed and the restoration of the native grassland on the headland. This project was designed to help return the headland to a stronger ecological position. I congratulate Kay on being one of the very deserving recipients of the years Australia Day Honours.

**GLENN SIMPSON – CRONULLA SUTHERLAND WATER POLO CLUB**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I recognise Glenn Simpson for his service to the Cronulla Sutherland Water Polo Club. Glenn has been a volunteer coach, referee, mentor and administrator for more than 20 years at the club. He has juggled his family and work commitments to be a great contributor to the junior program and can be found poolside every Sunday at 7am working to bring on the next generation of players. The club says Glenn is at the start of the journey for many of their players and that the impact of his coaching has made a big difference to the club's culture and that he embodies the organisation's values of integrity, excellence and belonging. According to the club, current players and administrators appreciate Glenn's work as a quiet achiever and are grateful for his involvement. I acknowledge Glenn Simpson for his dedicated contribution to the Cronulla Sutherland Water Polo Club.

**BABA'S PLACE, MARRICKVILLE**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Marrickville continues to be a magnet for foodies with the opening of Baba's Place in a sprawling warehouse in Sloane Street. Co-owners Alexander Kelly and head chef Jean-Paul

El Tom have won widespread praise and critical acclaim for their latest venture, which draws on the owners' Lebanese, Macedonian and Greek heritage but also expands to cuisines from cultures across the globe. Patrons are raving about the house-made labne, sous-vide octopus and Shanghai-style noodles. Baba's is envisioned as a slice of home, decorated with family heirlooms and items drawn from garage sales and op-shops across the Inner West. Baba's Place is situated in the burgeoning industrial area around Sydenham, complementing existing venues and businesses like Stix, Brickfields and Bourke Street Bakery, as well as a multitude of local food producers, breweries and distilleries. Marrickville's local food scene is clearly going from strength to strength. I warmly welcome and congratulate Alexander, Jean-Paul and the Baba's Place team and wish them every success.

### **CRICKET AUSTRALIA RECONCILIATION ROUND**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—Cricket Clubs across the country, including Inner West clubs, held a reconciliation round this past weekend, acknowledging and celebrating First Nations people. Clubs were encouraged to connect with traditional owners and organise a Welcome to Country, to acknowledge country prior to games, to connect with local Indigenous artists and paint their stumps, unveiling a plaque or sign to acknowledge land, or standing barefoot together as a sign of the team's continuing commitment to reconciliation. Clubs across the Inner West – including Marrickville Cricket Club, Summer Hill Cricket Club, and Western Suburbs District Cricket Club – all marked the occasion, with junior teams across the community taking efforts to express their commitment to reconciliation. These events were an important way for young players to learn more about the enduring connection and sovereignty of First Nations people to the lands on which they played, and also gave visibility and acknowledgement to First Nations kids on their teams. I warmly thanks and congratulate each of the local clubs who participated, offer my own acknowledgement to First Nations players in our local cricket teams, and thank Cricket Australia for this important initiative.

### **HAY WAR MEMORIAL**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to congratulate the following distinguished achievers of the 2021 Year 12 cohort at Hay War Memorial High School for outstanding results in their HSC – Delilah Crighton, Hugh Crighton and Kenneth Hargreaves. The disruptions of last year presented many challenges that, together, these students worked to overcome. From home-schooling to multiple changes to exam date they have shown real resilience in the face of adversity, and demonstrated that hard-work and determination really do pay off. They are role models to their school community and their success during such a disruptive period in our history makes their achievements even more commendable. I congratulate Delilah, Hugh and Kenneth on this fantastic accomplishment.

### **DUNGOG RUMBLE 2021**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Congratulations to the Dungog Rumble organisers for their perseverance to hold the 2021 event. The 10th Annual Dungog Rumble sparked Hooke Street to life on Saturday 11 December attracting over 100 vehicles and delivered a much needed tourism boost for the town. Originally planned for October, the show and shine went virtual then, as organisers and supporters patiently waited for COVID Safe conditions to hold the real show. The Rumble's motto is "anything with a motor and wheels" – vintage cars, classic cars, race cars, hot rods, motorcycles, trucks and tractors – all were there to mark the tenth event. In addition to being an opportunity for motoring enthusiasts to get together and show their machines, the Dungog Rumble fundraises for worthy causes. Tenth 'Rumble beneficiaries were Solider On Australia and young leukaemia patient, Patrick Gillan, with the recipients sharing the \$17,000 proceeds. Soldier On supports Australian Defence Force personnel, contemporary veterans and their families. Four-year-old, Patrick, has been in and out of hospital over recent years and the 'Rumble's support will be used to assist his family pay for medication and bills they have been unable to pay due to the toddler's medical treatment.

### **SINGLETON 2022 AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I want to congratulate the following winners of the Singleton Council – Australia Day 2022 Awards. Uncle Warren Taggart named Citizen of the Year for his tireless work to both preserve and share the rich history and culture of the Wonnarua/Wanaruah people. Uncle Warren is highly regarded for his work including conducting regular tours of the culturally significant Baiame Cave. Liam Byrne recognised as Young Achiever of the Year for his great sense of awareness of those less fortunate and the community groups who rely on community donations to exist. Liam volunteers with Singleton Legacy and Dolly's Charity Shop and raises funds, collects donations and sells merchandise in support of the Singleton and District War Widows. The announcement was livestreamed as part of an official COVID-safe ceremony at Singleton Civic Centre with the official Australia Day Guest Address delivered by retired Member for Upper Hunter and former NSW Government Minister, the Hon George Souris AM. The award recipients are to be commended for their community work within the Singleton community and I thank them for their contribution to the Upper Hunter electorate.



### UPPER HUNTER AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS RECIPIENTS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I would like to congratulate the Upper Hunter Electorate's four recipients of Australia Day 2022 Honours. Cheryl Porter of Quirindi awarded an OAM for her service to the state's Indigenous community. Ms Porter is the long serving Chief Executive Officer of the Walhallow Aboriginal Corporation Health Program. Antony 'Anto' White of Scone received an OAM for service to the Hunter Valley community. 'Anto' is a farmer and Life Member of Scone Polo Club, Upper Hunter Cutting Horse Association and The Gundy Bushmans Carnival. He is also a member Belltrees Parents and Citizens Association and Stewarts Brook Rural Fire Brigade. Spencer Turrin of Dungog awarded an OAM for service to sport as a gold medallist at the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020. Spencer won gold as a member of the Men's Coxless Four rowing team. And, Brian McKenzie of Spring Ridge recognised with the Australian Fire Service Medal for an outstanding contribution to the NSW Rural Fire Service. Mr McKenzie commenced with the RFS at Gosford in 1977 and is currently Captain of the recently formed Lower North Coast Support Brigade.

### WARNERS BAY PUBLIC SENSORY GARDEN

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—My congratulations to the students of the Warners Bay Public School "Green Team", who created an innovative sensory garden which took out the "Best in Show" category at the Allambi Care School Garden Bed Competition in 2021. With tin can chimes, hubcap flowers and spoons sprouting from the soil, the garden is not what you'd call typical—but it sure shows off the imagination and creativity of Warners Bay students! With an explosion of colour and shapes utilising three-dimensional space, including a forest of spoons called "Spoonville @ WBPS", the garden is beautiful and unique and well deserving of being named Best in Show! The Allambi Care School Garden Bed Competition is run by Lake Macquarie City Council and is aimed at encouraging students to think more deeply about their local environment, while building skills in gardening, sustainable design and upcycling. The Warners Bay Public school community is always looking for ways to help improve our beautiful area, and I want to congratulate the Green Team, the school staff and the entire community on this well-deserved win.

### BUNYA PARK, WARNERS BAY

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—Over the last 14 years, Bunya Park in Warners Bay has been completely transformed. Comparing aerial shots of the park, taken in 2007 and 2021, shows an astounding change. The fruits of thousands of hours of labour by Lake Macquarie Landcare volunteers, the regeneration of Bunya Park is proof of successful local efforts to remove weeds and revegetate key areas with native species. Lizards, snakes, bandicoots, possums, tawny frogmouths, frogs and other wildlife have returned to the area as a result. Bare patches of ground have been transformed into a flora and fauna haven, all because of the hard work and commitment of local volunteers who have planted 7000 native seedlings over more than a decade. In 2021 alone, and despite COVID forcing a significant reduction in on-site work, Landcare volunteers in Lake Mac contributed more than 9500 hours of work. They planted more than 5000 native specimens, propagated more than 55,000 seedlings and cleared invasive weeds from more than eight hectares of land. A big thank you to Lake Mac Landcare volunteers, and to the amazing Warners Bay Landcare in particular.

### TAJ HORADAM, HUNTER JUNIOR SURF LIVESAVER OF THE YEAR

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—I would like to acknowledge Taj Horadam of Redhead, who was recognised as the male Newcastle Permanent Hunter Surf Lifesaver of the Year on 6 February. Each of the Hunter Region's thirteen surf lifesaving clubs, from Catherine Hill Bay in the south up the coast to Tea Garden Hawks Nest, nominate a male and female for the award, with the winners selected based on a written application and interview with the judges. Taj is thirteen and attends Whitebridge High. Surf lifesaving is in the family, with his dad Jason currently serving as Redhead SLSC Nippers age manager and having previously served as the club's president. Taj nominates him as an inspiration, but I reckon Taj is pretty inspiring himself. At the State Championship Age Surf Race last year, Taj stopped competing to help out a fellow competitor who had run afoul of a blue bottle. His willingness to help those in need goes beyond the beach, too—he has helped a fellow school student after they fell unconscious, staying with them until paramedics arrived. My congratulations to Taj on this outstanding achievement. Very well deserved!

### SWANSEA PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS 2022

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Today I acknowledge Malea Lawson, Sophie Haracz, Brody Ruhan, Lawson Baxter, Jessica Ruhl and Emelia Paull on being elected as the 2022 Swansea Public School leadership team. These students always demonstrate a consistent work ethic and are dedicated to the Swansea Public School community. Each of these students have been involved in a variety of school activities and events over their time at Swansea Public School. They continuously strive to do their best in their studies and act as role models for their peers. Being elected as the 2022 school leaders is a testament to each of these students. I am sure they will carry

out their new roles with pride and develop many skills that they will find useful in the years to come. I congratulate Malea, Sophie, Brody, Lawson, Jessica and Emelia on their achievement and wish them all the best with their final year of primary school.

#### **ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS 2022**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Today I acknowledge Lara Windever, Hayden Wallwork, Jessica Quiggin, Emily Brough, Layla Wass, Madison Trembath, Emma Wilks, Jack Clarke, Sunshine West, Banjo Hoskin, Lily Hope, Jye Hendriks, Teddy Beckett and Gemma Blacklow on being named as the 2022 St Patrick's Catholic Primary School leadership team. These students consistently work hard and are dedicated to the St Patrick's Catholic Primary School community. Each of these students have been involved in many school activities over the years and continuously strive to do their best in their studies and act as role models for their peers. Being elected as the St Patrick's Catholic Primary School leaders is a testament to each of these students. I am sure they will carry out their new roles with pride and develop skills that they will find useful in the years to come. I congratulate Lara, Hayden, Jessica, Emily, Layla, Madison, Emma, Jack, Sunshine, Banjo, Lily, Jye, Teddy and Gemma on their achievement and wish them all the best for the year ahead.

#### **ST BRENDAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS 2022**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea)**—Today I acknowledge Kiara Weekes, Ethan Terrill, Meika Allison, Finn Solway, Ari Richards, Chaise Allison, Ellie Overton, Izak Tosic, Dakota Karg, Zach Mitchell, Sharlotte Larkin, Milla Johnstone, Luca Farrer, Isabella Sedgwick, Savanna Montague, Ella Robson, David Grech, Ryder Gordon, Isla Roberts, Ruby Parkin, Dylan Murray-Wright, Macy Perry, Amelia Douglass and Chase Hosking on being named as the 2022 St Brendan's Catholic Primary School leadership team. These students consistently work hard and are dedicated to the St Brendan's Catholic Primary School community. These students have been involved in many school activities over the years and continuously strive to do their best in their studies and act as role models for their peers. Being elected as the St Brendan's Catholic Primary School leaders is a testament to each of these students. I am sure they will carry out their new roles with pride and develop skills that they will find useful in the years to come. I congratulate Kiara, Ethan, Meika, Finn, Ari, Chaise, Ellie, Izak, Dakota, Zach, Sharlotte, Milla, Luca, Isabella, Savanna, Ella, David, Ryder, Isla, Ruby, Dylan, Macy, Amelia and Chase on their achievement and wish them all the best for the year ahead.

#### **GENESISCARE OFFICIAL OPENING**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I was so pleased to attend the official opening of GenesisCare's integrated cancer care centre and research hub recently. The new centre will provide patients from Maitland and the Hunter region access to radiation therapy, medical oncology, advanced imaging, pathology and allied health services under the one roof. Having this new world-class facility right here in our backyard will spare patients the current arduous daily journey which can be a two hour commute, even by car. I have long advocated for cancer services to be provided in Maitland, and with the recent opening of the new fully public hospital, the private hospital operating just up the road, Maitland is attracting a new level of state-of-the-art expertise in cancer and other health services to our city. While we can't stop cancer, by treating it promptly, by providing wrap around integrated services, we can stop it taking lives. Having this centre here will ensure that people know there is help for them close at hand. It will save lives. It will help patients and their families cope with the challenges cancer brings.

#### **MAITLAND BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I congratulate Maitland Business Chamber President Shane Hamilton, Vice President Michael Maffey, Treasurer Louise Lennox and Committee Members Andrew Vile, Helen Oswald, Andrew Mason, Melissa King, Iain MacDonald, Melanie Bird, Jonathon Poynter, Victor Prasad and Executive Assistant and Member Liaison Officer Kate Meyn Shrimpton on their announcement as finalists in the 27th Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards. The Awards are one of our region's longest-running awards and are one of the Hunter's premier business excellence awards. For nearly seventy years, the Chamber has created a positive and supportive environment for business and commerce in Maitland. They lobby for and provide support to member organisations, facilitate networking and broaden connections, promote the City of Maitland and our region, and encourage member organisations to grow and prosper. The Chamber proudly state that "Maitland, is the "Can Do City", and they certainly are the "Can Do Chamber". I thank Shane and his team for their single minded promotion of our City, and their endeavours to support businesses and the development of our local economy. I wish them the best of luck in the upcoming awards.

#### **NARELLE ANDERTON**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the outstanding service to women's netball made by Byron Shire Volunteer of the Year Narelle Anderton. Narelle has worked tirelessly for more than 30 years to

support and promote the sport in the Shire, particularly in her involvement with the Brunswick Byron Netball Association and the Mullumbimby Netball Club. Narelle still averages more than 20 hours each week volunteering for the netball community in various roles, including coaching, administration/organisation, umpiring and attending meetings. She has worked with players at all levels to help them reach their potential, including coaching several teams to win State Championships, coaching players who have been accepted into the North Coast Academy, and working with other coaches and umpires Narelle is endlessly energetic, arranging and participating in working bees to clean and maintain club facilities. Through her efforts, the canteen has raised more than \$150,000 in the last 10 years. I extend my congratulations and thanks to this selfless woman, for her commitment not only as a coach, umpire, mentor and player but for her service as an amazing role model for girls and women in sport and the broader community.

#### **VALE IRIS TERRY**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—It was with much sadness that the Fairfield Electorate learned of the passing of Ms Iris Terry, who was 104 years of age. Born Iris Pfitzner in Griffith NSW in 1917, Iris was one of eight siblings. When World War II broke out, Iris enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force, where she used her talents as a seamstress to equip the men with their combat uniforms before they boarded the ships that would take them to the front line. When the war ended, Iris decided not to return to Griffith but moved to Sydney where she met and married her husband Emerson Terry. They settled in Carramar after their marriage and Iris stayed in her home after Emerson's death at age 60, until a serious stroke in 2014 made it necessary for her to move to Rosary Village in Villawood. Iris was an energetic and vibrant member of the Fairfield community which she served through the Fairfield RSL-Sub Branch and Ladies Auxiliary. Her sparkling smile and her presence lit up a room and she will be dearly missed by her many friends, family and the community.

#### **PATRICIAN BROTHERS FOUNDATION DAY**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—On 2nd February 2022, the Patrician Brothers in Fairfield marked the Foundation Day of the Patrician Brothers. The Congregation of the Brothers of St. Patrick was founded by Bishop Daniel Delany, on the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Ireland in 1808. The four founding members were Patrick McMahon (Brother John Baptiste), Richard Fitzpatrick (Brother Bernard), Ambrose Dawson (Brother Joseph) and Maurice Cummins (Brother John Evangelist). They were quickly joined by more and the Patrician Brothers were established as a diocesan institution. The Patrician Brothers were then invited by Australian bishops to erect schools in Australia and the Patrician story in Australia began. I acknowledge the contributions of the Patrician Brothers in Australia. I also pay special tribute to Brother Domenic and Brother Thomas of Patrician Brothers' College Fairfield for staying true to the Patrician mission of providing education for everyone.

#### **PATRICIAN BROTHERS' COLLEGE – OPENING OF CRICKET NETS**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I was proud to participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the brand new cricket nets at Patrician Brothers' College, Fairfield. These nets were constructed with funds the College received from the Community Building Partnership Program and I was delighted to facilitate with this venture. I was joined by Executive Director of Catholic Schools, Mr Tony Farley and some avid young cricketers and together we cut the ribbon on what is sure to be a fantastic addition to the College sports arena. I commend Principal Peter Wade and his team at Patrician Brothers' College, Fairfield for applying for funding for this project and I wish students and the College community many happy cricket experiences in the new nets.

#### **LAWRENCE MUSEUM**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to the Lawrence Museum who last year won the Innovation and Resilience Award for the outstanding efforts of museums and galleries during hardship, for their Lawrence Unlocked, at the 2021 IMAGinE Awards. The museum's volunteers fundraised for the project which was to construct a 1930's style iron-clad shed for new displays. The shed's construction has created a lasting piece of history which will bring many tourists to the village. I commend the Executive of the Lawrence Museum and all their volunteers for the wonderful work they are doing to ensure future generations have the opportunity to look into the past and see how things were previously done. Keep up the great work.

#### **MIDDLE HARBOUR PUBLIC SCHOOL CHRISTMAS DONATIONS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I wish to recognise the spirit and generosity shown by the Middle Harbour Public School community for their contributions to the Christmas appeal that supports Dalwood Spilstead Early Intervention and Support Services. Dalwood is a collaborative project between the Northern Sydney Local health District and the Spilstead Charitable Trust which provides essential services to families and at-risk children. The school community provided numerous gifts in 2021 to bring the Christmas spirit to children

of all ages, who often go without during this time of the year. Gifts such as puzzles, musical toys, science games, construction, and craft kits were donated to the cause. Items collected for the hampers provided families at the centre with comfort and food to help them through the busy and stressful time of the year. A wide range of goods were collected for the hampers including toiletries, non-perishable foods, celebration foods, and Christmas decorations. Thank you to Principal Laura Barry and Deputy Principal Carol Jaye for organising this successful appeal. I extend my thanks to the entire Middle Harbour School community for their generous contributions which helped support vulnerable families and children in our local area.

#### **MONTE CHOIR PERFORMS AT 'SALUTE TO AUSTRALIA' CEREMONY 2022**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to recognise members of the Monte choir who performed at the 'Salute to Australia' ceremony at Sydney Harbour on Australia Day. The students performed "I am Australian" and were accompanied by the Royal Australian Navy Band. In attendance at the televised ceremony was the Governor of NSW, the Hon. Margaret Beazley AC QC along with a large crowd. The girls sung in both English and Eora before the commencement of the citizenship ceremony and the 21 Gun Salute and Jet Fly Over. The choral group members included Phoebe Sampson, Abigail Camilleri, Abigail Sinclair, Elizabeth Judson, Maddalena Gale, Scarlett O'Connor, and Alyssa Abood who sadly was unable to perform on the day. I am sure they all put in a lot of practice and time in preparation for this event. Congratulations to all of these girls, they should be so proud of their performance at such a large scale event. They have represented themselves, their school, and our community with great pride and professionalism and should be commended. Thank you to school Principal Nicole Christensen and her team for facilitating this performance.

#### **MIDDLE HARBOUR YACHT CLUB FLAGSTAFF MARINE AUSTRALIANA TWILIGHT SERIES**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to congratulate the Middle Harbour Yacht Club on their success in the Flagstaff Marine Australiana Twilight Race held last month. In Division 1 Mitch White co-skippered with his ten year old daughter Eden on Little Nico took out first place. Highly Sprung skippered by Mark Spring came second, closely followed by Gambler skippered by Catherine Thornton-Rofe. In Division 2 Artemis skippered by Tracy Richardson won, followed by Impulse skippered by Derek Minihane in second place, and Renaissance skippered by Mike Lowry in third. In Division 3 Fourth Dimension IV skippered by Adam Griffin came first followed by Elysium in second and Slac n Off in third. In Division 4 Happy Hour skippered by Harry Brigden took out first, followed by Wild Spirit and Cutting Loose. In the Women's Twilight Series the winners were Gambler in Division 1, Artemis in Division 2, Freedom in Division 3, and Wild Spirit in Division 4. Congratulations to all of the men and women from the Middle Harbour Yacht Club who participated or took home honours, and thank you to the Club for hosting the event and representing our community.

#### **REVATHY OF ELIZABETH MACARTHUR HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I congratulate Revathy of Elizabeth Macarthur High School on her performance at the Australian Poetry Slam, NSW State Final at Customs House in Circular Quay. Revathy's first poem titled 'Knowledge is Power' was a social commentary on the importance of a girl's education, particularly in disadvantaged areas across the globe. After a close contest Revathy placed top 5 in the NSW for the Australian Poetry Slam. This is an outstanding achievement and one to be proud of, congratulations once again Revathy.

#### **LUCEY OF LUDDENHAM PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I acknowledge Lucey in 5/6 of Luddenham Public School who has recently donated her hair to Variety Hair with Heart charity and raised over seven hundred dollars. The funds raised through Hair with Heart and the proceeds from the hair donated, support Variety's grants and programs for kids who are sick, disadvantaged or who have special needs. Lucey's hair will go towards a wig for a child in need. This is the second time Lucey has donated her hair. I commend Lucey on her thoughtful and selfless gesture, this is one to be very proud of and I wish Lucey all the best in her future endeavours.

#### **CAMDEN HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2021**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—Congratulations to High School Certificate [HSC] Class of 2021 of Camden High School on their admirable results. These results reflect the student's tenacity to successes throughout the past two extremely difficult senior years. Congratulations to 2021 Dux Kyle Hill who received an ATAR of 98.35 and Tylar Dupond who received an ATAR of 91.25. I also acknowledge the students who were recognised as Distinguished Achievers who received a Band 6/E4 result in individual subjects. Congratulations to, Amelia Smith, Kyle Hill, Tylar Dupond, Yingshan Wu, Sarah Fox, Grant Taylor, Clair Jones, Amelia Mangan, Luke Crotty, Chloe Angilley and Madeline Sharp. Well done and I wish you all the best as you move into your next adventures.

**MARRAR BOMBERS TAKE ON AFL SOUTHERN NSW WOMEN'S COMPETITION**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—Congratulations to the newly formed Marrar Bombers Women's AFL team, competing in the Southern NSW Women's competition. The Marrar Bombers, part of the Marrar Football and Netball Club Inc, have created history as the town's first ever women's footy team with a recent win against Narrandera a bonus feather in their cap. The team comprises of 27 women, Caitlin Kelly, Issy Cunningham, Caitlin Rynehart, Kadison Hofert, Courtney Carroll, Hannah Lenon, Erin Lenon, Bella Hofert, Emily Morton, Sophie McRae, Kaitlin McRae, Alicia Rynehart, Daisee Pless, Ruby Ceeney, Meg Wallace, Ash Grentell, Maddy Lawler, Hannah Jackson, Olivia Jury, Amy Whyte, Maddison Dickinson, Katelan Whitton, Charlotte Nugent, Maddy Walshe, Maddy Haggard, Lily Murphy and Mikayla Boots. A massive thank you goes to the coach Shane Lenon with the support of Pat Knagge, Sam Turner, Jackson Moye, Zach Walgers and Cane Graetz. The girls are commended for stepping up and getting involved. I hope to have a run with them all very soon!

**RETIREMENT OF PHIL SMITH, GUNDAGAI**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—I would like to thank Phil Smith for his 27 years of service to the 313 Fire & Rescue Brigade at Gundagai Station as he enters retirement. With age comes experience and in his time at the station, Phil has acted as a mentor for many new and existing members. Leading by example, Phil has encouraged and inspired countless locals to join the brigade including his son Brad. Emergency services play a crucial role and although it can be rewarding at times, being a first responder is no easy job, it takes a lot of courage and patience to help out those in need. I applaud and sincerely thank Phil for his length of service to the community which he should be very proud. Phil leaves behind a great legacy at the 313 brigade being well respected and trusted throughout the small community of Gundagai, Phil was a perfect fit for the team and will be sorely missed. I wish Phil all the best in his retirement.

**YOUNG HERITAGE MOTOR CLUB INC.**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—I am delighted to have been contacted by the Young Heritage Motor Club Inc. recently to advise they will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary later this year. It is wonderful to learn of their new Club Rooms, located under the newly refurbished Young Showground Grandstand. This is a great move to have made as they begin to prepare for their 50th celebrations, which is hoped to include a heritage vehicle rally in November. This sounds like a tremendous drawcard for visitors to the Hilltops region. I also take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the Young Showground Trust for their support of the Young Heritage Motor Club. From 7 founding members in 1972, the Club now enjoys 135 members with 164 heritage registered vehicles from right across the broader Hilltops region. It is my pleasure to congratulate all involved in Young Heritage Motor Club and I wish them all the very best for this, their 50th Year.

**IGA NORTH WYONG**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)**—IGA North Wyong was founded in 2003, and have been operating and providing groceries for the community since. I would like to acknowledge their contributions to the community furthermore. Recently Damien Maddocks and Ali Buxton of IGA North Wyong team have supported Wyong Public School through the Community Chest initiative which raises money in a number of ways. IGA kindly contributed \$1334 to Wyong Public School for sporting, iCentre and other projects. Thank you Damien and Ali for all your contributions to the community.

**LAUREN STURGESS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—The COVID-19 pandemic placed an enormous strain on our healthcare and frontline workers, and I am proud to highlight Lauren Sturgess' efforts during this difficult phase. Beginning her career as an assistant in nursing some 18 years ago, Lauren stepped up as Acting Director of Nursing and Midwifery at St. George Hospital during the pandemic. In this role, Lauren ensured the hospital was prepared for surges during the pandemic: incorporating facility infrastructure changes, the go-live of the COVID precinct, and preparing staff accommodation. Her colleagues commend her for pioneering a new 'team nursing model' allowing the hospital to safely manage ICU demand. For these efforts, I am honoured to nominate Lauren for the 2022 Local Woman of the Year Award for her efforts in Public Health. I congratulate Lauren, along with the team at St. George Hospital for their efforts in supporting our community during in the pandemic.

**ST GEORGE ART SOCIETY**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—I speak to highlight the work of the St. George Art Society's Online Exhibition. Ordinarily this exhibition was held at the Annual Art Show at the Kogarah School of Arts. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic this has not been possible, and so the Society held its exhibition online. In total,

39 members of the Society entered 147 beautiful artworks on display. Award winners across seven categories were judged by Dario Falzon. The Mitzi Tilley Excellence Award was awarded to 'Beyond Blue', a beautiful painting by indigenous artist Bree Riley. It is an inspiration to know that St. George is home to so many talented artists, and I note the Society's involvement in assisting with our recent and very successful Lunar New Year artwork competition. Congratulations to everyone involved, and I look forward to seeing the Society's next exhibition in person at the conclusion of the year.

#### **NANCY KOZAROVSKI**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—A warm congratulations to Ms Nancy Kozarowski on receiving the Business Person of the Year Award at the recent St. George Local Business Awards. Nancy heads up Bridge St. Kids Early Learning Centre, which operate two centres in my electorate. Their first centre opened in Hurstville in March 2017, followed by a second centre in Bexley. Bridge St. Kids caters for children aged from six weeks old to school age and is proud to have achieved a Department of Education rating of 'Exceeding' the National Quality Framework. They operate with continued distinction, winning the Early Childhood category both in 2019 and 2020 and placing as finalists in 2021. I congratulate Ms Kozarowski and her team of passionate and dedicated educators, and I wish them the very best of success in the future.

#### **MR STANLEY WING AND MRS MERLE WING'S 65TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I am delighted to congratulate Mr Stanley Wing and Mrs Merle Wing of Georges Hall on their 65th 'Blue Sapphire' Wedding Anniversary. Stanley and Merle married on February 2, 1957, in St Anne's Church, Strathfield. They have been residents of Georges Hall since 1975, after retiring from their own business, 'Wing's Glass', which they operated in Fairfield. Stanley and Merle have three children, Sharon, Phillip, and Andrew, and now have six grandchildren. Prior to marrying Merle, Stanley joined the Citizen's Military Force in 1953, becoming an officer in 1958. Stanley and Merle moved to the Donington Gardens Retirement Village in Georges Hall seven years ago, where they met several wonderful friends and are enjoying the village life. Earlier this month, they were joined by their family and friends at Donington Gardens to celebrate their wedding anniversary. Once again, I wish Mr Stanley and Mrs Merle Wing a very happy 65th Wedding Anniversary, and I am pleased the occasion was warmly celebrated with family and friends.

#### **SIR JOSEPH BANKS HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—On behalf of our local community, I would like to congratulate the graduating class of 2021, along with our hard working teachers and educators on the recent HSC results. The HSC is an exceptionally stressful time for students, teachers, and parents, and combined with the move to remote learning, this makes the improvements we have seen over the past year even more impressive. I take this opportunity to congratulate Sir Joseph Banks High School on their improved success rate which increased from 0.89 per cent in 2020 to 3.13 per cent in 2021. I would like to thank all of this year's HSC students for their incredible work, and the impressive level of adaptability they have all demonstrated during such challenging times. I am very proud of the students in our community, and their terrific achievements. I would also like to thank the Principal Mr Murray Kitteringham of Sir Joseph Banks High School, teachers, and administrative staff, who have provided immeasurable assistance to the HSC students. I also acknowledge the parents and guardians of students of Sir Joseph Banks High School who have worked tirelessly throughout the last year to support our students.

#### **MOUNT ST JOSEPH CATHOLIC COLLEGE MILPERRA**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—On behalf of our local community, I would like to congratulate the graduating class of 2021, along with our hard working teachers and educators on the recent HSC results. The HSC is an exceptionally stressful time for students, teachers, and parents, and combined with the move to remote learning, this makes the improvements we have seen over the past year even more impressive. I take this opportunity to congratulate Mount St Joseph Catholic College Milperra on their improved success rate which increased from 9.84 per cent in 2020 to 10.49 per cent in 2021, surpassing the state average of 5.47 per cent. I would like to thank all of this year's HSC students for their incredible work, and the impressive level of adaptability they have all demonstrated during such challenging times. I am very proud of the students in our community, and their terrific achievements. I thank the Principal Mrs Narelle Archer of Mount St Joseph Catholic College, teachers, and administrative staff, who have provided immeasurable assistance to the HSC students. I also acknowledge the parents and guardians of students of Mount St Joseph Catholic College who have worked tirelessly throughout the last year to support our students.

#### **GOSFORD HOSPITAL PATIENT EXPERIENCE OFFICERS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—In 2021 Central Coast Local Health District celebrated the hard work and dedication of team members in a challenging year through the Caring for the Coast Awards. Team of the Year

was awarded to Gosford Hospital's fantastic Patient Experience Officers; Lisa, Ashleigh and Emily. They act as the communication between Emergency Department patients and clinical staff, providing comfort and warmth in stressful scenarios. I would also like to recognise the other finalists in the category – the Maternity Services leadership team and the Public Health Unit who have both faced extremely challenging circumstances in the last year. The Caring for the Coast awards recognise excellence in the core values of collaboration, openness, respect and empowerment. Thank you to Central Real Capital, The University of Newcastle and Freemasons Central Coast for sponsoring the event. Congratulations again to the Patient Experience Officers.

### **CCAS BEACH VOLLEYBALL**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Thanks to the Central Coast Academy of Sport, 2021/22 will be the first season that aspiring Central Coast athletes will be able to participate in a pathway designed to assist them in progressing to higher representation in Volleyball. Mister Speaker, this is an exciting partnership with Volleyball NSW and well suited to our region given the Central Coast's great local beaches. The program is open to male and female athletes born between 2004 and 2011. It was exciting to hear this announcement which coincided with the opening game of Volleyball NSW's annual Beach Volleyball Tour at Avoca Beach in October last year. I would like to wish the best of luck to Tye McGann who has been appointed the Program and Strength & Conditioning Manager of the new program in his new role. I would also like to wish the best of luck to the up and coming athletes who will greatly benefit from the introduction of Beach Volleyball into the Academy's offering.

### **LARA CHECK**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Lara for dominating the state and national athletics scene in Australia, Lara now has her eyes set on international success. The Nowra High School student has accepted an athletic scholarship to study exercise science at Marshall University West Virginia. Lara had received a few messages from colleges through social media after they found her on the athletics world ranking list. Attending a collage gives Lara the chance to train and study on campus in a team environment all while being financially supported to pursue her dreams. As part of the full scholarship which is worth up \$300,000 all of Lara's campus and meet accommodation, meals, flights, tuition, books and medical expenses are all covered, as well as a Nike sponsorship deal. So again a huge congratulations to Lara this is very rewarding and something to be very proud of, I wish you all the best with your future and every success with your upcoming events competing in the NCAA National Collegiate Athletic Association.

### **JENI WILCOCK - SUTHERLAND SHIRE LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I congratulate Jeni Wilcock of Lilli Pilli for being named Business Person of the Year at the 2022 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. A Director of Sullivan Dewing Chartered Accountants and Business Builders in Caringbah, Jeni uses her passion, enthusiasm and common sense approach to help business owners and individuals achieve excellent financial results. She delights in growing clients' businesses and building their personal wealth through solid and intelligent strategies, with a core business ethic of caring for clients, and the overriding principle of achieving the best financial outcome every single time. Sullivan Dewing credits Jeni's strong and inspiring leadership for the continued growth of the business. They say Jeni's laser focus and genuine interest in all client businesses and their ultimate success has allowed Sullivan Dewing to help many companies to survive and thrive in uncertain business conditions. This was Jeni's first time taking part in the business person of the year awards and I congratulate her on her success in winning the award and her contribution to the business community in the Sutherland Shire.

### **DINA OSGOOD AND STEVE WILLETT - LILLI PILLI FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I commend Dina Osgood for her service as registrar of the Lilli Pilli Football Club. Dina is stepping back from her role on the executive team having been a tireless volunteer over the last five years. This has been in a period where there were about 10,000 registrations to approve. Whether it has been the flood of emails, the many steps required behind the scenes, the many questions and the hundreds of requests, the club says Dina has taken everything in her stride and has done a remarkable job with patience, persistence and professionalism. I acknowledge and thank Dina Osgood for her contribution to Lilli Pilli Football Club and the community. I recognise Steve Willett for his dedicated work in leadership positions at the Lilli Pilli Football Club over the last 20 years. Until recently Steve was the long-time treasurer of the club, having been secretary prior to that. The club has appreciated Steve's dedicated approach to steering the financials through a significant period of their history. I commend and thank Steve Willett for his hard work for Lilli Pilli Football Club and the community.

**ASQUITH GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL, YEAR 12 2021, ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—Today I would like to recognize the significant achievements by the 2021 Year 12 students of Asquith Girls High School. The top ATAR for the 2021 HSC was attained by Alison Carr, who achieved an exceptional result of 98.80. Congratulations Alison on this amazing result! The overall result for Asquith Girls High School in 2021 HSC, was an impressive 20th in the State. 54 students achieved a Band 6 result in at least one subject, which represents a mark of 90 per cent or higher. Other significant achievements of note from AGHS, Year 12 2021, students include; Languages: Elin Do - achieving 5th in the state for HSC French Beginners Drama: Sophia Higgs - Brent Street full-time Musical Theatre course for 2022 Sassy Soupdis - cast in an international film Jorja McHenry and Leah McCudden - the Griffin Theatre Ambassadors Program for 2022

**CARLA PITMAN, NSW CHS BLUE AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN BASKETBALL**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—Today I would like to pass my congratulations on to Carla Pitman, a former student at Asquith Girls High School, from the Year 12 2021 cohort. Carla was recently awarded a NSW CHS Blue for her achievements in Basketball. This highly prestigious award is given to a maximum of two students from each gender, in each sport, across NSW in a calendar year. Carla is in esteemed company, joining an elite list of former winners, including former Olympian and Australian Opals player, Lauren Jackson. Well done Carla. I look forward to following your progress in the coming years.

**PENNANT HILLS HIGH SCHOOL 2021 HSC RESULTS**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—I am very pleased to recognize the 2021 HSC results from one of my local schools. Last year's Year 12 students faced the challenges of the HSC during a pandemic, and it was extremely heartening to see so many extraordinary HSC achievements attained by students from Pennant Hills High School. I would also like to recognize the support provided by both teachers and parents, of Year 12 students, to create the most suitable environment possible. Their considerable efforts helped students attain the best result they were capable of achieving. Pennant Hills High School dux for 2021 was awarded to Emma Loch, who recorded an ATAR of 98.15. Emma also earned a place on the prestigious NSW Educational Standards Authority, All Rounders List for scoring straight Band 6 results. This achievement is very impressive and I know Emma's school community and family are extremely proud. Special mentions to Chelsea Steele who was selected to exhibit her Visual Arts Major Work in ARTEXPRESS, and to Lauren Fox who was selected to exhibit her Textiles Work in Shape. In addition, Year 11 student, Greer Townsend, was selected to perform her HSC Major Work at CALLBACK.

**ST GEORGE BRASS BAND**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—I recognise President, Mark Croucher and the entire St George Brass Band team for their ongoing commitment to nurturing up and coming talent within our local music community. The St George Brass Band is based in both Mortdale and Bexley, with rehearsals taking place every Wednesday evening at the Bexley School of Arts. It was an honour to drop into a rehearsal night to listen to the outstanding music being played by individuals from all age groups. The organisation proudly caters for individuals of all skill levels across all different types of brass instruments. This is what makes the St George Brass Band such an inclusive and successful team. The St George Brass Band is now home to over 40 members with many performing in elite competitions and at a variety of community events. I am pleased to see that enrolment numbers are increasing with many more young people now choosing to become involved in playing brass instruments. I look forward to seeing many more success stories from the St George Brass Band in the future.

**ST GEORGE DISTRICT NETBALL**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—I congratulate the St George District Netball Association on receiving an important funding investment from the NSW Government. Thanks to the Community Building Partnership grant, the St George District Netball Association has received \$40,000 to upgrade their storage facilities. It was an honour to join my Parliamentary colleagues, the Member for Rockdale, Steve Kamper and the Member for Kogarah, Chris Minns, on game day to announce the funding. The St George District Netball Association has teams across all age divisions and abilities playing on weekends and training during the week in Rockdale and their courts are the home of netball in our region. This funding will ensure that equipment can be stored safely and securely all year round. With participation rates growing ever higher within our local netball community, these upgraded facilities are great news for players and members of the association. I want to thank the President of the St George Netball Association, Tairua Ben-Vavia and the entire team for all of their hard work and commitment to our local netball community.



**GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE GRANT PRESENTATION**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Georges River Life Care is an outstanding local organisation that has been busy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, providing food and support services to individuals and families in need. I would like to congratulate the organisation on receiving much needed funding from the NSW Government to upgrade their relief centre in Peakhurst. Thanks to the NSW Government's COVID-19 Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Infrastructure Grant Program, the organisation has received \$50,000 for these upgrades. This will provide additional lighting and carpet, a new suspended ceiling and an external weatherproof awning. These upgrades will improve the overall look, feel and practicality of the space and this is fantastic news for staff and the community. I wish to thank Glenn and Karen Power, Scott Morrison and the entire team, for all of their hard work and their continued commitment to helping individuals and families in need. This revitalised and upgraded relief centre will continue to provide food and essential items through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Thank you again to Georges River Life Care for all of your outstanding work.

**COOGEE SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD – WULAN YULIANTARA, COOGEE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to recognise the 2021 winner of the Coogee Social Impact awards for Coogee Primary School, Wulan Yuliantara. The Coogee Social Impact Award recognises a student who has shown outstanding commitment to their classmates, their school and their community. Wulan is a quiet achiever, always gives it her best and with a smile. She has achieved great academic success in all curriculum areas and has always been very helpful to other students. Wulan is a team player who displays grit and brings creative ideas to group projects, whilst also remaining a humble and caring class member who always thinks of others. Wulan her class as an SRC member and is well respected by her peers and both her teachers and classmates agree that she is a very worthy recipient of this award. Congratulations Wulan.

**COOGEE SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD – VIVIAN BARILA, ST MARGARET MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to recognise the 2021 winner of the Coogee Social Impact awards St Margaret Mary's Primary School, Vivian Barila. The Coogee Social Impact Award recognises a student who has shown outstanding commitment to their classmates, their school and their community. Vivian is a mature young person who is invariably courteous. She has a respectful manner, and a beautiful way of connecting with her classmates and teachers. In her time at St Margaret Mary's she has consistently been a positive influence to others, in particular in her role as a Student Leader of the SRC and as a kindergarten buddy. Her kindness and nurturing nature is self-evident and has led her to be aware of others and their feelings. She also takes a conciliatory role when there is conflict in the classroom and she is counted on to be honest and non-partisan in her approach to the resolution of that conflict. Congratulation Vivian, a thoroughly deserving winner.

**COOGEE SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD – LEO OLIVER, CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to recognise the 2021 winner of the Coogee Social Impact awards for Clovelly Primary School, Leo Oliver. The Coogee Social Impact Award recognises a student who has shown outstanding commitment to their classmates, their school and their community. Leo is a courteous and polite student who has shown outstanding commitment to the school community throughout his years at Clovelly Primary School. He possesses an outstanding strength of character, always striving to be a positive role model and achieve his best both in and out of the classroom. Leo's strong humanitarian values and the care he places towards the environment are a fantastic influence on many. He's a student that proactively looks at where he can assist his peers and teachers, whatever the situation. His teachers at Clovelly Public School tell me that these wonderful attributes are all values that the school holds dear and that Leo is a great role model for the school. Congratulations Leo.

**KIMBERLY BENDER AND BRITTANY WOOD**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise Kimberly Bender and Brittany Wood. Last June, Kimberly Bender and her daughter Brittany Wood made a surprise visit to the Ronald McDonald House at Orange, bearing gifts. Kimberly and Brittany responded to a callout on social media platforms for donations of much-needed items, arriving on the doorstep of Ronald McDonald House with bag-loads of goods to support the sick children and families staying at the house. Kimberly and Brittany are passionate supporters of this charitable foundation, and happily outlaid hundreds of dollars of their own money to purchase items for donation to help keep that vital facility going. The items they donated included colouring-in books and pencils, games and toys, groceries, snacks and toiletries. Brittany has previously been actively involved in supporting a Wear Red Day fundraiser when she was at school, and went on to work at McDonalds where she was involved in annual fundraising events. Brittany now works at the Orange Hospital, where she has grown an even greater appreciation

of the important function served by Ronald McDonald House in caring for families from across the region. I applaud their thoughtfulness and generosity. Well done Kimberly and Brittany.

### **THE ORANGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND COLOUR CITY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA CONCERT 2022**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I recognise the Orange Symphony Orchestra and Colour City Chamber Orchestra Concert, held at the Orange Civic Centre on 20th February 2022. Following two previously arranged orchestral concerts which were cancelled due to COVID, the orchestras succeeded in performing to a full house. Orange is awash with musical talent, and is exemplified by the performance delivered by these local orchestras. I congratulate Robin Thompson OAM, President of the Orange Symphony Orchestra, on coordinating this successful event. I thank the local sponsors who financially supported the event, for the enjoyment of our art-loving community. Proceeds of the event were donated to the Orange Push for Palliative.

### **EASTERN CREEK RECYCLING ECOLOGY PARK**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Friday 18th February 2022, I toured Bingo Industries Eastern Creek Recycling Ecology Park with my NSW Labor Parliamentary colleagues Stephen Bali MP, Member for Blacktown, Edmond Atalla MP, Member for Mount Druitt and Penny Sharpe MLC, Shadow Minister for the Environment. During the tour, we observed the future timber shredding and processing building and the future green waste processing building, along with learning about the landfill gas capture project and recycling optimisation project. All of which support Bingo's vision of a waste free Australia. We learnt about the company's strategy to divert materials from landfill through a recycling-led solution. It was good to see this innovative and technology driven facility and to have important discussions about the waste industry with environment, construction and engineering specialists. Thank you to Chris Jeffrey, Chief Executive Officer, Chris Gordon, General Manager: Corporate Development, Brad Searle, Environment, Approvals and Regulatory Compliance Manager, Jason Goodman, Head of Engineering and Constructions, Simon Sherwood, General Manager: Operational Development, and Mike Wilson, Head of Safety for an informative and interesting tour.

### **THIRUKKURAL – A UNIVERSAL GUIDE**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Tuesday 15th February 2022, I was proud to host an event for my good friend, Dr Chandrika Subramaniyan, at the Parliament of NSW. During the event, we celebrated the release of Chandrika's newest publication, Thirukkural – A Universal Guide. In the publication, Chandrika provides an insightful and philosophical analysis into the teachings of the Thirukkural, in a way that is digestible and relevant to students, scholars and contemporary readers. The publication is a fantastic example of the vibrant Tamil culture that we cherish in the Electorate of Prospect. It is important that we recognise and celebrate our literary and cultural history. We do this to ensure that these achievements continue to be deeply respected and their reverence maintained by future generations. I am proud to support the Australian Tamil community in Western Sydney, and to have the opportunity to collaborate with many Tamil organisations on cultural, social, and political matters. I would like to thank Chandrika Subramaniyan for acting as a powerful voice for our Tamil community. I would also like to congratulate Chandrika and wish her the best of success with her new publication.

### **WESTERN SYDNEY TWO BLUES**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Western Sydney Two Blues Rugby, formerly Parramatta Two Blues Rugby, was formed in 1879 and competes in the Shute Shield run by NSW Rugby Union. They are one of the oldest clubs in the Sydney Premier Rugby competition and has produced 19 Wallabies over the years, starting with the Bill Cerutti in 1936 and Eric Tweeddale in 1946 through to the club's current, Tatafu Polota-Nau. On Saturday 5 February the Two Blues hosted the NSW Waratahs in a series of trial matches at the new Eric Tweeddale Stadium in Granville Park in my electorate. There were numerous matches including Waratahs Vs West Harbour; Waratahs Vs Hunter Wildfires; Waratahs Vs Two Blues; West Harbour Vs Hunter Wildfires; West Harbour Vs Two Blues and Two Blues Vs Hunter Wildfires. As a long-time supporter of the Two Blues I was delighted to attend. As a long term advocate for the upgrade of Granville Stadium I was delighted to see the facility put to good use. My thanks go to President, Scott Rogan and General Manager, Christian Burden for their kind invitation.

### **BOMBING OF DARWIN AND BILL HUDSON**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—The 19 February 2022 marked the 80th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin and the re-dedication of "Darky" Hudson Memorial in Charles Mance Reserve, Merrylands. I joined Merrylands RSL sub-Branch's commemorative service where I heard Mr Hudson's daughter Ms Wendy Hudson speak about his service. Mr Wilbert Hudson was a Gunner with the Australian Army and the first recipient of the Military Medal for bravery against the enemy on Australian soil. He was stationed in Darwin and on the day, he was in the shower but heard the gunfire so put on a towel, his coat and boots. He went to his Lewis gun to shoot

the planes down and in his own words "hit one fair and square." He was later known as the "naked gun" because his towel dropped. He was born in Merrylands in 1920 and after his marriage in 1945, Mr Hudson and his wife moved to Greystanes. My thanks go to Mr Frank Vella, Honorary Secretary, Mr Rob Grimley, President and the members of the Merrylands RSL sub-branch for their kind invitation and Ms Hudson for telling Mr Hudson's story in his own words.

#### **BOMBARDIER BRENTON BYRNE**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—It took five gruelling days, but Bombardier Brenton Byrne completed a 224-kilometre pack march to raise funds for the Black Dog Institute. Bombardier Byrne walked from his base at Kapooka, near Wagga Wagga, to his home town of Goolgowi, carrying an 18-kilogram pack in November 2021. His gruelling schedule saw him cover a distance greater than a marathon each day. He was motivated by the loss of his own father to suicide in 2009, as well as more recent devastating events that have impacted the Goolgowi community. Bombardier Byrne set an initial fundraising target of \$10,000 and I understand achieved more than five times that. He also hoped to encourage people to start conversations about mental health. His efforts won the support of not only his hometown, but his military colleagues at Kapooka, the "home of the soldier". As Phoebe Collins, the community fundraising manager at The Black Dog Institute, has pointed out, Bombardier Byrne's achievement was "incredible" and will help future regional Australians receive vital mental health support. I commend Bombardier Byrne on his efforts to help start conversations about mental health and to raise funds for the Black Dog Institute.

#### **COUNCILLOR JAMES HAYES**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I wish to acknowledge Councillor James Hayes for his service to the community as the inaugural mayor of Snowy Valleys Council. Having previously served on Tumut Shire Council, Cr Hayes was elected to the first council of the newly formed Snowy Valleys Council in September 2017. While he has now completed his term as mayor, he continues to serve Snowy Valleys as a councillor. Not an advocate for forced mergers, Cr Hayes nonetheless worked hard for the amalgamated communities of the newly formed council, within the structure imposed, at a time of great controversy. In particular Cr Hayes strongly promoted the council's advocacy plan. Cr Hayes also led his community during a period of significant challenge, being impacted in fairly rapid succession, by drought, bushfires, flood concerns and then the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to particularly commend Cr Hayes for his leadership during the Dunns Road bushfire crisis, a time he describes as 50 days of stress and tension that deeply impacted the whole community. I look forward to continuing to work with Cr Hayes for the benefit of the Snowy Valleys communities in the future.

#### **REVEREND COLIN RUSH**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—For more than half a century, Reverend Colin Rush has dedicated himself to his community through his church, local government and many volunteer groups. This selfless dedication saw Reverend Rush recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] on Australia Day this year. Reverend Rush and his wife Ruth initially moved to Wagga in 1972 with the Royal Australian Air Force. They remained here after Reverend Rush was discharged from the RAAF due to increasing difficulties with his eyesight in 1983. During his decades of community service to many organisations, Reverend Rush was chair of the Gumly Private Irrigation District and devoted 17 years to volunteering at the St Vincent de Paul Society's Micah House. His volunteering with Carevan Wagga Wagga continues to this day. Reverend Rush served on Wagga Wagga City Council from 1987 to 1995 and the-then Southern Riverina County Council from 1991 to 1995. He has been able to share a love of music through membership of organisations including Cantilena Singers, Wollundry Singers and Wagga Wagga Pro Musica. I congratulate Reverend Rush on for his many years of dedication to the Wagga Wagga community and for being awarded an OAM.

#### **GLEBE COMMUNITY OP SHOP**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the Glebe Community Op Shop. The "Oppy", as affectionately referred to by Glebe locals, has been serving the Glebe Estate and beyond for decades. Thanks to its work, The Oppy has made sure locals in need have access to everything from clothing, electrical goods, and seasonal gifts, supporting the upkeep and expansion of vital local community services by forwarding funds to local projects. The Oppy has also helped communities overseas by providing used clothing, including previously sending 100 kilograms of clothing to Sri Lanka in the wake of the 2017 floods. In particular I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the team of volunteers who make the work of The Oppy possible, including: Carol Adams, Kerrie Bartholomew, Meredith Dreha, Dawn Hogan, Heather Murphy, Laurie Murphy, Marla Priest, Maria Qiovula, and Daphne Tarlington. On behalf of the people in the Balmain Electorate, thank you for making our community a better, more compassionate place to live for all our residents. Your commitment and close connection to the community have inspired us all.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 19:44 until  
Thursday 24 February 2022 at 09:30.**