



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday 24 February 2022**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 24 February 2022

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

**The Speaker** read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

### *Addresses*

#### HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINUM JUBILEE

**Debate resumed from 23 February 2022.**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (09:45):** I join members of this House in congratulating Her Majesty the Queen and the British people on the seventieth anniversary of her accession to the throne. Although I have been an ardent republican since I was a young child, the reality is that Australia continues to remain a constitutional monarchy, as do each of the States that make up the Commonwealth of Australia. I hold a constitutional position under the constitutional monarchy that provides for the Government of New South Wales. Now is not the time for me to advocate any views that are inconsistent with the current constitutional monarchy arrangements.

Her Majesty the Queen was born in the same year as my late mother, in 1926, and born on the same day that I was born, on 21 April. She ascended to the throne relatively unexpectedly. When she was born, it was never anticipated that she would realistically have been in the line of succession. It only occurred on the abdication of her uncle, King Edward VIII, which caused her father, King George VI, to be elevated to the throne. In 1952, 70 years ago, Her Majesty was embarking upon a tour of Commonwealth countries on behalf of her father, who was too ill to travel. While she was at a fishing lodge in Kenya with the Duke of Edinburgh, she was made aware of the passing of her father. She was 25 years of age. Because of Her Majesty's location at the time, she was probably one of the last people on the planet to find out about the passing of her father. She returned to the United Kingdom as soon as possible to take up her position on the throne. There was some delay in her coronation because of political reasons that suited the Prime Minister of the day, Sir Winston Churchill.

For the past 70 years, from when she was a young monarch to now, at the ripe old age of 95, Her Majesty has served her position on the throne with considerable distinction. She was the first British monarch to visit Australia, in 1954. She opened the New South Wales Parliament that year—normally opened by her representative, the Governor. During her 70 years on the throne, Queen Elizabeth II has endured personal heartbreak and, at times, the upheaval of her family.

Members of the royal family have been the subject of scandal and public scrutiny. Some of their innermost secrets were disclosed. But Her Majesty never deterred from the one true consistent position that she has always maintained in her life on the throne: her duty. She has been a remarkable symbol of stability for the British people, who operate without a written constitution in accordance with Westminster traditions and conventions—traditions and conventions that we are supposed to follow in this place but which sometimes members seem to depart from. It has been a remarkable success story that the British people have been able to operate under a constitutional monarchy, without written constitutional arrangements, simply on the basis of convention. The Queen has been a constant, stable source of unity in the governance of the United Kingdom.

Her Majesty has been popular and provided solid leadership to all Commonwealth nations, including Australia. She has kept confidential her conversations with Prime Ministers and presidents over the past 70 years, as have they. Virtually every Prime Minister of the United Kingdom has described the monarchy as "extraordinarily useful", and in their regular one-on-one meetings with Her Majesty benefited from her great counsel. Although her constitutional duty is to advise, counsel and warn, every Prime Minister who has served the United Kingdom under her reign, without disclosing the contents of their discussions with her, has described Her Majesty as having provided very useful input into their decision-making process and the direction that the British Government has taken.

The Queen has a keen understanding of the constitutional arrangements of the United Kingdom. She was extraordinarily well versed in the constitutional arrangements as a child, and her unique understanding ensured that she did not in any way intrude into the political process or the democratic process beyond the role of a sovereign. If you think back over the 70 years of her reign in the United Kingdom—the changes in Prime Ministers

and in governments, with their different philosophies—it is extraordinary that no-one knows what Her Majesty's personal view was on any matter at any point in time. She remarkably discharged her role as the sovereign without giving her personal views or opinions on anything, respecting the view and the will of the British people. Former Prime Minister Winston Churchill summed up her role as monarch by saying:

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.

Queen Elizabeth II has been extraordinarily popular. She is widely respected throughout the planet for the role that she has performed and the dignity she has brought to the throne. Irrespective of what anybody's views are about constitutional monarchies, everyone concedes that Her Majesty is a remarkable woman who has performed her task as monarch in a remarkable way. I congratulate The Queen on her platinum jubilee. I wish Her Majesty every success in the future and a long life.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (09:55):** It gives me great pleasure as an ardent monarchist, unlike the member for Heffron, to speak this morning about the platinum jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. At 2.40 a.m. on Wednesday 21 April 1926, baby Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was born to the future king and queen of England, the Duke and Duchess of York—later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. She was baptised by the Anglican Archbishop of York, Cosmo Gordon Lang, in a private chapel at Buckingham Palace on 29 May. She was named after her mother Elizabeth, the name Alexandra was taken from her paternal great grandmother, who had unfortunately passed away six months earlier, and then Mary, after her paternal grandmother.

During her grandfather's reign, Elizabeth was the third in line to the British throne after her uncle Edward—who became Edward VIII—and her father. Although her birth generated an enormous amount of public interest, she was never expected to become queen, as Edward was still young and very likely to marry and have children of his own, who would precede Elizabeth in the line of succession. When her grandfather died in 1936 and her uncle became Edward VIII, Princess Elizabeth became the second in line to the throne after her father.

As we know, later that year history changed and Edward VIII abdicated, after his proposed marriage to divorcee socialite Wallis Simpson provoked a constitutional crisis in Great Britain. Consequently, Elizabeth's father became King George VI. Since Elizabeth had no brothers, she then became the heir presumptive. Move forward to World War II, when the royal family played a pivotal role in supporting the British people and those of the Commonwealth, including Australia. Lord Hailsham suggested that Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret should be evacuated to Canada to avoid the frequent aerial bombings of London by the Luftwaffe during World War II. This idea was rejected by their mother, Queen Elizabeth, who declared:

The children won't go without me. I won't leave the King. And the King will never leave.

This made it very clear that the royal family were there to support the people of Great Britain and the Commonwealth. Post-war, one of the greatest partnerships of all time was formed when Elizabeth fell in love with the Duke of Edinburgh. In July 1939, Elizabeth, only 13 years old at the time, fell in love with Philip and they began to exchange letters. She was 21 years old when their engagement was officially announced on 9 July 1947. Of course, the rest is history: a 73-year partnership, which saw the Queen and her consort travel the globe representing the monarchy and all of the Commonwealth nations. Queen Elizabeth is the longest reigning monarch in British history. She ascended the throne on 6 February 1952 and this month marks 70 years since her accession to the throne. She is also the first British monarch to celebrate a platinum jubilee. The Accession Council met in London to pronounce her the successor to the throne when King George VI suddenly passed away when Princess Elizabeth was just 25 years old.

When her coronation took place the following year on 2 June 1953 at Westminster Abbey in London, Queen Elizabeth II was crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury. This was signified by the crowd chanting "God save the Queen" three times at the exact moment St Edward's Crown touched the monarch's head. I am very proud to say that every morning in this Chamber I also repeat the words "God save the Queen". The Archbishop of Canterbury has been responsible for conducting the coronation since the Norman conquest in England in 1066. But for the first time, in 1953, the moderator of the Church of Scotland also took part. Queen Elizabeth II is the sixth queen to have been crowned in Westminster Abbey in her own right. The first was Queen Mary I, who was crowned on 1 October 1553. The Queen's grandmother, Queen Mary, aged 81, was the first queen to see a grandchild ascend the throne. Sadly, she passed away before the coronation took place.

The coronation bouquet was made up of white flowers comprising orchids and lilies-of-the-valley from England, Stephanotis from Scotland, orchids from Wales, and carnations from Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. The Queen's coronation service lasted approximately three hours and fell into six parts: the recognition; the oath; the anointing; the investiture, which includes the crowning; the enthronement; and the homage. A total of 8,251 guests attended the ceremony and 129 nations and territories were officially represented at the coronation service. More than 2,000 journalists and 500 photographers from across 92 nations were on the coronation route.

Just under 30,000 men took part in the procession, including 2,000 from the Commonwealth. The sovereign procession was made up of 250 people, including church leaders, Commonwealth Prime Ministers, members of the royal household, civil and military leaders, and the Yeoman of the Guard.

The Queen was crowned in St Edward's Chair, made in 1300 for Edward I, which has been used at every coronation since that time and is permanently kept in Westminster Abbey. St Edward's Crown, made of solid gold and weighing approximately 4 pounds 12 ounces, was placed on the head of the Queen during the coronation service. After the crown, the orb is the most important piece of regalia. Also made in 1661, it is a globe of gold surrounded by a cross, girdled by a band of diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires and pearls, with a large amethyst at the summit. The Coronation Ring, known as the wedding ring of England, was placed on the Queen's fourth finger of her right hand in accordance with tradition. It was made for the coronation of King William IV in 1831. The ring has been worn at every coronation since, except by Queen Victoria, whose fingers were so small that the ring could not be reduced in size enough to fit her finger.

Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh, wore full naval dress uniform for the journey to and from Westminster Abbey for the coronation ceremony. While in the abbey he wore a coronet and his Duke's robe over his uniform. The Queen's coronation dress, designed by British fashion designer Norman Hartnell, was made of white satin and embroidered with the emblems of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth in gold and silver. On her way to the coronation, Her Majesty wore the George IV State Diadem, which was made in 1820 as depicted by the stamp on the crown. It features roses, shamrocks, thistles, 1,333 diamonds and 169 pearls. Since the coronation the Queen has worn the coronation dress six times, including for opening parliaments in New Zealand, and in Australia in 1954.

When the 27-year-old Queen sailed into Sydney Harbour on 3 February 1954, she practically stopped a nation. Her after rival at Farm Cove, where Captain Arthur Phillip raised the British flag 165 years before her, attracted an estimated one million onlookers, and as the Premier said yesterday, in a city with a population of just over 1.8 million, it goes to show the love we had for the new Queen. Amalgamated Wireless Australia helped make history when it filmed the Queen setting foot on Australian soil and relayed the footage to the spastic centre in Mosman—thus the arrival of the Royals became the first televised event in Australia. In 1954 the Royal Tour was a much-anticipated event after planning commenced in 1949 for King George VI to visit Australia. However, due to the King's illness and later passing, Princess Elizabeth and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, came in his place. Her Royal Highness was at a safari lodge in Kenya when she was notified of her father's death. She returned to England and was pronounced Queen.

On 4 February 1954 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth attended the Parliament of New South Wales. The Queen's attendance at this event marked the first time that a reigning monarch had ever opened an Australian Parliament. Queen Elizabeth is the first and, to date, the only reigning British monarch to visit Australia. The Royals visited 57 towns and cities during the 58 days they spent in Australia, and during their 10 days in New South Wales they attended 28 major programs with events scheduled for mornings, afternoons and evenings—they were unstoppable. Queen Elizabeth's days varied from cultural watching, a surf lifesaving demonstration at Bondi Beach, to addressing 107,000 schoolchildren at three outdoor venues.

To put this in context, the Queen has visited Australia more than 15 times. On the visit in 1973 the Queen officially opened the iconic Sydney Opera House. In 1977 the Queen visited Australia, which marked her silver jubilee. As a sprightly 5-year-old I vividly recall the Queen's visit to Adelaide for her silver jubilee and the arrival of the royal yacht, *Britannia*. I recall being on the rope line in Rundle Mall when the Queen was meeting people, for which she has become famous. During her visit in 1977, she also opened the brand-new Festival Theatre in Adelaide. The Queen has attended other openings of landmarks since, including the Parramatta Stadium in 1986. She visited again in 1988 for the bicentennial celebrations, which commemorated 200 years since Captain Arthur Phillip's arrival with 11 ships of the First Fleet in Sydney Harbour. The Queen's most recent visit to Australia was in 2011. Her last visit to New South Wales in 2006 when she opened a new section of the Opera House.

The Queen has overseen 15 Australian Prime Ministers since her accession to the throne, including 20 Premiers in New South Wales. Sadly last year, after 74 years of marriage, the Queen mourned the loss of her life partner, Prince Philip. This puts into context her amazing reign—70 years of faithful, dutiful public service, of which she holds the highest standards. Even the most ardent Republican, the member for Heffron, who was in the Chamber earlier, admitted that because of the Queen's professionalism, poise and compassion there is no way anyone cannot be in awe of what she has achieved. Many of us come to Parliament to serve the public, but none of us can imagine serving the public for 70 years. Again, it is a testament to her commitment to the people of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, which she has served for so long. She well respected by so many people. On behalf of the Central Coast community and the residents across New South Wales, I thank Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth for her seven decades of service to the Crown, her country and the Commonwealth. God save the Queen!

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (10:08):** Today I am privileged to speak in celebration and honour of Her Majesty's platinum jubilee year. The celebration of the jubilee year has been a little bit sad in recent days with the announcement that the Queen is fighting COVID. I extend to the Queen my personal prayers and best wishes for a speedy recovery. As we in this Chamber and around the Commonwealth celebrate, we would be wise not to think of Her Majesty's reign as one of ruler or master. We should all seek to remind ourselves of the words Her Majesty spoke on 21 April 1947:

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.

Even before ascending to the throne, on her twenty-first birthday the young Princess Elizabeth declared to herself, the people of Britain and the Commonwealth that her life would be dedicated to the service of others. Much like the duty we owe here in this Chamber to our constituents, Her Majesty the Queen has for the past 70 years set the example for what true service looks like. Throughout her reign, Her Majesty has been a witness to 15 Australian Prime Ministers and seen global events that have transformed the very fabric of our global community. Her Majesty's service to the people has never wavered and has continued to be an anchor of stability despite the turbulence of conflict, politics and moments of significant upheaval.

Her Majesty's accession to the throne was not easy, nor was it a simple transition. The Second World War had taken its toll on Her Majesty's father, King George VI, and he was in declining health. Marred by lung cancer, His Majesty the King sent Princess Elizabeth in his place on a tour of Australia and New Zealand by way of Kenya. Whilst in Kenya, Princess Elizabeth was struck with the news that her father had passed in the early hours of the morning. When asked to choose her regnal name, she chose "Elizabeth" and said, "Of course," because that was her name. It was an immediate show of confidence in herself and the confidence she would demonstrate in the early years of her reign. The next three months of Her Majesty's reign were spent in mourning for her father, after which she moved into Buckingham Palace, fully stepped into her role as monarch and opened her first session of Parliament. This began a reign spanning more decades than any other British monarch's reign in history and a period of service unmatched by any leader.

In 1953 Her Majesty embarked on a six-month tour of the Commonwealth, during which she became the first reigning monarch to visit Australia. It was then that she was greeted by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, the first of 15 Australian Prime Ministers she would see come and go during her reign. Her Majesty's relationship with Australia and Australian Prime Ministers has been significant. She has travelled to all the States, leaving her impression and mark on the entire Australian population. The Hon. Robert Menzies was a very enthusiastic and passionate supporter of the monarchy and had a knighthood conferred on him by the Queen in 1963. It was during a royal tour of Australia that Her Majesty defied centuries of royal tradition when she casually strolled through the streets of Sydney to greet crowds of people in person rather than secluding herself in her personal vehicle at a distance. The Queen became more connected with her people. In turn, the people were able to form a closer, more personal connection with Her Majesty.

Some of the most important developments in human history have occurred during the 70 years of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Her Majesty has the advantage of claiming what few others can, and that is the fact that she has been a witness to some of the most significant global events that have transformed the global population. Her reign has seen some of the greatest evolutions in technology. Her Majesty was the first head of state to send an email and saw the first humans enter into space. She saw the invention of the personal computer and the evolution of telecommunications technology, the internet, the mobile phone as we know it today, and rapid communication of information, including by new means such as social media platforms. These technologies are what transformed humanity's ability to tackle our greatest challenges and help us to learn from the past to do our best for the future. No leader has seen greater change in their period of service than Her Majesty has.

Aside from technological developments, an important part of Her Majesty's reign was her ability to handle periods of times where humanity was at its most fragile. Her reign saw through the Cold War, when global superpowers stood on the edge of a war that no-one could come back from. Perhaps the most important period of time during Her Majesty's reign was seeing nations move out of the British Empire. During the 1960s and 1970s, over 20 nations declared their independence from Britain. This period of decolonisation was not met with violence or great division amongst peoples but rather a resounding echo of peace and grace. Most importantly, she accepted the people's democratic will, ensuring a lasting peace and creating lasting relationships with these nations for generations to come. Slowly the Queen saw the transition of a Britain once ruling from horizon to horizon into a peaceful and critical component of a new global chapter that led to the creation of the European Union and other global partnerships to usher in a new era of peace and cooperation.

In the midst of all these life-changing events and moments of leadership that others can only aspire to achieve, Her Majesty has raised a family, which has grown evermore with grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who might one day look to her leadership and carry out the style of leadership that Her Majesty has demonstrated

to the global community. Her Majesty has endured through the most fraught periods in human history as well as those that have lifted humanity to some of our greatest heights. Similarly, she has endured personally from the death of her father to the death of her husband, Prince Philip. It was also he, Prince Philip, who helped guide her through her reign. She has remarked that he was, quite simply, her stay and her strength for all her years of marriage and that both her family and many nations owe him a debt greater than we shall ever know.

The Commonwealth has been steered calmly and gracefully by Her Majesty, who has remained committed to her declaration of service that she made so many years ago. The commitment to leadership that Her Majesty has carried out is something that all leaders should aspire to in the same fashion. Throughout it all, Her Majesty has handled her reign gracefully. The Queen played a momentous role in ensuring the stability of a changing world, refraining from intervening, upholding her duties as the head of state and constitutional leader of nations skilfully. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has been in service to her people over arguably the most significant 70 years this world has ever seen.

**Debate interrupted.**

### *Bills*

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (DISQUALIFICATION FROM CIVIC OFFICE) BILL 2020**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:16):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2020 was introduced into the other place on 25 February 2020 and is in the same form. The second reading speech was given on 27 February 2020 and appears at pages 2,006 to 2,008 in the *Hansard* for that day. Ultimately, the bill seeks to address issues that have transpired over some time throughout certain local councils. From the outset, I want to be very clear on behalf of the Opposition that the overwhelming vast majority of councils and councillors serve their communities with integrity and dignity and do so very well. However, there is an anomaly that we feel needs to be addressed. I note that on the other side there are many who also feel the matter needs to be addressed.

As the shadow Minister for Local Government, I am proud to bring the bill to the House. From the outset, I acknowledge my colleague the Hon. Walt Secord, MLC, for his advocacy on this matter and for his efforts in getting the bill through the upper House as well as for his commitment to ensuring that integrity is provided throughout communities and our local councils. Ultimately, the bill seeks to disqualify real estate agents and property developers from holding civic office. That is the office of a councillor or mayor of a council or, in the case of a county council, the office of a chairperson or member. Furthermore, the bill also requires the following: first, councillors who are engaged in property development post council elections resign from their roles as councillors; secondly, councillors who are employed as real estate agents after being elected to council step down from their positions as councillors; thirdly, council candidates sign declaration forms stating whether they have any close associations with property developers; and, finally, council candidates sign declaration forms stating whether they have any close associations with real estate agents. Let me be clear: A close association will be regarded as a relationship where the candidate would receive financial benefit from development or any such transactions. The purpose of the bill is to remove the conflicts of interest faced by real estate agents and developers serving on councils and to ensure that the community's best interests are at the forefront of council decision-making.

In essence, the bill will provide certainty for communities that their elected representatives will be acting in the community's best interest alone. It will also provide candidates and councillors with clarity to ensure that they are not compromised. I will be very clear on that point: The development and real estate industries are two important, good and honourable professions. Many professionals work within those industries. The bill is no reflection on them. This is a matter of addressing a conflict or potential conflict that may arise, and has arisen, in councils across New South Wales—not every council and, yes, it is a vast minority, but the anomaly must be fixed. Communities must be provided with certainty that the sole motivation and focus of their elected representatives in civic office is community-based requirements; at the same time, candidates and councillors must be provided with clarity.

All members in this place are aware of the importance of integrity in the social democratic process that we enjoy in this State and, indeed, our nation. It must be bound by the delivery of certainty and confidence to our communities. There are challenges around this matter, in particular in the community's perception, which must be noted and acknowledged. As I said, everything must be in place to ensure that the community has confidence and certainty. Labor has had a longstanding and principled opposition to developers being on council. That is part of Labor's party platform and is a measure for which it has been advocating for some time. In fact, a similar policy

was adopted in 2017. However, with no thanks to the Liberals and Nationals, it was defeated at that time by their joint efforts.

Members opposite like to talk about standing up to corruption and undesirable behaviour, but time and again we have not seen any action to back up that position. As the shadow Minister for Local Government, too often I have heard about those concerns and the potential for a significant level of corruption in local government by the very nature of the tasks that local councils are required to perform. The fact is council representatives have access to planning information that the general public does not have access to. Should a developer get their hands on that information, all sorts of issues arise in terms of conflicts and potential problems. Again, providing that certainty for community is important.

As I said at the outset, this bill is not a reflection on the many good, honourable and dignified local representatives who serve on their local councils with respect and with the priority of delivering the outcomes that their communities need, deserve and desire. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has long highlighted the unique level of corruption potential due to the high level of decisions made and limited oversight compared with State and Federal decisions. The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals need to stop being concerned about their internal differences on this matter and just get it done. I draw attention to some of those members opposite who have expressed their serious concerns. I note the matter has been brought up at the Liberal Party conference as well, where colleagues on the other side of the House rightly spoke up on this matter and made the same, or very similar, representations that I am making today.

Accordingly, I urge those opposite to take up this opportunity and once and for all put an end to development-based corruption in local government. The measures in the bill are common sense. They are not only long overdue but also in line with contemporary community expectations. They will have a profound effect on improving faith, accountability and transparency in our communities. As I mentioned previously, I am not the only one saying this; I note the commentary on this issue by the member for Hornsby, Matt Kean. I think he said that it is like letting Dracula into the blood bank. Minister Kean is right. Again, it comes down to a very simple change to safeguard candidates and councillors whilst also providing the community with clarity. But Minister Kean is not the only one. That ever-diligent journalist Jake McCallum wrote an article published on 3 December 2021 in *The Daily Telegraph*, which states:

A senior Liberal MP warned the NSW Liberal Party over 'probity concerns' regarding its mayor candidate for a Sydney council as family links to property were revealed.

The article continues:

NSW Liberal Party president Phillip Ruddock was warned about concerns over a Liberal councillors lack of declarations of property interest affecting major planning proposals before he signed off on controversial nominations for local government elections.

That article in *The Daily Telegraph* further reports:

It is understood Baulkham Hills state Liberal MP—

and Minister—

David Elliott raised "probity concerns" with Mr Ruddock as early as October 22—

last year—

before the finalisation of nominations ...

Mr Elliott had previously told *News Local* he "repeatedly warned" Liberal Party President Phillip Ruddock over concern regarding the replacement of [an] outgoing mayor ... before the referral was made to ICAC.

The article goes on to quote Mr Elliott:

"I repeatedly warned the state president of issues with new candidates being endorsed."

We have seen other matters of concern raised about Strathfield Council, which were also acknowledged by the Office of Local Government as being of very serious concern and requiring further information. We on this side of the House pressed and pushed, but we have seen little to no action from the Government as these matters continue to arise. This bill is an opportunity for the Government to set things right. I truly believe that many members on the other side of the House agree with the changes that this bill will make to provide certainty for their communities, and clarity for councillors and candidates. But I also understand that they will probably be required to toe their party line, which ultimately is part of what we all do in this place. I acknowledge that, but I also acknowledge that there are varying views on this matter.

Our view on this side of the House is that we must ensure that we provide the community with certainty. We want to make sure that clarity is given to the candidates and councillors. This State has 128 local councillors who work hard under very challenging circumstances and put their communities' interests first. I commend each

and every one of those councils and councillors, who work continuously and very hard. But the reality is that over the past few years a couple of matters have arisen where there has been a conflict.

**Ms Melanie Gibbons:** There are a couple of matters where the Labor Party has been in conflict, and you are still here.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Yes, noted.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Members*

### **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY**

At 10:30 the House proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to attend a joint sitting to elect a member to fill a seat in the Legislative Council vacated by the Hon. Trevor Khan, resigned.

At 10:44 the House reassembled.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I report that the House has met with the Legislative Council in the Legislative Council Chamber this day for the purpose of electing a person to hold the place in the Legislative Council rendered vacated by the resignation of the Hon. Trevor John Khan and that Scott James Barrett has been duly elected. I table the minutes of the proceedings of the joint sitting. I order that the document be printed.

#### *Bills*

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (DISQUALIFICATION FROM CIVIC OFFICE) BILL 2020**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:45):** I note the member for Holsworthy's comments at the suspension of my contribution. This is not a matter of any specific political party—in the past, there have been Independents, Liberal, Labor, The Greens, whoever. This is not about any individual. This is not an attack on any particular political party. This is about providing certainty to community and councils, as well as clarity and protection for councillors and candidates. That is it. But, yes, I am critical of this Liberal-Nationals Government for not taking appropriate action. I understand that The Nationals, in principle, understand and appreciate the importance of having these changes in place. I understand that, as members of the Coalition, they have consistent positions as such. I also note, as I previously did, the deep concerns within the Liberal Party itself, as its members have publicly raised. So there is no secret around this. The Liberal Party has been very vocal and I commend those members of the Liberal Party who have—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Name them.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Minister Kean and Minister Elliott. And there are others. They were well noted at the Liberal Party conference. It was nearly split down the middle. I commend those members who have a principled position and understand the importance of providing integrity and certainty for communities. Again, this is not a swipe at anything; this is just about fixing an anomaly in the Act to provide clarity and certainty. We do not want matters that we previously have seen, and that we are currently investigating, to continue. If this bill were passed, we would not be seeing unfortunate stories in local media about individuals. Those individuals may not have even been aware that they were in a compromised position. This bill seeks to amend that and have provisions in place that provide safeguards for those candidates and councillors so it is very clear: "If you are this, you cannot do this." It is as simple as that. I know that there will be some people in this place who want to be theatrical about this, to play games and carry on with their politics. I have no time for that.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** You would never do that.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** No, I would not.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The member for Kiama will come to order.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** But what I will do is everything I can to ensure the integrity of the local government sector. I note the Minister is in the Chamber and I acknowledge that the Minister has a long and honourable history of representation in local councils at different levels—as a councillor, mayor and, I think, administrator—and a fine record. So I know the Minister herself understands that there are problematic matters that have to be resolved. This is the Minister's opportunity to amend them. There has been much said—and I will let those on the other side carry on—but I will conclude by saying to each and every member in this place that the

local government sector and local councils are the closest level of government to community, and they play a vital role in our democracy. The integrity of democracy matters. That is why I urge members to support the bill.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (10:49):** I thank the member for Campbelltown for taking carriage of the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2021 in this House. This is the Opposition's second attempt at legislating the measures proposed in the bill. The kindest thing that I can say about this bill is that it is an improvement on the previous one, but only because of the work the Government has already done to improve the integrity of our electoral system. The previous bill sought to ban people and their spouses from being councillors who were officers of companies undertaking property development activities, while leaving natural persons who were property developers free to be elected to councils. It was easy to get around the ban proposed in the previous bill brought forward by the Opposition. All you needed to do was to cease all property development or real estate activities before the election. If elected, you would then be free to resume those activities and continue to hold office in the council for the next two years until the disqualification took effect.

As I have mentioned, the bill is an improvement on the previous one because, unlike those opposite, the Government has already done the heavy lifting in crafting and delivering meaningful reform to improve the integrity of council elections and to promote community confidence in their outcomes. The bill is heavily reliant for its efficacy on the reforms to local government election funding and expenditure laws previously legislated by the Government. However, the fact that the Opposition has been able to rely on these reforms to improve the bill before the House has not assisted it to overcome the more fundamental flaws of its predecessor, which would likely see the amendments struck down by the High Court as unconstitutional if legally challenged. The legal uncertainty created by the bill is compounded by the fact that the measures contained in it will, if passed, see councillors who stood for election in December in good faith, believing themselves to be eligible to hold office in their local council and who have been successful in winning the support of their local communities, removed from their offices, not through the democratic choice of their electors but through a legislative instrument of this Parliament.

The Government has already done the hard yards on improving the integrity of local government and will continue to take the steps necessary to give members of the community the reassurance that they can have confidence in their local council and any decisions that it makes. Unlike those opposite, we are about delivering real outcomes. It is not about subscribing to empty, constitutionally dubious gestures, like those contained in the bill, that will needlessly cause disruption to many councils and create legal uncertainty, as well as possibly a greater financial burden. For this reason, the Government opposes the bill.

The bill seeks to amend the Local Government Act 1993 to disqualify persons from holding civic office in a council if they are a property developer within the meaning of division 7 of part 3 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018, or a real estate agent within the meaning of the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act 2002. Under the proposed amendments, if elected to council, property developers and real estate agents will have until the first meeting of the council after the election to cease being a property developer or real estate agent or their office in council will automatically become vacant. If a councillor becomes a property developer or real estate agent after being elected, their office in council will automatically become vacant.

The bill also contains transitional provisions that carry significant implications, given the timing of the House's consideration of the bill in the immediate aftermath of local government elections. Under the transitional provisions any councillors who are property developers or real estate agents on the commencement of the bill will not be disqualified from holding civic office in a council for the balance of their term or for six months, whichever is sooner. In practice, this means that if the bill is passed, councillors elected in December 2021 who are property developers within the meaning of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 or a real estate agent within the meaning of the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act 2002 will be disqualified from holding their office six months after its commencement, therefore creating a vacancy in their council, unless they cease to be a property developer or real estate agent within this period. I will return to this point later.

The Government acknowledges that the current bill is an improvement on the earlier bill. The earlier bill had three serious deficiencies. First, it used the then applicable definition of "property developer" contained in the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981, which has since been repealed. This only included corporations and their close associates. Natural persons who were property developers continued to be entitled to be elected to and hold an office in a council. Second, the definition of "property developer" used was imprecise, posing significant challenges to compliance with and enforcement of any ban based on the definition. Third, councillors who became property developers or real estate agents after being elected to a council continued to be entitled to hold their office in the council for two years, making the ban easy to circumvent.



The Government acknowledges that the current bill brought forward by the Opposition does not contain these deficiencies. It uses the more precise definition of "property developer" in the electoral funding Act, and the disqualification takes effect immediately, meaning the ban cannot be circumvented. Ironically, as I noted earlier, these improvements are due in large part to the Government's own reforms of electoral funding and expenditure laws and the tightening of the definition of "property developer" used in the electoral funding Act.

A more fundamental concern with the earlier bill was the susceptibility of the proposed ban to legal challenge on constitutional grounds. This continues to be a fundamental concern about the current bill. The Commonwealth Constitution imposes limits on the laws that the New South Wales Parliament can make. This includes laws that unduly burden an implied freedom of political communication. The High Court has consistently held that laws, including New South Wales laws, that burden political communication must be "reasonably appropriate and adapted to serve a legitimate end which is compatible with the maintenance of representative and responsible government."

A total prohibition of classes of persons from standing for elected office at any level of government is likely to require very significant levels of justification to withstand challenge. The Government is not confident that the measures contained in the bill, which seek to ban whole classes of people from holding elected office in councils based on how they earn a living, is proportionate to the risk they seek to address—namely, the risk that those persons may at some point have a conflict of interest in a matter they may be required to make a decision on. For this reason, the Government does not believe that the measures contained in the bill meet the high threshold of justification required for such a ban to be legally effective.

The measures proposed in the bill are particularly difficult to justify given the existing safeguards to ensure that councillors disclose their personal and financial interests in matters they are asked to make decisions on and to exclude themselves from making decisions on them. Since 2015 the Government has progressively tightened the rules governing the disclosure and management of conflicts of interest by councillors and increased the penalties for breaches. These measures are now enshrined in the Model Code of Conduct for local councils in New South Wales. The current iteration of these rules was prescribed only as recently as 2020 following a comprehensive review.

I understand that when the Office of Local Government consulted on the measures contained in the Model Code of Conduct many councillors complained that they were being subjected to tougher ethical standards than elected officials at all other levels of government. These tough standards are complemented by even tougher penalties. Councillors who breach their obligations to disclose their personal interests and remove themselves from any decisions that could impact on those interests can be suspended for up to six months or disqualified from holding office in any council for up to five years. Councillors who repeatedly breach these obligations and who have been suspended on three or more occasions for misconduct are automatically disqualified from being a councillor for five years.

It does not end there. Councillors who personally profit from breaches of their obligations can be forced to hand over to their council any financial benefit they have received from the breach. These measures have been effective in deterring councillors from breaching their obligations to disclose conflicts of interest in matters they deal with and to remove themselves from any related decision-making process. Since 2015 there have been only six proven breaches. The risk of pecuniary interest breaches has been further reduced by amendments made to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to preclude councillors from metropolitan councils and Central Coast and Wollongong councils from exercising the councils' functions as a consent authority. Those functions are now exercised by a local planning panel or joint regional planning panel. All development applications lodged by councillors at those councils must be referred to a local planning panel for determination.

The measures contained in the bill are also hard to justify given that electors now have information available to them on whether a candidate or councillor is a property developer and can make an informed choice about whether they wish to vote for that person at council elections. The Government has introduced rules requiring candidates at council elections and serving councillors to disclose publicly whether they are property developers. In the case of candidates, that information is publicly accessible in candidate information sheets, which are available immediately prior to the elections. If a candidate who is a property developer is elected, they are required to disclose that information in the return of interests that they are required to complete and lodge with the general manager, which is also published on councils' websites. The availability of that information means that electors can exercise their own judgement on whether they want a property developer on their council. These measures are more proportionate and better adapted to address the risks associated with property developers and real estate agents serving on councils than the total ban proposed in the bill.

The timing of the consideration of the bill, immediately following local government elections in December last year, could not be worse. As I have noted previously, councillors who stood for election in December in good faith, believing themselves to be eligible to hold office in their local council and who were successful in winning

the support of their local communities, will be removed from their offices through the operation of the transitional provisions contained in the bill unless they give up the occupation or activities that will see them disqualified. On a practical level, that will be highly disruptive for the affected councils and needlessly expose them to the cost of filling any vacancies created through the operation of the bill. Should any of the disqualified councillors choose to commence proceedings to challenge the constitutionality of the legislation under which they have been disqualified, it will create legal uncertainty and compound the disruption suffered by the affected councils.

On a more fundamental level, the removal of democratically elected councillors by legislation exposes the philosophical problem that lies at the heart of the bill. By passing this legislation, this Parliament will in effect be overturning the outcome of properly conducted council elections. The Parliament will effectively be saying to the electors of a local area who have chosen to demonstrate their support for a candidate who falls within the technical definition of a property developer or real estate agent contained in the bill that their democratic choice does not count. The Parliament will also be saying to electors that it does not trust them to exercise an informed choice about who they want representing them on their local council and that the Parliament, not the electors, should determine who is a fit and proper person to represent them on their local council. The fundamentally anti-democratic way in which the measures in the bill will operate only serves to underline the potential constitutional issues with the bill.

I have noted that this Parliament should not be in the business of deciding who should or should not be elected to a council based on how they earn a living. That judgement should be left to the electors. Because of the strong measures taken by this Government to ensure the integrity of local government, electors are now able to exercise that judgement, having available to them information about whether a candidate is a property developer and confident in the knowledge that, if elected, they will be obliged to put the community's interests ahead of their own. As I said earlier, the Government will be opposing the bill because the measures contained in it are anti-democratic, constitutionally dubious and represent legislative overreach by this Parliament. Unlike the measures proposed in the bill, the measures implemented by this Government to improve the integrity of local government and to promote community confidence in council decision-making are tangible, soundly based and again demonstrate this Government's commitment to delivering real outcomes for the people of New South Wales.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (11:04):** As a member of the NSW Labor Opposition, I make a contribution to debate on the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2020. I acknowledge the former shadow Special Minister of State, the Hon. Walt Secord, MLC, for his advocacy for the bill and ensuring its passage through the upper House. I also thank Greg Warren, MP, shadow Minister for Local Government, for co-drafting the bill and taking carriage of it in the Legislative Assembly today. The bill should be recognised as one of the more pressing pieces of legislation to be considered by the New South Wales Parliament this year.

The purpose of the bill is to prohibit and disqualify real estate agents and property developers from holding civic office—that is, the office of a councillor or mayor of a council or, in the case of a country council, the office of either chairperson or member. Members of this Chamber should be very concerned that local councillors, who have direct responsibility for zoning, development plans and development approvals, could have access to planning information that the general public does not and could work simultaneously as real estate agents or property developers. Currently, that is an enormous oversight and a terrible conflict of interest that does not ensure a community's best interests are at the forefront of a council's decision-making processes. Plainly and simply, real estate agents and property developers should not be permitted to serve as councillors or mayors of any council in New South Wales. It is an issue that has plagued local government for far too long and must be addressed within this Chamber. That is why this Chamber must support the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2020.

I turn now to the contents of the bill. The bill seeks to amend the Local Government Act 1993 by making three key changes. First, the proposed amendment to section 275 (1) seeks to disqualify property developers and real estate agents from standing for public office. Secondly, the insertion of new subsections (8) and (9) to section 275 sets out provisions for the transition. These new subsections stipulate that a real estate agent or a property developer who currently holds a civic office is not disqualified—unlike what the Minister said in her contribution to this debate—from holding the office for the balance of the person's term of office or for the period of six months, whichever is the shorter period. Additionally, a real estate agent or a property developer is not disqualified from being nominated for election or being elected to a civic office if the person has ceased to be a real estate agent or a property developer before the first meeting of the council or country council.

The bill also requires that council candidates must sign declaration forms stating whether they have had any loose association with property developers or real estate agents. Close associations are regarded as any relationship where a candidate could receive financial benefit from development or any realty transaction. Finally, the insertion of new subsection (10) in section 275 clarifies the meaning of both "property developer" and "real

estate agent". According to the bill, the term "property developer" will have the same meaning as set out in division 7 of part 3 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018, and the term "real estate agent" will have the same meaning as set out in the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act 2002.

The bill proposes sensible, commonsense measures, and it should have been introduced a long time ago by this Parliament. However, despite the New South Wales Government having an obsession with talking about corruption, it has failed to take any action to solve this pressing problem. Councillors and mayors exercise important responsibilities as representatives of the community, entrusted by the general public. When a councillor makes decisions relating to roads and traffic changes, parking and street upgrades, and infrastructural works they have significant insight into the impacts on values of property and suburbs. This key information can be open to exploitation by property developers and real estate agents who are also local councillors. There is the potential for these elected officials to act in their own financial interests at the expense of community interests. This does not respect the importance of integrity in the social democratic process.

It is not only the New South Wales Labor Opposition that is criticising this process but also the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. In 2021 the ICAC highlighted the issue in the seminal report entitled *Taking the Devil out of Development*. I quote the report by stating that local government has "a unique level of corruption potential" due to the high level of decisions that are made pertaining particularly to people's homes and livelihoods, with very limited oversight compared to State and Federal decisions.

I am certain that members of this Chamber will remember the issues presented by the former Strathfield mayor, Antoine Doueihi, who declared he was not a property developer in material lodged to the NSW Electoral Commission when he was indeed a director and shareholder of several companies with dealings in the property industry. By the time that Mr Doueihi was referred to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, he had been working as the mayor of Strathfield Council for a number of years, meaning that he had been making planning decisions that had an influence on density and zoning in the local government area where his company stood to gain.

On the topic of corrupt politicians, I expect that members opposite will throw names around like that of Eddie Obeid. I note that the New South Wales Government has already used the argument of Eddie Obeid to oppose the bill in the upper House. I mirror the words of my Labor parliamentary colleagues before me who have said that, while Mr Obeid was a Labor member of Parliament, that is not a legitimate excuse for the Liberal-Nationals Government to oppose this bill.

In the Labor Party, we ensure that we learn from our mistakes and do better. We have acted. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for those who sit opposite. The New South Wales Labor Opposition has fought for years to make this legislative change. In 2017 New South Wales Labor introduced a similar bill: the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2017. It would have legislated against property developers and real estate agents from working on local councils. It is no surprise that the Liberal Party and The Nationals have worked together to thwart this bill rather than improving the standards—

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The member for Ku-ring-gai will come to order. The member for Prospect has the call.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** Are you right?

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I have dealt with the member for Ku-ring-gai. The member for Prospect has the call.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** He is not having a good day. He had a bad day yesterday; I understand that he is a bit grumpy.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** The comments of the member for Prospect are not helpful.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** I was just reading the polls this morning. I am sorry. It is no surprise that the Liberal Party and The Nationals have worked together to thwart this bill rather than improve the standards of the integrity of local government. The Liberal-Nationals Government should be ashamed of this legacy. The subject in question has been part of Labor Party policy for quite some time. In 2016 Labor banned property developers and real estate agents from nominating as our candidates for public office. The New South Wales Government must also come to the table and act on this matter. This bill is not an attack on councils, nor is it an attack on property developers or real estate agents, but it is time to face the facts that these two professional entities cannot work as one.

Property developers and real estate agents should not be banned from public debate on council issues; in fact, I would encourage it. However, this right already exists within the law. Property developers and real estate agents can already make proposals and submissions to council. They can advocate, attend and speak at council

meetings. However, property developers and real estate agents should not have access to sensitive information pertaining to the future financial value of properties or suburbs, nor should they have the decision-making capacity to vote on rezoning, development applications, road and traffic changes or park and street upgrades. Ratepayers and rental tenants need to know that their local councillors are working in their best interests rather than abusing their position to line their own pockets. Our communities deserve accountable and transparent councils, and we must protect the integrity of the decisions made by elected councils. It is time to put an end to development-based corruption in local government. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (11:14):** This is the first opportunity I have had to congratulate the member for Lake Macquarie, who is in the chair, on his elevation to the assistant speakership, and I would like to warmly do so. It is wonderful to see a non-Government member elevated to such an important position. I congratulate him on his elevation, having been such a fair and impartial servant of this House. I am sure that will continue. I start by thanking the member for Campbelltown for bringing the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification of Civic Office) Bill 2021 before the House. If enthusiasm was the only criterion upon which one was to vote for anything the member brought before this Parliament, one would vote for it every time. In fact, he is so enthusiastic about this proposal that he is absent from the Chamber during the debate.

I address a couple of the issues in this bill. I propose that it is a solution in search of a problem that presently does not exist to the extent that the Opposition is suggesting. I note the groans from the member for Shellharbour behind me. Perhaps she might like to listen to my argument before she comes to her own conclusion. The bill seeks to ban property developers and real estate agents who are on a register. There are a couple of legal principles that I will address. Firstly, this sets up a slippery slope about what the Parliament believes is appropriate for people to contest civic office and the circumstances in which someone can stand. In my view, the voters always get it right. It is them who should be able to decide the characteristics or otherwise of someone who contests an election.

There is also a slippery slope argument about how far we actually go. Today it is real estate agents and property developers, but what about the people who provide contracted or subcontracted support to them? What about the chippies and the electricians? What about the people who supply resources to those who undertake development? What about those who work in their office? If this is a question about undue influence, what about the people who could be influenced by their employers should they seek to stand for local council? But, of course, there is another principle that deals with the fact that the Parliament is seeking to make a prescription about who can and cannot stand based on whether or not we like a particular category. What is next? Is it going to be philatelists, haberdashers or horny goat weed farmers? Who is it that we are going to provide a prescription for and not trust the people of the electorate to make the same decision that they do when they vote for all of us?

Why is it that the proposed bill applies only to local government and not to members of Parliament? Why is it that members of Parliament, particularly on the Labor side, some of whom would fall foul of their own legislation, are prepared to impose these conditions on local councillors but not themselves? As a former councillor, I am sick and tired of seeing State parliaments and State governments do things to local government that they would not apply to or require of themselves. That is what this bill seeks to do. In the shadow Minister's reply speech, I would like him to confirm to the House that, should this bill pass, no member of his caucus would fall foul of his own legislation.

The Minister gave quite a good dissertation on the issues around political communication and discussion and constitutional points as they need to be raised, but I make an observation. If we look at free speech cases like *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Company*, *Theophanous v Herald & Weekly Times Ltd* and *Stephens and Others v West Australian Newspapers Ltd*, we find that these were the grounds that the High Court decided, rightly or wrongly, to rule that legislation brought by the New South Wales Government that would prohibit third-party donors, such as unions, from making a contribution would be unconstitutional. Labor walked into this House and opposed that legislation, but it would be those same legal principles that would knock this piece of legislation out. It seems that the mover of this bill is happy to vote for legislation that suits his political purposes but seeks to impose conditions on people he does not like.

I do not particularly like developers. I come from a region that is being pressured by what I would consider to be inconsistent and inappropriate development. That does not mean that I bring a piece of legislation into the House that could potentially fall foul of the kinds of legal principles that Labor was happy to vote against when it suited its members but will not vote against, and will seek to introduce, when it suits a political purpose. That is a very dangerous precedent to set.

Also with this legislation if someone decided, God forbid, to change careers mid-term, because their job ended or they were seeking other employment, they could then face the prospect of losing civic office if they decided to pursue a career as a real estate agent or a developer. Who would bear the cost of that by-election? The local community. The reality is that councillors are not full-time employees. They are, in many respects, volunteers who are compensated by a small stipend for their service. I think it is wrong to say that just because

someone changes a career to look after their family and meet their needs it somehow could trigger a by-election at additional cost to the ratepayers.

I can understand the political reasons for a member of the Opposition bringing this bill. I note they did not do it when they were in government, but that was a long time ago. So whilst I do believe that the shadow Minister was genuine, in every single sentence, when he spoke about the reasons why he is bringing this bill, I simply remind him that, just as we trust the people of his electorate to vote for an appropriate representative, I trust those same electors to make the right decisions based on the ethical and moral values they believe their representatives should hold. It is not up to this place to impose that. As a philosophical Liberal, I look at every piece of legislation that a government seeks to impose with great scepticism. But when you see a piece of legislation that says that the political elite know more about what should or should not be the case in an election than the voters themselves, then not only do I say no, but I say hell no!

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (11:21):** As a previous councillor and mayor of Camden, I am not entirely sure what the Opposition is trying to achieve with the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2020. It would seem to me that Labor is trying to ban people who are engaged in otherwise lawful, legitimate businesses from being able to make a contribution to their community by putting their hands up for election for local council, simply because of how they choose to make their living. This represents a serious case of regulatory overreach.

One of the strengths of our democratic system of local government is that councillors are drawn from the local community. Because of this, it is likely that someone who is elected to council, regardless of their occupation, will be asked at some point to make a decision on something that may directly affect their personal interests or the interests of others known to them. What matters is not the potential for conflicts of interest to occur, but that councillors appropriately manage their conflicts of interest in a way that ensures that the community's interests are always placed ahead of a councillor's personal interests. There are already strict rules in place under the Model Code of Conduct for local councils in New South Wales to ensure that this occurs.

The Model Code of Conduct identifies two types of conflict of interest; pecuniary and non-pecuniary. The rules governing these are simple but effective. If a councillor or their relative, employer, business partner, or a company they hold shares in, stands to gain or lose financially from a decision the council is being asked to make, they will have a pecuniary interest in the matter. They must disclose their interest, remove themselves from the meeting and take no further part in any discussions, debate or decision-making on the matter they have the interest in. Non-pecuniary conflicts of interest relate to other types of interests councillors may have that are not pecuniary in nature. A councillor will have a non-pecuniary conflict of interest in a matter being considered by a council where a reasonable and informed person would perceive that the councillor could be influenced by a personal interest they have in the matter that they are making a decision on.

There is another term for this test—it is called the "pub test". Where the interest arises from a close relationship the councillor has with another person, like a business relationship or a personal friendship or close affiliation with an organisation, then the councillor will need to manage that conflict of interest in the same way that they would a pecuniary interest. They must disclose their interest, remove themselves from the meeting and take no part in any further discussion, debate or decision-making on the matter they have the personal interest in. Councillors will also be in breach of their obligations under the Model Code of Conduct where they misuse their position to try to improperly influence another decision-maker in the council to obtain a personal benefit for themselves or on behalf of a third party.

What are the consequences if councillors do not comply with these requirements? They can potentially be suspended from council for up to six months or lose their fee for up to six months. In serious cases, they may even be banned from being a councillor for up to five years. If councillors are found to repeatedly breach their obligations and are suspended on three or more occasions, they will automatically be disqualified for five years. Also, if a councillor is found to have financially benefited from their breach, the councillor can be forced to hand over the benefit to the council to ensure that they do not profit from their bad behaviour. The rules are already in place to ensure that councillors put the community's interests ahead of their own. We do not need to resort to ill-conceived, anti-democratic measures such as those proposed in the bill to achieve this outcome.

In 2012 I was a councillor on Camden Council, along with the member for Campbelltown and an outstanding independent councillor who was a real estate agent. When he had an interest, he would disclose it and he would not attend briefings or meetings on those matters he had an interest in. I think this bill will preclude outstanding members of our communities from being able to put their hand up to serve the community. That councillor, in my view, was a strong candidate and provided a lot of benefit not only to the community but also other councillors because he understood planning matters which sometimes other councillors did not. It is my strong belief that the bill will stop good citizens in our community becoming councillors—putting up their hand, essentially volunteering their time—and that, in my view, is not benefitting the community. I oppose the bill.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:26):** I contribute to debate on the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2020 and offer my 100 per cent support for this sensible bill. I thank my colleague, the member for Campbelltown, and shadow Minister for Local Government, for introducing this important bill to the House and for his continued advocacy on this important issue. I also recognise the efforts of my colleague the Hon. Walt Secord in getting the bill through the upper House. The bill seeks to amend the Local Government Act 1993 to disqualify real estate agents and property developers from holding civic office—that being either the office of councillor or mayor, or, in the case of a county council, the office of chairperson or member. To put it simply, the bill seeks to improve integrity and transparency in local government. What is wrong with that?

The premise of the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2020 is to remove the precarious conflicts of interest faced by developers and real estate agents serving on councils to ensure that the best interests of the community are at the forefront of a council's decision-making process. It is vital to protect the integrity of those decisions made by elected councillors. We should protect that integrity, not make it easier for dodgy developers or real estate agents to gain an economic benefit from sitting on a local council. Councillors are elected to serve their communities, not their own self-interest or that of developers. Communities across New South Wales should be able to have complete faith in their local government representatives and feel certain that they are acting in the best interests of residents, not in the best interests of themselves or their investment portfolios.

There is no doubt that council representatives have access to sensitive planning information that the general public does not. Should this information get in the hands of a developer or a real estate agent, it obviously presents all sorts of serious conflict of interest issues. History dictates this. We have already seen it. The history is there. We know what happens. It is not unreasonable to think that someone in this position could potentially utilise their privilege and access to confidential information for their own personal and economic gain. Why are we not negating the risk? We should be negating that risk. Make no mistake, this is by no means an attack on councils. Other speakers have raised this issue. We are not attacking councils. It is a reality check. It happens.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** You are attacking real estate agents. You are attacking good, honest, hardworking real estate agents.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** This commonsense proposal seeks to exclude property developers and real estate agents from local government office, as these positions rule on high value property development and zoning decisions. It is common sense. A report by the Independent Commission Against Corruption highlighted that due to local government's role in development proposals and the limited oversight when compared to State and Federal decisions, it has a unique level of corruption potential when it comes to developer-based corruption. The member for Kiama came in here a minute ago arguing against the ICAC's view on this. It is unbelievable.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** What, 10 years ago?

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** There has been a lot of water under the bridge since then.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! Government members will cease interjecting. If they have something to say, they can move a substantive motion.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** It has been NSW Labor's policy for some time now that property developers and real estate agents should not serve as councillors. In fact, our party's rules reinforce this stance, by ensuring that they cannot even be selected or endorsed as a candidate for council. Prior to the 2017 council elections, local government candidates were required to tick two boxes on disclosure forms, which outlined whether they were property developers or a close associate of a developer. However, there was nothing to prevent developers or real estate agents from actually running for, and holding, the position of councillor. This seems quite extraordinary, given that since 2009 New South Wales has had laws in place which explicitly ban property developers from making political donations. Why are we allowing developers and real estate agents to run in local government elections knowing that those donation bans are already in place? It does not make any sense.

It seems unfathomable and quite to the contrary that to this day, property developers whilst banned from making these political donations are still not excluded from being the actual decision-makers in local government. The people of New South Wales deserve a planning and governance system that is free of corruption. The fact is that nothing ruins public confidence more than a belief that a favourable decision can be bought. Let us remove the risk to public confidence that developer donations pose. It is surely a no-brainer. I trust that every member in this House is acutely aware that to serve the people of New South Wales and represent their interests is an enormous responsibility and a privilege. We have all stood in this place and said that. This is extended to all publicly elected officials, at all levels of government, not excluding local government. The bill seeks to ensure that this privilege is not misused by local government representatives for their own personal gain.

The Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2020 requires that councillors who are engaged in property development or who are employed as a real estate agent, after being elected to council, to resign from their position as councillor. Furthermore, council candidates will be required to sign declaration forms stating whether they have any close associations with property developers and/or real estate agents. Under this amendment, close associations would be regarded as any relationship where the candidate would receive financial benefit from a development or any realty transaction. The time for change is now. The Liberals and The Nationals need to finally prioritise the needs of communities across New South Wales, by supporting the bill today in this place. Unfortunately, those opposite, love to talk the talk but when it comes to their stance on corruption, time and again, they have failed to take any real action to address this serious issue.

Prior to my election as the member for Shellharbour in 2011, I worked as a union organiser with the United Services Union—the mighty USU—for 12 years. I take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to General Secretary Graeme Kelly, OAM, who has done a magnificent job. The United Services Union is the largest local government union in New South Wales, with over 30,000 members and 1,000 delegates across the State. I know the Minister sitting here today—

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. This has nothing to do with the unions. It is undemocratic. I ask the Temporary Speaker to draw the member back to the leave of the bill.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Shellharbour will return to the leave of the bill.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** The Minister is in the Chamber. She knows full well that the United Services Union is the principal union that looks after local government—and I am talking about local government. I do not know how that is irrelevant. I do not accept the member's point of order, but I will move on. In that role I quickly learned that local government workers are the backbone of our communities—and I do not think there is any argument on that score by anyone in this place. They build the roads, they maintain bridges, parks and gardens, they look after water and sewerage, local swimming pools—the list goes on. They patrol our beaches, they educate our pre-schoolers, they administer civic centres and offices throughout New South Wales. I make special mention of my good friend and mentor Graeme Kelly, OAM, General Secretary of the United Services Union. Without hesitation I provide my full support for this bill. I strongly urge those opposite to take this opportunity to finally put an end to development-based corruption in local government. The bill is a much needed and well overdue step in the right direction to help restore public confidence in local government. At the end of the day, isn't that why we are here? I am sure that members on both sides of the debate will agree that the interests of the people of this State should always come before lining the pockets of property developers and real estate agents.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Government members will come to order. The member for Prospect will come to order.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (11:37):** I speak against the Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2021 and echo the concerns raised by the Minister for Local Government. When I was a councillor I was a real estate agent, so I am taking this pretty personally. I know an awful lot of real estate agents; I am yet to find a dodgy one who I have had any association with. To smear one occupation in one fell swoop is disgusting. It is low to say, "You're now a councillor, so you must be dodgy. You must be in this occupation to make the most out of it." People are the same no matter what occupation they are in. In every occupation there are dodgy people and there are great people. To say you do not have the right to be a part of democracy is wrong.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. Members will cease interjecting. The member for Holsworthy will be heard in silence.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** Democracy is a great system, until we start picking and choosing who can run. That corrupts the system, particularly based on occupation. Do we then start saying based on your gender, based on your sexuality, based on your religion? What comes next? Any one of our occupations could very well be next. One's choice of occupation is not what makes one corrupt; it is what is on the inside. We can measures in place. We can beef up industry bodies. We can give the ICAC a closer eye over the issue. There are likely to be tonnes of things that can be done to make a difference, but do not demonise one or two occupations because we think that perhaps some people could do a bad job or do something dodgy. Do we next then decide who can run for election to this Chamber? It beggars belief what a bill such as this can next lead to.

I was a real estate agent for about two years. My family has been in real estate forever. When I was on council for a few years, I had to declare one conflict of interest. That was because it sought to lose money, not to make money. The council was deciding whether to put a massive road in front of its property. I said, "No, I am

going to declare a pecuniary interest on this because I do not want to risk the council's money." I never saw development applications that had anything to do with our office. I never had anything that I raised an eyebrow at and said, "This could be wrong." But I knew the difference between right and wrong. In that situation my job was to represent our vendor and say, "This could make an impact on them." The law is to declare a significant pecuniary conflict of interest in that situation. That is what the law is for, to keep people above board so we have the ability to respond in some way if they do something wrong.

Being a real estate agent and councillor at the same time, I was able to talk to people about why they were moving in and out of our area and what they needed to make it a better place. I was able to see why they chose their homes. I was able to see what the issues were with building standards and fire safety requirements. For instance, they did not have a big enough deck to put a table on because of fire issues or they had a tree they needed to cut down because it was over someone's bedroom. They took me into their homes and showed me why they were moving and it was because the council was being too tough on their situation.

When it came to planning how we could better respond to our community, I knew that some garages in some unit blocks were too small, which meant that instead of parking in them people were parking on the street. I knew that our block sizes were too small, so I was able to say, "Hang on a minute. All they can fit in there is a single-car garage, and with no extra bedrooms all their storage goes into their garage. Therefore, they put their car on the street, cluttering it and congesting it even more." Being so close to people gives us the knowledge about why they love their area. What do they love about their parks? "I take my kids down there, but there is not enough shade." So we learn that and we can make the area a better place. To exclude people with an occupation that allows them be in touch with their community is the wrong thing to do.

All elected officials should act in the best interests of their communities. Calling one occupation out, as all three Opposition members may have done, calling them dodgy, clears out people who are in a good occupation. Quite frankly, in our democracy, that is disgusting. The Labor Party is saying that its policy is to discriminate. The Hon. Walt Secord used to be a journalist. If we are going to discriminate on occupation, maybe we should wipe all journalists out from running for election because they have great contacts and they could be leaking information. They already have those networks.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** I'm an ex-journalist.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** Right. And you're not dodgy, are you, member for Tamworth? Shall we say all occupations are? No.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member for Prospect and the Minister will cease interjecting.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** Should we look at union officials and the networks they have? They talk about staffing. Should we look at the staff of our members of Parliament? Should councillors be staff of members of Parliament? They make decisions when it comes to funding and which places should get grants. Should we talk about personal trainers? Councils set when and where they can conduct outdoor sessions. Should we look at owners of restaurants and cafes? Councils make decisions about them. Should we look at childcare providers? Councils get a great say in child care. In fact, they run many childcare centres. Should we look at them and say, "Maybe they might have some knowledge about where the next childcare centre is going", and that that is not good enough?

Should we look at all small business owners and say, "You have inside knowledge on where other businesses are going to pop up"? Should we look at members of community and sporting organisations and say, "Maybe you shouldn't run for election because you have inside knowledge on sporting groups in the area and you know where the fields are and where they are going to be planned next"? Should we look at financial institution officers and loans to councils and the need to collect their debts? Should we look at mortgage brokers? They know where developments are taking place, and they have a great say in their communities. Should we look at tradespeople? Potentially they have contracts with council and will have an influx of work if things are approved. It is a huge thing to start saying, "Let's exclude an occupation."

It seems to me that with this bill Opposition members are saying to voters that they are not smart enough to exercise their own choices when voting at council elections and that this Parliament should override their democratic rights. One of the strengths of our system is its true democratic nature. It does not discriminate. It allows citizens in local communities to put their hand up to serve their communities as elected representatives. As the elective representatives of communities, councillors are required to make decisions on behalf of their communities and in their best interests. They are accountable. Their communities elect them and can send them out. They have the right to be judged for their decisions and their performance. If the councillors make decisions



that are not supported by their communities or if they fall short of the high expectations of their communities, they will not be re-elected.

The community is smart and the system works. Let us not start selecting people based on their occupation or some other random criteria that someone might decide to bring into this place on some random day. That is very dangerous. It is anti-democratic and it can only undermine the strengths of our democracy and our representative system of government. If it stops today, I say again, "What occupations will be next?" [*Extension of time*]

Will owners of small businesses no longer be able to run for council because councils can determine what they do in their premises and what times they operate? Will tradespeople no longer be able to serve on councils due to the possibility of entering into contracts with councils or the potential to obtain additional work if developments are approved? Will staff of members of Parliament be excluded because of potential conflicts with their Federal or State employer? Will board members of community and sporting groups be prohibited? It goes on. If we start making rules for some groups of people, where will they stop? One thing we know is that union officials will never stop making donations, being employed in this place, or running for Parliament or council just because of one side of politics, and it is just not right. It is funny when you cannot find the words because you just cannot fathom how wrong it is to remove one type of occupation.

In December last year members of council were nominated—in good faith—for election and they have held office in their local councils while servicing their communities competently and honestly. But the Opposition will remove councillors from office unless they give up their occupation from which they earn a living. So will we now say to people, "You are losing your livelihood because you want to do the right thing by your own community"? I do not understand how we are going to say to people who take on voluntary positions, "No, you are in a job that we think might be dodgy. You want to do the nice thing and represent your community, but we are not going to let you do it anymore." I think that is profoundly unjust.

As parliamentarians who are we to say that electors who demonstrated their support for these candidates last December by voting them in got it wrong? They all put out their biographies. Electors have never been as well informed as they are now, and yet we want to say, "No, sorry." Candidates are required to disclose their candidate information sheets with their nomination papers whether or not they are property developers. The community knows who they are electing. They know the person. They are not going to make a judgement over one industry. They are going to make a judgement over that person, and that is why we campaign and show the community who we are.

Local government is the closest form of government to electorates. People know who they are voting for and the type of person they are. All that information is publicly available, meaning that electors can choose whether or not they want to support those candidates. If a property developer is elected to council, then they are required to disclose that they are a property developer and the returns of interest are submitted to the council, together with information about their property interests, offices, interests held in corporations and trusts, and their sources of incomes. Councillors are obligated to keep this information up to date. We are talking about spouses also. Now a person is judged not only on their occupation but also on what their loved one does. I cannot believe that we can be that judgemental about people without even knowing who they are. Ultimately it should be left to electors to exercise their own judgments about who they want to serve them as their elected representatives on their local councils. This Parliament should not be taking that choice away from electors.

Data collected by the Office of Local Government indicate that only a small percentage of councillors are property developers or real estate agents. We are debating this bill based on those statistics. In the 2016-17 local government election cycle, only 1.5 per cent of councillors identified as property developers within the then applicable definition under the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981. Only 1 per cent of councillors identified as real estate agents. That begs the question: What is the problem this bill is trying to fix? There is no sweeping issue taking over our electorates. Only 1 per cent of candidates who run for council identify as a real estate agent. The electorate knows who they are and what they do for a job, and then they decide whether to vote for them. I do not understand why the Parliament would want to change that.

Do electors need this Parliament to exercise a choice on their behalf to prevent property developers and real estate agents being elected to their councils? Based on those figures, they do not need the assistance of their Parliament to exercise that choice. They are quite capable of making that choice for themselves. Voters are best placed to make their own judgements about which candidates will make suitable elected representatives on their councils. Let us leave that choice to the voters' good judgement.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (11:51):** The Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2020 is a commonsense bill. I am absolutely flabbergasted that the member for Holsworthy has such limited memory of history—of ICAC swooping through the Hunter because of developer donations.

Obviously, the member for Holsworthy has very little knowledge of developer donations in Newcastle and the Hunter. In fact, the member for Charlestown and I owe our jobs to developer donations to the Liberal Party, which caused by-elections in the Newcastle and Charlestown electorates.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. Government members will come to order, including the Minister for Lands and Water. The Minister for Skills and Training will also cease interjecting or he will be called to order.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP:** The member for Holsworthy has a very short memory. ICAC's sweep through the Hunter stemmed from developer donations. I am absolutely flabbergasted that members on the other side of the House are not embracing this bill to prevent that from happening to them again. In fact, if this legislation had been in place, a particular lord mayor would not have been handing out wads of cash to State members of Parliament. That lord mayor called himself the "walking ATM", no less. The walking ATM! If this legislation had been in place, that would never have occurred. I think that says a lot in favour of this bill.

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will give me the respect that I show him. He will take his point of order in the proper manner.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The bill is about council elections. The member for Newcastle just referred to a State election, so he seems to be confused as to the subject matter of the bill. What he said was irrelevant.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** There is no point of order. The member for Newcastle is being relevant; he was talking about real estate. Government members who interject again will be placed on a call to order. This is my final warning.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: The member for Newcastle is being totally relevant. He is referring to a matter by way of comparison to suggest how this bill would have amended a situation that otherwise would not have existed, which is totally relevant. Clearly, members opposite are disrupting the debate.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** It is helpful if members cite the Standing Order that applies to their point of order. The member for Newcastle has the call.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP:** Obviously I have hit a sore point, given members opposite are jumping up talking about developer donations—donations that swept through the Hunter just as ICAC swept through the Hunter and got rid of quite a few Liberal MPs.

*[A Government member interjected.]*

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP:** Our very good shadow Minister has shown common sense in putting forward a bill that seeks to disqualify real estate agents and property developers from holding civic office—that is, the office of a councillor, mayor and, in the case of a county council, the office of chairperson or member. The bill also requires that, post council elections, councillors who are engaged in property development or who are employed as real estate agents step down from their position as a councillor. Further, the bill requires council candidates to sign declaration forms stating whether they have any close associations with property developers or real estate agents. Close associations will be regarded as any relationships where the candidate would receive financial benefit from development or any realty transaction.

The purpose of the bill is to remove the conflicts of interest faced by real estate agents and developers serving on council, and to ensure a community's best interests are at the forefront of council decision-making. All members in this place are aware of the importance of the integrity of the social democratic process that we enjoy in this State. It must be bound by the delivery of certainty and confidence to our communities. This matter presents challenges—in particular, the community's perception. Everything must be in place to ensure the community has confidence and certainty. Labor has a longstanding and principled opposition to real estate agents and developers being on council. That is part of our party platform, and we have been advocating for that measure for some time. In fact, a similar policy was adopted in 2017. No thanks to the Liberals and Nationals, it was defeated at the time by their joint efforts.

Members opposite love to talk about corruption, but time and again they have failed to take any action to address this pressing issue. Council representatives have access to information that the general public does not have access to. If a developer or real estate agent were to get their hands on that information, it would present enormous conflict of interest issues. The bill is not an attack on councils; rather, it reflects the reality of the situation confronting us. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has highlighted "the unique level of

corruption potential" in local government due to the high level of decisions made and limited oversight when compared with State and Federal decisions.

In Newcastle and the Hunter we saw the ramifications of developer donations: ICAC swept through our area, dislodging Liberal members of Parliament. As I said before, we all heard about the walking ATM, and the ramifications of that were severe. Given that, I am very surprised that the Government is not embracing this legislation. The Liberals and The Nationals need to stop being concerned about lining the pockets of their developer mates. They need to prioritise the needs of the communities throughout New South Wales and support this bill. I urge all those opposite to take this wonderful opportunity to put an end to development-based corruption in local government. These are commonsense measures. They are not only long overdue but also in line with contemporary community expectations and will have a profound effect on improving faith, accountability and transparency in our communities.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:00):** The Local Government Amendment (Disqualification from Civic Office) Bill 2021 is an attack on democracy. What right does the Australian Labor Party have to decide who does and does not run for civic office? As Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, if the Labor Party wants to start banning people, I say take a good, long look. Every week I pick up the newspaper and read about Craig Thomson. This is a man who was elected to the Federal Parliament by those opposite—a senior member of the Health Services Union—who took the company credit card for a ride, was involved in prostitution, is now before the Federal Parliament—

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Campbelltown rises on a point of order. The member for Terrigal will resume his seat.

**Mr Greg Warren:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129 and Standing Order 74 (1) and (2). Standing Order 129 relates to relevance and Standing Order 74 (1) and (2)—

**Mr Adam Marshall:** To the point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member for Campbelltown has not concluded his remarks.

**Mr Greg Warren:** I believe the member for Terrigal is behaving in a disorderly manner, and is being defamatory, and should be called to account.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Far be it from me to assist the member opposite, but I believe the standing order he is looking for is Standing Order 76. Standing Order 129 relates to relevance in question time. Outside of question time, the appropriate Standing Order is 76.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for that clarification. The member for Terrigal will direct his remarks to the bill.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** As I said, as Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, all I have to say is that I would have been thankful if the six Labor councillors on the Central Coast could have read a balance sheet let alone be fit for office. Quite rightly they have been suspended and I thank the Minister for her actions on this. It was actually a real estate agent who blew the whistle on their appalling financial status, which had been hidden from the New South Wales Government, the public of the New South Wales and the people of Central Coast. It was a Labor member who was running the show as it went over the cliff.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Business of the House*

#### **POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** On behalf of Mr Mark Coure: I postpone general business notice of motion (general notice) No. 2998.

#### *Motions*

#### **PRIVIUM HOMES**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:04):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the devastation that the collapse of Privium Homes has had on families and workers in the Wallsend electorate.

- (2) Notes families have been signing contracts and paying substantial deposits for houses that would never be built, while some subcontractors have not been paid for months.
- (3) Notes homeowners may have now lost their deposit, after the company failed to take out compulsory insurance.
- (4) Calls on the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation to assist the victims of Privium to get some certainty, ensure these investments can be protected, and they can have their homes completed.

Building a house is the biggest investment many of us make in our lives. Imagine the devastation that prospective potential local home owners felt as more than 2,000 customers across three States were hit by the collapse of builder Privium going into administration last November, owing nearly \$43 million to secured and unsecured creditors. Privium Homes and eight related entities were placed into voluntary administration days after tradespersons suddenly downed tools. Privium owner Robert Harder blamed COVID, associated delays and a sudden construction boom for cost increases, thus dooming the group. Yet there is evidence of unjustifiable business conduct—\$22 million was paid out by two Privium companies to shareholders in fully franked dividends in the financial year 2019-20, concurrently posting \$28 million in losses. On top of this, the company outrageously failed to take out mandatory insurance. Cassandra and Mitchell from Shortland, who were customers, told me this:

When Privium went under all we had was a concrete slab and frame but no roof and we were advised by builders that if the roof did not go on before Christmas shutdown the frame would sustain damage and cost a significant amount to repair.

We had paid \$110,000 to Privium. The insurance company told us we should minimize damage and put the roof on, but as the contract was with Privium the roofer couldn't go on the block.

We couldn't legally do the work without a Home Builders Insurance Policy as the work was over \$10,000. We couldn't get a policy because we were not owner builders and Privium administrators won't approve access for us to do it.

Since the collapse we found a builder to complete our home, but we are \$100,000 out of pocket and our insurance will only cover about half of that.

With the collapse of Privium, many will be tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket since the safety net for home owners in New South Wales, icare's Home Building Compensation Fund [HBCF], places a 20 per cent limit on how much they can claim. The HBCF is not designed to help people impacted by the collapse of Privium Homes, but what I do not understand is how this Government, which has been in office in New South Wales for 11 years, failed to see this coming and adequately prepare and assist people. Sadly, building companies often fail, usually topping insolvency statistics. These failures devastate customers. The Government is fully aware of the need for reform, yet it has stalled.

The independent inquiry into construction industry insolvency in 2012, or the Collins review, made 44 recommendations to improve protections for vulnerable, would-be home owners impacted by the collapse of construction companies. Back then, 10 of the recommendations were supported and 13 were not. The others were given in-principle or qualified support. One of the key recommendations was that the money should be held in trust to minimise the loss caused by collapses, which can ripple outwards with terrible effects on those who can least afford it. When so many are doing it tough, the least this Government can do is to ensure that the victims of Privium's collapse have some certainty, that their investments are protected and that their homes are completed. This collapse has had a big impact on the people in Wallsend and potential builders; it should not have happened. I call on the Minister for Fair Trading to step in and do the right thing.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (12:10):** I note the Minister's attendance in the Chamber. I acknowledge my good friend, the member for Wallsend. She is a fierce advocate for her electorate. More often than not on a Thursday we find ourselves in the Chamber debating issues that she has raised. I congratulate the member for Wallsend for her fierce advocacy for her constituents. She does an incredible job for them and they are very supportive of her. I sympathise with those individuals and families who have been impacted by the collapse of Privium Homes as outlined by the member for Wallsend. This affects many people, workers and home owners alike. In New South Wales these sorts of issues have occurred time and time again under Liberal and Labor governments. It is a blight because it impacts many people. Building a home should be a high point of someone's life, not stressful or terrifying. I built a home on the Central Coast. If someone says to me, "Wasn't that a wonderful experience. Would you like to do it again?" my regulation answer is, "Absolutely not." It should not be that way. As the member for Wallsend articulated, not only should this be a high point in people's lives but also it should provide tradies with valuable jobs.

The member for Upper Hunter is in the Chamber. He will be able to talk in more detail about his firsthand experience of issues like this as a tradie. I repeat, time and time again under Liberal and Labor governments in this State people have been victims of the collapse of property developers and builders. My heart goes out to those people who have suffered. I remember how stressful it was when I was building a home, and I would not wish that on anyone. Home ownership is something that many people strive for—whether it be at Wallsend or the Central Coast. It should not be a terrifying time where your livelihood and your life savings fly away, with no

outcome. The New South Wales Government supports the hard work of building these homes. We are encouraging people to build their home with the First Home Owner (New Homes) Grant. Indeed, many people in the Hunter and on the Central Coast have taken that first foray and dipped their toes into the water of being a first home owner. It should be a pleasurable experience. It should deliver the fantastic dream home that people want. It should not be a nightmare because of a rogue operator who does the wrong thing.

Assistance and support is available through many government agencies, including the incredible team at Service NSW. I speak regularly in this Chamber about the great work they do. Service NSW also works with the Department of Fair Trading, which is responsible for the administration of consumer protection laws in New South Wales. It is unfortunate that Fair Trading is so busy in this area. I am sure the electorate of Heathcote has similar sorts of issues. These builders shine a bad light on all the good builders who do the right thing—follow the rules, employ people in an honest, hardworking way and deliver good homes. It is a pity that Privium Homes did not do that.

The Department of Fair Trading aims to achieve fairness for all in the marketplace by undertaking a range of activities, including giving consumers and tradies information about their rights and responsibilities; providing information about the department's services; helping to resolve consumer complaints and disputes, which can be incredibly complex when building a home; and licensing businesses, contractors, tradespeople and property professionals, all of whom need to do the right thing. If that chain starts to break down, it can be a very messy end. Registering associations and cooperatives is another part of its jurisdiction; conducting compliance, inspection and testing programs; developing and enforcing laws to safeguard consumer rights; informing businesses and traders on fair and ethical practices; and safeguarding rental bonds.

Fair Trading is committed to our regional communities—be it the Central Coast or the Hunter—with over 18 Fair Trading centres providing services in regional New South Wales. The member for Upper Hunter knows about the good work that Fair Trading does. In any industry there will always be rogues. They should not be tolerated. They should be called out and held to account because their victims have to live with their bad behaviour. These centres work with their local community to provide information and assistance on consumer issues, whether it be motor vehicles or home building and renovation—which is usually very expensive—and alternatives to high-cost credit, property and tenancies, plus cooperatives, associations and business licensing. They do a very good job.

Service delivery is extended to more regional and remote areas through a range of regional access programs, outreach and community education activities. We cannot take our regions for granted. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a huge increase in the number of people moving to the regions. I am sure the member for Wallsend, like I, has seen a massive increase in occupancy for both rental and residential properties. That is putting even more pressure on the building industry across New South Wales. We have to make sure that builders do the right thing. They have to be held to account.

The member for Wallsend is to be congratulated on bringing these shonky lurk merchants to the attention of the Parliament. They should be held to account. It does not matter where they are in New South Wales, this sort of behaviour is absolutely unacceptable. I again acknowledge the great work being done by Fair Trading. It offers so much support. As I mentioned, my building experience was not the most pleasurable. It may have been slightly more enjoyable if I had utilised them. I again thank the member for Wallsend for bringing the appalling behaviour of Privium Homes to the attention of the Chamber. It should be called out. We should be providing protection to both the workers and the home owners across New South Wales. The Minister is in the Chamber. I also thank the Minister for her attention to this issue.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Name her!

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** I do not need to name her because she is right here. She is doing an outstanding job and I congratulate her on her appointment to the ministry. She will be a fierce advocate for home owners across New South Wales. I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing the motion to the Chamber.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (12:17):** Building a home can be one of life's most exciting dreams and is certainly the largest personal investment most people ever make. But that dream has turned into a nightmare for many people because of the collapse of Privium Homes. While the Minister was settling herself in as a new Minister—and I congratulate her on her new role—families across New South Wales spent Christmas knowing that their nightmare was just beginning as they looked at half-completed homes and dealt with furious and desperate subcontractors who had not been paid and were in financial strife.

I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing this motion to the House. I acknowledge her work and that of the member for Port Stephens, who has been a very strong advocate, as well as the work of the member for Lismore. We have all raised this issue in this place. Over the past few months we have all been inundated with

calls and emails from people as they slowly became aware that something was wrong with their home build. Then they faced the terrible, gut wrenching reality of how they were going to continue to build their homes. A constituent I spoke to on the Saturday prior to the collapse told me she and her husband had been saving for 30 years to build their own home. They had dreams of a new home. They are now paying rent on one house as well as nearly \$2,000 a month on a mortgage, without any idea when they will be able to move into that house. People who have paid deposits were later told that the insurance they paid for was not activated, which is completely unacceptable. At the time, icare advised these people that it was not a triggering event, before advising them it would be at least 2024 or 2025 before their builds could get back on track at all.

The member for Wallsend talked about the damage that can be sustained. Think about the wet summer in the Hunter while people sat there with frames and trusses up but no roof. That is a disgrace. This situation cannot be solely blamed on Privium, though. It is also the fault of the New South Wales Government. We know that icare was the baby of the Premier, and he should have been addressing it to make sure that it was a fit-for-purpose vehicle for people to protect their assets, their life's work towards getting a new home. The member for Wallsend also talked about the Collins inquiry, which I put on the record in this place. For more than a decade, this Government failed to put in a retention trust, which was a recommendation of that inquiry.

What really gets to me is the lack of ministerial responsibility. When icare was advising people that they were not covered, I reached out to Minister Dominello. He told me it was the responsibility of the then Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation, who said, "No, it's Service NSW." In desperation, I reached out to the then Treasurer on the ministerial roundabout of no responsibility. Since then, we have had a reshuffle. We have a new Minister for Fair Trading, but where has she been on this issue? This Government has no care and no responsibility. People are sitting with plans to new homes that will never be built, and this Government has nothing for them.

We already have a housing crisis in the Hunter—68 per cent of the people in my electorate have housing and mortgage stress. Imagine having mortgage stress but no house that you are paying the mortgage on; it is just sitting there half built on a building site. Under the Perrottet Liberal-Nationals Government, you can have mortgage stress without a house. What an innovation! I call on the Minister to urgently assist and provide the victims of Privium and other collapsed construction companies with certainty to ensure that their investments can be protected and their homes completed. As the member for Terrigal said, these people have our sympathy. But they deserve more than sympathy. They need more than thanks. More than anything else that the Government can give them, they want to know what they can do to ensure the house of their dreams can be completed. Both sides of the House have been in government at different times, but this Government has been in power for over a decade. It has done nothing, and people of the Hunter and across the State are suffering from rogues and lurk merchants because this Government failed to act.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (12:22):** I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing the motion to the attention of the House. Unfortunately, this is something that happens far too often in the construction industry, which I worked in my entire life until my recent appointment to this House. It is an industry that is very fragmented. It works with subcontractors, suppliers and family-owned businesses, when we break it down to the small elements that come together in construction. It is an industry with a lot of pressure. The margins are small. Achieving quality is really challenging. It is an industry that works really hard. It takes up a huge part of our economy, and it certainly is the backbone of it. But it is tough, and it is tough for all subcontractors. My career has been in commercial construction, and I have dealt with the consequences of subcontractors and main contractors going under. I have seen the personal ramifications and the devastating effects it has on people. I have sat around the table with people who have been affected.

Today we are talking about the home building industry, which is another sector altogether. It particularly hurts when those companies go under because it affects families and people who have invested everything they have into the home they are building, which is their greatest investment. Extra special care and support is required when those companies go under. The collapse of Privium Homes has had particularly far-reaching implications. We have seen a huge building boom across Maitland and the western parts of Newcastle as the population has exploded. The member for Maitland raised some good points about the amount of housing we have in that area.

The Privium building company stretches all across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, so the impact of its collapse can only be imagined. On 17 November 2021 it was placed under voluntary administration and FTI Consulting was appointed as the voluntary administrator. NSW Fair Trading immediately contacted the external administrator and obtained copies of documents confirming its appointment. All three parties—Privium, Impact and Mr Harder—have surrendered their contractor licences. Thankfully, many of those impacted by the collapse are covered by the Home Building Compensation Fund, which provides a safety net for home owners in New South Wales faced with incomplete or defective building work carried out by a builder or tradesperson.

In New South Wales a licensed contractor that takes on residential work worth over \$20,000 needs insurance cover through the Home Building Compensation Fund, and it must obtain this cover before starting any work or taking any money under the contract, including the deposit. A certificate of insurance is issued by icare, and HBCF compensates the original home owners. That is common throughout the industry. [*Extension, by leave, granted.*]

In response to customer complaints and inquiries, Fair Trading continues to provide customers with a letter detailing the administrator's contact details, an outline of its role and the steps that the customer should take in order to help them get through this traumatic time. It also provides information on how to lodge a claim and gives general advice. A statement on the builder's recent failures and advice to impacted home owners about where to go for help remains on the home page of the Fair Trading and State Insurance Regulatory Authority websites. I commend the member for Wallsend for raising this issue and bringing the motion before the House. We know real people are hurting in this situation, and the Government's role is to support governmental departments supporting those who have been impacted.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (12:27):** The member for Wallsend finished her contribution to the debate by stating, "I call on the Minister for Fair Trading to step in and do the right thing." I start my contribution by echoing the member for Wallsend's call. In his contribution, the member for Upper Hunter said this happens all too often, and it does. Now there is an opportunity to work towards fixing this, and it can be fixed at State government level. I make the point that some of these companies also require Federal intervention and support to make sure that the people who are most impacted, the home owners, are not left totally out of pocket.

I speak in strong support of the motion moved by the fabulous member for Wallsend. Other members have already noted the fantastic work that she does in bringing important notices of motions to this House, ones that we can all speak on. The collapse of Privium Homes does not directly impact my area, but it could. It could impact any electorate across the State; therefore, I am happy to speak in strong support of the motion.

It is a tragedy for families. Imagine the trauma and the financial and emotional stress. They are out of pocket and have nowhere to go. That is where the Government can act. We often hear conversations in this place about big government and small government, but my response is that we need strong government and smart government. Before speaking on this motion, I did some research into construction company collapses. The first one I found was in 2019, but I am sure they go back before that. Three years ago there was an ABC News article with the headline "Construction companies in NSW collapsing at record rate as building slowdown bites". The Government already knew this was a problem that it should be trying to fix.

I then looked at an article on realestate.com.au from 2021. It talks about Privium and another company that has gone into administration. It also talks about all of the problems that are endemic in the industry, and offers a few solutions. Come January 2022, and there is more about the industry's collapse. There is clearly action that can be taken. The 2021 independent inquiry into construction industry insolvencies produced the Collins review, which made 44 recommendations for vulnerable would-be homeowners who were impacted by the collapse of construction companies. Ten of those recommendations were supported, but 13 were not. Others were given in-principle or qualified support. It is time to revisit that. One key recommendation was that money should be held in trust. I thank the member for Wallsend, and I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading) (12:32):** Like the members who have spoken before me today, I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Wallsend. I appreciate her bringing this very important matter before this place today. I also acknowledge the contributions of all members in this place who have spoken on this issue because, like them, I sympathise with the position of those individuals and families impacted, both workers and homeowners. I understand that families from Maitland, Cessnock, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Tweed Heads have been affected by the collapse of Privium Homes.

Building or renovating a home is one of the largest investments a person will ever make. I assure this place that NSW Fair Trading and associated agencies are continuing to investigate building company Privium Pty Ltd. It is a major builder in New South Wales, with an estimated 145 open home jobs, including in the Newcastle and Hunter regions. On 17 November 2021 Privium Pty Ltd and associated companies were placed under voluntary administration. NSW Fair Trading immediately contacted external administrators and obtained copies of documents confirming the appointment of the voluntary administrators. Matters currently being assessed for potential breaches of the legislation that NSW Fair Trading administers include the Home Building Act 1989 and the Australian Consumer Law. If potential breaches are identified, these matters will be included in NSW Fair Trading's current investigation.

NSW Fair Trading received 104 complaints and inquiries about the company between 1 November 2021 and 24 December 2021. A letter was provided in response, outlining how to make a claim and where to obtain

more information on the options available. It should be noted that there were no complaints or inquiries to indicate the presence of any issues with Privium before 1 November 2021. NSW Fair Trading continues to work with impacted consumers to help them understand their contractual rights. Before being placed under voluntary administration, an estimated 11 certificates of insurance per month were being obtained by Privium in New South Wales. Placing the company in administration enabled consumers to make a claim where home building compensation cover is available.

If evidence in NSW Fair Trading's investigation establishes breaches of the legislation, prosecutions with maximum penalties of up to \$110,000 for a corporation, or \$22,000 for an individual per offence may apply. Larger fines are available under the Australian Consumer Law and prison terms may apply where an offender has two or more convictions for the same offences. Disciplinary action can also be taken against licence holders or former licence holders. I encourage anyone impacted by Privium entering administration to contact NSW Fair Trading for support. As the company is now under administration, further questions about contractual obligations and financial affairs of the company should be directed to the administrator or the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

Anyone impacted by the Privium situation is encouraged to contact NSW Fair Trading, icare or the State Insurance Regulatory Authority for guidance and support. These agencies are maintaining intensive oversight of this matter to ensure that impacted homeowners are aware of their entitlements and can access guidance about assistance. Any investigation by NSW Fair Trading will focus on potential breaches of the Home Building Act and, potentially, the Australian Consumer Law. I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing this important matter before the House, and I look forward to working with all members whose constituents are impacted.

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:36):** In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Terrigal, Maitland, Upper Hunter, Lismore and Miranda for this considered debate. I appreciate the concern and sympathy from Government members, but people need more than sympathy. They need action from the Government. We need to look carefully at the legislation, provide greater restrictions and, as the member for Lismore said, work with our Federal colleagues so that inappropriate companies like Privium are not allowed to do what it is doing right now. I appreciate that the Minister for Fair Trading and others keep referring to and advertising NSW Fair Trading and other New South Wales services. That is fantastic. We know that all of the people who are victims of Privium have used those services; however, many of them are still up to hundreds of thousands of dollars out of pocket, even after contacting a website.

We need to look at tightening the legislation and how it works, and keeping a weather eye on contractors. I agree with the member for Upper Hunter that we have a construction boom in the Hunter, like we have in many other areas of New South Wales. We support the construction industry because it provides jobs and assists our economy. People want to live in beautiful new houses, and who can blame them? Meanwhile, they need to be protected. The particular family that I referred to is still out of pocket by many thousands of dollars, even with all of the compensation they have received and after doing the right thing. These people are victims of a company, and the Government needs to look at why these companies are getting away with what they do.

The Collins report was important, but we need to enact more legislation and look very strictly at these companies to ensure that consumers are not left with half a home that they cannot put a roof on before Christmas because of complications with the contract. They are the people, the members of our community, who are left out of pocket. So let us really consider what companies like Privium Homes are doing. I expect more, and the community expects more, than the Minister to say, "Well, I sympathise and I refer you to a website". I want the Minister to take action, to look seriously at these companies and to prevent it from happening in the future, so we can protect our communities. I thank members for the considered debate and urge them to support the motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Business of the House*

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (12:40):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide for general business notice of motion (general notice) No. 2998 [M6 Motorway Stage 1 Project] standing in the name of the member for Oatley to be considered forthwith.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (12:40):** The Opposition supports the motion. In our other careers, both the Leader of the House and I would frequently find ourselves momentarily delayed from being at court at 10 o'clock. We were occasionally delayed. I know that the member for Oatley has so many competing



considerations now that he is such a senior member of the Government. It is completely understandable that he was delayed when his notice of motion came up earlier today. I know how hard he works. So, in the spirit of cooperation, the Opposition is prepared to agree to the Leader of the House's motion to suspend standing orders.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Motions*

#### **M6 MOTORWAY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors) (12:41):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the Government is delivering the M6 Motorway Stage 1 Project to provide lower commute times for local residents and remove more than 2,000 trucks a day from surface roads.
- (2) Acknowledges this project has already provided new outdoor playing fields as well as a new war memorial for the Georges River and Bayside communities.
- (3) Recognises the Government is committed to improving roads and transport infrastructure across the State.

I thank the member for Heffron for his support. This motion acknowledges the New South Wales Government's commitment to improving the lives of people living in the St George and Sutherland shire area. This commitment to the people of the St George and Sutherland shire region cannot be better demonstrated than by the M6 Motorway project. Last November, I had the honour of officially turning the first sod of the M6 stage 1. How exciting! I was joined by the Premier, the former transport Minister, my parliamentary colleagues the members for Heathcote, Holsworthy and Miranda—the member for Cronulla was not there, but he would have liked to have been, of course—and my parliamentary colleague in the other place, the Hon. Peter Poulos.

The investment in M6 stage 1 alone totals \$2.7 billion. It will see a four-kilometre twin tunnel construction link President Avenue at Kogarah with the now completed M8 Motorway at Arncliffe, bypassing 23 sets of traffic lights. This is an enormous project. Over 10,000 cars will be removed from General Holmes Drive and other local roads. This will ease pressure on many local roads in the St George area which have been struggling under heavy traffic volumes. It will remove more than 2,000 trucks a day from our roads. The M6 will slash the travel time from the St George and Sutherland shire region to the city, allowing thousands of commuters to quickly and safely travel to and from work each day. This is a massive win for working families. This will benefit not only the commuters of south-east Sydney but also the workers of our local community.

Around 5,500 local jobs will be created as a result of the M6 Motorway, with thousands of tradies, builders and architects given the opportunity to work on this exciting and challenging new project. M6 Stage 1 and the jobs it will create is a big part of the Government's economic recovery plan. By investing in crucial road infrastructure, the Government is providing jobs and economic growth for those in the Georges River and Bayside local government areas. The M6 is one of the many congestion-busting infrastructure projects that this Government has invested in. The M6 complements other significant infrastructure projects, such as WestConnex and the M8 tunnel, which form part of the Government's plan to increase the connectivity of our motor network. This is a major statewide investment in our local road infrastructure.

We are continuing to fund worthwhile upgrades to local community projects. As part of the M6 stage 1, Brighton Memorial Playing Fields will receive a brand new, full-size, FIFA-grade synthetic football field, a small natural turf playing field, a family friendly playground, a new car park, substantial landscaping work and a new war memorial, which features a remembrance wall in recognition of the contribution of Australian service men and women to Australian defence forces. Transport for NSW is also transforming McCarthy Reserve and the Ador Park Precinct in Rockdale with new playing fields, large all-ability playgrounds and skate parks—we all love skate parks. All of these projects were handed back to the local council last year.

While the Government has invested heavily in major road projects such as the M6 and WestConnex, it has not forgotten the importance of continuing to invest in local roads that I and millions of people are using each and every day. The member for Rockdale will find this exciting: The Government has made substantial upgrades to President Avenue at the intersection of the Princes Highway to support the smooth flow of traffic in and out of the M6 tunnel. The enormous pipeline of road upgrades in south-east Sydney also includes the widening of King Georges Road—which has been talked about for over 50 years—which will see three lanes run in each direction. Other upgrades to our crucial feeder road for the M6 are taking place along the Princes Highway at Blakehurst and Kirrawee, helping to ensure that commuters can easily access the main motorway network which will crisscross Sydney. This is really exciting.

The New South Wales Government's commitment to improving roads and transport infrastructure is unmatched anywhere else in the country. We are standing on the edge of an infrastructure bonanza across New South Wales. We are boldly going where no government has gone before when it comes to infrastructure. The Government has announced \$71.5 billion worth of funding to deliver road and rail upgrades across the State. Over the past four years, the Government's massive infrastructure investment has included more trains, more services programs, the previously mentioned M6, the Great Western Highway upgrade, the Newell Highway upgrade, upgrades to the Princes Highway, and the Sydney Metro. I encourage everyone to use the Sydney Metro; it is fantastic.

From the city to the bush, this Government is committed to getting people where they want to go more quickly and more safely, by creating a well-funded, well-maintained road network that works for everyone. The Government's record investments in the road and transport network reflect this. I strongly believe that only a Coalition Government can deliver these kinds of projects in New South Wales. The hardworking people of New South Wales expect and deserve a government that invests in the right kind of congestion-busting, job-creating infrastructure projects. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) (12:49):** I observe the enthusiasm of the member for Oatley. I could see his colleagues behind him and even though the F6 is relevant to all of their electorates, there was no enthusiasm because it is the same old trick at the same time within the election cycle. We are getting close to an election again and we have got to pull out the old empty box: "The F6 is coming, people from Sutherland shire. You will be saved. Your lives will change overnight." Nothing is happening other than a hole in the ground in my electorate, which is going to become an absorption pit. I cannot see solid commitments to complete the rest of the road. That is what all of those communities have been waiting on for many, many years. Where is the hole going? It is going west. It is not going to the Eastern Distributor. How is it going to take cars off General Holmes Drive? They want to link up with the Eastern Distributor. It is not doing that.

Again, members opposite are selling that empty box to the people in your communities. We are only a year out from the election. We saw what happened down south in the by-election. That is an indication that people are all awake now. Guess who was presiding over this? It was the former member for Bega. Poor Fiona Kotvojs had to follow him. We saw what the voters did to Fiona and we will see what they will do to members opposite tomorrow. The people of the communities of those opposite still believe they are getting a proper F6, which they always knew would be a road that would take them from the Sutherland shire all the way into the city. They are going to go west and into this toll trap. They are going to jump into one hole, pay a toll, jump into another and pay another toll. That is what it has been all about: the financial modelling to underpin some sugar hit on the sale or part sale of the road network.

The Government has again tolled the M5 and taken trucks and cars off it. They have gone into the same electorate that the Government is creating an absorption pit in. Forget about removing 2,000 trucks off the road, the Government has probably added tens of thousands on. I would like to look at that modelling, but those numbers have been thrown at us for years. We know that there have been a lot of changes on the road network and it is much worse. I acknowledge that some work on playing fields and skate parks has been done in my electorate, but not because the Government wanted to do it. It is because I have gotten up here so many times enraged and abused the Government, that I had the former member for Bega come up to me and ask: "What can we do for you, Rockdale?" I asked for facilities. This bloke—Johnny-come-lately—came to the table with Transport for NSW after they had been designed. I said at the meeting: "Get out of here. You've had nothing to do with it because you didn't care about my community."

But members opposite are always there to do the big shovel turn. This is about the twenty-fourth time they have announced the same dud. The Government is building a two-and-a-bit kilometre road that will not service the communities. They are all going to know that. I am not going to let you get away with it again. The people of Bega understood that they cannot have empty promises and keep voting for the same people. That is a big issue. The M5 has brought lots of trucks and cars and further congested the area that is going to be the get-on point for the F6, stage one. It is stage one and only. That is what I want to call it, because there is no further commitment for the rest of it. I challenge members opposite to prove to me or anyone else in the community that they are going to construct the rest of it.

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (12:53):** What a theatrical outburst. The member needs to be in Actors' Equity. The member for Rockdale is challenging the Government to build more infrastructure, which it has planned. Stage two is the completion of the M6 to Loftus in my electorate. The Opposition has put out many false claims that the national park was going to be involved in this, which was an absolute furphy and a load of rubbish. I will go through some of the history of where we have come to today. Many previous governments, Liberal included, over the decades have promised this road. I have a statement at the end of my speech to say it would have been a lot worse if the Labor Party had actually done what it suggested back in the Lemma days.

The F6 freeway was first touted in 1938 when the Metropolitan Planning Committee began assessing the existing main roads systems in the Sydney and Wollongong areas. However, due to the war efforts, planning was halted in 1939 and a fresh start made in 1943. This time, the Department of Main Roads [DMR] undertook comprehensive surveys to determine the pattern of past and present development to predict future traffic growth. In 1945 the DMR produced a detailed report entitled *County of Cumberland Main Road Development Plan*. This plan, which differed little to what was eventually included in the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme, was the first official plan to include the F6 Southern Freeway.

A route was suggested in the plan from Ultimo, south through Redfern, Alexandria, Ramsgate, Kirrawee and Loftus to Waterfall—which is not part of the plan now—generally paralleling the existing Princes Highway. The planning of the F6 was an incredible feat, considering in 1945 the Princes Highway was still unsealed for more than half its length. It is also interesting to note that the plans for the F6 reached Waterfall only 15 years after the bitumen seal was completed. The F6 corridor was subsequently included in the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme and gazetted in 1951.

The Government has at last moved forward on the F6. I congratulate Ministers who have made this possible, including the Hon. Michael Costa from the Labor Party, who stopped the selloff of the F6 corridor back in Premier Iemma days. If that had happened, we would be in a parlous state at this stage, because we would have to purchase back all that land which is now being used. To the member for Rockdale, yes, the Government is tunnelling the majority of the F6. It was my choice 12 years ago when we were discussing that surface roads should have been built, but that would have taken away amenities for the public, because most of those amenities are built on the corridor for the F6. The Government is going underground at great expense to the taxpayers of New South Wales and against my better judgement.

As the member for Oatley has said, the M6 stage one will ease the traffic on surrounding roads. Considerable amounts of money have been spent on stage two, which is in planning now. Unfortunately, the member for Rockdale has not been invited to those meetings, but that will be going forward in the next couple of years. The first stage needs to be completed before the second stage can begin. Some of the upgrades which will be made are improving pedestrian and cycling safety through the new shared cycling and pedestrian pathways, which is fantastic for local residents. I commend the member for Oatley for bringing this motion forward.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (12:57):** It gives me great pleasure to speak on this motion. I thank the member for Oatley and Minister for bringing it to the House. I did have a laugh, Minister, because he said he commended the motion to the House. I am glad he did, because it was his motion. The Minister did not want Hansard to miss the issue of King Georges Road. The three-lane widening at the corner of Canterbury and King Georges Road reduces travel time by eight seconds apparently. That is about it and we have not quite gotten there. There are lots of clearways, but there is more to be said about that. After following the member for Rockdale, there is a fair bit to say because he took away most of my speech. The member was animated as always, passionate as usual and left me plenty of time to talk about things.

It is a real habit of the Government to sell a very good narrative. Everything that is done is to be done to improve working lives and family lives. No-one disagrees with the goal of getting congestion off the roads. The only problem the Opposition has is that it is inaccessible for most families. Every time a decision is made to build a road, it seems that a toll is whacked on it. There is an obsession with building toll roads. Some people have referred to it as toll mania.

We have a road that is effectively two kilometres. Apparently, it is going to take so many trucks off the road and make life so much better. I fell for that when a toll was put on the existing M5 and the M8 was opened. I thought, "You know what? This is going to take trucks off the road." But you cannot say you are going to take 10,000 trucks off the road if the trucks cannot afford to use the toll road. We see that every single day along Bexley Road, along Forest Road and all throughout the St Peters area. It is simply untrue to just say that truck drivers are going to use it. They would if it was affordable.

I would use the toll roads much more if they were affordable. My P-plate driver daughter would use the toll roads if they were affordable or—better still—if they were free. Remember that most of their funding came from the sale of assets that once belonged to the State. And let us not forget the issue with the NRMA Rate Your Road, which put some roads in south-western Sydney as the worst in the State. I agree. So how come we are not making it easier for families? Why are we not making it better for families? Why are we not making it accessible for families?

This is a Government that gets up and sells a great story, but it is really terrible when it comes to delivery. This is yet another example. I note that the member for Heathcote is laughing. This road takes people two kilometres to bring them onto General Holmes Drive, where they are going to hit the traffic. They have another choice. They can take the Eastern Distributor at \$8.50 a pop. The Government is slugging people one way so they

can cut five minutes from their journey and sit in a parking lot somewhere else. We have seen no better example than the M4 tunnel, which was opened a couple of years ago. When you go through the M4, where do you end up? On the City West Link. Try and move on the City West Link at the moment. Or travel along the M5, like I do in the morning. When you get onto General Holmes Drive you cannot move and you have two options. One is to pay another \$8.50 for the Eastern Distributor; the other is to sit for another 45 minutes to try to get from near Alexandria to Parliament. That is not right.

It is not right that we couch this as if it is making families' lives better. It is not. Of course people want less congestion and improved roads. But the Government cannot do that if it does not make it accessible for families. It cannot do that if it is discouraging trucks because it is making it so unaffordable. Families cannot sleep at night because, at three o'clock in the morning, truck drivers are trying to save money by driving on residential roads. I commend anyone who would like to reduce congestion, but let us not fool ourselves by saying that we are making motorways accessible to each and every person in the State.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (13:01):** I support the New South Wales Government and the motion moved by the member for Oatley. I thank him for raising this topic in this place. We know that the Government continues to invest in upgrading our local roads and improving the State's transport infrastructure. The commencement of the M6 Motorway stage one project has been long anticipated by so many of us who travel south or south-west. We all know the need for it, and we have been working for it ever since we came into this place in 2011. Plans have been under way. Money has been found. Holes are being dug. Playgrounds and outdoor areas are already being built along the motorway to create community infrastructure. It is something we are all going to benefit from. Yet written in *The Leader* of 15 October is:

State Opposition Leader Chris Minns has given a strong indication the M6 (F6) won't be extended beyond Kogarah if Labor wins the 2023 election.

Even so, the member for Rockdale is claiming Government members will be the ones that will stop it. We are not stopping it. We are moving ahead. We are making it happen. We have promised it will happen, and it is continuing. The member for Kogarah doubts whether it is needed or wanted. I do not know why we would not want this infrastructure that will make a huge difference to thousands of people every single day, giving them the choice of how they get in and out of the city, whether from Bega or elsewhere. The member for Bega used to travel the road all the time. He knew exactly what the traffic issues were. That is why he was part of leading this change. He knew the difference it would make. Motorists will spend less time in traffic and will travel to their destinations on a safer road, so I am happy to see it happening. As I said, I am also happy to see those new outdoor playing fields all ready for the community to enjoy.

We have great form in building infrastructure, including road infrastructure. We are already funding our 2.2-kilometre duplication of Heathcote Road. That means we have put in the temporary traffic lights already, ahead of schedule. We moved the project forward because it was a safety issue, and it has helped to keep traffic safe and travelling smoothly along that road. We have committed to investigating the full duplication of Heathcote Road. That will make a huge difference. The first 2.2-kilometre section will come with the duplication of three bridges: those over Harris Creek, Williams Creek and the T8 Airport line. It is a huge undertaking, and our Government is making it happen. It comes with a pedestrian- and cyclist-shared pathway that will connect people to Holsworthy train station so they do not have to look for parking, even though we have also extended the car park to provide hundreds more parking spots than before. That will make a huge difference to Voyager Point residents and everyone else who accesses that train station.

We were the ones who completed the M5 West Widening project when we first came to government. We said we would do it under Premier Barry O'Farrell, and we did. That has made a huge difference. Then we moved on to building the other side of the M5 and the M8. We are building projects that are making a difference to people. Labor was against the 22-kilometre section of road from Prestons to Beverly Hills, which added an extra lane in each direction. We made a difference with it. We did not listen to Labor in 2011, and I am glad we did not, because it provides such a smoother journey for our locals. We have provided \$175 million to improve congestion and traffic on the M5 between the Hume Highway and Moorebank Avenue. We have addressed pinch points along Moorebank Avenue, from Georges River, Powerhouse Road, the railway lines and Lakewood Crescent. We are the ones who recognise the importance of getting on with this work now. There is no doubt about what direction we are heading.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (13:06):** It is always delightful to hear the pearls come from the member for Holsworthy. Long may she remain a member of this House—at least until March of 2023. I have known the member for Oatley for a long time. He is a great salesman. The people of Oatley think he could successfully sell ice to Eskimos. He is at railway stations every morning for whole four-year periods at a time. He is successful in advocating on behalf of the Government, and a large percentage of people from Oatley buy the argument. But this is one dog of a project that not even the member for Oatley will be able to sell. In the fullness of time, as this

project proceeds, he will be hoisted by the very words of this motion. He has been sent in here to support a dog of a project, and it is going to catch up with him.

The member for Rockdale is not normally wrong when he talks about economic models. As boisterous as he can sometimes be in getting his message across, he is correct. The history of the M6, or the F6, has been floating around for half a century. Road reservations that will take motorists from the Illawarra right through the CBD have been talked about ad nauseam. The plans involve effectively taking people from the then F6, joining them up with the Eastern Distributor and taking them into the city. But there is a bizarre thing about the stage one 2.6-kilometre section of road that will leave from President Avenue.

Instead of taking people onto the Eastern Distributor and dealing with the poor suffering residents of the electorate of Kogarah, stage one actually heads west and proposes to send traffic onto the M8 to feed the business model of WestConnex. That is the purpose of it. If it was part of some overall design that the Government had planned and was the first genuine stage of a motorway to address the needs of people from the Illawarra or even from Kiama who want to come to the CBD, it would be different. The problem of going via the M8—apart from the e-tag going "kerching-kerching" along the way—is that people are being sent west in a circle. The member for Oatley said that motorists are bypassing 26 traffic lights. But that is only because they are taking a circular route. Under the original plan for the F6, they would probably bypass two.

That will happen to the people of Kogarah, Rockdale and even Oatley—the member for Oatley had better hope it is finished before the next State election; otherwise, he will be hoist on his own petard. The people will work him out. In the St George area they are screaming about the number of tolls they are paying. They are screaming about all the heavy vehicles that are bypassing the toll roads. The smartest thing to do is what was originally planned with the F6: Construct the first stage of the F6 to the Eastern Distributor.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading) (13:10):** By leave: I appreciate the indulgence of the House in granting me leave to make an important contribution to debate on the motion moved by the member for Oatley. I give the member my unwavering support for this project that is of great importance to south Sydney communities. As the member for Miranda, I know how committed to this project my community is. For over 70 years our communities have been crying out for this infrastructure. It has taken this Government to deliver any progress on the project. I am so proud to be part of a government that is delivering on stage one of the M6 for all our communities.

I have stood with the member for Oatley, the member for Heathcote and the member for Cronulla as we have delivered the various milestones of the project. We have opened the synthetic playing fields at Brighton Memorial Park and Ador Reserve to make sure that the community is not inconvenienced in the use of those important community assets whilst we deliver vital road infrastructure. We were there at the sod turn for the four-kilometre twin tunnel that will link the M8 at Arncliffe to President Avenue at Kogarah. We know how excited residents are about spending less time in the car and more time at home with loved ones—which, ultimately, is what we all want to do.

Traffic congestion is an important issue in our communities. This project is the single most important project to the communities of southern Sydney. I believe in this project so much, which is why my colleagues and I are so committed to ensuring that this Government works on developing plans for future stages of the motorway. It is long overdue. I am personally committed to it, and have spoken about that in the past. I thank the House for its indulgence.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Bills*

### **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS (CARE AND PROTECTION) AMENDMENT (FAMILY IS CULTURE REVIEW) BILL 2021**

#### **First Reading**

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

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I set down the second reading of the bill as an order of the day for tomorrow. I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Members***MEMBER FOR WYONG****MEMBER FOR MULGOA**

**The SPEAKER:** I wish happy birthday to the member for Wyong and to the member for Mulgoa.

*Announcements***DANNY HELDAL**

**The SPEAKER:** The third birthday we have today is Danny Heldal. Happy birthday.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPH**

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

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome the member for Oatley's guests from a local Probus Club who are watching question time from the Jubilee Room. I had the pleasure of speaking with them a little earlier.

*Announcements***MEMBER VACCINATION STATUS**

**The SPEAKER (14:16):** I will make a short statement on the vaccination status of members in light of some comments in the media earlier today. I clarify that all members of the Legislative Assembly are, by resolution of this House, able to attend Parliament if they are either fully vaccinated or have a valid medical exemption for not being fully vaccinated. I am empowered by the House to enforce these rules, and an audit of compliance was conducted late last year. I am advised and understand that all members of the Legislative Assembly have complied with these rules.

*Question Time***RAIL SERVICES DISRUPTION**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:17):** My question is directed to the Premier. Is it true that on Thursday 17 February the Government made a decision to shut down the rail network not for one day but for a two-week period commencing Monday 21 February?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:18):** Not to my knowledge.

**WESTINVEST FUND**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (14:18):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the WestInvest Fund is going to improve the lives and amenity of families across west and south-west Sydney?

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:18):** I thank the member for Holsworthy for her question and her appreciation of the importance of investment in western Sydney—whether it is north-west Sydney or south-west Sydney—right across the board. Projects like the WestConnex, which we know will provide a great opportunity to people across western Sydney, have been opposed by those opposite every step of the way. Not only are people able to get to work faster and home quicker, but there are also ancillary roads like Parramatta Road where people can travel faster. Following question time yesterday the Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of asset recycling and Labor members' opposition to that program, which has unlocked significant capital across the State. We have invested record infrastructure in every single corner of New South Wales, and that is why the net worth of our State has not diminished over our term in office but actually increased now to close to a quarter of a trillion dollars.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** As the member for Holsworthy knows all too well, that WestConnex transaction has unlocked billions of dollars, including \$5 billion in additional headroom which we are investing across western Sydney.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I thank the 15 councils across western Sydney whom we met with during the difficult Delta outbreak.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** In my previous capacity as Treasurer, I discussed with Labor mayors, Liberal mayors and Independent mayors what the areas were in which they would like to partner with the New South Wales Government to drive economic opportunity, jobs growth and, ultimately, provide a great societal benefit to all those western Sydney communities. The list they came up with was: opportunities in parks and urban spaces, green space, enhancing community infrastructure like local sporting grounds, modernising local schools in western Sydney, creating and enhancing arts and cultural facilities in the west, revitalising high streets, addressing those pinch points and clearing local traffic. This Government has invested record amounts in mega infrastructure projects but it is the smaller projects as well that can make a real difference to people's lives.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Whether in Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Burwood, Camden, Campbelltown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, The Hills, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith, Strathfield or Wollondilly, each of those councils will be able to apply for projects as a result of the announcement today by the Treasurer and the Minister for Western Sydney. Those councils will be able to apply under the WestInvest Fund; \$400 million of that fund has been allocated for shovel- and screwdriver-ready projects in each of those council areas. Each local council will be able to apply for grants between \$20 million and \$35 million based on the size and population of the councils. But we know, from consultation with those local government areas, that these projects will make a real difference and ensure that western Sydney is the best place to live, work, run a business and raise a family.

These investments do not just happen. They happen because of the strong fiscal policies of this Government, which turned around the economic malaise of 16 years of Labor and turned around the State's finances. Since that time every single policy of this Government, every difficult decision—whether it was the poles and wires transaction, other asset recycling initiatives or the fiscal constraint in this State—has put the budget in a position where, over the past two years, we have been able to invest \$46 billion in our pandemic response across the board to ensure that we had a very strong health response. In addition to that, we have been able to invest in keeping businesses open and keeping people in work. That is why we are in the position we are today when it comes to our health and economic response. We are leading the nation off the back of investments that only the Liberals and Nationals could make.

#### RAIL SERVICES DISRUPTION

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:23):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. It refers to evidence before the Fair Work Commission whereby Sydney Trains contacted the New South Wales Chief Economist about the economic impacts of a two-week shutdown of the transport sector and stated, "The modelling forecasts it will cost"—

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

**Ms Anna Watson:** What's the point of order?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** We have the same problem as yesterday.

**Ms Anna Watson:** No, what is the standing order?

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It is Standing Order 128, subclause (2) (a)—statements of fact that are only strictly necessary to render the question intelligible can be given. Why does the Leader of the Opposition not just ask the question?

**The SPEAKER:** I do not need to hear further from the Minister. I am satisfied that the question is in order to create a context.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I go back to the quote from the Chief Economist:

The modelling forecasts it will cost \$33 million a day and \$370 million for the full two weeks. It also showed that it would impact 150,000 workers per day across Greater Sydney and almost 1.6 million people over the fortnight.

Is it really true that Sydney Trains contacted the Chief Economist about a two-week lockdown and did not bother to tell the Minister about it?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Veterans) (14:25):** I have waited a long time to receive a question about economics from the Labor Party. We talk about opportunity costs, we talk about investment and, of course, we talk about the circular flow of income, which the member for Kogarah knows full well because of his negotiations with Jamie Clements and his friends in the Chinese Communist Party. I would have thought that if he was going to refer to leaked documents he would have read them properly. The question does not make much sense to me. If the member thinks that any government department would not approach contentious issues and seek advice on all impacts, whether it be industrial or economic, he has clearly forgotten his time as an electorate officer in the last Labor Government.

### OFFSHORE MINING

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (14:26):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Police and Minister for Regional New South Wales. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Government is protecting our offshore ecosystems from mining exploration?

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (14:27):** I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question. The Government understands the important contribution that the resources sector makes across this State. However, we also appreciate that there is a need to deliver a responsible and balanced approach to the development of our resources. It was with that in mind that yesterday I announced the New South Wales Government will not support commercial applications for offshore exploration or mining for commercial purposes in or adjacent to New South Wales coastal waters.

As the member for Coffs Harbour well knows, our ecosystems are complex and very sensitive. It is important that we protect them for generations to come. As a government we need to protect our coastal waters, but we also need to provide certainty to the New South Wales onshore mining sector, which remains a key employer. We have our Future of Coal Statement, we have our Future of Gas Statement and the Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy, which was announced recently in Dubbo. All of these highlight the New South Wales Government's very clear vision for onshore exploration and mining activities. It is another way that we are shaping a stronger and more sustainable sector and providing greater confidence for investors and clarity to industry and regional New South Wales communities.

One would have thought that our offshore policy would have been well received by those opposite; after all I thought it was great news for coastal communities concerned about projects such as petroleum exploration permit [PEP] 11. Yesterday I was shocked to see a tweet from the member for Bankstown—one of those great coastal communities. The tweet stopped me in my tracks. It stated:

Toole's announcement today about banning offshore mining in New South Wales is clearly a political stunt, which is more about following Morrison's orders and protecting the Federal seats of Mackellar, Wentworth and Robertson, rather than protecting the New South Wales environment.

The member for Bankstown has shown that she does not care about offshore mining. She clearly does not care about these coastal communities. In her opinion it should not be in her backyard.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** She would be happy to have PEP 11, PEP 12, PEP 13, all the way through to PEP 20. She turned her back on those communities.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We will continue to support them. Over the past two months I have been campaigning in the Monaro electorate but, according to the member for Bankstown, I am more concerned about the electorate of Wentworth. As I have been travelling around regional and rural New South Wales I have been listening to the concerns that have been raised by those communities about their needs, exactly like this project. If this was a stunt what about the decision that the Government made to rule out coal exploration and mining for Hawkins-Rumker? Was that a stunt too? What about protecting 6,000 hectares of land on the Liverpool Plains? That was about righting Labor's wrongs; about what we would have seen with the Shenhua mine. Was that a stunt? If these were stunts then frankly I wish the Labor Party would employ a few stunts of its own. Instead it issued exploration licences across the State like confetti—everywhere across the State. Those opposite accuse me of following Scomo's orders. Let me tell members opposite whose orders they followed: They followed Eddie Obeid's orders. When he gave them orders they followed.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order—



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

**Mr Ryan Park:** My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Deputy Premier is a mile off what we have been discussing. I do not know what a former member has to do with the issue that has been raised.

**The SPEAKER:** I have given the Deputy Premier some leeway. I ask him to return to the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** When discussing where sandmining is to take place I talk about the ongoing collaboration that is occurring in relation to erosion on our beaches. [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** I have granted the Deputy Premier another two minutes, but I make it clear that he has been given enough discretion. The Deputy Premier will return to the leave of the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** My answer has been relevant to the question. I have been able to work closely with the member for Newcastle as well as the mayor to look at the needs of that community. My office has an open door policy and we are happy to continue to do that. It is important that we protect our coastal waters. We do that to ensure that the people who live there can continue to enjoy it, along with visitors to our beaches and the next generation. All I hear about in this place is stunts from the Opposition. Opposition members turn their backs on the people of regional New South Wales. They do not stand up for coastal communities. The Liberal-Nationals Government continues to do that.

Those opposite continue to damage the environment in the same way as they damage regional and rural communities. They turn their backs on them. The people of regional and rural New South Wales know that they forget to look after them. The Liberal-Nationals Government will continue to support them. I will keep talking to the members who I know are happy with this announcement—the member for Newcastle, the member for Swansea, the member for Terrigal, the member for South Coast and the member for Manly. All those members continue to acknowledge the work that this Government does. The Liberal-Nationals Government continues to represent communities right across the State.

#### RAIL SERVICES DISRUPTION

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:34):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. I refer the Minister to evidence given to the Fair Work Commission by a senior executive in the Minister's department, who said, "On 17 February 2022, in view of the finalised risk assessment, the executive leadership team made the decision that the network could not be operated for a two-week period commencing 21 February 2022." Given that we now know that the entire leadership team of Sydney Trains made a decision to shut down the network not on Saturday, not on Sunday, not on Monday morning but on Thursday the week before, is it really true that the Minister had no idea that the network would shut down and lockout would happen on Monday morning?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Veterans) (14:35):** I am assuming that the Opposition leader is referring to the story that been put online by Ashleigh Raper at the ABC. I must congratulate him on allowing others to do his research for him. It is no wonder his tactics team is a mess. This was a contingency plan. It was an assessment. Assessments are done to assure that any potential contingency is addressed. Assessments are done by government. Every time a government department faces a dilemma, whether it be industrial action, police operation or natural disaster, it does assessments to address all contingencies. This is not rocket science. This is Government 101.

**Mr Chris Minns:** Point of order: For the information of the Minister—

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

**Mr Chris Minns:** —it said that the decision had been made. It was not a contingency.

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

**Mr Chris Minns:** It is under Standing Order 129. The decision had been made.

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Minister has completed his answer.

#### WESTINVEST FUND

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (14:36):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Minister for Tourism and Sport, and Minister for Western Sydney. Will the Minister update the House on WestInvest and how it will make life better in western Sydney?

**Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Minister for Tourism and Sport, and Minister for Western Sydney) (14:36):** It is always good to get a fantastic question from an advocate for western Sydney. I know that Prospect Highway is one of those great projects that the member

has been a strong advocate for. We will call it Winston Hills now, so the community of Winston Hills has an incredibly strong representative. It is a fantastic day for western Sydney, with the opening up of the WestInvest Fund, a new \$5 billion fund to build on the fantastic things that this Government has been doing across western Sydney over the past 10 years.

This is a once-in-a-multigenerational opportunity for western Sydney, such an important part of the State. That is not to downplay any other part of New South Wales, but western Sydney is one area of the State that is going to have to take on a larger portion of the future population as our State continues to grow. The New South Wales Government has understood that for such a long period of time, and that is why it has been investing in big pieces of infrastructure like new rail lines and new roads. It is supporting the Commonwealth with a new international airport and really making it much easier to move around western Sydney.

WestInvest allows us to get closer to the ground across the 15 local government areas in western Sydney to make sure that we can improve the quality of life for people who live in the western Sydney community and for people who want to visit it as well. We want to invest in the amenity of our local community. We know that it is so important to take full advantage of being able to improve the quality of parklands, invest into parklands and open spaces for future generations. Throughout the course of the history of New South Wales, governments have looked into those growth areas and growth corridors and quarantined those locations for future parklands before the populations arrive. That challenge now exists for this Government. WestInvest is going to give us the opportunity to do that.

Today we are starting with \$400 million, which will be going to those 15 local government council areas. It allows us to be able to give a minimum of \$20 million to every single one of those 15 councils, and then we will increase the loadings based on the size of the population. As the Premier said, this will allow local governments to get the cash in the bank as quickly as possible, get it out the door and start on those projects that they have ready to go. Coming in next will be another \$1.6 billion for the community to engage and have their say. Today the Government launched a new website, [nsw.gov.au/westinvest](http://nsw.gov.au/westinvest), where every person across western Sydney, and indeed across the State, can have their say about areas that funds should be allocated to. What are the projects that are important to you? How do you want to embellish your local community? What are the local high streets that need an upgrade? What are the local sportsgrounds that need to be upgraded? What are the local cultural facilities that your community deserves? That is what this fund is for.

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

**Mr STUART AYRES:** New South Wales government agencies will also be able to invest another \$3 billion in conjunction with local government and engage with the local community to make sure that we really lift western Sydney and make sure that it is absolutely the best it can be. Western Sydney is going to continue to take on a lot of population growth into new greenfield areas, and that is because we are going to continue to grow as a State. We are going to continue to grow as a community. This is a government that is taking a responsible approach to that growth, making sure that it continues to invest in the infrastructure and that it also invests in the quality of life and public amenity. It is so important that the Government encourage people, local community groups and organisations to get in and have their say. It is a collaboration between the Government and the citizens of western Sydney.

It is so terribly disappointing that those opposite have consistently opposed projects like these for 10 years. They have opposed the funding model, the asset recycling, that has allowed the Government to deliver new infrastructure time and again to western Sydney and across regional New South Wales. The moment WestInvest was announced, Labor was out canning it straightaway, saying, "This isn't real. The money is not there. It's all fake." Well, here it is now. Labor can stand up and oppose every single project that we announce after we have gone out and engaged with the community and listened to what they want.

If Labor does not support this fund, it should front up and oppose every single project. Front up and do it. Those opposite are prepared to use budget estimates and question time to question the strategy. If they do not like it, they can oppose every single one of the projects. What we have seen over the past 10 years is a government committed to the people of western Sydney. It has a strong plan for the future of western Sydney. WestInvest is at the heart of it. It is making sure that this \$5 billion goes to the people of western Sydney so they get their fair share.

#### RAIL SERVICES DISRUPTION

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:41):** My question is directed to the Premier. We now know that Sydney Trains made the decision to close the network last Thursday. We also know that the department contacted the NSW Chief Economist.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** That's not true.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will remain silent. The member for Rockdale will remain silent. The Minister for Health will remain silent.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Given we now know that Sydney Trains contacted the Chief Economist, the Department of Communities and Justice, and the Department of Education about the impact of a two-week shutdown, is it really plausible that all of those people knew about a two-week shutdown all over his Government but the Premier personally had absolutely no idea?

**Mr Matt Kean:** Preparing for your sanctioned union strikes.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Treasurer will remain silent. The Minister for Health will remain silent.

*[Government members interjected.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping—Premier) (14:42):** This is a scare campaign by those opposite. The unions were out there last year and again this year calling for chaos across our city and State.

**Ms Anna Watson:** We've seen this movie, Dom. We saw this movie.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Those opposite are not hiding it. They are actively promoting it.

**Ms Anna Watson:** It wasn't a union strike. Everybody knows.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Labor sanctioned strikes right across our State. To my knowledge, there was no plan to do that at all, but it would only make sense, given these Labor-sanctioned strikes across the State, to ensure that in a worst-case scenario. It would be completely remiss of any good government to plan against the militant unions' ideas about shutting down the network. The unions do not run the operation of the network; Sydney Trains runs the operation of the network. We are not going to take advice from Labor-backed unions that are intent on causing mass disruption to people across the State for political purposes. Members opposite can stand with union bosses, but we stand with the people of New South Wales every single day of the week. Labor is having secret meetings, putting union bosses before the people of the State.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point or order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has completed his answer.

### MULTICULTURALISM

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (14:45):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Multiculturalism. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting and delivering for multicultural communities across the State?

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors) (14:46):** Not that I am counting, but it has been 3,500 days since I was first elected to this place and, finally, I have been asked my first question. You never forget your first time—question. I thank the member for East Hills for her question. I know how hard she works in her multicultural communities. Over 44 per cent of people living in her electorate speak a language other than English, which is a great reflection of the diverse make-up of many of her communities.

I am sure we can all agree that New South Wales has a brilliant multicultural story, which has led our State to becoming the multicultural capital of not just Australia but the world. We are home to over 300 different cultures, speak more than 275 languages and practise 144 different religions. Regardless of background or the language we speak, we live well together. It is what our great State has to offer that draws people to visit, work and live here. New arrivals see our State's values and opportunities for themselves and their families. They arrive in Australia for a new beginning, for hope and for opportunity. More importantly, we recognise the great value and contributions that they bring to our State.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge how challenging the past two years have been for multicultural communities across the State. They have had it tough but, thanks to the partnership between our Government and multicultural leaders, we have been able to work together through these challenges. Through meaningful partnerships with local leaders, the Government can truly help communities. We have allocated a record \$54.7 million to support vulnerable people and multicultural communities experiencing hardship. More

than \$38 million went directly to grassroots multicultural groups. This funding has enabled those organisations to support people, while also getting out important health advice.

I recently visited the NSW Council of Pacific Communities in Minto, led by a fantastic individual, Mal Fruen. By working in partnership, we have helped provide COVID-19 information packs, distribute food hampers, establish local vaccination hubs and provide HOPE toolkits, which I was proud to launch recently. This is just one of 750 examples where the New South Wales Government has empowered community organisations to better support their communities. By working together, we are delivering meaningful outcomes. While we have worked through many challenges presented by the pandemic, we are still powering on, supporting and delivering for multicultural communities. A key focus for me as Minister for Multiculturalism has been bringing together multicultural and religious leaders and multicultural media to hear their concerns and relay important information. This has included hosting weekly multicultural leader and press forums, and I have really valued the continued engagement in these forums.

Again, I say a big thank you to all of the multicultural leaders and media outlets that have worked with us to keep people safe across New South Wales. Earlier this week, I announced additional funding for festivals and events through the Multicultural NSW Stronger Together Grants Program. More than \$545,000 has been allocated to over 50 community groups to host multicultural festivals and events across the State. Each of these events is about bringing people together and celebrating our State's wonderful multicultural communities. We have already seen Lunar New Year festivals and refugee awareness programs delivered.

I have visited many of these organisations over the past six weeks, including the Australian Korean Association of Sydney & NSW and the Friends of India Australia, which are both located in Strathfield, but it does not end there. Many more events are scheduled to take place. These are just some of the more than 50 events that our Government is supporting to help bring people together, and they are important to help us reconnect and celebrate who we are after the past two years. Our Government is getting on with the job of supporting and delivering for multicultural communities right across New South Wales.

#### MULTICULTURALISM

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (14:51):** My question is also directed to the Minister for Multiculturalism. It is a big day for him.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members that clapping in the Chamber is not usually allowed.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** The Minister for Multiculturalism is almost as popular as the Minister for Transport today. Given the importance of international students, migrant workers and international tourists to Sydney, how is the Government working with our multicultural communities to attract and welcome them to our global city?

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors) (14:52):** Twice in one day. Lucky me. I thank the member for his question and for sharing my passion for multicultural communities in Sydney and across New South Wales. This week marked an extraordinary milestone for our State, as Australia's national borders were finally reopened. This is not just significant for people with aspirations of finding a new life for themselves in New South Wales, but it is also incredibly important for our multicultural communities that have family and friends living overseas. They can be reunited once more. Spending two years apart from the people we care about is a very long time.

I thank the Premier and Minister Ayres for leading the reopening of our national borders and making sure that our State is ready for it. We certainly are ready. The pandemic has had a profound impact on Sydney, as it has on many other global cities around the world. For instance, Australia's international student numbers have more than halved since the onset of the pandemic. It was a tough time for the students who stayed, many having come from countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, India, China and Indonesia. The New South Wales Government recognised this and worked to support international students while they were away from their families. In 2020 the Government pledged over \$20 million for the welfare of international students.

*[A member interjected.]*

**Mr MARK COURE:** Twenty million. This included funding for temporary crisis accommodation for those who needed it. I am proud to say that program has successfully met those needs, including temporary accommodation support for over 6,500 international students and their dependants. But our work does not end there. To ensure that people want to come to Sydney to live, work and study, they need to know that governments are here to support them and make them feel welcome. As I outlined in my earlier response to the member for East Hills, the New South Wales Government has been working really closely with our multicultural communities

across the State. We will keep working with them to help attract more migrant workers, international students and international tourists to Sydney and our State.

The Government believes that supporting major cultural events and festivals is an important part of bringing people back into our city. In addition to successful major events like Vivid Sydney, there are huge upcoming cultural events that will showcase Sydney's multicultural success story to the world. An example is the upcoming Greek Festival of Sydney 2022, starting with Greek Fest at Darling Harbour on 13 March. It is one of Australia's longest-running and most significant annual cultural events. This year marks 40 years of the Greek Festival of Sydney. I attended the launch of the festival with the member for Canterbury and the member for Rockdale. The festival's organisers acknowledged just how important the New South Wales Government's \$100,000 annual funding has been for them. The Government is also proud to support other major cultural events like the City of Sydney Children's Festival, planned for June in Pyrmont, and the Bangladeshi new year festival in March. These festivals bring people together to showcase and celebrate our cultural diversity, and the Government is looking at what it can do to support even more major festivals and events in Sydney and across New South Wales.

Over the past two years, government agencies have consistently translated important public health messages. Since June, more than 2,600 public health resources have been translated into more than 60 different languages. A major focus for me has been making sure that these translations are more efficient while distributing translated materials to a wider audience. To that end, I have asked that translated materials be sent not just to members of Parliament and community leaders, but also to local councils and universities. We want them to have the latest translated information so that it is easily accessible for multicultural communities and, now that the borders are open, for international arrivals as well. This includes international students, workers and tourists. We have to do everything we can to make new arrivals feel welcome. I firmly believe that New South Wales sets an example for the rest of the world as a peaceful and harmonious multicultural society. It is my role as Minister for Multiculturalism to promote social cohesion and community harmony, so that every— *[Extension of time]*

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

**Mr MARK COURE:** I am getting to that. That is what the extension is for. As Minister for Multiculturalism, I am here to promote community harmony so that every community can thrive regardless of cultural background or heritage. I thank the member for Sydney for his question. We cannot take our successful multiculturalism for granted. We live in an increasingly uncertain world, and our communities are impacted by global events that we cannot control. But let me assure the House—and, in particular, the member for Sydney—that the Government will continue to proactively work with multicultural communities in New South Wales to maintain our social and community harmony.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (14:58):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister update the House on how local councils improve the quality of life for families across New South Wales?

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (14:58):** I thank the member for Albury for his question. He is a great local member, no doubt. He knows all too well the important role all levels of government play in ensuring that families across New South Wales can thrive, whether they are based in our regions, rural areas or metropolitan hubs. The vital role that our local governments play in maintaining and improving the quality of life for families across the State must be recognised. Even in my short time as Minister for Local Government, I have witnessed firsthand how local councils across the board are at the forefront of building cohesive communities for their citizens. Before my time as the member for Goulburn, I spent 17 years working at the coalface in my local communities—first as a councillor, then a mayor, then an administrator. I understand service delivery. There is no doubt that local council is where the rubber hits the road. During every day of those 17 years I witnessed how families relied on the services delivered by councils to succeed and stay connected to their communities.

Local councils provide over 470 public pools in our State for families to use—pools where many children take their first laps and learn skills that could ultimately save lives. It is local councils who manage the 1,786 community halls across our State. These halls host playgroups for the new parent who is just learning how to get a week's worth of tasks done in a day, they are where after-school and vacation care programs are held so that parents can get back to work and put food on the table, and they host citizenship ceremonies to welcome new Australians into our communities. It is local councils who run the libraries that spark the imaginations of our young minds, provide quiet spaces for our high school students to study in peace and for our senior citizens to learn digital skills so they can stay connected with their kids and grandkids. Local councils support nearly

50,000 vibrant jobs across our 128 local government areas, which in turn helps families in towns large and small pay their mortgages and bills.

Local councils also deliver \$12 billion in goods, services and infrastructure every year and manage \$170 billion in assets. They play an important role in our State's economy. Local councils provide maintenance of parks, playgrounds, gardens and sporting pitches; transition to school programs; waste management and recycling services; and reliable water supply for residents. The list of ways local councils tirelessly work to improve the lives of families goes on and on, and members of this House know that. As good local members, all of us in this place know the importance of local councils. But I think there is no clearer indication of how our councils make life better for families than by how they all stepped up to the plate during these arduous recent years. New South Wales residents have gone through unimaginable hardships since late 2019—drought, bushfires, the pandemic and floods. And it keeps flooding.

In the aftermath of the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires, local governments stepped up to make sure everyone across the State could get on with the job of recovery. A specialist unit, the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group, was formed in 2020 to coordinate hundreds of offers of assistance from councils simply hoping to help other councils. There were 44 local councils who were not directly affected by the bushfires that offered a helping hand to their neighbouring councils, and some metropolitan councils who assisted regional councils. The help was desperately needed and the local councils played a great role. We are one big happy family in local government. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the member for Albury because I really cannot get enough time to talk about local government. Let us not forget the ongoing efforts of councils to help communities stay supported and connected during these difficult times of COVID-19. Local councils are often the first port of call for residents needing support and services during a crisis. It was during the lockdowns and business closures that New South Wales councils maintained essential services for local communities—services we do not even realise we rely on because they are maintained so seamlessly by our trusted local government workers.

As our economy has opened up, councils have steadily adapted and innovated to help family-run businesses recover, including through the introduction of outdoor dining options. Meanwhile, certain local governments funded not-for-profit organisations that provide much needed food and care services to our most vulnerable families. I am unsurprised, but nevertheless impressed, that despite the extremely demanding pressures of the past two years, local councils continue to make life better for all families, no matter what they look like. As they strive to provide families with the highest and most rewarding quality of life, we as the New South Wales Government will continue to ensure that goal is achieved through support at every level.

That support includes the nation-leading \$395 million local government economic stimulus package our Government provided—a package that included \$82 million to support 260 council-run childcare centres—and the \$5.2 million to relieve council rates for homes, businesses and farms left decimated by the bushfires, not to mention the \$33 million the New South Wales and Australian governments pulled together to assist councils in their bushfire recovery responses. Let us not forget the \$5 billion WestInvest program announced by the Government this morning, which will enhance infrastructure and economic recovery across the 15 local government areas.

### *Committees*

## **COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Membership**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I move:

- (1) That pursuant to clause 2 of schedule 2 of the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014, Ms Melanie Rhonda Gibbons and Mrs Leslie Gladys Williams be appointed to serve on the Committee on Children and Young People in place of Ms Robyn Anne Preston and Mr Dugald William Saunders.
- (2) That a message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**

### **Membership**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I move:

- (1) That pursuant to section 68 of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993, Mr David Robert Layzell be appointed to serve on the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission in place of Mr Gurmeh Singh.
- (2) That a message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

**Motion agreed to.****COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION****Membership**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I move:

- (1) That pursuant to section 66 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, Mr Peter Bryan Sidgreaves, Mr Lee Justin Evans, Mr David Robert Layzell, Mrs Leslie Gladys Williams and Mr Raymond Craig Williams be appointed to serve on the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption in place of Mr Justin Paul Clancy, Mr Mark Joseph Coure, Mrs Tanya Davies, Mr Dugald William Saunders and Ms Wendy Margaret Tuckerman.
- (2) That a message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

**Motion agreed to.****COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION  
AND THE CRIME COMMISSION****Membership**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I move:

- (1) That pursuant to section 31D of the Ombudsman Act 1974, Mrs Leslie Gladys Williams and Mr David Robert Layzell be appointed to serve on the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission in place of Mr Mark Joseph Coure and Mr Dugald William Saunders.
- (2) That a message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

**Motion agreed to.****LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Membership**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I move:

- (1) That pursuant to section 6 of the Legislation Review Act 1987, Mr Nathaniel Gerard Smith be appointed to serve on the Legislation Review Committee in place of Ms Robyn Anne Preston.
- (2) That a message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

**Motion agreed to.****PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE****Membership**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I move:

That pursuant to section 54 of the Government Sector Audit Act 1983, Mr David Robert Layzell, Mr Raymond Craig Williams and Ms Melanie Rhonda Gibbons be appointed to serve on the Public Accounts Committee in place of Mr Justin Paul Clancy, Mrs Tanya Davies and Mr Gurmeh Singh.

**Motion agreed to.****STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE****Membership**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I move:

That Mr Alister Andrew Henskens, Mr Gurmeh Singh and Mr Nathaniel Gerard Smith be appointed to serve on the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee in place of Mr Mark Raymond Speakman, Ms Stephanie Anne Cooke and Mr Adam Sibery Crouch, discharged.

**Motion agreed to.***Community Recognition Statements***DR HELEN MACKIE**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (15:08):** From time to time I have the privilege of acknowledging exceptional individuals in the Ku-ring-gai electorate, such as Dr Helen Mackie of Wahroonga. Dr Mackie, who retired on 30 November 2021, has provided 30 years of service to Mt Wilga Private Rehabilitation Hospital as a rehabilitation specialist. In 1992, Dr Mackie worked with the physiotherapy team to develop the lymphoedema clinic at the hospital. She has held many prominent positions and is a past president of and

current medical advisor to the Australasian Lymphology Association. She is a university clinical lecturer at Macquarie University and is considered an expert in the subspecialties of musculoskeletal disorders, back pain, multiple sclerosis and late effects of polio. I am pleased that her contribution has been recognised at the hospital through the renaming of the clinic to the Dr Helen Mackie Lymphoedema Clinic. Notably, the hospital has been named a finalist in the Australian Private Hospital Association Awards. I commend and congratulate Dr Helen Mackie on 30 years of service to the people of Ku-ring-gai.

#### **BUNGREE AUSTRALIAN SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (15:09):** Bungree Aboriginal Association was pleased to announce this week that the organisation has achieved both certificate and award level accreditation from the Australian Service Excellence Awards. Now a New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice requirement for all specialist homelessness services providers, the accreditation is a whole-of-organisation assessment that acknowledges Bungree's commitment to quality and continuous system improvement. Suzanne Naden, CEO of Bungree Aboriginal Association, said:

This new accreditation boosts Bungree's already impressive list of company accreditations and registrations that support our business and program deliverables through NDIS, My Aged Care, Transport, Housing and now for our Specialist Homelessness Service.

The new accreditation is a culmination of hard work and dedication from our service staff in creating a quality organisation that consistently delivers trusted services to our clients and community.

She went on to say:

I would like to thank not only our staff for all their hard work, but also our local business and community partners, and community members who participated in this process as references.

#### **WEST WYALONG AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience) (15:11):** I congratulate West Wyalong Amateur Swimming Club on hosting a very successful Southern Inland Swimming Association Long Course Championships Meet and Speedo Sprint recently. This major event attracted 204 participants from across the region, including from Coleambally, Cootamundra, Deniliquin, Ganmain, Griffith, Gundagai, Harden, Hay, Junee, Leeton-Yanco, Narrandera, Quandialla, Temora, Tumut, Ungarie, Wagga, Yass and Young. There were 30 events in which West Wyalong had local representation. Isaac Charpentier, Lucas Charpentier, Hunter Connellan, Thomas Jordan-Downes, Maicey Maitland, Bosco and Quincy Ng, Emily Seaman, Jai Rhys and Annalise Bischoff competed in races ranging from 100 metres to 800 metres, with personal bests, ribbons and medals achieved galore. It was my absolute honour to attend this fantastic event on the day, stopwatch in hand, to see firsthand our outstanding up-and-coming swimming stars from across the electorate.

#### **WIRES ILLAWARRA**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (15:12):** I acknowledge WIRES Illawarra for being recognised as Kiama Municipal Council's 2022 Community Group of the Year. I applaud WIRES Illawarra for its ongoing contribution to our Kiama municipality throughout its outstanding work rescuing and sheltering native wildlife, especially following the summer bushfires of 2020. The group also contributes to the Illawarra and South Coast from just south of Stanwell Tops down to Kiama. I congratulate WIRES on assisting tens of thousands of animals each year, receiving over 70,000 requests for rescue assistance annually. Once again, I congratulate WIRES Illawarra on this incredibly well-deserved recognition and thank the group for its significant and ongoing contribution to rescuing, caring for, preserving and protecting some of our most vulnerable, that being the native animals of our country.

#### **PICNIC POINT HIGH SCHOOL HSC STUDENTS**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (15:13):** I congratulate the staff, students and leadership team of my former high school, Picnic Point High, on their outstanding 2021 HSC results. Picnic Point High School achieved a ranking of seventeenth in the State in the HSC Top Comprehensive Public Schools list. I acknowledge some of the school's distinguished HSC achievers: Ryan Bell, Meghan Blackburn, the hardworking Erin Campbell, Felicity Earl, Olivia Hansford, school captain Riley Hayward, Amira Kahla-Dunn, Phillip Ladas, Beckham Lam, Kevin Le, Jason Parmaxidis, Jaxon Skead, Daniel Snook, Nathan Southon, Alexander Stengos, Ellie Truong, Holly Wilmore and Nicolas Yung. Congratulations to all of you for your excellent results in what was the most challenging of circumstances to undertake the HSC.



### NAUGHTY NOODLE FUN HAUS

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:14):** I recognise the Naughty Noodle Fun Haus, which has quickly become a cultural institution on the Central Coast, providing innovative and fun art and entertainment, as it prepares for an action packed 2022. Naughty Noodle provides an important space for inclusive and diverse representation in the arts and has enriched the cultural fabric of our community. In just over two years, Naughty Noodle's people have provided pathways for local artists and contributed to social change as they have worked with hundreds of collaborators in music, fashion, performance, photography and more. Their creativity and joy has put the coast on the map to a much wider community, with over 7,000 visitors to the Coastal Twist before COVID slowed down the performing arts. I applaud them and wish them all future successes, particularly in their soon-to-commence Rayon Riot IV for the upcoming International Women's Day, with a focus on this year's theme of Break the Bias. They inspire, uplift and entertain all of us. I truly thank them for helping the Central Coast to become an even more vibrant, inclusive and fun location. Welcome back, Naughty Noodle.

### RHONDA MASON

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (15:15):** I recognise Rhonda Mason, the coordinator of the Inverell I C YOUth centre, for her positive influence in working with ongoing issues relating to our young people. It was her goal to realise a community centre dealing with youth homelessness, mental health and substance abuse. She saw the need to provide a safe and inclusive meeting place to support, empower and encourage the wellbeing of Armidale's young people. This year's programs at the Youth Insearch peer support group include school homework assistance, Drop In and Chill Out fun afternoons, and special activity trips throughout the year. Sport and craft are the highlight of the boredom busters, with bus transport to places like Tingha and Gilgai to include the outlying townships. To provide this requires an army of volunteers, which Rhonda has gathered or pressed into service by spreading her enthusiasm for positive outcomes in the Inverell community. I congratulate Rhonda on realising her goal for this vibrant youth community centre. I commend her on her efforts throughout the many challenges.

### CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:15):** On Sunday 6 March 2022, over a million Australians will participate in Clean Up Australia Day. This incredible movement, started by the late Ian Kiernan, AO, has become the nation's largest community-based environmental event. This event is one I have been supporting since before I was elected to this place. Each year, I join with volunteers and local councillors at the corner of South Seas Drive and the New England Highway at Ashtonfield to do some cleaning. I am pleased to report to the House that each year the amount of rubbish that we have to collect from this area is reducing, as people are becoming more aware of the issue of illegal dumping. This year I am really excited to again be joined by West Maitland Centennial Lions Club in cleaning up Australia and particularly Ashtonfield, and I am very hopeful that we will have many other volunteers join the Lions club and me on the day to help with this process. I urge everyone to jump online and find a Clean Up Australia site near them. If we all take small steps to clean up our environment, we will make an enormous difference, because, after all, many hands make light work.

### REGENTVILLE RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (15:16):** I acknowledge the local firefighters from Regentville Rural Fire Brigade [RFB], who had been busy in meetings with Santa late last year to ensure that they could get him out and about in the local community for all to see. Santa made his rounds through December of 2021 in the locations of Emu Heights, Glenmore Park, Leonay and Regentville. Due to popular request, Santa was even booked for a whole day at the Regentville RFB station, where everyone came down to take photos with him in front of his big red fire truck, which he claimed to be his sleigh for the day. The volunteers at Regentville RFB love doing these Santa runs and being able to give back to the community that supports them when they need it most. I thank very much the Regentville RFB firefighters for all they do for the community and for helping brighten the spirits of others after such a difficult year.

### CHINESE LUNAR NEW YEAR

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (15:18):** On 6 February 2022, Lunar New Year celebrations were held at Mingyue Lay Temple and hosted by the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society in Bonnyrigg to welcome in the Year of the Tiger. The event is a local highlight for the community, with thousands of people normally attending the temple to welcome in the new year and honour ancestors. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the event was attended by officials, volunteers and committee members only. In true fashion there was plenty of colour and cheer, with traditional lion dancing, a fireworks display and cultural performances. It was a pleasure to be in the presence of local State and Federal colleagues, who all are strong supporters and advocates of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society. I commend the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society chairman, Mr James Chan, OAM,

president, Mr Vincent Kong, OAM, board members and volunteers for organising another successful Lunar New Year celebration. Happy Year of the Tiger.

#### **BEC SMYTH**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (15:18):** I congratulate Narromine's Bec Smyth, who has been named as captain of the ACT Brumbies for the 2022 Super W Rugby season. Bec makes the nine-hour round trip from Narromine down to Canberra for each two-hour training session. That is on top of her jobs as a personal trainer, head teacher at Narromine High School and mum to four kids: Matt, Bella, Phoebe and Sam. It sounds like a lot of effort, but Bec does it for the love of the game, for her teammates and for her kids. Bec wants them to learn that being part of a team is a privilege and that, if you do want something, you need to work hard for it. Bec has certainly done that over her stellar career, which includes representing Australia in three Rugby World Cups. She also claimed the Players' Player of the Year award last year, in just her second Super W season with the Brumbies. Dubbo's Kim Fyfe and Lillyann Mason-Spice have also been named in this year's Brumbies squad. Congratulations, ladies, and all the best for the year ahead.

#### **TRIBUTE TO TING AN ZHANG**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:19):** I am deeply saddened to hear that my friend Mr Ting An Zhang passed away on 4 February at 75 years of age. I offer my deepest and sincerest condolence to Mr Zhang's family and friends. I was shocked to learn that he was in a coma for 10 days following infection with COVID-19. I last saw him just before Christmas, and we planned to meet for lunch in the new year. Mr Zhang was a lovely and generous local resident who always lent his help to others. He also referred local people to my office if they needed my assistance on State Government matters. I am also grateful for Ting's support for my campaign to win Granville in 2015 and for my re-election in 2019. I will miss my dear friend Ting a lot. It is a tremendous loss for us to lose a committed, thoughtful and selfless community member like him. My electorate office staff also came to know him well, and they have asked me to also pass on their condolences. May his soul rest in peace. He will be dearly missed by many of us.

#### **ARTEXPRESS**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (15:20):** I acknowledge and congratulate St John the Evangelist Catholic High School student Lily Thomas-McKnight and Nowra Christian School student Lincoln Davie on being selected for the 2022 ArtExpress exhibition. ArtExpress will be running from 3 February to 25 April and will be showcasing outstanding artworks created by students for the HSC Visual Arts examination in 2021. The artworks submitted by Lily and Lincoln were two of only 43 young artists' works selected from 8,440 submitted works by students. Lily's art explores connections to her identity and culture with portraits to show how everyone is connected, and Lincoln also explores identity with his series of portraits, which delve into the psyche of young people, using photographs of his peers. The hard work and talent demonstrated by Lily and Lincoln are outstanding and has well and truly paid off. ArtExpress is a fantastic opportunity for their talents to be shared with the broader community. What an exceptional job they have done to achieve this result. I wish them both success with their future and congratulate them on their artworks in 2021.

#### **COVID-19 AND CAMPBELLTOWN ELECTORATE**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:22):** I take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the hundreds of families, local businesses, volunteers and frontline workers who have supported my community and our entire region during the pandemic, whether it has been the Arts Centre Cafe preparing meals to get out to families in need, Lomandra Community Pantry working tirelessly to ensure that the food gets out to those families who have been isolated or Campbelltown Meals on Wheels out of the Ruse community hall. Everyone has come together and worked so hard. The best thing about any community is its people. That has been on display by the people of Campbelltown. I thank each and every one of our frontline workers. It is not just a job for them; it is a passion they have, whether they are on the front line at the hospital or with our local police, emergency services, doctors, nurses, clinicians or physicians. Everyone has worked so hard and come together, and I thank them.

#### **BARRENJOEY SWIM SCHOOL**

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport) (15:23):** I pay tribute to the efforts of the Barrenjoey Swim School, in my electorate of Pittwater. Damian and Lucie Geyle have operated the highly successful swim school at Avalon Beach and have helped oversee the swimming growth and independence of thousands of local kids. Their focus on small classes in a friendly, inclusive and relaxed environment has resonated among local families and has helped to ensure the ever-growing demand for swimming lessons in our community can be met. The very nature and culture of the Pittwater community means swimming in the ocean is an integral part of our local lifestyle. Every opportunity

should be pursued to help ensure this essential life skill can be learnt as early as possible. Barrenjoey Swim School is currently in discussions with Northern Beaches Council on ways its invaluable service can continue into the future. I look forward to working with the community to achieve a positive outcome.

#### **TRIBUTE TO FRED MOORE**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (15:23):** Fred Moore was one of a handful of white men to be officially recognised as an Indigenous Elder. He was one of two men to be made honorary members of the Miners' Women's Auxiliary. He was a defender of workers' rights, an advocate for change and a fighter against inequality wherever he saw it. He enjoyed breeding his budgies, taught himself to play the harmonica and was the original president of the New South Wales Miners' Federation brass band. Fred Moore was a decent, honest gentleman who always worked towards a better deal for the people of the Illawarra. He marched in nearly every May Day march from the age of nine, at times leading the Wollongong march and then travelling to Sydney to participate in the Sydney march. He attended every Mount Kembla mine disaster memorial service. Fred Moore was respected and admired. Following his recent passing, he will be missed deeply, particularly in the local union movement. To borrow from something Fred said to me on a number of occasions: Fred, you did a good job mate, thank you.

#### **SEVEN HILLS HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMING CARNIVAL**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:24):** I congratulate staff and students of Seven Hills High School on the school's recent successful swimming carnival. Once a year, local students from Seven Hills high are given the opportunity to display feats of sportsmanship in the annual swimming carnival. Students compete not only for personal accomplishment but also for the pride of their house. Seven Hills high has four houses: Bradman, Thorpe, Freeman and Ellis. I extend my congratulations to age champions Mariela Parker, Bradley Warner, Isla McIntosh, Riley Graczol, Kaylen Tweedie, Hunter Leeuw, Brody Ellis, Ryan Telley and Paige Williams. I also congratulate students from Bradman House on being awarded 2022 house champion status. It is fantastic to see the frequent participation in community events of students right across the Seven Hills electorate. I wish staff and students of Seven Hills High School nothing but the best for the future in 2022.

#### **MARJORIE ELLEN MALE**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:25):** I thank the Glengara Retirement Village residents committee for its kind invitation to attend the massive celebration it organised to commemorate the 100th birthday of Marjorie Ellen Male nee Scott on 11 February. It was a fantastic event. The organisation and the spread put on by the residents committee is a tribute to the leadership of its president, Barry Porter, and all the volunteers on the committee. The Glengara community is a fine one, which I am proud to have in my electorate. I acknowledge Marj, who has lived at the retirement village for 22 years. She was born in Tamworth, where she met her husband during the Second World War. They both worked for the Commonwealth Bank and had 68 years of happy marriage together before Marjorie's retirement. I wish her and the Glengara community well.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY RSL SUB-BRANCH**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:26):** I congratulate North Sydney RSL sub-Branch, which received funding through the New South Wales Government's Anzac Community Grants Program. North Sydney RSL received \$1,000 to go towards its Veterans' Health Week 10 Day Movement Challenge, which aims to bridge the gap for veterans in hospital or other health clinics who are unable to attend the usual Veterans' Health Week activities. The RSL vision is to provide a program of 10 activities over 10 days that a hospital or clinic team can easily facilitate. Activities include yoga, swimming, sailing and more. I thank president Alex Wilson, vice-president Geoff Watson and their entire team for organising this great program. The annual Veterans' Health Week provides vital physical, social, and mental benefits to our veterans. Our local RSLs run a number of activities such as the waterside walk and luncheon hosted by Kirribilli RSL sub-Branch in November. I thank all of our local RSLs for their important work for our veterans and for the wider community. I also thank all of our local service men and women, past and present, for their sacrifice for our country.

#### **TEELA REID**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (15:27):** I recognise the outstanding achievements of proud Wiradjuri and Wailwan woman, and Koojay resident, Teela Reid. Teela has a long list of incredible achievements, but today I recognise her recent appointment as the first Indigenous practitioner-in-residence at the University of Sydney Law School. Teela is a senior land rights lawyer and a key advocate for the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. Teela is also an active member of the Walama Working Group, a court designed to divert Aboriginal people away from the criminal justice process by involving Aboriginal Elders in the decision-making process of the District Court of New South Wales. Teela is already an inspiration. In her new role, I am sure she will continue her work and inspire generations to come to follow in her footsteps. I congratulate Teela.

### VAUCLUSE BOWLING CLUB

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (15:28):** Our communities are made up of wonderful organisations. In my electorate I am lucky to have dozens of community sporting organisations that are places for the residents to get together, enjoy each other's company and stay fit. I acknowledge local Vaucluse resident Suellen Bassetti who last year stepped down as president of the Vaucluse Bowling Club. Suellen was a strong community advocate for the club and its members. She is a well-known local and a member of the Vaucluse/Diamond Bay Precinct committee. I congratulate the incoming board: chair Kim Hanna, treasurer Lyn Bourke, secretary Rhonda Denton, and board members Ian Nicol and Elspeth Sharp. We celebrate Suellen's dedicated service to the Vaucluse Bowling Club. I wish the new leadership team the best of luck and look forward to working with them in the future.

### KATHERINE CUMMINGS

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:29):** On the sad news of the passing of Katherine Cummings, a local transgender activist and author, I express my deepest thanks for her contribution to the LGBTQ+ community. From Tascott, Katherine was a true trailblazer in fighting for her community and giving us an important insight into what it is like to be a transgender woman in modern society. Her first book *Katherine's Diary* was published in 1992 and won her the Australian Human Rights Non-Fiction Literature Award that year. It is one of many examples that show her light, her gift for words and her courage to be her authentic self. In her second tome, *The Life and Loves of a Transgendered Lesbian Librarian*, Katherine shared personal stories of the first half of her life as a husband to her wife. The book recognises her three daughters and the challenges of her transition. I put on record that Katherine's generous contribution to The Gender Centre in Sydney has made a huge difference to the lives of the many people the centre has helped with gender issues. We mourn the loss of a key member of our community, and we thank Katherine for setting the path for future generations of transgender youth and the broader LGBTQ+ community.

### MID NORTH COAST PICNIC PROGRAM

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (15:30):** I welcome a new health program for children in my electorate initiated by local dietician Richard Ball. The program aims to create positive eating environments for our children's growth and development into adulthood. Inspired to improve healthy eating habits in our growing children, dietician Richard is launching a new resource on the Mid North Coast aligned with the favourite kids program *Playschool* called the Parents in Child Nutrition Informing Community program, known as the PICNIC program. It is designed to remove parental stress at the dinner table. Richard draws on his vast credentials in healthy eating to coordinate the PICNIC program, which has gained applause from new parents and guardians who are learning how to feed their infants and toddlers. Following his success in this area, Richard was approached by the children's program *Playschool* for his expertise in feeding children adequately in a stress-free environment. The PICNIC program teaches parents and guardians to give their children choice at the dinner table, removing that age-old tradition, entrenched for many generations, that a child should eat everything in front of them. I congratulate Richard on making mealtimes easier for families through his insightful program.

### PHIL SMITH

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience) (15:31):** As he enters retirement, I thank Phil Smith for his 27 years of service to the Gundagai Fire Station 313, Gundagai's local Fire & Rescue NSW station. With age comes experience. 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. 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 those in need. I applaud and sincerely thank Phil for his long service to the community, of which he should be very proud. Phil leaves behind a great legacy at the 313 brigade. He is well respected and trusted throughout the small community of Gundagai. Phil was a perfect fit for the team and will be sorely missed, and I wish him all the best in his retirement.

### LARA FARRELL

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (15:32):** I congratulate Lara Farrell from Kiama High School on being recognised as Kiama Municipal Council's 2022 Young Citizen of the Year. I applaud her outstanding contribution to the Kiama municipality through her energetic leadership skills displayed across a range of youth-related issues, particularly during this critical time of the COVID pandemic, which has presented many challenges for our local young people. I also acknowledge and congratulate Lara on receiving an International Women's Day award at Kiama High School for her academic and leadership success. Lara has volunteered at the World of Learning to support local young children and has helped at SENTRAL Youth Services, including planning for Youthfest. I

congratulate Lara. She is an outstanding young leader and a young woman of whom everyone can be rightfully proud.

#### **MERRIDY THOMPSON, OAM**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:33):** I recognise Ms Merridy Thompson, OAM, for being awarded an Order of Australia Medal in this year's Australia Day Honours. Ms Thompson was recognised for her service to youth through her work with, and commitment to, the Australian Air Force Cadets. Ms Thompson has an extensive history with the Australian Air Force Cadets and has held several roles, including Commanding Officer at City of Ryde, Public Affairs and Communications Officer, and Staff Officer Training. She has played a significant role in encouraging young people to be involved in the Air Force Cadets and has assisted them through their cadetships. I am happy to see her acknowledged for her service, as she inspires so many young people every day. I thank Ms Merridy Thompson, OAM, for all of her efforts in supporting the Australian Air Force Cadets and congratulate her on receiving this well-deserved recognition.

#### **CENTRAL COAST WILDLIFE ANIMAL RESCUE AND CARE SOCIETY**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:34):** I congratulate Central Coast based organisation the Wildlife Animal Rescue and Care Society [ARC] on winning the public vote in the Greater Bank's Greater Central Coast initiative. The prize money of \$2,000 will contribute to the society's important role in rescuing local wildlife and providing further care and rehabilitation. As the Central Coast continues to develop, the work done by ARC is becoming increasingly important. For 35 years it has provided the utmost care and concern for our local wildlife. In addition to congratulating it on its prize, I say a big thank you from all of us to all of the generous volunteers and on behalf of our local wildlife. The coast is a beautiful place many of us chose to call home because of its close proximity to nature, and we celebrate and cherish our local wildlife. It is great to know that ARC expertise is only a phone call away for support when we come across a sick, orphaned or injured native animal. Organisations such as ARC go a long way to ensuring that the Central Coast has an intact and vibrant ecosystem and wildlife.

#### **BROUGHTON ANGLICAN COLLEGE**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden) (15:35):** I congratulate Broughton Anglican College Higher School Certificate class of 2021 on their hard work and outstanding results. After a challenging year, the resilience, commitment, focus and hard work of the students, staff and parents are reflected in the results. I congratulate college dux Angelina Ockoljic on her ATAR of 97.75. Angelina also placed first in the State for her biology project at the 2021 Young Science Awards. I also congratulate Jason McCann, who received an ATAR of 95; Olivia McDonald, who received an ATAR of 94.55; and Piper Kelly, who received an ATAR of 94.35. I wish them all the best as they move into their next endeavours.

#### **MAITLAND REGIONAL MUSEUM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:36):** I congratulate the tireless volunteers of the Maitland Regional Museum, which reopened on 5 February. It was a successful day for them. For the upcoming Maitland Pipes and Drums exhibition they have set up an amazing display and, together with a local apprentice, assembled a display case for the band memorabilia as they celebrate one of their significant anniversaries later in the year. As part of the exhibition there will be a band recital, which will include an afternoon tea and be by bookings only. I urge members and people who live in the Maitland electorate to consider attending the exhibition because the Maitland Pipes and Drums has been a stalwart of all community events across our city for generations.

#### **HELEN MITCHELL**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (15:37):** I recognise Helen Mitchell as Moree's Volunteer of the Year for her 40-plus years of service to the local community, stepping up when a job needed to be done. When she found out the news, Helen said, "I'm absolutely amazed that this has happened and I haven't really done anything to merit the award." Truth be told, Helen started volunteering when her children were at school, filling in whenever there was a need. She has sold raffle tickets and supported a number of fundraisers and events for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Support Group. When the Red Cross Blood Bank came to Moree, Helen was there. As a member of the Day VIEW Club she has supported children through the Smith Family. She is a quilter and worked on the Town Crier's Cloak and the Moree Town Quilt with other members of the Moree Quilters, who also donate to the Moree Renal Unit and Ronald McDonald House. She delights in visiting Fairview and sharing craft with the residents. The list goes on. I congratulate Helen on the well-deserved award of Volunteer of the Year. I commend her for her spirit and service to the local community.

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

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council regarding the membership of the committee. Mr Don Harwin has been appointed as a member of the committee to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr Trevor Khan.

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE****Membership**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council regarding the membership of the committee. Ms Catherine Cusack has been appointed as a member of the committee to fill the vacancy created by Mr Peter Poulos.

**COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION****Membership**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council regarding the membership of the committee. Ms Catherine Cusack has been appointed as a member of the committee to fill the vacancy created by Mr Lou Amato.

**OMBUDSMAN, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION AND THE CRIME COMMISSION****Membership**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council regarding the membership of the committee. Mr Don Harwin and Mr Wes Fang have been appointed as members of the committee to fill the vacancy created by Mr Peter Poulos and Mr Lou Amato.

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS****Membership**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council regarding the membership of the committee. Mr Ben Franklin has been discharged from the committee and Mr Scott Farlow has been appointed as a member.

*Private Members' Statements***WELLINGTON SWIMMING CLUB**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (15:39):** I recognise the Wellington Amateur Swimming Club, which hosted the 100th Nat Barton Carnival on Sunday 13 February. Nathaniel Dunbar Barton was born in Wellington in 1894 and spent most of his early life growing up on his family's property, Nanima, close to Wellington, which his parents had bought in the same year he was born. Nat attended Wellington Public School, and then boarded at The King's School at Parramatta, where he became head boy and a sergeant in the cadets. He was just 20 years old and in his first year of medical studies at the University of Sydney when the First World War broke out. After volunteering for the Australian Imperial Force, he arrived in Egypt and joined the 7th Light Horse Brigade.

After joining the fighting at Gallipoli in May 1915, he was promoted to lieutenant. He was wounded in July and returned to Egypt to recuperate. In 1916 and 1917, Nat served with the 7th Light Horse across the Middle East, including at the Battle of Romani. He was promoted to the rank of major in September 2016. After being wounded in 1918 at Amman, he was sent home to rehabilitate. Nat then completed his studies in medicine and began working as a doctor in Parkes until the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1940 he was commissioned into the Second Australian Imperial Force and appointed commanding officer of the new field ambulance as lieutenant colonel. In 1944 he became the commanding officer of the Australian General Hospital at Adelaide. Nat was awarded a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for his distinguished service to the war effort in New Guinea. Other medals he received during his service include the Australia Service Medal, the Defence Medal, the Pacific Star, the Victory Medal and the British War Medal.

After the war, Nat returned to Australia and settled back in Wellington, where he established a successful private medical practice. Dr Nat Barton was instrumental in the construction of the very first Wellington pool, after raising awareness of the many drownings that had been happening in the Bell River. In later years an Olympic

pool was constructed, and that has now also been replaced thanks to funding from this State Government. It is now a state-of-the-art modern aquatic facility. Sadly a widower from 1969, Nat died aged 91 years in 1985 and is buried in Wellington Cemetery. His grandsons Nat, Tim, Peter and Matt, and great-granddaughter Alex, were all in attendance at the 100th carnival on behalf of the Barton family, which was lovely.

In celebrating the centenary, Wellington Amateur Swimming Club was joined by two world swimming champions—Ian O'Brien and Ben Austin. Both were born, bred and educated in the Wellington district. Ian's achievements in the pool include gold at the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games in the 200 metres breaststroke, gold at the 1962 Perth Commonwealth Games in the 100 metres and 200 metres breaststroke, along with the 4 x 100 metres medley relay and gold at the 1966 Kingston Commonwealth Games in the 100 metres and 200 metres breaststroke. Ben, meantime, competed at three Paralympic Games. At the Sydney 2000 games he won silver and two bronze. At Athens in 2004 it was two gold, three silver and one bronze, with two world records, and at the 2008 games in Beijing he won a gold and a silver. At the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games he won two gold and set two world records, and at the 2006 Commonwealth Games he set six world records. Both Ian and Ben graciously gave their time to talk to all the competitors about their time in the sport, and allowed them to look at and touch their medals and have photos with them.

Nearly 170 swimmers from clubs across the Central West flocked to join the Wellington Amateur Swim Club to compete and to celebrate the 100th carnival. There were swimmers from Dubbo RSL, Dubbo City Swimtech, Orana Aquatic Swimming Club, Mudgee Indoor, Macquarie Yabbies, Narromine, Nyngan, Cobar, Coolah, Coonamble, Coonabarabran and Warren. The Wellington club was awarded the NSW Good Sports Club of the Year in 2020 in recognition of the club committee's and members' behind the scenes efforts and commitment to keeping the community safe. Good Sports is funded by the Federal Government and a tent was set up on the day, where merchandise was handed out to the swimmers and some fun games were run for the children who were not competing. The program offers sporting clubs free tools and resources for community health. It has also been providing fundraising toolkits to clubs to help them get back on their feet after the COVID-19 outbreak.

The spirit of the Wellington community was certainly on display with sponsorship of every event, raffles, and two 100 Clubs assisting in covering the costs of the day and encouraging swimmers to continue in this healthy activity. Also in attendance were life members Rod Pedron, Anne Styles, Donna Cosier, Ruth Arnold and Fiona Arnold, along with parents and friends of club members, and many who had learned to swim at the Wellington pool. Big congratulations go to the Wellington Amateur Swimming Club committee, President Carmen Gain, Registrar Chris Stevens, Secretary Beth Angel, Treasurer Sally Hunt and committee members, including Pip Smith, on what was a wonderful celebration for the entire family and community—the 100th Nat Barton Swimming Carnival.

## WESTERN SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (15:44):** I speak about some of my priorities for the areas of western Sydney that I represent in this House and our fight for basic infrastructure against the Premier with a tin ear and his Government that continues to let down western Sydney. All members know that the State has been through a very difficult past two years. COVID has had an enormous impact on the lives and livelihoods of people across our State. The residents of western Sydney were significantly impacted, as many members have spoken about in this place time and time again, suffering through lockdowns that treated residents unequally. Throughout this period the needs of western Sydney residents fell by the wayside. This Liberal Government used the pandemic as justification to stop listening to people. As we learn to live with COVID, the infrastructure issues faced by western Sydney must not be ignored any longer.

These are issues that I have spoken about time and time again in this place, but they need to be said again. The much-needed high school in Marsden Park is still not delivered. In 2019 the New South Wales Government promised a high school to families in Marsden Park, just prior to the State election—funny that. Three years later, and construction still has not started at the high school site in Newpark Estate. Families in my community are rightly asking why the New South Wales Liberal Government thinks it is okay to promise a school before the election and then refuse to deliver it. It is a similar story at Jordan Springs, except here there is not even a site for a high school—a suburb of more than 7,000 residents and there is still no public high school. I do not know where the Government thinks the children will go once they finish year 6.

At Werrington more homes are going in south of the train station, but there is no action on the much-needed upgrade of Werrington Road. The road is already a huge bottleneck, and while the Government fails to deliver this project traffic will only get worse. Again, the same mistakes will be made because the Government is asleep at the wheel. We already know its Ministers sleep when they should be taking important phone calls. Planning for western Sydney infrastructure under the Liberals has been a litany of failure for 10 long years. The Liberals certainly have not learnt from their mistakes, because they keep making the same ones. Time and time again it is

the same issues. There is rapid population growth without the necessary infrastructure. It means longer times spent in traffic and families left without local schools.

The same issues plague suburbs right across Greater Sydney. We know why these issues persist: because the Liberals do not care about the suburbs of western Sydney. Whether it is schools, hospitals, roads or train stations, it is infrastructure that should have been planned and delivered from the get-go. Under the Liberals, it has become commonplace for the western Sydney residents I represent to fight their own government to get the most basic facilities and infrastructure. Families are fed up with the empty promises and constant talk without action from Dominic Perrottet and his Liberal Government. They have simply stopped listening to the people whom they claim to represent. We do not need to look very far to see just how the Liberal Party treats western Sydney.

Last year I spoke in the House about the scourge of inappropriate development in the suburbs I represent. Out-of-area developers are building boarding houses in our local suburbs using backdoor planning loopholes that the New South Wales Liberal Government refuses to close. I wrote to the planning Minister in 2020 urging him to change the law. I asked him to meet the western Sydney residents impacted by this law. He refused to change the law, he refused to meet with the residents and he refused to act. Because he refused to change the law, 10 studio units can now replace any single home in suburbs like Werrington County, Cambridge Gardens or Kingswood, and the residents of these quiet suburban streets do not get a say. There is no clearer sign that the New South Wales Liberal Government has betrayed the hardworking families of western Sydney. We need a better deal. It is past time our schools and road upgrades were fast-tracked. It is well past time the twice-promised Rouse Hill hospital was delivered. I will continue to speak out and fight for these projects and will keep up this fight every single day until western Sydney gets its fair share.

#### **CLONTARF FOUNDATION PORT MACQUARIE ACADEMY AWARDS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (15:49):** It is an honour to announce the Clontarf Foundation Port Macquarie Academy major award recipients for 2021, who have achieved academic excellence despite the challenges presented as a result of COVID. Founded in 2000, the Clontarf Aboriginal College opened its doors in the town of Waterford, Western Australia, with 25 students and two staff, focused on improving the education and employment prospects of young men. From humble beginnings to a nationwide body of academies in 148 schools across Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory, the vision of Clontarf continues to reach new heights in Indigenous education for the now 10,000-plus students who participate in the program. The dedicated staff at the Clontarf Foundation Port Macquarie Academy provide extra support and encouragement for their students to help foster career ambitions. I commend them for helping to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment ambitions of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.

Today I congratulate award recipients who have shone in a number of key areas, including application, academic success, attendance, leadership, sport, employment, training, spirit and community service. The Principal Award was won by Max Barker and Austin Sampson. Max is in year 11 at Hastings Secondary College Port Macquarie Campus and a conscientious student with an incredible 96 per cent school attendance. He is described as a positive role model who volunteered in Clean Up Australia Day and has gained part-time employment at Woolworths. Max has also attained the 2021 Employment Award based on his success at Woolworths and his effort with Clontarf activities.

Austin Sampson is a year 9 student from Hastings Secondary College Westport Campus with a high attendance record of 94 per cent. He is known as a quiet achiever and a pleasure to teach, with a work ethic that continues to reflect high academic results. He is ranked in the top 10 students in College Ongoing Attitude to Learning. The 2021 Academic Award was presented to Ethan Schafer and Yooringa Curry. Ethan is a year 12 student excelling in engineering, completing his Certificate I and Certificate II in Engineering Pathways. He has continued to enhance his skills, completing a Statement of Attainment towards a Certificate III in Live Production and Services. Yooringa Curry is acknowledged for his hard work and commitment to his studies and his polite, friendly nature in the classroom. Another role model with a 91 per cent attendance, it is not surprising that his teachers consider him a delight to teach.

Claiming the Clontarf Foundation Sport and Top Trainers Award was Lesley Smith. The year 10 student has literally had a blistering year in sport, having participated in the Bradman Cup, mid North Coast representative teams and the Indigenous Sydney Sixers side. Locally, Les has competed for the Wauchope Blues in rugby league, attended the NSW Combined High Schools Sports Association for table tennis and took part in the 2021 virtual City2Surf charity run. Les has achieved so much in his time at the academy and I congratulate him on his successes. Joining Lesley with the Top Trainers Award was Izaak Gordon, a year 7 student who has displayed punctuality, leadership and teamwork qualities in his love and passion for extracurricular sporting activities.



The Clontarf Spirit Award was presented to Anthony Hooper and Desmond Slade. Anthony and Desmond have both shown exemplary leadership qualities, assisting with tasks like washing up, cleaning tables and other maintenance activities. Acknowledged with the Clontarf Encouragement Award were Jhydn Atkins and Dylan Alston-Tonkins. Each has shown a positive effort, respect and willingness to work hard overall. Dylan is now employed part time at Kmart, while Jhydn consistently leads by example at Port Macquarie Campus. The prestigious Academy Member of the Year Award went to year 12 graduate Connor Goddard for demonstrating consistent engagement in the Clontarf Port Macquarie Academy program. Connor is a conscientious student and a role model for his commitment to his studies. He has successfully gained part-time employment and always displays respect for his colleagues and teachers.

I applaud Clontarf as an outstanding institution with revolutionary teaching methods that continue to set a new standard in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. I wish the young men every success for their future goals. Congratulations to all of them.

### REGIONAL HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:54):** It is fairly safe for me to say that when the members in this Parliament end their day, they will either head home or to their accommodation and a comfortable bed in a space that they control. They will choose the temperature of that space, how to secure it and who enters that space. When nature calls, they will have somewhere to go to be safe and private. The home or the shelter that they are in will be affordable for them. It might even be subsidised. These expected facilities of housing we take for granted are not readily processed as privileges, but under this Government that is what housing has become.

Recently Shelter NSW released the *New South Wales Regional Housing Need Report 2021* produced by the Regional Australia Institute. This detailed and focused report examined the broad housing situation across all regional local government areas in New South Wales. The researchers determined the 10 areas of highest and lowest housing needs throughout regional New South Wales. I am sad to say that Maitland was identified as one of the top 10 areas of highest need. In fact, it was placed equal fifth on that list—68 per cent of the people in my community experience mortgage stress and 69 per cent experience rental stress. That is just not appropriate. Real estate agents have told me that it is not unusual for people to apply for 120 properties before they can find somewhere to rent. Maitland is a booming town. It remains the fastest growing city in New South Wales outside of Sydney. In 2016 the estimated population of the region was around 79,000. In 2022 the estimated population is closer to 95,000, and it is projected to increase to well over 100,000 in the next 20 years. Perceived affordability has seen more and more families and individuals stretched to attain the new-build home of their dreams.

Earlier today I spoke about the collapse of Privium Homes and how that has turned those dreams into nightmares. We are very concerned about the lack of housing in our community. Nearly 40 per cent of households have mortgages and a significant proportion of those households experience mortgage stress. More than 30 per cent of their available income is being paid on a mortgage. That is just not good enough. Currently 732 people are on the waiting list for social housing in Maitland. That is 732 people who are waiting for somewhere that they can call home. Shelter NSW currently estimates it will take between five years to 10 years for those people to get a property. What of them in the meantime? What of those who will join that already vast number in the future? At this moment 732 people have a need that cannot be met. Are we expected to always accept that demand will outstrip supply in this area? As reported routes of funding facilities in other local government areas and admitted pork-barrelling are used as a prop-up for the creaking structure of this Government, are we expected to simply accept that a safe place to sleep is a step too far, unaffordable, unattainable and unfundable for people in our community, and that this Government will not act to address it?

I have had people in my community with dementia who cannot make the transition to the aged-care packages that they need from social housing. They have lost the wraparound supports. I have had victims of domestic violence who have not yet become survivors because they have no support at all. They are being shunted from refuge to refuge, from place to place, from town to town because they cannot get someone to address the post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health issues they are experiencing and their extreme need for safe and secure housing. That is not acceptable. A gentleman who came to my office all the way from Tamworth literally camped in my front office for a week. He was in such a state of distress and illness, with mental health and drug addiction issues, and yet he had nowhere to go. Nowhere. This is not a civil society. This is a complete failure of our obligations as a community to provide for the most vulnerable in our community. I understand the inherent challenges of the development and provision of affordable and suitable social housing, but we do not come to this Chamber to help people who can help themselves. This Government needs to act urgently for the most vulnerable people in our community. They should not be left to do it alone.

### EMBEDDED NETWORK OPERATORS

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill) (15:59):** I advise the House of a very serious problem for residents living in an apartment complex in Kellyville. The complex is serviced by an embedded network operator known as WINconnect. For those members unaware of what an embedded network operator is, I can advise the House that they are nothing short of extortionists. The apartment complex in Kellyville was built by the developer Toplace and has had several problems in regard to building defects—which is common with this particular developer. However, the apartment complex has had much more serious problems with the company that provides electricity and gas.

The constituents are already being charged for electricity, water and gas, which is normal, but on top of these charges are additional charges by WINconnect for the heating of their water. Incredibly, one resident was charged \$10,000 for 18 months of water heating. Other tenants are being charged \$400 per month for the heating of their water, with one resident charged almost \$2,000 for the heating of their water when they have only been charged \$67 for the water that they had used. Residents have refused to pay these outrageous charges to WINconnect. I place on the record that I could boil a kettle and provide enough hot water for an average apartment and it would cost nothing like \$2,000.

At a time when our New South Wales Government is putting downward pressure on the costs of electricity, embedded network operators like WINconnect are forcing costs sky high and significantly increasing the cost of living for families. In looking further into how these networks operate, I have come to the simple conclusion that WINconnect is operating a complete scam, taking advantage of a muddy regulatory framework and overcharging for a shameful and deceitful service. The charging for the heating of water by an embedded network provider, such as WINconnect, is nothing but a licence to print money at the expense of unsuspecting consumers. The decent owners and tenants of apartment buildings, just like the one in Kellyville, were never alerted to the significant additional costs involved with an embedded network operator such as WINconnect when purchasing or leasing their apartments.

This problem of embedded network operators charging excessive fees for items such as heating water has been a problem for some time. It must be stopped and the only way to stop it is to completely regulate this unscrupulous industry. A number of cases have been successfully defended in the Supreme Court, but governments at both State and Federal level must take immediate action to stop this financial gouging of innocent consumers. The Australian Energy Regulator [AER] states in its own retail guidelines that the sale of bulk hot water cannot be considered a "sale of energy". That is absolutely correct and means embedded network operators like WINconnect are ripping off consumers with fraudulent charges for heating water. The Australian Energy Regulator also states:

... the current exemption framework suffers from an inadequate compliance and monitoring regime.

...

The meter used to measure bulk hot water in each building unit is a water meter and not an energy meter. Therefore, it is unclear which metering requirements are applicable and if the energy metering regulation would apply.

...

It is therefore likely that consumers are paying high or inaccurate bills for hot water because of these external factors.

I rest my case. The cat has been well and truly belled regarding the atrocious activity by embedded network operators. The AER has also stated:

... the Commission started the Review of the regulatory frameworks for embedded networks which was completed in December 2017. From this, the Commission found that the exemption framework is no longer fit for purpose in the face of the growth in the number and scope of embedded networks. The current framework does not strike an appropriate balance between innovation, consumer protection and facilitating consumer access to retail market competition.

Further to this, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] has stated:

... the way bulk hot water service is metered does not appear to meet the requirements of the Residential Tenancies Act.

If the two government authorities are aware of the significant issues related to embedded network operators, why has nothing been done to address those concerns on behalf of consumers? Origin Energy has now purchased WINconnect and is financially benefitting from this sham. Unfortunately, without the proper regulations put into effect, we will only see embedded network operators become even more brazen in extorting thousands of dollars a year from unsuspecting tenants and owners of apartments. NSW Fair Trading must immediately act to fully regulate embedded network operators in this State and protect innocent consumers from the thousands of dollars they are being ripped off. Both WINconnect and Fair Trading are now firmly on notice: Fix this problem and stop embedded network operators ripping off their consumers.

*Petitions***COVID-19 AND PARLIAMENTARY SITTINGS**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It being 4.00 p.m., the House will now consider an electronic petition signed by 20,000 or more persons regarding a request that the Legislative Assembly be recalled to discuss and vote on COVID-19 pandemic lockdown regulations and other business.

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

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (16:05):** In June last year, when the pandemic was entering a particularly acute phase in Australia, the New South Wales Government suspended Parliament. Faced with a sudden rapid rise in COVID-19 case numbers and working on health advice that we never saw, it put a temporary stop to the normal democratic process. We were the only State in Australia to do so. On the face of it, that might have seemed like a good idea given that the health advice warned against large indoor gatherings, which is what Parliament basically is. Research showed that large gatherings of people were a major vector for spreading the disease. While there may have been a pretext for it at the time, the suspension went for months longer than it should have. Once the fog of confusion had passed and a clearer view of what was happening emerged, the Government should have recalled Parliament to chart a path to safety.

While the State continued to operate as it always does because of amazing people working at a local level, at the highest level the Government bunkered down and continued to issue orders and make decisions without the usual checks and balances afforded by a sitting Parliament. While it might be argued that the unprecedented public health emergency necessitated unprecedented measures, suspending Parliament was actually counterproductive because it narrowed the Government's vision at a time when it should have been more open to a wider range of solutions to the crisis and more transparent to the public, who were confused and concerned about what was happening and needed to be better informed. It left many people feeling abandoned and helpless.

In the report from the February 2022 Munich Security Conference, an annual meeting where matters of international security are discussed at a high level, it talked about the global sense of learned helplessness that has come about as the result of a series of global crises, among them the pandemic. The report said that this sense of helplessness, the feeling that nothing can be done about our dire situation, has resulted in our liberal democratic institutions coming under fire. To quote the report:

This perception is highly dangerous because it can turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Societies that have concluded that they cannot solve humankind's most challenging problems might no longer even try to turn the tide.

It further says that this is a time that we should be shoring up our democratic institutions. It says:

The combination of strong democracy at home and reliable cooperation among democracies abroad is still the best hope for dealing with these challenges.

By suspending Parliament for as long as it did, the Government undermined our democracy, but it went further than that. Calls for papers were held up for months, making a mockery of the Government's claims to be transparent and accountable. One of the fundamental principles of a democratic government is that the incumbent administration opens itself up to the scrutiny of other elected representatives and allows voices from outside of the party in power to call the government to account for its actions, point out the problems with what it is doing and draw attention to any other oversights.

When a government ignores these checks and balances, it can run into serious problems. The exchange of ideas is a vital part of the democratic process. It allows a range of voices to be heard and points of view to be argued. As a result, the ideas that are best for the people and the running of the State can emerge. It is also essential to avoid problems such as self-interest or blind prejudice creeping into public administration. The idea of an assembly where ideas regarding the future of the people and the running of the State can be discussed is an ancient one, going back to at least 3,000 BC in Mesopotamia, when the power of the king was restrained by assemblies. Those gatherings inspired the more famous assemblies of ancient Greece.

Over the centuries, while monarchs, tyrants and dictators have often ruled without the advice of assemblies, the representative assembly has emerged time and again in Rome, Switzerland, Iceland and even amongst the Vikings. In the twentieth century, the era where many nations adopted broad suffrage, some political leaders used State emergencies to bypass democracy, usually to their detriment. Whatever the motives and whatever the crisis, governing without a sitting Parliament leaves a government vulnerable to making bad decisions that are blind to local realities and peculiarities that only members from specific electorates would know. In a global emergency, it is an especially dangerous precedent to set to move away from democracy in any way. I thank the 20,000-plus people who took the time to sign this petition in a very short amount of time. There was a huge amount of support from the community to see this matter debated. I hope that we learn from the previous shutting down of the Parliament and that we never see it happen again.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (16:09):** I make a contribution to the debate on the petition presented by the member for Barwon. The petition states that under our former Premier we have seen calamity and chaos. That assertion is ludicrous. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has risen to every challenge the pandemic has thrown at it. I was at Parliament House for a committee hearing when we had our first lockdown, back in March 2020. I remember the panic that set in because we have never done this before in our nation's history, to my knowledge. There were society-wide implications for having lockdowns like that. Let us hope that we do not have to go back to those again.

It certainly has not been easy but, since then, the Government has been working hard to keep our community safe. On the flip side, it has been working to keep our society as open as it possibly can and support businesses where it can. Businesses have seen record support from our Government. There have been billions of dollars invested in the various support programs, and schools remained open for as long as possible. I congratulate and single out the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, who did not push back school opening dates, unlike Labor States like Queensland. Schools opened on day one and rapid antigen tests were sourced and provided in a large logistical exercise, spanning the breadth and width of the State, to ensure that people were able to get tested and continue education in a safe way.

We met the challenge of getting our whole population, or as much of our population as possible, vaccinated within a very short window. While that might seem like less of a challenge for people in the metropolitan area, in regional areas, like the electorates of the member for Barwon, the member for Murray and on the North Coast, it presented its own logistical challenges. Our Government, in conjunction with the Federal Government, was able to meet those challenges. I acknowledge the challenges faced in the member for Dubbo's electorate and in the neighbouring electorates to the west.

The Dine & Discover vouchers, Parents NSW vouchers and Stay NSW vouchers support families while also stimulating the economy at a time when it needs stimulus. The Government is not afraid of being held to account. That is the job of the Opposition and the crossbench. That was true during the Alpha outbreak, the Delta outbreak and the Omicron outbreak. I note that the Parliament was shut for a very short period and we were back here in October. We lost four sitting weeks, which is 12 sitting days. We made half of that time up before the end of the year.

I also acknowledge that the Minister for Health has always had a generous policy of sharing his phone number and contact details widely. Members of the Opposition and crossbench often had better luck getting through to him than we on this side did. I am only joking, but he has been very accommodating to members of the Opposition and crossbench in giving information and being open and available to them. The former Deputy Premier, the Hon. John Barilaro, also had regular Zoom meetings with all regional members of Parliament to keep them abreast of and updated on the evolving situation in New South Wales. Many members of the Opposition and crossbench took advantage of those regular meetings as well.

Our regional communities were more vulnerable to a large-scale COVID outbreak than metropolitan communities were. They have smaller hospitals, fewer hospitals and fewer resources than metropolitan areas do. So we needed to make sure that our communities were safe. At that time, the vast majority of New South Wales residents were unvaccinated and the challenges of the Delta variant meant that we had to keep people out of risk's way. One of the biggest risks to the community at that time was presented by members of Parliament coming into Sydney and then returning home to their electorates. We have seen that is how COVID spread in other places, through delivery drivers and the like. To conclude, there was no calamity, no chaos, just a Government that was innovating to allow Australia's oldest parliament to continue amidst a once-in-a-century pandemic.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (16:14):** I thank the member for Barwon for sponsoring this petition to the House. This is an important debate, as it is fundamentally about democracy. When the Government suspended parliamentary sittings, 24,500 petitioners responded, demanding that it recall the New South Wales Parliament immediately to discuss and vote on ongoing lockdown regulations and other important parliamentary business. During Premier Berejiklian's daily COVID media briefing on 21 August 2021, she said, "I'm the Premier of the largest State in Australia, and I expect to be held to account. I expect every decision that we [the New South Wales Government] take to be scrutinised." If the then Premier were genuine with her words, she would have brought Parliament back to allow scrutiny, transparency and accountability to continue. In fact, she did the very opposite; she suspended sittings, which conveniently removed any scrutiny by the democratically elected members of this House.

During this unprecedented suspension of Parliament, the community of New South Wales copped the wrath of the Government's policymaking on the run, which had devastating financial and dramatic lifestyle implications for the citizens of this State. Had Parliament been sitting, the Government would have had to face the tough questions. One of many poor decisions made by the Government which evaded scrutiny was its COVID-19 Roadmap to Freedom and the unfair trade restrictions it imposed on businesses. It was a dog's breakfast. It was

not just inequitable, it was inconsiderate and inconsistent. The trade restrictions contained within the road map applied a four-square-metre rule. However, in the case of hairdressing and nail salons it was capped at a maximum of five people, irrespective of the total area of the individual salon. Pubs were not being limited to a maximum number of patrons, as long as they stuck to the four-square-metre rule.

A hair salon in Orange, whose owner was being financially impacted by this unfair decision, was large enough to comfortably cater for six staff and up to 12 clients under the four-square-metre rule, but the Government imposed a random cap of five people allowed in salons. That made no sense at all, as hairdressers' clients are typically by appointment and they are seated for the duration of the visit, whereas a pub typically has people wandering to and from a bar and there is bound to be increased interaction among a greater number of people. I am not singling out pubs, but it is a comparison which highlights one of many inconsistent and unfair decisions which was not able to be scrutinised because the Government shut down the Parliament, and in doing so it road-blocked democracy. The litany of health order restrictions imposed on all of us were unable to be challenged in this place. Our communities' freedoms were subject to terms and conditions.

Each member of this House was elected by the people in their community to represent them and to challenge Government decisions which impact them. That process was removed and denied by the suspension of Parliament. I note the current Premier provided a written response to this petition and obfuscated blame for the decision to suspend sittings. He stated, "postponement of scheduled sittings is a matter for the Presiding Officers". Yet he then referred to Sessional Order 47A; that the Government may, in the public interest, write to the Speaker and request an alternate day or hour for the next meeting of the House. The Premier further wrote in his response that additional sittings were held in November—as the member for Coffs Harbour alluded to—to make up for the period that Parliament was suspended. But November sittings did not help the hair salon owners whose businesses were financially impacted and devastated in August, and whose elected members were unable to vigorously represent them here and hold the Government to account and scrutinise its decisions.

I called for the introduction of remote sittings to alleviate a total suspension of Parliament, but the Government was very slow to adapt. It was completely foreseeable that the pandemic was not going to quickly pass, and moves to facilitate remote sittings ought to have been made far sooner, if for no other reason than to keep up with the twenty-first century. Age does not necessarily translate to wisdom; the New South Wales Parliament is the oldest parliament in Australia and the last to adopt electronically assisted remote sittings.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (16:19):** Since the pandemic began, New South Wales has set the benchmark for other States in Australia with its response to COVID, and that is not by accident. It is by the work of this Parliament, by the people across this Parliament—the Presiding Officers, the staff, people from every single party, people from the Government, people working from the crossbench and the Opposition—all working together for the community to support, in particular, our frontline healthcare workers and emergency service workers who delivered the response to COVID. We did it all because of the advice that we received from the experts. We made decisions the best we could at the time, with the information we had to hand, in unprecedented circumstances for us here in New South Wales and across the globe. We relied on the people who knew best. I respect the decisions made for this Parliament because they were made with the best intentions, and based upon the best advice and the best information available at the time. I respect the decisions made for New South Wales for the same reasons.

I think everyone in this place would agree with the spirit of the member for Barwon bringing forward this motion to talk about scrutiny, transparency and accountability. That is why we are all here—it is why we should all be here. But the notion that we can ignore the Delta outbreak in New South Wales and its devastating consequences for people's lives and livelihoods, and pretend that we did not need to respond to it and keep people safe in our own workplace and across the entire State, is naïve at best. To now debate, many months later, what we should have done at the time of the Delta outbreak, when we were seeing incredible impacts across the community—I am not sure what we should have done differently. Should we have made people that have underlying health conditions turn up to Parliament to work? Should we have made parliamentary staff—attendants, Hansard, catering, cleaning—attend this place so that members could turn up to work and continue to have their say, keep their voice, while denying the voice and the wellbeing, health and safety of every other person within this precinct?

I do not agree with the premise of what has been put to us today, because I believe the health advice led by Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant—whom we have relied upon with such incredible respect for her precision, ethics and integrity throughout this entire two-year period—and I think that advice continues to stand. On 22 June last year, when members were sitting in this Chamber discussing the budget, I am sure that every single one of us was thinking that things had changed. The whole world, the whole of Australia, thought things had changed, but on that very day we were impacted by a COVID outbreak within our building. These were the kinds of circumstances faced across New South Wales. Considering that those who work in the parliamentary

precinct are a melting pot of every single community across this State, to force everybody to return to this building—members, staff and support—for that period of time would have been negligent. I support the decisions of the Presiding Officers.

I acknowledge what some of my colleagues have mentioned. All sides of the Parliament agreed to work together to make up those lost days and to improve and increase the opportunities for members to represent their communities. We had the additional sitting days in November. I note that the member for Orange does not think that that was substantial enough for the issues that were faced earlier in the year during the Delta outbreak, but the Government has acknowledged that time and time again. The former Premier's strong leadership saw this State through multiple waves of COVID. She said, on many occasions, that she would not get every decision right and that she would listen to the community, she would listen to every member in this place—she would listen to the member for Orange, she would listen to the member Barwon—and she would make the necessary changes if the Government did not get things right. And that is what she did. What we have done as a Government throughout the pandemic—throughout every lockdown, throughout every furlough or impact—is stand by the community. Throughout this pandemic, the Government has made decisions, changed decisions, tweaked restrictions and settings to make sure it is doing the best that it can.

But we have also had significant financial support packages, including for hairdressers, such as the one the member for Orange mentioned in his contribution—and we should. We should support our businesses and our community. We should support people who are devastatingly impacted by the decisions that a government has to make in the face of a one-in-100-year pandemic. That is what we have done. I stand by the decisions that we made to do that. I stand by the support that we provided to the community and that we are continuing to provide to the community—small business grants and grants for temporary visa holders and asylum seekers, refugees and women escaping domestic violence. I stand by those decisions and this Parliament has stood by those decisions.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (16:25):** I thank my colleague the member for Barwon for sponsoring this petition in the House. Although Parliament is back in session, it is important that we have this debate to make it crystal clear that a government should never shut down Parliament. Last year when this Government channelled its inner Donald Trump and decided that democracy did not matter, it was the rural areas that were hurt most by the sneaky decisions it made behind closed doors. The New South Wales Government made new laws from Sydney with no consideration for people in the bush.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** That's a lie.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON:** It is not a lie; it is the truth. New South Wales border communities were trapped between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, the Government told us to stop travelling to limit the spread of COVID-19 and, on the other hand, it has gutted the rural healthcare system. Many residents in my electorate are fully dependent on Victorian hospitals and doctors, and need to cross the border for medical care. Do those opposite know the border? It is the Murray River—the border that none of them ever considered. For years, the New South Wales Government has been bludging off the superior Victorian healthcare system, and it still does today. The New South Wales Government pays. Go get the facts; sort it out. Moama residents go to Echuca for health care. Wentworth people go to Mildura. Deniliquin folk go to Shepparton. How about Government members come to the area and have a look? The Minister for Western New South Wales should come out and have a look.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Happy days.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON:** Happy days, yes; we will welcome him with open arms. But the New South Wales border restrictions made behind closed doors with no parliamentary scrutiny created havoc for us. People were prevented from attending their regular hospital for cancer treatment. They were stopped from going to work and from seeing their family. Rural New South Wales was abandoned by this city-centric Government. The member for North Shore has never been over the Blue Mountains. Our vaccine rates were half those of Sydney residents for much of last year. Then, in its wisdom, the New South Wales Government decided to strip vaccines away from rural areas and give them to year 12 students in Sydney. Imagine that.

My electorate includes the Far West Local Health District, which serves the most Indigenous people in the State. The Government did not think about them, did it? People from the Far West contacted me to let me know that the Government had cancelled their scheduled vaccine appointments so Sydneysiders could get their doses. Happy days for Sydney. There was no way to scrutinise the outrageous decision to strip Indigenous and rural communities of their vaccines. Parliament was not sitting, so the betrayal of our First Nations people was covered up. We know The Nationals always roll over for the Liberal Party in Cabinet meetings. They were happy for their own electorates to be disadvantaged.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** You are lying again.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON:** You were. Those decisions deserved scrutiny and explanation in Parliament. It was 2021, but the New South Wales Government seemed to be the only organisation in Australia that could not figure out how to work remotely. We all had to do it.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** We were working.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON:** Yet this Parliament could not do it. It was amazing. The Government expected every school in New South Wales and tens and thousands of students and teachers to work from home but said it was too hard for 140 MPs. We could not vote and we could not take points of order—dear oh dear, honestly! In Australia, Parliament is the cornerstone of democracy. The people who signed this petition have expressed their views loud and clear. This Government must never again be allowed to kill our democracy. I encourage any city MPs to come out to the bush and speak to the people along the border to see how they feel about Gladys' decision.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (16:29):** I thank the member for Barwon for bringing this petition forward. I think he has done it in the right spirit but there has been a little unreasonable behaviour from a couple of his colleagues about some suggestions—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Murray will resume her seat. The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Murray needs to put her mask on when she has finished speaking. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** The suggestion that the only way democracy works is with people sitting in this building is ludicrous. We have all worked, as you have, Madam Deputy Speaker, through this pandemic. This is just a sledge-a-thon for no reason. The member for Murray knows you can work in your community without being in this building. We lost 12 sitting days and made up six. Six days were lost.

**Mr Philip Donato:** When was that?

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** In November at the end of last year. The sittings happened. We came back as quickly as we could to get on with the business of Parliament. But, in the meantime, we were in the community doing what was needed. Do not pretend there was no way to connect with the community, because it could be done. The members in the Chamber were invited to be part of regular hook-ups with the Deputy Premier, the health district and the health Minister, as I was. We were there together. They had input in what was happening. Some decisions around the pandemic had never been made before, but they were involved collegially and were offered the opportunity to provide feedback.

The member for Orange made some remarks about businesses. Yes, it was tough; it was tough for everyone. He mentioned nail salons. All businesses faced the same scenario. Pubs and hospitality venues of all kinds were impacted. Nail salons and hairdressers were impacted. Some people did not want to come back to work until there were no cases anywhere and some wanted to have six clients not five. You cannot please every single person in every single case. Professionals made decisions that were then rolled out. We all had input, we all had to communicate with our electorates and we all tried the very best we could to do that.

Where other than New South Wales would you have rather been for the past two years? Think about it seriously. This is the only place in the world that I wanted to be. Nowhere else in Australia handled the pandemic as well as we did. We have managed it from a health perspective, we have kept the economy going and we have supported businesses of all kinds. There is nowhere else you would rather be. Yes, there are lessons we have learnt, but we had not experienced a pandemic like this in our lifetime so we have done extremely well. Suggesting we could have done better is a little over the top. In the spirit of the petition, we recognise Parliament is a bastion that we hold in high esteem. I think we all agree on that. But we must also respect that we all had a role to play, and most of us did that.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (16:33):** That was entertaining. I thank members representing the electorates of Orange, Murray, Coffs Harbour and North Shore, and the Minister for Western New South Wales, for their contributions. I will address some of the remarks made by Government members. I say to the member for Coffs Harbour that I have never backed away from acknowledging Ministers who are accessible. I have always acknowledged them, and the health Minister is very accessible. He certainly changed the health orders a number of times upon my request. I have never stopped acknowledging that. But it is not about that; it is about the lack of democratic process for those people who might not have that access and be able to have those discussions. I also submit that SMSs and phone calls do not make it into *Hansard*. They are not in public view. They are not transparent like debates in *Hansard*.

The Minister and I attended the same Zoom meetings with the Deputy Premier. I thanked the Deputy Premier for those meetings. From memory I was involved in two, and I do not think I missed any. I do not know

whether there were others that perhaps he was involved in that I was not party to, but the two that I was involved in were very helpful. I thank the Deputy Premier for the meetings, but it is not a substitute for Parliament sitting.

To the member for North Shore I say that we did need to respond. What we did not need to do was shut down or deny the voice of our people and their ability to come to this place. The whole purpose for me speaking on this petition today is to make sure that we never get back to a situation where the residents of our State are not able to have a voice in Parliament, on *Hansard*, which is the way it is meant to be. She mentioned the health advice. Every day we were told what decisions had been made in secret or in private. We never saw the health advice. We never saw the evidence that was used to underpin those decisions. Again, we should have been more transparent with the public about that information. I can say to the Minister that I am not complaining about our ability to connect with our community. We have multiple channels and ways of doing that. This petition is about the ability to bring the concerns of communities to this place and have them addressed.

**Petition noted.**

*Private Members' Statements*

**HENTY RESPITE CARE FACILITY**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:35):** Today I am pleased to inform the House of the efforts and vision of the community at Henty to develop a respite care facility in the town. The community has really got behind the project, and the first shovels will hit the ground in a few weeks, bringing to life a concept born of need and led by a group of people who have not let any hurdles stand in their way. To be named Avondale Place, the aim is that the facility will be the preferred centre for affordable retreat and respite for those in need of care as well as providing support for carers. The proposal is for a two-stage project with the first stage providing four beds in a boarding house style dwelling and the second stage providing four independent living units. The project has been costed at \$2 million.

A significant gap in local respite care has been identified for Henty because there is no similar facility between Wagga Wagga and Albury. This new facility will capture residents from the Lockhart and Greater Hume shires. The project is being driven by the community through the Henty Respite Trust. Work to date has included purchase of the land, obtaining council approval and awarding the construction tender. On the governance side, deductible gift recipient status has been achieved, along with completion of the process for the trust to become a registered charity. In preparation for operation, Mercy Connect has been appointed to manage the facility.

It is noteworthy that three-quarters of the funding has been raised by the community through donations and other fundraising activities, which is a monumental effort of volunteers. The money has enabled work to proceed earlier than might otherwise have been the case. This community can never be accused of sitting on its hands. Construction commenced in February, and it is planned that the project will be completed by the end of this year. I have been meeting and discussing the project with two of its staunchest advocates, Henty Respite Trust chairman Ben Hooper and Mick Broughan. Mercy Connect chief executive Trent Dean put it well, saying his organisation was looking forward to being part of a project the community was passionate about. He also said:

It's a small town but it has a really huge heart and community sense and spirit of wanting to make something happen.

I endorse those sentiments and strongly support the proposal. This project has everything going for it and is a terrific example of what a small town can achieve when there is an ambitious project being run by a group of motivated local residents. The project is essentially shovel ready, and work will commence thanks to an exceptional level of community donations and support, even though the second stage is not yet fully funded. With a total projected budget of approximately \$2 million and with funding and donations of \$1.5 million already secured, the trust is seeking funding assistance from other stakeholders, including the Government, for the remaining amount of \$500,000. While it is possible to proceed with the development in two stages, there is no doubt there will be substantial efficiencies and cost reductions if the project can be completed as a single continuous construction. This is the plan.

The model for the centre is to be based on providing more personalised care, where the staffing and processes can be structured to suit the needs of the greater community and, by having a range of accommodation options, can better tailor the respite care to the needs of the individuals, whether this would be to stay in a supported independent living unit or, alternatively, in the respite house for support and care. What is really important is that there is a commitment to ensure that there will be a sense of community on the site. I congratulate the Henty community members on what they have achieved. It has been a remarkable journey for them. I join in wishing them a straight road and kind weather during this construction phase.

I particularly congratulate trust chairman Ben Hooper and a fellow advocate for Henty, Mick Broughan, as well as all members of the Henty Respite Trust. It is a real tribute to them and their tenacity. My appreciation also goes to Mercy Connect and its chief executive, Trent Dean, and to the community in this wonderful and most



historic of towns. I look forward to catching up with the Minister for Regional Health to continue our discussions about this project so that we can help where we can to make Avondale Place a highly valued regional respite care facility of the first order and a beacon to all other regional towns.

### CENTRAL COAST INVESTMENT

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:40):** Last week I spoke about my role as Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast and I updated the House on the funding that our region has received from the New South Wales Government. I am pleased that the member for Gosford and the member for The Entrance are in the Chamber because I can continue updating the House about the levels of funding our region has received from the Liberal-Nationals Government. I will pick up where I left off and talk about the \$157.9 million funding for LED lighting upgrades in schools, which I am sure the member for Mulgoa has received in some of her schools. Ettalong, Kulnura, Peats Ridge and Somersby public schools have received shares in that funding as well. Those funds will upgrade the infrastructure at those schools. In 2018 and 2019 it was announced that \$1.8 million will be allocated to continue the \$2 million renovation and extension of the Kariong fire station, which I was proud to be invited to attend.

The Gosford police station has received a total of \$3.5 million for its upgrade. I congratulate Superintendent Tony Joyce. That \$3.5 million was well spent. They have done an outstanding job of updating the interior of that police station after consultation with the officers who use it every day. That station has now been designed for the safety and security of not only the officers but also all visitors to the police station. I want to give a shout-out to all of the new probationary constables across the Central Coast, who do an amazing job. The "thin blue line" keep us safe every day. There are no finer institutions than the Tuggerah Lakes and Brisbane Water police commands, which do an outstanding job. Their performance is reflected in the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research numbers. The 2021-22 budget committed \$881,000 to the Gosford Court House. The courthouse was locked down during COVID, but those improvements are vital because the courts play an important role in our legal system on the Central Coast. There is new public safety network infrastructure, including a new emergency communication site in Gosford and a radio site in Kulnura.

In my role as Parliamentary Secretary, it has been fantastic to support a range of businesses from across the Central Coast. Only last week in this Chamber we were talking about the fantastic Regional Job Creation Fund. I note that the member for Wyong was in the Chamber applauding that fund, because it has delivered literally millions of dollars of support to businesses right across the Central Coast. The member for Gosford mentioned some fantastic companies, such as Supreme Poultry & Chickens at Mangrove Mountain, which received \$600,000, and Glenworth Valley Outdoor Adventures, which received \$300,000. The fantastic team at Broken Bay Pearl Farm are setting a new standard on the quality of pearls in Australia, but the akoya meat is also being eaten at restaurants. I congratulate them. They received \$100,000 through the Regional Job Creation Fund. Vision Lighting received \$600,000 through that same fund. Of course, our all-time favourite is Eastcoast Beverages, which are stocked in the fridge at Parliament. If members have a chance, they should drink the Lantini family's sparkling water. They received \$360,000 through that fund.

All of this money helps create additional jobs on the Central Coast. When somebody says they are not receiving their fair share, I say, "Take a look at what we are delivering for business and growth, and our populations, schools, hospitals and roads from one end to the other." These initiatives will help boost businesses so that people can live and work on the Central Coast without having to leave it. Gosford is also home to a new \$3.4 million all-weather training surface at Gosford Racecourse. That was bolstered by a further \$8 million for 200 additional stables at that facility. Every four stables mean another full-time job. Almost 1,000 people are employed in the racing industry on the Central Coast. So this \$11 million investment in the Gosford racecourse and entertainment grounds is absolutely vital to continuing that growth. Trainers come from all areas of the State to live and train on the Central Coast because of that investment, which will result in the expansion of that industry.

Community groups and assets throughout the Gosford electorate and right across the Central Coast have benefited from many types of funding from the New South Wales Government. In 2021 the Gosford RSL Sub-Branch received an almost \$5,000 grant from the Community War Memorial Fund. The Kariong Scouts received \$29,000 and Patonga Public Hall received \$19,000 from the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund. The list goes on. I look forward to returning to the Chamber to provide further updates to the House on investment on the Central Coast.

### DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:45):** I speak about disability employment and inclusion, which is one of my favourite topics. As a Labor member, I believe work is very important to our identity. Being employed says to someone not only that their time is worth something but also that their contributions are valued by society. For people with disabilities, work provides a symbol of inclusion in a world determined to sideline us. In November

last year we celebrated International Day of People with Disabilities. The theme was "Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustained post-COVID-19 world". In the same month, the NSW Public Service Commission released its annual *State of the Public Sector Report 2021*. Amongst the glossy pages was an admission that the New South Wales Government has wilfully dropped the ball on its pledge to employ more people with disabilities and has not addressed the toxic workplace bullying and discrimination that prevents people like me from entering the workforce and succeeding.

In 2019 then Premier Gladys Berejiklian announced that the New South Wales Government would make disability employment a Premier's Priority, pledging to more than double the number of employees in the public sector who identify as living with a disability. Almost two years on, the Government is exactly where it started and not a single percentage point higher, which is incredibly disappointing. Currently 2.5 per cent of people in the New South Wales public sector, compared with 15 per cent of the general population, identify as having a disability. Even more concerning was the fact that the report, and the People Matter Employee Survey on which the Government's report is based, found that people with disabilities are experiencing bullying at an ever higher rate in their workplaces. In the New South Wales public service, one in four employees with a disability experienced bullying. At least two-thirds of them say the source is their fellow workers or immediate or senior managers. That hardly seems fair or right in 2021 or 2022. That is almost double the rate of the bullying that public sector employees overall experienced in New South Wales.

Even within the New South Wales Department of Premier and Cabinet, less than half of the people who identified as living with a disability said they either did not feel like they received adequate training, were not satisfied that they had future opportunities within their organisation or did not believe that their organisation wanted to develop them. Almost half of them said they did not believe they received the right support to do their job well. The report paints a picture of a government that wilfully disregards its own pledge to employ more people and to combat disability discrimination in its workplaces. Unlike the New South Wales Government, people with disabilities across the country are proving their worth, and our community of people with disabilities—a very strong community of voters—knows that.

Rachel High is the first person in Australia's history with Down syndrome to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Rachel graduated from Flinders University the same month that the report came out. The pride in Rachel's parents' eyes in her graduation photos is shared by many Australians who see a person with a disability finally gaining access to education and to the support they need to get into the workplace. Rachel's mum and dad, Miriam and John, said that their daughter's academic experience was the same as "any other student" with "plenty of bad days and plenty of tears" along the way. "She's determined and she does get on and do things," said Rachel's mum. Perhaps Premier Perrottet could take a leaf out of Rachel's book.

Who could forget Dylan Alcott, the Australian of the Year? On accepting this honour, Dylan decried the lack of disability employment in Australia, and put governments and workplaces on notice, when he said:

We're not just ready to work, we're ready to take your jobs, alright? We are coming. We are coming. But we've got to get those opportunities.

Dylan reignited the fight for us to be represented in our boardrooms, parliaments, mainstream schools, sporting fields and universities. Will Premier Perrottet ignore that call? Recently the disability portfolio was again passed on to another Minister after only slightly more than six months. We have seen only continued failure in the Government's employment record. I hope the new Minister takes the Premier's Priority seriously by employing and listening to all of us. When I became a member in this place, it was not accessible. We have made a few changes, and it is getting there. We still do not have captioning of the voices in the people's Parliament. We have so much further to go to include people with disabilities across this State. The public sector workforce should take a good look at itself and make the changes that we need to see.

### MULGOA ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (16:50):** On Wednesday 26 January families and friends across the country came together to celebrate Australia Day—a day to reflect on what it means to be an Australian, to celebrate our diverse society, to acknowledge our history and to be grateful for our democratic nation. What makes an Australian is not what we look like, the clothes we wear or the language we speak but rather our protection of the values and freedoms our forbearers fought to protect in the theatres of war. It is the universal Aussie values of helping your neighbour in need, giving everyone a fair go in life and working hard to make the most of being an Aussie that collectively add up to make our nation ever greater.

Today I acknowledge and commend the recipients in the Nepean region of the Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2022 Australia Day Honours List. I acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of Jessica Fox, OAM; Barry Roots, OAM; Dr Harry Pope, OAM; and Ken McKay, OAM. Those locals were recognised for service in sport, education, medicine, veterans and history preservation. Their character, selflessness, determination and

passion for the community and in the pursuit of their own dreams and goals have led to this well-deserved recognition. In the Australian honours system, appointments to the Order of Australia signify the highest recognition for outstanding achievement and service. Undoubtedly, the noteworthy and substantial contribution individuals make to the development, progress and advancement of local communities helps to bind us together as a nation. Each of this year's local recipients are outstanding individuals. Their unique achievements make them stand-outs, and we strive to emulate the qualities that have led to their success.

I turn to each of the four Nepean region locals who were awarded the 2022 Medal of the Order of Australia. First, I mention Ms Jessica Fox, OAM. At just 27 years old, the paddling powerhouse won a gold and bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympic Games and is an eight-time world champion. She achieved her dreams in Tokyo. It was an amazing moment not only for her, her family and all those who supported her along the way but also for the members of the local Penrith community, who were hugely impacted as they watched it happen. While it is a huge honour to be receiving an OAM for her service to sport, it is a different sort of medal to those that she is used to collecting for her sporting achievements. Jess expressed her appreciation for being in the same realm as the other incredible locals from all walks of life who also received the OAM.

Second, I mention Mr Barry Roots, OAM. The South Penrith teacher was recognised for his service to secondary education. He was privileged to have been the foundation headmaster of Penrith Anglican College [PAC] in my electorate for 17 years. Barry grew up in Penrith, where he enjoyed his experiences as a school student. It was roughly in year 5 when he thought teaching might be something he wanted to do later in life. Now retired, he admits he misses the students he taught every day. In demonstrating his humility, Barry said he would give one of the letters of his OAM to his wife, the second letter to his incredible deputy at PAC and the third letter he would share with every teacher he had the privilege of working with.

Third, is Dr Harry Pope, OAM, from Our Medical Home, Penrith. He thought he was going to be an architect designing pubs under a cadetship with Tooheys Brewery when he was younger. Fast-forward through 41 years in medical practice and Dr Pope has received an OAM for his service to medicine through a range of roles. Whilst Dr Pope had his doubts about whether he could get high enough marks to get into medicine, his achievement should be an example to many aspiring young medical professionals that you never know until you have a go with all your might and determination. Dr Pope admits it has been extremely rewarding developing relationships with his patients and being in their lives through the highs and the lows.

Fourth, is Mr Ken McKay, OAM, who has received his nomination for his services to veterans and history preservation. Mr McKay joined the Australian Army Reserves at 17 and retired at the age of 47. The now 81-year-old former major dedicates his time to veterans and history preservation. Ken volunteered to do national service and had quite a satisfying experience, which led him to opportunities like the Australian Army Museum at Victoria Barracks that he is involved with today. He is the secretary of the 2/5th Infantry Battalion Association, which was his father's unit. For a life of serving others and preparing to put yourself on the line to defend our freedoms, we all say thank you.

I extend my congratulations to all the local Nepean region Australia Day award recipients. They deserve recognition not only for their time and effort but also for their genuine passion and dedication to enriching the local communities they serve. The example they have set in pursuing their goals and dreams, and the hard work and determination to achieve great things, is an example to us all. The work of these individuals strengthens our Penrith community and improves the lives of many Penrith residents. I acknowledge these remarkable individuals and their dedication to building a better community.

#### TWEED VALLEY HOSPITAL

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (16:56):** The most amazing piece of infrastructure is being built in the Tweed—the new Tweed Valley Hospital. The \$723.3 million state-of-the-art facility with free car parking is on track to be completed in 2023. Construction is progressing well, with the structure of the main hospital building nearing completion. The floor slabs from the basement to level 4 have been completed, concreting is continuing on level 5 and formwork is commencing on level 6. The western and eastern core structures are almost at full height and structural completion. Topping out is on track for mid-2022. The installation of the precast panels and mega panels to enclose the building has also begun, with precast facade panels installed up to level 2. Six of the approximate 400 mega facade panels have been installed on the ground level on the north-western side of the hospital building.

With the lower levels of the building now enclosed, the fit-out activities are well underway with the installation of high-level services such as electrical, air conditioning, plumbing, walls, partitions, ceilings and painting. Moving into the fit-out stage of the project has seen an increase of tradespeople onsite, with the workforce now at approximately 400 people onsite per day. External to the site, motorists will notice that the widening of a section of Cudgen Road and the installation of a new signage intersection into the main entry are

underway. Works on the multi-deck car park—very importantly, there is going to be free parking in the car park—will soon begin to ramp up, following the appointment of ADCO Constructions in late 2021. On opening, around 1,200 car parking spaces will be provided across the hospital site, with the ability to increase to up to 1,500.

The project has navigated the pressures of workforce and supply interruptions as a result of the changing COVID-19 situation through a resourcing strategy to focus on local employment. More than 75 per cent of the workers live locally, within the Tweed-Byron local government area. This has mitigated the impact of COVID and allowed works to continue to maintain the program. I am thankful to the incredible Health Infrastructure team working to deliver this facility, including: Chief Executive Health Infrastructure Rebecca Wark; Executive Director, Rural and Regional Amanda Bock; Director, Rural and Regional Mark Brockbank; Senior Project Director Tim Mason; Project Director Todd Lee; Assistant Project Director Sukhjeet Kaur; and the lovely Communications and Engagement Lead Linda Brandon. Linda has been responsible for leading 30-odd different community groups that meet, discussing everything from artwork to traffic flows. Linda has been sensational in that. I also thank Senior Communications and Engagement Officer Sarah McEwan and Executive Assistant Emma Webb.

Finally, I also thank my local Labor Federal member, the Hon. Justine Elliot, and member in the other place the Hon. Walt Secord for their ongoing criticism and negativity about the whole project. Without that, I do not think we would have ended up with what we are about deliver. They have been sensational, particularly the Hon. Walt Secord, standing behind my back on a continuous basis and supporting the general community. I think this is going to be sensational. The old hospital has 1,200 staff; the new one has 2,700. We are going up to 499 beds, so that is a great thing. As opposed to the lovely Premier of Queensland, Annastacia Palaszczuk, who famously said that Queensland hospitals are for Queenslanders, we are building a hospital in the Tweed Valley for all Australians—not just Queenslanders or New South Wales people. Because, guess what? We have a heart in the New South Wales Government. I commend the new Tweed Valley Hospital to the House.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (17:00):** I echo this House's congratulations to the member for the Tweed for his advocacy on behalf of his community for many years to see this amazing essential piece of health infrastructure delivered for his community. I recall being aware of his advocacy, arguing, support and lobbying on behalf of his community for many years, and I pay tribute to the strong advocate that he is for his community in the north of New South Wales. He is 100 per cent for the Tweed.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** I forgot to say that.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES:** He does not just say that; he embodies and lives that. His community is very well-served by his servanthood. They are an incredibly privileged community to have him as their MP. I congratulate the member.

#### CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (17:01):** I will talk about one of our favourite subjects on the Central Coast: the predicament of Central Coast Council. This House witnessed a debate on a petition last year which was brought about by the community's anger about a lack of answers as to why the financial predicament of the council had come about. Central Coast Labor MPs at the time supported a full independent public judicial inquiry. We thought it should have had the status where an independent member of the bench was appointed to look at everything to do with the financial predicament of the council, including the merger, the decision to merge, the merger process, what happened with the council under the initial period of administration, what happened when the council formally elected the councillors and where it all went wrong.

Minister Shelley Hancock, to her credit, announced the formal public inquiry into Central Coast Council on 26 April 2021. It did not go quite the full length that we had asked for but we were pleased that it was an independent inquiry and that it had open-ended criteria, which included looking at issues other than the performance of the councillors. It seemed a little bit pointed, trying to put the blame all in one place, where we and the community knew that there were a number of contributing factors to the financial situation. The public inquiry occurred during October last year and obviously the commissioner would have needed some time to compile the evidence that was presented, both the written submissions and also the verbal contributions through the public inquiry.

Those transcripts have been available online since last year. I congratulate Minister Tuckerman on her appointment as Minister for Local Government. I ask her to now act with haste to release the report. Our community wants to know what the outcomes were, who was to blame and to make sure that those things do not happen again. Because of the financial situation, the current administrator is pushing through the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] for an extension of a rate rise for 10 years, which was initially allowed

by IPART for three years. We do not think that should happen until the report is released and the public has a true account of what took place.

Quite frankly, there is a concern in the community, which is shared by the member for The Entrance, the member for Gosford, the member for Terrigal and the member for Swansea, that in September this year there will probably be an election for new councillors. It is not fair for those new councillors to come into a situation where the reasons for things going wrong are not known. The community still does not have confidence that proper action has been taken. There are rate rises, service cuts and staff cuts, yet the financial position of the council, while improved, is still in the red in some places. We ask the new Minister to release the report in haste. I have written to the Minister, and I will write to her again, asking for a meeting with all Central Coast MPs for a briefing so that we as a community can have confidence that our local government body once again can act in a fit and proper way. Today in question time the Minister spoke glowingly of local government. I hope that when she does visit the Central Coast her dreams are not destroyed.

### TRIBUTE TO ROBERT GEORGE PORTER, OAM

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (17:06):** I acknowledge and pay tribute to the late Robert George Porter, OAM, better known to most as Rob E. G. Robie was born on 4 June 1941 in Ashfield. Robie was a renowned recording artist, producer and record label founder, known across the world, not only for his own hits such as *55 Days at Peking* and *Si Senor*, but also for his record producing work that resulted in dozens of iconic hits. Robie was responsible for the careers of many of Australia's great recording artists, with names such as Rick Springfield, Marcia Hines, Daddy Cool and Hush all owing their stardom in part to Robie's abilities.

It was at about eight years of age that Robie started lessons on the steel guitar, an instrument that would go on to become his signature sound. In 1959 he made his first appearance on *Bandstand* where he performed the hit *Sleepwalk* on his lap steel guitar. Robie went on to become a regular on *Bandstand*. In 1961 Robie was injured in a car accident and had to adapt his playing style, finding even greater success with number one hits such as *Si Senor*, *Jezabel* and *55 Days at Peking*. In 1964 Robie again achieved chart success with *When You're Not Near*. On the advice of The Beatles' manager, Brian Epstein, Robie moved to the United Kingdom in 1964 and then on to the United States in 1967, appearing in popular television shows such as *Daniel Boone*, *Mannix* and *Malibu U*. In 1969 he co-starred in the movie *Three* with Charlotte Rampling and Sam Waterston.

But it was in 1970 that Robie returned to Australia, where he took over Sparmac records. He then went on to found Wizard Records with the Elvis comeback producer Steve Binder. It was during this time that Robie began producing Daddy Cool, and in 1971 their debut album became the highest selling Australian album at the time. It was from this album that the song *Eagle Rock* came, a song that went on to become the unofficial anthem of the Manly Warringah Sea Eagles and a song that today still belts out at Brookvale Oval. In the 1980s Robie went on to produce albums for Air Supply, Tommy Emmanuel and Marcia Hines.

Robie was a very well-known figure in the Manly electorate. I would often bump into him at various events and he would always have a piece of advice for me about various local issues. Robie proudly wore campaign shirts, handed out flyers, and did pre-poll and election day activities for me over the years. He was a much loved and respected member of our local Liberal Party and the party more broadly. I think people across Australia came to know and love him for his extraordinary musical talents. They were certainly recognised when he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the 2017 Queen's Birthday Honours for his service to the music industry as a producer, writer and performer. In the same year *TV Week* reissued his Logie Award for a recording that was stolen in New York in the 1970s.

Robie passed away on 16 December 2021 after a short battle with dementia and is survived by his son, Kristopher, and daughter, Geordana. I pass on my respects and condolences to Robie, his friends and family. I also acknowledge the kindness and compassion of Mr Lee Furlong, who supported Robie in his final days that were challenging for him and his family. I also acknowledge the many members of the Manly Liberal Party who came together to acknowledge Robie's challenging last couple of months. May Robie rest in peace. I congratulate him on an amazing musical career and a wonderful life. He will be missed. We acknowledge and salute him. Long may *Eagle Rock* belt out at Brookvale Oval with many more wins for the mighty Manly Sea Eagles.

### INDIAN SUPPORT CENTER

**Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Minister for Corrections) (17:11):** It gives me great pleasure to bring to the attention of the House the great work that the Indian Support Center is doing in our community. The Indian Support Center is a non-profit, non-government organisation that was established in March 2015 as an independent body to understand and support migrant communities from the Indian subcontinent covering India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bhutan and the Maldives who are residing in New South

Wales. The launch of the centre was made possible through a small initial seed capital grant given by the then Liberal Government led by the Hon. Mike Baird. The Indian Support Center has just completed seven years of its dedicated support to the Indian subcontinent migrant community. The centre's primary focus is on providing grassroots support services, which are badly needed in the community, including JobSeeker support, family support and, in particular, harm prevention and domestic violence victim support, digital education for seniors, and more recently the much-needed support for victims of COVID-19.

In summary, the centre has successfully delivered to date the following programs: It has helped support and resolve more than 50 cases of domestic violence; assisted hundreds of jobseekers in coaching and finding them the right jobs; provided digital education to more than 450 seniors, and continuing; delivered free groceries to more than 400 financial victims of COVID-19; and disseminated and shared COVID-19 information to more than 200,000 community members through social media, plus exposure through ethnic community radio broadcasts in various languages, YouTube and live streaming programs. The centre has recently achieved the status of National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] provider and in that capacity provides NDIS services to various participants. The centre is currently working closely with the office of the Indian consulate in Sydney by delivering notary and other documentation services. The centre brings all the culturally and linguistically diverse communities from the Indian subcontinent under one roof, resulting in a much bigger perspective of Indian subcontinent support.

The Indian Support Center delivered its first JobSeeker support program for 2022, Language Culture and Job Seeking. The program was delivered by Mr Paul Forrest, a noted industry coach and mentor. With an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 Indian subcontinent people currently living in New South Wales, with a sizable presence in western Sydney and its surrounding suburbs, these services have now become very essential. The Indian Support Center Helpdesk is testimony to the work done by the centre's team of selfless volunteers who are supported by the centre manager and a formally constituted board. The centre has assisted in closing more than 2,000 support requests from the community recorded so far and the number is growing. In fact, the Indian Support Center has now become the epicentre of support and a barometer for migrant community issues in the western Sydney region.

The centre has been dependent upon the support from government bodies such as Multicultural NSW, the Department of Communities and Justice, the Cumberland City Council, the City of Parramatta Council, Good Things Foundation, and the Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia. In a recent event held on 28 January 2022 at the Redgum Function Centre in Wentworthville, the centre organised Australia-India Day 2022 as a mark of celebration of diversity, which included felicitations in recognition of the election of the 22 councillors from the Indian subcontinent at the recent council elections on 4 December 2021. I was joined at the event by the Hon. Mark Coure, Minister for Multiculturalism; Mr Manish Gupta, Consul General of India; mayor and councillor Lisa Lake from the Cumberland City Council; Dr Hari Harinath, Chair of Multicultural NSW; and various community leaders from the Indian subcontinent and ethnic media. I also acknowledge Mr Subba Rao Varigonda and his team, members of the board and the volunteers for their hard work in the community. It is great to see how they have dedicated their time and energy to the community.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT GARY MERRYWEATHER**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:17):** I reflect on the recent medical emergency on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the extraordinary bravery of a remarkable New South Wales police officer and a team of NSW Ambulance paramedics. On the evening of Friday 18 February 2022 during peak-hour traffic a lone protestor carried a poster and a hidden knife along the southbound lane before stepping into traffic on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In the middle of the road the man tossed away the poster, revealing the knife, before wounding himself several times in the stomach. The man had also doused himself in petrol and fell to the ground bleeding. As we can imagine, this would have been incredibly frightening for all drivers and bystanders during this busy time of day. The man would have died there and then if it was not for the efforts of Superintendent Gary Merryweather.

Superintendent Merryweather was the first responder on the scene after seeing the man cover himself in petrol, ready to ignite. He was travelling northbound but instantly turned his car into the oncoming traffic, jumped from his vehicle and rushed towards the man. Superintendent Merryweather stated that he had sighted the man pouring liquid over himself. As he got closer, he could smell petrol. Superintendent Merryweather acted quickly, tackled the bleeding protestor, snatched the knife and a cigarette lighter away from the man as he attempted to ignite himself. The superintendent's incredibly brave actions allowed NSW Ambulance paramedics, who also happened to be travelling across the bridge, to tend to the man's injuries. All the while, the man screamed and swore at the first responders. Ironically, it was police that he was protesting against. The man continued to struggle and curse as he was wheeled into the ambulance.

The protestor's actions and then reaction to Superintendent Merryweather highlight a greater need to support our police officers, who at times can come under scrutiny but are absolutely essential in safeguarding our community. Despite the knife wounds and being covered in petrol, we know that the man was taken to St Vincent's

Hospital and is now in a stable condition. When asked how he felt after the incident, Superintendent Merryweather selflessly stated "that's what police do". He also said that for police officers who are risking their lives, "It just comes as second nature, I think. You get in there and try and save people." As we know, Superintendent Merryweather and the paramedics did not receive gratitude from the man they had saved, but that did not phase them as they believed it was just part of their daily duties.

Superintendent Merryweather's words are inspiring, but his actions on that memorable Friday evening speak volumes for his and the NSW Police Force's dedication to service. Gary Merryweather has spent many years serving our community through his work as an officer in the NSW Police Force. In 2014 he was appointed as commander of the Blacktown local area command, where he was a strong advocate for the prevention of violence towards women. I have had the pleasure of working with Gary on many occasions, mostly in his role as an executive member of the Police Association of NSW and more recently as the chairperson of NSW Police Legacy. I have also had the privilege of attending events with Gary commemorating key days in the police calendar, Police Remembrance Day being a key example. I am proud to consider him a colleague and friend.

In his capacity working with the NSW Police Legacy, Gary has helped support widows, widowers, partners and dependent children of deceased New South Wales police officers. More broadly, Gary's work helps support the needs of the entire New South Wales police family. If a police officer is injured and might not necessarily be able to return to work, Police Legacy allows them to still feel a part of the police family. On behalf of the New South Wales Parliament, I thank Superintendent Garry Merryweather and the hardworking paramedics from NSW Ambulance, who put their own lives in harm's way to save another. We could be telling a very different story from a very tragic angle, but thanks to the quick thinking, rapid action and bravery of our officers, we have good news to report. I also thank all NSW Police Force Officers, sworn and unsworn, and New South Wales paramedics who have continued to put themselves on the front line to keep our community safe. Thank you for your service to our community.

#### **SHOALHAVEN CITY COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:21):** Tonight it is with great disappointment but little surprise that I am forced to address attempts by The Greens political party in the Shoalhaven to water down the rights of property owners to keep themselves, their families and their properties safe. Following the last council election, for the first time in the history of the Shoalhaven, two institutional political parties now control the council. The Greens political party and NSW Labor are in coalition. They vote en bloc, and they are calling the shots.

Mayor Amanda Findley is someone I know well. Councillor Findley was elected as a councillor during my last term on Shoalhaven City Council. I endeavour to work with elected leadership at all levels, and I have enjoyed a consistently good and personable relationship with Councillor Findley. But that does not mean we always agree. Councillor Findley authored a mayoral minute for the ordinary council meeting on 21 February, to which I am absolutely and diametrically opposed. Councillor Findley, along with her Greens political party colleagues, are seeking to remove a component of council's tree management policy known as the 45-degree rule. For those unfamiliar, the rule allows a property owner to remove a tree on their property that is within 45 degrees of someone's home. You do not need an application. If a tree endangers life and property, you can seek to take action as is appropriate.

I am a conservationist. I was the first local member of Parliament for Kiama to expand the footprint of national parks in our region when I convinced Minister Kean to bring the Killalea Estate under the remit of national parks. I fought hard to stop coal seam gas exploration and mining in my electorate. I ensured we made changes to State planning documents to protect the southern boundary of Gerringong, and I have consistently fought against overdevelopment that detracts from village character and culture. I feel deeply about preserving and protecting our environment. My conservationism, though, is not protectionism. I am not an absolutist, and I believe that life and property need to come first.

For the benefit of the House, the 45-degree rule in the Shoalhaven came following a tragic and terrible event. Local residents Carlene and Gordon Timbs had been seeking to remove a tree that they believed endangered their lives. Not only did they raise their concerns with the local council, they applied to have this dangerous tree removed. In talking with Carlene recently, she reminisced how she and Gordon would have sleepless nights, lying in bed worried about a tree that they had identified as dangerous. In spite of raising their concerns and the tree being assessed as safe, the tree fell and killed Gordon. The Timbs family lost a husband, father, brother and son, and our community lost a good man. Understandably, outrage followed and the council resolved to allow any property owner to take action to remove a tree within 45 degrees of someone's home.

Come forward from 1998 to today. The mayoral minute presented no tangible evidence to support why this policy should be changed. There is no evidence of widespread abuse, nor of residents simply chopping down trees because they can. Our community loves its natural environment, but human life must come first. In defending

her actions to scrap a policy that has undoubtedly saved lives, The Greens mayor said that there are existing State policies that are sufficient to deal with dangerous trees. These were the same policies that were in place that did nothing to save Gordon Timbs' life.

I commend my friend Councillor Paul, who was recently elected to Shoalhaven City Council, for calling out these dodgy and dangerous moves. I congratulate Carlene Timbs on having the courage to speak up and once again join the fight against moves that are not based on evidence, fact or common sense. Speaking with news journalist Glenn Ellard of 2ST, The Greens mayor Councillor Findley said that people would still be able to remove dead and dangerous trees but they would just need an arborist's report before it could proceed. Councillor Findley said, "There have never been as many arborists as there are now in the Shoalhaven." One arborist, Russell Munz, told 2ST that there were none with the qualifications to prepare the reports that Councillor Findley and her Greens councillors require. He said that only arborists with level five qualifications were able to prepare reports for council, and he was not aware of any in the Shoalhaven, thus establishing an impossible bar. He also said that they were expensive, with an average report costing in the vicinity of \$600. This is well beyond the budget of many of our local people.

I do not for one second believe that Councillor Findley was not aware of this fact. To call a spade a shovel, I believe she absolutely knew what she was doing. If her defence is that she was not aware, why would she be so careless to change such a significant policy without any appropriate research? At best, this is inelegant and lazy leadership. It may interest members to learn that Labor and The Greens ran a joint ticket for the mayoralty. I have never seen a red-green coalition formalised before. On Labor's Shoalhaven how-to-vote cards, voters were not presented with a Labor candidate but with the incumbent Greens mayor. Labor's member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips, was proudly handing out the how-to-vote cards.

Carlene Timbs contacted Fiona Phillips to ask about her view on the 45-degree rule. Whilst I have been happy to nail my colours to the mast publicly, I call on Ms Phillips to state where she stands. After all, Amanda Findley would not have been re-elected without Ms Phillips' support. Councillor Findley has now pulled her mayoral minute, no doubt at Ms Phillips' request, until after the Federal election. I make it clear that I cannot and will not support winding back a policy that could endanger human life. Life and property comes first, and if this is a fight that needs to be had then bring it on.

### ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:27):** I talk about the shocking state of roads right across the Lismore electorate, which I represent. The NRMA report from 2016-17, a report that was lauded at the time but has not yet been acted upon, includes some telling findings and some good reform initiatives. When I say they have not been acted upon, some have been taken up but have not been fulfilled as yet. One of the key findings was that across the Lismore electorate there is a roads maintenance backlog of \$151.7 million. That was in 2016-17. That would have risen since then, but that is the figure that I am using.

It also showed that 40 per cent of the regional roads maintenance backlog was in the North Coast and the Hunter areas combined. Some of my electorate of Lismore is on the North Coast, but there is also Tenterfield, which is in the New England North West area. The report pointed to some of the problems, how we would get funding and some of the reform initiatives. It also said that the funding backlog for all regional roads rose by 30 per cent, from \$1.73 billion in 2014-15 to \$2.2 billion in 2016-17. Regional councils are responsible for approximately 75 per cent of this backlog, or \$1.7 billion. One of the other findings was that the potential to expand tourism, agriculture and industrial freight in regional centres will be restricted if roads are not built and maintained to a standard that can cater for existing and future demand.

That brings me to a point that I have raised a few times in the House. When we have floods and other events that attract natural disaster funding, local councils are not allowed to repair the roads to a better standard than they were previously. That does not make sense. If we get funding to repair and restore roads, we should always be working to better standards because they improve over time. I know why that natural disaster assistance funding came about, but it needs to be looked at government to government. The report also found that without immediate action and an effective, long-term regional and local roads funding plan, pressure will be put on the network and intensify the backlog.

The regional and local roads network accounted for 68.9 per cent of all fatalities and 77.6 per cent of all injuries. That cost the New South Wales economy \$3.9 billion, not to mention the trauma and the emotional cost, which we cannot quantify. Our regional communities shouldered the majority of this burden, at a cost of \$2.6 billion. The over-representation of crashes on regional and local roads requires immediate and ongoing action. The report also found that the cost of not having a proper base to maintain regional and local roads will continue to have a negative impact on safety. It would be good to see a coordinated, coalesced and comprehensive plan from the Government that shows it is working on fixing roads, particularly in the regions. I seek that the



Government does that as soon as possible and that it continues to work on the 15,000 kilometres of road it is taking back. I think it has only been 400 kilometres so far, so that needs to be upscaled.

#### TUAN VAN NGUYEN

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (17:32):** On Australia Day in 1982, a young man named Tuan Van Nguyen arrived in Australia as a refugee. Like many refugees arriving in Australia at this time, he started his life here with only the shirt on his back and not a penny in his pocket. Tuan Van Nguyen was born and raised in a small village in the Mekong Delta region of South Vietnam. His parents were rice farmers, and they placed a strong emphasis on education. These values would serve Tuan, his adopted country and, eventually, the scientific and medical communities across the world extremely well. Following his studies, he spent over 30 years at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research. His association with the institute began with an interview with Professor John Eisman, who convinced him that working in medical research could help millions of people.

At the time the Dubbo Osteoporosis Epidemiology Study had just commenced, and Professor Eisman needed an epidemiologist and a biostatistician to work on the study. Tuan was capable of both of these jobs and secured this role while completing his PhD from this study. In this time, he further developed his interest in why people have osteoporosis, what causes bone fracture and how to predict the risk of fracture for an individual. His research program is driven by the hypothesis that an individual's susceptibility to fracture is determined by reduced bone strength due to bone loss and deteriorated bone structure, and that bone loss and bone structure are primarily determined by genetic factors.

At this time the link between osteoporosis and genetic factors was relatively unheard of. Osteoporosis is a common bone disease that affects one-third of women and one-tenth of men aged 50 years and older, and causes bone fractures. These fractures increase the risk of premature mortality and, in turn, reduced life expectancy. The overall goal of Tuan Van Nguyen's research is to improve life expectancy for people impacted by osteoporosis and to empower people to take preventive actions to reduce their own risk of osteoporosis. In 2000 he became the leader of genetics and epidemiology of the osteoporosis laboratory at the Garvan Institute. His research defined the relationship between fracture and mortality, and included the discovery of genes that contribute to the risk of fracture. One of his achievements is the translation of 20 years of research into a prognostic tool called the Garvan Fracture Risk Calculator for assessing fracture risk for an individual. The model has been implemented in mobile devices and a dedicated website that has been used by doctors and patients from all over the world.

Mr Nguyen has published more than 320 peer-reviewed publications, and some of his papers are considered pioneering and have received applauded commentaries. Mr Nguyen's papers have been cited over 32,000 times. He is one of the most highly cited scientists in the field of osteoporosis and medicine, and regularly speaks at lectures and major osteoporosis conferences. During the past 15 years he has conducted many workshops in osteoporosis, evidence-based medicine, research methodology, scientific writing, epidemiology and biostatistics in Thailand and Vietnam. His highly popular workshops have attracted and improved research capacity for thousands of doctors, healthcare professionals and scientists. He has also contributed to grant review for many funding agencies around the world.

He has supervised 15 PhD students, including four in Vietnam who are now successful and independent researchers. Currently Mr Nguyen is supervising three PhD students. His students have published their work in high-profile journals, and have won national and international prizes. Mr Nguyen has collaborated extensively both nationally and internationally with his research and he has been appointed a Distinguished Visiting Professor at many universities abroad. I am very happy to talk to the House today about Professor Nguyen, as on this year's Australia Day, exactly 40 years to the day after his arrival in Australia, Mr Nguyen was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to medical research, to osteoporosis and fracture prevention, and to tertiary education. Professor Nguyen is a stellar example of our successful multicultural nation and a wonderful example of the many successful migrant stories of those in the Vietnamese community who live in my electorate of East Hills. I congratulate him on his Australia Day honour and commend him for his decades of research and work.

#### OASIS VILLAGE, WINDANG

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong) (17:37):** There is nothing that angers me more than when innocent and vulnerable people are being bullied and pushed around. There are 43 residents living at Oasis Village in Windang who have been subject to what I regard as bullying and unreasonable behaviour by its operator for over two years. The Oasis Village is one of around 500 communities on the residential land lease communities register which in total house more than 36,000 people in New South Wales. These communities offer housing choices from low-cost to resort-style living for those aged over 55. The owners of residential land lease communities range from mum-and-dad investors through to large corporations. The Oasis Village is operated by S&Q Assets Pty Ltd and its chief representative is Mr David Wei. I have corresponded with Mr Wei on a number of occasions over

the past two years on behalf of local residents. I have not met him, to my knowledge, or the other representatives of S&Q Assets Pty Ltd.

Residential land lease communities are subject to the provisions of the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Act 2013. Section 54 of the Act requires the operator of a community to comply with the rules of conduct in schedule 1 to the Act. Most importantly, the Act requires operators to have knowledge of the legislation; to act fairly and honestly; to not mislead or deceive any party in negotiations; to not engage in high pressure tactics, harassment, or harsh and unconscionable conduct, or provide false information about the effect of the Act. S&Q Assets Pty Ltd appears to have plans to redevelop Oasis Village into a luxury golf course on the foreshore of Lake Illawarra at Windang. I cannot blame them—it is a beautiful location. In my view, Lake Illawarra is one of the most underrated natural assets for tourism and recreation in Wollongong. However, the lake foreshore is also home to thousands of residents, including the residents of Oasis Village.

S&Q Assets Pty Ltd is trying to take advantage of requirements by Wollongong City Council to address longstanding matters over compliance with regulations and licensing. These requirements affect other residential land lease communities in the Wollongong local government area as well. Council has, I believe, acted in a reasonable and cooperative manner with each of the operators. Council has also offered, as I understand it, very reasonable and cooperative terms for S&Q Assets Pty Ltd to address its compliance issues. I am advised that Mr Wei initially agreed to these arrangements, only to then renege at the very last minute.

In the meantime, S&Q Assets Pty Ltd has appeared before the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] for it to adjudicate on whether the operator is complying with the requirements of the Act. The appearance of S&Q Assets Pty Ltd before NCAT has not been spectacularly successful at any stage. NCAT has ruled on several occasions and made relevant orders requiring S&Q Assets Pty Ltd to withdraw a notice of termination to Oasis Village residents and to undertake maintenance and repairs to community facilities. It appears that those NCAT orders have been flouted. So serious is the situation that NCAT has ordered the site fees to be paid into a trust to fund basic maintenance, from mowing of the lawns to providing satisfactory sanitation for residents.

I acknowledge and pay tribute to the Affiliated Residential Park Residents Association [ARPRA] and, in particular, its chief executive officer, Mr Gary Martin. Mr Martin has advocated on behalf of the residents, and taken action before NCAT, to protect their rights. He has been quite successful and is owed a debt of gratitude. So too are the resident representatives, Maryann Kirkby and Julie Funnell, who have been outstanding in their support of the residents of Oasis Village at every turn. I also thank Councillor Ann Martin, who has been tremendous in her support for the residents. I recognise the interest of the former Minister for Fair Trading in this matter. I raised the matter with the new Minister for Fair Trading, discussing it briefly with her at a polling booth recently. I appreciate that she is only newly appointed. I hope that we can work together to uphold the Act's provisions and protect the local residents.

I have made a request of the Minister, which I hope she will seriously consider. It is simple: Given the continued belligerence of S&Q Assets Pty Ltd and Mr Wei, and the contempt shown for the NCAT orders, I believe it is now time for the New South Wales Government to join in support of ARPRA's efforts. I have asked the Minister to consider initiating further action under section 164 of the Act, which allows, upon the application of the Commissioner of Fair Trading, the New South Wales Supreme Court to order the appointment of an administrator to exercise all the functions of the operator of Oasis Village. I consider that there is more than sufficient evidence to satisfy the commissioner that this action should be taken under the Act for the protection of the Oasis Village residents. S&Q Assets Pty Ltd and Mr Wei must understand that their conduct over the past two years in particular is unacceptable, has been reprehensible, and will no longer be tolerated—enough is enough.

Many of the Oasis Village residents are elderly, frail, and facing the daily challenges of battling chronic ill health. They all want to live their lives with peace of mind. Under the Act they have every right to do so. They have been forced to endure threats about the future of their homes for long enough. I place S&Q Assets Pty Ltd and its representatives on notice. Oasis Village residents will not be forced from their homes; if the operator wants residents who may wish to move out to do so, then it must pay them fair compensation. S&Q Assets Pty Ltd must comply with the law, by letter and in spirit, and I will be watching every step of the way to make sure that it does.

#### **ALDENHAM ROAD, WARNERVALE**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (17:42):** I raise an issue which has upset the residents of Aldenham Road at Warnervale—and I think rightly so. Aldenham Road is a class 1C road. It is just a normal residential street. It has no kerb and guttering, but it is located within the new development areas around Warnervale. Approval has been given for lot 31, at the end of the road, to be subdivided into 40 residential lots. Residents of Aldenham Road are rightly concerned that all of the traffic from the new residential subdivision will come down their street. Several of the residents have lived there for more than 30 years, and some actually paid for the last upgrade of Aldenham Road themselves, which was more than 20 years ago.

The council has spent very little money, if any, on the road since. The irony is that right next door, almost parallel, is what will be a major road, known as the Warnervale Link Road. The link road currently runs from Sparks Road to a roundabout next to Lakes Grammar—an Anglican school—and eventually will run all the way to the suburb of Watanobbi, parallel to the freeway. So it will be an internal road that will take quite a lot of traffic. It will also link up the council's education and sports precinct. The residents of Aldenham Road are concerned that on the link road is a roundabout that is currently using three exit or entry points, one of which will go through to Wyong under the planned extension, one which goes to the Lakes Grammar school, and the third which goes back towards Sparks Road.

The residents say that the new housing estate is on a paper road that links into a fourth entry or exit point on that roundabout. But apparently they have been told by council—although it may have been Transport for NSW who advised them this and I will check whether that is the case—that it is not safe for that fourth entry or exit point to be used by the residents of the new housing estate. That seems astounding, because roundabouts are built to be four ways—it is a normal thing. The satellite image in Google Maps shows the road that is supposed to connect to that roundabout. Not only that, they have put up concrete barriers where the road would go and they have left a gap in the gutter where the road would connect in. But, all of a sudden, they have said, "No, we are going to send all the traffic from this new estate down a 1C residential street that already has two unit developments going on and add all of that traffic."

It pushes all the traffic north to what is called Jack Warner Drive, which is 500 metres of road between a railway crossing and a set of lights that joins up to the link road. In the mornings and afternoons at school time, that road is gridlocked. It is only going to get worse, not only because this estate has been approved but also because there are five new housing estates in the vicinity. Nearly 200 houses have been approved, and the cars will all empty onto that 500-metre stretch of road. There is a purpose-built roundabout that could take traffic away, ease congestion for residents and make things safer, and yet they are being told that is not an option. It is just ridiculous.

On behalf of residents I spoke at the Independent Planning Commission two weeks ago, asking why the council is pushing this fact and why an updated traffic plan with all the new estates has not been done. We cannot keep adding people into a place and not improve the road infrastructure. I am calling on the council, together with Transport for NSW, to use some common sense and allow the estate to have an entry-exit point onto the link road. It will be a major link road between the north and the south and will make it better for everyone: the new residents and the current residents. It just makes sense. The infrastructure is already there; it just has to be finished. The residents rightly are scratching their heads and saying, "We've paid rates for all these years. We upgraded the road in the first place. Yet, when the time comes for us to be supported, the authorities are walking away from us." It is simply not fair. We have to do better.

#### **VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (17:47):** On behalf to the Vaucluse electorate I congratulate local students who excelled in the 2021 Higher School Certificate. Each year, I am really happy to hear of the HSC academic excellence achieved by students at my local high schools. This year was no different, despite the impact of COVID-19 on schools and learning. I was proud to see many local schools ranking amongst the best in the State. These students' last years of high school have been mired in the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, I heard firsthand from students and their parents and carers about the challenges it brought and how they supported each other through remote learning and throughout changing health orders.

I will list all of the students; they are all very worthy. I am proud to say there are a lot of names. From Ascham School in Edgecliff there were 81 distinguished achievers, who received a result in the highest band possible for their course, and 17 all-rounder students, who received results in the highest band possible for at least 10 units of the HSC courses. They included Charlotte Bathgate, Sachi Bruce, Alene Chen, Ava Commander, Bronte Everett, Nadia Hui, Sonia Lam, Claudia Litver, Rebecca Molnar, Lilli O'Driscoll, Laetitia Opie, Tiffany Philippou, Marie Qian, Reja Read, Mia Rebello, Chloe Tallis and Camilla Thomson. I congratulate the head of school, Andrew Powell, and the board chair, Janet Anderson.

Cranbrook School in Bellevue Hill celebrated 101 distinguished achievers, including the following 18 all-rounder students: Joshua Abelev, Alfred Broekhuizen, Lachlan Carroll, Emil Droga, Dane Feeney, Thomas Findlay, Asher Learmonth, Stephen Lincoln, Marcus Lowe, Ajay Murugasu, Samuel Oliver, River Penn, Samuel Roberts-Lovell, William Sant, Mitchell Scott, Chang Su, Adeel Tejani and Jiuyu Zhang. Congratulations to headmaster Nicholas Sampson and president of the school council Jon North. Kambala School in Vaucluse had 78 distinguished achievers, including the following 17 all-rounder students: Alix Nafsika, Anjalee Desai, Sarah Edwards, Eloise Fletcher, Sophia Fonseca, Yue Yang Fu, Francesca Herro, Aarya Kaul, Sophia Morgan, Mayling Paton, Stella Rafeletos, Mia Retallack, Sunday Rose Salt, Jemma Tan, Claire Villata, Sara Wright and

Victoria Yan. Congratulations to the soon-to-be new school principal Jane Danvers and president of the school council Ainslie Van Onselen.

Kesser Torah College in Dover Heights, which is a smaller school, also excelled with 12 distinguished achievers, including: Adiella Lobel, Amit Aronstam, Batya Moss, Fraida Feldman, Gabrielle Cohen, Liat Friedgut, Mushka Berger, Schneur Groner, Shira Eisenberg, Shira Dadon, Shoshana Spielman and Yakov Gestetner. Congratulations to Roy Steinman and school president Shaul Schapiro. Kincoppal Rose Bay had 76 distinguished achievers, including the following 12 all-rounder students: Emma Chang Chiew, On Yui Choi, Harriet Cook, Olivia Deakin-Bell, Marie Khoury, Nicole Lai, Sophia Laverty, Lok Law, Bianca Meli, Molly North, Charlotte Smeallie and Hanke Xie. Congratulations to principal Maureen Ryan and school board chair Dr Mark Sinclair. Reddam House had 128 distinguished achievers and an amazing 28 all-rounders, including: Kate Aruman, Zac Atkinson, Gerard Buttigieg, Macartney Cohen, Lilith Flint, Louis Fontaine, Dyllan Garratt, Joseph Ghosh, Alden Katz, Aeden Keldoulis, Cem Kozaoglu, Maxwell Lane, Isabella Lingam, Talia Machet, Scarlet Marshall, Eva Maximova, Zoe Moore, Dena Rubinstein, Patrick Saita Setterlund, Jay Schwarz, Mirrasa Seyed Esfahani, Lara Topper, Ethan Urquhart, Brendan Vuong, Kaetie Yuan, Yuanhao Zhang and Adrian Zhao. Congratulations to head of senior school Dave Pitcairn and head of junior school Dee Pitcairn.

Rose Bay Secondary College had 53 distinguished achievers, including all-rounder Sara Buick and the following local distinguished achievers: Liam Alkobi, Maria Argyrous, Daniel Finkelstein, Carla Franco, Alexandra Hay, Charlise Kelly, Frankie Peterson and Harriet Shand. Congratulations to principal Melinda Bright and P&C president Kara Milker. Scots College had 87 distinguished achievers and the following 10 all-rounder students: Charles Carmont, Joshua Gale, Louie Gu, Harry Murfet, Hamish Robertson, Alex Rozenbergs, Charles Sayers, Edwin She, Kyle Soepono and Joshua Wei. Congratulations to principal Dr Ian Lambert and college council chairman Wayne Richards. Congratulations to all my local schools and those distinguished achievers. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

#### RIVERSTONE-SCHOFIELDS RSL SUB-BRANCH

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (17:52):** I acknowledge the longstanding good work of the Riverstone-Schofields RSL Sub-Branch and, in particular, current president Bruce Shaw. As I have mentioned in this place before, Riverstone boasts one of the oldest war memorials in the country, having been erected in November 1911. That predated the RSL sub-branch and, in fact, it probably predated the creation of the RSL itself. The original local RSL sub-branch was known as the Schofields RSL Sub-Branch following an advertisement in the *Hawkesbury Gazette* on 17 August 1928 that read:

A meeting will be held in the Oddfellows' Hall Riverstone, on Thursday next, August 23, at 8 p.m., for the purpose of forming a branch of the Returned Soldiers' League.

The sub-branch began arranging annual commemorative Anzac services in 1929 and that has continued to this day. I have had the privilege of attending both Anzac Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies at the war memorial in Riverstone for the past decade. While the membership of the sub-branch has been relatively small in recent years, members have included veterans from Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain. A highlight in the recent history of the sub-branch was the stirring centenary of Anzac celebration in 2015, which was attended by many thousands—the largest crowd seen in Riverstone that anyone can remember. In November 2019 another moving ceremony marked the rededication of the war memorial 100 years after its original dedication.

In 2021, with the help of the Riverstone chamber of commerce and Blacktown City Council, the sub-branch installed an evocative addition to the war memorial. A pair of Great War era army boots were reproduced in bronze and placed at the foot of the memorial, which is located adjacent to the entrance to the railway station, to recall the fact that each of the volunteers whose names are on the monument left the district to go to war by walking through that railway station entrance and boarding a train to Sydney. The current RSL sub-branch president is Bruce Shaw, who served in the Vietnam War as an engineer from 1969 to 1970. Bruce joined the sub-branch in 2014, despite initial reluctance due to negative community perceptions of Vietnam veterans.

During his term he has advocated for returned service men and women to seek support and treatment for health issues, including PTSD, and has encouraged younger returning service men and women to become members of their local RSL to access support for their welfare and the guidance that the organisation can provide. Bruce has actively reached out to local schools to encourage them to participate in Anzac and Remembrance Day celebrations, with great results despite the recent challenges presented by the COVID pandemic. Regularly the event has a choir of students from local schools. Wreaths are laid by representatives of an ever-growing number of school communities. Bruce oversaw a grant application under the Community Building Partnership program to fund installation of solar panels on the sub-branch hall roof, which have reduced ongoing power bills. He also led a process of refurbishments of the hall, making it a more attractive venue for community groups to use.

Bruce has engaged with the local chamber of commerce on behalf of the sub-branch, again with great effect, as with the boots memorial. I congratulate and thank the members of the Riverstone-Schofields RSL for their persistence and diligence in honouring their pledge to remember those who have fallen in the service of Australia and in supporting the welfare of those who have returned from military service. As we know, many who serve in the armed forces find adjustment to civilian life very difficult. It poses real challenges for our veterans. It cannot be taken for granted that they can simply walk back into ordinary life without issues. I thank those in the RSL who specialise in providing that support and connecting people with support they need and encouraging younger members to join and pass on the wisdom they have to others. I congratulate Riverstone-Schofields RSL and Bruce Shaw.

### AGED-CARE SECTOR

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:57):** I speak in support of calls for a proper pay rise for aged-care workers across the State, the country and in my electorate of Shellharbour. The two \$400 payments to aged-care workers that the Prime Minister recently announced do not even begin to address the crisis in the aged-care sector. Some \$800 between now and the upcoming Federal election is a short-term political fix designed to cover a long-term policy failure. The Government's policy of pursuing a market model for aged care has led to increasingly high casualisation and job insecurity, especially in home care. Government failures at the start of the pandemic include a severe lack of preparation and a failure to consult with aged-care workers. The slow vaccine rollout, delays in booster shots and lack of adequate policy implementation led directly to the deaths of residents, with almost half of aged-care homes suffering an outbreak of COVID-19.

As at 1 February, across the country 23,900 active cases across 1,261 aged-care facilities were recorded. They include 14,000 staff and 9,000 residents, who all had to isolate. The 500 deaths from COVID in aged-care facilities last month number more than the deaths for the whole of 2021. Mark Sewell is the CEO of Warrigal, an aged-care provider throughout the Illawarra, Southern Highlands, Queanbeyan and Canberra regions. He has applied for help from the Australian Defence Force for Warrigal's Mount Terry facility at Albion Park, where 22 residents and 12 staff members have COVID. Ten out of the 11 Warrigal homes have had an outbreak of COVID since Christmas, and 18 residents have lost their lives.

Aged-care providers have said that currently, on average, one-quarter of all shifts are being left vacant. Up to 30 per cent of shifts were unfilled in the first two weeks of January as the Omicron wave peaked. According to the royal commission, in 2019 some 57 per cent of Australian residents lived in facilities with unacceptably low levels of staffing. The Health Services Union president and general secretary, Gerard Hayes, has said that the staffing crisis is so great that some residents were not being showered for two to three days and exhausted staff across the country have in some cases been forced to extend their normal eight-hour shift to 14 hours or more. All staff need a long-term pay rise.

Last year the final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety laid out a plan to overhaul the aged-care system and called for better wages. Recommendations 84 and 86 called for an increase in award wages for aged-care employees and a minimum staff time standard for residential care. Both Federal and State Liberal governments have let down the people of New South Wales and Australia. The Fair Work Commission is currently considering a case forwarded by the Health Services Union and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, which are asking for an approximate 25 per cent wage increase for residential and home-care workers.

The Federal Government—what a shock—is refusing to support the submission for a pay increase. That is a kick in the guts for every one of those workers and it shows how out of touch Scott Morrison and Dominic Perrottet are. If the Government was interested in helping aged-care workers and residents, it would support the submission for a pay rise and finally act on the royal commission report, which was handed down 11 months ago. Not one of those over 200 recommendations has been implemented. What a waste of taxpayers' money. The view of the royal commission and everyone in the sector is that aged-care workers are undervalued and should be paid more.

A more secure, better-trained and properly paid aged-care workforce will no doubt cost more, but without a high-quality, well-supported workforce it will be impossible to deal with the ongoing aged-care crisis. I put on record that John Howard took aged care out of public health and put it into the private sector, draining every cent from residents that it could possibly get out of them. Aged care is a public health issue and it should be in the public Health portfolio. Aged-care workers deserve our respect and the resources they are desperately asking for. I urge all my parliamentary colleagues to support aged-care workers and their ongoing calls for a fair pay rise and increased staffing to allow them to provide quality care to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

*Community Recognition Notices***LUGARNO PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate Lugarno Public School on opening their new nature play space which has been funded in part by the NSW Government. Thanks to the NSW Government's generous contribution, the school and their P&C were able to utilise the cumulative funding to create an outstanding space for children to learn and play. The nature play space at Lugarno Public School includes a natural river system, native flora and fauna, as well as a leafy outlook that encourages students to explore and discover. I wish to thank the Principal of Lugarno Public School, Justine Williams, as well as P&C President, Melissa Porter, for all of their hard work in arranging the design and construction processes of this project. It was my absolute pleasure to attend the grand opening of the nature play space and hear from students and teachers about the benefits of this space within the school environment. I look forward to delivering more important projects at Lugarno Public School alongside Melissa and Justine in the future.

**NSW FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Speaker, I rise to recognise the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools after they hosted their fantastic Annual Gala Dinner last year in 2021. There are more than 230 community language schools in NSW across more than 435 different locations. These schools provide linguistic education to more than 28,000 students across 87 different languages and this requires the expertise of more than 2500 teachers. Here in the St George region, extra-curricular linguistic education is provided at local schools including Lugarno Public School, Peakhurst Public School and Connells Point Public School. The Annual Gala Dinner was an incredible event and it was fantastic to see the community coming together to recognise the importance of our community language schools across the State. I wish to thank the President of the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools, Lucia Johns, as well as their Chief Executive Officer, Michael Christodoulou, for organising this fantastic event. Multiculturalism is the heart and soul of the St George region and I look forward to working alongside our local community language schools into the future.

**SENSIA ALLIED HEALTH**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate Sensia Allied Health on opening their brand new head office, complete with their new business branding in Riverwood. The Sensia Allied Health team has been providing important services to individuals across the St George region for a number of years and it is fantastic to see that they are now calling Riverwood home. Whether it be occupational therapy, home modifications, speech pathology or anything in between, the Sensia Allied Health team has always and will always be there to support those in need. In June 2021, I had the honour of attending their launch event at their new head office and I took the opportunity to say a few words to staff and clients about the importance of their services within the community. I want to thank Carol Bahsoun, Mohamed Bahsoun, Ned Mannoun and the entire team for helping bring this critical service to Riverwood and for organising the fantastic launch event. I look forward to seeing Sensia Allied Health reach new heights in the future as more local residents and their families access their important services.

**MELISSA BEDWELL**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to congratulate local Glenmore Park mum, Melissa Bedwell, for her enthusiastic effort in creating her small business, Clue Tours NSW. Clue Tours use nature, infrastructure, history and community to create cryptic clues for people to access and solve with your mobile phone. It is a fun self-guided trail where you solve the clues on a scavenger hunt through the outdoors. You receive two clues on your phone and answer them as you follow and walk on your trail – to help discover more of the people, land and history with every clue. The fun part is, they can be done by yourself or with a group of family and friends. Melissa has always been passionate about adventure, exploring history and having fun, and with overseas travel being closed for the better half of two years, she was able to rediscover these experiences at home in the local area and beyond. There is so much beauty in our landscape and she wanted to share that with the local community. Congratulations on your small business' success so far. I look forward to taking part in a Clue Tour in the near future!

**WILLIAM (BILLY) BEGGS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—Today I want to recognise the long and continuing life of service that a member of my community has been devoted to for the most part of his adult life. William (Billy) Beggs is best known as one of the founding organisers of the Penrith Men's Walk and Talk involved with community services and mental health assistance. Billy's service originates to his time in Belfast, Ireland as a young adult who quite

early got involved in community work, helping children in need, the unemployed and people with housing problems. A life changing moment in Billy's life ensured he served the community without reference to religion which at the time was an unheard of practise in the North of Ireland. After travelling to Australia for the first time with his wife, they fell in love with the country and decided to emigrate following a second holiday in 2005. Billy now is a Community Development Coordinator with Parramatta Mission assisting primarily in the area of mental health. Thank you Billy for the service you provide the community and I commend your long service to mental health issues.

#### **GRACE WEST ANGLICAN CHURCH**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—Before Christmas last year members of my community, through determination and perseverance were finally able to achieve what so many of them have been waiting for. A new church for people to come together and celebrate their faith. The Grace West Anglican Church, a merger of the Mulgoa Church and the Glenmore Park Anglican Church, has finally become a finished building for both merged communities to come together, exercise and practise their religion. Thanks to the perseverance and determination of both local communities, 35 years of planning and giving has resulted in their goal coming to fruition. It has taken an enormous amount of effort from both communities, I want to recognise this hard work and congratulate them on their new church.

#### **EMILIO SALUCCI**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong)**—I wish to recognise the contribution of Emilio Salucci to the advancement of the manufacturing sector in the Illawarra during his nearly decade long role as Chair of the Illawarra Innovative Industries Network – i3Net. Emilio has been the driving force behind i3Net and has always been a passionate advocate for the role that the Illawarra's industries can play in innovation, industry growth and job creation. Over the last decade i3Net has grown with its member organisations ranging from SMEs through to multi-nationals and representing more than 10,000 employees. I have always found Emilio easy to deal with, but most important ready with new ideas and approaches that will sustain interest in the Illawarra's industry. The annual Illawarra Industry Showcase has allowed our region to continue to promote our highly skilled manufacturers and their capabilities to the world. Emilio's contribution to i3Net has been considerable and there is no doubt that the group would not be in the position that it is in today had it not been for his leadership which has seen the organisation grow to become one of the most proactive industry bodies in the region. I wish Emilio the very best for the future.

#### **PETER ERNST**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong)**—I would like to acknowledge, congratulate and thank Peter Ernst of NSW Ports who was recently recognised at the DCN Australian Shipping and Maritime Industry Awards for his work supporting international seafarers during the COVID pandemic. Peter recognised the isolation and vulnerability of seafarers, many of whom had been unable to leave their ships for months despite docking at ports around the country and around the world. Firstly Peter worked with local stakeholders at the Port Kembla port to provide wifi access for seafarers docked at Port Kembla. As Peter said: "I met seafarers during the peak of the crisis that had been onboard vessels for 18 months and some of them had not spoken to their family for periods of six months at a time. That's catastrophic from a humanitarian perspective." He then set about working with NSW Health, myself and others to establish a vaccine program for seafarers to protect the health of the men and women who were keeping international trade alive. This has led to the vaccination of more than 500 seafarers docked in Port Kembla alone. Peter's efforts continue a long tradition of the Illawarra supporting workers no matter where they come from.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY AND AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS 2022**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—It was fantastic to attend the Sutherland Shire Citizenship Ceremony and Australia Day Awards Presentation 2022 to congratulate our newest citizens and celebrate the inspiring people in our community. It take this opportunity to acknowledge all the individuals and groups nominated for the Sutherland Shire Australian Day Awards and thank them for generously donating their time and expertise to help others in our community. I congratulate the worthy recipients of the awards for their significant and positive contribution to our community. They are extremely deserving of this accolade. Citizen of the Year award: Danielle Lucas, Care for Kids and Megan Barnes, pancreatic cancer awareness advocate; Young Citizen of the Year: Alexander Tuckfield, 2020 Tokyo Paralympian; Environmental Citizen of the Year: Julie Keating, Shorebird enthusiast; Community Group of the Year: COVID-19 Sutherland Shire Community Group on Facebook.

#### **AUSTRALIAN FRIENDS OF IRISH UNITY**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise the recent formation of an organisation called Australian Friends of Irish Unity. The aim of this organisation is to campaign for a Referendum to be held on Irish Unity.

This requires the British and Irish Governments to honour the requirement set out in the Good Friday Agreement [GFA] of 1998. The agreement provides for concurrent referenda in both the Six Counties and the Twenty Six Counties to determine any change in the constitutional status in the north of Ireland. Last year marked 100 years since the partition of Ireland. It's now time for the people of Ireland to decide if the partition should be undone.

#### **DAPHNE GRAY 100TH BIRTHDAY**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—It is with great pleasure today that I acknowledge Heathcote constituent Daphne Gray as she celebrates her 100th birthday next month on 12 March 2022. I trust Daphne will celebrate this momentous occasion accompanied by her closest friends and family. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to Daphne and wish her good health and happiness for the future.

#### **BELLA LEWIS**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to Bella Lewis, who has earned the opportunity to attend summer school at the University of Cambridge by being named a runner-up in the Immerse Education essay competition amongst 5000 entries from around the world. Bella is no stranger to thinking outside the box. While in Year 8 last year she developed an app to encourage the uptake of public transport. Her initiative was inspired by what she saw around her during the pandemic, combining the concept of QR code check-ins and the Dine and Discover Program, and would see users scan a QR on public transport that would earn them points that could be redeemed at local businesses. I've no doubt Bella will love every minute of Cambridge and wish her all the best for the trip.

#### **MICHAEL BLAXLAND OAM**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to Michael Blaxland, who has been recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the performing arts and theatre. Michael has been a fixture of Newcastle theatre for 40 years both on and off stage, taking on almost every role imaginable including as an actor, director, designer and committee member. He has also been a driving force behind fundraisers and has leant his talent and experience to those who want to learn. Perhaps more recognisable than his face is Michael's voice, through his career as a newsreader and journalist. Michael's voice has been heard on almost every radio station in Newcastle, and has also given his media and public relations expertise to local organisations and events. Michael is part of the furniture in Newcastle theatre and media, and his contributions are extremely valued.

#### **JOHN MAYO OAM**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to John Mayo who has been awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to surf lifesaving. John is a fixture of Cooks Hill Surf Club, which he has served for over 15 years and been recognised twice as Lifesaver of the Year, also taking out the same award for the Hunter region in 2018. John's dedication has not just been to club members or beach users. With kindness and creativity he has also sought to bring positive beach experiences and water safety education to people culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. He is also no stranger to administration, working on nippers and disability access programs, coordinating ANZAC ceremonies, and turning his hand to member services and fundraising. John's commitment and passion are undeniable and admirable. Congratulations.

#### **SUSAN PARKER & TRISH PUGLISI**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Today I recognise the indispensable and tireless work of Susan Parker and Trish Puglisi, two women who have dedicated their lives to supporting people with disabilities through their longstanding relationship with local support organisation, Biala. Trish enrolled her son at Biala Special School in 1981, while Sue's daughter started attending in 1987. Both families instantly felt a sense of belonging and connectedness at the school community. For the past 40 years, both women have been involved in fundraising for various initiatives within the school. The pair secured funding for a respite service, which resulted in the 'Fun Club' and 'Mel House', and they introduced debutant balls in 1992. Strikers Bowling was Susan's inception in 1991, a service for people with disabilities that still runs today. In 2004, Susan and Trish organised a school holiday program, in addition to maintaining the school grounds for many years. Susan and Trish are longstanding board members and were instrumental in Biala expanding to provide disability support with the transition to the NDIS. Susan remains on the board after having served as president on and off for 30 years, while Trish remains involved with fundraising activities.

#### **COLEAMBALLY CENTRAL**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the following distinguished achievers of the 2021 Year 12 cohort at Coleambally Central School for outstanding results in their HSC – Laura Mannes and Lily McKersie. 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 Laura and Lily on this fantastic accomplishment.

#### **MURRUMBIDGEE HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the following distinguished achievers of the 2021 Year 12 cohort at Murrumbidgee Regional High School for outstanding results in their HSC - Callum Wepler, Durva Patel, Eden Gyles, Emily Roser, Hannah Ellis, Lachlan O'Grady and Zara Jones. 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 Callum, Durva, Eden, Emily, Hannah, Lachlan and Zara on this fantastic accomplishment.

#### **LEETON HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Madam/Mister Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the following distinguished achievers of the 2021 Year 12 cohort at Leeton High School for outstanding results in their HSC - Angus Crelley, Brooke Eglinton, Matthew Ryan and Sarah Allen. 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 Angus, Brooke, Matthew and Sarah on this fantastic accomplishment.

#### **JASON ENGLISH**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—Jason English, a world-champion mountain bike rider, school teacher, and Charlestown electorate resident, is unfortunately very familiar with the impact of cancer on children, babies and their families. A young member of Jason's family was diagnosed with leukaemia at just twelve weeks of age, and his first-hand experience with the heartbreak of seeing a young child fighting cancer has inspired him to jump in to help out Camp Quality's Big Ride for Little Kids. Jason is the event's 2022 ambassador. Jason says, "My cousin's life has been turned upside down as her daughter battles this terrible disease. It's so important that these children and families feel supported." I couldn't agree more. Jason is encouraging everyday cyclists to sign up for the virtual challenge, which asks participants to ride 100km, 200km or 300km from 1 March to 31 March. The goal is to raise \$500,000 for children and babies facing cancer. These funds will help children fighting the disease to attend Camp Quality camps, allow them to have a much-needed break and make positive memories with their families not centred on their cancer diagnosis. Thank you to Jason and Camp Quality for this important work.

#### **WARNERS BAY HIGH SCHOOL – ENVIRONMENTALISM**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—I would like to acknowledge Warners Bay High School for stepping up to address the growing problem of disposable face masks ending up in our environment. Over the last two years, masks have become an inescapable part of everyday life—and while they have no doubt kept many safe from COVID-19, they can become serious environmental hazards if not disposed of properly! As many as 1.6 billion of the estimated 52 billion disposable face masks produced in 2020 ended up in the world's oceans. It will take until the late 25th century for them to biodegrade! This is a worldwide issue, but Warners Bay High is taking a lead in addressing the issue in the Charlestown electorate, acting locally while thinking globally. Partnering with TerraCycle Australia, the Warners Bay Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group and the Munibung Hill Conservation Society, Warners Bay High has set up boxes for the safe disposal of uncontaminated face masks. My thanks to principal Marcus Neale, his staff and the entire school community at Warners Bay High, as well as the Warners Bay Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group and the Munibung Hill Conservation Society. Great work!

#### **OUR COMMUNITY PLACE**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown)**—After their operations were badly disrupted by COVID-19 over the course of 2021, the wonderful Our Community Place—based out of PCYC Lake Macquarie in Windale—is back and keen to reconnect with the local community. OCP is an invaluable resource for Windale and the local community, offering a range of services and programs. COVID caused some of OCP's programs to be shifted to

alternative forms of delivery, and others to be temporarily shut down altogether, so it's great to see that the organisation is embracing the return to in-person delivery! Programs that have recently started up again include Women's Shed on the Lake, Lunch Hub, Sister Talk, Food Share, Young Parents Group and Resume Kiosk. OCP is keen to expand their services and meet the changing needs of their local community, and are open to any suggestions of programs or courses that locals would like to see developed and delivered. My thanks to manager Lydia Manusiu and community development worker Elizabeth Hyslop for keeping OCP running throughout COVID-19, and my best wishes for their return to in-person delivery in 2022.

#### **ANASTASIA ELLIOT – DEADLY DESCENDANTS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I commend Lismore local Anastasia Elliot on her Deadly Descendants program. On her website Ms Elliot describes her program as "a therapeutic support organisation for children who are at risk of developing, or are experiencing mild to moderate emotional, mental health or behavioural difficulties. This could include; anxiety, depression, emotional and behavioural issues and challenges related to upbringing and negative life experiences, such as family breakdown, grief, loss, abuse and trauma." Her Lego Therapy caught my eye, as a Grandma who has learned a lot about Lego with my seven year old grandson Gabriel. Ms Elliot started up the therapy business as she saw a gap in mental health services available to children. She showed incredible initiative and dedication in setting up Deadly Descendants in our community. Ms Elliot works with families until they can be independent of her help. A mum herself of Zander, 8, and Leo, 6, Ms Elliot knows it is important to support the mental health of our children. She is a proud Wiradjuri woman, now on Bundjalung country. Her service is open to all, but Deadly Descendants addresses the particular local lack of culturally sensitive mental health support for Indigenous children.

#### **ST PAUL'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LISMORE**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Recently I attended the induction service for new Minister Reverend Darryl Spriggs at St Pauls Presbyterian Church, Lismore. We also said farewell to Rev. Glenn Samuel who is moving on after 12 years of wonderful service to Lismore. Our community is fortunate to benefit from the contribution of both Ministers and I commend them both in parliament today. Rev Darryl Spriggs has come to Lismore from Nambucca Heads where he was particularly engaged with the regions young people through Nambucca Valley Christian Community School. It was just wonderful to see Darryl, his wife Kath and his four children welcomed by the congregation at St Pauls with open arms. I am sure they will make a lasting impact here in Lismore just like they did in Nambucca. I look forward to catching up with them out and about in our community. Rev. Glenn Samuel came to Lismore as a former high profile executive at major corporations, a talented musician and a keen cyclist. He used his talents, experiences and his commitment to the teachings of his church to gain a great respect here in Lismore. I wish the entire congregation and both Ministers well.

#### **NIMBIN CENTRAL SCHOOL OUTSTANDING HSC RESULTS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I congratulate the Nimbin Central School class of 2021. They have performed extremely well in the 2021 HSC despite what was a tough year. They have done their families, the Nimbin community and school community proud. The school recently posted on Facebook how proud they were of the students and I thought I would share some of the post with the parliament. "The HSC class of 2021 finally received their results this week, a month later than usual due to the delayed HSC examination timetable, with outstanding results from the students at Nimbin Central School. The outstanding results from Nimbin Central School include 6 students being recognised on the 'Distinguished Achievers' list and 9 Band 6's overall (students achieving marks in the top 10 per cent of the state). 90 per cent of the Physics class and 100 per cent of the Extension 1 and 2 English classes achieved in the top 2 bands. School Dux, Kiani Tribolet, received 3 Band 6 and 1 Band 5 result and an overall ATAR of 94. Nimbin Central School is immensely proud of all their HSC students, persevering and achieving their HSC despite the challenges of a global pandemic." So am I.

#### **KIAMA AND DISTRICTS BUSINESS CHAMBER EXECUTIVE**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the NSW Parliament acknowledges the newly elected Kiama & District Business Chamber Executive. The Chamber has an energetic new board ready to promote the interests of small businesses in Kiama and surrounds. Having grown up in a small business family, I am deeply grateful for the efforts of volunteers who are seeking to strengthen our local economy. I acknowledge the Chamber President Cameron McDonald from Carter Ferguson. The other board members include: Kathryn O'Brien from Beachside Emporium, Michael Emmett from Bluestone Building Group, Aaron Shelley from Project Dry Hire, Past President Marie Beikmanis, Cathryn Lyall from Seed Space Venture Capital, HR specialist Rachel Edwards and Michael Cains from Pecora Dairy. I have always enjoyed a strong relationship with our local Chambers of Commerce and I look forward to working with the new executive on local issues affecting our business community as well as attending their future events.

**LAWRENCE BOYLE**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the NSW Parliament acknowledges Mr Lawrence Boyle on being recognised as Shellharbour City Council's 2022 Citizen of the Year. I applaud Mr Boyle's outstanding contribution to our community and organising the Warilla Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club through his many roles, including Secretary, Public Officer, Vice-President and Volunteer Lifesaver. I also note Mr Boyle's involvement in 2021 spending significant time supporting cancer research funding and providing care and support to other community members who had illness or were facing significant challenges or hardship during the ongoing COVID pandemic and lending a supportive hand to others in need. Congratulations and well done to local champion Lawrence Boyle.

**IMOGEN RADBURN**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales congratulates Miss Imogen Radburn of Nowra Hill on being recognised as Shoalhaven City Council's 2022 Young Sports Person of the Year. I applaud Imogen's contribution to the motorsport community and her outstanding achievements in karting. She is an inspirational ambassador and role model for other young women in motorsport who strive for their goals and achieve them. I also admire Imogen's career goals of one day becoming a diesel mechanic and racing in V8 Supercars alongside the likes of Shane van Gisbergen, Andre Heimgartner, Chaz Mostert, Nick Percat and Will Davison. And other female drivers such as Simona de Silvestro and Renee Gracie have proven that this pathway to Supercars and even The Great Race at Mount Panorama Bathurst is certainly possible and achievable. Congratulations and well done Imogen Radburn.

**WILLIAM BECK**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government)**—Mr Speaker I rise today to recognise the dedication of William "Billy" Beck to the Yass Valley Community. Mr Beck has provided mentorship to young people and demonstrated a true passion and commitment to assisting local junior sporting teams. Mr Beck volunteers his time to train, coach and coordinate junior players participating in the Yass Minor Rugby League, Yass Touch Football and Yass Basketball. Mr Beck has also demonstrated his commitment to ongoing learning and development, completing his Certificate III in Arboriculture and his Arborist Diploma. Mr Beck has also completed the NRL Junior Coach and League Safe Courses, which assist him to undertake his roles with junior players and teams. I was delighted that Mr Beck was recognised at the 2022 Australia Day Awards being awarded the Yass Valley Young Citizen of the Year. I would also like to publicly recognise the efforts of Mr Beck and thank him for his mentoring and role modelling for his peers and younger players within the sporting and wider community.

**REMOUNT NOT-FOR-PROFIT**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government)**—Mr Speaker I rise today to recognise the extraordinary work undertaken by the not-for-profit Remount to individuals and families within the Yass Valley Community. Remount provides a steadfast commitment to supporting and assisting veterans who experience stress and/or anxiety related to their service. Marina and Ben Maguire founded Remount and graciously provided this charity out of pocket from their cattle farm in Bowning for the first two years. Mr & Mrs Maguire continue to donate their time, farm and horses and volunteers give of their time to run the programs, which are predominantly run over weekends. Since 2016 Remount have assisted 300 veterans, first responders and their families through equine therapy. I was thrilled that Remount was recognised at the 2022 Australia Day Awards being awarded the Yass Valley Community Group of the Year. I would also like to publicly recognise the exceptional and tireless energy and generosity of Mr & Mrs Maguire and the extraordinary passion of the volunteers, they are a very special group of people who we are very fortunate to have within our community.

**JEREMY MILLWARD**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government)**—Mr Speaker I rise today to recognise the efforts of Jeremy Millward, of Moss Vale High School. Jeremy set a goal to spread mental health awareness for R U OK? Day in September. As you may know, R U OK? is a harm prevention charity that encourages people to have conversations with the aim to invest in personal relationships and informal support for suicide prevention. Jeremy set out to involve the whole community in his quest to raise money for R U OK? – which he most certainly did. He raised a momentous amount of \$4000 for the charity. He was recognised by the charity and given a trophy and a certificate of gratitude for his efforts. I would also like to publicly recognise the efforts of Jeremy, and thank him for his initiative and dedication to mental health support in his community.

### **CONGRATULATIONS MRS GRIGG – BEST WISHES ON RETIREMENT FROM COROWA PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Mrs Carmel Grigg of Corowa Public School who retired from teaching after 44 years. Mrs Grigg's career has taken her across various schools in Sydney before settling at Corowa Public School in 1997, where she began work in a full time role as a kindergarten teacher – a role that has continued for the last 24 years. Many students have passed through and Carmel has caught up with some of them over the years who have wished her well. Through her role as a teacher she has supported many children and families on their learning journey. Carmel leaves the profession with a lifetime of memories of school life, interactive field trips, excursions to the Melbourne Zoo, to ScienceWorks, and the fun of occasions such as Book Week dress up days. Thank you Carmel for your support for students in Sydney and Corowa over so many years.

### **NO BARRIER TO NEW BUSINESS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Michelle Foxcroft from Khancoban who recently launched her fashion business, 'The Fox's Croft Collective'. It all began with building up the confidence to get started, enrolling and then accessing the fee-free online course through NSW TAFE called 'NSW Women in Business program'. Starting a new business can be challenging but I am pleased that Michelle took advantage of the TAFE offer during the pandemic and made this her stepping stone to running her own business, prepared with training in finding grants, creating a business plan, growing sales, use of media and personal wellbeing. I wish Michelle all the very best, having achieved your dream of owning your own business, and sharing your story to empower others to take on business ownership with a foundation of training and preparation.

### **QUICK SNIPS BARBER SHOP CELEBRATING 25 YEARS IN BUSINESS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Lisa Janice Mackenzie and Susan Ruth Patten from Quick Snips Barber Shop celebrating 25 years in business together in Albury. Lisa and Susan first started working together in 1986, however in the summer of 1996 they both found themselves out of work with significant life events changing their course, Lisa had a baby and Susan underwent treatment for breast cancer. It was in that following year of 1997 that they decided it was time to re-enter the workforce, together. On the 1st of September 1997 their Barber shop first opened its doors and the rest is history. Congratulations to Lisa and Susan on their successful and enduring partnership, and to the Quick Snips Barber shop for celebrating 25 years in business.

### **ELINOR WROBEL**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I wish to put on record outstanding contribution of Elinor Wrobel OAM, nurse, curator, art collector and 'serial nuisance'. Elinor remains a fierce advocate and activist, and continues to use her voice to speak out for the community and for the environment, particularly on health and the arts. Elinor helped establish the Powerhouse Museum and went on to set up the John Passmore Museum of Art convinced Passmore not to burn his artworks, with her husband Fred. She's threatened to chain herself to the Domain Moreton Bay figs to save them, and hunger strikes to get action on the Lucy Osburn-Nightingale Museum. A former nurse, Elinor established the museum at Sydney Hospital in 2001, recognising the links with early NSW nursing history and Florence Nightingale's nursing methods. She recovered and restored the unique rare morbid specimen collection of body parts, even threatening a hunger strike to defend it. I thank Elinor for her lifetime of commitment to nursing and health, and to Australian art. She has contributed much to Sydney and our community that is much valued and appreciated.

### **CARL SCHUBERT - 2022 RAS RURAL ACHIEVER AWARD FINALIST**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Congratulations to Carl Schubert of Dungog on being named among the eight finalists for the 2022 RAS Rural Achiever Award. The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW award is a state-wide leadership program run to recognise future young leaders, aged 20–29 years, who are working hard to make a significant contribution to their local community and to rural Australia. Carl works as a rural contractor and stockman which sees him actively involved with local producers and supporting the industry with new and innovative ideas. I understand Carl has a tremendous sense of responsibility and belief that we are all custodians of the land we live and work on and he has a focus on sustainability and future-proofing the agricultural industry. A deep respect for the land and the food and fibre it produces has seen Carl throw himself into the agricultural Show movement and take on greater involvement with associated societies. Carl, enjoy your time at the 2022 Sydney Royal Easter Show as well as participating in the additional opportunities this program can provide throughout the year. I wish you every success for the future.

### MERRIWA EMERGENCY AND RESCUE CENTRE FUNDING

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—The expression "all good things come to those who wait" is finally coming true for the Merriwa and District Rescue Squad. February 2022 will now mark a significant moment in the organisation's history after being informed that long held plans for a proper home will receive funding. The proposed Merriwa Emergency and Rescue Centre has secured \$1.4 million of Australian Government support from the National Bushfire Recovery Fund. Merriwa and District Rescue Squad has waited very patiently and on behalf of the people of the Upper Hunter I want to acknowledge the squad's perseverance with its existing premises. A semi-converted, almost 60 year old panel beater shop with a litany of problems from leaks to vermin currently serves as the rescue squad's home base. For almost a decade the organisation dreamt of having a purpose-built facility so all emergency events can be coordinated and supported locally. Congratulations to Merriwa Volunteer Rescue Association president Andrew Luke and the Merriwa and District Rescue Squad team – your patience is about to be rewarded. I look forward to continuing my support for this very worthy project and seeing the Merriwa Emergency and Rescue Centre operational.

### LIONS CLUB DONATION TO MUSWELLBROOK HOSPITAL

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Thank you to the Lions Club of Muswellbrook for a \$20,000 donation to Muswellbrook Hospital. The club resumed fundraising late last year and subsequently had a successful Christmas period. The proceeds will allow the hospital to purchase ice machines for use in the emergency department, maternity and general wards. To Lions Club of Muswellbrook president Wilma Holmes and her small group of supporters, I want to express the gratitude of the Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter community for your efforts to assist Muswellbrook Hospital. Like many volunteer organisations the Lions Club of Muswellbrook is in need of members and I hope this recognition of its efforts can assist in encouraging prospective members to take the next step and join. Lions clubs are made up of ordinary people doing extraordinary things for the community. They raise funds to help those in need in our local community, nationally and in humanitarian causes internationally. If you live in the Muswellbrook shire, have time available to volunteer then please consider joining a service club with its heart in the right place which is committed to helping our community. Again, thank you president Wilma and the Muswellbrook Lions.

### JUNE LUSK TRIBUTE

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)**—Speaker, I wish to draw the House's attention to the passing of June Lusk on 16 February, aged 92. June Lusk was the first female bus driver in Sydney, entering service in 1970 at the Brookvale Bus Depot in my electorate of Manly. In 2010, Mrs Lusk attended a celebration for the 40th anniversary of female bus drivers at which the Minister for Transport unveiled a plaque in her honour at the Brookvale Depot. Aside from her achievements in paving the way for the many female bus drivers that followed, June was an avid Manly Sea Eagles supporter. I understand the Sydney Bus Museum is planning to honour June with an exhibition later this year. We honour June for her trailblazing achievements and extend our sincere condolences to her family, friends and former work colleagues.

### NORTH CURL CURL SLSC

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)**—Speaker, I would like to ask the house to recognise and congratulate the new officer holders of North Curl Curl Surf Life Saving Club. This includes President Glenn Slater, Director of Administration David Wymer, Director of Finance Brad Higgs, Director of Lifesaving Carmel Howard, Director of Youth Justine Hayward Smith, Director of Member services Hayden Lilienthal, Director of Education Brett Jeffery, Director of Marketing Saul Brown, Director of Surf Sports Michael Crews, Director of Juniors Activities John Vickery. I would further like to thank past office holders for the significant service and contributions to the club and the wider community.

### JOHN SEYMOUR OAM

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude and congratulations to immediate past Mayor of Coolamon Shire, John Seymour OAM. First elected to Coolamon Shire Council in 1998 and serving as Mayor for 9 years, John retired at the 2021 local government elections. It was very special to gather with the Coolamon community at the Up-To-Date Store recently to thank John for his 23 years of service to local government, together with his wife of 55 years Margaret, Mayors and Deputies from near and far, my Federal colleague The Hon. Michael McCormack and many others. John's service and vision have set the town of Coolamon and all the villages of the Shire up for a long and prosperous future. It has been an honour to work alongside John over the past 5 years on all matters Coolamon and I also recognise John's service to the NSW Rural Fire Service, which he joined in 1957. Congratulations and thank you for your leadership, friendship and sacrifices over many decades in service to the people of the Coolamon Shire and NSW.

**GRENFELL MULTIPURPOSE SERVICE HOSPITAL AUXILIARY**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to recognise the efforts of the Grenfell Multipurpose Service [MPS] Hospital Auxiliary, recently selected as a finalist for Volunteer of the Year as part of the Western NSW Local Health District's 'Living Quality and Safety Awards'. This is a very special recognition to have achieved and I thank members for their incredible work in support of the Grenfell MPS. I extend my gratitude to Dorothy Starr, Vicki Reid, Glenice Clarke, Maree Cotter, Mavis Drogemuller, Colleen Nealon, Jan Holland, Bernadette Dykhoss, Hazel Pickwell, Pat Verney, Margaret Cuddihy, Verona Hughes, Myrl Hunter and Carol Hargraves. Collectively these members fundraise tirelessly for their local MPS and are always willing to contribute more in any way to that they can. The 'Living Quality and Safety Awards' showcased the success of various teams within the Western NSW Local Health District over what was a very challenging year. Congratulations once again to the Grenfell Multipurpose Service Hospital Auxiliary on this special nomination.

**LES CARR – AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDAL**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience)**—Mr Speaker, it is with great excitement that I announce devoted volunteer firefighter and Cootamundra stalwart, Les Carr, was presented with his Australian Fire Service Medal earlier this month at Government House from Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC Governor of New South Wales. Les was announced as a recipient in June last year in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his distinguished service so I am extremely pleased this ceremony could finally take place to give Les the public recognition he deserves. Since 1981, Les has devoted over four decades of his life to NSW Fire and Rescue, selflessly serving communities in need right across NSW. This latest accolade for Les joins a long list of awards which he has been presented with throughout his various roles in the Cootamundra Brigade as a member, Deputy Captain and Captain, a position which Les has held since 2003. I congratulate Les on this achievement and once again thank him for his selfless dedication.

**ANTHONY WHEELER - ANGEL FLIGHT**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—I want to recognise a community member who has reached a significant milestone that deserves our appreciation and thanks. Bowral local, Tony Wheeler, has clocked an impressive 150 volunteer flights with Angel Flight, after completing a flight from Bankstown to Armidale on 18 February of this year. The flight was made extra special by his passenger, Lotus Walker, was taking her 100th Angel Flight, making it a significant milestone for them both. Angel Flight is a charity which coordinates non-emergency flights to assist people in rural and remote areas access specialist medical treatment that would otherwise be unavailable to them because of vast distances and high travel costs. Volunteers like Mr Wheeler give so generously of their time and expertise to make this wonderful service possible. Although people who have benefited from the work of Mr Wheeler are from far and wide, on behalf of the Wollondilly community I would like to thank him for his dedicated service.

**CHRIS BENTON MEMORIAL TROPHY**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—Earlier this month, the Bowral Bowling Club had their Chris Benton Memorial Trophy match raising money for brain cancer research. Chris Benton was a beloved member of the Bowral bowls community, who sadly lost his three year battle with brain cancer and passed away in 2017. Members of his family attended the memorial trophy match and were grateful to those who gave so generously on the day. The event was a terrific success, a tough competition fought in beautiful weather. Over \$3,000 was raised through raffles and donations, and will go directly to cancer research at the Cancer Council Australia. I thank the Bowral Bowling Club for hosting a great event, and congratulate the match winners: Andy Connor; Bob Crowley; Terry Butt; and Josh Woodcock.

**CREEK TO PEAK CHARITY RUN**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—There is a new charity event happening in Bowral, perfect for those who want to challenge themselves physically whilst raising funds for a variety of local charities. The first ever Creek to Peak charity run will kick off on the 6th of March in Bowral. Beginning at the Bowral Pool, participants will run (or walk!) up Mount Gibraltar, and come down through the Cherry Tree Walk, a total of five kilometres. Tim McLean of Spirit Sport and Events has modelled the run after the Sydney-based Balmoral Burn, which raises money for the Humpty Dumpty Foundation. Since moving to the Highlands, Tim learned about the great work of local charities like the Pop-In House and wanted to create a community event that would both financially support the work of charities as well as supporting the community through a challenging activity. I commend Tim on this wonderful initiative. Funds raised will go to: Pop In, a drop-in and online service for women and children in the Wingecarribee who are threatened by domestic violence; CanAssist, which supports

cancer patients in rural and regional NSW; and Lifeline, who provide 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.

#### 40 LOVE

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise Parkes Tennis Centre's awesome foursome, Pat Drabsch, Val Glasheen, Pauline Nicholson and Lynette Pengilly. Forty years ago, these four ladies established the Parkes Tennis Centre's canteen, to support and sustain members and visitors at the Centre. Together they have continued to volunteer at the canteen for the past four decades, making the venue and the sport of tennis inviting. Their work, sales and fundraising has enabled ongoing upgrades to the canteen and the facilities, also making the club and the sport attractive to newcomers, and helping to grow membership. All four of these passionate ladies are now life members of the club. Their commitment to the club wasn't limited to just canteen duties, each of these ladies have actively assisted in all facets of the club's operation and running of the sport. Their love for the Parkes Tennis Centre and the club is unquestionable. Pat Drabsch and Pauline Nicholson last year announced their retirement from their voluntary canteen work, while Val Glasheen and Lynette Pengilly will continue on with help from new volunteers. I congratulate all four ladies on their extraordinary commitment to voluntary service for the Parkes Tennis Centre, and their remarkable teamwork.

#### DARREN WOODING – ORANGE YOUTH SHED

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise Darren Wooding, of Orange. Darren is a local builder and the founder of the Orange Youth Shed. Darren founded the organisation to provide a place for young people, aged 12-25, to connect and feel a sense of belonging, while providing them with a mentoring program aimed at giving them hope and a purpose in life. Darren through his own experience knows what it is like to struggle with poor mental health, and his own journey inspired him to establish the Youth Shed initiative. Darren wanted to provide young people a space where they can come and be safe, be themselves, to connect with others without pressure or judgement. Each Friday at the Youth Hub in Glenroi, Darren organises free activities for young people, getting them to come together and open up. He is using his extensive trade skills to teach regular attendees woodwork, how to use tools and other practical skills. These activities have helped the young participants to learn lifelong skills, grow their confidence, to communicate and work together as a team. I applaud Darren on his fantastic initiative, the Orange Youth Shed. Well done.

#### SPINNING FOR SPINAL SUPPORT

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise the Spinning for Spinal Support fundraising initiative at Orange. Former Orange local Katherine Swain sustained a serious spinal injury last year after diving into a shallow pool. Katherine and her husband David set up the charity Stronger Together, to provide education about spinal injuries to the wider community, improve accessibility and provide specialist equipment for those with spinal injuries in regional areas. A group of people from Orange wanted to support the Swain's initiative by raising money through the Spinning for Spinal Support fundraising event. It is one event in a series of an overall fundraising campaign. The Spinning for Spinal Support event was hosted at Integra Gym in Orange, and involved a group of seven stationary spin-bike riders, in addition to another fifty volunteers who took part, keeping the pedals of the bikes spinning for 24 hours straight. The spin-a-thon raised nearly \$6,000 for Stronger Together, and came ahead of the main fundraising event on March 14 that will see a group of Katherine's closest friends from Orange set out on a five-day, 500km Spinning for Spinal Support road ride to Newcastle. Congratulations to all involved in this great cause.

#### MARK BLACKADDER

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to Mark Blackadder who last year was named Local Tourism Hero at the Destination North Coast NSW Annual Awards. This is wonderful recognition for an extremely community minded local who has constantly gone above and beyond to ensure that the iconic Jacaranda Festival is a success, even during COVID. I wish Mark continued success in everything that he does.

#### LAUNCH OF THE WESTERN SYDNEY PHILHARMONIC

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Monday 21st February 2022, I was delighted to attend the launch of the Western Sydney Philharmonic orchestra at Riverside Theatres, Parramatta. West Phil are a not-for-profit charity that gives young people of Western Sydney an opportunity to learn and play extraordinary music with the best professional musicians available. Through West Phil programs, young musicians have the opportunity to learn from and perform with concert level classical musicians through educational programs, outreach opportunities at schools, and small group musical performances. During the launch, I enjoyed an octet performance who played 'Octet 4 Strings' by Mendelssohn. West Phil identified that young musicians in Western Sydney, despite a region with 10 per cent of the nation's population, mostly needed to look outside the region for

music-making opportunities. In the future, West Phil hopes to engage with the young musicians of Western Sydney more broadly by expanding the opportunities to children as young as 3 years of age. Thank you to Kym Williams, Patron, Kristian Winther and Maximilian Holzner, Co-Founders, for supporting our young, diverse and gifted community of Western Sydney by creating a unique space for young musicians to learn and create memorable performances.

#### **BLACKTOWN ANIMAL HOLDING FACILITY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Thursday 27th January 2022, it was a pleasure to visit the Blacktown Animal Holding Facility with NSW Labor colleagues Stephen Bali MP, Member for Blacktown and Deputy Mayor Brad Bunting, Blacktown City Council. AHF acts as a holding facility for Councils in the Sydney region. The facility provides the opportunity for unclaimed strays to be sold or rehomed in order that they may find someone to care for them. It was great to meet the staff and take a tour of the facility. We enjoyed meeting some of the dogs currently residing at the AHF. The staff and volunteers are doing great work caring for and creating a positive experience for cats and dogs who need homes, whilst also helping to socialise the animals. As we emerge from COVID-19 lockdowns, AHF is under increased pressure as the facility is nearing at capacity and will soon move to a new facility at Eastern Creek. Thank you to the staff and volunteers at AHF who generously care and rehome animals in need. I would also like to thank Blacktown City Council for running and maintaining this wonderful facility.

#### **EGYPTIAN SCHOOLS GRADUATION EVENT**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Tuesday 22nd February 2022, I was pleased to attend the Egyptian Schools Graduation Event at the Parliament of NSW. Organised by the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Egypt Committee and the Australian-Egyptian Forum Council, the event was an opportunity to celebrate students from Egyptian Background for their achievements during their HSC examinations. We welcomed students from St Bishoy Coptic Orthodox College, Mount Druitt, St Mary and St. Mina's Coptic Orthodox College, Bexley, and St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College, Wattle Grove. Guests included Yasser Abed, Consul-General of the Arabic Republic of Egypt in Sydney, The Hon. Mark Coure MP, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Stephen Kamper MP, Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism. Thank you to Amir Salem, President, and Sara Nour, Secretary, Australian Egyptian Forum Council for hosting this fantastic event. Thank you to the Heads of Schools, Michael Atteya, St Bishoy Coptic Orthodox College, Francois David, St. Mina's Coptic Orthodox College, and Anthony Tsoutsas, St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College for presenting certificates of special achievements to the hardworking students of your respective schools. It has been a particularly difficult two years for school students and it was wonderful to see these students rewarded for their achievements.

#### **LOCAL BUSINESS 'BEST FRUIT AT MOSMAN' CELEBRATES 88 YEARS OF SERVICE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to congratulate 'Best Fruit at Mosman' for achieving 88 years of service to the North Shore community. The store was founded in 1934 by Antonio and Terzita Lopez and gained community popularity through their exceptional service and the care taken with produce displays, which saw them win a New South Wales Apple and Pear Board prize. 'Best Fruit at Mosman' continues its commitment to its heritage and founding community values under the leadership of Vince and John. They supply high quality produce and flowers to the community, with a specific focus on sustainability and sourcing 99 per cent local produce. This is only achieved through the strong relationships they have built with local farmers, growers, local markets, and suppliers. The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on all independent and small businesses so it is incredible to see local institutions such as 'Best Fruit at Mosman' doing so well. I extend my congratulations to all members of the team who have worked so hard to keep the store going, they should all be proud of this significant achievement.

#### **NORTH SHORE SCHOOLS 2021 HSC RESULTS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to congratulate North Shore students on their 2021 HSC results. The class of 2021 had to deal with more than just the typical pressures of the final year of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They've had to navigate lockdowns and home learning on top of their assessments and final examinations. Many local schools performed extremely well and deserve to be commended. North Sydney Boys High School ranked second in the state overall. Congratulations to all of the students, staff, and parents who helped achieve this great outcome for the school. North Sydney Girls High School ranked 9th in the state, Loreto came 21st, Wenona 24th, St Aloysius 27th, Monte 52nd, and SHORE came 54th overall. These are amazing results, everyone in each of these school communities should be proud of this success. It was a tough year on students, schools, and families. I recognise all of our local students who continued to persist and work hard to finish the school year. I also want to thank all of the teachers, school staff, and parents and carers who have without a doubt supported our local students in their final year.



## **NORTH SYDNEY COMMUNITY CENTRE RECEIVES FUNDING FROM NORTHS THROUGH 2021 CLUBGRANTS PROGRAM**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Speaker I want to recognise Norths who sponsored the North Sydney Community Centre as part of the ClubGRANTS 2021 program. Norths donated \$2750 to fund the Community Centre's 100 Days of Playgroup Project. This will allow the Community Centre to provide 100 days of free playgroup dates to parents with young children. The program will support parents and encourage them to participate and connect socially through activities and play group. Being able to provide free playgroup will also alleviate the financial burden on young or struggling families who will now be able to reap the rewards of this great program. The Community Centre is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to connect the community and foster the wellbeing of all through their various programs and services. They offer an extensive range of creative classes, social activities, courses and more for the community to enjoy. Thank you to the entire team at the North Sydney Community Centre for all of the amazing work you do in North Shore. Thank you to Norths and their team for awarding this funding to the North Sydney Community Centre which will help local parents.

## **CODDINGTON STUD RAM**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—Speaker ... Congratulations to Geurie's Graham and Susan Coddington, whose Merino ram took out the Supreme exhibit at the recent Dunedoo Show. The judge's comments were: "This ram ticks all the boxes for its nourishment quality, all over wool, pure poll, good underline, perfect bare breech, a ram ahead of his time; uniform all over and a power house". Graham named him 'Sam the Ram', in honour of the recent passing of a dear friend and fellow sheep breeder John 'Sam' Williams of Thalabah Merino Stud. 'Sam the Ram' will now be exhibited at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Congratulations Graham and best of luck at the Royal!

## **DAVID ESLICK JOHN WHITELEY AND JIM WILLOCK**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—Speaker ... Six years ago, Wellington's David Eslick suffered a stroke, which sadly brought an end to his days driving trucks. While recuperating, David has found a way to give back to the community, and look after his health at the same time. David clocks up to 40 hours a week walking and collecting recyclable bottles and cans from residents, restaurants, cafes and hotels around Wellington, and as far afield as Mumbil and Stuart Town! With the help of his fellow Lions Club members, John Whiteley and Jim Willock, David takes them to Return and Earn machines around the region. The proceeds go towards the Wellington Lions Club's charitable undertakings. Since he began, David estimates he's raised \$50,000 for charity, and in doing so he's also diverted half a million containers from landfill! David's efforts were recognised recently when he was presented with the District Governor's Award, but he's humble, crediting the community members who generously donate the containers to the cause! Congratulations David, and thank you for everything you do for the Wellington community!

## **GULGONG SHOW**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—Speaker ... Last weekend I attended the Gulgong Show – and what a fantastic day it was! It was lovely to see Gulgong's Royal AgShows Young Woman of the Year Hollie Smith ... the team in the dining room was amazing as always ... the first Dog Show in 18 years was held at Victoria Park ... and I was delighted to be on the spot as 10-year-old Tommy Stiff won his first ribbon showing sheep. Congratulations to Gulgong's Young Ambassadors for 2022: Tiny Tot ambassador Adele O'Neill; Tiny Tot runner-up Claire Webster; Primary Ambassadors Abigail Watt & Riley Deville; Junior Ambassadors Dakota Watts & Noah Deville; Teen Ambassadors Hayley James & Oliver Seymour O'Brien. The pavilion had a great range of winners! Congratulations also to Oak Tree Retirement Village residents Marie Dempsey and Pam Francis for their winning Tomato Jam and hand-knitted items. And well done to Gulgong High School student Lacey Consadine who claimed first with an amazingly delicious looking cake, and the SistaSpeak 2021 group for their remarkable woven creation.

## **SANDRA FRAZER**

**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. Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Sandra Frazer who was congratulated for over four years of volunteer work in Gosford Hospital. Her main role is delivering reading material to patients with the magazine trolley. She also provides extraordinary support to the emergency department. I would also like to recognise the other finalists in the category, Diana Akers who volunteers at the Wig Wam styling wigs for cancer patients and Terry Davidson who volunteers at Gosford Hospital's main entrance and has given more than 450 volunteer hours since his retirement.

The 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 Sandra. The Central Coast is lucky to have such dedicated volunteers.

#### **LARRY LLOYD**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Mister Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Larry Lloyd who has become the second life member of Gosford Men's Shed. Larry has been a member of Gosford Men's Shed for approximately 9.5 years and held the position of Senior Vice President before becoming President in 2019. During this time Larry has been very active and conscientious in his approach which has made the shed what it is today, with changes including a relocation and growth in membership. Larry is always straight forward, up front and not afraid to ask for favours and assistance from members, businesses, Local Members or the Men's Shed Association in order to advance the structure, health and wellbeing of Gosford Men's Shed. Larry spends countless hours doing tasks behind the scenes like stock replenishment and is always active in the search and implementation of new ideas, tools, machinery and projects. I would like to extend a big congratulations to Larry and thank him for all of his dedication and devotion that has helped the Gosford Men's Shed grow into the fantastic organisation it is today.

#### **INNER WEST COMMUNITY ENERGY**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate and acknowledge Inner West Community Energy on their vital work. Inner West Community Energy recently received a Community Building Partnership Grant which will go towards the installation of solar for the Aboriginal Medical Service. The community group is passionate about renewable energy and working with various organisations towards a renewable future. I thank the wonderful committee, team and volunteers at Inner West Community Energy for their continued efforts and hard work.

#### **HAYMARKET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LUNAR NEW YEAR BANQUET**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to congratulate and acknowledge the Haymarket Chamber of Commerce on their Lunar New Year Banquet held on Friday, 11 February 2022. Lunar New Year is one of the most important dates for so many in our community and it was so special to be able to celebrate and share a wonderful meal. Now more than ever, in light of rising anti-Chinese sentiments and dangerous anti-Chinese rhetoric, it is important for the community to come together. The Lunar New Year Banquet provided a much-needed opportunity for this - allowing for enjoyment, conversation, and collaboration. I was proud to be a part of this event and publicly show my support for the community. The Haymarket Chamber of Commerce is a vital part of our Chinatown. I acknowledge the work of Vincent Lim, President, outgoing President Simon Chan, and the wonderful Committee at the Chamber for their continued efforts and determination to stay strong in these challenging times.

#### **NURSES STRIKE**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association and the thousands of nurses and midwives who rallied outside of NSW Parliament on 15 February 2022. Throughout the pandemic, healthcare workers have been at the frontlines - working overtime shifts and reaching breaking point. The signs held by many on the day made it clear that resources have been stretched and the underfunding and lack of ratios has been felt by so many. The calls for ratios and Nursekeeper were heard throughout the crowd. The right to strike is critical in ensuring that workers are able to stand up for their rights at work - and when it comes to our nurses and midwives, their rights are directly linked to our health and safety. I acknowledge the vital contributions that nurses and midwives make to ensure that our public health system functions safely and appropriately, and thank them for striking to protect our healthcare workers and their rights.

#### **ALF JAMES OAM CRICKET SERVICE AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—I would like to recognize my friend Alf James OAM, for his services to the sport of cricket. This summer Alf, playing for the Berowra Cricket Club, is competing in his 59th season of senior cricket with the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai and Hills District Cricket Association [HK&HDCA]. Alf is a Life Member of HK&HDCA, and served as President of the Association for 22 consecutive years (1980 – 2002). He holds the distinction of being the only player in HK&HDCA history to score over 10,000 runs and take more than 1,000 wickets in the Senior Competitions. The C3 Grade premiership perpetual trophy is named in his honour. I know it was a highlight for Alf, in the 2008/09 season, when his team won the C3 competition to secure the A.B.M. James Trophy, and Alf was able to lift "his" trophy with his team. Alf represents NSW in the Over 70s team that competes in the national championships. In addition to playing Alf James umpires and has officiated in approximately 200 matches for the Association. Alf is the author of over

20 cricket books, including superb historical accounts of Sir Donald Bradman, Charles Bannerman and Victor Trumper.

#### **FAREWELL RICHARD (DICK) STUART UDY**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—Today I would like to recognize Rev. Richard (Dick) Udy who was a retired Uniting Church minister and an active member and important mentor to many at Galston Uniting Church. Dick Udy passed away on the 4th November 2021, at the age of 98. In 1942, Dick joined the ADF. During a tense period of WW2 he became a wireless operator on board Catalina flying boats which flew in the Pacific region, and were based at Rathmines on Lake Macquarie. Known as "the Black Cats" they were responsible for air-sea rescue, reconnaissance and mine laying in enemy held ports, including around Papua New Guinea. Dick was one of a small handful of survivors of his Squadron. A very humble man, Dick Udy's life was one of selfless service too so many. Along with being a WW2 veteran, he was a high school teacher and headmaster at a school in Fiji. Dick was also a keen historian, an author and a poet.

#### **VALE IAN HUCKEL**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—I would like to recognize Mr Ian Huckel who passed away recently. Ian was a very active member of the Pennant Hills Rotary Club. He served as Club President in 2022/12, as well as several other key Club roles that included Secretary (twice), Treasurer, International Director, Youth Director, Membership Director and, most recently, Welfare Chairman. Since he became a member, in February 2005, Ian Huckel was always keen to be actively involved in whatever activity the Club undertook or decided to support. This included trailer raffle ticket sales and Daffodil Day sales, and always with a cheery smile and friendly greeting. Ian Huckel leaves a son, Derek, and daughters, Karen and Jennifer, as well as a number of grandchildren. My sincere condolences go out to Ian Huckel's family and to the members of the Rotary Club of Pennant Hills, for their loss.

#### **BIG SISTER FOUNDATION**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I commend GyMEA Bay based Big Sister Foundation for the \$2.4 million in donations it is making to 12 vital community organisations in the Sutherland Shire and beyond. Big Sister Foundation has a proud history tracing back to 1928 and operates across the southern Sydney region to ensure women can access vital services at the time when they most need it, by providing funding and other non-financial support. Since 2005, it has donated more than \$3.5 million to community organisations in the Sutherland Shire and has now spread its support to adjoining areas where there is need. The Foundation says the grants mean dedicated teams of support workers will be able to lift the spirits of women and families. The organisations receiving the grants will be able to expand their valuable programs to assist mothers, victims of domestic violence, women struggling with mental health and refugees, and also to help build resilience in children who have experienced trauma. I acknowledge the wonderful work of the Big Sister Foundation and dedication of its directors Kim Brown, Alison Brown, Debbie Crowley, Cathy-Anne Kelly, Julie McCarthy and Shanne Taylor.

#### **JUNIOR LIFESAVERS OF THE YEAR – JASMINE SPRINGALL AND LENNOX SOUTHWELL**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I congratulate North Cronulla Surf Club nippers Jasmine Springall and Lennox Southwell for winning the Surf Life Saving Sydney male and female Junior Lifesaver of the Year Awards for season 2021-2022. The awards recognise nippers' knowledge of surf lifesaving; their active involvement within local clubs and the community; leadership skills; self-awareness, communication and presentation skills; and their future surf lifesaving plans. Jasmine and Lennox were judged the winners from finalists chosen from clubs between North Bondi and the Royal National Park. It's the first time in more than a decade that both winners of Junior Lifesaver of the Year have come for the same club. The North Cronulla club is very proud of Jasmine and Lennox and says their junior program is producing fine lifesavers and young citizens of whom the whole community should be proud. Being named Surf Lifesaver of the Year from across so many clubs is a prestigious award and I recognise the great achievement of Jasmine and Lennox as well as the North Cronulla club.

#### **SUTHERLAND DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB – UNDER 21 CHAMPIONS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I congratulate Sutherland District Cricket Club and its under 21 team on winning the Poidevin-Gray Shield for season 2021-2022. The competition is the premier under 21 men's cricket competition in NSW featuring the best players in the age group from around the state. After being undefeated all season Sutherland took out its seventh Poidevin-Gray premiership with an overwhelming victory over Penrith in the final. The club says the young Sharks showed their experience and fight throughout the competition to come out on top as much deserved winners. The winning team is captain Andrew Ritchie, Lachlan Ball, Callum Barton, Ronak Bedi, Dylan Holdstock, Justin Green, Zac Philipson, Luke Ritchie, Kobe Ross, Tom Straker, Will Straker and Kieran Weatherall. I acknowledge this great achievement for the

players and wish them continued success in the future representing the Sutherland club and our community. Behind the team's success is the work of many volunteers including the club committee, Matthew Duff, Paul Burg, David Cush, Tom Icton, Phil Weatherall, Roy Amos, Stuart Clark, Shane Duff, Brian Hall and Nathan Whittingham. I commend them on their ongoing commitment to cricket and sport in the Sutherland Shire.

#### **WEST MAITLAND CENTENNIAL LIONS CLUB**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—West Maitland Centennial Lions Club has only been around for a relatively short time, but they have already made a big impact on our local community. They have made an enormous contribution to our local community, raising funds for many local causes, including Maitland Hospital Children's Ward, Wallaroo Football Club, palliative care, and local drought and bushfire affected families. I was especially pleased to see the Lions donating to my back-to-school drive, with Lyn Dark and Jan Oksam dropping off a number of backpacks for local school children whose families are doing it tough. As a new club, they are very keen to get involved with any activities in the community, and of course, to have new members join them. Some of their other activities include battery recycling boxes, Christmas present wrapping, collecting cans and bottles, recycling spectacles, share the dignity and more. The club holds an informal dinner meeting on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 6pm at Telarah Bowling Club. Please consider joining them!

#### **MAITLAND WELCOMES NINETEEN NEW AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—On Australia Day I had the pleasure of attending Maitland City Council's Australian Citizenship Ceremonies which saw nineteen permanent residents become Australian Citizens. The ceremony marks a special chapter in each and every new citizen's migration story and their ongoing commitment to Australia and our shared values. I would like to extend a warm welcome to Myra Beltran Alamag, Ma Catherine Pampag Babon, John Kyle Babon and Cristopher John Babon Jaime, Farshad Bahrami, William James Martin Brunwin, Avinash Kumar Goyal, Leeza Goyal, Purav Kumar Goyal, Nusrat Jahan, Muhammad Imran Zahedi, Amandeep Kour, Rishi Raj Singh, Jackielyn Jose Johnson, Rosela Montejó Santiana, Taija Smith, Dayana Vimal and Crystal Linette and Jordana Lee Van Gils who have joined us from six countries including the Philippines, Iran, United Kingdom, India, Bangladesh and Canada. Their presence and contribution to the Maitland community has been positively felt and goes a long way to further enriching the diversity and multiculturalism of Maitland. It's wonderful to have these people and their families in the Maitland community as proud Australian Citizens, continuing to contribute to the economic and social development of our community. Congratulations and welcome!

#### **GRAHAM DARK OAM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—It is hard to find a better example of the resilience, selflessness and extraordinary dedication to community than Maitland's newest recipient of an Australia Day Honour, Graham Dark OAM. Graham's community service record is extensive and inspiring serving in some 30 community organisations over 40 years. What makes Graham's service and leadership even more outstanding is that he has been battling cancer on and off for 20 of those 40 years. At a time when it would have been understandable to sit back for a while and look after himself, he redoubled his efforts to serve others. And with all of this, his smile is always there, ready to welcome you to join his cause or at least buy another raffle ticket! Of course, always by his side, his tiny tower of strength and loving wife Lyn, has supported and cared for him so that they can help others. Congratulations Graham on an outstanding life of service! You and Lyn and your family should be very proud of all that you have achieved!

#### **LUNAR NEW YEAR 2022 – THE YEAR OF THE TIGER**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—Lunar New Year's Day, 1st February 2022 was the first day of the Year of the Tiger. I send my best wishes to Asian Australians who celebrate this important festival. Lunar New Year celebrations in Australia are an excellent opportunity for us to learn about other cultures. Lunar New Year is a time for families to gather for feasts and to exchange red pockets stuffed with money for good fortune. Several local councils across Sydney also held events and activities to embrace this cultural event, however COVID-19 has meant some were reduced to a smaller scale than usual. Nonetheless, I know many Asian Australians have celebrated in a COVIDsafe way with their relatives or friends. The zodiac sign of the tiger is a symbol of strength, exorcising evils, and braveness, and I am sure I join with many people in saying I trust we can all carry on the tiger's spirit to overcome this pandemic, so daily lives can return to normality. Happy New Year, I wish you all good health and lasting prosperity.

#### **ROTARY CLUBS & POLIO ERADICATION**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—My local Rotary clubs, along with other clubs from neighbouring electorates, are holding fundraising movie screenings and raffles in March. They are supporting the important goal of ridding the world of polio. Poliomyelitis, is an awful and very infectious virus that can paralyse or kill. It

most commonly affects small children. However, vaccination makes polio completely preventable. Along with their partners, Rotary have helped immunize more than 2.5 billion children against polio in 122 countries. Polio cases have been reduced by 99.9 percent since Rotary's first project to vaccinate six million children in the Philippines in 1979. Rotary members have contributed more than \$2.1 billion and countless volunteer hours to protect nearly 3 billion children in 122 countries from this paralysing disease. Today, polio has been banished from Africa and India and remains endemic only in Afghanistan and Pakistan. If all eradication efforts stopped today, within 10 years, polio could paralyse as many as 200,000 children each year. This local fundraising effort will help Rotary obtain the vaccines, transport and materials needed in the fight against polio. Heartfelt thanks to Rotary clubs near and far for such a world changing effort.

#### **NSW/ACT PGA STATE PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise to applaud James Single who is an incredible talent gracing our local golfing range in Port Macquarie, recently acknowledged with the 2021 NSW/ACT PGA State Professional of the Year Award. Described as an influential member of Port Macquarie Golf Club, James is looking ahead and focusing the sports direction to target more women and junior participation. He has recently started a program called 'Swing Fit' which aims to improve fitness and skills of women golfers. James has previously been nominated four times for the Award, so understandably he was ecstatic to finally take home the prestigious trophy of the golfing fraternity. If there was ever a representative for golf who lives and breathes the game, James would undoubtedly take home the prize. His passion and commitment to introduce new members to the game and involve all ages, no matter their skill level is one to be commended and absolutely deserving of the State accolade. I congratulate James for his longstanding contribution to the sport of golf and encourage anyone wishing to take up golf as a New Year's resolution to consider the merits of this friendly but competitive activity.

#### **DONNA HYDE - 40 YEARS HSC PORT MACQUARIE CAMPUS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise to commend Donna Hyde on celebrating an incredible 40 years of service as a professional cleaner at Hastings Secondary College Port Macquarie Campus. Described as an unsung hero and close friend to many of the staff at Port Macquarie Campus, Donna Hyde celebrated her four decades of service as a cleaner on the 10 February 2022 marking a career of maintaining a high standard of healthy and hygienic practices at the School since joining the team in 1982. Donna has a long history with Hastings Secondary College, having attended as a student in her youth, before introducing her two lovely children Ethan and Joshua to the Campus some years later. The teaching staff at Hastings Secondary College truly appreciate Donna's tireless dedication and professionalism to her role, noting she always invests her heart and soul into her many multifaceted responsibilities to ensure our children's learning environment is always at the highest standard. Donna has served on the Committee for the Multi-Purpose Centre build while juggling daily 4 am starts and afternoon shift cleans. An irreplaceable woman by all accounts, I thank Donna for her contribution.

#### **LOUIS CROWE – BRONZE MEDALLIST**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I applaud the sporting achievements of nine-year-old Louis Crowe from Camden Haven Surf Life Saving Club for claiming the bronze medal in the 70-metre beach sprint on 13th February at Lighthouse Beach. Considered a rising talent on the surf life saving circuit, Louis was undoubtedly a young man on a mission on the Sunday he won the Bronze honours, after blitzing the field to win his heat at the Carnival before backing it up again in the final. The accolades continued for Louis when he was recognised as the first junior in 20 years to secure a place in the 70-metre beach sprint - a feat that will see his name archived for a remarkable finals finish. Proud Mum Brooke was ecstatic about her child's performance, having enrolled Louis into the surf life saving nippers program back in 2017. Brooke can see the difference it has made to Louis self-esteem and confidence, notwithstanding the positive influence he is displaying to others in his age bracket. I congratulate Louis for his accomplishments at the surf life saving Branch Carnival and thank him for committing his time to a worthy community organisation.

#### **MRS MAHA ABDO OAM**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Mrs Maha Abdo OAM, Chief Executive Officer of the Muslim Women's Association in my electorate of Lakemba on her appointment as an expert panel member on the Women's Economic Opportunities Review. Her appointment to the panel will allow her to participate in developing strategies that will benefit women of all ages and ethnic backgrounds and all walks of life. The Women's Economic Opportunities Review will give Mrs Abdo an opportunity to impart her knowledge and expertise in the many areas impacting marginalised women. Mrs Abdo's commitment to serving the community spans over a 40 year period of dedication and has been nothing short of inspiring. I am confident that this appointment will allow her to contribute to many important initiatives such as affordable childcare, early childhood education, boosting numeracy and literacy for younger women; and strategies to improve the lives of

older women. Mrs Abdo has indicated her plans of retiring as CEO of the Muslim Women's Association as soon as a successor can be appointed, but her appointment to this panel shows that she has a lot more valued community work to do.

#### **PLATFORM 26**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba)**—Small businesses have done it tough during the pandemic and it takes a lot of courage to keep one open after lockdown. Last year, I had the pleasure of meeting Sahar, who had the courage to set up her own small business, Platform 26 near Wiley Park Station. Her business has suffered during the pandemic but she persisted and opened back up once it was safe to do so. Platform 26 make amazing coffee and to-go snacks, which makes it an easy option if you are catching the train to work. However, if you have some spare time they also offer a range of sit down options. Behind Platform 26, there is a strong message of persistence and resilience. Opening just before a lockdown, having to close down due to restrictions and enduring the associated financial obstacles is a commendable achievement. Small businesses like Platform 26 are essential for our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only do they provide an economic benefit, but also they give so much back to the community. We should support our local businesses because they are local community and they support us.

#### **RONGDHANU AUS-BANGLA CULTURAL SOCIETY INC**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba)**—I would like to acknowledge the work of the Rongdhanu Aus-Bangla Cultural Society Inc for their work with local talent and leaders. The society, a not for profit is based in Lakemba. The Board and local community work extremely hard to keep their culture alive and to share with us what the richness of their heritage. Their deep and rich heritage adds value to the core of this country we call home. For the past 12 years this Bangladeshi Community Organisation have encouraged and recognised the achievements of people of Bangladeshi origin in education, sports, culture, literature and social activities through a Talent Award program. With Bangladesh being the eighth most populous country in the world, the approximately 5000 Bangladeshi community in my electorate have shared with us their rich culture and history through music, celebrations and we can't forget the food. I would like to further extend my thanks to the Australian-Bangladeshi community, who have contributed towards the greater good of our people and recommit my support to all groups doing good work.

#### **LUNAR NEW YEAR 2022**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—I wish to congratulate the Chinese Associations of Greater Western Sydney for hosting the 2022 Lunar New Year celebrations at Freedom Plaza, Cabramatta. After a two year absence due to the pandemic the community was able to finally come together to herald the Year of the Tiger. I acknowledge the organising committees, Australian Chinese Buddhist Society; Jintao Qiaoguang Association of Australia Inc. and the Australian Lao-Chinese Association Inc for hosting the event in conjunction with Fairfield City Council. It was an honour to have participated in the official Buddhist Blessing presided over by Venerables Shi Ming Shang, Shi Ban Bao, Shi Phouc Hy, Shi Ming Shang. With much colour, dance and fireworks the 2022 Lunar New Year celebrations certainly welcomed in the year in grand style.

#### **VERONA SCHOOL - BUSHBRED EQUINE AND ANIMAL THERAPY**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—This year, Verona School is participating in the Bushbred equine and animal therapy. This program focuses on developing life skills through interactions with horses and animals. Students are encouraged to develop their listening, problem solving, team work and communication skills in a fun way. As well as figuring out solutions for different life situations, students will also learn to build up a sense of responsibility as well as resilience. On 7th February, Class Myrtle and Eucalyptus attend their first Bushbred session. It was a very successful session and the students were keen and eager to try this new approach to learning. The program is being funded by Verona School at no cost to the students and I commend Verona School Principal Ms Carla Scott and her team for finding new ways to engage and support their students.

#### **2021 HSC AWARD CEREMONY - VCAY**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—The Vietnamese Community in Australia Youth [VCAY] hosted the 2021 HSC Award Ceremony at Cabramatta Bowling Club. It was a day of acclamation and appreciation for the efforts of the HSC High Achievers from the 2021 cohort. The event was truly inspiring as teachers, parents and community leaders gathered to celebrate the academic achievements. Students were presented awards in the following categories: Dux of School; 99+ ATAR and 1st place in a HSC course state wide. Congratulations to VCAY Founder Ms Kate Hoang and the organising committee for promoting academic excellence in our local youth. The VCAY is to be commended for reaching out to the entire community for extending its hand of friendship, fostering social cohesion and harmony.

**MRS MARIA TERNULLO 100TH BIRTHDAY**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—It is with great pleasure that today I acknowledge Mrs Maria Ternullo on her 100th birthday which she will celebrate next week on 4th March 2022. I am sure Maria will celebrate this momentous occasion accompanied by her closest friends and family. I take this opportunity to again extend my sincere congratulations to Maria and wish her good health and happiness for the future.

**KATE GEORGE - YOUTH INSEARCH**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Kate George of Inverell for her commitment to Youth Insearch. Kate has been an active volunteer with the Youth Insearch program since the opening of the I C Youth Centre. Youth Insearch runs weekend programs for 14-20 year olds from all walks of life and aims to help participants reach their full potential. For many youth feeling lost and confused this can be a life changing experience, helping to turn their lives around. This is why Kate has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure participants were looked after. She is often a camp mentor, drives the bus, and importantly is there as advocate and friend to help them with their challenges in the community. I congratulate Kate for her commitment to Youth Insearch and the resulting inspiration that has helped to change lives. I commend Kate for appreciating the value of Youth Insearch to the extent of devoting so much of her own time to help youth realise their own potential.

**PLC ARMIDALE – GIRLS IN AGRICULTURE**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise PLC Armidale for their encouragement in including agriculture in the quest for excellence in science and technology. Lucy Wright is the third PLC student to be selected as a UNE GRASS Industry Placement Scholarship recipient. Lucy has been awarded the University of New England's Growing Regional and Agricultural Students in Science [UNE GRASS] Industry Placement Scholarship among a group of 74 worthy applicants. Following an interactive camp highlighting science-based careers, cutting edge science supporting agriculture and tours of innovative primary industries, Lucy can participate in a 5 day Industry Placement of her choice, giving her the opportunity to experience work in greater detail than classroom experience. The previous recipient, Lilly McCook (2021 Graduate) chose scientific research on a sustainable cotton research project which gained publication in "The Australian Cottongrower" 2021. I congratulate PLC Armidale and students, Lucy Wright and Lilly McCook, for your selection in the UNE GRASS Industry Placement Scholarship. I commend PLC Armidale for their teaching and encouragement which prepares students to pursue careers in science and technology.

**KATE & SAM LISLE – OLD WOOMBI CHAIN-O-PONDS**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Kate and Sam Lisle as examples of quality breeding in the sheep industry. Old Woombi Poll Dorset Stud, Ashfield at Walcha was started by the Lisles in 2009. By 2016 the stud had an outstanding sale year with many of Old Woombi's sires on the CarcasePlus and Elites list. As the years progressed, Old Woombi ram and semen sales increased attracting both local and interstate buyers. Last year, Bruce and Margaret Davidson of Chain-O-Ponds said good-bye to the industry after one of their best Border Leicester sales. With the amalgamation of that successful stud, the Lisles held their inaugural on-property ram sale as Old Woombi Chain-O-Ponds, achieving an 81 per cent clearance rate. Top priced ram Chain-O Ponds 209050 was purchased by Tony McRae from Guyra. This sale kicked off the British breed sales in the New England region which auctioneer Lincoln McKinlay found very promising. I congratulate Kate and Sam on their amalgamation with Chain-O-Ponds and their successful stud ram sales. I commend the Lisles on their professionalism and achieving the correctness that produces quality and marketable rams.

**ORAN PARK ANGLICAN COLLEGE SPORT ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I congratulate Maddison (year 5) and Ella (year 7) Stares of Oran Park Anglican College on their recent successes in tennis over the school holidays. Maddison won the 2022 Margaret Court Cup at the NSW Grasscourts Championships in Albury and has been selected in the Australian National Development Squad. Ella won the 12 and Under Tennis Macarthur Tournament and has been selected in the Tennis NSW Squad. What a tremendous achievement and I wish Maddison and Ella the very most success in their tennis journeys.

**ELDERSLIE HIGH SCHOOL HSC RESULTS**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I congratulate Elderslie High School Higher School Certificate [HSC] Class of 2021 on their successful results throughout the challenges of their senior years. Congratulations to the Dux of 2021, Cherise Holley who achieved an ATAR of 97.20, I also congratulate Emily Szalajko who demonstrated academic excellence by achieving an ATAR of 96.0. I also acknowledge students who were recognised as Distinguished achievers who received a Band 6/E4 result in individual subjects. Congratulations to

Cherise Holley, Emily Szalajko, Alana Mausell, Briannan Eggert, Enka Ward, Estelle Hollinshed, Ezra Cordova and Lachlan Lane. Well done and I wish you all the best as you move into your next adventures.

#### **CAMDEN TIGERS FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I acknowledge Camden Tigers Football Club and their partnership with the Indigenous Football Program (IFP) to provide up-and-coming players with more opportunities to play soccer. The Camden Tigers are the first football club in NSW to partner with the program. The 2022 Dharawal Cup- Festival of Football was the clubs initial vision to help give the indigenous community a taste of the NPL level. Eventually Camden Tigers will offer a scholarship program to help provide Indigenous play football at the NPL level. What a fantastic partnership for our community and I wish all the up-and-coming players all the best in the season to come.

#### **DEWRANG ART**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)**—I acknowledge Dewrang Art, winner of Sole Operator of the Year at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards 2021. Owner of Dewrang Art and Illawong resident, Amy Lea Hill, is an incredible contemporary Indigenous artist from the Kamilaroi Mob. Growing up along the Georges and Woronora rivers on Dharawal Country, Amy Lea is deeply rooted in our local Aboriginal community. She credits her love of art to her Auntie Lex who Amy would spend hours with painting. Amy Lea's passion for her indigenous culture is evident, with even the name of her business, Dewrang Art, coming from the Dharawal word meaning "high or lofty". Amy Lea's inspiration for this was the incredible view from her home, which overlooks our local waterways. Additionally, Amy Lea serves as a board member of the Kurranulla Aboriginal Corporation and runs a number of workshops creating Aboriginal art while storytelling. I congratulate Amy Lea on Dewrang Art on being named Sole Operator of the Year at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards 2021 and wish her well in her future endeavours.

#### **KURRANULLA ABORIGINAL CORPORATION**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)**—I acknowledge Kurranulla Aboriginal Corporation ("Kurranulla"), an incredible organisation that was nominated for Community Group of the Year at Sutherland Shire Council's 2022 Australia Day Awards. Kurranulla is a local not-for profit organisation whose team strives to develop closer ties between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups and promote Aboriginal culture to improve our community's social and emotional connection and resilience. Kurranulla's services have been incredibly important for our local Aboriginal community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the incredible team at Kurranulla provided wellbeing calls twice per week to elders, as well as delivering care packages and frozen meals to elderly clients. Of course, none of this would be possible without Kurranulla's outstanding Executive Committee including Auntie Deanna Schreiber, Stuart Fraser, Ann Cribb, Wayne Egan and Bianca Warner. Additionally, I recognise team members Wendy French, Ann-Maree Webb, Shanelle Beazley, Emille Welsh, Dave Birchell, Rikkii-Leigh Dargan, Wendy Kerr, Sandra Moss and Noah Lester for keeping our community safe and connected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I congratulate the team at Kurranulla Aboriginal Corporation on receiving this nomination and thank them for their ongoing support of our local Aboriginal community.

#### **MIRANDA NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)**—I acknowledge Miranda North Public School ("Miranda North") who are the successful recipients of \$17,912 from the NSW Government's 2021 Community Building Partnership Program. Miranda North is a wonderful community that provides quality education in a nurturing, innovative learning environment. The school's welcoming culture has seen Miranda North's population expand considerably over recent years. To support this growth, the grant funding will deliver a new multi-purpose learning area which is engaging for students, to accommodate programs such as the Targeted Reading Program. None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of school Miranda North's Parents and Citizens Association committee members including Brett Robinson, Rebecca Abrook, Sharon King, Michelle Morris, Megan Chimiak and Vanessa Gale. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership of new school Principal Ross Angus. I thank the Miranda North Public School community for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it makes for our local students.

#### **COOGEE SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD – THOMAS HETHERINGTON, MARCELLIN COLLEGE**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to recognise the 2021 winner of the Coogee Social Impact awards for Marcellin College, Thomas Hetherington. The Coogee Social Impact Award recognises a student who has shown outstanding commitment to their classmates, their school and their community. Thomas regularly patrols at Clovelly SLSC and is currently completing his training to become an IRB Driver and Trainer.



Last season alone, Thomas completed 150 hours patrolling while completing his Silver Beach Medallion Management. He has also recently completed his Crew Course, a course which consists of 5 weeks of 6am starts on Saturday and Sunday at Maroubra. Thomas has made valuable contributions to Surf Lifesaving for more than 5 years and he is a worthy recipient of this award. Congratulations Thomas.

#### **COOGEE SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD – ROSIE ROBINSON, OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART PRIMARY**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I rise today to recognise the 2021 winner of the Coogee Social Impact awards for Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Primary, Rosie Robinson. The Coogee Social Impact Award recognises a student who has shown outstanding commitment to their classmates, their school and their community. Rosie is a Year 6 leader who embodies the qualities of the Social Impact Award. She is an empathetic young woman who always offers more than she receives and this can be seen in her interactions with OLSH staff and students alike. Rosie is very passionate about the environment and is always looking at the bigger picture. She contributed several ideas as one of the OLSH Environment Leaders for 2021, including a school wide initiative for each grade to adopt a koala. Rosie, along with the environment committee she co-led, raised enough money to adopt 7 Koalas and plant 14 Koala food trees at the Koala Hospital Port Macquarie. Rosie is a strong future leader filled with character and the courage to always follow the right path and is a deserving recipient of the 2021 Social Impact Award. Congratulations Rosie.

#### **SENIOR SERGEANT DAVID COOK**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—After more than 50 years in the NSW Police Force, Senior Sergeant David Cook has hung up his hat for the last time. "Cookie", as he is widely known, spent much of his career working closely with the Police Citizens Youth Club in various youth crime prevention roles. Prior to settling in Wagga Wagga, Senior Sergeant Cook worked at the Dubbo Police Citizens Youth Club. But when it was time to say goodbye, his colleagues in the force were not going to miss the chance for a fitting farewell. Officers attached to the Riverina Police District formed a guard of honour at Wagga Police and Community dYouth Club [PCYC] to give Senior Sergeant Cook a proper send-off at a ceremony in December 2021, where the much-loved police officer was also presented with his 50-year clasp and service board by Acting Inspector Mel Cooper. While he has officially retired, this dedicated former police officer is continuing to show his passion for working with Wagga Wagga's young people by volunteering at the city's PCYC each week. I thank Senior Sergeant Cook for his dedicated service and wish him and wife Margaret all the best for the future.

#### **TUMUT CHARITY GOLF DAY**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Congratulations to the Tumut community, which has continued to show its support for Stephen Dean and his family. Mr Dean has primary progressive aphasia and his wife Jane once again this year organised the Tumut Charity Golf Day to support Frontier Research, which specialises in the diagnosis, prognosis and care of people with frontotemporal dementia. The Dean family began hosting the annual event five years ago. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, 130 people took part in the November 2021 event, which ultimately raised \$60,000. People travelled from the Central Coast, Sydney, Wollongong, Batemans Bay, Canberra and Albury to attend. Of the money raised, \$34,000 came via an auction, with NSW State of Origin and Manly Sea Eagles jerseys among the items that proved popular with bidders. In addition, Kurt Baker, a lifetime friend of the Dean family, had his head shaved by Ella Pearce and Jack Dean, and raised more than \$7600. Local musician Andrew Wortes kept the crowd entertained. Congratulations to everyone who supported the Tumut Charity Golf Day and to Mrs Dean, son Jack and daughters Olivia and Grace for their hard work in organising this great annual event.

#### **ROSALYN BARBER**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—Wagga Wagga's Rosalyn Barber has been a dedicated teacher for most of her adult life. Her career has spanned an extraordinary six decades. Mrs Barber decided to retire after celebrating her milestone 80th birthday in 2021. Her legacy is extraordinary, and made even more special because she had not always intended to become a teacher. This much-loved educator had in fact wanted to be a truck driver, but her parents' lack of enthusiasm towards her career choice made Mrs Barber instead decide on teaching. Mr Barber's first posting was at Dareton and it was here that she discovered just how much she loved teaching. After a year, Mrs Barber came back home to the Riverina. She taught at North Wagga and Koorinal Public schools before taking some time away to have children of her own. But the classroom beckoned again and Mrs Barber eventually returned to the classroom, teaching at Henschke Primary School. Later in her career she stopped full-time teaching, but continued on a casual basis, most recently at Mater Dei Primary School in Wagga Wagga. I wish Mrs Barber well and commend her on so many years of extraordinary service to educating Wagga Wagga's children.

### WALLSEND SOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Wallsend South Public School on their appointment. Wallsend South Public School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Kelly Deakin, the outstanding staff at Wallsend South Public School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Learn For Life" 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. The 2022 leadership team is a group of amazing students who demonstrate the Wallsend South Public School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, Kai McPhail, Cooper Hearne, William Dunbar, Georgia Farrell, Claudia Hinchliffe and Amelia Hawkins 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 Wallsend South Public School.

### ALACRITY HEALTH – HAYDEN HEATHRINGTON

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Newcastle Jets fans will never forgive the Melbourne Victory after their controversial win in the 2018 A-League Grand Final. So at the end of the 2021 season, I took great delight in taunting the Melbourne Victory fans with special decorated wooden spoons when their side finished last in the league. One loyal Victory fan, Hayden Heathrington, who is the Director of Alacrity Health, a mental health service based in Victoria, decided that a challenge was in order to settle the ongoing battle with the Victory and the Jets. After a long distance discussion, it was decided that me the loser of the bet would donate \$200 to the charity of the winners choice, as well as wearing an opposition teams jersey to work for a day. With battle lines drawn, the game was an epic battle, with the Newcastle Jets eventually victorious, despite attempts by the Victory to steal it away again. Hayden, being a man of his word, immediately settled his debt and donated \$200 to Headspace Newcastle and donned a Newcastle Jets jersey to work for the day. Thanks for the great banter, Hayden, I look forward to Round 2.

### NEW LAMBTON PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of New Lambton Public School on their appointment. New Lambton Public School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Justine Abell, the outstanding staff at New Lambton Public School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Truth, Loyalty, Honour" by developing and supporting each student through their foundational years of learning. The 2022 leadership team is a group of amazing students who demonstrate the New Lambton Public School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, Captains Hamish and Grace, Vice-Captain Luisa and Jake, Prefects Chloe, Samuel, Ivy, Bobby, Hanna, Jacob, Katelyn and Oliver, House Captains Allison, Kainan, Charlotte, Kalan, Indigo, Laeth, Aadhya and Liam and House Vice Captains Stella, Aryan, Pumudi, James, Catherine, Ethan, Georgina and Sebastian 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 New Lambton Public School.

### STARS OF NOWRA

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the following for taking part in the Cancer Council Stars of Nowra, Andrew Allmark, Karen Crater, Brett Austin, Sharon Woodcock, Suzie Davies, Abby Hopkins, Caitlin Alston, Mick Walker, Sharlina Mead, Elle Burns, Todd Cremer and Ory Purhonen. Last year's performance for the Shoalhaven was one of the biggest yet raising \$230,000 and over 670 people in the audience. This year's stars consist of 12 businesses and local community leaders who are learning to dance in just 12 weeks with the help of talented dance teachers whilst raising funds for Cancer Council NSW. I wish all the best for everyone competing and taking part in this year's event and hope it is a huge success for the Cancer Council NSW Stars of Nowra 2021.

### NOWRA SHOW GIRL

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast)**—Congratulation to 22- year-old Imogen Clarke who accepted the title of the Nowra Showgirl in the competition last year. On the weekend more of Imogen's talents were brought to light, she has produced a musical telling the tale of where the food in your fridge comes from, with the help of young performers from the Albatross Musical Theatre Company JAM group. The performance known as Farm to Fridge was performed for the first time at the 145th Nowra Show, Imogen wrote the musical in hope it helps educate children on milk production. She came up with telling the story of milk production because

that's what we do here in the Shoalhaven area. So again congratulations to Imogen and her creativity and support during the show.

#### **GEORGES RIVER GRAMMAR**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—On behalf of my electorate of Bankstown, 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 Georges River Grammar on their improved Success rate which increased from 5.70 per cent in 2020 to 6.30 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 would also like to thank the Principal Ms Raquel Charet of Georges River Grammar, teachers, and administrative staff, who have provided immeasurable assistance to the HSC students. I also acknowledge the parents and guardians of students of Georges River Grammar who have worked tirelessly throughout the last year to support our students.

#### **EAST HILLS BOYS TECHNOLOGY 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 East Hills Boys Technology High School on their improved success rate which increased from 6.77 per cent in 2020 to 8.21 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 demonstrated during such challenging times. I am proud of the students in our community, and their terrific achievements. I congratulate and thank the Principal Mr Paul Abboud of East Hills Boys Technology 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 East Hills Boys Technology High School, who have worked tirelessly throughout the last year to support our students.

#### **EAST HILLS GIRLS TECHNOLOGY 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 East Hills Girls Technology High School on their improved success rate, which increased from 4.24 per cent in 2020 to 9.65 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 demonstrated during such challenging times. I am proud of the students in our community, and their terrific achievements. I congratulate and thank the Principal Mrs Jennifer Hardwick of East Hills Girls Technology 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 East Hills Girls Technology High School who have worked tirelessly throughout the last year to support our students.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:04 until  
Tuesday 22 March 2022 at 12:00.**