



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Seventh Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday 24 March 2022**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Thursday 24 March 2022**

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

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

### *Announcements*

#### **JOINT SITTING**

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members that, as per the message from Her Excellency the Governor which was reported last night, a joint sitting will be conducted at 10.30 a.m. in the Legislative Council.

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES FLOODS MORNING TEA**

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members of a fundraising function for flood-affected communities in the Fountain Court. The function was going to be held in the Speaker's Garden, but it has been relocated to the Fountain Court. The morning tea is commencing now and it will continue until 10.45 a.m., with official proceedings commencing in about 15 minutes, at 9.45 a.m. Entry to the fundraising function is by way of donation for those in need. There will be a number of special guests and a speech from the Minister for Emergency Services. I urge all members to attend the function.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

### *Budget*

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

**Debate resumed from 23 February 2022.**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) (09:47):** When I last spoke on Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2021-2022, I stated that the Premier's approach to the matter of public housing investment had been abysmal and that the housing issues facing this State amounted to a humanitarian disaster. This ties in to another humanitarian disaster we are facing in New South Wales, one of which every member of this Parliament should be keenly aware. I have been a member of Parliament for nearly eight years and in that time I have seen this Government mismanage a homelessness crisis into a full-blown catastrophe. Wherever we go in the Sydney CBD, we see visible homelessness—rough sleepers with nowhere else to go, sheltering from the elements in storefronts and alleyways. It is a situation I see in my own electorate of Charlestown: rough sleepers seeking shelter wherever they can. Not too long ago a young man was even camping out in the alcove between my office and the Family and Community Services office next door—an office which, ironically, includes the Charlestown branch of Housing NSW.

That young man is not the only person in that position that my office has had direct contact with. The former Premier made reducing rough sleeping one of her priorities, but we know that rough sleepers comprise only a tiny fraction of those facing homelessness. *[Extension of time]*

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Don't be nasty.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am in Opposition. It is our role to point out the facts and the failings of the Government. Recently in my electorate a woman who was fleeing domestic violence had no option other than to set up a tent in a local cemetery. A woman in a similar position came to my office late one afternoon, desperately afraid that she and her primary school-age son would have to spend another night in their car. A woman named Jenny contacted my office, desperate for assistance. Struggling with a range of health conditions, Jenny had been forced to live in her car for months. Suffering from crippling pain, she was unable to find a secure place to park overnight. In each case, these women had been shuttled back and forth between support services, had often exhausted access to temporary accommodation and still had nowhere safe to go. In each case, these women faced complex circumstances and structural disadvantage. And in each case, these women had been failed by a system that the Government has for years failed to adequately fund or support.

Our specialist homelessness services do everything they can to support people in this position, but they are stretched to breaking point. They were already overburdened before the pandemic, but they have reached their absolute limit, and it is the most disadvantaged members of our society who are suffering as a result. I acknowledge that homelessness is a complex issue with complex causes, but that does not mean it should be put in the too-hard basket, as the Government seems all too keen to do. Homelessness can happen to anyone. How

many times have we heard from those facing homelessness or who have experienced homelessness that they never expected to be in that position?

So many of us are so much closer to homelessness than it might seem. All it takes is the loss of a job, an unexpected medical condition, a death in the family, the breakdown of a relationship or even an unexpected note from a landlord terminating a lease. These are things that can plunge an individual or a family into having to couch-surf with friends and relatives, live out of their car or sleep rough. This a whole-of-society problem that requires a whole-of-government solution. While we have experts in this field—people who know what they are talking about—the Government does not listen to them. The Government has failed to take action, and I have no expectations that this Premier will do any better. The Government clearly recognises that homelessness and housing are serious problems, but where is the commitment? Where is the backup? Where are the solutions embedded in the budget? They are simply not there.

This oversight is only one aspect of the Government's demonstrated ignorance of the problems facing regional electorates, including Charlestown. Public schools in my electorate are overcrowded, but there was no money for upgrades in this budget. Every child, no matter what electorate they live in, has the right to a quality, free public education. The squeeze being put on local schools is impacting that, making it more difficult for teachers to teach and for students to learn. After the extraordinary efforts put in by our teachers over the course of the pandemic, having to adapt to online learning and navigate the broad range of challenges that came with that change, don't we owe them a good place to work? We know that, despite the best efforts of educators and parents, learning over Zoom is no replacement for face-to-face learning in a classroom. Don't we owe students schools with enough room for them to comfortably learn in?

Following years of tireless work from community activists whose work has helped me to prosecute the case here in Parliament, I am pleased that in the budget last year funding was allocated for long-overdue upgrades to Hillsborough Road. Hillsborough Road is a major arterial road in the Charlestown electorate, but it has not been fit for purpose for many years. It is a dangerous bottleneck and has proven deadly in recent years. The Government delayed funding upgrades on Hillsborough Road for years. Now we are getting the money, but the lack of interest in the bread-and-butter infrastructure of a community like Charlestown is emblematic of a Government more interested in shiny, expensive projects in Sydney—assets that can be recycled at a later date and that all too often go over budget. There are other infrastructure priorities in Charlestown. Investment in infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth, and it is common to become stuck in traffic at bottlenecks across the electorate.

My community is calling for intelligent approaches to growth, the development of twenty-first century industries and job opportunities, sustainable development with adequate infrastructure, public transport that meets population growth and strong public services. Where are they in this budget? In his career as Treasurer, when has the Premier shown his capacity for or interest in delivering this? Budgets are about more than figures on a spreadsheet; budgets are about people. Every budget is a chance to improve lives, lift people out of poverty, provide opportunities for education and employment, and build a better State. This budget is in every way a missed opportunity. The chance to reset has been passed over in favour of more of the same. The opportunity to build a stronger, fairer economy has been ignored in favour of a status quo which the pandemic has revealed as deeply unfair. If we look at the Premier's track record, it is clear that his last budget as Treasurer is Perrottet from beginning to end: It is ideological, it is focused on the bottom line to the detriment of the people of this State, and it is simply not good enough.

The Premier has continued on that track with the debacle of the Transport Assets Holding Entity [TAHE], the mismanagement of which this side of Parliament has spent a lot of time on uncovering. How many billions of dollars are taxpayers now on the hook for because of the Premier's mismanagement of TAHE? The Auditor-General has revealed that she was days away from rejecting parts of the New South Wales Government's 2020-21 financial accounts, and that rejection was avoided only at the last minute by the New South Wales Government committing taxpayers to fund an additional \$5.2 billion to prop up TAHE. How much social housing could that have built in my and other electorates to deal with housing problems? How many additional classrooms could that have been built to deal with the overcrowding in our schools? How many road extensions could have been built to deal with the traffic bottlenecks being experienced in my electorate? Every day at question time the Premier goes on and on about his Government's economic achievements. But when I look at asset recycling, TAHE, icare and the failure to deliver basic services to the people in our State who are most in need, I see a Government that has failed to do right by this State. We can do so much better, and we certainly should.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (09:57):** I contribute to the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2021-2022 take-note debate. I acknowledge the past two years of uncertainty and change; we continue to be in that environment even today. We are at a point in time in our community and in our economy where so much is unknown. We see the pressures of rising inflation around the globe and inflation in Australia that is

predominantly caused by supply pressures. There is very little that governments, regulators or the Reserve Bank can influence. We see rising oil prices and the instability of geopolitical issues within Russia and Europe, and we do not know what will happen next. We can make guesses about where inflation will go. We can make guesses about interest rates, about the unemployment rate and about whether or not we will have any real wage growth. But the reality of all of that uncertainty is that households, businesses and communities are unsure about their own futures and their own financial security and stability.

In that context we have to think about whether or not the Government can put in place the economic and fiscal measures that will ensure a greater sense of stability and security for the people of New South Wales. The record of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government shows that it is the only government that can manage the economy to achieve the best outcomes for families and businesses across the State. That is what has been reflected in the past two or more years of the COVID pandemic. Time and again we responded with the right COVID measures to ensure that we maintained confidence, provided opportunities for businesses to operate and kept money in people's pockets so they had the funds and the cash flow that they needed for their businesses and their families. In response to each of the different COVID waves and the uncertainties that they brought, we provided recovery packages to get New South Wales booming yet again.

This record of strong economic management meant that New South Wales was ready when each crisis hit. We are now using our fiscal firepower to ensure that businesses and households are on the road to recovery as we chart a steady course back to addressing the next challenges for our economy. What we have seen under the Premier, the then Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet, and the current Treasurer, Matt Kean, is a determined focus on delivering what New South Wales needs and the support that the people of New South Wales require to go about their daily lives with minimal impact from the economic shocks that are happening across the globe. The 2021-22 budget delivered during all the uncertainty and all those challenges. This Government took the next step to look beyond the pandemic to take the State from recovery to transformation and to create a better New South Wales for families. At the time we did not know what would follow, particularly with the Omicron wave late in 2021. So I will speak to the budget and to the ongoing response after the Omicron wave.

New South Wales continues to rebound strongly. We are making investments that will transform communities, support individuals and families and address the cost-of-living pressures that everyone is facing. We need to drive productivity. We need to think about reforms that must be made and deliver them to ensure that New South Wales continues to be a great place in which to live and work and to visit. We have ensured that we are introducing real reforms. We have a commitment to support job creation and economic recovery with billions in stimulus and support measures. We have invested heavily in our world-class health system, in providing more funding for schools and students, and in protecting our wildlife and natural environment. We are bolstering our transport infrastructure program. We are investing in tackling the scourge of domestic and family violence and also easing families' cost-of-living pressures. We all know how crucial our health system has been, but it has never been as predominant in our daily lives as it has been in recent years. This Government committed over \$30 billion in the 2021-22 budget to support our exceptional healthcare system and our even more exceptional healthcare workers.

This funding includes an additional \$1.1 billion for the COVID defence health response; \$214 million to upskill 240 paramedics for intensive care services; and more than \$260 million in COVID response funding for the vaccination rollout. Since March 2020 our Government has committed more than \$4 billion to help the healthcare system increase its capacity, ensuring that it is well placed to manage the ongoing effects and impacts of COVID-19. Our COVID-19 health response has invested over \$340 million for personal protective equipment and associated warehousing costs; more than \$200 million for pop-up clinics, testing and contact tracing; \$145 million for returning travellers in quarantine requiring medical assistance; \$80 million to continue additional elective surgery; and \$30 million for enhanced cleaning within health facilities. The \$30.2 billion that NSW Health received in the budget was a demonstration of the Government's commitment to ensure world-class health services for communities across New South Wales. More than \$3 billion will be invested this year to build and redevelop hospitals and health facilities across New South Wales, in addition to the more than \$27 billion in recurrent funding. We are continuing or commencing more than 110 health capital projects across 18 metropolitan hospitals, 28 regional hospitals and many other health facilities.

Mental health has significantly impacted many people in the community during COVID-19—an issue that is not spoken about often enough. But this budget will ensure that we provide the people of New South Wales with the support that they need. We have ensured that our kids and teenagers have access to specialised mental health services when they need it most. We are investing more than \$109 million over four years to develop 25 Safeguards Child and Adolescent Mental Health Response teams across New South Wales. These teams are to provide support services to children and adolescents with moderate to severe mental health issues, and support to their families and carers. The 25 funded Safeguards teams represents a new model of care—it brings the right care at the right time in the right place to children, teens and their loved ones. In addition, \$36.4 million was allocated

over four years for 57 mental health response and recovery specialists across regional and rural New South Wales. These specialists provide assertive outreach support for communities and coordination with local services at the time of a disaster or crisis and during the ongoing recovery phase.

We are also investing \$25.8 million to continue funding the co-responder program PACER, involving teams working together between police, ambulance and clinical early response teams to respond to mental health situations. We are investing more than \$20 billion in New South Wales students, driving evidence-based reforms, building new and upgraded schools and reaching record staffing levels, including in my community of North Shore. I turn now to the recovery from COVID. There is a sense throughout our community that there is a desire to live with COVID. There is a desire to move on from the restrictions of the past and get back to life as normal—whatever the new normal happens to be. One of the areas that we have significantly supported following the Omicron wave in New South Wales has been small business. March is Small Business Month—an opportunity for us to reflect on the contribution of small business to our communities, the importance of small businesses to families and the number of people across the State that they employ. They provide jobs which put roofs over people's heads and put food on the table. In my community there are well over 14,000 small businesses. For an electorate that is 25 square kilometres in size, that represents a significant proportion of the economic contribution to my community.

This week the Government announced an extension to the COVID small business support that was released in January. I acknowledge the work of the Treasurer and Treasury. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer and for COVID Recovery, I have had a great opportunity to spend a significant amount of time with the Treasury team that works on the COVID support packages. I have never met a group of employees and public sector workers that have so much focus, dedication, drive and commitment to achieving outcomes for their stakeholders—being the people of New South Wales—and, in particular, small business. When we meet on numerous occasions every week, I enjoy sharing ideas with business associations and peak groups.

I acknowledge some of the feedback that we have received from those associations and groups. We are constantly told about the support that New South Wales is giving to these businesses as compared with other States—the responsiveness of Treasury and the capacity of Service NSW to deliver and adjust, and be rapid in its response. Time after time we have gone above and beyond any other jurisdiction in this State. We are the easiest to deal with, the most consultative, the most communicative, and we are most likely to reflect what the community and the business sector need from a government. This unsolicited feedback is given to me quite regularly.

Generally in those meetings I seek constructive feedback to try to improve some of our programs and initiatives, because Treasury and the Treasurer are very open to that feedback and take it on board willingly and quickly. But it is always rewarding to hear that the many thousands of men and women who are working in our public sector across all our departments are delivering such significant results for the people and businesses of New South Wales. While we often look at frontline workers in our healthcare systems, our schools and our emergency services, we also need to reflect on the many tens of thousands of people who work for the people of New South Wales as public servants and have been at the forefront of this crisis as well. I congratulate them and thank them for the work they have done.

I acknowledge the Minister for Small Business, her support for small businesses and her advocacy for the \$1 billion financial support package, which we announced in January. Though we did seek for the Commonwealth to continue to provide cash flow funding for businesses most significantly affected by the Omicron wave to ensure that they could continue to meet some of their payroll obligations and keep the nexus between employers and employees, we had to go it alone in New South Wales in providing that support from February onwards. But we have announced that we are extending the Small Business Support Program to the new closing date of 29 April this year. That includes the cash flow funding that will support businesses and workers as well as the performing arts across New South Wales. The four-week extension acknowledges the continuing challenges we face, particularly at the end of the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, we experienced the bushfires. At the end of the pandemic—I hope we are at the end—we have experienced significant floods. The tough impact over the past couple of months on so many businesses means it is important that we have targeted support for them as we emerge from an additional crisis.

To continue the support the State Government provided last year, the lump sums paid in the Small Business Support Program are a 20 per cent contribution of weekly payroll, with a minimum payment of \$500 per week and a maximum payment of \$5,000 per week for businesses that have a turnover between \$75,000 and \$50 million and experienced in January 2022 a decline in turnover of at least 40 per cent compared with January 2020 or January 2021. I encourage small business owners to reach out to the Service NSW Business Concierge and to Small Business Commissioner Chris Lamont and his team because they are there to ensure that our businesses, and small businesses in particular, can access support and programs. There are a range of other programs, including for toll and rapid antigen test rebates, but I will not go into all of them today. The only other one I will

touch on is the CBD Revitalisation Program. Seventeen CBDs are eligible for the \$50 million program, which acknowledges their importance and vitality. We have a lot of CBDs, but some people are Sydney CBD-centric.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Parramatta.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** The member for Parramatta is Parramatta CBD-centric. I have the North Sydney CBD. The CBD Revitalisation Program also covers Bankstown, Blacktown, Campbelltown, Newcastle, Wollongong, Kogarah, Hurstville and Macquarie Park. I will be tested on the rest of these. There are also Penrith, Manly, Liverpool and Fairfield. It covers 17 different CBDs.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Campbelltown.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON:** I said Campbelltown, but the member for Parramatta is correct to call out Campbelltown as well. These 17 CBDs all have the capacity to thrive and to contribute to jobs growth and economic activity. They all have their own characters and identities. This program is being delivered by Investment NSW and the 24-hour Economy Commissioner and his team and being led by Minister Stuart Ayres. I acknowledge their work. Through the initiative we will try to bring the heartbeat back to our CBDs. We are about to release the details for the recipients for round two. Round three will open shortly afterwards. We encourage all people involved with those CBDs to come up with exciting, collaborative approaches for activations that can help bring people back to those areas, such as work, evening or early morning activities, multicultural activities, the high arts, the low arts—anything that has people enjoying their CBDs. They should put in applications so that we can help to fund what our communities do best.

Minister Stuart Ayres and I are running a forum for the CBD Revitalisation Program in the next 10 days or so. We have invited all of those people to come together and share case studies of great successes and share their skills across the Greater Sydney Basin. That will ensure that we do not have isolated opportunities only in some CBDs but that we are focused on working together and getting every single part of the New South Wales economic engine firing on all cylinders. That work will continue. I am excited about the work Investment NSW is doing to put that together. I acknowledge Macquarie University for the support it is providing to us in hosting the forum in Macquarie Park, which is a CBD on the list. I acknowledge also the Ryde council and in particular Mayor Jordan Lane, who has been very supportive of the forum. He has not only led and provided an opportunity for activation within his own CBD of Macquarie Park but also provided a platform for other CBDs to access that information.

In my own community, incredibly exciting news continues for the people of North Shore, particularly families. The biggest news is around investment in education. Across New South Wales we have upgraded schools and record staffing levels. In my area, we are delivering a major upgrade of Neutral Bay Public School. We have funding in the bank, which Treasury has approved. The scope of works is done, and we are progressing with the upgrade. This is a high-performing school. But, over the years, in order to accommodate the growth in the number of students, some classrooms have been cut in half by concertina doors put in the middle. The library was cut in half to create new classrooms. In order to meet the growing student population and the demand for the school, everyone has just dealt with it. But now we finally will get the benefit of investing in that upgrade.

I pay tribute to the entire school community: the P&C, the current president, the former presidents, the school council, the principal, the former principals, and the deputy principal, who has been there throughout the tenures of all former principals during my time. I particularly acknowledge my predecessor Jillian Skinner, who, even five years on from being the member for North Shore, continues to advocate for the school. I know she will be delighted to hear that we have the funding to proceed with the upgrade.

We have a brand new primary school planned for St Leonards. The local students and families will be the big winners. Interestingly, that primary school is being proposed as a co-located educational facility that could have a catchment area that includes the children of nurses, doctors and other hospital staff by locating it on the grounds of Royal North Shore Hospital. A brand new building would include childcare areas, clinical suites, accommodation for people travelling for healthcare reasons from across New South Wales, and key worker housing. A significant proportion of the residential development would be required to be reserved for key workers within the Northern Sydney Local Health District. *[Extension of time]*

I appreciate the extension. I know how excited all members are about schools and education. We all want to see the best start for kids across New South Wales. Another major upgrade for my community is underway at Mosman High School. I was there just the other day. The main building, which was at the corner of Military Road and Belmont Road, has been demolished. Interestingly enough, that building was part of the last major upgrade of the school and was also delivered by a Liberal government. I think Virginia Chadwick was the education Minister at the time. So it has taken us since the 1990s to get more investment in Mosman High School, which is such an amazing school. The performing arts talent and the technical skills of students coming out of that school

are phenomenal. It is right in the heart of Mosman village. Because it is situated in that village heart, it feels like an asset for the whole community. The entire community has bought into the design of the new school, particularly the prominent school building on Military Road. It is going to be an amazing delivery for that community. North Sydney Demonstration School, a primary school that is known for its capacity to support teachers in their development and students in their learning, is about to undergo a major upgrade. We are getting rid of demountables and making sure we are responding to the growth of the population, particularly around North Sydney and up to Crows Nest, due to significant high-rise developments.

**Debate interrupted.**

*Bills*

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (TENANT PROTECTIONS AND FLOOD RESPONSE)  
BILL 2022**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Jenny Leong, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:20):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

On behalf of The Greens, I introduce the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Tenant Protections and Flood Response) Bill 2022 with a sense of urgency arising from the crisis that is occurring across New South Wales following the devastating weather and floods. This environmental and climate disaster has turned very quickly into an escalating housing crisis and will continue to do so unless the New South Wales Government proceeds to act. The Government has the power to suspend standing orders to debate the second reading of the bill today. The Greens have done the heavy lifting by looking at measures that are needed right now in the Northern Rivers, in areas of the Hawkesbury and in flood-impacted areas across the State. The Government could suspend standing orders and pass this bill today so that people renting homes in flood-impacted areas of New South Wales would be protected immediately by a moratorium on evictions and a cap on rents to make sure that greedy landlords do not seek to profit from the horrific and tragic crisis.

As a demonstration of the scale and scope of the problem, the huge list of flood-impacted local government areas [LGAs] where renters desperately need the support provided by this bill runs to more than a page. New South Wales has long been experiencing a housing crisis, which has made affordability a key issue for many people who rent. The situation has been exacerbated by devastating floods throughout New South Wales that have impacted thousands of people who need specific protections right now. The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Tenant Protections and Flood Response) Bill 2022 seeks to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to provide two things: increased protections for tenants generally across New South Wales and additional specific protections in flood-impacted areas. The bill addresses two crucial issues faced by renters in light of the housing affordability crisis and the social housing deficit resulting from successive New South Wales governments' failure to act. It also amends the minimum standards for rental properties across the State, which protect renters from living in conditions that are detrimental to their health, by inserting additional fit-for-habitation requirements that a property must be free of mould and have adequate waterproofing.

I will focus on the urgent measures that are needed to protect renters in flood-impacted areas and then go through the detail of the measures that are required across the State to protect renters. I hope the Government is listening because Minister Petinos could adopt this bill to amend the Residential Tenancies Act now—I am happy for it to be a Government bill—and put in place its provisions to assist flood-affected victims. On Tuesday members on both sides of the House spoke about personal stories and the impacts of the floods on their communities. The member for Coffs Harbour, the member for Lakemba, the member for Tweed, the member for Blue Mountains, the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Prospect and I all contributed to the debate. The member for Lismore and my Greens colleague the member for Ballina were not in the Chamber because they were still in their communities. They have been working tirelessly to support them during this time. They know that right now the Government needs to do absolutely everything it can to protect those who are impacted.

The images might have dropped off the front page of the news, but this crisis has only just begun. In the days after the water receded, reports about how many homes had been destroyed and deemed uninhabitable began to trickle in. First it was 1,000, then 2,000. Today the estimate is over 4,000, and that figure is expected to climb. At least 4,000 families cannot return to their homes. The climate crisis has created a housing crisis. Whether or not members agree that a climate crisis caused this extreme weather event, all members in this place can agree that right now people are living in unacceptable conditions. They are sleeping rough, camping in tents next to

their home and living in cars. While COVID cases continue to rise, older people are living in crowded caravans, garages and evacuation centres, or staying with friends and doing whatever they can. No doubt, some people have gone back to dangerous family situations because that is their only option. But today, if we want to, we could suspend standing orders to pass this bill and introduce its two measures to protect renters in flood-impacted areas. I turn to the details of those now.

The first of those measures, in proposed section 230, provides for a ban on evictions. Tenants in LGAs that have been declared flood impacted will be protected from eviction, subject to a few exclusions—namely, where the property is uninhabitable or ceases to be usable as a residence. This is a crucial protection for renters in flood-impacted areas where a severe lack of accommodation provides incentives for opportunistic and greedy landlords to seek higher rents from whoever is prepared to pay the most. The proposed section provides for a 12-month eviction moratorium. I remember falling off my chair during lockdown when the New South Wales Government introduced a moratorium on evictions. I never thought it would be possible. That was a great policy position. But to say that the crisis impacting those in flood-affected areas is not as extreme as the pandemic crisis would be underestimating the flood crisis. We need another moratorium on evictions immediately in flood-impacted LGAs across the State. I call on the Minister responsible to take that action now.

Following on from the proposed 12-month eviction moratorium, proposed section 230 of the Act provides for a cap on rents. We need to make sure that greedy landlords and those who are engaged in the short-term letting accommodation industry, who are profiting from the housing affordability and weather crises, are called to account. This proposed amendment to the Act ensures that for a 12-month period rent cannot be increased under a new tenancy agreement where the previous tenant leaves voluntarily. Additionally, the section provides that rent payable under a new lease of a property must be set at the level of rent payable as at 25 February 2022 if the property was leased at that time or, otherwise, at the median rent for the same type of premises. Basically, that means that a landlord in a flood-impacted area cannot kick the tenant out, raise the rent astronomically because they know there are no rental properties available and then lease it to a new person who is going to then suffer financial stress. We need to peg rents. What is a median rental price? The Greens think rents were already too high. However, it is much better to cap it at that level than to allow rents to increase further or to allow greedy interested parties to charge a per-night accommodation rate on a residential rental property that used to be tenanted under a six-month or 12-month lease.

I urge the Government to look at the detail in this bill. I will circulate it to all members. At the next opportunity I will talk about the other measures in the bill designed to protect renters. I urge the Government not to worry about this bill having been introduced by The Greens. I urge it to adopt these amendments that will address the needs of flood-impacted regions as a matter of urgency—to suspend standing orders, get this done and help people living in flood-affected areas in New South Wales right now.

**Debate interrupted.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** I thank the member for Newtown. The members will now proceed to the Legislative Council Chamber for the purpose of electing a person to hold the place in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of the Hon. Donald Thomas Harwin. Upon returning from the Legislative Council Chamber, the House shall meet on the ringing of one long bell. It is customary for members of the Legislative Assembly at the joint sitting to sit on the corresponding benches of the Legislative Council Chamber.

*Members*

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY**

At 10.30 a.m. 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. Donald Thomas Harwin, resigned.

At 10.51 a.m. the House reassembled.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I report that the House 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 vacant by the resignation of the Hon. Donald Thomas Harwin and that Christopher Dennis Rath has been duly elected. I table the minutes of proceedings of the joint sitting of the Houses of Parliament of New South Wales to choose a person to hold the place in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of the Hon. Donald Thomas Harwin. I order that the document be printed.

*Bills***RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (TENANT PROTECTIONS AND FLOOD RESPONSE)  
BILL 2022****Second Reading Speech****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:52):** Before the break I was talking about the complete market failure when it comes to dealing with housing affordability, the disastrous situation in New South Wales regarding renters' rights and protections for renters who have lost their homes as a result of the recent significant and extreme weather events across the State, and the need for the Government to step in and act urgently to provide protections for tenants in this State. I was talking about the effect on thousands of people in flood-impacted areas in the Northern Rivers who have seen their homes and their communities devastated by floods. Now over 4,000 people are affected and, sadly, that number continues to grow.

Let us say that capitalism knows no bounds when it comes to stuffing around the everyday person in the pursuit of profit. Greedy investors and property owners in flood-impacted areas are already thinking about how they can make money out of this crisis. Instead of returning their properties to the long-term residential tenancy market, property owners are considering letting them for a short term and charging people per night as opposed to weekly, which is affordable for families who are currently living in evacuation centres or in tents next to their uninhabitable homes, or elderly people who are currently living in caravan parks. The Greens have been working on the issue of renters' rights in this State for a long time—indeed, since before I was elected in 2015. At that time you barely heard mention of renters in this place.

The many hundreds of thousands of people who rent in New South Wales have the right to a safe and secure place to live. The Greens have been pushing for that right to be fully recognised and protected. Nothing could be more urgent or in need of an immediate response than providing affordable housing for renters in flood-impacted areas. The bill will introduce two measures to assist tenants in such areas. The first is a ban on evictions in flood-impacted areas. This is necessary precisely for the reason I outlined. It will stop property owners being able to boot a tenant from their flood-damaged home for no reason whatsoever and then allowing them to move back in when the property is restored but hiking up the rent, or instead putting the property on a short-term letting site for a per-night cost and pricing renters out of the market so they have nowhere to live.

The second measure is rent caps. We know that rents in New South Wales are too damn high. They have been too high for too long. Successive New South Wales governments have failed to act and stand up for those who live in rental properties and recognise their right to have a safe, secure, habitable and affordable place to call home. The Greens support capping rents. We support pegging rents to a median amount so that people can afford to pay rent without adding to existing cost-of-living pressures. New section 231 introduces the second specific measure for flood-impacted areas—a cap on rent increases. The effect of this provision is that existing rents cannot be increased during the specified period and leases on new rental properties will be limited and must be in line with the median rent charged for the same type of property prior to 25 February 2022. This accounts for changes in tenancies in flood-impacted areas so that rents cannot be increased between tenancies during a 12-month period if a tenant leaves voluntarily and the property is leased to a new tenant.

Additionally, the new section calls for new medium-term or long-term rental properties to be leased at the median rent for the area on 25 February 2022, prior to the floods. We recognise that rents were already too high. The member for Ballina has spoken multiple times in this place and in her community about the fact that, even before this extreme weather event—when the climate crisis intersected with the housing crisis in New South Wales—there were sometimes between 10 and 100 people waiting to inspect a single rental property in her region. Now what do we have? We have a further escalation of this crisis. Do we see any action from the Government? We have Ministers visiting flood-impacted areas and doing what they can to assist. But there are things we can do right here, right now in this Chamber.

There is nothing stopping the Government coming into the Chamber right now and saying, "Let's suspend standing orders. Lo and behold, The Greens have got an idea that is actually responding to the needs and the interests of renters." We have seen successive Ministers for Fair Trading, who were responsible for rent regulation in this State, come and go. I can think of at least four in my time in this place, and I have been here only six years. But The Greens have consistently stood up for renters' rights. If the Government has any desire to respond to the needs of flood-impacted victims who are struggling right now, then this rental reform should be adopted. New section 231 takes into consideration the development of new rental properties, which could be properties that are moving from short-term accommodation to market leases. Rent protection in the form of stopping or limiting rent increases and banning evictions are imperative in all flood-affected local government areas, which we know are



currently experiencing a housing emergency that is not going to end soon. It is absolutely critical that we recognise that, and that is why The Greens are calling for a number of broader provisions across the State.

I will briefly summarise the broader provisions of the bill now, and I will go into more detail later. The broader State provisions that we are looking to deliver for the people of New South Wales who rent include a requirement that all rental properties are free of mould and have adequate waterproofing. The recent extreme, nonstop rains—whether in my community of Newtown or across the inner city, the inner west or the State—have resulted in a significant presence of mould, which is having a huge impact on people's health.

The other absolutely critical provision in the bill puts an end to no-grounds evictions in the State. That is not new; it was brought up when the now Treasurer, Matt Kean, was the Minister responsible for the Residential Tenancies Act in this place. We saw a push by the community and the Everybody's Home campaign, backed by the Tenants' Union and so many others, to see an end to unfair no-grounds evictions in the State. The Tenants' Union has been leading the charge, and its recent *Eviction, Hardship, and the Housing Crisis* report shows that the average cost of a move for renting households in New South Wales ranges from \$3,215 for a single person in a household in Greater Sydney through to \$5,400 for a family household in regional New South Wales. It is critical that we end unfair no-grounds evictions so that renters are not slugged with those costs in addition to the incredibly high cost-of-living issues that they are currently facing.

We also want to see a cap on rents across the State. If the Premier is so set on capping public service wages at 1.5 per cent or 2.5 per cent, then why is it not reasonable for the Government to cap rents in the State in line with public service wage rises? The only way to avoid housing stress is to see that wages growth matches cost of living, and 60 per cent to 70 per cent of renters in the State are currently living under housing stress. Housing stress is real, and the Government needs to do more to recognise that housing is a fundamental human right. The Government needs to stand up for the rights of renters when it comes to the power imbalance currently inflicted on them by landlords.

**Debate interrupted.**

## **CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE) BILL 2021**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) (11:02):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I thank the House for the opportunity to introduce this important bill, the Constitution Amendment (Virtual Attendance) Bill 2021, which ensures that this Parliament and its members can adequately represent their communities. It brings this Parliament out of the seventeenth century to join the UK Parliament and parliaments around the world that say that virtual attendance, with safeguards, is not only possible but critical. This important bill has already passed the upper House. It amends the Constitution Act 1902 to enable members of Parliament to attend meetings of the Houses of Parliament remotely for the purpose of voting and quorum. For the purpose of two provisions of the Constitution Act 1902 relating to ascertaining a quorum for or determining a question in either of the Houses of Parliament, the amendment provides:

... a Member of Parliament is taken to be present at a meeting of the House if the member attends the meeting remotely using an audio or audio visual link, or another method of communication in accordance with—

- (a) the Standing Rules and Orders of the House, or
- (b) a resolution or sessional order of the House.

Proposed new section 3 (2) defines that for the purpose of a quorum or a vote in Parliament, a member of Parliament is taken to be present if they attend remotely by way of an audio or audiovisual link. This very simple but incredibly important change allows Parliament to continue to operate while ensuring that members are able to comply with the health orders that we have been subject to during the pandemic as well as maximising the safety of members and parliamentary staff. It also allows a mechanism for remote attendance, as agreed to by each House, to provide flexibility in the future as technological changes enhance the ability of members to attend remotely. The change creates a model that allows for the ongoing functioning of the Parliament with important checks and balances in place to ensure the powers are not misused. Importantly, the bill is drafted so that it does not limit the capacity of either House to have any other functions performed remotely in accordance with existing custom and practice, such as online committee hearings.

The UK Parliament allows for remote attendance as provided in this bill, and the Brazilian senate, the Argentinian and Chilean parliaments and the G7 meet remotely. The United Nations Security Council has met remotely. Courts in Australia have switched to online proceedings, as have parliamentary committees. The Greens think this is an opportunity for the House to seriously consider how we deal with the threat of pandemics, natural

disasters and catastrophes in the future with the provision of flexible arrangements. That is particularly important for rural and regional members to be able to continue to represent their communities in the case of a disaster or catastrophic event. The Greens have introduced this bill, originally in the Legislative Council and now in the Legislative Assembly, to enable the ongoing functioning of Parliament because we believe what occurred during the pandemic was unsatisfactory. In a democracy, representation must continue even during times of crisis. All members of the House will recall that during the initial stages of the pandemic the Parliament simply could not sit, and it was up to the Executive to determine the course taken by the State. It is even more important during times of crisis and pandemic that all members' voices are heard and that the Parliament plays its role. It should not be up to the Executive alone to determine the course of our State for many months.

To ensure democracy and representation, it is important that elected representatives are able to do their job—that is, represent their constituents; importantly, act as an oversight of Government Executive power; and pass the laws that are needed to deal with a crisis. While health orders play a role, it is important for Parliament to pass laws. To this end, the bill allows very limited and restricted opportunities for online or remote sittings of Parliament. As I have noted, the amendments specifically relate to two provisions that allow for a very straightforward amendment to the Constitution. I draw members' attention to the second reading speech of Mr David Shoebridge in the other place as to the detail, and I re-emphasise some of the critical points.

The change that The Greens are proposing creates a model that allows for the ongoing functioning of the Parliament, with appropriate checks and balances to ensure the powers cannot be misused. As a member of a party in this place that is not a major party, I am particularly conscious of how parliamentary power can be misused. A party may be unpopular or members may not agree with another member's views. The Greens want to make sure that, in such a situation, there are very strong checks on the Parliament so that non-major parties are not excluded. Having discussed the provisions of this bill for a long time, The Greens seek to make arrangements to allow for reduced numbers of members being present in the Parliament or for hybrid sittings, when needed.

The first safeguard is that remote attendance provisions will operate only if the Presiding Officer of the House—the President in the other place and the Speaker in the Legislative Assembly—has declared that a public emergency exists and that as a result it is not safe or practical for members of the House to meet in person. A "public emergency" includes a public health crisis, a natural disaster, a major accident, a civil disturbance or an act of terrorism.

Confirming that the Speaker or the President is the threshold decision-maker will ensure that the decision is made by someone who has the confidence of the majority of the House and that it cannot be done on a whim or if someone believes that something that does not meet this very important threshold is being met. It is the Speaker or the President who makes the call, obviously in consultation with the Parliament. The test is also a high one, being that, as a result of a public health crisis, natural disaster, major accident, act of terrorism or civil disturbance, it is not safe or practical for members to meet in the House. It does not just mean that one of those things has to take place; it has to be of such a serious nature that it is not safe or practical for members of the House to meet in person.

That amendment, which is found in new section 3 (3), will ensure that this provision is not abused or, in the future, used to potentially convert real-life sittings of the Parliament to remote sittings, if the government of the day wanted to downgrade the status of Parliament and say, "We are just going to do it remotely." No. It can only happen when a very serious incident or sequence of events occurs and the Speaker executes the next stage. The second safeguard in the bill is the insertion of a sunset clause that sees the new section repealed five years after commencement. Even though we have seen other parliaments around the world do this, including the United Kingdom Parliament, we want to make sure there is a strict sunset provision so that after five years it will be repealed. Of course, it is hoped that the section is in place and working effectively. We have seen—and this is the good news—that almost no sunset clause has ever set on legislation in New South Wales. Bad laws tend to be amended, improved or changed. We see that there are opportunities, however, to review it and make sure that that sunset clause is in place. We have that sunset clause in the bill so we can test, over the next five years, whether any potential concerns or issues are valid.

In short, we want the Parliament to continue to sit during this pandemic or any future pandemic, and we want to make sure, with appropriate safeguards, that the Parliament can continue to function and that members can continue to contribute, but also vote and be counted to quorum. We understand that the Government might say, "We had some meetings where we listened to what everyone had to say." Listening is great, but voting is critical. That is why the removal of the capacity of parliamentarians to carry out their business for all of that period during the pandemic is absolutely unsatisfactory. Government requires scrutiny. One of the things that governments and oppositions say is that the reason we have the Westminster system—a system that can create an adversarial environment—is to make sure that we rigorously examine, interrogate and uncover what the Executive

and Government are doing, and that leads to a better democracy. We cannot do that if we not only cannot meet but also cannot vote and continue the functioning of the Parliament.

The other drawback during the pandemic period when we were not able to attend Parliament was that we could not pass laws, including laws that were carefully targeted to address the unfolding crisis. When we first saw the pandemic spreading, we were persuaded to rapidly pass emergency laws that gave incredible sweeping powers to Ministers, even to a point of allowing them to override existing laws to address the crisis. That emergency measure had to take place because we were unable to sit, to carefully consider each of those laws, and it gave the Executive unprecedented powers. On reflection, many of us will say that there was not an abuse of power. That was, quite frankly, not by design but because of goodwill and a range of other factors.

Other parliaments have shown the way. We can and must do better. We must be able to safely recall Parliament in a situation, for example, of a pandemic. We do not want to see the lack of flexibility that we have at the moment, where we are forced to hand over extraordinary powers to the government of the day. We cannot hold democracy hostage. We need to make sure that the Parliament can continue to function. We have seen in other countries around the world—in the United States and other places—that democracy is a fragile thing and needs to be nourished, nurtured and treasured. If we can take some simple measures following in the footsteps of other parliaments, like the United Kingdom Parliament, that is worthy of support.

There were issues where people and members of the community were not listened to and where they believed that they were not adequately represented and supported during that period, and the bill seeks to address that. Even though members could attend remotely and contribute during the period when there was remote attendance, there were limitations because of the Constitution. They were not considered to be in the Chamber when we were determining the minimum quorum and they were not entitled to vote. Those two restrictions, which were in the Constitution, meant that we were not able to address those issues. In cases where it is legitimately not reasonable for members of Parliament to attend the building—it could be a natural disaster, as we have seen at the moment, where members cannot attend—we want to make sure that the wheels of democracy continue and that Executive power is not being emboldened, resourced and facilitated by Parliament having to hand over all of its powers. It is time we got into the twenty-first century.

The British Parliament, in many senses the forerunner of this Parliament, introduced a hybrid model that allowed about 50 people to be present in the Chamber and 120 to participate from home. That technology was implemented in that Parliament and it enabled remote voting. Why can we not do it here? The reason is that it all seems to be a bit too difficult. We want to be forward thinking, not stuck in the seventeenth century. We need to recognise that we can do better and, with technology today, we can make sure that we can do what other parliaments have done. As I mentioned before, the Brazilian Senate and other State and Federal parliaments around the world have done it, including Argentina and Chile, for example, and the G7 met remotely and carried out its business. If it is good enough for the United Nations Security Council and our courts, it should be good enough for the New South Wales Parliament.

Ensuring virtual attendance is already possible; we have proved it. Other parliaments have led the way. The technology is in place, and the will is there. The risk of potential catastrophes and pandemics is now more clear than ever before. We need to have a legal framework so that we can have full effect in this Parliament. The bill will provide the legal framework. It will provide an opportunity for us to empower every MP in this place so that never again do we have to hand over such extraordinary powers to the Executive. It is important that this bill passes. But if it does not, it is important that we get a commitment from this Government to look at implementing this, to work with the various organisations within this Parliament, internal and external, to make it work in the future, and to make sure we can protect ourselves against downgrading the importance of members of this Parliament.

In conclusion, scrutiny is critical. The Parliament, the members and the Houses of Parliament are here for a reason. The Executive has a role, but allowing it unfettered powers is something which our democracy should not continue to tolerate. We have the technology. We have the legal framework to allow us to circumvent that very unfortunate and unnecessary situation. Scrutiny and our democracy are at stake. We want to ensure not only that we can talk to our constituents but also that the Government can hear what our communities say to hold the Government to account. With any pandemic in the future, we want to ensure that this risk is absolutely ruled out. I commend the Constitution Amendment (Virtual Attendance) Bill to the House, and I encourage the Government and all members to support it.

### Second Reading Debate

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (11:19):** I thank the member for Balmain for his leadership on the Constitution Amendment (Virtual Attendance) Bill 2021 in this House. The Government does not support the bill. The consequences of it are significant, and the Government does not believe that the impacts of it have been

fully considered. There are existing oversight mechanisms of Parliament that allow it to continue to operate in the case of a public emergency. I will outline in my speech the considerable implementation challenges that the Government does not believe have been considered and addressed. It is concerning that it is not clear, from anything that I have read in my preparation for this speech, that there has been full consultation on what would be a significant and material change to parliamentary constitutional practice in this State. I note that we are a State that has a constitution.

For the important parts of parliamentary process and procedure, and to honour the responsibilities that we have to the people who elect us across the State, the ability not only to debate and move motions—which was possible under the arrangements that we had in place previously—but also vote is something that must be done as it currently is under the Constitution and operational procedures. The bill does not offer a way to get around the primary responsibility of people being here in person to vote to either support, abstain from or object to legislative measures before this House, in full public view and with no intermediation of the exercise of the most important duty to this Parliament.

I referred to the way in which Parliament was conducted during the pandemic. We are coming up to almost two years since the impact of the first variant of COVID in New South Wales. It feels like a very long time. It feels longer than those two years because of the ebbs and flows of the virus through our community. I acknowledge the extraordinary work of all members of this Parliament in supporting their communities through this time. I thank my colleagues for the flexibility, nimbleness, goodwill and trust that framed the work of this House, whether they be members of the Government, the Opposition, the crossbenches or Independents—whatever the colour of the representational capacity that they bring to this Chamber. It was exemplary, and it was done flexibly. I particularly single out the Speaker of this House, the President of the other House, the Deputy Speakers, the Assistant Speakers, the Clerks of both Houses and all of the people that have a governance role in the oversight of the running of the Parliament.

I acknowledge the support, the goodwill, the quick working, the legal advice that had to be taken and the way in which we all came together as members of this House, realising that we still wanted to be a part of Parliament but had to be flexible given the extraordinary impact of the pandemic. That was a testament to our working together, and it was a very good experience for me as the local member of a metropolitan electorate. My colleagues have expressed a similar view. I again commend the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, the Assistant Speakers, the Clerks and all of the people, including my colleagues here, who worked together during that two-year period, when there were challenges to the constitutional functioning of Parliament. We were able to come together and meet remotely to debate matters of legislation and move motions. We were not able to cast votes, but I do not believe that is a good enough reason to take this giant leap of faith and step towards embracing the bill of a member of the other House.

I turn to the first reason to be concerned about the way the bill is crafted. I do not believe that the impacts of this bill have been fully considered. The Government supports measures to improve the functioning of Parliament. It demonstrates that through the various committees that meet and involve members of this Chamber and the other Chamber, led by the Speaker, the President of the upper House, the Clerks and the other people that make this place work so well. Amendment of the Constitution Act to allow parliamentary proceedings to occur by electronic means is a significant step, as I have outlined, and it requires very careful and full consideration of its necessity and its impact. That is all the more so because, as I said earlier, we have seen how this worked extremely well in uncharted territory with goodwill, complying with the Constitution and complying with the requirements of members of this House of Parliament, which has a long and proud history. This is the oldest Parliament standing in Australia. We got through that period without ever compromising the important duties that we have to our electors and the reasons why we were elected by our constituencies. Section 10 of the Constitution Act states:

The Governor may fix the time and place for holding every Session of the Legislative Council and Assembly, and may change or vary such time or place as he may judge advisable and most consistent with general convenience and the public welfare, giving sufficient notice thereof.

Therefore, Parliament needs to sit in accordance with the commission of the Governor for that session, including as varied. There is that safety gap. There is guidance and concurrence from the Governor about how both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly may vary the time and date of their proceedings. There is the Governor's oversight to our practice and procedure. A case has to be made and duly agreed to when there are changes, which is a significant protection for both Houses that exists. With the existing oversight mechanisms, the Government acknowledges the importance of parliamentary representation and oversight during times of crisis. That is paramount to our obligation to the communities we represent. A number of existing oversight mechanisms of the Parliament have continued to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. I go back to the exemplary job that we did during that two-year period, when we came together as members peaceably and with

the sole purpose of representing the people of New South Wales who have elected us. We continued to serve our purpose and provide oversight.

One reason that the Government does not support this bill is the implementation challenges. The Constitution Act refers to the "presence" of members. The sections proposed to be amended by the bill relate to the minimum number of members present required for a quorum and for the determination of questions in the Legislative Assembly, under section 32, and the Legislative Council, under sections 22H and 22I. To constitute a meeting of the Houses of Parliament, the Constitution Act requires the presence of at least eight members of the Legislative Council, excluding the member presiding, and at least 20 members of the Legislative Assembly, excluding the member presiding.

Questions are decided by a majority of votes of the members present, not including the member presiding. When votes are equal, the member presiding has the casting vote. This bill intends to insert a new subsection into section 3 of the Constitution Act 1902, which provides that, for the purposes of sections 22H, 22I, and 32 relating to ascertaining a quorum for or determining a question in a House of Parliament, a member of Parliament is taken to be present at a meeting of the House if a member attends the meeting remotely using an audiovisual link in accordance with the standing rules and orders of the House. However, those provisions would only have effect if the Presiding Officer of the House had declared that it would be impractical for members of the House to meet in person during the specified period due to a public emergency, including a public health crisis, natural disaster, major accident, civil disturbance or an act of terrorism; and if a majority of the members of the House have requested remote attendance of the House be permitted under this section during the specified period.

So there are significant implementation challenges that I believe have not been addressed. For example, the bill does not make clear what rules will apply to virtual voting. Surely it is imperative to prescribe those rules so there is a clear procedure by which the democratic right, which we individually represent in this House on behalf of our constituencies, is able to be exercised, and for it to be clear and transparent for everyone to understand, including the people who vest that important right in us by electing us every four-year term. I can see no provision in the bill that requires physical attendance by any member. That lack of clarity must be addressed for the Government to consider any future iteration of the bill.

There are numerous issues with how virtual proceedings would be run and how procedural matters would be regulated and determined in the model that the bill proposes. The bill does not require the Presiding Officers to be physically present in the Chamber. The Presiding Officers provide an important role, as they have over the past two years under very difficult circumstances. What is the situation or circumstance that the bill requires of them when they have an additional, complementary and important role in ensuring that we meet our obligations under parliamentary procedure and under the Constitution Act? There are also no safeguards, or, as we like to say, guardrails in place to ensure proceedings of the Parliament are not held virtually without a proper basis. The Government is concerned by what would be the proper basis upon which proceedings are held virtually. We need to be very clear about that if we are going to move to another model in which we exercise our important, precious and necessarily transparent obligation and privilege on the part of the people who elect us to this House.

There is also no consideration of the procedures relating to the recording of votes or ways of resolving disputes. The absence of such procedures is writ large in the Government's concern, as it is something that the bill has not sought to deal with or resolve. If we were to move to any other model—and I am not suggesting the Government would necessarily support that—these are the six material issues that have not been addressed by the bill. They need to be addressed because they are equally as important as any other role, right or obligation we have in the Houses of Parliament.

I had the opportunity to read the second reading speech of Mr David Shoebridge, MLC, in the upper House. I thought he provided a way of undermining his own argument in an offhand comment he made. He said that if we had legislated for a technological fix, as he called it, 25 years ago, it probably would have been limited to a landline. Of course, very few of us now have landlines in our homes or in many other places in which we operate, although I note that we do have landlines in our offices here in Parliament and in our electoral offices. But one must be very cautious when doing something as serious as this bill proposes, which is seeking to legislate for future practice and procedure, when that future practice and procedure goes to some of the fundamental tenets of our democratic system of government in New South Wales. As the member for Balmain has pointed out, that system can be fragile in other parts of the world. We would not want to think it could ever be fragile here, but I caution against any great leaps into the future.

If we were to make the changes proposed by this bill to allow Parliament to meet remotely using audiovisual links, I posit to this Chamber that, just as 25 years ago landlines were the only technology available to convene remotely, in 25 years' time audiovisual links may be something of the past. There are discussions in the community currently about the metaverse and what Google and other large software players in the marketplace are going to do about that. We do not know what ways there may be in the future to have a meeting of minds, a

meeting of people. We would not want to limit our options or create confusion, which, as Mr Shoebridge rightly points out, could have created a problem for us over the past two years. Instead, the way in which proceedings in Parliament have been conducted during the pandemic has been nimble and driven by goodwill. So, when we jump to do things like this, which go to the heart of our roles in this Parliament, we must consider all the potential unintended consequences of making such changes. As I said, the proponent of this bill made that point himself in his second reading speech in the upper House.

With that, I will conclude my comments, other than to say there are very strong arguments against the adoption of this bill. As I have made clear, the Government will not support the bill. I caution that if this bill were to come back in any other form, a very clear outline of consultation has to be undertaken with the Presiding Officers, the Department of Parliamentary Services, the Procedure Committee and members of Parliament. These things, like any other piece of legislation, but particularly legislation that addresses the way in which we exercise democracy in this State, must be fully canvassed and fully consulted on, and we must know the results of that consultation before we take any uncertain leap into the future, which is what the Constitution Amendment (Virtual Attendance) Bill seeks for us to do. With that, I leave my comments to the House.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (11:36):** The Labor Opposition supports the Constitution Amendment (Virtual Attendance) Bill 2021. Many members will reflect during this debate on the very challenging times that COVID has brought us and, therefore, the requirement for this bill that we are now considering. This is a very important bill. Many of us would never have predicted that it would be something that this House, this Parliament, would need to consider. None of us could have predicted the extraordinary circumstances that we have lived through. But the issue is how we can keep democracy going when we are in such a serious crisis situation, whether it is a pandemic or any one of a range of other possible public emergencies. As we are experiencing, they are going to become more intense and more frequent.

It is important that we remember that these things are not just handed to us on a platter. In fact, members on this side of the House were extremely frustrated by the actions of the Government in relation to how COVID and the Parliament was managed—that we had to drag the Government, kicking and screaming, into keeping the Parliament going. Not sitting limited our abilities to do our jobs as elected representatives. That is the community's expectation of us, and it is ever more important when we are facing crises as a community, whether that be a pandemic, which we are still experiencing, natural disasters or other public emergencies. Democracy is an essential service. Even when it might annoy the government of the day, that is why we are here.

Currently opinion is divided as to whether the provisions of the Constitution Act 1902 require the physical attendance of members in either House for the purposes of quorum or for voting. This is a very modest amendment bill, and it is fairly simple in its nature. The bill will facilitate the ability of the Parliament to sit and all members to equally participate. I believe the community would have an absolute expectation that that is already the case. But, as we have experienced through this crisis, through the pandemic, it is in doubt whether the Constitution allows the full participation of members under those circumstances. The bill clears up that confusion so that we can enable lawful virtual sittings of this Chamber and the other place in the future, if required—and let's hope it is not required. But this is a case of hoping for the best and preparing for the worst.

It is disappointing that the Government will not support the bill. In her contribution, the member for Vacluse raised issues relating to implementation and time for consideration of the effect of the legislation. That is particularly disappointing given that the bill was introduced in October 2021 and passed the other place on 20 October 2021. It is now 24 March 2022. Although all crossbench and Opposition members in the other place supported the bill—and I understand there is a broad base of support in this Chamber for the passage of the bill—the Government does not have a considered position. It claims it has not had enough time to consider the implications of the bill. That is disappointing at best.

In terms of the implementation issues, COVID has shown us that we can adapt—and adapt rapidly. I put on record the Opposition's thanks to the Clerks and staff of the Parliament for their work in getting our Parliament to run remotely. It is extremely important that we can have the opportunity to represent our constituents even when circumstances are difficult. We have not advanced our technology in decades. Outside of a pandemic, these things often move at a glacial pace, but we have moved forward rapidly and have that technology available. I note the examples provided by the member for Balmain of international parliaments just like this one—in fact, some much larger and more complicated, like the House of Commons in the UK—that moved to a system that allowed hundreds of members to vote and participate.

They moved to that system rapidly. Our Federal Parliament moved to that system ahead of this Parliament. I appreciate the financial and other implications, but the functioning of our democracy is an essential service. The bill is an obvious and important next step. Members should be able to fulfil their roles as elected representatives under dire circumstances, and that means being able to vote on behalf of the people that they represent and those who elected them. The solution proposed by the bill is very well designed. It provides good protections against

the government of the day being able to run off and decide how it is going to run Parliament. It provides the ability for each Chamber to set rules around that. It provides triggers and, importantly, protections for members to sit in the Parliament and fully participate. It provides protections for the people of New South Wales to know that the Parliament is operational, that members can continue to do work on their behalf and that decisions can be made.

I note that Labor successfully moved amendments in the other place to improve the bill by including a requirement for the Presiding Officer to declare that it would be impractical for members to meet in person by reason of a public emergency, including a public health crisis, a natural disaster, a major incident, a civil disturbance or an act of terrorism as defined within the bill, and that a majority of members must signify their concurrence with that course of action. Those provisions are important because they ensure that each Chamber is the master of its own destiny. I do not want to reflect in any way on the Presiding Officers—particularly the one present in the Chamber, Mr Assistant Speaker—but the Opposition wants to ensure that it is the will of the House that determines those sittings. Those provisions will be spelled out in the standing orders of each House and will ensure that it is not the determination of the Presiding Officer alone.

Labor also moved an amendment that removed the sunset clause of the bill. Ordinarily Labor often inserts and reviews clauses; that would be the normal process when it comes to legislation, and of course that makes sense. But these are emergency provisions, so they have to be there under any set of circumstances. We do not want the lapsing of a bill going unnoticed and then the provisions not being available to us when we need them the most. Labor removed that clause because it makes no sense, given that this emergency provision needs to be in place if members are unable to gather in person. Again, it is about hoping for the best but preparing for the worst.

These provisions should be passed by this House today to ensure that in the future members can serve the people of New South Wales. Labor supports the bill. It is proportional, important and, the Opposition believes, fundamental to keep democracy going. The past two years have provided many lessons. The bill goes some way to making sure that those lessons are learnt and, importantly, that we are not starting from scratch if it happens again. It would be naive of us to think that this is never going to happen again. With this amendment bill we would be ready to go, and members could continue to do the work that they were elected to do on behalf of the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (11:46):** Three years and one day ago, I believe, we returned as a government and I was elected as a new member of Parliament. It was a Sunday morning, and I remember thinking ahead to things like my inaugural speech. I was thinking about coming into this Chamber, making contributions and representing my community. The inaugural speeches we have heard in the past few days from the new members representing the electorates of Monaro, Willoughby and Strathfield have brought my mind back to bringing my own family into the Chamber to watch my inaugural speech. There was something special about travelling to this Chamber and standing in this very spot, delivering an inaugural speech. I do not think the same could be said for delivering a speech online. Particularly over the past two years, members of Parliament have become quite accustomed to having meetings online and doing various other things online. But doing something as significant as an inaugural speech, or even the speech I am making now, would certainly not be the same if members were doing it online.

Before coming into politics I made sure that I understood the role of an MP. Often people think that the role of an MP is to be in the Parliament exclusively. A lot of people think that members are here 52 weeks of the year, but the majority of the job of a member of Parliament is actually out in the community. We spend far more time in our electorates and in our communities than we do here in Parliament. But that is why it is important to actually be here in Parliament in person. Talking to Ministers, other members of Parliament, the Opposition or the crossbench is made easier by being in the Parliament building, in the one place. We can get many more things done. The Government is opposed to the bill for many reasons, which the member for Vacluse outlined in her speech.

One of the provisions that we did pass during COVID was for councils to use electronic means to host council meetings during that period. That allowed councils to continue to hold their meetings. But now that the immediate COVID era seems to be passing, we have seen that people are taking advantage of that electronic means. They can be on holidays or anywhere else. However, meetings are not run the same when four or five people are on Zoom and other councillors are together in a room. My personal experience with the hybrid sittings late last year was that, as great as it was to see the technology move on, it had not quite moved on to a point where it was seamless. It was quite clunky. As one of the MPs who did use that virtual service, I definitely did not prefer to. My strongest preference is for members to be face-to-face in the Chamber. That is a great equaliser.

The COVID-19 pandemic of the past two years is referred to as a once-in-a-century pandemic and, as I understand, this was one of the first times that Parliament was not able to sit. The last big pandemic, the Spanish flu, is said to have been three to five years long—depending on where you mark the end of it. The COVID-19

pandemic may have been managed better. We certainly have better vaccine technologies, and we understand diseases and pandemics better than we did 100 years ago, so we might be at the end of it. We should not pass legislation that looks at a snapshot in time, from 2020 to 2022, and sets to freeze that time when we do not know what technology will bring in the next five, 10 or 20 years. As the member said in his second reading speech, had this bill been introduced 25 years ago, it would have been written for telephone lines.

I believe—and it is the belief of many of my colleagues—that to be in the Chamber in person, exercising our democratic right, representing our communities, is of the utmost importance. When many of us have been on Zoom meetings we have been the victims and the perpetrators of turning the screen off and doing other things—kids in the background, in the foreground, on people's laps, all the different types of things that can go on. I admit I have gone out for a coffee while in the middle of a Zoom meeting. I turned my camera off and came back 15 minutes later, and the meeting was still going. Many times there were five blank screens and only two people with their cameras on. That is not an acceptable standard that would be introduced to our Parliament if we were to legislate to include today's technology.

When technology improves—not if, but when, as no doubt technology will improve—we will need to revisit a bill with similar provisions to this bill. But until that time, in my view and that of the Government, it is important for people to attend Parliament in person. Currently several members of Parliament and/or their staff members, as well as other parliamentary employees, have tested positive to COVID-19 and are unable to be here. Arrangements are in place where members of Parliament can be given a pair. Those arrangements have been long term and ongoing for various illnesses and ailments, and for other family reasons that members may not be able to attend. It is important that, as a civil Parliament, we continue the traditions of being able to react with empathy to members in Opposition and vice versa. I believe it is one of the more civilising features of our Parliament that we are able to come to those agreements.

I am concerned about the limitations of new section 3 (3). For instance, we have seen things such as natural disasters pop up. We had the bushfires two years ago. Various communities will have levels of flooding or other natural disasters. The second part of that clause says that the majority of members must request a remote attendance. That potentially could be misused when a majority of members must make that request. In general, as was mentioned by the member for Vacluse, there are provisions in this bill that have not been thought through sufficiently. I understand Labor moved amendments to this bill in the other place, and I thank them for doing that. I agree with the member for Summer Hill that legislation such as this should not have a sunset clause. It needs to look at what happens into the future.

#### **Debate adjourned.**

### **ICAC AND OTHER INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INDEPENDENT FUNDING) BILL 2021 (NO. 2)**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (11:56):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill (No. 2) to the Legislative Assembly. This bill will smash the rampant corruption in New South Wales politics. The New South Wales Government previously voted against this bill, just before several MPs resigned from Parliament with huge clouds hanging over their heads. Today is the Government's chance to cast the dark and dirty era of corrupt New South Wales politics aside and make a fresh start. The Australian public is sick of governments using taxpayer money as their own personal slush fund—sports rorts, dodgy dams, dodgy Daryl, Watergate, bushfire relief, pork-barrelling, grant council scandals, icare, pipeline rorts, mysterious grants for Wagga, Chinese Government companies buying New South Wales water licences, secret emails from government officials favouring irrigator groups.

A new scandal emerges every day, yet all the while Liberal and Nationals MPs viciously attack our anti-corruption body. Prime Minister Scott Morrison called it a kangaroo court. Minister Stuart Ayres accused ICAC of being a waste of money. One has to wonder why. Why do Liberal and Nationals MPs hate ICAC so much? What are they afraid of? The fact that they attack our anti-corruption body so much is the exact reason we need to strengthen it, increase its funding and make it fully independent of Liberal Party MPs. That is exactly what this bill does. We need more oversight of government, not less. When politicians do not have anyone looking over them, they get up to no good. When there are no consequences, there is ample crime. Proper rules and accountability for how taxpayers' money is spent separates First World democracies from Third World dictatorships. We must draw a line in the sand and say enough is enough. We must protect our democracy. This bill is the perfect start.



The Liberal Party's attack on ICAC is part of a broader campaign against the ABC, our councils, our departments and all oversight bodies. Under this Government, our watchdogs have become lapdogs. They are terrified of losing their funding and of being unable to do their jobs properly. Nobody wants to bite the hand that feeds them. Over the past year, I have reported numerous scandals to ICAC and the Ombudsman. I have provided clear evidence of councils misusing ratepayers' money and of bureaucrats favouring certain groups and excluding others. But I keep getting the same response, which is, "Yes, that sounds bad, but we've decided not to investigate." How can ICAC investigate when it is hampered by a \$4 million funding shortfall due to government cutbacks? A Premier should not be allowed to cut funding to a body investigating them or their Ministers. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that the bodies that are entrusted to oversee our government are independently and properly funded so that ICAC staff can do their jobs without worrying about losing those jobs.

The effect of the bill is that ICAC will no longer be reliant on the whims of the Liberal Party and The Nationals for its funding. The bill provides clear oversight of the adequacy of funding for ICAC, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Electoral Commission and the NSW Ombudsman. It does that by allowing the annual funding of those bodies to be allocated separately from allocations to other agencies and free from political interference. It is a no-brainer. As happened when I introduced my bill that sought to force members of Parliament to declare their water interests, the upper House passed the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2021 (No. 2) by a landslide. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers, together with Labor, The Greens, One Nation and the Independents all supported the bill. Of course, the Liberals and The Nationals voted against it. They have the chance to right that wrong in this Chamber and vote for a bill that, I am sure, has overwhelming support amongst the public.

The bill is drafted on the basis of four recommendations made in the *NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption Special Report: The need for a new independent funding model for the ICAC*. The bill gives effect to each of those recommendations. Recommendation 1 states:

That the parliamentary oversight committees for the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission ... make recommendations as to the funding priorities.

That is a parliamentary committee, not Cabinet. Recommendation 2 states:

That the annual budgets for [the oversight bodies] include a set contingency fund to address unbudgeted financial demands, with access to the funds governed by prescribed criteria and approval of the relevant parliamentary oversight committee.

Recommendation 3 states:

That the [the oversight bodies] be directly allocated their annual funding through the Appropriation legislation, rather than the funding being allocated to the relevant Minister, so that they are not subject to reductions in funding during the financial year.

Recommendation 4, which is probably the most important, states:

That the NSW Government remove [the oversight bodies] from the—

dreaded—

Premier and Cabinet cluster.

The bill will ensure that ICAC gets several millions of dollars more in funding, which is exactly what it needs. It will give ICAC the strength to defend itself against bullies in the Liberal Party and The Nationals. Implementing the recommendations will allow our oversight bodies to do their jobs in a frank and fearless way, which is absolutely essential in any democracy. It is the first step in curtailing the scourge of corruption that is undermining our society and our economy. Therefore, I urge members to support the bill.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General) (12:03):** The ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2021 (No. 2) was introduced by the Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC, on 11 November 2021. Relevantly, the bill is in terms that are similar to the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2020. That bill was passed in the other place in November 2020 and was subsequently negatived in this place. The Government's position on this bill has not changed from its position on the previous bill. The Government continues to work with integrity agencies on the funding model for those bodies, which do critical work for integrity in New South Wales. The Government looks forward to finalising that work. With those opening remarks, I turn to the detail of the bill.

The bill seeks to amend a number of Acts to confer on the Public Accounts Committee a role in reviewing the information used in the preparation of the New South Wales budget as it relates to the Audit Office of NSW; to establish the Public Accountability Committee of the Legislative Council as a statutory committee and to confer

on that committee a role in reviewing the information used in the preparation of the New South Wales budget as it relates to the Department of the Legislative Council; and to establish a Joint Committee on Parliamentary Services as a statutory committee, and to confer on that committee a role in reviewing the information used in the preparation of the New South Wales budget as it relates to the Department of Parliamentary Services.

The bill also seeks to confer on the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters a role in reviewing the information prepared by the Electoral Commissioner; to confer on the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption a role in reviewing the information used in the preparation of the New South Wales budget prepared by the Independent Commission Against Corruption; and, finally, to confer on the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the New South Wales Crime Commission a role in reviewing the information used in the preparation of the New South Wales budget prepared by the Ombudsman's office and the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission.

Most significantly, the bill would provide for the relevant parliamentary committees to which I have just referred to "determine" the annual appropriation for the relevant bodies. As members are aware, in November 2019 the Government requested that the Auditor-General undertake an independent review of the effectiveness of the financial arrangements and management practices of all integrity agencies, including the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The Auditor-General tabled her report on 20 October 2020. I thank the Auditor-General for that important work. I also note that the Public Accountability Committee has conducted an inquiry into the budget process for independent oversight bodies and the Parliament of New South Wales. That committee tabled its first and final reports, with the latter being tabled on 5 February 2021. The Independent Commission Against Corruption also made special reports in May and November 2020 regarding funding arrangements.

Following all of that important work, and before the Government could respond to the Public Accountability Committee's final report, on 15 July 2021 the former chair of the Electoral Commission, the Hon. Keith Mason, AC, QC; the Independent Commission Against Corruption Chief Commissioner, the Hon. Peter Hall, QC; and the Auditor-General for New South Wales, Ms Margaret Crawford, wrote to the then Premier, jointly requesting that the Government delay responding to the Auditor-General's report to allow for further consultation on the response. The Government's view is that because the weighty issues considered by the Auditor-General and the Public Accountability Committee are related, they should be responded to at the same time. Although the Government provided a response to the Public Accountability Committee's final report on 5 August 2021, as required under the standing orders of this place, that response noted that it is appropriate that the Government respond to both reports at the same time.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the funding of the State's integrity agencies continues to be based on principles of transparency, accountability and independence. The Government is carefully considering the substantial work that has been done to date. I note that recently the Premier provided this place with an update during question time, following a question from the member for Balmain. On 22 February 2022, the Premier advised the House:

... the New South Wales Government is completely focused on ensuring that the integrity agencies—not just the ICAC but all five, being the ICAC, the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the Auditor-General and the NSW Electoral Commission—have appropriate funding to continue the important work they do for the people of our State in maintaining integrity in New South Wales. Since becoming Premier, I have personally met with each of the integrity agencies and discussed the issues that they have raised with the Government regarding the funding model. There has been further engagement, and I believe that the proposal that we will put in place will adequately address the concerns that the individual agencies have raised. There are obviously different issues affecting all five of them, including the ICAC. In terms of timing, those arrangements will be in the place ahead of the 2022-23 budget process and will be implemented in the budget.

For those reasons, the Government opposes the bill.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) (12:10):** I am pleased to lead for the Opposition in debate on the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2021 (No. 2). The Opposition supports the bill and notes the important work of the Legislative Council's Public Accountability Committee on the issues and principles that the bill encompasses. The Opposition supports the principle that the integrity agencies of government should be regarded as a distinct and separate pillar to the Executive. The bill facilitates the administrative and financial independence of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Electoral Commission, the Ombudsman's Office and the Audit Office, and constitutes committees to review budget information and determine the appropriations for those agencies.

The bill now contains amendments that add the legislature to the institutions with arrangements that would support a degree of independent oversight. Along with the Parliament, those agencies are tasked with holding the Executive to account. They hold a different relationship to the Executive than many of the other structures of government and it is important to acknowledge the pressures and complications that have eventuated by having

many of those agencies bundled in with the Premier's cluster. During hearings of the Public Accountability Committee, agency leaders explained what can only be characterised as a lack of certainty and a lack of transparency around the funding for their organisations. We have heard that time and time again, and it is disappointing that the Attorney General has this morning failed to acknowledge the will of both Chambers that reform must occur. This morning we have again heard explanations relating to the time required to examine these matters. We are 11 years into this Government and, indeed, it is now more than six months since the bill was put before this Parliament, and longer since its predecessors were introduced, so those excuses are running pretty thin.

The lack of certainty around funding for those critical bodies clearly inhibits their capacity to effectively plan and, of course, satisfy their critical functions. It is bad for integrity, for our democracy and for the people of New South Wales that the Executive of Government that they have entrusted to serve their purposes is not held to account by truly independent organisations. It is clear that the current cluster arrangements deny those agencies the independence from the Executive that they require, contributing to those institutions not being able to work effectively and not being able to focus on their primary job: the scrutiny of the actions of government. During the Public Accountability Committee hearings, the ICAC Chief Commissioner gave compelling evidence about the conflict of interest between the Executive and the ICAC, which at times has moved into examining the activities of the Executive.

The events of the past year have enlivened a real question as to how institutional arrangements between the Executive and the ICAC impact the work of the latter and keep the work of both distinct. Clear lines must be drawn about how they work together. I note that the ICAC used its special powers to put two special reports before this Parliament in May 2020 and November 2020 to plead the case for adequate funding. The fact that the ICAC had to come cap in hand to this Parliament is, frankly, an embarrassment. The Opposition has listened and carefully considered those reports. We are deeply disappointed by the decision of the Executive—in this case, the decision of Premier Perrottet—to reject ICAC's calls for extra funding.

The Legislative Council sent a very strong signal that funding for the ICAC must be increased. The proposition would find broad stakeholder and community support, but unfortunately it has fallen on deaf ears with the Premier, as the Attorney General has conveyed this morning. The Opposition supports a robust, independent and properly resourced ICAC. It is essential to our democracy and these calls have gone on long enough. The Opposition supports each of the agencies outlined in the bill being properly resourced and thereby being granted the dignity of independence that they require. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (12:16):** I speak in debate on the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2021 (No. 2). The New South Wales integrity agencies—the Auditor-General, ICAC, Inspector of the ICAC, Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC], Inspector of the LECC, NSW Electoral Commission [NSWEC], and the NSW Ombudsman—are not subject to ministerial direction or control in the exercise of their statutory functions. Instead, the integrity agencies are responsible to the Parliament and are generally kept under review by parliamentary committees. Appropriations for the ICAC, LECC, NSWEC, and Ombudsman's Office are contained in part 4 of the annual Appropriation Act, entitled "Appropriations—Special Offices", and are appropriated to the Premier for the services of each of those agencies for the "accountable and responsible government" State outcome. The Audit Office receives an annual government contribution outside the appropriations.

In November 2019 the Government made a referral to the Auditor-General to review the effectiveness of the financial arrangements and management practices of the ICAC, the LECC, the NSWEC, and the Ombudsman. The Auditor-General's report, entitled *The effectiveness of the financial arrangements and management practices in four agencies*, was tabled in Parliament in October 2020. The Auditor-General made three recommendations directed to Treasury and the Department of Premier and Cabinet [DPC]. Recommendation 1 was that the Government "should implement a funding model for the integrity agencies that addresses potential threats to their independence while ensuring their accountability." It further stated:

This should be based on the following principles:

- The integrity agencies are required to demonstrate their accountability as prudent managers of their financial resources.
- Parliament's role in the budget process should be expanded to ensure Cabinet is provided with more independent advice on the funding requirements for the integrity agencies.
- There should be transparency to Parliament and the relevant agency for decisions made about funding for the integrity agencies.
- There should be structured oversight by Parliament of the performance and financial management of the integrity agencies.

Recommendation 2 of the Auditor-General's report states that the Government:

... should reassess whether the process used to apply efficiency dividends to the integrity bodies is consistent with the appropriation legislation and the independence of the integrity agencies.

Recommendation 3 states that the Government:

... should ensure that the use of cluster-based financial management arrangements does not diminish the independence of the integrity agencies and is consistent with the requirements of appropriation acts and other relevant legislation. That includes ensuring that:

- the provision of additional funding to the integrity agencies outside the budget process is consistent with appropriation legislation and includes sufficient safeguards to protect the independence of the integrity agencies
- any request for the integrity agencies to report on activities and outcomes as a part of outcome budgeting reforms is consistent with their independence.

The provisions of the Government Sector Audit Act 1983 do not require a formal government response to the Auditor-General's report. In October 2019 the Public Accountability Committee established an inquiry into the budget process for independent oversight bodies and the New South Wales Parliament. The Public Accountability Committee tabled its first report covering the integrity agencies and Parliament on 24 March 2020. It made eight recommendations.

Recommendations 1 to 4 related to reforms to the budget process for the integrity agencies, excluding the Audit Office, and recommendations 5 to 8 were directed at establishing a new funding model for the Parliament. The Public Accountability Committee tabled the second and final report of that inquiry on 5 February 2021. The final report made 13 recommendations, remaking many recommendations from the first Public Accountability Committee report. The following recommendations were made regarding the budget processes of integrity agencies:

**Recommendation 1**

That the parliamentary oversight committees for the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission review the annual budget submissions of each agency and make recommendations as to the funding priorities.

**Recommendation 2**

That the annual budgets for the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission include a set contingency fund to address unbudgeted financial demands, with access to the funds governed by prescribed criteria and approval of the relevant parliamentary oversight committee.

**Recommendation 3**

That the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission be directly allocated their annual funding through the Appropriation legislation, rather than the funding being allocated to the relevant Minister, so they are not subject to reductions in funding during the financial year.

**Recommendation 4**

That the NSW Government remove the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission from the Premier and Cabinet cluster.

...

**Recommendation 12**

That annual funding for the NSW Audit Office's performance audits be provided as a separate amount in the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill rather than as a government contribution.

**Recommendation 13**

That the NSW Government remove the NSW Audit Office from the Premier and Cabinet cluster.

Recommendations 6 to 11 were concerned with establishing a new funding model for the Parliament. Only recommendation 7, that the Government work with the legislature in adopting the United Kingdom model of funding for the Parliament of New South Wales, was directed to the Government. The Chief Commissioner of the ICAC has tabled two special reports to the Parliament regarding its funding arrangements: *The need for a new independent funding model for the ICAC* in May 2020 and *A parliamentary solution to a funding model for the ICAC* in November 2020.

The New South Wales Government is carefully considering the Auditor-General's recommendations, as well as those of the Public Accountability Committee, and the special reports tabled by the Independent Commission Against Corruption in relation to funding arrangements for New South Wales integrity agencies. The Government has deferred responding to recommendations regarding those funding arrangements at the request of New South Wales integrity agencies to allow further time for consultation, and that consultation is ongoing. The Premier has met with each of the integrity agencies and discussed the issues that they have raised with the Government. A new funding model is now being developed with a view to arrangements being in place ahead of the 2022-23 budget process. For those reasons, the Government opposes the bill.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:23):** On behalf of The Greens, I make a contribution to debate on the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2021 (No. 2).

I acknowledge the member for Murray for bringing this important bill to the Chamber. It is absolutely critical that the bill, which seeks to establish the administrative and financial independence of four oversight agencies—the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC], the NSW Electoral Commission, the Ombudsman's office and the Audit Office—is supported in the Chamber today.

Successive governments in New South Wales have attempted to avoid the significant scrutiny provided by the oversight agencies within our State. As a result of a lack of financial and administrative independence, we have seen huge levels of concern, huge levels of corruption and huge levels of mismanagement and failed delivery of significant public projects. The bill would establish committees to review the budget information prepared by the Department of the Legislative Council and the Department of Parliamentary Services and to determine amounts of appropriations for inclusion in the annual appropriation Act. The Public Accounts Committee would be empowered to review budget information prepared by the Audit Office and to determine amounts of appropriations for inclusion in relevant appropriation Acts. The Treasurer would then have to make a statement of explanation if an appropriation made by an appropriation Act is inconsistent with the determination of a committee on the appropriation.

I note the member for Sydney in the chair. How lovely it is to see an Independent in that role. It is nice to see you there, Mr Temporary Speaker. I will provide a little bit of background. Successive governments have tried to avoid the scrutiny of the ICAC for too long, and there have been serious issues around the independent funding of it. My Greens colleague the member for Balmain has worked tirelessly to highlight and expose the complete lack of funding available to the ICAC and to make sure that it delivers for the community in overseeing issues of corruption. In fact, before I was even elected to this place, he had a motion passed in this Chamber on a Thursday, on private members' day, supporting the ongoing independent funding of the ICAC. No-one on either side of the Chamber dared to oppose that. But this bill will deliver that, and what do we hear from Government members? "Oh, no, sorry, we're not interested anymore." They are happy to look like they are very supportive of independent oversight just before an election, but the election is not for another year. There is that awkward thing around current Liberal Government members being investigated by the ICAC or who are part of the discussions around it. Maybe it is a little uncomfortable for them to support independent funding, financial support and administrative support for the oversight agencies.

Let me go back to December 2019. The ICAC Chief Commissioner warned that the ICAC will be forced to shed a quarter of its full-time staff over the next financial year due to inadequate funding, reducing the organisation to its smallest size in its 30-year history. In May 2020 the ICAC produced a report on the need for a new funding model. The report contained legal advice from Bret Walker, SC, stating that the ICAC's funding arrangements may have been unlawful. In October 2020 my Greens colleague the member for Balmain, our anti-corruption spokesperson, asked Premier Berejiklian in this place whether she would act on the ICAC's request for independent funding. I will let other people draw conclusions about what might have been going on at the time that the member for Balmain was asking the Premier whether she would support the request of the ICAC for independent funding.

In October 2020 the Auditor-General released a report examining the effectiveness of the financial arrangements and management practices of four integrity agencies, finding that the role of the Executive Government in deciding annual funding for the integrity agencies presents a threat to their independence. That report included recommendations that the ICAC funding model be changed. In February 2021 the Public Accountability Committee, chaired by my Greens upper House colleague Mr David Shoebridge, held an inquiry into the budget process for independent oversight bodies and the Parliament of New South Wales, which reported in February 2021. The report recommended a range of reforms, including that the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW Electoral Commission be directly allocated their annual funding through appropriation legislation, rather than the funding being allocated to the relevant Minister, so that they are not subject to reductions of funding during the financial year.

In February 2022 the member for Balmain asked Premier Perrottet during question time when his Government would respond to the Auditor-General's report. In March 2022 we welcomed the Opposition's commitment to independent funding of the State's anti-corruption watchdog. It was very welcome to hear what the member for Summer Hill said on behalf of the Opposition. I hope that in March 2023 we might see a shift in who sits on what side of this Chamber. The Greens will be here, making sure that a potential new Labor government holds to its commitment to ensure ICAC's financial and administrative independence. Because we have been disappointed by NSW Labor before. It is not news that it promises one thing in opposition then gets into government and does a completely different thing. We are used to that behaviour, and it is good to have on record that the Opposition is committed to this. Labor has had its own problems with ICAC in the past, and I hope that, should we see a future Labor government in New South Wales, it will hold to its commitments.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Are you going to be a coalition with them?

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** I note the interjection from the Attorney General. The Greens have been calling for the Government to act on these issues for a number of years, and we strongly support the bill. I ask the Attorney General to table the secret Coalition agreement between The Nationals and the Liberals that no-one in this Chamber has ever seen. If we are talking about coalitions that are lacking transparency, let us talk for a minute about the numbers in this Chamber. Let us talk about the disgraced Liberal members sitting on the crossbench and the fact that this Government is doing everything it can to avoid a vote. Why? Because it does not have the numbers in this Chamber anymore, yet the Attorney General is asking us about coalition governments.

The Coalition is looking pretty shaky. We saw what the New South Wales Government looked like when Labor was in power last time, 11 years ago. What happened? It started losing members to ICAC and to indiscretions. Now we see the same thing happening to this very shaky Coalition Government. I thank the Attorney General for his interjection. I will talk about the shaky Coalition Government in New South Wales. Bring on a vote today, and we will see how those numbers fall and how solid the Coalition Government is.

Back to the bill at hand, we know that the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission has responsibility and oversight for the NSW Police Force. As a member of this place who has made a personal complaint to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission—perhaps the only member; I am not sure about others—I can attest to the fact that that body is underfunded and under-resourced. I hear regularly from people who have complaints about the police and take those issues to the LECC. The complaints are unable to be investigated because of a lack of resources. It took a number of years for me to go through the process because the LECC is under-resourced to handle these matters.

It is very concerning that we have police in New South Wales who are not being held to account because the LECC is not provided with enough funding. Why is that? It is because there is a continuous law and order auction in this State in the lead-up to elections that sees more funding for police and more desire to provide police with protections that do not allow for independent oversight and accountability. The Greens are absolutely committed to the independent oversight of police. We acknowledge that there is an absolute need to make sure that the independent commissions, including ICAC, are independently funded and that their administration is independent from the relevant Minister. We support the bill, and we urge Government members to look at themselves in the mirror. Then they would see that the bill would provide them with the necessary protections and transparency to stop the arrogance of a government that has been in power for way too long.

**Debate interrupted.**

#### *Sessional Orders*

#### **STANDING ORDER 365**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** In accordance with Standing Order 139, I seek leave to amend motion No. 3070 standing in my name on the *Business Paper* for a proposed sessional order. I have circulated my amended motion in its entirety for the benefit of members and understand there to be an agreement to the amended motion, which remains within the scope of the original notice of motion.

**Leave granted.**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (12:35):** Accordingly, I move:

That during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, Standing Order 365 shall read as follows:

- (1) A member may, at any time after 10.00 a.m. and up to 1.15 p.m., without leave, move a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders to deal with any matter.
- (2) A Minister may, at any time, without leave, move a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders to deal with any matter.
- (3) The mover, one other member and the mover in reply shall be entitled to speak to the motion for up to five minutes each.
- (4) When the mover is a member not supporting the Government, the response shall be by a Minister and, when the mover is a member supporting the Government, the response shall be by the Leader of the Opposition or a member deputed.
- (5) Such motions shall not be entertained during question time.
- (6) The closure shall not apply.

I express my appreciation to crossbench members for their support for the motion that I originally proposed. I particularly express my appreciation to the member for Sydney and the member of Lake Macquarie for being integral in persuading the Government to agree to what I am proposing. I also express my appreciation to the Leader of the House for his reasonable response to what I am proposing, and express my appreciation for his effort to ensure that the intention of what I propose is fully contained in the change to Standing Order 365 that is now in my amended motion.

I draw the attention of the House to the provisions of standing orders that apply elsewhere in Australia and New Zealand, lest it be thought that, somehow or other, the Opposition was taking advantage of the minority government in this State and the fact that the Government cannot guarantee control of the Legislative Assembly. I assure the House that it was not my intention that this motion be political in nature. It was simply to have the standing orders reflect the standing orders that generally apply to Westminster systems throughout the world and certainly throughout the Commonwealth of Australia.

In the Commonwealth Parliament, any member can move to suspend standing orders. They can do so in Queensland. They can do so in Victoria, although their standing orders are silent. They can do so in South Australia, which also does not limit the class of members who may move a suspension of standing orders. They can do so in Western Australia, under Standing Order 3. They can do so in Tasmania, under Standing Order 358. They may even do so in the Northern Territory, under Standing Order 252. They can do so in the Australian Capital Territory, under Standing Order 272, and they can do so in the New Zealand Parliament under Standing Order 5. They can do so in the Canadian Parliament under Standing Order 53 and, of course, they are able to do so in the House of Commons.

What I am proposing is consistent with what occurs in Westminster parliaments throughout the Commonwealth of Australia and many significant parliaments in the western world. It is not the fault of the Government of the day, but members of this place should never have been denied the ability to have the House consider a motion or issue that arises suddenly. The mere fact that I was relegated to lodging this motion as a general business notice of motion and had to wait for it to come up, which then compelled some level of negotiation with the Government, is probably due to luck rather than good management on my part. Even if members agree to the motion, it will not place the standing orders of the House in the same category as those of other Commonwealth parliaments because the motion limits the ability of member, not a Minister, to move a suspension of standing orders to between the hours of 10.00 a.m. and 1.15 p.m. Other parliaments do not limit it so much.

I acknowledge the concern expressed by the Leader of the House that, without some measure of control, the provision could be misused when members are not generally in the building or, alternatively, may inhibit the conduct of Government business in the afternoon. That is why I was prepared to make the concession. The Leader of the House took a reasonable approach in discussions. I commend the change of standing orders to the House.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (12:41):** I thank the member for Heffron and acknowledge the manner in which we were able to debate the matter constructively with the member for Sydney, who is in the chair, the member for Lake Macquarie and the member for Wagga Wagga. The member for Heffron acknowledged that the standing order, in its current form, is an overhang from the former Labor Government and not the creation of the current Government. We were able to fashion a compromise that recognises the very busy nature of the lives of members of this place so that a motion of this kind can be put at an appropriate time of the day and reflect the importance of members having some certainty around the structure of the day and the arrangements of this House. It is important that the House and its members have some reasonable certainty about the structure of the day so they can arrange their affairs around that.

By the same token, as the member for Heffron indicated, it is important to give members of this House the same rights that are available in other places and parliaments in the Westminster system. This provision should not be taken advantage of capriciously or vexatiously. It is important that the standing and sessional orders of the House regulate the conduct of this place so that there is an orderly contest of ideas and opinions. Therefore, dispensing with standing and sessional orders should not be taken lightly and must be done only with clear justification. We have landed in a place that appropriately balances all those considerations, but it will still be for members to use this amended standing order in a sensible and responsible fashion, which I am sure will be the case. I thank the Manager of Opposition Business for the courteous way that he always conducts himself, as he has done in this case. The motion as amended will be supported by the Government.

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (12:44):** I make a brief contribution to debate and particularly acknowledge the member for Heffron and the Leader of the House, whom we have been negotiating with on the matter this morning. The Independents have agreed that this is a worthy proposition. The intention of the motion of the member for Heffron is inherently honourable, as is the member himself. We were pleased to work with him and find a way through that could satisfy his intentions but also preserve the needs of the Government. As the member for Ku-ring-gai has alluded to, there is a need for some order in this House. As frustrating as that can be—particularly for non-Government members—we all understand that there is a significant contest for time in this House to transact the business of the Government but also bring forward the needs of each member's constituency. We were pleased to find a middle ground and, indeed, it is a very good position.

We know that we are in extraordinary times. With respect, at other times, when the numbers in the House were more favourable to the Government, it may not have entertained this idea. I am pleased with the way in which the Leader of the House and the Government seem more open to discussing matters regarding the operation of the House. I have never found the member for Heffron to be motivated by anything other than the best intentions in fulfilling his role and moving motions in this place, so it was not a big stretch for us to support him. I thank him, but I also particularly acknowledge the Leader of the House and others who have assisted in this matter.

The three elected Independents, with respect to the member for Murray and the member for Drummoyne, worked together and tried to involve all crossbench members. I appreciated being able to brief and seek the views of The Greens, particularly the member for Balmain; the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; and my Independent colleague the member for Murray. It is a good outcome, and I thank everybody for the way in which they transacted business and for the good spirit in which it was carried out.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:47):** I speak briefly to offer the support of The Greens on this critical motion, which was moved by the member for Heffron. I recognise that it is a slight shift from the original motion. It is good to see people having conversations across the different parties in this place—including the member for Balmain on behalf of The Greens, as the member for Lake Macquarie mentioned—to make sure that, when it comes to issues of standing orders and suspending them, we recognise there are more than two sides in this Chamber. When standing orders are suspended in debate there is often an agreement about how many minutes Government and Opposition members will speak for. One member of the collective crossbench is then allowed to speak—if we are lucky. It is important to recognise that as numbers on the crossbench grow, so too does the diversity of views in the Chamber. We need to reflect that in our response. So I thank the member for Heffron for bringing this motion. The Greens are supportive of it and, as a consensus-driven party, we are very welcoming of consensus motions coming to this Chamber that involve all of us in improving the way democracy works in this place.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Motions*

#### **WAUCHOPE BOWLING CLUB**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (12:50):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Wauchope Bowling Club on once again throwing its support behind Wauchope District Memorial Hospital.
- (2) Notes the Wauchope Bowling Club has raised a \$1,000 donation to the hospital's Rehabilitation Unit and it is the eighth year the club has supported the local hospital and patients with its fundraising endeavours.
- (3) Commends this year's donation as it will fund a height-adjustable table and slider mats to assist stroke patients and those with upper limb injuries with their rehabilitation and recovery.

The electorate of Oxley has some incredible health services; I say "services" because of the people who deliver them. They include Dorrig Multi Purpose Service [MPS]—the only MPS within my electorate and located on the coastal fringe—which provides services for aged-care residents; Bellingen Hospital, which has had around \$30 million in upgrades since we have been in government; the new Macksville hospital, a \$75 million magical hospital that has united the Nambucca Valley; and the new Kempsey hospital, which cost about \$85 million to build. At Wauchope hospital the Government has also spent a considerable amount, upwards of around \$30 million, putting in new operating theatres and improving palliative care services. On top of that, in the Oxley electorate a new Bowraville HealthOne is about to open soon. Hopefully the Minister for Regional Health will come up to open it. We also have a HealthOne at Nambucca and a very important Aboriginal medical service, the Durri medical service, that operates out of Kempsey and also assists the Bowraville community.

But it is always about the people who deliver these services, and in preparing for this motion today I was reminded that local hospital boards and fundraising have always been at the heart of the establishment of our local hospitals. The Wauchope Public Hospital board was formed in the early 1940s. On 21 June 1944 Governor John De Vere Wakehurst and C. A. Kelly, Minister for Health, gazetted the name "Wauchope District Memorial Hospital". In those days Wauchope was a thriving city and Port Macquarie was just a tiny fishing village. In the hearts and minds of many in Wauchope that is still the case, but the population signals a different view. It took several years of negotiations and fundraising before the State Government reported in April 1954 that funds would be made available in 1955 to commence the construction of the memorial hospital.



The present-day district memorial hospital has an urgent care centre, which operates from 8.00 a.m. until 6.00 p.m. seven days a week, and a purpose-built palliative unit and rehabilitation service, which services the Hastings district. I cannot stress enough the importance of that rehabilitation and palliative care service. Many people from Port Macquarie also use that service in the Hastings Valley. Having a coordinated health service and service delivery within a council area is vital and it is a very good example of a networked health district. The hospital also has a modern surgical suite in which a range of day surgical procedures are undertaken. That is a new suite that has been constructed during our time in government. Other services offered at the hospital include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, pharmacy, dietetics, as well as diagnostic services such as pathology and general X-ray.

As I said, the hospital also has an urgent care centre. There has been a lot of consternation in the community about a hospital emergency department. One of the challenges is getting specialists who are prepared to work and live in regional New South Wales. From my perspective, there is nothing more frustrating than seeing a plane full of specialists coming from Sydney to the country. We need specialists and doctors working in our hospital system, and I am pushing very hard for our specialist services to be staff specialists, as they are in a lot of Sydney hospitals. I am pushing for a model of care where Bellingen networks with Coffs Harbour and between Macksville and Kempsey staff specialists could provide Medicare-funded specialist appointments. Currently, people have to travel to either Coffs Harbour or Port Macquarie for specialist appointments, which they cannot afford to do. With travel costs, the time involved and the gap payment, sometimes people cannot afford to attend a specialist appointment. Local services are vital and need to happen. I note that the member for Wagga Wagga, Dr Joe McGirr, who is present in the Chamber, will be moving a motion relating to regional and rural health.

Again, at the heart of all this is the community—those beautiful people from Wauchope Bowling Club, the Wauchope hospital auxiliary, the Lions Club. In 2015 the Lions undertook a labour-intensive garden makeover at the hospital; in 2017 the club donated a \$13,500 specialist lifting chair; and in 2019 it donated \$10,000 for an ECG unit and \$12,000 for five pressure mattresses in the palliative care unit. The latest donation brings the Lions Club's support of Wauchope in the past seven years to a remarkable \$42,000. I note that the Government was able to improve the capacity of the local Lions Club to donate by providing community grants to install a new kitchen at its clubhouse at Wauchope Showground so that it can hold and cater for more events and functions. Then we have the hospital auxiliary. These incredible people have given so much time and commitment to their hospital. The Wauchope United Hospital Auxiliaries branch has had a difficult year and suspended its monthly stalls and meetings. However, even in the time of isolation, our volunteers, like Win, have continued to be committed to our community. Win Secombe is a standard bearer for our hospital auxiliary. She personifies what our communities do in supporting each other and supporting our communities. I commend my motion.

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (12:57):** I support the motion moved by the member for Oxley on the value of Wauchope Bowling Club to its community. I acknowledge the value of all clubs to regional communities. A club's support for its local hospital is not unique to Wauchope; it happens in every country town. Clubs are often the very heartbeat of our communities. They are a focal point. They are where people go to play sport. Obviously at Wauchope Bowling Club people play bowls. Although they joke about inadvertently sending a bowl on the opposite bias, they take their bowls very seriously. It is commendable of the Wauchope Bowling Club members to raise money for their hospital.

Bowling clubs are also a focal point for social events and activities. In my own town of Maclean, the bowling club is a tremendous support to our local community. Only last Friday the club hosted a function for the Maclean hospital auxiliary, of which my wife is a member. The auxiliary decided to have a fundraising debate and the club very graciously donated its premises as the venue. About 250-odd people attended the debate. I am a bit embarrassed to say what the topic was. It was a very prehistoric sort of topic: that a woman's place is in the home. I can see by the scepticism on the faces in the Chamber that it was a very inappropriate topic, but it was tongue in cheek. It was a topic that was debated at the golf club in Maclean some 25 years ago as a fundraiser for the public school. It raised eyebrows then and it raised a few more last Friday but, as I said, it was tongue in cheek. I was privileged to be the MC, so I asked my wife if I could tell a few inappropriate jokes. I would love to repeat them but unfortunately they were filtered out. They were not really funny; it came down to, "Why did the chicken cross the road?"

But the point is that it was tongue in cheek. It was held at the bowling club. It was for the very useful and sincere purpose of raising money for our hospital. Hospitals are probably the most important public building in any regional community, so it was terrific that John Nilon could host us at the bowling club. Even more recently, through the floods, the bowling club at Coraki has been using its premises so that volunteers can prepare meals and cook on barbecues and on makeshift gas cookers to feed about 150 or 170 people who do not have anywhere to live. They are living in houses that are basically uninhabitable, but they have nowhere else to go. The houses have been cleaned. They have probably been stripped, so there is only a shell. There is no power. And so the bowling club is using its premises very usefully to accommodate those people with meals every day.

Similarly, the Evans Head Bowling Club was used during the floods when flood victims from Broadwater and Woodburn had nowhere to go. They sheltered at the Evans Head Bowling Club, which was very gracious in preparing meals and very generous in looking after those poor people who had lost everything. They showed them some love, care and compassion, and that is what we are going to need to support the people who have lost everything. Only this morning I was talking to the general manager of Lismore City Council. He told me that about 3,100 businesses have been impacted by the floods, and that would affect about 18,000 workers. What has happened to the Northern Rivers with the flood event is really devastating, but our local clubs are rallying behind their communities. They are supporting their communities. They are providing the care and compassion that they need.

Governments can provide funding for infrastructure and are good at building roads, bridges, schools and hospitals, but the most important ingredient in any project is the people. We have to look after the people, and that is what clubs do in our local communities. They care about people. They are formed by members of the community. They have an affinity with their friends, their neighbours and their families. They have lived in their communities for generations, so they know their communities very well, and they will support important projects and important facilities, like hospitals, which require care and compassion. We know that the Government can and does build hospitals, but the creature comforts that the auxiliary provides that are not normally provided by the Government are so important for the comfort of patients. Those patients are generally our family and our friends. That is why this motion is so important. I commend the member for Oxley for bringing it to the House.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (13:03):** It is a great honour to support the member for Oxley. I know how hard she works in her electorate and how diverse her electorate is. I could not pass up the opportunity to speak on the Wauchope bowls club. My mother grew up in Wauchope. I have a large number of aunties and uncles. I will slightly digress for a moment. Wauchope is known as the town of the lasiandra. For those non-gardeners in the Chamber, the lasiandra is a shrub-like bush with beautiful purple flowers that bloom. Wauchope is renowned for lasiandras. Next time members are in Wauchope, they should look out for them; they are beautiful. Digressing a little bit further, I must tell a story. My father was a teacher in a one-teacher school at a place just west of Wauchope.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** He taught my sister.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** My father actually taught the Attorney General's sister in north Caringbah.

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** Not in Pappinbarra.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** Not in Pappinbarra; it had a population of about 15. My father was courting my mother, who was playing hard to get. The only way my father could get the 25 miles into town was to put his good clobber in a bag on a Friday and sit in the back of a truck taking pigs to market. Obviously there was a chance that he might smell like a pig by the time he got there, so he had to go into the hotel and have a shower and change.

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** Why is that relevant? What year was that?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Is that a point of order?

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** No, it's a segue.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** It is a segue. I like that word. That would have been around 1955, and that was the time when the Wauchope hospital was first founded—and also the Wauchope Bowling Club. Therefore, there is a connection to me in that. My brother was born there, but I was born a number of years later, when my father was the teacher at Bowraville, which is behind Nambucca Heads. It is a great little town; I think they call it the town of the verandah. I was born there many years ago in what they called the hospital, which was more like a house with a nurse.

My history with bowls clubs goes back a long way. I had the great honour of being the general manager of the Tweed Heads Bowls Club. It is probably the largest bowls club in the Southern Hemisphere. It has around 300 staff and we hosted many great bowls events. For a number of years I served on the national board of Bowls Australia, based in Melbourne. As a sidenote—and I know you will think this is interesting, Mr Temporary Speaker—I think I am the only living life member of the national organisation. Usually it is the more senior members that get to that level.

Bowls is a great game for any country town and even the ones in the cities. To dispel some of the myths about bowls, the average age of the Australian teams—both men's and women's—in the Commonwealth Games is around 28 to 30. They earn a fairly good income with sponsorships and endorsements and things like that. Being a clubbie, I am a big fan of clubs like the bowls club and also the RSL in Wauchope; I cannot forget them. Clubs become a central focus. They are where people go for a christening, an engagement, a twenty-first or a wedding,

and usually people end up there for a wake after a funeral. If there is a flood—which we have seen—a bushfire or a natural disaster, that is where people go. I fully endorse the motion of the member for Oxley.

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (13:08):** I congratulate the member for Oxley on a fantastic motion about the Wauchope Bowling Club. Bowling clubs do so much for our community. There are several clubs in Wollondilly. There is Picton Bowling Club, which I have a long association with. I was preselected there on 30 June 2018. That was a great day for the people of Wollondilly. The Picton Bowling Club played an important role during the fires in 2019. Last night in the Chamber I spoke about the need for a Picton bypass. There were 15 kilometres of backed-up traffic heading to that evacuation centre during those two bad days on 19 and 21 December 2019. The Picton Bowling Club looked after those who were in distress, who did not think they had a house to go to. I was there with them for a few days and they did so much for our community. It was unfortunate that a couple of my constituents first found out they had lost their homes when they saw it on the TV at the bowling club. It was a very emotional time for my community. We have got Bargo Sports Club. Mittagong RSL has also been an evacuation centre for the floods and fires and has also assisted with COVID. Our clubs do so much for our community. We cannot thank them enough. It is so good that the member for Oxley has brought this motion to the House. It is wonderful to see clubs raising money for our local hospitals. I commend the motion and congratulate the member for Oxley.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) (13:09):** In reply: I thank my colleagues who have contributed greatly to this debate. There is a theme that a hospital is very much at the heart of a community. But other parts of a community—whether a bowling club, an RSL club, a hospital auxiliary or a Lions Club—contribute to the successful running of that community by giving and volunteering their time. As I mentioned, the united hospital auxiliary has raised more than \$60,000 in the past five years. That would have been impacted by COVID, as a lot of the stalls it regularly holds would not have been able to be organised. Two weeks ago, at our regular catch-up to talk about what is happening in the local health district, the CEO of the district said there was a need for more bariatric beds. That is an area that I know our fundraising efforts will contribute to, not just the better mattresses for palliative care beds. They are the types of items that everybody is working towards to ensure our community is looked after.

That generosity of spirit of the volunteers in the Hastings Valley and Wauchope extends through the Macleay Valley, the Nambucca Valley and the Bellinger Valley. The level of commitment to volunteering from my community members is absolutely second to none. It is through them that we can make our hospitals better. It is not that they raise money for vital lifesaving equipment; it is about making the hospitals a more caring, more comfortable place. Government has the responsibility, through our taxes and management of our local health districts, to invest in equipment and facilities, but to have that support coming in and wrapping around the delivery of local hospital services is paramount. As I acknowledged at the beginning of my speech and as the member for Tweed reiterated, the funding for the establishment of the Wauchope District Memorial Hospital came through in the 1954-55 financial year. But it would not have happened if it had not had a local board pushing for it, raising the money and showing the Government of the day that that community needed the hospital.

It has been an absolute pleasure to be part of debate on this motion and part of a local community, to acknowledge those who contribute above and beyond what is expected of any community member in terms of volunteering, fundraising, weekly stalls, sausage sizzles at the Lions Club and events at the bowling club. Let us not forget that this is about acknowledging the money and the donation that has just been delivered by the Wauchope Bowling Club. The club's special event, which it holds on a regular basis, is all part of what a community is about. It is my absolute honour to represent it in this Parliament and acknowledge and call out the work of this particular group in supporting the magnificent Wauchope Memorial District Hospital.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **RURAL, REMOTE AND REGIONAL HEALTH**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (13:14):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the many submissions made to the upper House inquiry on rural health that highlighted the issues facing rural communities in accessing safe and appropriate health care.
- (2) Acknowledges the Government's appointment of a dedicated Minister for Regional Health.
- (3) Calls for the creation of a dedicated department of rural health to address the unique needs of health care in rural, remote and regional New South Wales.

**Debate interrupted.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.15 p.m.

*Announcements*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS**

**The SPEAKER:** I inform the House that a Legislative Assembly departmental staff member will be taking photos of question time today from the gallery and side doors of the Chamber to document the Chamber back in action and to generate images for parliamentary publications, including the annual report.

**CHAMBER COVID-SAFE ARRANGEMENTS**

**The SPEAKER:** Yesterday I advised the House that a member of this place tested positive for COVID-19. I inform members that today another member of this place, who tested negative yesterday, has tested positive. I will not repeat the same messages. Please take responsibility for yourselves and take care of those around you.

**NEW SOUTH WALES FLOODS MORNING TEA**

**The SPEAKER:** This morning I had the pleasure to host a morning tea alongside the President of the Legislative Council to fundraise for communities affected by the recent floods in New South Wales. I thank all members and parliamentary staff who supported that morning tea. The amount of money received and counted so far is over \$130,000, and we are still counting. It includes \$125,000 donated through the Australian Chinese Flood Relief Committee and \$2,000 from the auction of a chocolate sculpture. The chocolate sculpture was donated through the tourism Minister by the Tourism and Transport Forum and made by The Star's chefs. The member for Barwon succeeded in bidding on that item with a bid of \$1,000. He then very kindly donated it for re-auction, which raised a further \$1,000. I thank everyone for their generosity and support for this great cause. The five recipient local charitable organisations are Ballina Hot Meal Centre, Women Up North Housing, The Winsome & Lismore Soup Kitchen, Broadwater Community Hall through the Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre, and Murwillumbah Community Centre. I join with all members in wishing a speedy recovery to all communities affected by the floods.

*Ministry*

**REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** On behalf of Mr Paul Toole: I inform the House that the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Health.

*Question Time*

**FLOOD RECOVERY GRANTS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (14:20):** With the indulgence of the House, I note that the mayor of Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, Kenrick Winchester, made an appearance. I acknowledge that he is a wonderful servant of the people of that region. My question is directed to the Acting Premier. His Government has received 6,590 applications for storm and flood disaster recovery small business grants. Yet the Government has paid out only 119. Meanwhile, 3,107 applications are waiting to be assessed. Why are flood recovery grants so incredibly slow?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (14:21):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. There is no doubt about the devastation and impact the floods have had on businesses in those communities; the floods have turned the communities' lives upside down. With the support of the Commonwealth, the Government is providing several billion dollars' worth of support. That money is going into the pockets of businesses and individuals, allowing them to get back on their feet. Those businesses can make applications through Service NSW. It has been 3½ weeks since those floods impacted those communities in the Northern Rivers. A lot of people did not go back to their businesses for several weeks. For some people, going back to those areas is still raw.

Some communities have been able to speak to the concierges at a number of recovery centres that have been established around them, giving those who are seeking support and assistance the right information about what is available. Service NSW and Service Australia are a part of those centres. There is the Salvation Army and various other groups. Those looking for financial support for businesses and homes can go to the recovery centres and seek out that information. Getting that money into the pockets of business owners and home owners as quickly as possible is an objective of this Government. We know how tough it is for them. That is why today temporary accommodation support payments are hitting those people who need them. We can always do things

faster. We can always look at doing things better. We want to ensure that when a disaster of this magnitude hits, people can access the right information to get money into their pockets as quickly as possible.

Those communities have been doing it tough. Some members have been there and walked along the streets where those businesses are. I acknowledge that. When they see everything that has been taken out of those businesses and laid out on the streets, they can understand the magnitude of the problem those people face. Members should not come into this place and play a blame game. We should work together to ensure that outcomes are delivered for those communities.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

I will come back shortly to what those opposite are not doing to help those communities. But I will say that this Government is continually providing support, whether it is business support, individual support or primary producer support. We have already announced a number of support measures for those communities and there is more to come, because this Government will stand by those communities and continue to deliver for them as they rebuild.

### FLOOD RECOVERY

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (14:25):** My question is addressed to the Acting Premier. Will the Acting Premier update the House on how the Government is supporting flood-impacted communities to get back on their feet?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (14:25):** I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question. He is a member who has been in his community, supporting those who have been impacted by floods. He has been working not only in his community but also in neighbouring electorates, assisting with food supplies and the clean-up. I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for the work that he has been doing for his community and for other communities on the North Coast. It is important that we continue to shine a spotlight on those communities that have been impacted by the floods. They need this Government and this Parliament to step up and continue to do everything that we can to support them. It is pleasing today to announce that applications are now open for flood recovery rental support payments for residents in flood-impacted areas.

As I said yesterday, the sad fact is that many people will be requiring temporary accommodation because their houses are uninhabitable and will remain so for some time. The New South Wales Government is offering grants of up to \$18,000 to help those residents in highly impacted areas with the cost of short-term rental accommodation. Those one-off payments are part of the Government's \$285 million Temporary Housing Support Package and will ensure that victims have access to safe, secure and affordable short-term rental arrangements while their homes are being rebuilt. Those payments will provide up to 16 weeks of rental support, which will afford security and stability for residents as they rebuild their homes and lives. To highlight the extent of the issue, more than 9,500 people have already registered interest in receiving rental support payments. It is far from the end of the journey for those residents, and it is certainly not the last thing that the Government will do to support them. As the 16-week period draws to a close, we will reassess and provide further support if it is required.

The clean-up efforts are continuing. So far, 13,500 truckloads of material have been taken to the waste stations that the Government set up at Alstonville and Coraki. We have seen 60,000 tonnes of material put into those quarries. It is anticipated that around 110,000 tonnes of material will be disposed of in those transfer stations. We have also coordinated 126 council waste collection crews for kerbside clean-ups on the ground in the Northern Rivers and Hawkesbury areas. The crews have deployed 778 skip bins for kerbside waste removal in those areas. Importantly, we will continue to do more for those communities in each phase as they rebuild. We will continue to stand side by side with those communities in their time of need. We will also be with them every step of the way as they rebuild after this unimaginable crisis. The Government and emergency services will continue to work every day—

**Ms Prue Car:** So they do agree with climate change!

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on! It is all right for you to come in here and make a noise. I will make this point: It is expected that the Northern Rivers will see significant rainfall over the next eight days. Yesterday in this Chamber I raised an issue about a motion to be moved in the other place that would have required all of our frontline emergency services workers to provide text messages and emails.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** That would mean that our police, our Rural Fire Service, our SES and our Fire and Rescue NSW would have to put down tools and go back to the office because members opposite do not stand up for them.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** They do not stand up for our emergency services. They would rather see them sitting in an office and not helping the people out in their communities who right now need a pair of hands to support them. I find that absolutely disgraceful. The members opposite should hang their heads in shame. They talk about supporting our emergency services workers, but clearly they are not standing up for them or supporting them. *[Extension of time]*

**The SPEAKER:** I have granted an extension of two minutes, but the Acting Premier will return directly to the leave of the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It is a shame that members opposite talk about supporting emergency services workers, but I will say thank you to all of them.

**Dr Marjorie O'Neill:** It is a shame that you do not accept the science of climate change.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Hang on! I am thanking them. I say thank you to the members of our emergency services and our police. They are tired. They have been working tirelessly in those communities. Many of them have come from other parts of the State. I have spoken to some who have come from Maroubra and others who have come from the Central West. They have come from right across New South Wales to support those communities that need an extra pair of hands to assist them. What we are seeing from the Labor Party is complete hypocrisy. It is disgusting to know that the Labor Party is not supporting them. I bet the member for Lismore would be hanging her head in shame, knowing that today and yesterday Labor moved a motion in the other place to turn those people away from the work that they are required to do. It is nothing but shameful.

**Ms Jo Haylen:** No, you are shameful!

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** You can talk about that, and you know for a fact that it is wasting time and resources on the ground in these communities. The shadow Minister in the other House and those opposite in this place can make noise, but I say to them that a motion like that takes away from the good work being done. They can ask questions in question time and in budget estimates and make a submission to the inquiry, but they should not waste the time of those who are committed to helping the communities that need it. They should be ashamed of themselves and ashamed of their party.

### FLOOD RECOVERY PORTFOLIO

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (14:32):** My question is directed to the Acting Premier. Moments ago the Acting Premier said that this Parliament should "step up", particularly in flood-affected communities. On 8 March *The Australian* reported:

... The Australian can reveal that Deputy Premier and NSW Nationals leader Paul Toole declined to accept an appointment as Minister for Flood Recovery due to the prohibitive volume of work involved, according to officials familiar with the matter.

Why does the Acting Premier not step up for the people of New South Wales and tell us in this Chamber why he did not step up?

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (14:33):** I thank the member for her question. I point out that this is not about titles. It should not be about people having certain positions.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Opposition members are on a taxpayer-funded holiday every day. They are so lazy. They do nothing and then they come into the Chamber, ask a question like that and refuse to let me answer it. Those opposite do not want to hear the answer.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order—

**Mr David Elliott:** He finally withdrew his bill about local government. Where's your local government bill, Greggie?

**Mr Greg Warren:** I will get to you soon. My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. The personal reflections of the Acting Premier are irrelevant when we are talking about a serious issue that is affecting people's lives in a serious way. Local families are suffering and this is a legitimate question. The Acting Premier's reflections are unrequired.

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard enough. There is no breach of Standing Order 73. Before the Acting Premier recommences—

**Mr Matt Kean:** You're wasted up there, Greg.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Treasurer to order for the first time. The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. I call the Treasurer to order for the second time. I call the Treasurer to order for the third time. I call the member for Coogee to order for the second time. I will be clear. A question was asked of the Acting Premier. He was answering the question without attacking Labor. There were numerous interjections from Opposition members and the Acting Premier then started attacking the Opposition. In those circumstances, I am less inclined to call members to order. Opposition members will cease interjecting and give the Acting Premier a proper opportunity to answer the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I again say to Opposition members that positions should not be about anyone at this point in time. This is about making sure that we represent those communities that need support and provide them with the assistance that is required. This is going to be a long journey. I have indicated on a number of occasions that this will not take weeks or months—it will take years for those communities to bounce back and be stronger and better than before. I have been to those areas on a number of occasions already. I was there for about nine days during those first three weeks. I moved around the affected communities and talked to them directly about their needs on the ground. I am the Minister for Regional New South Wales, I am the Deputy Premier and I am—

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —responsible for regional matters, no matter what. I will go back to the question that I was asked. The position of Minister for Flood Recovery was created after the Premier and I had a discussion. We decided that, because of the work undertaken by the emergency services Minister and because she has carriage of the relevant Acts, we would appoint her as the flood recovery Minister. The Hon. Steph Cooke is doing a fantastic job in that role and she has been engaging with those communities on the ground each and every day. I thank her for the work that she continues to do.

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

#### FLOOD RECOVERY

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (14:38):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning, and Minister for Homes. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is helping communities on the North Coast recover from the devastating flooding?

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Planning, and Minister for Homes) (14:38):** I thank the member for his question and for his strong advocacy and that of other members whose communities have been impacted by floods over past weeks. As we are all too aware, the devastation the flooding has wreaked on the North Coast and Northern Rivers communities has been difficult to absorb. Families have lost loved ones, homes and businesses have been damaged or destroyed, and keepsakes and memories have been washed away, with just mud and mould left in their place. But the devastating floods could not wash away the bravery, resilience and spirit of these communities of which we are all so proud.

In that same spirit, they can be assured that the New South Wales Government has their backs. Due to the scale of the flood event, there are many obstacles the communities still face and we are working as hard and as fast as we can to help everyone who needs it. The fact is, even though this disaster has been bigger, has come on faster and has affected so many people, our response has been faster too. This Government is working relentlessly to make sure that the planning system does its job—that it helps and is not a hindrance to the complete recovery of these communities. My message to councils in flood-affected areas is this: Do what is safe, practical and necessary to support your communities. We will give you all the assistance that you require.

I have senior officials from my department on the ground this week to meet with councils and communities to continue and speed up the rebuilding process. The Planning group in the department, working with colleagues from other agencies, has set up a Housing Recovery Taskforce to help with the flood response. The immediate aim of this team is to support flood-impacted councils with the exemptions and planning tools they need right now for urgent issues such as temporary accommodation and supplies for the community. There are a range of things Planning already does to help in this regard. Managers of caravan parks and camping grounds can allow people who have been displaced as a result of the floods to stay in the park or camping ground for an extended period of up to two years. People who have been displaced as a result of the floods can install a movable home such as a caravan, on any land, without council approval, for up to two years. The Regional Flying Squad program is designed to boost the capacity of councils to deliver much-needed housing in the regions and that will be

expanded to include flood-impacted LGAs. This will give these councils access to a panel of planning experts to assess development applications for homes.

While the clean-up continues and we work to ensure that immediate needs are met, we must have one eye on the future. That is why the Government has ordered an independent inquiry into the preparation, response and recovery from this catastrophe. We have tasked two extraordinary and experienced individuals to lead this work—former police commissioner Mick Fuller and the highly qualified Professor Mary O’Kane, the current head of the Independent Planning Commission. The House will be familiar with Professor O’Kane’s exceptional experience, which is why I specifically asked her to lead this work as it relates to the planning system.

With regard to planning, the review will report and provide recommendations on: land use planning and management and building standards; the instruments, policies and programs applying to existing development in flood-prone locations across New South Wales; the instruments, policies and programs applying to proposed future developments in flood-prone locations across New South Wales; and the appropriate action to adapt to future flood risks to communities and ecosystems. They have been asked to provide recommendations on the causation, land use planning and management, including any related matters, by 30 June. I look forward to seeing those recommendations. While that work is underway, this Government will continue to keep working as hard as humanly possible to support these communities as they recover. It is a priority.

### FLOOD RECOVERY

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) (14:42):** My question is directed to the Acting Premier. Last weekend Queensland announced a \$741 million package which includes funds for retrofitting, house raising and voluntary buybacks of homes in flood-affected areas. It also raised the maximum amount of funds available to families to \$50,000. Why has New South Wales not taken the same steps to offer the thousands of people who have flood-damaged homes more options to help them rebuild?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (14:43):** I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. After witnessing the disasters that we have seen over the past number of years—whether it is droughts, bushfires, floods or a pandemic—I thank God that the Liberals and The Nationals are in government. There is no way that the Labor Party would have been able to handle the disasters that have been thrown at this State. We are providing billions of dollars in support to communities on the ground. I thank the Treasurer for the work that he has done and I know that there is more work that he is doing to ensure that those communities receive additional support and funding programs as they rebuild. In some cases it is about supporting individuals. It is about supporting businesses and primary producers. Some people have lost everything, as I have said on numerous occasions, but the Government will continue to provide support as it is needed along the way.

I also point out to the member for Londonderry that the Government has already provided several billion dollars in support to help the communities that need it right now. I will go through some of that, because I want to educate the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The Government has provided support of up to \$50,000 for small businesses and support of up to \$75,000 for primary producers. The Government has provided \$285 million for temporary housing, which is about getting a roof over people’s heads. That has been a primary focus of the Government. Motorhomes have moved into a number of communities already, including 124 motorhomes in the Northern Rivers. I heard members in the upper House today saying that a lot of those communities had no power and no water, which is absolutely wrong. They have power and they have water, and the Government has been focused on ensuring that the people who have been displaced from their homes have a roof over them as quickly as possible.

The Government has programs to support the Red Cross and \$150,000 to support private rental companies. Support for businesses totals \$150 million, of which \$80 million will be for recovery grants of up to \$10,000 to assist small businesses. Rapid support grants of up to \$50 million are available for major employers, so the Government is supporting not only those that employ only a handful of people but also the larger employers within the Northern Rivers region. Government members have always said that this will be a long journey; we have always said that several packages of support will be required for those communities. Rather than trying to play politics with people’s lives, I ask the member to have a look at the support that has been delivered on the ground already. Otherwise, my door is open; the member can come and see me and I will show her exactly what it is.

### HOSPITALITY SECTOR

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (14:46):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Lands and Water, and Minister for Hospitality and Racing. Will the Minister update the House on the Government’s support for the hospitality sector in its recovery from floods and COVID-19 and how the sector is working to support impacted communities?



**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth—Minister for Lands and Water, and Minister for Hospitality and Racing) (14:47):** I thank the member for East Hills for her question. She is a very strong advocate for the hospitality sector, not only in East Hills but right across New South Wales, and she knows hotels, pubs and clubs very well. Not many members would know she is a very fine singer and entertainer, so she knows how to support those pubs and clubs through the great work she does. The hospitality industry has suffered incredible hardship over the past two years due to COVID and now the devastating floods in the north and in western Sydney. Some of those clubs and pubs have showed incredible spirit to support the flood victims on the North Coast. Over a dozen clubs have served as evacuation centres across New South Wales. Local clubs step up to support their community in times of crisis, opening their doors when people need it most. Clubs have served as evacuation centres, which is a significant financial burden on the clubs as they offer free food, shelter and accommodation to the communities in need.

Club Evans RSL on the mid North Coast was an evacuation centre from 28 February to 8 March. At the peak, around 110 people were using the club as a shelter. The Cherry Street Sports Club opened its doors to the public to provide shelter for those who had been displaced by the floods. Club general manager Tere Sheehan said the club looked a bit like Noah's Ark, with people and animals coming in for a hot meal, shelter and some entertainment. The club called in the chefs, who were able to come in and cook meals free of charge for those who were sheltering. Fortunately for many, Lismore Heights Bowling Club was not affected and was able to open its doors. It was able to supply much-needed shelter for local police, who used its facilities as a station. Its function room was used as the police base of operations for Lismore Heights.

Our thanks go to the hotel industry as well. In and around Lismore, in particular, 20 hotels suffered extensive damage and many have closed. Many will not reopen, and for many others it will be months before they can reopen. In Lismore, all nine pubs were destroyed and the floods have had a devastating effect. But in Ballina, the local pubs have been preparing food baskets for volunteers. Local pubs have acted as collection points and safe places for rescue workers and flood-impacted locals to gather as a community. While impacted themselves, local pubs continue to provide much-needed accommodation for those who are displaced and for recovery workers—those emergency frontline workers who are doing an outstanding job.

In addition to that, the industry has launched its Clubs Helping Clubs appeal, with clubs across the State banding together and raising nearly \$1 million to help severely affected clubs get back on their feet. Government members pass on our sincere thanks. We are working with them and standing by them, doing everything we can to support them. One of the huge problems that they have is resources—getting staff for hotels, pubs and clubs in the hospitality sector. That is why we have looked at free responsible service of alcohol courses, so that people can get a free RSA course online and then they will be able to start work the very next day. I acknowledge the skills Minister for doing a sensational job and the Treasurer for also coming to the party and making sure we had enough funds to cover those 10,000 free RSA courses.

**Mr Matt Kean:** We can offset it.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** No, we won't. I did hear that comment. To assist workers on the front line in the hospitality industry, the Government is easing the automatic mutual recognition rules and regulations to make it easier for others to come across the border—particularly on the North Coast, around the Tweed and in the Northern Rivers area, where they will be able to come across. Workers will be able to start work in the hospitality industry, making it much easier for our hotels, pubs and restaurants—the hospitality sector that plays such an important role—to get back on its feet. They have done it tough over the past couple of years, through COVID, and they have provided incredible support for the poor people who have suffered as a result of floods.

### FLOOD RECOVERY

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) (14:52):** My question is directed to the Acting Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police. On 28 February Trevor Breed from helicopter operators Helitreck spoke to the RFS and was told it did not require any help at that stage. In the next few days he sent two helicopters to the Northern Rivers, where one was allocated less than 24 hours' work and the other sat for six days without turning a blade. Other companies reported being sent to Cooma instead of Ballina, where they sat doing nothing for a day and a half. It is clear that private helicopter operators were ready and willing to assist during the recent flooding disaster. Why did the Government decline those offers?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (14:52):** I thank the shadow Minister for his question. I put on the record that the Government is holding an inquiry that will look at the causes of, the preparation for, the recovery from and the response to the catastrophic floods that we have seen in 2022. That is an opportunity for the shadow Minister to put forward his concerns and views. I know that when catastrophes of this magnitude occur, one should always learn from them, do better and look at ways to improve from every aspect of them. I also know that in the

communities at Lismore, where the water rose not just to the first floor of houses but to the second floor and roof, streets were lined with people who took out their own boats to rescue enormous numbers of people from the rising floodwaters. Again, our helicopters are a part of that. I know that in some instances when people were saying, "Let's put helicopters in," helicopters were not even able to go in the sky because of the bad weather that was experienced in some areas at that point in time.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: I tried to make the question as specific as possible. The question was why did this Government decline the offer of helicopters?

**The SPEAKER:** The Acting Premier was speaking directly about helicopters.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Absolutely. I am answering the question. Again, these things will come out in the inquiry, and I encourage the shadow Minister to put them forward. The inquiry will be led by Professor Mary O'Kane and former Commissioner of Police Mick Fuller. They will be engaging with communities, councils and stakeholders. The shadow Minister will have an opportunity to put forward a submission, and I am sure that the Government and agencies will be able to learn from it and do better in the future as we see catastrophic events like this happen.

### NEW SOUTH WALES FLOODS

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) (14:55):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is helping primary producers recover and bounce back from the unprecedented floods in northern New South Wales?

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

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (14:56):** I thank the member for Tweed for his question. He is, of course, one who knows firsthand how difficult it has been. He has been out there in the gumboots—borrowed, albeit—to help people out. He has been doing a tremendous job. We know that this incredible flooding event has had impacts across parts of the State like never before. We have heard plenty of stories of how people in the Tweed electorate are dealing with it in pretty devastating ways, including stories of dairy farmers having to pour milk onto the ground because trucks cannot get in. There have been massive landslides, where we have seen entire banana plantations washed away on the side of a hill and cane crops completely destroyed. It has been devastating in the member's part of the world. The impacts of the floods should not be underestimated and, as we have heard from the Acting Premier, they are not going to be resolved very quickly. It is going to be an extended period of time before we can do that.

I can assure the people of regions like the Tweed that the State Government will be with them, shoulder to shoulder, every step of the way, to make sure that they are being looked after. The one good piece of news is that when things go wrong, we know that Australians and New South Welsh people stand together. During the floods we have seen examples of it, where people who do not know each other help each other out. Of course, neighbours who do know each other also help each other out, particularly farmers who have been digging in together to try to make the best of a pretty ordinary situation.

I want to talk in detail about some of the work of, and highlight some of the efforts made by, staff of the Department of Primary Industries [DPI] and Local Land Services [LLS]. Some of these things probably have not been talked about much. Staff from both agencies were mobilised very early. They were there to respond from the Friday immediately before the flooding event started, in preparation for what at that stage was still only a possible emergency situation. Quite quickly a State coordination centre was established to oversee the flood response that same morning, and then a local control centre was immediately activated at Grafton.

As local members would know, the response was all being controlled out of that one local centre—a purpose-built centre that was a direct investment from the Liberal-Nationals Government. As we saw the rainfall predictions and the impacts moving down the coast, local control centres were stood up in the Hunter at Paterson, in the south-east in the Shoalhaven, and in Sydney to work directly with affected landowners in those areas. More than 324 DPI and LLS staff have been involved in the response so far. Of course, many of those staff live and work in the affected areas. They are directly impacted themselves. They have been doing an outstanding job and, in most cases, have been looking after people in their communities before worrying about their own homes and properties, which is admirable.

The Agricultural and Animal Services Hotline was activated for landholders and all members of the public to request assistance for animal assessment, vet support, emergency fodder and, if required, euthanasia and burial. Of the 1,694 calls that have requested assistance so far, 75 per cent are complete and 25 per cent are in process. After an event of this scale, it is common to find many things that have gone wrong, such as fences destroyed and livestock missing, injured or, in some circumstances, killed. Disposing of deceased stock can have significant

impacts on environmental, human and animal health if not performed properly, and the LLS and DPI staff are working with private vets and locals to make sure that happens in the best possible way.

While the aftermath of this disaster is devastating, and seeing animals hurt or killed is really distressing, what we know from on-the-ground reports is that it could have been worse and a lot of the animals that are being discovered, whilst needing some assistance from vets, are possibly better than expected and not quite as bad as what we have seen previously during bushfires. Under the Australian Government-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements that have been brought forward—and the Acting Premier has mentioned it—primary producers can access up to \$75,000, including \$15,000 up-front to assist with the immediate clean-up and recovery costs and, if required, a further \$60,000 to repair more extensive damage to their properties. The Rural Assistance Authority [RAA] has now received more than 1,064 applications, with an average of 53 per day, and reports of around \$306 million worth of possible damage. [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members, and the member for Bankstown in particular, will cease talking during the Minister's answer.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** The Government is definitely committed to helping people get back on track. The Rural Assistance Authority has been working seven days a week to ensure that that money gets out the door as quickly as possible. As an example—and there are quite a few—a dairy farm in the Shoalhaven local government area estimated damage of maybe up to \$200,000, including dead cattle, loss of pastures and loss of fencing. The Rural Assistance Authority approved that application a couple of days ago, with the first \$15,000 due to roll out the door very quickly. That will help with purchasing fodder and retaining what is left of his herd to keep producing milk. An important part of this new program was getting that \$15,000 out the door very quickly, without the need for invoices at this point in time.

In the Nambucca Valley Council area, RAA has approved a vegetable farmer's first-up \$15,000 payment to assist with damage to crops and farm infrastructure, including fencing, roads, water pumps and trellis. That is all rolling out. Matthew, an oyster farmer who has been severely affected and who is dealing with massive damage to his junior and mature oysters, is already in the system, with that initial \$15,000 helping him to harvest more stock and deal with mature stock. A macadamia farmer in Eureka received \$15,000 out the door to help him mainly with cleaning the driveway and getting access to equipment to help him rebuild.

That is what this is all about. Fodder has been extraordinary. Over 2,260 tonnes of emergency fodder has now been distributed from five emergency fodder distribution sites, and that is helping people around the Northern Rivers to deal with what is an extremely difficult scenario. I was lucky enough to spend time up there to help, and the people who are up there providing that fodder are incredible and are doing an incredible job. I was joined by the shadow Minister from the other place, so we could help out and see what people are dealing with. We thank the DPI and LLS very much for their ongoing work, and we are committed to supporting primary producers.

#### DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (15:03):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning or her spokesman in this place. Concord High School is the only public high school in my electorate. Will the Minister update the House on the progress of improvements to Concord High School and other schools in my electorate?

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai—Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology) (15:04):** I thank the member for Drummoyne for his question about one of the great public schools in New South Wales. This Government is investing \$24.5 billion in education for students in primary school, high school and tertiary education. Public schools in New South Wales are educating more than 800,000 students each year, with the help of 74,000 dedicated staff.

**Ms Prue Car:** Maybe it is because you haven't built the high school at Wentworth Point.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Londonderry to order for the third time.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Members opposite do not want to hear about public education. All they want to do is chirp across the Chamber. They do not want to hear about the \$7.9 billion infrastructure expenditure over the next four years to deliver 215 new and upgraded schools in New South Wales. They do not want to hear about the largest capital investment in public education in the history of the State. They are not interested in that, but they should be.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Point of order: My point of order is about relevance under Standing Order 129. The question is about Concord High School; it is not about the Opposition. In the spirit of bipartisanship, I wish the member for Holsworthy all the best for tonight's preselection for Hughes.

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume his seat. I call the member for Fairfield to order for the first time. The Minister has the call.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** Those opposite do not care about public education, and they do not care about facts. The member for Drummoyne has been a great advocate for the public schools in his electorate. He has advocated for an upgrade to Lucas Gardens School, which was completed in 2016 and delivered 12 permanent classrooms and other infrastructure. There was also the redevelopment of Russell Lea Public School, which was delivered in 2019, with 24 new teaching spaces, covered outdoor learning areas, a library et cetera. The member for Drummoyne was instrumental in delivering the new Victoria Avenue Public School, which opened in 2015, with 28 primary classrooms.

Concord High School is one of the great comprehensive co-educational high schools in our State. It has had absolutely outstanding academic results, with 60 per cent of its students going on to tertiary education—which is more than twice the State average—and 20 per cent going to TAFE. It provides great vocational education. The member for Drummoyne has been advocating strongly on behalf of the community of that school, day in and day out. The Minister for Education and Early Learning has said that she will continue to work with the member for Drummoyne and the local school community in supporting its needs. She has committed to visiting Concord High School, and the school has already been prioritised for maintenance work and major and minor upgrades, including to the canteen and school oval.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** The member for Drummoyne, Concord High School and the Department of Education will continue to work through the proper processes to ensure upgrades to the school. I am sure the member will accompany the education Minister when she visits the school in the near future to have further discussions about the upgrades.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

The member for Drummoyne actually cares about public school, unlike those members opposite who are interrupting. They do not want to hear about facts or the record expenditure in school upgrades. They did not do any of that when they were last in power. The last time they were in government, they closed 90 schools; they did not improve 215.

#### FLOOD RECOVERY AND SMALL BUSINESSES

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (15:09):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Small Business. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting small businesses and protecting consumers in flood-affected communities?

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading) (15:09):** I thank the member for Hawkesbury for her question and acknowledge the impact of the recent floods in her electorate and her advocacy for her community. After a difficult two years, the recent floods that have ravaged northern New South Wales in particular have added a further challenge to our impacted small business community. On Monday I was in Lismore with the Small Business Commissioner, and we met with several small business owners as well as representatives from Service NSW, NSW Fair Trading and SafeWork NSW. Despite the devastation and heartache, it was incredible to see the local community band together to support each other in such a difficult time. I acknowledge the incredible men and women from Service NSW, NSW Fair Trading and SafeWork NSW, who are still helping others on the ground despite the fact that some of them have lost everything themselves.

The New South Wales Government has responded to this unforeseen event by providing targeted support to small businesses in flood-affected communities. Eligible small businesses can apply for grants of up to \$50,000. We have structured the grant so that businesses can get quick and immediate relief when they need it most, with the first \$15,000 paid up-front. Service NSW has made the grants easy to access by allowing applicants to upload photos and quotes onto its website. To date, 7,000 Flood Disaster Recovery Small Business Grant applications have been received, with a total value of \$110 million. That is quite incredible. If members take the time to go out to the recovery centres in Lismore, as I did, they will see that those people are processing 300 applications a day across all areas that the Government is servicing. It is remarkable.

The money can be used towards the cost of clean-up and repairs or to restock and reopen. In the past week the New South Wales Government has joined with the Commonwealth in announcing a further \$80 million in funding for grants of up to \$10,000 for small businesses that have suffered a 40 per cent downturn. Concessional loans of up to \$130,000 are also available to eligible businesses under the Clean Up and Recovery Grant program. These loans are particularly helpful for larger small businesses that need to restock either large parts or the entirety

of their store. As the party that champions and understands small business, we have done absolutely everything possible to ensure that this much-needed support gets to people as soon as possible. We have committed to delivering funds to successful small business applicants within five to 10 business days of their applications.

Despite the fact that this disaster has been bigger, come on faster and affected more people than other recent disasters, our response has been faster too. Recovery grants for small businesses have been delivered 43 days faster than the 2017 North Coast event, and the \$50,000 small business grants were delivered 25 days faster than in last year's event. The New South Wales Government is warning flood victims to be wary of scammers who are seeking to rip-off flood victims. We know, from previous disasters such as the bushfires, that fraudulent individuals and organisations seek to rip-off people already experiencing heartache. This includes extremely dodgy contractors charging for building works that never occur.

I recently saw firsthand the trauma caused by a predator who targeted victims of the 2019 bushfires who received lump sum insurance payouts. Andrew Lennox, of Atomic 6, ripped off vulnerable people by charging them for houses that were never built. I do not want to see this happen to other people. We stripped his licence and issued a public warning. I make this message clear to anyone who is looking to scam a flood victim: When you get caught, and you will, we will throw the full force of the law at you.

Impacted residents should only engage qualified and reputable tradesmen for any repair work. I urge the community to please check the licence details of any tradesmen that they want to engage to do work. People can do this on the Service NSW website very easily. The message is very clear: We know that flood victims throughout New South Wales have experienced many challenges. We will be there to support them, we will be there to support small businesses throughout this State and, together, we can all make sure that our community gets through this tragedy.

#### *Documents*

### **INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSION**

#### **Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 37 of the Government Information (Information Commissioner) Act 2009, I table the report of the Information and Privacy Commission entitled *Report on the Operation of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009: 2020-2021*, received this day. I order that the report be printed.

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION**

#### **Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 142 of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I table the following reports from the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, received this day:

- (1) *Operation Hosta*, dated March 2022
- (2) *Operation Tabourie*, dated March 2022
- (3) *Operation Torrens*, dated March 2022
- (4) *Operation Mokeno*, dated March 2022

I order that the reports be printed.

#### *Petitions*

### **RESPONSES TO PETITIONS**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following Minister has lodged a response to an electronic petition signed by 500 or more persons:

The Hon. James Griffin—Mattress Recycling—lodged 15 February 2022 (Mr Jamie Parker)

#### *Members*

### **MEMBER FOR KIAMA**

#### **Suspension**

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the Acting Premier, I will make a brief statement, given the nature of the matter. The House is proceeding with business with precedence and the debate on the motion of the Acting Premier pursuant to Standing Order 255. I remind members that charges have been laid against the member for Kiama and the sub judice convention now applies. As to the scope and nature of this debate, I remind members that debate

should be confined to the motion before the House. Members must respect the judicial process and refrain from referring to or reflecting on the alleged conduct which is the subject of criminal legal proceedings during any proceeding in this House.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police) (15:17):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Suspends the member for Kiama from the service of the House until the verdict of the jury has been returned on the five criminal charges laid against him on 22 March 2022 or until it is further ordered.
- (2) Acknowledges the need to ensure the alleged victims in this matter have their day in court, and therefore cannot debate the alleged misconduct of the member for Kiama contained within the said charges.
- (3) Notes that it does not have the power to withhold a member's remuneration.
- (4) Notes that the Government has sought advice on options to effect the withholding of a suspended member's remuneration, and all other entitlements.

New South Wales police have charged the member for Kiama with five criminal offences. In considering this matter, it is important that the House observes the sub judice rule and avoids discussions which could have the potential to prejudice the court proceedings. For this reason, there are real risks in this House debating the alleged misconduct of the member at this time. Most significant of these risks is the possibility that alleged victims will be deprived of their day in court. It is, therefore, appropriate that the member be suspended until the criminal proceedings have been finalised. I note that under Standing Order 254, the expulsion of a member would require this House to make judgement upon the conduct of the member, which is clearly something that is for the criminal justice system and not this House. The suspension of the member is therefore the strongest action the House can take without running the risk of prejudicing the criminal proceedings, which would be contrary to the rights and interests of the alleged victims. The courts have made it clear that the House's powers of suspension and expulsion arise by necessity and are self-protective, not punitive. They are to preserve and safeguard the dignity and honour of the Houses of Parliament and the proper conduct and exercise of their functions. Standing Order 255 provides:

If the House decides not to proceed on a matter which has been initiated in the House concerning the alleged misconduct of a Member on the grounds that the Member may be prejudiced in a criminal trial then pending on charges founded on the misconduct, the House may suspend the Member from its service until the verdict of the jury has been returned or until it is further ordered.

It has been accepted by the courts that the House has the power to suspend a member while criminal charges are pending. In passing this resolution, the House should be taken to have decided for the purposes of Standing Order 255 not to proceed on a motion to expel the member for Kiama concerning alleged misconduct by the member on the grounds a criminal trial could be prejudiced, potentially depriving the alleged victims of their day in court. The House should therefore suspend the member for Kiama from its service until the finalisation of the criminal proceedings or until further ordered by the House. I can also foreshadow that the Government will take any available action to suspend the salary and other entitlements of the member for the period of his suspension.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (15:21):** The Opposition supports a motion to suspend the member for Kiama and does not quibble with paragraphs (2), (3) or (4) of what is proposed, but, for reasons that I will refer to, the Opposition may not necessarily agree with the particular wording. However, to facilitate the decision of the House, the Opposition will support the motion as moved. I make the following observation, and I make it not in a political context but in the context of propriety and in the context of what I submit is an appalling failure by the Premier of New South Wales when faced with this challenging issue on Tuesday. The Premier said in his statement that he proposed a motion to remove the member for Kiama from the Parliament and that the member needed to defend himself of these serious charges as a private citizen. Then he had staff briefing the gallery that they were going to propose the expulsion of the member for Kiama.

With the availability of all the resources of the State of New South Wales, including an Attorney General who is a silk, the Leader of the House who is a silk—even a law student could have picked up Anne Twomey's book and had a look at *The Constitution of New South Wales*—the Premier should have known that there was no power to expel the member for Kiama from this House unless the Premier had some material that enabled this House to judge the member for Kiama to be guilty of unworthy conduct. Bearing in mind a prosecution between an accused and the Crown is actioned by the State, the Opposition assumes that the Premier must have had in his possession sufficient material to enable him to come to this House with a proposal to expel the member for Kiama. But the reality of the situation was that he did not. The Premier did not seek advice. As soon as he was faced with this challenging issue he ran to the media with a ridiculous proposition. We are talking about the Premier of New South Wales. We are talking about a member of this House. We are talking about the provisions of the standing orders and the presumption of innocence.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for South Coast will come to order.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** We are talking about a very difficult constitutional issue that relates to how the standing orders are worded. One would have expected that, before he opened his mouth from his parental leave, the Premier would have obtained some advice before saying what he said. If he had, he may well not have said:

While Mr Ward is entitled to the presumption of innocence ...

—that is novel, being a member of the New South Wales Parliament, I must say—

... as any citizen is, the standards expected of an elected member of Parliament are not compatible with the seriousness of the charges he is facing ...

The member for Kiama is presumed to be innocent. When the Premier talked about the standard of behaviour expected of a member of Parliament, the only inference that the Opposition could draw is that he knew something that nobody else knew. But the reality is that he did not know. He gave some media response to try to protect the Government's political position instead of demonstrating proper leadership, as the head of the Government of New South Wales, to protect the integrity of this House.

The Premier then went to the Crown Solicitor, not to the Attorney General who is a silk, the chief law officer, the chief adviser. There is no way that the Opposition would not accept the legal opinion of the Attorney General or would believe that his opinion would be politically tainted. He is a member of the bar, the most senior member of the bar, whose views would be respected. Instead of going to the Attorney General to be advised that on the material that was available to the House at this stage the member could not be expelled, he made an assertion and went to the Crown Solicitor's Office. The Crown Solicitor gave advice, which the Acting Premier tabled yesterday. Much of that is nonsense. To see page after page of legal advice about the risk of a permanent stay of proceedings is just nonsense. Whilst one can get a stay of proceedings because of the High Court decision of *Tuckiar v The King* and *The Queen v Glennon*, the fact of the matter is that the courts never apply it.

In a matter where I appeared for the applicant, the Court of Criminal Appeal would not give a temporary stay when the accused had front-page photos in the Sunday papers a week before an extortion trial. Whoever wrote the advice has probably never seen the inside of a criminal court. There was no risk of a stay of proceedings. The reality, though, is that unless the Premier had material with which this House could judge the member for Kiama guilty of unworthy conduct, the question of expulsion could never have arisen. This man who leads the Government is supposed to preserve and protect the Westminster system and understand the privileges of members of the House. For him to start floating and briefing out expulsion is terribly dangerous. I can just imagine some bodgie charge being implemented, say, for stealing, orchestrated by a branch of the Executive Government and then the Government moving for the expulsion of a member of Parliament. I was gobsmacked by the Premier's approach.

The other matter that I find extraordinary is that the Acting Premier moved this motion and wants to get legal advice about what the Government can now do. For the last two days, hasn't the Government had access to all the Crown law officers? Hasn't it had access to the Solicitor General? Hasn't it had access to the Crown Solicitor? Alternatively, I can give the Government a copy of Anne Twomey's book, and she might tell it how suspension applies, or that the Government can only suspend the member for Kiama, and that it cannot be punitive, and that there is no power in the House to take away his salary. There is not much point going to get legal advice; I will give it to the Acting Premier now. You cannot take away his salary unless you legislate to take away his salary. Surely they would have told you that two days ago! And if that is what you are considering, where is your bill? I am not saying that is appropriate. I am saying, Where is your bill? You have had two days to introduce it into this House. The situation is that the Government is careering around on a most serious matter, and it has absolutely no idea what it is doing.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Ku-ring-gai will come to order.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The Leader of the House should read the standing orders. Please read Standing Order 253. You might find out that what you have proposed in the notice of motion, a suspension, only applies to the precincts of the Parliament. It does not apply to an electorate office. It does not apply to entitlements. And so the member could be sitting in his electorate office. He could be direct mailing his constituents. He could be mailing potential jurors in respect of the criminal trial and no action is taken or proposed to prevent that. You want my advice? I am giving it to you now.

The Government is bumbling and stumbling around with one of the most serious of matters. It could have looked at Anne Twomey's book for the answers. There is not always a political solution to a problem. There is a right solution and there is a constitutional solution and there is a legal solution. Some issues are beyond just defending yourself in the media, and they are beyond just trying to come up with a political solution. I would have thought that maintaining the integrity of democracy and members of this House as to what should occur in these circumstances is paramount. It is not unusual for members of this House, as members know, to fall foul of the law. The whole purpose of representative democracy is to take a range of people from various backgrounds as

representatives of the entire community. It is a matter that has happened repeatedly since the history of democracy, not only in this country but also in others. There has to be a proper, fair, lawful and constitutional process that is followed, and the Government has failed miserably.

The Government has obviously not considered or understood the issues I have just raised, because of the way in which it has bumbled and stumbled around this matter. Bearing those issues in mind, the Government—it should do it; it is the government of the day—should refer the matter to the Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics Committee, of which I am a member. It has four Government members and me. It has a history of dealing with matters on a bipartisan basis. Despite what the Government might be thinking about what I said, I would hardly be dealing with the matter unfairly or politically. I would refer the matter to the privileges committee to investigate the available material and provide a recommendation to the House as to what to do in respect to entitlements, access to an electorate office and the other activities and privileges of a member of Parliament.

I do it not to be punitive and not to prejudge the matter; I raise these matters so that the House can protect itself in respect of what this motion seeks to do. No more stumbling around. No more bumbling around. No more trying to hide behind legal advice. No more trying to hide behind sub judice rules. If we look at virtually every decision of the courts in this country, we will see that they regard the way in which the House operates and protects itself and the privilege of this House to be paramount. Despite what Mr Speaker might have said about the sub judice issue, which has substance and merit, if the issue required discussion to protect this House, it would take precedence because the functions of this House are paramount. The privileges committee would operate on a confidential basis. It would not prejudice a criminal trial in respect of this matter and might provide advice that is far better than other advice offered to this point.

The Opposition supports the motion. Because of the very serious nature of the charges, it is appropriate that the member be suspended. The Government needs to address Standing Order 253 and the fact that it appears to apply only to the precincts of this Parliament. It needs to extend the suspension to the electorate office and the entitlements for the reasons that I have indicated, as well as to whatever rights—and I do not know them offhand—even a suspended member of Parliament has. Those opposite might not like what I am saying. It is not political. It is not designed to take some political advantage of a bumbling government. It is designed to ensure that this House protects itself and the Government makes appropriate decisions in the interests of protecting this legislature.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

### **HOLSWORTHY WOMAN OF THE YEAR ROBYN GRAHAM**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) (15:37):** I recognise Robyn Graham, Holsworthy's Woman of the Year for 2022. I know Robyn in her capacity as secretary for the Moorebank Rams Junior Rugby League Club. She is passionate about promoting sport both for people with disabilities and for women. She has worked tirelessly for the club to ensure it has the best facilities possible so that everyone is able to get involved. It is no secret that our local sporting clubs cannot run without the dedication and passion of their volunteers and organisers. Robyn's continued effort to support the Moorebank Rams and encouraging everyone to get involved with the sport is definitely something to be commended and greatly appreciated. She has been a strong advocate for the club's recent upgrades, such as the full replacement and upgrade of the field's lighting—which I got to switch on. That will significantly improve the environment to train and to play. The facility upgrades are going gangbusters and I am proud to be a part of the work the Moorebank Rams are doing. Congratulations to Robyn Graham for this deserved recognition. I look forward to seeing what she does next for the club.

### **AUTHOR ANTHONY CHIDIAC**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) (15:38):** I congratulate Mr Anthony Chidiac on the publication of a picture book he has written for young adult readers, *The Priceless Gift: The Lost Lake*. Anthony is a former colleague and has extensive experience with young readers, being a high school teacher in the Human Society and Its Environment department. This is his second book. *The Priceless Gift: The Lost Lake* explores the story of Lake Pedder, a glacial lake in Tasmania that provided a home to Tasmanian tigers and to Indigenous Australians many years ago. This is Anthony's first major writing project for young adults and it was completed in 2017, coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the flooding of the lake in 1972 to make way for a hydro-electric scheme. *The Priceless Gift: The Lost Lake* tells the story of the beauty surrounding the lake and the fight by conservationists to save it. I congratulate Anthony on such a beautifully illustrated story about an important event in Australian history.



### **HAWKESBURY FLOODS LOST AND FOUND FACEBOOK PAGE**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (15:39):** I commend the revival of the Hawkesbury Floods Lost and Found Facebook page in response to the devastating flooding across New South Wales. The page was the initiative of young Richie Benson following the March 2021 floods and allows members to post images of items that have been washed up in the floodwaters. Locals are also able to post appeals for personal possessions lost in the flooding. The lost and found Facebook page has attracted more than 6,000 members and speaks to the kindness of the local community. Scrolling through the page you can see remarkable finds, with people uploading pictures of water tanks, oars, entire tubs of personal belongings, boats, a pontoon and many other items that have been rescued from the floodwaters. It gives locals the opportunity to be reunited with belongings that are of great financial or personal value, after having lost so much already to the mighty river.

### **MAITLAND ELECTORATE FIRST RESPONDERS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:40):** I give my heartfelt thanks to the many local first responders for the incredible service they provide to our community. Whatever the disaster, our emergency services are there and they often work in a voluntary capacity. The recent devastating storm and flood event once again showed just how amazing our first responders are. Crews were on the ground in Maitland doing what they could, whether it was providing sandbags to desperate residents or operating flood boats to deliver essential transport, or surf rescue crews helping isolated residents get from their homes to school, work and vital appointments without tying up precious SES resources. Other crews travelled north to help with the clean-up in Lismore and surrounding areas. I pay tribute to all involved, who are always there in times of need, for their skills and expertise, for their dedication and, most of all, for their extraordinary compassion and humanity. I thank those brave men and women for their commitment and service to our community and the rest of the State.

### **SECONDARY STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) (15:41):** I welcome students who attended the Secondary Student Leadership Program today at Parliament House, and particularly Chloe and Marcus from Heathcote High School, Brooke and Paige from Engadine High School, and Jayden from Southern Cross Baptist School in my electorate. I commend those students for their leadership within their schools and their communities.

### **HOPE FAMILY COTTAGE**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (15:41):** I recently joined Emma McBride, MP, member for Dobell, and community supporters Community Bank Wyong and Iris Foundation to officially open Hope Family Cottage in Wyong. Hope Family Cottage is a newly established community-based organisation that provides supervised child contact and family support services to those experiencing family breakdown and crises. Founder Lisa Joye became aware of the need to provide a home-like environment for children to have supervised contact with their parents after working in child protection, where she provided supervised contact in offices—too often on hard floors with no toys to play with and no place for babies to have tummy time. Congratulations to Lisa and the staff at the Family Cottage. I certainly wish them every success with their excellent venture.

### **INDIA CLUB**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:42):** I acknowledge the India Club, which was founded by local Shubha Kumar, for its terrific work in supporting the Indian Australian community across the Seven Hills electorate. The India Club is a not-for-profit organisation for people of Indian origin who live in Australia. It focuses on bringing people together in order to promote leadership on a range of issues that are important to the community. It was fantastic to hear that India Club President Shubha Kumar was awarded the National Rugby League Community Harmony Medal at the annual Premier's Harmony Dinner. I congratulate Shubha on this fantastic achievement. Shubha Kumar does a terrific job leading the India Club and creating an inclusive environment for all members. The India Club is known for being rich in culture and for having a vibrant and diverse community. I wish the India Club all the best for 2022 and encourage it to keep doing such wonderful work in our local community.

### **COOKS HILL SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:43):** Thank you to the surf lifesavers of Cooks Hill. I agree with a recent Facebook post by the club, "You vollies are TRULY amazing!!" Dan Solomon, Adrian Henry, Sam Murland and Matt Lintott all answered the call for volunteers and made their way to Maitland recently to assist with our flood crisis. They positioned themselves at Lambs Valley Way to ferry flooded residents across the waters back to the safety of the mainland. Shaleigh Lennox was also on the ground at Maitland, having been on standby at Singleton. Thanks so much to these volunteers. As an MP who represents an electorate with no beach, I am always grateful for the care and concern that surf lifesavers show to my constituents when they do get

to the beach. But they also stood up to assist students, workers and other residents who needed to leave their homes and ensured that they were able to do so without tying up precious SES resources during the catastrophic flooding across the State at that time. I thank them very much for going the many extra miles to help my community where we needed it: at our homes.

### REGIONAL YOUTH TASKFORCE

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:44):** Mikal Tesfamariam and Luke Austin from the Coffs coast are among 18 young leaders selected from across New South Wales to represent their community as the third official Regional Youth Taskforce. I recently congratulated Mikal and Luke on their appointments to the ministerial advisory group, who will provide operational and policy advice to the New South Wales Government on behalf of their peers. Task force members have been selected from more than 130 applicants from each of the State's nine regions and will officially meet four times throughout the year to discuss issues impacting regional youth. The first meeting will be held in Dubbo next month and will centre around what it means to be work ready and how the New South Wales Government can better engage regional youth to prepare them for different career paths and jobs of the future. The 18 new members will build on the success of their predecessors and gain an insight into how to drive policy change and advocate for real outcomes and results for young people. I again congratulate Mikal and Luke and congratulate all members of the Regional Youth Taskforce.

### FRIENDS AND RESIDENTS OF GOULBURN SWAMPLANDS

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn—Minister for Local Government) (15:45):** I recognise the Friends and Residents of Goulburn Swamplands, also known as FROGS. The site known as Goulburn Wetlands is a remarkable project, which has made leaps and bounds thanks to the dedicated FROGS. For over 60 years, an abandoned brick pit was in the centre of Goulburn. It was untidy and littered with rubbish that would wash into our river system when the pit flooded. Today the site is an incredible nature reserve thanks to 10 years of work from FROGS. Not only have they improved the natural environment in the centre of town; by restoring the ecosystem, the site now acts as a natural stormwater treatment system. In addition, the wetlands are a terrific community recreation asset, delivering positive social outcomes and promoting community participation with educational opportunities. I publicly congratulate FROGS on their success to date in the development of the wetlands, particularly the volunteers who have devoted so many years to weed removal, plant propagation and tough physical work.

### WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE PARTICIPANT ISLA CAMERON

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) (15:46):** Isla Cameron of Toukley recently participated in the World's Greatest Shave for the Leukaemia Foundation. Isla is 10 years of age and committed to shaving off her locks at an event at Toukley Golf Club on 12 March. Isla has said that work undertaken by the Leukaemia Foundation is close to her heart, as her grandmother was diagnosed with the illness four years ago. Isla has so far raised \$2,640 via Facebook and is selling raffle tickets and holding a sausage sizzle. I congratulate Isla on being so courageous for such a great cause.

### URANA DEBUTANTE BALL

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:47):** Being at the Urana Soldiers' Memorial Hall last Friday evening for the debutante ball was a real pleasure. I give a shout-out to the Urana and Oaklands community for a fantastic evening of community spirit. The debutantes and their partners came from a variety of schools, such as St Paul's College at Walla Walla, St Francis De Sales Regional College at Leeton, and the Academy at Wangaratta. It truly was a wonderful evening, when the community came together as one. Some 270 people were there to cheer on and support the debutantes, who looked amazing. They were fantastic and well supported by their partners. I thank the organisers, Anna Ferguson and the Urana Swimming Pool Committee, and the dance instructor, Frances Day, for their hard work, dedication and tireless hours in organising an evening of fun, formality and support.

### TRIBUTE TO ANATOL DANGEL

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (15:47):** I pay my respects to the family, friends and fellow volunteers of Anatol Dangel, a beloved and dedicated volunteer, formerly of the Maitland NSW State Emergency Service unit, whom we lost in October last year. Anatol joined the SES in the mid-1990s, after serving with the Royal Australian Navy as well as spending some time with the NSW Rural Fire Service. He delivered outstanding training and excellent dedication to the SES, often spending his days at the unit maintaining equipment and ensuring that the fleet was always ready to roll out the doors when the community was in need. He is well remembered for his unbeatable catering skills. In more than 20 years of service to the SES, Anatol filled a number of roles, from member to deputy officer. He attended not only local call-outs but also major events across our region and across the State, including the 1999 Sydney hailstorm, the 2007 *Pasha Bulker* storm and Maitland

floods, Cyclone Yasi in 2011, and the April 2015 super storms in the Hunter region. Anatol has, of course, been sadly missed in the current times. Vale, Anatol Dangel.

#### **SOUTH COAST WOMAN OF THE YEAR ANNETTE CHAPMAN**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (15:49):** I congratulate Annette Chapman on being announced as the South Coast electorate's woman of the year for the significant contributions she has made to the South Coast community. Annette is a very deserving recipient of this award for all her hard work and dedication to the wider Shoalhaven community, which she has been a part of for decades. Annette served at Fire and Rescue NSW for over 20 years in the local area, participated with driver education in Ulladulla and volunteered with surf-lifesaving organisations and so many other services to our community. The Local Woman of the Year award, as we all know, recognises wonderful support given by women to their local communities. Annette is one of those women. She is an outstanding recipient and has well and truly played her part in taking care of our community, which makes her rightly deserving of the Local Woman of the Year award. I again congratulate Annette Chapman and thank her for her continued support and services to the Shoalhaven.

#### **ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:50):** Every year I am extremely proud to join my local Assyrian Australian community in celebrating the Assyrian new year. The Assyrian New Year is celebrated by Assyrians worldwide on 1 April by holding parades, festivals and cultural programs. This year's festivities will be held on Sunday 27 March at Fairfield Showground with over 15,000 members of the local community in attendance. Throughout the day, attendees will be able to experience the unique Assyrian culture, traditions and language on display. To celebrate this occasion, I will be joined by Australian parliamentarians and Federal senators, New South Wales parliamentarians, local government councillors and a range of community and religious leaders. I sincerely congratulate Hermiz Shahan, the president of Assyrian National Council Australia, and David David, the president of Assyrian Australian National Federation, on their dedication and commitment to their community. Their tireless efforts do not go unnoticed. I thank them for organising another Assyrian New Year festival and for bringing the community together to celebrate such a joyous occasion. I look forward to joining the Assyrian Australian community in celebrating this occasion every year in the future.

#### **WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE PARTICIPANT HEIDI CAROLAN**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (15:51):** I commend Heidi Carolan, a young Dubbo woman who shaved her head in an effort to help local people access the same cancer treatment as those in the city do. Heidi braved the razor and shaved her head to raise money for local charity Can Assist. It is not the first time she has raised money for cancer in this way. Ten years ago, in 2012, the then year 12 school captain at Dubbo College Senior Campus shaved her head to raise money as part of the World's Greatest Shave. This time, Heidi wanted to raise funds that would stay in the community to help local people with their cancer diagnoses. As Heidi said, cancer does not discriminate and does not discriminate on who can afford a cancer diagnosis. With a personal goal of \$5,000, Heidi managed to raise just over \$5,300, which will help Can Assist in Dubbo to support patients with the financial burden that comes with a cancer diagnosis. I was lucky enough to meet Heidi in person last night, at an event that was held in the Stranger's Restaurant. I congratulate Heidi on her fantastic achievement.

#### **COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD WINNER GLENN SMITH**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (15:52):** The principal of Canterbury Boys' High School, Mr Ross Dummett, and I were honoured to have presented the community service award to Mr Glenn Smith for his outstanding dedication to supporting young people and creating an inclusive and enriching educational environment for his students. Mr Smith is a teacher at Canterbury Boys' High School, where he has led the implementation of the enrichment program. The program caters to the specific needs of students at the school, including those from low socio-economic backgrounds, migrants and those speaking a language other than English. Through the enrichment program, Mr Smith guides students to work collaboratively, extend their analytical skills and foster a sense of curiosity and a determination to question. His commitment to teaching is shaped by his own lived experience. He says that he has his own disability, which gives him the focus and determination to overcome physical limitations and succeed in any endeavour.

#### **EAST HILLS BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (15:53):** I congratulate the students and teachers of East Hills Boys High School on their outstanding 2021 HSC results. I acknowledge the school's highest performing students: Xuan Thinh Le, who attained a mark of 94.7 in chemical engineering; Justin Xu, who attained a mark of 94.3 in architectural studies; Eddie Tran, who attained a mark of 93.9 in city planning; David Thai, who attained a mark of 93.45 in law and commerce; Nishil Singh, who attained a mark of 92.5 in mechatronics engineering; the diligent

and hardworking Amin Aazouze, who attained a mark of receiving 92 in law; Arash Basnet, who attained a mark of 90.9 in information systems; Haydn Huang, who attained a mark of 90.85 in computer science; Adam Kammoun, who attained a mark of 90.2 in pharmacy; and Muhammad Awan, who attained a mark of 90 in project management. I had the pleasure of welcoming Ajinkya Darvesh for lunch last year to acknowledge his work as a school leader in 2021. He achieved a mark of 90 in engineering and advanced science. I congratulate all those students who undertook the HSC in 2021 in the most challenging of circumstances.

#### **TRIBUTE TO ROSS BROGDEN**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) (15:54):** I acknowledge Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club life member Ross Brogden, who sadly passed away earlier this month. Over the years, Ross contributed greatly to the surf club and his local community. During his membership, Ross held multiple roles, including vice-president and sponsorship coordinator. Ross was also involved in many of the club's internal committees. Ross achieved both 25-year and 50-year service awards for his commitment to serving the Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club community. Ross's contribution to surf lifesaving was appreciated by members of the surf club and by the broader Hunter surf life saving community. Ross was highly respected by members of Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club and by the people of Swansea. I am sure Ross' legacy to both Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club and the Hunter branch will live on. The community wishes to thank Ross for his commitment to surf lifesaving. Vale, Ross Brogden.

#### **GOSFORD HOSPITAL STROKE TEAM**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:55):** I acknowledge the stroke team at Gosford Hospital who were recently awarded platinum status by the World Stroke Organization in recognition of their excellent standards and care. To achieve platinum status, hospitals must show a range of outcomes, including optimum time to treatment, coordinated care, appropriate scans and screening, and medications for discharged patients to minimise future stroke risk. Gosford Hospital's achievement comes only two months after being awarded gold status and makes it one of only three Australian hospitals to be recognised with platinum status. I congratulate Dr James Evans, the hospital's stroke lead, and team members in the emergency, CT and neurology departments, together with the many doctors, nurses, physios, speech and occupational therapists who see patients through to rehabilitation. In what has been a challenging few years, the team has gone above and beyond to maximise patient outcomes. This is a truly fantastic effort. I am proud that the Central Coast is fortunate to benefit from the expertise of the world-class, platinum status awarded Gosford Hospital stroke team.

#### **WARRAGAMBA FIRE AND RESCUE TEAM**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (15:56):** Acts of bravery and kindness surface in moments of adversity. The recent floods hit parts of my electorate pretty hard and led to some frightening moments for locals—human and animal alike. Our wonderful emergency services teams worked around the clock to prepare people and villages, and perform rescues for those who were caught in floodwaters. The Warragamba Fire and Rescue team were called upon to save a distressed pooch in Wallacia, who had been cut off by the floodwaters. Teddy, an Irish Wolfhound, was already in the wars, having had surgery just a few days earlier. With water rising around Bent's Basin area, evacuation orders came, but Teddy's owner was not able to safely get him out. Help was called, and two members of the Warragamba fires came bravely to the rescue, accessing the property by driving their four-wheel drive vehicle over the Old Silverdale Hillclimb bush track. Well done to the Warragamba brigade on its rescue mission. I thank all those who have done a fantastic job for the community.

#### **NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE MICHELLE CASHMAN**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:57):** I acknowledge my constituent Michelle Cashman.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** Hear, hear!

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** My colleagues know Michelle. She is a nurse who has worked at the Long Jetty hospital on the Central Coast. Many members would be aware that the hospital is one of the oldest on the Central Coast, having been established in 1958. Michelle has led the members of the Central Coast branch of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, as part of the Central Coast Local Health District. Currently she is fighting to represent members who are contesting the change in the arrangements at that hospital, which might see them redeployed to other parts of the health district. I wish Michelle all the best. She does a great job representing nurses in my community, and she and her colleagues do a great job serving my community on the Central Coast.

#### **YARRAWARRA ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CENTRE**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (15:58):** The Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Corindi Beach is a wonderful celebration of our Indigenous community and its important contribution to the Coffs Coast. The centre will be upgraded to become more accessible for visitors of all abilities to enjoy, thanks to

the New South Wales Government's Regional Tourism Activation Fund. A \$261,00 grant will upgrade the centre to include a new accessible amenities block, which will give people with disability the opportunity to visit the centre comfortably while learning about the culture and practices of our Indigenous community. The funding will also be used to build new covered, wheelchair-friendly footpaths and to add solar panels to the new amenities block, ensuring an economic and energy-efficient approach to the operation of the new facilities. Recently I visited the Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre, where I shared a cuppa with hospitality manager Bob Palmer, Gurehlgam CEO Julie Perkins, arts worker Lilly Clegg, Gurehlgam business advisor Kenn Payne, and community member Col Skinner.

**Business interrupted.**

*Petitions*

**PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is that the House take note of the petition.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (15:59):** First, let me make one thing clear. I firmly believe cruelty to animals is not on. There can be no excuse for wilfully mistreating any animal. People who do so are often the worst kind of humans—the kind who try to make up for their own inadequacies by taking out their frustrations on creatures over which they have too much power and who cannot take legal action against them. Sometimes the animals can give the person a good bite, kick or spray—sometimes people learn their lessons—but there will be those who will be cruel regardless. That is why we need legislation to protect animals from the worst that humans can dish out. We need laws to define the boundaries that should not be crossed. But those boundaries must be properly defined and not too broad.

That is the problem with the changes to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 [POCTAA] that are being discussed. The changes outlined in the discussion paper are too drastic. They introduce to the animal rights agenda a definition of what "cruelty" means. The introduction of the Five Freedoms for animals, the changing of the definition of "cruelty", the overarching concept of harm and, for the first time, the inclusion of psychological suffering as a form of animal cruelty make any interaction with an animal potentially fall within the ambit of POCTAA. Under the proposed changes, the Five Freedoms will become mandatory obligations to be met by anyone who interacts with animals. There will be a positive obligation under the Act, and therefore a requirement, and the aspirations of animal rights organisations will become the minimum standards.

Further, the penalties will be increased significantly. Again I make it clear that I do not think animals should be distressed, infuriated, tormented, terrified or traumatised into submission. When it comes to training animals, better results are mostly obtained with a carrot rather than a stick—that is, with positive reinforcement over punishment. But there is an obvious problem with trying to include in legislation the concept of psychological harm to an animal. The definition under discussion tries to qualify the definition of harm with the subjective phrase "unnecessarily or unreasonably", which gives rise to the possibility of people having to explain themselves constantly, most likely in court, and leaves many human-animal interactions wide open to subjective judgements.

What would constitute psychological harm? Many normal, everyday interactions that we have with animals could be construed by some as cruelty. If a farmer yells at his sheepdog to correct it while it herds sheep and the dog tucks its tail between its legs, is that abuse? If a horse needs to be broken in by making it wear a saddle or take a bit in its mouth for the first time, which it does not like, would that be inflicting trauma? Pushing a racehorse into a barrier and making it run for all it is worth could be seen as doing psychological damage. The same applies to mounted police, who condition their horses to cope with crowds and ride them to prevent violent protests, which could be seen as psychologically damaging. Catch-and-release fishing could be said to inflict psychological harm on the worm—certainly—and the fish.

Where does it end? Is leaving a dog alone all day to suffer separation anxiety going to become a punishable offence? Do we fine a family that refuses to get rid of a cat who terrorises the budgie? Do we ban loud music, power tools, cars and New Year's Eve fireworks because of their potential effect on household pets? The argument of psychological harm can be taken to a ridiculous extreme. Are we causing psychological harm by not stopping animals attacking and terrorising each other? Should we be teaching them to read and write so they can read the laws that apply to them? Should we be teaching them to talk so they can work through some of the psychological problems that we have inflicted on them? Where are we drawing the line of our stewardship of the world's animals?

Some interactions that might be construed as psychological cruelty have existed for centuries. Sections of our economy rely on interactions with animals that might come under the cloud of being psychologically harmful on subjective assessment. As human beings, we can think about what we are doing to other creatures and other people. Most people act with decency. To punish the rest by imposing such a strict set of conditions will not make things better for animals who are already illegally tormented by people who generally show a disregard for the

law and, by extension, disregard for other people and animals. I am all for improvements in legislation where it offers better protections for those who cannot protect themselves, but this would not be an improvement. That is partly a result of the flawed consultation process. Several of the stakeholders I have spoken to have told me their concerns—they say they were not listened to, and they were not mentioned in the discussion paper. Preconceived ideas skewed the consultation process and blinded the review panel to the glaring problems with these changes to the existing law. For the sake of farmers, pet owners, horse riders and others who work and own animals, we hope that good sense will prevail and the Government will abandon its plans to go down this dangerous path.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (16:04):** I contribute to debate on the petition before the House regarding the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. In the petition I note that the member for Barwon suggests the subject bill is sponsored by the agriculture Minister and the Animal Justice Party. That accusation is far from correct. It is a Government bill. The Government knows that animal welfare is an issue that the people of New South Wales take exceptionally seriously, which is why a key part of the animal welfare reform process has been, and continues to be, consulting with the community at multiple stages of the project. Let me focus on what members of the public have raised as their concerns in the petition, and give the hunting, fishing and agricultural industries peace of mind.

This Government will continue to get on with the job of delivering for New South Wales. This Government will continue to work with the community and key stakeholders to ensure that New South Wales animal welfare legislation keeps pace with the latest animal welfare science, community expectations, industry practices and technology. The new bill has existing defences as exemptions and updates them to improve clarity on how they are intended to apply. The exemptions provide certainty to people who undertake lawful activities like fishing, hunting and pest management in appropriate ways that they are not committing an offence. The bill also amends the current defence for performing certain animal husbandry practices to allow the detail of those practices to instead be included in regulation so they can be more easily updated and changed if needed.

Furthermore, the bill introduces new exemptions for live-bait fishing and aquaculture, to ensure that the inclusion of cephalopods and decapod crustaceans under the new laws has no unintended consequences for normal fishing and aquaculture practices. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Aquatic Animal Recognition) Bill 2021 is a private member's bill brought forward by the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC, that proposes to extend the definition of "animal" to include cephalopods and crustaceans at all times. It does not put forward the additional protections around fishing as proposed by the Government's draft bill. This private member's bill is not supported by the Government. I think it is important to reiterate that there are two different bills: one is a private member's bill that is not supported by the Government and the other is the Government bill.

I would also like to address the concerns raised by the member of Barwon about the powers of the enforcement agencies. The draft bill proposes no changes regarding who can bring forward prosecutions under the new laws. These provisions have been carried over from the current laws, where they have been in place since 2007. The enforcement agencies, including RSPCA NSW and Animal Welfare League NSW, NSW Police Force, the Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission and authorised officers from the New South Wales Government, will continue to be able to commence prosecutions under the new laws. These groups have powers under the new laws to investigate allegations of offences. These groups enforce animal welfare laws and run prosecutions on the basis that they have both specialised skills and knowledge of animal welfare and judicial processes. This is nothing new.

Animal welfare is an important issue for many in the community, and is one that I and the Government take very seriously. It is the Government's intention to ensure that the new laws are robust, modern and fit for purpose for all who work with animals in New South Wales.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (16:08):** I make a brief contribution to this petition debate regarding animal welfare and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. I thank the member for Barwon for his efforts and passion around this issue. I also thank the many people who signed the petition. It is a very complex and serious issue for many people around our State, particularly those in rural and regional New South Wales. We on this side of the House understand the importance of animal welfare. We also take very seriously the concerns expressed by the community. The petition process is a good vehicle for the people of New South Wales to have their say and see matters debated on the floor of the Parliament, where decisions will be made. The petition aims to express and address the many serious concerns held by the community and to give members the opportunity to present those concerns in this place. I note the specifics of the petition and I accept that the views expressed by the signatories to the petition come from a very sincere place. We on this side of the House take them very seriously. I thank the House.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:10):** I welcome the opportunity to speak to this petition debate regarding animal welfare and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act [POCTAA]. Obviously, I do so from the perspective of a veterinarian with over 20 years' experience and someone raised on the land. I acknowledge the

importance of this debate to enable us to engage in discussion and dialogue. In that regard, I think we are all genuinely concerned about the welfare of animals. At the same time, we all want to ensure that those who do the right thing are not overburdened or penalised unnecessarily. In that sense, as a veterinarian, one of the issues I considered that the member for Barwon raised is around having proper definitions in legislation. That is important when considering any new legislation. At the end of the day, the whole debate around psychological suffering is in response to the need to provide clarity, because we currently have laws that imply a level of psychological suffering through the use of terms such as "distress", "tortured", "tormented" and "infuriated".

The member for Barwon talked about subjective judgement and it is obviously important that we clarify exactly what those sorts of terms mean. I think it is important to have clarity around that. Likewise, when we use a term such as "harm" as an alternative to "pain" I certainly understand as a veterinarian—and I am sure everyone in this Chamber does also—that the welfare of an animal can be impacted on in so many ways that do not necessarily cause pain. An animal might be locked in a cage, confined or not fed—things that will not necessarily cause pain but we have a shared understanding could impact on the welfare of the animal. We should look at these elements as a way of giving clarity.

I note that the petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to withdraw from and abandon the review process for rewriting the POCTAA and not proceed to legislation. I will speak a little more about the consultation process but, at the end of the day—and to the point raised by the member for Campbelltown—it is on the floor of this House that we engage in debate to make sure the legislation we are crafting is the best legislation we can possibly put forward. So rather than abandoning it, let us bring to the House a bill that the Government is prepared to put forward. I note that the member for Coffs Harbour drew a distinction between the private member's bill—which the Government does not support—and consideration by Government of the need for a level of legislative reform in this space. I will speak about the consultation process because it is important and I think there should be visibility around it.

For some time now the New South Wales Government has prioritised protecting the welfare of animals. In 2018 the New South Wales Government released the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2018-2021, which committed to modernising legislation that is almost 40 years old to deliver an animal welfare system that is focused on outcomes and one that reflects our evolving sense of animal welfare. It is obviously a key point that our understanding and community expectations have evolved with time, and we need to ensure that we have fit-for-purpose legislation.

Penalties were part of the legislative changes that went through the House in 2021. Any draft bill looking at reform to POCTAA is not about increasing or changing penalties because that has been previously addressed by Parliament. I welcome the opportunity to engage in this debate. It is really important that we continue to look at how we can improve our animal welfare, ensuring that those who do the right thing are not having unnecessary burdens placed on them.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (16:15):** I thank my colleague the member for Barwon for sponsoring this important petition. I also thank and acknowledge the 22,656 signatories who oppose the push backed by the Liberal-Nationals Government to introduce unnecessary and impractical animal rights legislation. At the outset, I share the views of my colleague the member for Barwon, and I have no tolerance for any unnecessary harm to any animal. That is why laws and hefty penalties already exist—to deal with those few in our society who intentionally and unnecessarily harm animals, rather than to expose the majority of law-abiding people in our community to falling foul of the proposed new laws. The lives of people living in the communities of rural and regional Australia are entwined with animals, be they animals they shepherd, animals they keep as companions or pets, animals they work, animals they cull or animals they kill for sustenance. Human-animal interaction is a part of country life and an essential part of our primary industries and food chain.

Mother Nature and the animal kingdom, in and of themselves, are as cruel to animals as cruelty gets. Cruelty inflicted upon animals by other animals, including those living in the same herd or flock, involves harm by way of the aggressive and cruel tendencies of animal species, wild or domesticated. Under animal cruelty laws, a farmer would have the book thrown at him for marking or mulesing a sheep to prevent the sheep inevitably suffering from the torture of flystrike, which is a proper definition of cruelty. That is a perfect example of the craziness of this extreme animal rights legislation.

What are the parameters of psychological harm to an animal? The breaking of a horse to bit and saddle, the collaring of a dog to leash or chain, the process of forcing a worming tablet inside a distressed and resistant cat's mouth and the loading of sheep and cattle into a truck could all be determined as psychological harm under the extreme proposed laws. Even a grandfather threading a worm onto his grandchild's fishing hook or holding up the first fish he has caught for a photo before returning it to the water would be deemed as harm under the proposed new laws.

I note the very limited group of stakeholders engaged in developing the *NSW Animal Welfare Reform - Discussion Paper*, which was developed by The Nationals through the Department of Primary Industries and is the foundational document for the Government-sponsored legislative change. The stakeholder groups were cherry-picked for what was a highly targeted stakeholder consultation process. Conspicuously absent from the short list are many farm and primary industry advocacy and representative groups. No input was requested from the dairy industry, the commercial fishing or hunting industries, or the long list of stakeholders whose livelihoods and life interests depend on human-animal interaction. Several of the targeted stakeholders who actually engaged in the development of the discussion paper have reported to my Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party colleagues that they felt ambushed at the outset of their involvement in the process. They felt railroaded by the process, with their views being dismissed, with no proper consideration or incorporation in the final document, which the Government released in the dead of night.

Essentially, the unholy Liberal-Nationals alliance with the Animal Justice Party proposes to replace animal cruelty laws with an animal rights law. No wonder traditional National Party voters are looking further afield for their representation when the so-called representatives of farmers and rural Australia have quietly teamed up with an extreme left-wing party whose ultimate agenda is to outlaw any use of animals—except, of course, their Pomeranians, pugs and dachshunds, whom they dress in doggy clothes and gem-adorned collars that the dogs probably feel psychologically distressed about wearing. Members may laugh, but the reality is that psychological harm is subjective. The interpretation of this law means that almost any human-animal interaction could be considered harm. The proposed new laws threaten the future of farming, fishing and other essential primary industries, let alone cultural traditions such as fishing and hunting, which have been part of the culture of this country for over 40,000 years. I cannot put it better than my colleague in the other place the Hon. Robert Borsak, who said:

The current laws are more than adequate and deal appropriately with cruelty offences when detected. Without healthy and happy farm animals, there cannot be healthy farming communities. Without those farming communities, there cannot be healthy city and suburban communities. It is that simple.

I commend the petition to the House.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (16:19):** By leave: I feel compelled to say a few words as a metropolitan animal lover because most of my colleagues are from regional and rural New South Wales. I commend the member for Barwon for bringing this petition to the House and finding the right balance. Someone once said to me, "If you want to get a friend in Parliament, you should buy yourself a dog", and I did that about 1½ years ago when the RSPCA did a promotion in this place. I took home a German shepherd-greyhound cross, and it is probably the best thing I ever did. I can almost say that I am still here today because of the love of my dog, whose name is Dante.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** I thought it was your wife and family who keep you going!

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** Yes, we treat my dog with the greatest respect and admiration. Owning pets is one of the similarities between regional and metro New South Wales, apart from the work role they might take on in regional New South Wales. Members have to be very careful in the way we legislate to avoid taking things to extreme lengths. The petition is looking at where we draw the line, and often common sense is where we draw the line. I do not think there would be a person in this place who could endorse bad behaviour or cruelty to animals. It is just zero tolerance. Like the member for Barwon said, anyone who inflicts pain or suffering on an animal is usually the most heinous of people and would probably reflect that same behaviour towards other humans. It is really important that we do not impose harsh restrictions and that we draw the line at a sensible point. But I commend all those who have signed the petition. It is a part of our democracy that we can debate matters and pay respect to those who have raised issues, and that is why I find the petitions in Parliament such a crucial part of our democracy.

As I said, animals play an almighty role, whether they be pets, working animals or animals that help those with disability or the aged. I have found that my pet has done wonderful things for my family, and we treat him as if he were a child. That is the general consensus of most people. As has been rightfully said, we have legislation in place that outlaws bad behaviour towards animals. I do not think it should be taken too much further, to the point where we cannot draw the line anymore. How far do we take it—to the point of a stressed dog because it is left by itself or because we happen to raise our voice in an attempt to discipline? Members can look at the reports and all the information brought forward, but we need some common sense and the member for Barwon has articulated and outlined a sensible response that we can look at further down the track. Anyone that goes down the path of cruelty to animals should have the book thrown at them. It is unacceptable, and it should not take place in this day and age.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (16:24):** I thank the member for Drummoyne for his contribution, but what an absolute load of rot this



is. This is pure and simple scare tactics. The member for Orange mentioned recruiting a left-wing party. The member for Barwon had to recruit a Labor Party member to speak today because the member for Murray was punted. What was her thought on this? As the member for Barwon well knows, all of the scenarios are dealt with in the current bill. The draft bill—"draft" being the operative word—is to deal with some clarity around some of the scenarios that people are now talking about. It is clarifying the existing bill. I have already taken out one whole part of the bill because it was completely unnecessary. But a draft bill is drafted and then consulted on. There is a committee that will oversee that process. It is starting its public consultation now. Would members have that not happen?

I completely agree—and I think we all agree—that animal welfare is really important. But what the member for Barwon is suggesting is, in fact, that we should limit community consultation. He is saying we should not use the draft bill; we should just do nothing. The bill was brought in by the former Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales. It was brought in to clarify existing terms and clarify what other jurisdictions already use. This is not a brand new way of dealing with things. This is clarifying what we already have in place. Seriously, it is another attempt at scare tactics. Hunting and fishing are already exempted. The member for Barwon knows that. They are not in the bill. People do not have to apply for an exemption. They are exempted, as are all animal husbandry practices that are within normal bounds. There is nothing in there that changes. People can still do sheep handling, cattle handling, pig handling, fishing, hunting and normal practices.

I am worried the member for Barwon is specifically trying to create a problem. I understand people have genuine concerns about what this might mean specifically for them. But that is what consultation is about. There is no change to normal behaviour in any way, shape or form. There have been 6,000 responses in the two rounds of public consultation. That is not nothing. There will be more now through the parliamentary committee that has been set up to go through the process and provide a clear pathway forward. Let us let the process do what it should do rather than try to create scare tactics that only alarm people.

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (16:27):** In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Coffs Harbour, Campbelltown, Albury, Orange and Drummoyne and I thank the Minister for Agriculture, the member for Dubbo. I thank the member for Albury for his sincere approach, and I agree that definitions are very important. The feedback we have had from peak groups is that the consultation did not go well in terms of what made it into the discussion paper. I suggest that we need to go back to that consultation point with those peak groups and start there. I noticed that, when the member for Drummoyne started speaking about Dante, his whole demeanour changed. His face changed. His body language changed. He was very happy talking about his dog. I can understand that. I feel the same way about our pets at home. This is all about making sure we can continue to have those human-animal interactions that are so important to us and our wellbeing and not place them at risk.

I totally disagree with the Minister that this is a cheap shot or a scare tactic. In the discussion paper we are worried about the psychological suffering of octopuses. I reckon an octopus with a hook in it is not too happy, but I do not know how else you get it out of the water. We need to start consultation again and get back to consulting with the peak groups. I am protecting farming and the way of life we enjoy in the west, interacting with animals. It is a subjective assessment. No-one wants to see cruelty, but allowing a subjective assessment of psychological harm threatens sports and hobbies that involve animals, agriculture, fishing, hunting and pest eradication. That is the wrong balance. Existing laws make cruelty illegal and allow for prosecution. Let us not make it harder for farmers, fishers, horse enthusiasts, greyhound racers and domestic pet owners. The Government's memory is short. Greyhounds took scalps and seats. It seems we are here again.

#### **Petition noted.**

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **NSW WOMEN'S WEEK**

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly) (16:29):** NSW Women's Week ran from 7 to 13 March and was a chance for women and girls across to State to get together, support one another and share information—and for all of us in the community to celebrate women's achievements. I was privileged to attend the 2022 NSW Women of the Year Awards on 9 March hosted by the Hon. Bronnie Taylor. At the ceremony I was pleased to present the Wollondilly Woman of the Year award to Dr Anna Pham, principal of Picton Family Medical Practice. Dr Pham has practised medicine in Wollondilly for the past 15 years and was nominated for her longstanding support and tireless dedication to improving the health and wellbeing of many members of the community. Dr Pham and her team, known locally as the "Picton Angels", have provided excellent support and care and are recognised for their vital role in the frontline fight against COVID-19. I congratulate Dr Pham on the wonderful work she does.

### MAITLAND CANCER APPEAL COMMITTEE

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:30):** I was delighted to share in the fortieth anniversary celebrations with the wonderful members and volunteers of Maitland Cancer Appeal Committee and see their wonderful donation of \$400,000 to four researchers. The money went to Associate Professor Nikola Bowden for ovarian cancer research, Associate Professor Matt Dunn for children's brain cancer research, Professor Hubert Hondermark for pancreatic research and Professor Xu Dong Zhang for lung cancers. Started in 1982 by Alice Bennis, who sadly passed away last year, Ingrid Heyman and Lesley Flannery to try to get an oncology unit in the Hunter Valley, the Maitland Cancer Appeal Committee has been a driving force in providing care to cancer patients with their linen service and in raising much-needed funds, as outlined, which is part of a \$2 million contribution through their op shop and craft shop sales. Certificates of life membership of the committee were given to Fay Murray and Paula Zuhnemur for their many years of service. I congratulate everyone I have already mentioned who worked to make the day such a success. I also thank service manager Fiona Bonner and volunteers Sue Towns and Barbara Heckman for their contributions.

### KENDALL POST OFFICE

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:32):** I congratulate Kylie and Steve Kendell from the town of Kew on celebrating 10 years as licensees of the Kendall Post Office. A piece of treasured local history has recently celebrated 10 years since the Kendall Post Office licence transferred from the late Ken Moore in 2012. The Kendell family, formerly from Sydney, are now the proud owners of the heritage-listed building which was, and still is, the centrepiece of the rural town of Kendall. Since taking over a decade ago, Kylie and Steve have transformed the once predominant postal service to a new and vibrant service with electronic banking, EFTPOS facilities, homewares and giftware for all ages. The Kendall Post Office now operates over lunch and more post office boxes have been installed in the building due to an increase in clientele and online traffic. Not only that, the postal service has now extended its reach to Resort Road at Lakewood, supporting more regional families in the Camden Haven. I congratulate Kylie, Steve and children Rhys and Erin on providing this vital service in the town of Kendall and its surrounds.

### WYONG ELECTORATE WOMAN OF THE YEAR CAPTAIN PAMELA PRICE

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (16:32):** I congratulate Wyong Electorate Woman of the Year, Captain Pam Price, DSA, MSA, of Doyalson Girls Squadron, Australian Air League. Pam is well respected in the community and within the Australian Air League through her various roles within the organisation throughout the years. She has been a mentor to other squadrons and, most importantly, an inspiration to the cadets that she has supported and guided all through the years. Her dedication and commitment to the league have been demonstrated in her success in leadership and mentoring as she was awarded the Meritorious Service Award, the Distinguished Service Award in 2018 and Central Coast Volunteer of the Year 2021. Pam has been serving as a volunteer in the Air League for over 30 years at Doyalson and in roles for the New South Wales girls groups. I have witnessed firsthand her dedication to developing young people into responsible citizens, teaching them courage, dedication and knowledge. I congratulate Pam.

### MUDGEES REGION TOURISM

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (16:33):** The Mudgee region started the year with a lot to celebrate and continued to set the tone and the highest expectations for tourism campaigns, visitor services and accommodation in New South Wales. At the NSW Tourism Awards in February, Mudgee Region Tourism won gold for the Feel the Love campaign. That winning campaign was proudly supported by the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments, with \$495,000 awarded to Mid-Western Regional Council through our Bushfire Local Economic Recovery program. The Mudgee Visitor Information Centre was awarded silver for the great work that it does. I give a huge shout-out to all the members of Mudgee Region Tourism, from Gulgong, Kandos, Rylstone and Mudgee. Well done to Mid-Western Regional Council for its ongoing confidence in Mudgee Region Tourism and the marketing, public relations and digital agencies who share the vision and passion for the Mudgee region. I congratulate all the locals who embrace, celebrate and welcome visitors each and every day. Visitors really feel the love across every inch of the region, and that collaboration and love is key to its ongoing success.

### OURIMBAH NEWSAGENT ALLEN O'DONNELL

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:34):** I acknowledge Allen O'Donnell, who has operated the Ourimbah newsagency for 34 years. Recently he decided to retire, much to the delight of his wife, Faye, so that they can spend more time on the quality things in life, like caravanning and operating their hobby farm. The good news for our community is that Allen and Faye's daughter, Kelly, has taken over the operation of the newsagency, which is one of the best-stocked newsagencies I have come across on the Central Coast. We are also fortunate

that Allen still drops into the newsagency to chat with locals, including myself. I wish Allen and Faye all the very best, and I thank him and his family for their service to our community. The O'Donnell family are an important part of the Ourimbah community and have been a big contributor to it over the years they have spent operating the newsagency and will continue to be for years to come.

#### **DETECTIVE SENIOR SERGEANT VIVIENNE CRAWFORD**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:35):** I acknowledge Detective Senior Sergeant Crawford, who has served the community as a member of the New South Wales Police Force for the past 41 years. She is the second longest serving female police officer and has spent the past 14 years at Brisbane Waters Police District. She was sworn in as a serving officer in 1980 and performed a variety of roles and training in different areas. Vivienne was promoted to detective sergeant in 1998, where she led a team investigating child abuse offences. By 2004 she became a detective senior sergeant as a coordinator at the Child Protection & Sex Crimes Squad. In 2008 Vivienne commenced duties as Brisbane Waters' crime coordinator, a role she has held since. She has been active in areas such as domestic violence and crime prevention and has run the incredibly successful Brisbane Water Police District's Facebook page. It has been a pleasure working with Viv in the time that I have been the member for Terrigal. I wish her all the best in her well-earned retirement and thank her again for her stellar service and absolute dedication to protecting our community.

#### **MAITLAND WOMAN OF THE YEAR BARBARA HECKMAN**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:36):** I congratulate Barbara Heckman, Maitland's Local Woman of the Year for 2022, on her outstanding contribution to Maitland for nearly 40 years. When Barbara moved to Maitland in 1984, she joined local community groups, including the East Maitland Girl Guides support committee and Maitland Meals on Wheels. She held a number of positions at Meals on Wheels, including president. When the organisation merged to become Maitland Community Care Services, Barbara helped to facilitate the merger, as well as continuing to operate a number of the activities of the new service. As president of the Maitland branch of the Country Women's Association [CWA] for the past seven years, Barbara has led the members' participation at the 2021 CWA State Conference in Bega, where a number of members won awards, as well as Maitland's slow food markets, Total Field Days and the Maitland Show. Under her leadership, the CWA has received a number of community grants to enable the club to continue its great work. She has also been a member of the Maitland Cancer Appeal Committee since 1987. On top of all of that, she has inspired me to learn how to make scones, after 20 years of not cooking or baking.

#### **KEN AND GRETA GRAYDON SEVENTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms WENDY LINDSAY (East Hills) (16:38):** I congratulate Ken and Greta Graydon of Panania, who celebrated their seventieth wedding anniversary recently. Ken and Greta were married on 8 March 1952, the day after Greta's twenty-first birthday. They have two sons, one of whom serves the Penrith community as a doctor. After settling in Panania, Ken and Greta have attended the Panania Methodist church and the Grace Uniting Church. Congratulations, Ken and Greta, on 70 beautiful years of marriage.

#### **NORTH STEYNE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB MARKETING MANAGER DAVID COWELL**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage) (16:38):** I acknowledge David Cowell, the marketing manager of North Steyne Surf Lifesaving Club. He is exactly the type of person that you want in your community. He has been a longstanding member of North Steyne Surf Lifesaving Club and is currently the marketing manager in a volunteer capacity at the club. If there is a barbecue to be manned, David is there. If there is a fun run drinks station to be looked after, David is there. He is the epitome of a wonderful community volunteer. I acknowledge his work in the Manly community over many years and thank him for his terrific effort. He is a credit to North Steyne Surf Lifesaving Club, and I wish him all the best as he continues to be a pillar of the Manly community. Thank you, David.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF NSW**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:39):** The Country Women's Association [CWA] of NSW is a formidable institution that has laid a foundation of honour to God, loyalty to the throne and service to the country, through country women, for country women, by country women, to enrich the lives of its communities for nearly a century. Today I am proud to stand here, as a member of the Kendall branch of the CWA, to acknowledge the CWA's centenary celebrations, to be held on 21 April 2022. Foundation president, Mrs Grace Munro, was elected at the Bushwomen's Conference held in conjunction with the Sydney Royal Agricultural Show in April 1922. The early trailblazers' mission was to secure reduced train fares to the coast, obtain support for a seaside home and have maternity wards in country hospitals. This has expanded over the years to incorporate

agricultural and environmental issues, hospital support, education initiatives, show catering, social justice advocacy—and the list goes on.

As the organisation grew and expanded, the New South Wales Parliament passed the Country Women's Association of New South Wales Incorporation Act 1931. The mid North Coast group was formed in 1929, with branches from Bulahdelah and Nambucca Heads to Gloucester in the west. Now overseen by CWA State executive member for the mid North Coast group, Delma Robson, one of the group's major accomplishments of recent years was coordinating a bucket drop at the gateway hub entrance into Port Macquarie, raising \$15,000 for the CWA Disaster Relief Fund. My electorate of Port Macquarie has five CWA branches: Port Macquarie, Harrington, Hastings, Kendall and Bonny Hills. The Port Macquarie branch is the oldest among the five branches, celebrating its ninetieth birthday in 2019. Founded on 11 April 1929, its aim was to establish rest rooms to provide a place for women from the country to meet and share fellowship. Springing to action, the foundation women coordinated fundraising activities that included street stalls, card parties, dance nights and many other social functions to raise money.

During the Great Depression, the CWA supported the baby health clinic by renting and supplying the clinic sister in the old school of arts with items such as light bulbs, pillow cases, toilet paper, cotton buds, cuddle rugs, furniture and even an iron and ironing board. In 1955, with a huge increase in membership, a decision to purchase land on Town Green saw fundraising activities go into overdrive. With the foundation stone laid in 1955, the baby health centre was opened in May 1956. At that time, the decision was made to serve Devonshire teas to the public to aid in the refurbishing of the rooms. By 1990 it became clear that the rooms needed to be updated. In association with the proposed development of the Australia Post building next door, CWA donated its land in exchange for new rooms in the complex.

On 20 June 2007 the new premises were opened by the then State president, Mrs Margaret Roberts, OAM. Today's office-bearers include president Margaret Roberts, OAM, secretary Gloria Burgess and treasurer Delma Robson. The Kendall branch of the CWA was formed on 19 September 1952. In the early days, craft lessons were the main activity, with a focus on building a baby health clinic in town. Thanks to the war memorial committee, construction on the clinic and community meeting rooms began on the RSL site and was completed by November 1954. I thank the current committee for its tireless work and friendship, including president Nancy Bowman, secretary Susan Carter and treasurer Jennifer Smith. There have been many changes to the Hastings branch, which was originally formed in 1963 by the evening committee of the Port Macquarie branch before being renamed the evening auxiliary in 1964. In 1989 another change saw it called the Port Macquarie Evening branch. The daytime branch now operates from Lake Cathie and is presided over by president Chrystine Bouffler, secretary Eunice "Topsy" Roberts and treasurer Nadine Thomas.

In the southern end of my electorate, the Harrington branch of the CWA was inaugurated on 19 August 1968, focusing on a variety of craft activities for women of all ages. Recently, younger women have rejuvenated the branch, which meets at the Harrington Memorial Hall and Literary Institute. Current office-bearers include president Gwen Hudson, secretary Tracey Bonfante and treasurer Wendy Shoesmith. The Bonny Hills branch held its inaugural meeting on 28 August 2002 to meet the needs of a vibrant and growing Camden Haven community. The members hold weekly craft and friendship morning teas. The committee comprises president Frances Adams, secretary Judith Hardy and treasurer Jennifer Smith.

A dynasty of tradition, service and advocacy in our community, our influential and prominent women from past to present have established and maintained a dominant brand that is arguably the leading women's organisation in New South Wales. I thank them for it. I also acknowledge the member for Maitland and thank her for her initiative to soon commence a parliamentary friends of the CWA group, which is entirely appropriate in the CWA's 100th year. I am looking forward to being a part of that group, and I know that many other members are as well because we met as a group of women yesterday to put our names on the ledger. I congratulate the member for Maitland. It is a great thing to do. Happy birthday to the CWA for its 100th year of existence.

#### **MAITLAND ELECTORATE FLOODS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) (16:44):** First, I place on the record my enormous thanks to everyone in the emergency services, especially the volunteers, who have worked so hard to help people in my community over recent weeks impacted by flooding and storm events. Whilst Maitland has not had the catastrophic flood events that we have seen in the Northern Rivers or in other parts of the State, it has had flooding that has had significant impacts on those people whose houses have been directly affected. What is of concern to me is that it appears that the Federal Government is prepared to let this go and ignore the impact on those individuals.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Order! Members will come to order.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** People in my electorate have been writing to me and I have been making representations to the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, and now Minister for Flood Recovery, and to the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture about these people who have been put in terrible situations. Each one of the pieces of paper in my hands represents people who have suffered things like sewage coming through their houses; who have been isolated in their properties; who have been relying on flood boats and Surf Life Saving rescue to get to work, to medical appointments and to education; who have not been able to earn an income; who have had holes in their roof; who have had mould all over their walls; who have had substantial damage to their property.

A lot of farmers have been impacted, and I raised that with the Minister for Agriculture. He said there is no natural disaster declaration. But there was a massive amount of damage on the levee bank at Maitland, which is a State Government asset; it is under soil conservation. The trigger for a natural disaster event is \$240,000 of damage to State-owned assets in a local government area. I was trying to make that point to the Minister—I note he is not in the Chamber currently—but his response was that there is no natural disaster declaration. Perhaps the Minister could have pushed for that. I give credit to the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, that after three representations calling for a natural disaster declaration—where I pointed out that the flood plan for Maitland that we are operating under is from 2013 and the plans are supposed to be reviewed every five years and the plan is relying on data from 2003 from Maitland City Council—they have updated their plan. But it is not in the State Plan.

For communities like Gillieston Heights where, in 2015, some 2,000 people were isolated for eight days—if we go back to 2003 only about 150 people lived in that area—the Government is working on out-of-date information. If everybody had forgotten that, I would say it is a really bad thing that we all forgot it. But I did not forget it. I wrote to the former Minister for Emergency Services in August 2020, saying to him that the flood plan is out of date and that he has now had seven years since it should have been reviewed to get it done. He has not done that and we have had a major flood event.

**Mr Mark Coure:** It is actually a council plan.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is not the council plan; it is the State Government's. The council's plan is pretty much up to date—much more so than the State Government's. But this creates problems for our community. We had a flood event in November and this Government did nothing. I begged the Government to make a declaration because of the damage to the levee banks and the impact on our farmers who have had thousands of dollars of loss from that flood. Nothing was done. They were completely ignored. And now, in March, I have had to beg and beg and beg for my community. I have been advised that a Federal declaration is about to come out about individual assistance to those people who are living with sewage having flowed through their home, with their carpets ruined and their electrical white goods blown out. There is money there on the table that the Federal Government has, but it wants to make an announcement. The Government just needs to do it. It needs to get the money out the door.

The Acting Premier criticised Labor in question time today for asking for accountability. But our community is hurting and they are very distressed. We need to know that this money is getting out the door. We need to help those people; they have been through so much. Everyone in our State has been through so much over the past few years and when help is promised by the Government in a media release and it is not delivered, it is a massive betrayal and the Government should be ashamed. But, more importantly, just get the money out the door to the people who need it, please.

### HARMONY WEEK

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors) (16:49):** This week, as everyone will know, is Harmony Week, a week where we take the time to celebrate diversity, and reflect on how multiculturalism can play a great role in making societies such as ours great places to live, work and visit. The beginning of Harmony Week also marks the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. That day is also a time to acknowledge that while we have come a long way to becoming the harmonious multicultural society we are, there is still more work to do. I truly believe that New South Wales is the world's greatest multicultural success story. We are home to people from more than 300 cultures and ancestries, who speak 275 different languages and dialects and practise 144 different religions. Of course, that includes the traditional owners of this country, who are the world's oldest living culture.

Even though we have so many people from so many different backgrounds here in New South Wales, we all live harmoniously together. No matter who we are, where we are from or what we believe, we all call New South Wales home and try to make our State the best place it can be. That is what I believe makes New South Wales the greatest multicultural success story. We are setting an example to the rest of the world of how such a diverse population can live together as one. For me, in celebrating the spirit of Harmony Week, I started a

conversation around languages. On Monday, which was Harmony Day, I called for everyone across New South Wales to find a second language that resonates with them and to take the time to learn it. While I would like to see more focus placed on learning a second language in schools, I want to see it go well beyond this. I want people to be empowered to learn a language through university, TAFE, or at one of the 250 community language schools we have in New South Wales.

More than that though, I would love to see people take an interest in the language that their family, friends, work colleagues and even neighbours speak. There is something incredibly powerful in being able to speak another language, and I know that it will lead to enormous benefits not just for individuals, but for society. So to everyone in New South Wales celebrating Harmony Week, instead of just acknowledging just how great our diversity is, I call on each and every one of them to be a part of it. Turn to your neighbour, friend or work colleague and ask them how to say hello, goodbye, yes, no, please or thank you in their language. They might just find that not only will they build a greater relationship with them but also it might motivate them to go and learn more.

Having, I believe, the best job in government, I am incredibly privileged to be invited to many events across New South Wales, where I get to experience just how much colour and vibrancy our multicultural communities add to New South Wales. Earlier this week I was able to help launch the George's River Council's Better Together anti-racism campaign. This campaign is a great example of how we can work with the community to build knowledge of how to respond effectively to racism and support those who are targets. The New South Wales Government, including my agency, Multicultural NSW, works hard to combat racism in all its forms through important programs including the Community Partnership Action [COMPACT] program, the New South Wales Community Resilience and Response Plan and the Remove Hate from the Debate project.

As we recognise and celebrate Harmony Week, I offer my warmest wishes to everyone in our great State. It truly gives us a moment to pause and reflect on our achievements and how our diversity adds to our Australian identity. It gives us the chance to celebrate our commitment to our diverse multicultural society and to take pride in our belief that everyone belongs. More than anything, this is because we all value the hope and the opportunity that our country has to offer. Long before I became Minister, multiculturalism has always been dear to my heart, not just for the benefits it gives us as a society, but for paving the way for the great relationships we all have. And that is what is so great about living in New South Wales: despite our differences, we all get along, and we all live harmoniously together.

### FLOOD RECOVERY

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) (16:54):** Emotions are understandably on a tightwire in the flood-impacted communities of the lower Richmond Valley and other flood-impacted communities as the clean-up begins and reality sets in. We all know someone impacted by this record flood event. The Northern Rivers is a region of communities, and we all feel their pain. Family, friends and neighbours are all contemplating their futures. "Where can we find a roof over our head for tonight and tomorrow? How do we rebuild? Where do we get a job? How do we pay the bills? Do we stay or go?" They are continually mulling over these questions in their heads as they clean the mud from their flood-ravaged homes, all the while walking past the flood debris lining the streets—debris that only a short time ago was valuable lifelong possessions and precious memories, now putrid and stinking and bound for landfill.

The debris was visible when I visited Coraki, Woodburn and Broadwater with Premier Dominic Perrottet and Deputy Premier Paul Toole as soon as the floodwaters receded and access was possible. But what stood out so prominently from our visit was the courage and resilience of our people. We use the word "resilience" all too frequently, but it was on show when we visited those flooded communities. We heard of their courage when they rallied together in their tinnies, without a thought for their own safety, to help their friends and neighbours and people they did not even know. There was the incredible commitment of the SES and other first responders to continue to help others when they had lost their own homes and when the SES shed in Woodburn was flooded. There was generous support and donations to people in evacuation centres from everyone far and wide. To those who have come from far and wide to lend a hand, we say thank you, thank you, thank you.

This was a flood the likes of which we have not seen since Noah built his ark. We were spread thin on the ground, and there is no doubt that it is largely through the incredible efforts of our volunteers and good-hearted community members that we are where we are today. Visiting the community at Broadwater was inspirational and uplifting. We arrived at happy hour, after driving through streets lined with flood debris only to be greeted with smiles, incredible stories of bravery and wonderful stories about how flood evacuees were looked after. I was absolutely astounded by their positive attitude. There were Australian Defence Force members in camouflage fatigues, SES members, council staff, members of the community, and family and friends all having a drink and celebrating that they were alive and well. They were telling me that there were people worse off than them, which I found hard to reconcile when 80 per cent of Broadwater was underwater. I felt like I was in the M\*A\*S\*H 4077th unit; there was chaos and devastation all around, but I was safe in this happy haven.

This is why we use the word "resilience" about our communities. This is how we recover and rebuild our lives and our communities. We need to look after each other and support each other with meals, hospitality, donations, love and conversation and anything else, just to be there for each other. There will be support from all levels of government every step of the way on the journey to recovery. The New South Wales and Commonwealth governments are committed to providing all levels of support to individuals, primary producers and businesses. We know that the Government is very good at building infrastructure, like roads, bridges, hospitals and schools, but the most important ingredient in any infrastructure project is people. There is no value in funding infrastructure projects without people to benefit from them. This recovery must focus on our people.

It will take more than assistance from the Government to rebuild lives and communities. It will take love, compassion and care for our friends and neighbours. Let us endorse the values that we hold so dear in our regional communities and that make living there so special. It will need the same level of support shown by our local heroes who manned the tinnies to save lives and the same generosity we saw immediately after the flood, with donations and physical help. Going forward, let us continue to help each other. Let us support families, friends and neighbours, and do our bit to rebuild their lives and the communities that make the Northern Rivers such a special place to live.

### SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE SMALL BUSINESSES

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (16:58):** I acknowledge 2022 NSW Small Business Month and the immense diversity of small businesses that operate across the electorate of Seven Hills. Throughout March the New South Wales Government celebrates Small Business Month. The aim of this event is to celebrate and recognise the fantastic contribution that small businesses make to their local communities. Across New South Wales there are an estimated 73,000 small businesses operating all year round. These businesses form the lifeblood of our economy, providing an amazing number of services for the residents of this great State. The electorate of Seven Hills is currently home to an astounding 9,198 individual small businesses. They operate in a range of industries, including construction, scientific services, finance, retail, transport, social assistance, health care, telecommunications and trade.

Small Business Month is an occasion to celebrate the many individuals who have dedicated their working lives to developing local trade and opportunities for thousands. Not only do they provide essential services, like construction and retail, but they also generate employment and livelihoods for many. A fantastic example representing the importance of small businesses is local gym owner Sheriden Wardle. Sheriden owns and runs Pump Station Fitness, a 100 per cent family-run gym in the heart of Seven Hills, just down the road from the electorate office. I recently received an email from Sheriden with the exciting news that her family had recently become the full owners of Pump Station Fitness and were undergoing the process of rebranding to refocus the business and bring about positive changes in the local community.

Sheriden told me that her family was planning to run regular charity drives to support various groups throughout the community, like the Restore store. This ties in closely with the gym's operational focus on the mental and physical wellbeing of individuals. In the words of Sheriden, who is a former professional athlete, Pump Station is more than just a gym; it is part of the local community. This is perhaps the best perspective on how small businesses function within our communities. Not only do they provide positive services for locals, but customers are also often able to form lifelong friendships and meaningful connections with owners and other customers.

The theme of the 2022 Small Business Month is "Rebuild, Recharge, Renew", with a government-wide focus on helping small businesses across the State find new opportunities to prosper after a difficult few years through COVID-19, bushfires and floods. It is no secret that small business owners across the State have undergone an intense period recently. COVID-19 lockdowns meant many owners had to make difficult decisions, but countless individuals also found new ways to provide services. Many local businesses across Seven Hills partnered with community groups, like the Lions Club or Karabi Community and Development Services, to provide aid to those that were struggling through tough times.

Small Business Month has been a huge success in recent years. In 2019 small business owners had the opportunity to engage with international and local markets while developing an effective strategy to do so, while 2020 saw business owners learn how to effectively manage workload, successfully plan for the future and connect with industry leaders within their field. The 2022 Small Business Month has just as many workshops and chances for small business owners to grow their skills and network. This year there is a specific focus on expanding growth into online spaces. Information seminars are being run to equip business owners with knowledge on how to engage with the social media space, use email resources and understand individual cybersecurity needs.

Local councils and small business chambers were encouraged to apply for New South Wales Government grants to assist them with hosting events across the month. These groups have shared insights and tools on how

to help local small businesses get back on their feet, selecting from a range of recommended topics, like branding, marketing, customer connection, utilising technology and maintaining a mentally healthy workspace. It is fantastic that the Government is providing an avenue for businesses to connect with their communities. I encourage the residents of New South Wales, particularly those in the Seven Hills electorate, to make an active effort in supporting small businesses in their community this month, whether it is a family-run mechanic shop, a supermarket or a tuckshop down the road. They form the cornerstone of our economy and communities, and we should all make an effort to support them more often.

### **AZERBAIJAN-ARMENIA CONFLICT**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:03):** This Parliament has a long history of standing with the Armenian-Australian community. Rightfully, it has taken a principled stand on issues of importance to that community. In 1997 the New South Wales Legislative Assembly took a bold step, becoming the nation's first jurisdiction to recognise as genocide the 1915 and 1923 massacres against the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek peoples perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire.

In 2013 the Legislative Council reaffirmed our commitment to standing with truth and justice, condemning the Ottoman Empires' successor state, the Republic of Turkey, for continuing to deny the first genocide of the twentieth century and similarly called on the Australian Government to follow the example we set as a Parliament and acknowledge this crime against humanity. On 27 September 2020, as modern manifestations and tribulations of the Armenian genocide were playing out against the Indigenous Armenian population of Artsakh, the Legislative Assembly condemned the Turkish-backed Azerbaijani aggression and recognised the self-determination of the Republic of Artsakh. As a Parliament, our position is clear. Not fazed by party politics or ulterior motives, we recognise that by not condemning and learning from history, humanity is doomed to repeat it. I confidently speak on behalf of all parliamentary colleagues and say that this Parliament does not, and will not, tolerate the injustices that threaten the very existence of the Armenian people.

In the highlands of Western Asia, wedged between the Democratic Republic of Armenia and the brutal dictatorship of Azerbaijan, lies a cradle of civilisation, over 100,000 indigenous Christian Armenians who wake up every day fearing it is their last. The date 27 September 2020 marked the commencement of this nightmare. On that day, Azerbaijan's unprovoked, indiscriminate shelling of Artsakh, use of cluster munitions and Turkish-backed Syrian rebels commenced under the cover of a global pandemic. This nightmare has not ended. For 500 days now, 70 per cent of the Republic of Artsakh remains under Azerbaijani occupation. For 500 days now, the people of Artsakh have faced sporadic military attacks against their villages, schools and hospitals and the repeated violation of their human rights.

For 500 days now, Cultural Heritage Watch has reported that over 2,000 ancient religious and cultural heritage sites have been desecrated and erased in what the European Parliament has called "historical revisionism". For 500 days now, over 200 Armenian civilians and soldiers remain captive, as prisoners of war in unimaginable, inhumane and brutal conditions. For 500 days now, Azerbaijan has implemented the most wicked and shameful tactics aimed at terrorising and psychologically traumatising the people of Artsakh.

As I speak before the Parliament today, for over 10 days, over 100,000 people are living in a part of the world experiencing gut-wrenching, sub-zero freezing temperatures without access to natural gas for heating their homes, schools and hospitals—100,000 men, women, children, the elderly, the sick and the infirmed. Azerbaijan has refused to allow Armenian authorities to repair the gas pipelines that provide vital heating to this population. Whilst the international community is rightfully focused on the invasion of Ukraine, the cries of the people of Artsakh are falling on deaf ears. I will not let that happen.

We, the New South Wales Parliament, should not let this happen. I speak directly to the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne. Whilst I praise our nation for the generosity we have shown to our friends and allies in their time of need, the Armenian people desperately need our help, now more than ever. I call on the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister to reassess the Armenian National Committee of Australia's request for urgent humanitarian assistance to Armenians, who are currently living without access to proper heating and continue to deal with the mass-humanitarian crisis resulting from the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war.

I speak directly to the OSCE Minsk Group. Enough is enough. Azerbaijan must be stopped. The petro-dictatorship of Aliyev must be stopped. The ongoing military violations discredits the Russian 9 November ceasefire agreement following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, which in turn resulted in the occupation of Artsakh. Since 13 May 2021 Azerbaijan has attacked the sovereign borders of Armenia time and time again. Australia must do better. The international community must do better. The Christian Armenians must be protected and helped in their time of greatest need.



### DUBBO ELECTORATE WOMEN ACHIEVERS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (17:08):** From 7 March to 13 March communities across New South Wales—including my electorate—came together to support, share wisdom and celebrate the achievements of women. I was especially pleased to help recognise some of the amazing women who make remarkable contributions in our communities. Lorraine Holland is one such outstanding individual and I was very excited to name her as my 2022 Dubbo Electorate Woman of the Year. Last year Lorraine lost her husband, Alex, after an 11-year battle with Alzheimer's disease. Lorraine was his carer for most of that time and, after his passing, has been determined to raise awareness of Alzheimer's and its impact on sufferers and their families. Late last year, Lorraine and her daughter Laura hosted the Holland Open Garden and Memory Makers Art Prize. People entering the art competition were asked to submit works drawing on a memory, in a nod to the devastating impact dementia and Alzheimer's have on the cognitive capacity of sufferers.

It certainly got people talking, and raised around \$13,000 for the Dementia Australia Research Foundation and Opal Homestead Residential Care Community in Dubbo. Lorraine's advocacy, and commitment to Al's legacy, is certainly an inspiration to us all. I was very proud to be able to recognise Lorraine at a recent Community Leader's Breakfast in the heart of Dubbo. I was joined by the Minister for Women, Bronnie Taylor, who just happened to be there for the announcement. I wish somebody had filmed it—the look on Lorraine's face as it slowly dawned on her what was happening, and the fact that she was about to be named, was priceless. She gave me a great big bear hug and the Minister had tears in her eyes. It really was a lovely moment. We are so lucky that as part of this job we have the privilege of helping to recognise people like Lorraine. I thank Lorraine for everything she does for the Dubbo community and dementia and Alzheimer's sufferers more broadly.

Jane Kemp is another outstanding woman in my electorate whose contribution has flown under the radar—until now. Jane was a finalist for the Cancer Institute NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year, what fantastic recognition for her work right across western New South Wales. Jane is the executive leader for Aboriginal strategic development at CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes. She is dedicated to progressing reconciliation and supporting Aboriginal people. Drawing on her connections to family, community and country, she helps Aboriginal men rediscover and embrace their cultural identities and advocates for communities in far western New South Wales. Jane developed the first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan and Aboriginal cultural appreciation training for CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes and increased the proportion of Aboriginal employees, who now make up almost one-third of the team. Thank you Jane for everything you do.

Women's Week is not just about recognising fantastic women such as Jane and Lorraine. It is also great to see events across the State uniting, celebrating and empowering women and girls of all ages in our communities. I am proud this Government financially supported many of those, including Business Mudgee to deliver its Working Women's Wellness Luncheon. The number of small businesses in the Mudgee region is only growing post-COVID and a lot of those ventures are being driven by women. The event was a great opportunity for locals to hear from like-minded women and take some time out to focus on their own wellbeing and personal development. A huge shout out to keynote speaker Amorette Zielinski, the founder of Central West Mums, an online community that brings together women across the region. The Q&A panel with local wellness experts was a hit. Well done to Danna Maloney, Portia Lindsay, Shahna Smith, master of ceremonies Alyse Pilley and all the team at Business Mudgee for pulling the event together.

I am also proud of the financial support we are providing to a series of Strong Like a Girl self-defence classes in Dubbo, which is an initiative of the Dubbo Violence Prevention Collective. The classes are running alongside a series of health and wellbeing sessions on a variety of topics such as body image, domestic violence, sexual health, financial abuse, anxiety and depression, reproductive health, menopause, breast screening and elder abuse. Each session focuses on topics relevant to a particular age group, helping to create a safe learning environment.

The great thing about this initiative is that it is a true collaboration between a range of government and non-government organisations, including the NSW Police Force, Department of Communities and Justice, BreastScreen NSW, TAFE NSW, Services Australia, PCYC, Uniting Mission Australia, Western Women's Legal Support, Western Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Orana Support Services, Interrelate, Staying Home Leaving Violence, Creative Community Concepts, LiveBetter and Connecting Community Services. A huge shout out to everyone involved, including collective members Angela Coker, Mark Noonan, Alina Zimmerman, Bec Putland, Kerry Seaton, Rebecca Camilleri, and Taekwondo coach Kym Housden, whose experience and expertise empowering women and young girls made the whole program possible. Women's Week was a great chance to recognise special women in our communities, but many more women fly under the radar and I thank them for their contributions each and every day.

### RHODES FIRE BRIGADE CENTENARY

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) (17:13):** I am pleased to acknowledge the centenary of Rhodes fire brigade. I was honoured to attend a celebration on Friday 11 March to remember the brigade's continuous dedication to the Rhodes community and surrounds. Brigade No. 66, Rhodes Fire Brigade, was established on 11 March 1921, following a request from the Rhodes Progress Association. Concord Alderman Charles McIlwaine, who had been a fireman at Darlinghurst, was appointed captain of the eight-man brigade. The brigade's equipment consisted of a large hose reel and 400 feet of hose. The centenary celebrations were planned for 2021 but needed to be rescheduled due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was fitting to hold these celebrations on the 101st anniversary of the brigade. The original members of Rhodes Volunteer Fire Brigade were Captain Charles McIlwaine, James Lindsay, William Brown, Robert Brown, George Howie, Fred McCrea and John Sandilands. It remained a volunteer brigade until July 1923, when the district officer deemed that it was appropriate to be placed on the list for partially paid volunteers.

Early fires the brigade fought included the fire on board SS *Our Elsie*, which was moored at Rhodes in February 1927, the fire at McKenzie's timber yard in January 1929, and the fire at John Darling's flour mill in July 1929. The station's first motorised fire appliance was a Willys-Knight fire engine, transferred from Grafton on 14 April 1930. The Rhodes brigade fought major fires at Ellis' timber yard in 1937 and 1943, McKenzie's timber yard in 1930, Timbrol in 1938 and the Barnes Bacon factory in 1934. During World War II, the brigade expanded to over 30 members, including auxiliary firemen. The years following World War II saw a major expansion of the chemical industry in the Rhodes area and a number of serious fires. These included fires at CSR in 1961, Berger Paints and Union Carbide in 1967, and the Mortlake gasworks in 1968. In more recent times, the Rhodes fire brigade was deployed to the Southern Highlands and Blue Mountains in the 2019-20 bushfires.

Charles McIlwaine's son Charles, who was known as Vic, became captain after his father retired. After Vic's retirement, in 1981, his son Greg McIlwaine was captain, which is a position he still holds today. The involvement of the McIlwaine family in the Rhodes fire brigade over the course of a century has been a remarkable story of community service. If you were to count the accumulated service of all members of the McIlwaine family, you would amass over 150 years. I make particular note of Captain Greg McIlwaine, who received an acknowledgment at the centenary celebration for 55 years of service, with 38 of those as captain. Communities are built through people giving back and contributing to the place where they live and work. I recognise the McIlwaine family for its significant contribution to the Rhodes brigade and to the Rhodes community more broadly.

At the centenary celebrations held earlier this month, I met Belinda McMartin, the CEO of the Museum of Fire. The museum created a historical account, researching the local history of the Rhodes brigade and producing a wonderful book with information using photographic and primary records taken from Fire and Rescue NSW, the City of Canada Bay council and those held by the museum. There is an interesting 101-year history of the brigade. I cannot stress enough the importance of documenting this history for future generations. I convey my deepest gratitude to the past and present serving firefighters of the Rhodes fire station. In times of crisis, they have been there for my community. I express my deepest appreciation for them. The Rhodes fire station is a valued and important asset in my community. I once again acknowledge and thank Captain Greg McIlwaine, Deputy Captain Lachlan Coles and the 11 firefighters currently stationed with the brigade. Here's to 100 more years of the Rhodes fire brigade.

### DUST DISEASES

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (17:18):** In greater western Sydney, south-western Sydney and my electorate are thousands of workers who worked without masks in dust-ridden factories. They are elderly now. When my dad and uncles came here in the mid-1960s, they worked at a factory called Metters. That was before work health and safety laws and the industrial relations expertise and corporate knowledge that went into that legislation. We built all of that over the past 100 years. But, over the past 20 or 30 years, a lot of elderly gentlemen have been affected by dust diseases. During the recent review of the Dust Diseases Scheme, Barry Robson, the president of Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia, made a striking point. He explained that, almost 100 years ago, the Government of the day set up the Dust Diseases Board to tackle dust-borne diseases, particularly silicosis. He said, "Dust Diseases Board was set up just under 100 years ago because of silicosis. Workers were dying from silicosis." We are talking about almost a century ago, when work health and safety was not at the forefront.

Fast forward to today, and the Perrottet Government's inaction on dust diseases has taken us back to the nineteenth century. As many as 600,000 workers are currently exposed to silica dust. That figure comes to us from submissions to the dust diseases review. In just two years, silicosis cases reported by icare have increased from 10 cases a year to more than 100 a year. Silicosis is a deadly disease that ruins the lives of victims and their families. It is a lung disease caused by breathing in tiny bits of silica, a common mineral found in sand, quartz and

many other types of rock that are handled by workers in construction, mining, tunnelling and many other occupations. Over time, exposure to silica particles causes scarring in the lungs, which can harm the ability to breathe. Symptoms of silicosis usually appear after many years of exposure. By then it is too late.

At the parliamentary review last week, we heard from two brave silicosis victims who wanted to share their stories to bring light to the dangers of silicosis. We heard from former stonemason and silicosis sufferer Andrew, who has now moved to Goulburn because he cannot afford to live in Sydney. He lost his family. He has five kids. Four of them have a range of disabilities. He will be cut off from workers compensation because of the dumb changes the Government made. He worries about who will look after his kids if the disease becomes aggressive. Every member of this place should look at the evidence Andrew and his colleague Kenneth gave. It is on my Facebook page and would take 30 seconds. Every member should look at what has happened to these people. They are young men with young families. Kenneth is a former stonemason and also has silicosis. Six out of 15 of his workmates have contracted a dust disease.

This is very serious matter. The personal stories are heartbreaking and devastating. A review three years ago recommended that the Government add additional dust diseases to the schedule. That can be done with the stroke of a pen. The Labor Party will support that. We need those dust diseases on the schedule to make it easier for people to get access to compensation and support. I urge the Government, the Premier, the Acting Premier, Minister Tudehope, the Treasurer and Minister Petinos to do that. I know that they have hearts. They should look at the video of those gentlemen's evidence and bring forward adding those dust diseases next week; we will support that. But there is much more to do. There is a range of recommendations about regulation, mandatory CT screening and access. We need a whole lot of changes. The Government has them on the table and needs to bring them forward to the Parliament.

### WYONG ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (17:23):** Being a local member, particularly one in Opposition, can have its challenges. Whether you are in government or in opposition, you often run campaigns on behalf of your community to try to get decisions changed or funding for particular projects. I am pleased to say that in the electorate of Wyong the month of March has been the daily double. I was alerted to the proposed auction of my old school—Dooralong Public School—three weeks before the auction date. The community rallied quickly. We publicised the issue in the media and put forward a case that the facility would be better left with the community. Some 16 minutes before the auction was due to start, the Government pulled the school from sale. I was over the moon. One of the potential buyers rang and asked me whether I knew anything about what had happened. I did know a little of the background. I acknowledge Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, which also intervened on behalf of the community. Hopefully there will be discussions about how the site can be best used. Some of it may have to be sold but the main buildings and that community hub are very important to the community and dear to my heart, having lived in the area for seven years.

This morning I got wind of the second piece of great news, again through local media. Since 2009 we have been fighting to upgrade the Pacific Highway through Wyong. I have mentioned it prior to every budget and raised it in the media. We have had petitions, rallies and everything under the sun. Many of us thought it would never happen in our lifetimes. Today I give credit to the New South Wales Government and the Federal Government. An announcement was made this morning that the Federal Government will fund 80 per cent of the project and the State Government will fund the other 20 per cent. I am over the moon. This is an incredibly hard project. It comprises 1.2 kilometres of road, including a railway station and a few other things. It will cost \$420 million because it requires two brand-new bridges over the Wyong River, a brand-new rail bridge at Rose Street, duplication of lanes through the township, a commuter car park and changes to the transport interchange.

I thank my colleague across the Chamber the member for Terrigal who got on board and understood how important the project is to our area. As I said on radio this morning, this is not about politics; it is about getting the best for the community. I do not care who funds it. Labor committed to it prior to the last two elections. But the main thing is that we have the money now. At a cost of \$420 million, it is a huge project. It will unlock the entire corridor and, being close to the railway line, make Wyong a better area in which to build homes and live. It will be great for businesses. I think of Wideline Windows and Doors, which has factories at North Wyong and Tuggerah. On a normal day it takes 40 minutes to travel the one kilometre between those two sites. The road project will make a huge difference. I acknowledge the Wyong Regional Chamber of Commerce. The current chamber has long advocated for the project. The original chamber lost us money in 2009, but that is another story. We got past that.

People need to know about this project. Some people thought we needed east and west bypasses, overpasses, underpasses and tunnels. Everything was considered. Some \$40 million has been spent on planning this section of road. It is time to get on with it and get the shovels in the ground. It will be a few more years before anything tangible can be seen, but the main thing is that the money has been earmarked for the project. I am

smiling from ear to ear. I have been on a high all day. As I said, March has been great. Dooralong school has been saved and we will get the work done in the Wyong township. As an Opposition MP, I could not be happier. We have had an upgrade to Wyong Hospital, a new school at Porters Creek and two new ambulance stations. It is because I do such a good job!

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Don't forget the lifts.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** Yes, the lifts at Tuggerah have also been announced. My role is to facilitate the community. This is about the members of my community, and I am so happy for them. I use the facilities but this is a victory for our community, for which I say thank you.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:28):** I am delighted to join the member for Wyong in speaking about our announcement today of almost \$400 million for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway at Wyong. I thank the Deputy Premier and Minister Sam Faraway for supporting my lobbying for the \$80-plus million from the State Government to make this project a reality. As the member for Wyong said, \$40 million has gone into planning this complex piece of road through Wyong. Anything that could have made it hard was there. I thank the incredible team at Transport for NSW, headed by Anna Zycki, for their tireless efforts. I also thank the Wyong Chamber of Commerce for its support. I was also pleased to be able to lobby the education Minister about the Dooralong Public School site. We need to look at all options that the community wants to put forward for that site. I look forward to continuing to work collegially with the member for Wyong because, as we have both said, this is all about the Central Coast getting everything it deserves. Today's road announcement is a massive shot in the arm for workers and the thousands of commuters on the Central Coast.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am sure other members will join me in congratulating the member for Wyong and the member for Terrigal. I also congratulate members of the Central Coast community. Well done to everyone involved.

#### SHOALHAVEN CITY COUNCIL

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) (17:30):** As we all know, last year local government elections were finally held across New South Wales. Whilst the pandemic posed considerable challenges for voters, candidates and the community, I was so pleased that democracy prevailed and that most councils were able to elect or re-elect their councillors for the next term. Particularly pleasing for me was the increase in female participation and success in the elections. Most members would know that, as the former Minister for Local Government, I was pleased to run a number of targeted campaigns right across the State to encourage female candidates. I ran workshops to give them information about what was involved because New South Wales was lagging behind the rest of the country. Prior to the elections, 31 per cent of New South Wales councillors were female. I would have been happy if we had increased that to 37 per cent or 38 per cent. The results speak for themselves: 40 per cent of New South Wales councillors are women. That pleased me more than anything.

The workshops were well attended. I remember the one held in Goulburn was particularly well attended. Most people put up their hands to say, "Yes, I'm going to have a go." I say well done to all those women who took the plunge and decided to run. They overcame their fears and concerns—and they did have fears—to run and win. I also congratulate those who put up their hands but did not win. Maybe next time they will have another go and succeed. I served as a councillor on the Shoalhaven City Council for 17½ years. We have a great record of female councillors. In 1987 when I was elected, I think we had five, which was good. We have always had about five or six. I congratulate all the elected councillors and wish them well for their future careers in local government, which I know they will find extremely rewarding.

I thank sincerely those who ran for election for the Shoalhaven City Council but who were unsuccessful. I thank them for their enthusiasm for local government and encourage them to run again next time. I congratulate Mayor Amanda Findley on her election for a second term. It is a tough gig. In her first term she faced a diverse range of challenges and issues across the Shoalhaven, not to mention two years of bushfires, floods and, of course, the pandemic. Well done to councillors who were re-elected. I thank Patricia White and Mark Kitchener, who represent my old area of Ward 3, for their committed representation and hard work over the last term in particular in an area that was affected so badly by bushfires. They were both involved throughout those dark days. No-one gets re-elected unless they work hard and prove their commitment to their community. To them, I say well done.

I congratulate Greg Watson, who has represented Ward 2 for 40 or more years, including as mayor and deputy mayor. Throughout the campaign, Greg experienced some of the worst vitriol that I have ever seen. Despite that, he was re-elected once again, which was undoubtedly a reflection of his hard work and effective representation over a long period. Well done, Greg. I congratulate John Wells on his re-election to Ward 1. I thank him for his effective representation over a long period, including in the role in which I knew him—as a former professional director at Shoalhaven City Council. I am so pleased that John is back. I congratulate all the newly

elected councillors. Their party is irrelevant. We have representatives of Labor and The Greens as well as Independents on Shoalhaven City Council now, and I congratulate all of them.

The new councillors for ward 1 are Tonia Gray, Serena Copley and Matthew Norris; for ward 2 they are Evan Christen, John Kotlash and Paul Ell; and for ward 3 they are Moo D'Ath and Liza Butler. A number of councillors ran effective campaigns for at least a year before the elections. When the elections were deferred and deferred again, they simply kept campaigning and worked very hard to be where they are. The councillors I am speaking about know who they are, but I particularly call out Serena Copley.

All new councillors have been provided with information regarding their role and responsibilities under the Local Government Act and the code of conduct in particular. I would not normally advise councillors about their future actions in council except to say, please enjoy your time in council and enjoy the privilege that has been bestowed upon you in a beautiful part of the State of New South Wales, the Shoalhaven. Develop cordial relationships with your fellow councillors and with the community, who will have diverse views that may be difficult to reconcile. Finally, this term of council will be shorter than the usual four-year term, so your time is limited to demonstrate to your community that you will listen and respond to their concerns.

### SOCIAL HOUSING MAINTENANCE

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:35):** Safe, secure, affordable housing is a human right and vital for people to reach their potential and contribute to the community and economy. The private rental market will always be out of reach for some people because of circumstances like disadvantage, trauma, poor health, mental health and, of course, luck. We will always need a strong, well-resourced social housing system that provides appropriate housing to those who need it and treats tenants with respect and dignity. Unfortunately, years of neglect have left many housing properties in disrepair and the repairs and maintenance process fails to ensure tenants' homes are safe and sustainable. Cost cutting has become the priority since asset management was split from tenant support, creating a disconnect between the property and its role to provide safe and sustainable accommodation that meets tenants' needs.

The Department of Communities and Justice [DCJ] is responsible for tenants, and the Land and Housing Corporation [LAHC] is responsible for repairs and maintenance, managed through private contractors. As a result, the maintenance process is confusing, difficult, slow and unresponsive. Tenants struggle just to make a report about the repairs and maintenance needed to their home. The eRepair facility is not for all issues and some operators on the maintenance line refuse to log issues that they consider to be the tenant's responsibility, without considering the circumstances. Vermin, which can be caused by wall cracks and gaps, or mould which can be caused by leaks, for example, are regularly referred back to tenants to deal with. Where an issue is logged, there are significant challenges in getting the help needed. Tenants are not informed about the priority a job has been given or the expected time frame for its completion. Responsive or urgent repairs are often delayed or declined due to cost, leading to more expensive and extensive repairs in the future.

I get regular complaints about problems with contractors. Work done is often incomplete or unsatisfactory and when tenants follow up unfinished work, they often find out that a job has been closed. Contractors rarely provide tenants with a time when they will attend and often cancel jobs after turning up when no-one was home. Maintenance contractors do not have access to tenants' files and the laborious and unreliable processes to add notes to maintenance work orders means they are rarely added. One of my constituents who has impaired hearing was promised a phone call on approach because they cannot hear their buzzer. Without any call, the tenant later found a "We missed you" card in their letterbox. Accessibility modifications and simple requests, like installing a cheap tenant noticeboard, require back and forth between LAHC and DCJ, causing significant delays. I tried to get a noticeboard for tenants at Lawson Street, Paddington, for almost a year. Rubbish left in bin rooms is the responsibility of LAHC cleaning contractors, but elsewhere it is the responsibility of DCJ due to illegal dumping. I regularly see rubbish complaints referred from one agency to the other.

Escalating matters often results in tenants being passed between departments and contractors, each denying responsibility. Contractors send tenants to their client service officer, who often refers them to the maintenance line or eRepair. When planned maintenance by LAHC finally takes place, tenants are often forced to continue living in unliveable homes without even a rent reduction. One of my constituents did not have a functioning bathroom for over three months due to leaks. She had to sleep on the couch because water ingress rotted the floorboards in her bedroom, causing black mould. She had to use neighbours' bathrooms for showers, including during the lockdown, before a portable shower was installed in her backyard. Notwithstanding, she paid full rent to LAHC and DCJ.

Another constituent had to live in her home with her three small children during major renovations to the kitchen and bathroom, despite dust, noise, chemical smells and mess, and despite submitting multiple requests for temporary accommodation, including a request from the construction crew that she be relocated. Alternate

accommodation was only granted after her son attended hospital from a serious asthma attack. Another constituent whose apartment had bed bugs waited almost two months to get temporary accommodation for fumigation. As a result, the problem spread to his neighbour's home.

Maintenance issues often overlap with tenant welfare, and the NSW Ombudsman, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and the Tenants' Union have raised concerns about public housing being split into two separate portfolios. I am concerned that the recent portfolio name change from "Housing" to "Homes" represents another move away from a person-focused approach. The repairs and maintenance process should ensure that all public housing is safe, comfortable and fit for purpose. It should be proactive and not just respond to complaints; there should be a property audit to ensure regular maintenance. I call on the Government to adequately fund public housing repairs and maintenance and make tenants' wellbeing the priority.

#### LUDDENHAM VILLAGE

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) (17:40):** Tonight I speak on behalf of my village at Luddenham. Luddenham village is one of the oldest villages in western Sydney, dating back to 1813, and it is the only existing town centre in the new Aerotropolis. According to the Western Sydney Airport's environmental impact statement [EIS], housing was to be allowed in Luddenham in the Australian Noise Exposure Concept [ANEC] 20 to 25 noise contour, but with noise mitigation measures. That is an appropriate step to take. However, the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment went one step further and said that no new housing would be permitted within the draft noise contours, and the locals accepted that decision. The draft noise contours that were used by the department were worst-case scenario and are the projected contours for 2063 when the airport is at full capacity and includes aircraft like the 747s.

In October 2021, the planning department presented four scenarios for the future of Luddenham village for community consultation, as part of the final Aerotropolis plan. Despite meetings being held online, over 95 per cent of participants from the local area were involved, including Penrith and Liverpool councils, both local Federal members and all three local State MPs. All of these participants supported scenario 4, for new housing to the northern end of Luddenham village, which is outside all draft noise contours. However, without consultation, WSA Co Limited [WSA] submitted to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment its full opposition to any new housing in Luddenham, even outside the draft noise contours. WSA did not attend any of the Luddenham community consultation meetings. Unfortunately, WSA will not provide a copy of its objection so that the community, or someone like myself, can begin to understand what is objected to.

The community is in the dark about the basis for WSA's objection, given scenario 4 meets the requirements of their own EIS, and in fact goes beyond those requirements and it meets the requirements of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. The department has said that Luddenham village will die without any new homes. Sadly, the population continues to decline. The community's plan for growth is about replacing the people and the homes that have already been lost due to the airport site and new supporting infrastructure, which is now underway. Luddenham residents are committed to doing everything they can to ensure their village survives and thrives. The community wants to work with WSA to better understand the basis for its objections, which simply do not seem to make any sense and are inconsistent with its position taken for other similar areas within the Aerotropolis. I encourage WSA to re-engage with the Luddenham community on this critical issue, so that both parties can understand the perspectives, wishes and concerns each other hold and thereby be able to work more collaboratively to reach an agreed position.

I continue to be in contact with the main spokesperson for the Luddenham village residents, Mr Wayne Wilmington, liaising with the planning Minister's office as well as the Federal Minister, the Hon. Paul Fletcher, and his office in relation to this very critical issue that my community and its residents are facing. I frequently visit Luddenham village, which is a magnificent small township with great historical links. I am fully in support of my local community being supported by both levels of government to remain in existence and to thrive with the accompanying airport being built adjacent to them. I urge that all parties come to the table in open, frank and transparent discussion and work together towards finding a solution that not only alleviates any concerns WSA Co may cause to further residential areas but also encourages the community at Luddenham village to survive and thrive next door to the Western Sydney Airport that is under construction.

#### TUGGERAH LAKE FLOODING

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:45):** I continue my discussion of flooding around Tuggerah Lakes and the risk of flood for my constituents in the electorate of The Entrance. I have reported to the House before that flooding has occurred around the Tuggerah Lake for each of the past three years and that flooding around Tuggerah Lakes and in The Entrance electorate is a regular feature of our environment. I have reported to the House before that following the 2020 floods around Tuggerah Lake, my community raised concerns about the

flood response on the Central Coast. It caused my colleagues and I to look at the ways we could use our influence to improve flood response for our community.

We found a number of things in our work. Firstly and most importantly, we found that the local flood plan, that key foundational document that is the responsibility of the State Emergency Service and other agencies, had been prepared in 2013. It was due to be reviewed in 2018, which had not occurred, and it was out of date. There was no clear strategy for the local council to clear The Entrance Channel. That is the key point where the floodwaters are released into the ocean and is a key factor in determining the duration and height of flooding around the Tuggerah Lake.

That strategy did not exist, despite a recommendation in a 2014 report prepared for the council on the Tuggerah Lakes flood plain giving that as a high-priority recommendation. I found the flood warning levels used by SES were simply wrong. In the 2020 flood they issued a minor flood warning, but the floodwaters had risen above the floor level of many of my constituents' homes. The floodwaters had risen to a level that covered some of our main roads. That is a moderate flood, not a minor flood, and I demanded that that be addressed. There was simply little education, which was a key requirement of the old flood plan that had never really been implemented.

I called for three things at the time: a better warning system, better management of The Entrance Channel and more education for our community on flood risks. When flooding occurred again in 2021, the response was better, but the flood plan had not been updated and the warning levels were still inaccurate. But our efforts began to yield fruit, and in late 2020 I was advised that the local flood plan had been updated. Work still needs to be done on that document, but it is certainly better now than it was. There are now new flood warning levels, and that is key because that triggers actions by the authorities. Those new flood warning levels are welcome. The council now has a procedure for opening The Entrance Channel, and that has had an impact in the recent floods.

Those changes have meant that when floodwaters began to rise on 28 February this year, there was a better warning system in place, regular and accurate warnings were being issued, and the council went to work early on The Entrance Channel to keep it open. That was welcomed by the community. The evacuation centre was opened early and was available for community members who needed to evacuate their homes. I thank all the authorities that were involved in that work—the council staff and our local SES volunteers who brought it all together and made our response this year much better than it has been in the past.

I note my frustration in dealing with the former emergency services Minister, who had been slow to respond to my constant badgering about the problems on the coast. However, we seem to be moving in the right direction, and the council is certainly on board in terms of what they need to do. We need to keep monitoring our response to flood. Flood warning signage needs to improve, and my constituents want sandbag points located closer to the community in the Long Jetty area that experience flood most often. The local flood plan needs to be worked on, and Parliament needs to do more about local flooding. In this recent flood, a gentleman lost his life after driving into floodwaters in Holgate. Members need to continue to draw our attention to the local flash flooding that happens throughout our local area, to make our response better and to protect our citizens as best as we can.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:50):** I acknowledge the speech by the member for The Entrance but also acknowledge the excellent work done by Central Coast Council in the recent storm event. As was articulated, the amount of coordination that was done with the services across the Central Coast was nothing short of exemplary. I have already spoken publicly about the great work that the council has done in that area. The notification that we were provided as members was very timely. We were all provided the same information simultaneously, and the messaging to the community was excellent. The management for The Entrance Channel was excellent, and 80 people were evacuated around the Tuggerah Lakes area. All of them were provided with housing either with friends or through the emergency centre at Diggers@The Entrance. It was a well-coordinated response from the Central Coast Council and all of our volunteer organisations. I also acknowledge that the gentleman who lost his life in my electorate of Holgate was the result of a tragic accident. I have already spoken with his family, and these incidents can literally take a life without any warning whatsoever. I acknowledge the very good work done by Central Coast Council and the team there during the recent storm event.

#### RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE FLOODS

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) (17:51):** As Riverstone falls within the broader Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, the recent floods in that river system impacted areas within the electorate. Local falls creating stormwater closed local roads and flooded First Ponds Creek and Second Ponds Creek. But South Creek, Eastern Creek and Bells Creek meet the Hawkesbury River nearby at Windsor. As those creeks flow into the river and it rises, it gets higher than the creeks and makes them flow backwards, causing backwater flooding in Riverstone, Schofields, Angus and Richards. That is what occurred in early March. In the first week of March, we had a peak of 13.8 metres at Windsor, which meant dozens of houses in the Riverstone electorate were inundated as a result. That 13.8-metre peak was a 5 per cent annual exceedance probability, or AEP, event. That

is the one-in-20 level. Compare that to the 1 per cent AEP, or one-in-100 level, of 17.3 metres or the record flood since 1788, which was 19.7 metres, and members can see the heights in the Hawkesbury can be quite significant. The probable maximum flood is estimated at 26.7 metres Australian Height Datum.

To put those figures into some readily understood context, if a typical storey in an office or residential building is 2.2 metres from floor to ceiling, the flood we experienced this month was more than six storeys high above normal river level. The one-in-100 flood would be almost eight storeys high. Using that yardstick, the record flood of 1867 was about nine storeys high and the probably maximum flood at Windsor would be a staggering 12 storeys high. The source of the biggest challenge for authorities today is that over the past 234 years, many homes have been built on land that we only later found out was too low to be safe from flooding. The first homes were built in the Hawkesbury-Nepean region within a handful of years of British settlement in 1778. My own ancestor Thomas Gosper, who arrived as unwilling guest on the Second Fleet, was only four years later given a land grant of 30 acres on the western bank of Hawkesbury River near Windsor in 1794. That original grant and his house was on land that is now part of the Freemans Reach lowland area where you will find turf farms and the like today. It is land that was under water for a couple of weeks recently, just as it was 12 months ago in the March 2021 flood. It is fertile land for farming precisely because it is frequently flooded.

In 1794 the colonial authorities did not know nearly as much about Hawkesbury floods as we do now. This story has been repeated hundreds of times in localities across New South Wales. Some discussion has occurred in recent days about the possibility of government buying back low-lying properties as a way of reducing future damage. If there were only a handful of such properties, this may be a reasonable strategy. But there are not just a handful of properties involved. Depending on how low or how high you draw the line, there are at least many thousands of properties—and potentially tens of thousands—that could be the subject of such a scheme. There are thousands within the Greater Sydney region alone. The cost of such a scheme statewide would run to many billions of dollars. If not outright prohibitive, the cost would nevertheless be massive. Not only would this cost be so great as to require gradual funding over many years but also it would also incur a very significant opportunity cost to the people of New South Wales, as funding would have to be diverted from other priorities and projects that would otherwise be supported.

As an alternative to this drain on public finances, I am proposing that government explore ways the private market may be able to address the mistakes of the past. This morning I gave notice of a motion that reads as follows:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the risk to life and the immense damage risk arising from the historic placement of dwellings on land now known to be flood prone.
- (2) Notes that the cost of any government buy-back scheme for tens of thousands of properties across New South Wales would run to many billions of dollars.
- (3) Calls on the Government to explore options for a market-based system of land trading, development credits or tradeable development rights to design an orderly mechanism for the voluntary removal of dwellings from unacceptably flood-prone locations.

I am not proposing any specific model. This will take some working through. Rather, I am urging that government explore options that may provide the private sector with sufficient incentive to address the problem within parameters designed to reflect and protect the public interest. We need a way to bring people out of harm's way. There are houses where there really should not be. But they are people's homes. They are people's lifelong investments. That is all they have. We have to find a way to do this properly that is sustainable for the community and reduces flood risk in future.

### CENTRAL COAST FUNDING

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:56):** I continue to highlight the record level of investment into all electorates across the Central Coast. As Parliamentary Secretary for the Central Coast, it is my job to ensure that the Central Coast gets its fair share. Over the past few weeks, I have been updating the House about the many millions of dollars that have been invested from one end of the coast to the other. The Gosford electorate continues to benefit from funding from the New South Wales Government across a broad range of projects, as I have outlined. It includes the \$60,000 worth of arts and cultural funding provided to Gosford Regional Gallery in 2019 and the Infrastructure Grants provided to the Hope & Wish Foundation in Bar Point, being another \$45,000. In 2021 the Government committed to accessibility and car park upgrades at the beautiful Somersby Falls worth \$2.3 million. That work is currently being undertaken.

Recently, I was able to open the well-constructed Woy Woy wharf upgrade, which was made possible by a \$3.99 million contribution from the Liberal-Nationals Government's Regional Communities Development Fund. In addition, \$300,000 was invested in the Piles Creek Loop walking track. In the 2021 budget \$971,000 was



committed to shared pathways along Racecourse Road in Gosford, and the Government has provided another \$6.2 million to continue the dredging of Ettalong Channel. As the member for Wyong knows, that was an embarrassing battle where the council refused to apply for the funding multiple times until the channel had to be closed. I am pleased to say that the Liberal-Nationals Government provided emergency funding to get that work done when council refused to do it. We have delivered a fantastic outcome for the more than 200,000 people who commute through that channel every year.

I am pleased that the member for Wyong is in the Chamber, because I will start talking about the investments in the Wyong electorate by the Liberal-Nationals Government, including the \$420 million announced today for the Pacific Highway upgrade through Tuggerah. I am absolutely delighted that I was able to work with the Deputy Premier and the member for Wyong to help secure the \$84 million worth of additional funding that is making this project a reality. The value of the project cannot be underestimated. In addition to alleviating physical stress on the thousands of commuters who have to negotiate the Pacific Highway through Wyong every day and recognising what that will mean for their lives, more than 900 construction jobs will be delivered to the Central Coast as part of the \$420 million investment in the Wyong electorate. This is something that the New South Wales Government is committed to delivering.

Like everyone else, including the member for Wyong, I know that when the New South Wales Government bunting goes up the projects get delivered. One example is the intersection of the Pacific Highway at Wyong Road, which was delivered through more than \$100 million worth of investment in the Wyong electorate. The intersection at Mingara is the result of another investment worth more than \$100 million from this Government to deliver road projects for the thousands of commuters on the Central Coast. I am really proud to be part of a government that is delivering billions of dollars' worth of investment from one end of the coast to the other. That includes a more than \$200 million investment for the upgrade of the now open Wyong Public Hospital, which just opened its brand new refurbished operating room that is much bigger than the previous one. They will be able to perform very high-end operations in that theatre.

As the member for The Entrance was articulating earlier, we have the Transport Access Program [TAP] upgrade to Tuggerah station. This Liberal-Nationals Government has delivered more than \$34 million to upgrade a train station that was built without any lifts. They are now being delivered. TAP has been an amazing program. Every TAP project on the Central Coast has been delivered by this Government. The Tuggerah upgrade is slightly more complex, as the member for Wyong knows, given the additional requirements of parking. Point Clare is almost completed. The upgrade of Tuggerah station is currently out on final display. We have processes we have to go through, including the environmental impact statements, but, again, it is great to see the Government investing \$34 million in the Wyong electorate.

There are so many projects that we can talk about in the Wyong electorate. I am pleased the member for Wyong is here. They include upgrades of the practice wickets at Barker Park for Wyong District Cricket Club and building new community and social sporting infrastructure at Norah Head. I congratulate the team at Norah Head Lighthouse. I look forward to continuing to update the community about what the Government is delivering on the Central Coast.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (18:02):** I commend the member for Terrigal. The Transport Access Program has delivered some of the most significant outcomes to metropolitan and coastal communities. The centre at Edgecliff train station, which was built in the 1960s and 1970s, had no connection between the station at which people would catch that wonderful service, up to the buses, which were two levels above. In between, there was a shopping centre. It was a complex project for both my electorate and the electorate of the member for Sydney. It was worth over \$20 million because of the complexity of it. If there is any project of which I am most proud it is that. I believe the member for Sydney, who is in the chair, would say the same thing. It has created accessibility to a very good public transport system that otherwise was literally out of reach of many elderly and disabled people and young mums in our communities. I commend the words of the member for Terrigal for giving me the opportunity to reflect on one of the most significant projects in my electorate and the member for Sydney's electorate over the past 10 years.

#### **FIRE AND RESCUE NSW**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (18:03):** I speak on the incredible achievements of the fourth largest urban fire rescue service in the world and the busiest in the Southern Hemisphere during the last two years—Fire and Rescue NSW. During this period Fire and Rescue NSW has worked tirelessly to keep the community safe from fires and hazardous materials whilst providing much-needed disaster and humanitarian relief and immediate medical attention to casualties affected by fires. I am proud to inform the House that during the 2020-21 period, Fire and Rescue NSW firefighters responded to some 17,703 fires, including structure fires, rubbish fires, bushfires and vehicle fires. I particularly commend Fire and Rescue NSW's efforts in south-west Sydney during the factory fires on Hoxton Park Road in Prestons on 19 March 2021. Firefighters confronted giant

fireball explosions in a factory that contained thousands of litres of flammable liquid. Fire and Rescue NSW worked with various agencies to contain contaminated run-off and continued to battle the fire for several days.

Fire and Rescue NSW also responded to 16,428 rescue-related emergency incidents. These involved animal rescues, in-water flood rescues, confined space rescues and responses to motor vehicle accidents. Fire and Rescue NSW crews worked alongside the NSW State Emergency Service and the NSW Rural Fire Service during the severe rain events across the mid North Coast, Hawkesbury and north-western New South West in March and April 2021. During this period firefighters conducted 19,000 rapid damage assessments and pumped out floodwaters from flood-affected properties. I raise these achievements at a very topical time as firefighters are continuing these incredible efforts during the current flood events of March 2022.

Fire and Rescue NSW responded to 9,581 hazmat incidents in 2021. I commend the crews for their impressive feat of participating in the largest oil spill exercise in New South Wales. In March 2021, nine different government agencies, including Fire and Rescue NSW, responded to a scenario replicating a damaged oil tanker releasing 800 tonnes of oil off the South Coast of New South Wales. The role of Fire and Rescue NSW included the discontinuation of people working in the hot zone, cleaning up oil, and supporting the cleaning and decontamination of wildlife. In response to this exercise, Fire and Rescue NSW developed a hazmat knowledge management system. In 2022 Fire and Rescue NSW plans to add an emergency response decision support system to mobile data terminals on fire appliance and hazmat laptops.

I have significant gratitude for Fire and Rescue NSW for its natural disaster and humanitarian relief efforts during 2020-21. These achievements included participating in the 17-person Australian Medical Assistance Team that was deployed to Papua New Guinea to support the National Control Centre operating from Port Moresby Hospital. Conversely, Fire and Rescue NSW crews worked on the front lines and put their own health at risk when providing specialist logistic services to support the COVID-19 pandemic response. In the future Fire and Rescue NSW plans to implement the natural disaster and humanitarian relief road map, which is a three-year plan to enhance its natural disaster and humanitarian relief capability.

In addition to providing immediate medical attention to casualties from fires and rescues, the Fire and Rescue NSW crews responded to 11,382 medical-related emergency incidents, which included assisting NSW Ambulance paramedics and welfare and Community First Responder incidents. An example of one such life-saving response involves firefighters Chris Smith and Peter Carr, who in February 2021 stopped to assist 58-year-old John Alam, who suffered a heart attack while riding his bike on the Bangor Bypass in south Sydney. Chris immediately commenced CPR before waving down a passing ambulance. These prompt actions saved John's life. Fire and Rescue NSW are working towards participating in the NSW Ambulance Public Access Defibrillation program.

I thank the Fire and Rescue NSW firefighters, who go above and beyond responding to fires and, as the motto states, are prepared for anything. During 2020-21 our community faced many challenges, but we also have much to celebrate. I am proud to address the Chamber to tell these stories of emergency responses, technological advancements, and Fire and Rescue NSW's commitment to protecting and safeguarding our community. I look forward to continuing to work and collaborate with Fire and Rescue NSW in my capacity as a State member of Parliament and to keep the community safe from fire, hazardous materials, natural disaster and other emergencies as a volunteer for the NSW Rural Fire Service.

#### NSW WOMEN'S WEEK AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse) (18:08):** Earlier this month New South Wales celebrated Women's Week. It is an annual celebration of the diverse and strong contributions of women across the State. It also coincides with International Women's Day on 8 March. To me, International Women's Day is about building a better future and making sure that more girls and women have more opportunities, including opportunities to be leaders in our community. As part of the celebration, the New South Wales Government hosted the annual women's awards breakfast on 8 March. It was great to attend it with both my 2022 Vaucluse Local Woman of the Year, Debbie Midwinter and NSW Young Woman of the Year finalist Camille Goldstone-Henry, who are both from Bondi.

On the Sunday before the New South Wales Government breakfast, I had the chance to personally congratulate Debbie Midwinter at North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club, which is one of two world-class surf clubs in my electorate. Deb has been a volunteer at the club for 19 years, and it is no wonder she was recently awarded life membership for her dedicated service, especially in supporting female members. I presented Deb with a certificate of congratulations and met her friend and club member Amanda Dawson. I also met with NSW Young Woman of the Year finalist Camille Goldstone-Henry ahead of the New South Wales Government breakfast. Camille is a wildlife conservation scientist and the founder of biodiversity tech startup Xylo Systems, which is a cloud-based platform that tracks conservation projects and uses artificial intelligence to maximise the use of

conservation resources. Camille is a proud Kamilaroi woman. Becoming a finalist was important recognition that she is paving the way for young women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] and tech. I look forward to working with her on a number of things that we discussed when we met, including how we can better support our female tech founders.

Throughout Women's Week I was grateful to attend a number of other events. On 8 March I joined the Australia India Business Council [AIBC] as a panellist for its Women in Business Chapter luncheon with a number of female business leaders. Our discussion focused on how we can better unlock the wealth of economic opportunities between India and Australia. We were joined by the High Commissioner of India to Australia, His Excellency Manpreet Vohra; his wife, Mrs Naseem Vohra; Manish Gupta, Consul General of India, Sydney; and a number of esteemed female leaders in the business community. I thank Sheba Nandkeolyar for organising the panel and for her leadership as past national chair of AIBC.

On 9 March I visited The George Institute for Global Health Australia for its International Women's Day forum on addressing gender bias in health and medical research. There were over 200 guests, and we heard from speakers including Professor Robyn Norton, AO, Principal Director of the George Institute; Dr Anthony Brown, Executive Director of Health Consumers NSW; Dr Cheryl Carcel from The Heart Foundation; Yumi Lee, Manager of the Older Women's Network; and Angela Priestley, founding editor of Women's Agenda. The case was clearly made that we must change the gender bias in medical research.

I was also delighted to join the Minerva Network as a mentor recently. The Minerva Network supports elite women athletes both on and off the field, and it was co-founded by Christine McLoughlin, AM. A recent Minerva Network initiative is the announcement of a fourth Minerva Network scholarship. It is a 2022 Newcastle Knights 12-month tertiary scholarship worth \$10,000, which will be open to women athletes who are connected with the Newcastle and Hunter area and would benefit from financial support to complete or commence an Australian-certified education or vocational qualification. Fellow Minerva Network athletes, including Sydney FC and Matilda's player Jada Whyman, Australian rowing Tokyo 2020 Olympian Georgie Rowe and surf IronWoman Jemma Smith, have all previously received scholarships.

Whether it is more girls and women involved in STEM, whether it be studying, in jobs related to STEM or founding STEM tech companies, or more opportunities for female athletes and sponsoring young female talent, it is all incredibly important. The celebration of Women's Week and International Women's Day is an opportunity to look at our past performance on those measures and consider and plan for the future. Having reflected over a number of things I did during the week, I believe we have come a long way. We have much more work to do, but it is all about creating better futures for women and girls in our New South Wales community.

### KOGARAH WAR MEMORIAL POOL

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) (18:13):** Tonight I speak on an issue that we all care deeply about in the electorate of Kogarah: the Kogarah War Memorial Pool at Carss Park. I represent the residents of Carss Park and the suburbs in the wider community around Carss Park. This gorgeous piece of public land, based along the banks of the Georges River, has had a public pool for over 57 years. During this time the pool became an establishment of the local community, teaching children how to swim—including my own children—keeping people fit and healthy, and providing those without private pools with an opportunity to cool down in what have become increasingly hot summers. I use this moment to highlight the efforts of Dick Caine. In the past 50 years Dick operated the well-respected swim school located onsite. Together with his team, Dick had the privilege of coaching many of Australia's best: gold medallist swimmers Michelle Ford and Janelle Elford; marathon swimmer Suzie Maroney; and even boxer Anthony Mundine.

But close to some three years ago, it was announced by Georges River Council that the pool was to close. This was not a decision greeted warmly. More than 10,000 residents signed a petition demanding the pool be saved, and more than 2,000 signed a pledge for it to be rebuilt at the current site. This started a movement which forced a major shake-up at Georges River Council, with pro-pool candidates being elected and a new mayor taking office last December. Michelle Ford described the pool as a "sacred site for many people", labelling it an important part of Australia's sporting history. It was known not only for the champions it produced but also as a place where the community joins together. That is why we cannot see this community just go away. A new pool built at a different site simply will not work. A proposal put forward by the previous Georges River administration would see the demolition of Todd Park, a park adjacent to Carss Park, and the construction of a pool at the Kogarah Oval site in Kogarah. This is absolutely the wrong solution for my community.

It has been my position for the past three years that the pool must be rebuilt and reopened on the current site. That is what the community wants, and that is supported by every phone call and every piece of correspondence coming into my electorate office. Furthermore, the pool is a public asset, and it is dedicated to our diggers. It is a legacy that we need to respect, and it is simply not our right to pull it down. Members may not

know that after the Second World War, in lieu of cenotaphs and memorials to those who had fallen in the First World War, our forefathers decided to build public infrastructure in memory of the service of diggers from the Second World War. Libraries, pools, boulevards and public utilities were built right across New South Wales. The pool is, in effect, as sacred as any cenotaph located in any park, town or city right across this State, and we have absolutely no right to get rid of it.

My second point is that not everyone has access to a private pool. People live in apartments, increasingly so in my electorate. They do not have the money necessarily or the resources to get to private pools. The idea that we are looking at closing a public pool would disproportionately affect those from working-class backgrounds. It is for that reason that we must work with all levels of government to rebuild the pool at its current site. I have to give credit to the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, who I share part of an electorate with, who has already committed the Commonwealth Government to \$5 million, and I express my thanks for making that happen. I call on the council to work with me to develop a costing and a detailed plan to give this important piece of infrastructure back to our community. The previous Georges River Council planned to spend up to \$9 million to demolish and remove the pool. I humbly say that redirecting this money to build the pool at its current location is a great place to start. This is a commitment the community and, in fact, all of us need in this beautiful part of Sydney.

#### DAVID LOWE AND TRANSPORT FOR NSW

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) (18:18):** Tonight I relate a David-and-Goliath story in every sense. David is Mr David Lowe from Blue Haven and Goliath is Transport for NSW. Mr Lowe invited me around to his house in 2020 to show me flooding that was coming off land adjacent to his property and flowing at a certain level through his property, through his garage and work shed, through part of his lounge room and into the local creek, Wallarah Creek. It was plain to see that the water was coming from the block next door, which was a vacant block. He told me that the block belonged to Transport for NSW and it had been bought to duplicate the Wallarah Creek bridge, which is on the agenda as one of the future projects, but the land remains vacant there. He invited me to his house when it was raining and I could see the direction the water was coming from. It clearly was coming across that vacant block.

Despite Mr Lowe showing Transport for NSW photographs—and he showed me videos of one of the incidents where it was particularly bad—Transport for NSW continues to say that it is not its issue and it has come up with a whole range of excuses. One of the excuses is that Allambie Close, where he lives, has no kerb and guttering, so therefore it is a Central Coast Council issue. The problem with that is that it is not the direction the water is coming from. I witnessed with my own eyes the water coming across the vacant block. Transport for NSW also said that a tree had been removed from its property at the request of Mr Lowe and that that this had contributed to the problem. But the tree roots were encroaching into Mr Lowe's property and he had every right to ask them to remove it. They did remove it. It then caused a sink hole, which is where the water comes into it, pools and, when it gets to a certain level, then crosses into Mr Lowe's property, finding its way to the creek. I am not talking about a dribble of water; I am talking about water quite high actually flowing through parts of his house.

Mr Lowe is a battler. When I went and met him, he was wearing thongs, shorts and a singlet; he was there with his mate; he has got a great spot on the edge of the creek; and he likes to throw a line in the river. He is your normal everyday Aussie bloke. All he is asking is that a trench, a levee or something is built on his fence line to divert the water. For the life of me, I cannot see why this is such a big issue. Transport for NSW, apparently in a letter to my office, said, "We can't divert. It is illegal to divert water directly into the creek", but not five metres away there is a stormwater drain where water goes directly into the creek. Transport for NSW said, "That's not our responsibility; that's someone else's responsibility." This seems a lot of buck-passing, but, at the end of the day, Mr Lowe continually, year after year, is getting water through his property—and it does not have to be a major storm; it just has to be enough water that falls in a particular period. One can actually see it; there is a pathway that goes under Wallarah Creek bridge that the school kids use to get to the high school along the edge of the creek, and the water follows, to a certain extent, the path, goes onto the vacant block, pools up in the water where the sink hole, as Mr Lowe calls it, is and then it goes into his property.

It is beyond me that nothing can be done about these problems, which are probably quite simple to solve and would make his life a whole lot better. He cannot do anything because he cannot do stuff on their land. He said he would go and do it; he would get his shovel and do what he needed to do, but legally he cannot do that. I am calling on Transport for NSW to see some reason, to put its legal stuff away and just help the poor bloke out. He is not a rich man. As I said, he has got his little piece of paradise which is being disrupted through no fault of his own and he is living with the consequences time after time. There is an article in the local newspaper this week. I told him, "Look, mate, I wrote to Transport for NSW. They reckon they went out and had a look." He said he never saw anyone. I said, "Maybe it's time to go to the media." I said, "I will raise it in Parliament for you."

I felt genuinely sorry for this poor bloke who is being, pardon the French, screwed over by a huge government instrumentality on a problem that should be easy to fix.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:23):** I also saw the story about Mr Lowe in today's paper and I acknowledge the speech by the member for Wyong. If the member for Wyong would like to forward me a copy of the correspondence from Transport for NSW I would be more than happy to also take up Mr Lowe's cause with Transport for NSW. Because we have people who, as the member for Wyong said, live on a little bit of paradise, they do not interfere with anybody else's lives, and there is nothing worse than being stuck in a bureaucratic never-ending circle. The member for Wyong and I have seen it many times when bureaucratic-speak steps in. If the member forwards me a copy of the correspondence from Transport for NSW I will also make representations on Mr Lowe's behalf to see if we can find a solution to his never-ending torrent of water coming from next door.

#### **AUBURN ELECTORATE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY HOUSING**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:24):** I will talk about social housing and the way it is being developed in my electorate. On numerous occasions in this Chamber I have pointed out that I now have the second-biggest electorate in the State in terms of population, and that is largely due to about 50,000 people being put into Wentworth Point and down onto the peninsula. There is no part of my electorate that is not being hit by huge development, and low-rise housing suburbs are now being hit hard. I was interested when I drove past a new development called the Lidcombe Rise project with a councillor the other day. I said, "There's another one," and he said, "But that's public housing." I said, "What do you mean it's public housing? Do you think this whole development is public housing?" He said, "Yes, that's what I assumed." Well, it absolutely is not.

The Government originally announced that the Lidcombe Rise housing project would build 262 new homes, including 53 that were social community housing. The Government originally handed over the project and the land to the developer on the basis of 262 new homes, 53 of which were social housing, but the developer then put in an application to increase the site to 375 dwellings, 63 of which are social housing. There were 10 dwellings added to social housing at a tremendous cost to the local community, which now has 375 dwellings across the road from its low-rise, R2-zoned residential properties. The developer is getting about 313 to sell; only 63 are going to social housing. How is that a good deal for the public when the Government has handed over the land to a developer? The developer has not paid for the land. It is public land along a railway corridor. The developer is getting 313 properties to sell. Every time members hear the Government saying, "We're building new social housing," it is talking about the 63 houses that it is putting in here.

I said to the Government, "Hang on a second. How much of this is actually community housing?" The Government said, "We are not paying anything to build the new social housing." The Government is not paying anything, but there is a big social cost for a community that has until now only had low-rise buildings to have huge high-rise buildings going up around them. A community housing property organisation that runs as a not-for-profit has bought 93 of these dwellings, but they have all gone into the profit for the developer. More importantly, when I asked about parking spaces, I learnt that they are 30 car spaces short for the community and social housing, whereas there are more than enough car spaces for the ones that are going on the market for private sale. There is no real off-street parking. The community is going to have an additional 30 vehicles because a developer has not built it. It is going to have a huge high-rise development, six or seven storeys, across the road from Rookwood Cemetery, with low-rise buildings all around it. There is no high-rise development there. That is what the community is going to have peering into their houses and backyards.

That is the problem with this Government's social housing policy. The member for Wyong will know that social housing is being developed on the Central Coast and in Newcastle. The member for Canterbury will know that she is getting social housing in her electorate. I know I am getting social housing developments in my electorate, because I do not have just one. But I could not find any in Mosman or on the Northern Beaches. When the Government breaks up the zones and gives grants, it says, "We divide them amongst the zones." It is pretty good on the grants, but it does not seem to divide the social housing up amongst the zones. My electorate has taken more than its fair share. We love social housing—it is great—but we are getting the burden of all the overdevelopment that is paying for it. It is not coming out of the taxpayers' pockets or anyone else's pocket. There is a social cost to the public land that we lose, and there is the social cost of what our community has to take so that there is any social housing in this State. It is a disgrace when this Government talks about social housing.

#### **ARCHITECT ANGELO CANDALEPAS**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury) (18:29):** I inform the House of the contributions of Mr Angelo Candalepas, one of Australia's most celebrated architects, whose humble beginnings started in our local community and have paved the way for him to become an expert and leader in the world of architecture and design. His parents, Mr Chris Candalepas and Mrs Panagiotta Candalepas, migrated to Australia from Greece in search of a better life and better opportunities. They raised their four children in Campsie and were active members

within the local community as well as the Greek-Australian community. I sincerely congratulate Angelo Candalepas on the work he has done. Angelo's work, creative drive and pursuit of architecture has given him distinction across Australia.

His attention to detail and search for perfection has secured him many esteemed positions, such as on the Design Excellence Review Panel for Barangaroo; on advisory panels for the City of Sydney, in an advisory role at the University of Sydney; and as a nationally elected councillor for the Australian Institute of Architecture. Angelo has worked on renovations at the iconic St Mary's Cathedral, on the design of St Andrew's Theological College, on the redevelopment of the Cathedral of the Annunciation of Our Lady in Surry Hills, and on the design of the All Saints Primary School building and gym in Belmore, amongst other designs. Angelo has also designed the visually stunning Punchbowl Mosque, which features cutting-edge modern structures that capture the solemnity of prayer and reflection.

The dome of the mosque is unlike any mosque seen before in Australia and represents the raising of prayers and the soul into heaven. The prayer spaces in the mosque are innovative and distinctive, designed to allow in sunlight in unique and intricate ways to show the presence of Allah during prayer. Interstate, Angelo's excellence has been recognised recently by the Victorian Government, with his groundbreaking designs chosen for the National Gallery of Victoria Contemporary. His exceptional gallery design has evoked quite a response in Victoria, being described as a game changer which will create a cultural legacy in Melbourne for many generations. Despite his national achievements, Angelo is still very active in our local community and constantly helps us and puts forward his expertise. I wrote to him to congratulate him on his game changer. This was supported by the Opposition in Victoria and by the lord mayor, as well as the Government.

I understand that the lord mayor has welcomed the design as monumental and city-shaping. The design has bipartisan support. It is no surprise at all that Angelo has achieved this with his winning proposal, which is a light-filled central omphalos. In ancient Greece, this was a conical stone from Delphi representing the navel of the earth. The omphalos to the rooftop gallery restaurant and sculpture garden is a design truly representative of the modern art gallery and will certainly punctuate Melbourne. Sydney is the best, but I inform the House that our local, fantastic architect Angelo Candalepas has had a winning design in Melbourne. I congratulate him on all of his achievements, which show that anybody in our electorate can do what Angelo has done.

#### *Bills*

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

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

#### **Assent**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** I report receipt of messages from the Governor notifying Her Excellency's assent to the bills.

#### *Community Recognition Notices*

#### **TERESA LATTOUF**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Teresa Lattouf a local catechist at both Bankstown Public School and Condell Park Public School. Ms Lattouf, a parishioner of St Brendan's Catholic Church in Central Bankstown leads two full days of scripture class and is a well-respected and loved volunteer. Ms Teresa Lattouf was born with a serious congenital heart condition, with doctors giving her a poor diagnosis. Despite her many challenges Ms Lattouf with the spiritual and loving support of her family has endured and persevered through many medical setbacks including a risky heart surgery in her teens. Ms Lattouf is living her childhood dream of being one of over 1700 volunteer catechist which deliver scripture to more than 26,000 students in public schools. I would like to acknowledge and commend Ms Teresa Lattouf for her outstanding and inspirational efforts in teaching the Catholic faith in the community of Bankstown. I have no doubt that countless number of students have benefited and been enriched spiritually by her classes. Her family and indeed our community are immensely proud.

#### **BANKSTOWN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I am pleased to recognise and express my gratitude to the New South Wales State Emergency Service (SES) Bankstown Unit for their incredible work in keeping our Bankstown community safe. At the beginning of March, New South Wales experienced record breaking rain fall, resulting in severe flooding across our state particularly in the Northern Rivers region where more than 2000 homes and business were destroyed and sadly lives lost. The floods also affected areas surrounding the Georges River in South West Sydney, triggering multiple evacuation orders, closure of schools, roads and plenty

of sandbagging. I had the pleasure of meeting with the Bankstown SES on the 4th of March, where I was briefed by the Deputy Unit Commander, Graham Tomkinson and had the opportunity to thank our invaluable volunteers. I would like to thank the Bankstown Unit Commander David Niven, the Deputy Unit Commander Graham Tomkinson, Tony Harb and all of the volunteers at Bankstown SES for their incredible efforts.

#### **BANKSTOWN DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown)**—I take this opportunity to recognise the Bankstown District Cricket Club [BDCC] for their generous and incredible work with the BDCC Uganda Equipment Project, an initiative launched in 2005. The Uganda Equipment Project provides resources to school in Uganda enabling students to develop life skills and an opportunity to learn and play cricket. Initially the targets were relatively conservative, with the aim of filling one container of supplies and equipment, however, with the unprecedented generosity of our community the BDCC soon found itself needing to expand the project. The BDCC is now on the verge of dispatching their 15th full container. Since the start of the project the BDCC has sent 300 kit bags and cartons of cricket equipment and other sporting equipment, school books and uniforms. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the pioneers and leaders of the Bankstown Cricket Community including but not limited to Patrons, John Murray OAM and Daryl Melham AM, President Scott Grant, Honorary Secretary M H Klumpp OAM, and Assistant Secretary B Freeman OAM. Special mention to BDCC staff, management, players and volunteers.

#### **PACIFIC LINK: BEST AFFORDABLE HOUSING AWARD**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is with great pleasure that I can recognise Pacific Link Housing as recipients of the Property Council of Australia's "Best Affordable Housing Development, 2021". Located in Glendale, their project "Pacific Gateway" is a twenty-one unit development focussed on accessibility and environmental sustainability. This project is the first to be completed as part of the NSW Government's Community Plus Program, a \$22 billion dollar investment designed to renew our state's approach to social housing. Led by CEO Ian Lynch, his board of Mark Glew, Cindy Butlin, Daphne Wayland, Wal Edgell and Stephen Brahmans have created an aspirational environment for all tenants, with an integration of private, social and affordable housing. Critically, it provides a future vision for occupants, offering a transition from social to affordable tenancy without the need for relocation. This national award is partnered with recognition late last year from Australasian Housing Institute's "Response to COVID-19" and "Executive Excellence" for CEO Ian Lynch, both in the NSW jurisdiction. These achievements are a reflection of the planning, vision and overall excellence of Pacific Link Housing. Congratulations.

#### **TOURISM AWARDS 2021**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—It is with pride that today I can recognise the work of three outstanding businesses on the Central Coast who were recognised this week by NSW Tourism. These awards, while managed by the NSW Tourism Council, are in partnership with Business NSW and accentuate the excellent work of local businesses, despite the challenges faced with limited tourism. The Australian Reptile Park received a Silver Award for Major Tourist Attraction; IBIS Styles The Entrance was awarded the Bronze Award for their 4-4.5 star accommodation; and the Central Coast Council Marketing and Tourism Team acquired a Bronze Award for the Local Government Award in Tourism. Given that tourism is such a key part of the Central Coast economy, employing ten thousand locals and contributing 1.2 billion dollars, these awards are a reflection of hard work, commitment, and savvy smarts applied by the respective businesses to succeed in such a volatile and changing tourist climate. I provide my sincerest congratulations to all those involved.

#### **REBECCA HINSHELWOOD – CRONULLA WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I congratulate Rebecca Hinshelwood of Kurnell on being awarded Cronulla Woman of the Year for 2022. Rebecca is the President and Deputy Captain of Kurnell Rural Fire Service, where she has been a volunteer for almost 29 years and served on the front line as a firefighter as well as in a number of senior roles at the local brigade. She follows in the footsteps of her father David Lavis, who was its captain for 17 years during a 30-year career with the organisation. Her husband David Hinshelwood is the present captain. Rebecca balances her volunteer work with raising her three daughters and a career as a nurse. Rebecca has been committed to regular training and improving her skills and knowledge, while gaining valuable experience fighting the 1997, 2001 and 2019-20 'Black Summer' bushfires. As a leader in the RFS, Rebecca is a great role model for women in an organisation that has traditionally had more male volunteers. The award is due recognition of her commitment and the valuable role she plays in steering an essential local service.

**KEN Warburton - Sylvanvale Pre World War II Car Show**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I congratulate Ken Warburton of Burraneer who organised another successful Sylvanvale Pre World War II Car Show, held in Sutherland last Sunday 20 March. The event couldn't be held in the last two years because of COVID-19, but the show came back to life in 2022 with crowds enjoying the great weather to inspect more than 100 vintage cars on display. Ken's parents (now deceased) were part of a group of families who established Sylvanvale 75 years ago to give children with a disability a better quality of life. Ken's older sister Carol lives in a Sylvanvale group home. Ken says that from a very young age he took on the role of her protector and defender. Ken founded the car show back in 2015 to raise money to support the services offered by Sylvanvale. Ken has organised the show six times. His passion for Sylvanvale and love of cars has made for a popular community event that has helped the 750 disabled children and adults served by Sylvanvale. Congratulations to Ken and the Sylvanvale team for making a difference in our Sutherland Shire community.

**Wanda Surf Life Saving Club Flood Response**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Attorney General)**—I commend members of the Wanda Surf Life Saving Club for volunteering to support the recent flood response in Sydney and the South Coast. Wanda had two teams respond to the need of communities at Nowra and Hawkesbury that were inundated by floodwaters. Sixteen club members gave up their time to leave home for several days to deploy Wanda's rescue craft in very difficult circumstances and help people stranded by murky waters. Club Captain Denny Rowlands led the team to Nowra that also included Nat Buckley, Brett Porteous, Riley Porteous, John Wilde and Mark Lloyd. Riley Porteous came home and was deployed again in the Sydney area to provide drone support. The team sent to Hawkesbury was Brett Porteous, Peter Daras, Guy Bland, Cromwell Ollivier, Stephen Trembath and Josh Crowthers. The response teams were well supported by other club members Mikaela Sutherland, Mark Lake, Adam Buckley and Ken Smith and their families.

**Gaza Children's Fund**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I recognise the Gaza Children's Fund which is a not for profit organisation that was founded by a group of volunteers and social activists. This organisation supports disadvantaged Palestinian children, orphans, widows and families in need in Gaza. Among other things it supplies safe lighting, food vouchers, essential medicine vouchers, bedsheets and mattresses, and roofing. Granted the conditions in Gaza which I saw myself several years ago, such efforts are invaluable. They hold an annual event featuring a documentary about Palestine. This year's event was held on Saturday 5 March 2022 at the Bryan Brown theatre in Bankstown. This year the film was about the 2021 War in Gaza. The function also featured a number of speakers and a series of fundraising auctions to help raise funds for the organisation's activities. This organisation does good and important work and I'm happy to acknowledge it and its members.

**Diplomacy Training Program – East Timor**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool)**—I am delighted to recognise the Diplomacy Training Program [DTP], based at the UNSW Faculty of Law and Justice and especially the webinar held on 16 February entitled "Timor was Invaded." DTP was established over 30 years ago by Jose Ramos-Horta to build the knowledge, skills and networks of advocates and human rights defenders. The East Timor webinar was introduced by Professor David Dixon, DTP Chair. The Moderator was Susan Connelly, RSJ, PhD. Presenters included Professor Peter Stanley; Dr Kirsty Sword AO; Paul Cleary, Edward Willis; Gregorio Rosa; Ana Maria Ferreira and Jose Ramos Horta. Many Australians remember the Japanese bombing of Darwin 80 years ago. Fewer know of the Japanese invasion of Timor. Even fewer know that that invasion occurred because Australia breached Portuguese neutrality. 40 to 60,000 Timorese died during the occupation. The webinar was about much more than recording the history. It raised issues about the obligations of friendship, and the responsibility of this generation for things done by previous generations. This raised issues also in relation to Afghanistan and to the Kurdish people in the north of Iraq.

**Neil Bulger**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I wish to pay my respects to Neil Bulger, a cricketing legend who is regarded as one of the finest sportsmen to come out of Tumut. Mr Bulger, a Wiradjuri elder, has been remembered as a talented all-rounder. He played 34 years of first grade cricket with clubs across the Riverina and the ACT, but also excelled at every sport he played. Mr Bulger won numerous first grade cricket titles, on top of rugby league honours, and he was awarded life membership of the Queanbeyan Cricket Club, while also having an oval there named in his honour. In 1989, Mr Bulger was picked to play in the Prime Minister's XI, alongside Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson, when Bob Hawke was PM. He was vice-captain of the Australian Indigenous cricket side that toured England in 1988. The loyal Rabbitohs supporter is remembered as gregarious, humble and



big-hearted. His sister, Sue Bulger, told The Daily Advertiser her brother, who was the oldest in a family of 11, was a generous community-minded man. Friends have remembered a man of immense sporting talent, who loved a good yarn and his community. Vale to a much-loved and respected member of the Tumut community.

#### **LAYLA BACAYO**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I wish to extend my congratulations to Layla Bacayo, who has been awarded the Community Colleges Australia Achievement Award at the Community Education Student of the Year Awards for 2021. Layla is an illustrator, painter, digital artist and DJ. She is a young woman with neuro diverse features who attends the Art Factory Supported Studio at the Riverina Community College in Wagga Wagga. By attending the Art Factory, Layla has had the opportunity to collaborate and be a valuable contributor to the wider contemporary art world. Layla has collaborated with a number of regional art galleries, including Griffith Regional Art Gallery, The Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Eastern Riverina Arts and the National Portrait Gallery. Her colleagues have said of Layla: "Layla is a well-organised, effective ambassador and advocate for people with neuro diverse features and disabilities. She is an outstanding young woman who has met many challenges and risen to be an active member of our local community. "Layla is a fierce advocate and leader in the arts and disability sector, fighting discrimination against people with disability and striving for equal opportunity, predominantly in the arts. Well done Layla on your hard work and great achievement.

#### **LIBBY CLOHESSY**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—When Libby Clohessy began working for The Leisure Company in Wagga Wagga, she spent six hours a week looking after two clients. In January, the now-chief executive officer marked 30 years with The Leisure Company, which provides recreation, work, and life skills to people with a disability throughout Wagga Wagga. In her three decades with The Leisure Company, Ms Clohessy has seen the organisation go from strength to strength, adding clients and staff as the range of services and programs has expanded. Ms Clohessy is proud of her staff and clients and says Wagga Wagga residents have been supportive of The Leisure Company and its programs. Although she has played a vital role in helping the service provider to grow over the past 30 years, Ms Clohessy maintains that it would not be where it is today without a team of dedicated staff. She remains dedicated to clients, who grow and develop new skills through their interactions with The Leisure Company. During her time with The Leisure Company, Wagga Wagga has continued to grow its positive attitude to inclusion. I commend Mrs Clohessy on her 30 years of hard work and dedication to The Leisure Company.

#### **HOLY CROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL GLENDALE STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Holy Cross Primary School Glendale on their appointment. Holy Cross Primary School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Ashley Borg, the outstanding staff at Holy Cross Primary School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "We Dare, We Share" by developing and supporting each student through their foundational years of learning. The kind hearted students at Holy Cross Primary 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 Holy Cross Primary School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, Anastasia, Joshua, Hayley, Lola, Olive, Indianna, Hamish, Alexis, Ekam, Danielle, Mia, Cooper, Claudia, Blyth, Henry, Sophia, Lewis, Lafaele, Catherine, Aryan, Michael, Louis and Cameron on their successful appointment. 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 Holy Cross Primary School.

#### **LAMBTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Lambton High School on their appointment. Lambton High School is a wonderful community. Its members pride themselves on their diverse and nurturing culture. Led by Principal Gary Bennett, the outstanding staff at Lambton High School work alongside the parent and student body to uphold their motto "Light The Way" 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 Lambton High School's values. I congratulate the 2022 Student Leaders, School Captains Mhairi Hammond and Thomas Muggleton, Vice Captains Taneisha-Lee Fry and Hugh-Angus Bright, Senior Prefects Charlotte Mason, James Harrison, Rachel Pree, David MacClure, Sophie Tickle, Arlo Yeomans-Hansen and Sophie Unwin and Prefects Lily Jane Dauwalder, Leila Futter, Grace Jolly, Chloe Odgers, Tara Odgers, Eunso Oh and Francelle Patingo on their successful appointment. These students should be incredibly proud of this achievement. I look forward to seeing them lead their peers through this exciting year filled with new opportunities. I extend my best wishes to the new student leaders at Lambton High School.

**ROBYN AVERY**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Some called it palindrome day while others opted for Twosday. Whatever you called it, the 22/2/2022 was a special day for some. One local woman thought it was a special enough date to celebrate all the local babies born on the day. Robyn Avery decided to prepare and donate some onesies for all the babies born at the John Hunter Hospital. A last minute decision, Robyn raced out and purchased 10 newborn onesies and then added the heat transfer vinyl that said "Born on Twosday 22.2.22, worlds most awesome baby" and delivered them late the night before to the maternity unit at the John Hunter Hospital. One proud parent posted a photo of his newborn son, Jack, on my Facebook page, in his special onesie, thanking the anonymous donor of the clothes. Soon enough Robyn was outed as the person responsible for the outfits. Her aim was to make people smile and she certainly achieved that with many happy parents taking home their special gift. Mission accomplished Robyn. Thank you for your wonderful gesture, making an already special day just that little bit more special.

**ISLA CAMERON**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang)**—Isla Cameron of Toukley recently participated in the World's Greatest Shave for the Leukaemia Foundation. Isla is 10 years of age and committed to shaving off her locks at an event at Toukley Golf Club on the 12th of March. Isla has said that work undertaken by the Leukaemia Foundation is close to her heart as her grandmother was diagnosed with the illness four years ago. Isla has so far raised \$2,640 via Facebook, is selling raffle tickets and holding a sausage sizzle. Congratulations Isla for being so courageous for such a great cause.

**MRS THELMA KLEEM 100TH BIRTHDAY**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—It is with great pleasure that today I acknowledge Mrs Thelma Kleem on her 100th birthday which she will celebrate on 28th March 2022. I am sure Thelma will celebrate this momentous occasion accompanied by her closest friends and family. I take this opportunity to again extend my sincere congratulations to Thelma and wish her good health and happiness for the future.

**SUTHERLAND BASKETBALL REPRESENTATIVE SEASON LAUNCH**

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)**—At last a return to the Sutherland Basketball Stadium with a very successful 2022 season launch!! After a long absence I would like to acknowledge the efforts of volunteers preparing for the season and thank them for their contribution. The Women's Basketball League is an exciting sport played around Sydney and I encourage keen basketball fans to attend and support our team the "Sutherland Sharks". With basketball activities disrupted during the last couple of seasons, the participants are looking forward to a great season. I wish them every successful in their competitions. Go Sharks!!!!

**VALE PETER HERLINGER**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—I am saddened to announce the passing of our friend Peter Theodore Joseph Herlinger on 27th February 2022. Peter was a Girraween local who, from September 1999 – September 2000, served as the first Labor Mayor of Holroyd City Council - a council whose history dates back to 1872. Mr Herlinger was always a great fighter for the Labor cause, especially in the Holroyd Area where he was a member of the party since 1962. He was a good man that always looked out for the community and was well-loved and respected by all.

Peter made an outstanding contribution to the Western Sydney Area Health Board and the Upper Parramatta River Catchment Trust. He also was a member of Girraween Public School Council, Parramatta Park Trust and a patron of the Girraween Little Athletics. Peter will always be remembered for his enthusiasm in the Labor movement, his strong leadership, and determination to give back to the community. Peter will be missed by his family and friends, including his children Julie and Robert, his daughter in law Mary, and his grandchild Andrew. Vale Peter Herlinger.

**AUSTRALIAN TAMIL CONGRESS CAMPAIGN LAUNCH**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—On Saturday 27 February 2022, I was pleased to show my solidarity and support the Australian Tamil Congress and global Tamil Diaspora organisations who have jointly launched a human rights campaign to impose an international ban on eighteen identified alleged war criminals in Sri Lanka. The campaign has been encouraged through the successful passage of the UNHRC Resolution 46/1, which is promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, and the 2015 OHCHR report, which specifically identified eighteen Sri Lankan personnel for having command responsibility for committing atrocity crimes towards the end of the war in 2008-09. I am proud to represent a vibrant and significant Tamil community in the Electorate of Prospect and understand all too well, the impact that this genocide has had on all generations of the Tamil community. Thank you to the Australian Tamil Congress and global Tamil Diaspora

organisations for your advocacy in promoting restorative justice for our Tamil community here in NSW and abroad. I look forward to continue working with you to address human rights issues affecting our Tamil community. The Tamil community deserves justice.

#### **ADVANCE DIVERSITY SERVICES 40 YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Today I recognise a fantastic community organisation in my local area, Advance Diversity Services. In 2021, Advance Diversity Services celebrated their 40th anniversary which I had the pleasure of attending. The event highlighted 40 years' worth of hard work and dedication to the community. Over the years, Advance Diversity Services have supported our local culturally and linguistically diverse communities providing crucial services to those with limited English skills. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Advance Diversity Services has adapted their services to support temporary visa holders who may have been at a severe financial disadvantage thanks to a loss of work. The work that Advance Diversity Services does is often heart breaking work, but, none the less it is crucially important work as the most vulnerable within our multicultural communities can turn to organisations such as Advance Diversity Services in their time of need. I want to thank CEO Antoinette Chow and all of the staff and volunteers at Advance Diversity Services for their hard work and dedication to make our community a better place.

#### **GRC PEAKHURST GRANT PRESENTATION**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Today I recognise a fantastic school in my local area, Georges River College Peakhurst. Late last year, I visited the school where I was pleased to see that a grant from the New South Wales Government worth \$1350 was going to be put to good use. This funding is going towards purchasing a portable workstation and storage unit for the woodworking department at the school. This funding is fantastic news for the students, teachers and parents who make up the GRC Peakhurst school community as it will upgrade their existing capabilities to teach Technology and Applied Studies subjects. Speaker, I strongly support the improvement of hands-on learning subjects in our schools. This investment helps to prepare our students for life after school, whether they go to university, TAFE or enter the workforce, it is important that we provide support for all avenues in life. I would like to thank Principal Diane Wilson and P&C member Anissa Kapadia for their advocacy on this matter and I look forward to working with them on future projects.

#### **MUSIC TEACHERS CONFERENCE 2021**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley—Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors)**—Today I recognise the 2021 Music Teachers' Association of New South Wales Inspire conference. Last year, I had the pleasure of attending this fantastic event which unfortunately due to COVID regulations had to be held over zoom. However, it was still an engaging and educational experience for all those who attended. The conference provided music teachers all over New South Wales the opportunity to engage in an environment of innovative learning and teaching strategies, sharing important skills and knowledge from countless hardworking teachers. Teaching throughout a global pandemic is no small task but teachers rose to the challenge. In homes right across the state, teachers and students learnt remotely over Zoom and worked with parents to ensure as little disruption as possible to our kids' learning. I would like to sincerely thank of all the teachers who have worked so hard this year and I also wish to thank the Music Teachers' Association of New South Wales, President Susan Deas and Secretary Mary Leman for an insightful conference.

#### **RETIREMENT OF ALAN YOUNG PSM, CITY MANAGER, FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—Mr Alan Young PSM will retire from his position as City Manager of Fairfield City Council on 4th July 2022 after almost 23 years of service. I wish to acknowledge Mr Young for his dedication to the job and to the Fairfield Local Government Area over a long and successful career. Fairfield is the last in a list of seven Councils that Mr Young has worked for since 1975. An outstanding leader, Alan has earned the respect of the councillors and staff at Fairfield City Council for the respect he offers his colleagues and Council staff and for the proactive approach he takes when dealing with the needs of the Fairfield community. Not only does Alan possess an extensive knowledge of local government issues, he is also valued for his considerate and caring personality. Alan Young is considered a valued leader at Fairfield City Council and will be greatly missed. I wish Alan all the very best in his future endeavours.

#### **GOOD360 AUSTRALIA - FLOOD RECOVERY SUPPORT**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—During the recent wet weather episode across Australia's east coast, Good360 Australia stepped in to provide essential items to those members of the community who were in need after flooding. The Smithfield-based service were inundated with orders and provided more than 70,000 items including clothing, toiletries, PPE, school supplies, cleaning supplies, furniture and kitchenware at a value of more

than \$820,000. I commend Good360 Australia for their recent efforts, coming soon after the huge demand for their services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **COMMUNITY LEADERS HARMONY DINNER**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield)**—In the lead up to Harmony Week (21st - 27th March, 2022) the Western Sydney MRC and Core Community Services hosted the, Community Leaders Harmony Dinner 2022 on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The focus of the event was to unite the community leaders and active community members of the Fairfield and Liverpool Local Government Areas to celebrate Harmony Week and to thank them for their ongoing dedication to the community. Community groups and individuals were excited to be back celebrating achievements and acknowledging those that continually strive to create social cohesion in their community. The evening was awash with lots of traditional cultural dress and colour. Harmony Week is an opportunity for all people to work towards the elimination of hate and racism. I acknowledge the work CORE Community Services, Western Sydney MRC and community groups are doing towards eliminating racism and extremism in society and I thank them for their efforts.

### **WELCOME TO HABERFIELD**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—The excellent team at the Haberfield Association have been busily working on a new flyer to welcome new residents to Haberfield. A special volunteer group has been working on the flyer for months, which includes a history of Australia's first planned garden suburb, references to important books on Federation architecture, as well as useful tips and hints for homeowners embarking on renovations in the Haberfield Heritage Conservation Area. The flyer outlines key heritage principles, as well as a palette of recommended external colours for Haberfield homes. The flyer builds upon the Haberfield Association's important work to preserve the suburb, including their important work at Yasmar Estate, their efforts to document the suburb's unique heritage, and their campaign to have the entire suburb listed on the NSW State Heritage Register. I warmly thank and congratulate all those at the Haberfield Association who worked so diligently to produce the Welcome to Haberfield flyer, which will no doubt delight and inform current residents and those who make Haberfield home in the future.

### **MARRICKVILLE MARAUDERS – INTERNATIONAL FENCERS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—The Marrickville Marauders have been training fencers of all ages at Marrickville PCYC since 2009. This year, two of their wonderful athletes will be travelling to Dubai and representing Marrickville in the Australian National Men's Sabre and National Women's Sabre fencing teams. These two Marrickville locals, Gaia Hardge and Daniel Iliffe. Not only is this Daniel's first time competing overseas, but both athletes attend public high schools here in the inner west and are funding all training and travel costs themselves – certainly no mean feat for a teenager. Of course, the success of any athlete is also due to the many people behind the scenes supporting them. Congratulations to the families of these terrific young people, to head coach of the Marrickville Marauders Jess Brooks, and to all coaches and volunteers at the club on this wonderful story of achievement. Local sporting clubs like the Marauders foster the aspirations of young people and provide extraordinary opportunities like those Gaia and Daniel are about to embark upon. Congratulations Gaia and Daniel - I wish you all the best for your competitions. The inner west is proudly cheering you on.

### **SAVVY FINANCE – MARRICKVILLE LEGAL CENTRE**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill)**—As part of Inner West Council's Collab(Orate) initiative for International Women's Day 2022, Marrickville Legal Centre has transformed the Savvy Finance program from an online series of learning modules to in-person events. Marrickville Legal Centre hosted a morning tea for community workers on 15 March to raise awareness of the issue and the program. Workshops in the Savvy Finance program are offered in English, Vietnamese, Mandarin and Arabic, are offered in partnership with other organisations including Asian Women at Work, and are designed to support women who have experienced domestic violence to identify and seek support around coercive control and financial abuse. A recent study found that nearly one in twenty women in Australia have experienced financial abuse, which can include controlling or exploiting behaviour that limits a person's ability to obtain, save or spend money. I warmly thank and congratulate all the staff at Marrickville Legal Centre who have worked to create both the Savvy Finance E-Kits and in-person workshops, and the community workers and partners who have supported this important work.

### **2022 PITTWATER WOMAN OF THE YEAR SARAH MORRIS**

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport)**—It is a privilege to recognise the incredible contribution of Sarah Morris – recently honoured as the 2022 Pittwater Woman of the Year. When COVID-19 hit, it abruptly impacted lives and livelihoods across Sydney – particularly our community's most vulnerable. Sarah co-founded Acts of Kindness Community Outreach to provide food items to the homeless and families across Sydney through their distribution hub at

Woolloomooloo. She has also established a community pantry at Newport – in partnership with local businesses and charities – to provide emergency access to essential items for anyone who is struggling. By coordinating a link between those with surplus food and those in need, Sarah's compassion and determination has helped make a real difference in my community of Pittwater and across Sydney. In Sarah's words, sometimes "people just need a little bit of kindness, just to get through, and when they're back on their feet they could do the same for someone else." Sarah's example is an inspiration to us all. For all the heartache and challenges the pandemic has caused – it has also exposed the absolute best of our society. Thank you, Sarah, and congratulations on this richly deserved recognition.

#### **ALFORDS POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)—**I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Alford's Point Public School on their appointment. Alford's Point Public School is home to an incredible group of caring and welcoming students. Led by outstanding Principal Annette Wein, the teaching and support staff work hard to ensure that all students succeed and thrive in an environment underpinned by collaboration, inclusivity and high expectations. With the resumption of face-to-face learning, students and staff have enjoyed being back at school kicking off the year with the school swimming and cross country carnival. The 2022 leadership team truly embody the values that make Alford's Point Public School such a wonderful place to learn and grow. I congratulate School Captains Ashleigh Morgan and Jayden Kwon along with Vice Captains Abbey Sennis and Patrick Moore on their successful appointment. To be elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud, and I look forward to seeing the opportunities they embrace throughout the year. I commend the student leaders from Alford's Point Public School on their success and extend my best wishes for the 2022 school year.

#### **KAREELA PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)—**I congratulate the newly elected leadership team of Kareela Public School on their appointment. The incredible students at Kareela Public School pride themselves on their welcoming culture, always endeavouring to support and uplift each other in every opportunity. This year, the Year 6 students have launched themselves into learning new skills and refining their talents through the golfing program, Picasso portrait workshops and took part in the school swimming carnival. Leading by example is the 2022 leadership team who truly embody the values that make Kareela Public School such a wonderful place to learn and grow. I congratulate School Captains Charlotte Paterson and Isaiah Murr, along with Vice Captains Ava Cupples, Zoe Wood, Jed Bass and Tiernan Diaz on their successful appointment. To be elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud and I look forward to seeing the opportunities they embrace throughout the year. I commend the student leaders from Kareela Public School on their success and extend my best wishes for the 2022 school year.

#### **JANNALI PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Fair Trading)—**I acknowledge Jannali Public School who are the successful recipients of \$25,000 from the NSW Government's 2021 Community Building Partnership Program. The wonderful team at Jannali Public School work hard to "inspire lifelong learners" by creating diverse educational opportunities suited to students with different needs and learning styles. The grant funding will help construct a permanent shade cover in the school playground which will provide protection from the elements for students. The shade cover will also allow students and staff to maximise the use of this space as an outdoor classroom and for Before and After School Care. None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of the Parents and Citizens Association committee including Brett Robinson, Rebecca Abrook, Sharon King, Michelle Morris, Megan Chimiak and Vanessa Gale. I also acknowledge the leadership and support provided by Principal Michael Duffy. I thank the Jannali 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.

#### **BIANCA FULLER**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—**I wish to recognise Miss Bianca Fuller. A student and representative of the Kinross Wolaroi School in Orange, Bianca competed at the Country Swimming Championships in February 2022. Bianca's exceptional performance resulted in her winning three gold medals, two silver medals and two bronze medals. Bianca was also crowned the 2022 NSW Country Championships Female Swimmer of the Meet. All of this was despite the fact she didn't even get the chance to medal in some of her stronger events as the championship event was cut short. Bianca is a dedicated athlete and has been working towards her favoured individual medley events and breaststroke however, the event ended early due to unforeseen circumstances. Following these great results, Bianca continued her training in preparation for six events at the NSW opens titles,

and hopeful of making either an A or B final throughout the higher level competition. Congratulations, Bianca. I look forward to watching the progression of your promising sporting career.

#### **EMERITUS MAYOR REG KIDD**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise former Orange City Council's Mayor, Mr Reg Kidd. Following two consecutive terms as the Mayor of Orange, then Councillor Reg Kidd retired from representing his community on council and the local government leadership role. Elected to his first term in 1991, Reg was Orange's first popularly elected mayor in 2017. He also served as mayor between 2007 and 2009, and has served on numerous committees during his 32 years on Orange City Council. He also represented on Local Government NSW on a number of state advisory committees. At the recent Local Government NSW event, Reg was honoured for his long service in local government. Reg was awarded an Outstanding Service Award and a 30-year Retirement bar, before being awarded the title of Emeritus Mayor. I wish to acknowledge Emeritus Mayor Reg Kidd for his significant service in local government and on his recent awards and title. Congratulations.

#### **DAVID HOADLEY**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish Superintendent David Hoadley of the Canobolas Zone, NSW Rural Fire Service. David has a combined 53 years of service in both volunteer and professional capacities with the NSW Rural Fire Service. After 23 years of voluntary service, David transitioned to a professional roles, commencing at Blayney and then concluding at Canobolas, where he was Zone Commander for 21 years before recently announcing his retirement. David led a management team which was responsible for over 80 RFS brigades and 2700 volunteers. Under David's command, lives and countless properties have been saved in the many bushfires fought. David has been instrumental in developing the Canobolas Zone, and the broader organisation through improving its operation and capabilities. Under David's leadership, notable achievements include, Gum Tree meetings to consult with volunteers and the community, development of a new standard in Risk Management Plans and RFS policy, making hazard reduction a priority and improvements to fleet and equipment and many other initiatives which have been adopted by the organisation. I commend David's professionalism and leadership, and congratulate him on a very accomplished and distinguished career. I wish David well for a much-earned retirement. Well done.

#### **AVALON BEACH CENTENARY**

**Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport)**—I acknowledge a significant milestone for the sylvan spot that is Avalon Beach, in my community of Pittwater. Last weekend I was delighted to attend celebrations to mark the Centenary of the naming of Avalon Beach, including a tree planting by local school students and traditional smoking ceremony performed by Uncle Neil Evers. The first published reference to Avalon Beach occurred in December 1921, when areas of the community were subdivided by A.J. Small as part of the Palmgrove Estate. The suburb is named for the island paradise of Arthurian legend, and – bounded by what could be called the moat of the Bilgola Bends – locals will agree that Avalon Beach is indeed a paradise. Known to many as 'Avalon' – or simply, 'Av' – the suburb was formally gazetted by the NSW Government as 'Avalon Beach' in 2012, to reflect the area's historical designation. With Centenary celebrations impacted last year by the Pandemic, it's fantastic Pittwater residents can now come together again to celebrate this incredible shared community journey. Thank you to the many Avalonians involved in organising events – including Ros Marsh, Jan Roberts and Geoff Searl – and Happy Centenary to the Avalon Beach community.

#### **MONTE STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN LIONS YOUTH OF THE YEAR PROGRAM**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to recognise the success of members of the Monte school debating team in the Lions Youth of the Year Program. The national program has been running since 1964 and aims to foster leadership skills in students with a focus on academic skills, public speaking, sporting and cultural involvement, and contribution to the community. Emma Greenup and Athina Tsakalos who are both in year 12, competed as local finalists for the Lion Club Youth of the Year Award competition on the 8th of February. As part of this competition, they had to deliver prepared speeches. Emma spoke on the topic of the need for reform in the education system to increase inclusivity for LGBTQIA+ students. Athina presented a speech on the date of Australia Day. The girls also had to answer questions following their presentations. Congratulations to Emma and Athina for representing yourselves, your school, and our local community with great pride. I want to thank Monte Principal Nicole Christensen, Debating and Public Speaking Coordinator Sarah Jackson, and anyone else from the school community involved in supporting Emma and Athina in their participation of the program.

#### **2022 MOSMAN SENIORS FESTIVAL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I would like to recognise the Mosman Seniors Festival, which coincides with the NSW Seniors Festival from the 25th of March to Tuesday the 5th of April. Many local residents

in North Shore love to get involved and join in with the activities held locally. This year activities include art classes, bocce, Tai Chi, table tennis, Zumba, and more. As well as seminars and workshops on history, local fauna, soldering iron, and the Mosman Art Society Exhibition Highlights Tour. The Seniors Festival also provides crucial information sessions on technology, online scams, and aged care to keep our local seniors informed and connected. I want to thank the Mayor of Mosman Council Carolyn Corrigan and her team for bringing this festival to the community for another year. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Mosman Community Centre, the Mosman Seniors Centre and to all of the other local businesses and community groups who have collaborated to deliver the Festival. I hope our local seniors enjoy the amazing program that has been organised for this year along with the NSW Government's awesome calendar of events.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL UPGRADES**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to acknowledge that upgrades to the science labs at North Sydney Girls High School to deliver Phase 1 of the project have begun. Phase 1 includes upgrades to four science laboratories, a preparation room, and a chemical store. NSGH has secured enough funding that they have been able to extend the project to include Phase 2 plans. This will allow for all labs and preparation rooms to now be upgraded, a huge win for the school and STEM students. This project would not have been possible without \$500,000 of funding from the NSW Government, as well as contributions from the North Sydney Girls High School Foundation and the generous school community. I am proud to have helped secure this state funding as part of the NSW Government's \$120 million Metro Renewal Program to deliver this outcome. Thank you to NSGH Principal Megan Connors, her faculty, the P&C, and wider school community for raising the remaining funds to deliver not only Phase 1 of this project, but move to Phase 2. Congratulations to you all for this success, these upgrades will significantly benefit the learning of students for years to come.

#### **OLIVER SHARPE**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina)**—Congratulations to Oliver Sharpe from Lennox Head/Alstonville Surf Life Saving Club who won the Open Male Ironman race at the age of just 16 at the NSW Country Surf Life Saving Championships on January 29. Oliver also won gold medals in the U17 male ski, surf and board before taking out the open men's Ironman race. Oliver was intending to compete in the U17 Open Ironman but thought he would "have a bit of fun" by taking part in the Opens and was "a bit shocked" when he came first in the more challenging event. His sister, Niamh, also enjoyed successes in the U15 Board race and the U15 Surfboard riding event.

#### **MEG JOHNSON – SUPER SWIMMER**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, and Minister for Flood Recovery)**—I wish to congratulate 25 year old Meg Johnson who managed the incredible feat of swimming 33 kilometres to raise an astounding amount, totalling nearly \$4000 for the Starlight Foundations Super Swim Challenge. Meg maintained the mindset of never giving up, believing in herself to swim 660 laps of a 50m pool over the month of February and raising thousands of dollars past her initial goal and swimming a kilometre further than she originally aimed for. She overcame many difficulties while working toward her goal, managing to battle through 3 sick days, swim around various swimming carnivals and travelling the distance to Cootamundra or Harden if Young pool was too busy to do her laps. A sweet and kind natured young lady, Meg's motivation behind wanting to raise these funds was because she wanted to help make sick children feel better. I believe Meg achieved this, and she should certainly be extremely proud of her efforts. I would like to congratulate Meg once again on this incredible achievement and celebrate her hard work and selfless dedication to trying to help sick children.

#### **131ST GUNDAGAI SHOW**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, and Minister for Flood Recovery)**—I congratulate the Gundagai Pastoral and Agricultural Society for hosting the hugely successful 131st annual Gundagai Show. Residents and visitors flocked to the Gundagai Showground to enjoy all the show had to offer which included an abundance of exhibitors from all over the state putting their best work on display. Country shows provide a great day out for all and it is so wonderful to see them go from strength to strength each year, backed by the support of the local community. I know firsthand how amazing the Gundagai Show is which is why I have attended and helped out for the past 5 years. It is always such a lovely day out full of fun. So much effort goes into the organising of the show by the committee who I commend on putting a wonderful few days of events together despite all the uncertainty and challenges experienced over the past two years. Once again I applaud all involved who made the 2022 Gundagai Show a roaring success.

#### **COOLAMON SHIRE WOMEN SET TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra—Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience, and Minister for Flood Recovery)**—I would like to thank 4 local Coolamon Shire Women for taking the plunge to talk about

Mental Health. Wendy Chamaoun, Cathy Booth, Carolyn Cox and Tanya Davis are commended in their efforts at arranging a community discussion on Mental Health within their local area. These amazing ladies have organised a women's morning tea and chat event at the Ganmain Sport's Club to address the current Mental Health issues present and discuss ways the community can help break down the stigma. The Coolamon Shire Council Mayor, Dave McCann, has recently announced that Mental Health will be the forefront of Councils agenda in the coming term and in such have kindly provided \$2,000 in funding to Wendy, Cathy, Carolyn and Tanya to help see these events come to fruition. Although the initial event is aimed at women I am assured that the exact same meeting is also planned for the men later in the year. I thank Wendy, Cathy, Carolyn and Tanya once again for coordinating such a fantastic initiative and I look forward to working closely with you all.

#### **LAUREN GEAR LWOTYA NOMINEE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—I congratulate Lauren Gear upon her nomination for the recent Local Woman of The Year Award. Following her graduation from the University of Newcastle with Honours in 2019, Lauren received a targeted graduate placement with the Department of Education. Lauren is now a Special Education Teacher at Rutherford Technology High School. Lauren works tirelessly to ensure the inclusion of her support students within the wider community. In collaboration with other support units, staff and community members, Lauren creates multiple out of school excursions that provide sports, dance and social opportunities for these students. Every step that Lauren takes to support her students is in collaboration with their parents and carers. Lauren believes this is key to ensuring her students have access to a supportive learning environment with the appropriate resources. Lauren is passionate about developing and delivering Individual Education Plans that support students' academically, whilst also providing them with vital life skills. I commend Lauren for her work and her giving of herself as an educator. I congratulate her upon this nomination and I wish her a stellar future powerfully contributing to children's lives.

#### **STACY JACOBS LWOTY NOMINEE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—Stacy Jacobs shares the valuable company of several women of Maitland as a nominee in the Local Woman of The Year Award. Stacy has stated that she loves living in Maitland and appreciates all of the opportunities it has given her to grow. She is a member of the Rotary Club of East Maitland, President of Cessnock PCYC Committee, President of Cessnock Family Support Service, Secretary of Cessnock Chamber of Commerce and Volunteer Driving Supervisor for Cessnock Driving Success. Stacy has spoken at a number of international conference events over the years. Stacy is currently a Student Support Officer at Cessnock High School and she has held that role for the last 10 years. During that time she has also been involved in the development and support of other Student Support Officers across NSW in her capacity as a SSO Buddy. Stacy is also the primary carer for her mother. I appreciate Stacy's willingness to get involved and contribute to our community. I congratulate her on her nomination and the recognition of her contributions and efforts that it represents.

#### **SIGI VAN DER WESTHUIZEN LWOTYA NOMINEE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland)**—Navigating the complexities of a new country can be an exciting and sometimes daunting challenge. To navigate that challenge while also exploring and developing a new career has culminated in the nomination of Sigi Van Der Westhuizen in the Local Woman of The Year Awards. With a Master Degree and registration as Industrial Psychologist in South Africa, Sigi was a specialist at a large bank until she and her young family immigrated to Australia for her husband's work. She has now pivoted and is well known for developing successful treatment options in nail-biting and picking. Sigi is also pushing forward with complimentary approaches to a range of other fingernail problems. I commend her on the range of her multilayered journeys both culturally and career-wise. I congratulate her upon her nomination and I look forward to seeing where her entrepreneurial spirit will lead her in the near future.

#### **KATIE GREENAWAY**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—A Dubbo early childhood educator has been recognised for her commitment to support and mentor staff and children. Centre manager of Community Kids Dubbo, Katie Greenaway, has received the Mentoring Award in the 2021 G8 Education National Standout Educator Awards. Katie was selected out of 9,500 people for her strong leadership and mentor role across multiple centres, and ability to positively impact staff and children. G8 Education CEO and Managing Director, Gary Carroll, has said that Katie is a deserving recipient of this award, as she became a positive mentor and leader for multiple centres. Katie has dedicated her time across the organisation to support and guide the practice of many. She goes above and beyond, and is a role model and an inspiration as she works hard in her role. She has worked in childcare for 11 years, and in her spare time enjoys playing soccer and socialising with friends. Katie was recognised for her achievements in a virtual award



ceremony alongside other recipients for a variety of categories. The six national winners were selected from 36 regional finalists. What a fantastic achievement, Katie. Congratulations!

#### **DUBBO SAFE HAVEN**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—I recently attended the launch of the Dubbo Safe Haven, a refuge for people struggling with thoughts of suicide or experiencing emotional distress. One of 20 being trialled across NSW, the Dubbo Safe Haven offers a place of safety and support, aiming to break the cycle of distress people find themselves in before they require emergency care. The key to the safe haven concept is the peer workers – people with lived experience, who are willing to share that experience with others. Thanks to peer workers Matt Barnes, Monique Rayment and Ngaire Bigwood, and team leader Ben Brien. I've got no doubt you will help change countless lives. I want to commend the entire Western NSW Local Health District team who worked behind the scenes, including but not limited to: Martin Davis – district coordinator, Towards Zero Suicides Initiatives ... Donna Stanley – district coordinator, Aboriginal MHDA Services ... Vicky Scott – hub manager, MHDA Dubbo and Regions ... Rodney Cain – team leader, Dubbo MHDA Services ... Carol Vesey – MHDA Corporate Service Manager. Good luck with the trial and I hope to see this initiative rolled out to other areas across regional NSW!

#### **CUP OF KINDNESS CAMPAIGN**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales)**—I want to commend Trangie's Kate Kennedy, and the owners of Café 2823 – Julie Berry and Dee Carney – on their Cup of Kindness Campaign. Kate's friend, Bronwyn, lost her 17 year old son, Timothy, to suicide in 2020, and on the day of his funeral Bronwyn asked others to perform a random act of kindness in his honour. Inspired, Kate gave her daughter, who was working at Café 2823, \$50 and a mission – to buy 10 people a cup of coffee. So began the Cup of Kindness Campaign. 4200 cups of coffee later, the Trangie business now has a board tracking the many donors and recipients of the random acts of kindness. They're also actively promoting the work of organisations like Beyond Blue and Lifeline. Ms Kennedy said "I never imagined it would still be continuing today and to the volume it is. Not in terms of monetary value but the random acts of kindness". Because of Kate, Julie, Dee and Café 2823, the 'Cups of Kindness' campaign helps Timmy's legacy live on.

#### **GRESFORD SHOW 2022**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—The Upper Hunter Electorate's 2022 agricultural show season is underway with congratulations to the Gresford Show committee for ensuring their show did go on! History will record that the devastating weather along the New South Wales coastline unfortunately impacted the 90th staging of this annual event. Weather forecasts and the condition of the grounds forced Gresford District Agricultural Society to cancel cattle and horse events. So, Saturday March 12 became the focal point of the event with free entry and plenty of attractions drawing the crowd to Gresford Showground. The pavilions featured a veritable A-to-Z of interests from art and craft to cooking, including a men's section, through to the vegetable display. Outdoors, the sights and sounds of chainsaws, motorbikes, a tug-o-war competition and the pet parade entertained the crowd. Taylor McKenzie was named the Gresford Young Women of 2022 and now goes on to the Zone final of the AgShows NSW Young Woman competition in 2023. The generosity of Gresford was another highlight with the Show's Produce and Cookery Pavilion Auction raising \$2613 for flood victims. You can't beat a visit to our wonderful country shows and the Gresford Show committee did a fantastic job.

#### **UPPER HUNTER SHOW 2022**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—The Upper Hunter Show at Muswellbrook promotes itself as 'real country show entertainment for the whole family' and this year certainly delivered on that promise. It was a pleasure to attend such a great regional country show with a long tradition that brings the community come together to support the event. I thank Show president, Keith Gooze, for the invitation to officially open the event and participate in celebrations to open the showground's new administration building. One favourite part of the show is always the fun to be had at the CWA Muswellbrook Branch stall. The celebration of agriculture and the Upper Hunter started just after sunrise on Friday 18 March with the stock horse judging and the school beef cattle competition. Polocrosse, post splitting and the rodeo kept the action going into Friday evening. Saturday's program featured the stud beef cattle competition, wood chopping, tent pegging and the tug-of-war. Racing lawn mower demonstrations, a demolition derby and fireworks put the icing on Saturday night's proceedings. Congratulations to everyone involved with the 2022 Upper Hunter Show. These shows don't occur without a mountain of work by volunteers and a strong committee backed by generous sponsors.

#### **MADDIE KENNEDY**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise Maddie Kennedy as the state-wide recipient of the Zonta International Achievement Award for 2021 for a young Indigenous woman. The Zonta

International Achievement Award celebrates the achievements of young Indigenous women currently enrolled in Year 12. In her application for this award, Maddie highlighted her personal goals, including her intention to study education at university. Maddie hopes to use this degree and her passion for education to inspire the next generation of Indigenous children as they venture through their own lives. In her application, Maddie also outlined her proud Indigenous heritage, describing her Pop as a person who has had a considerable and positive influence on her.

Maddie's ability and strong character have also been recognised by her school with Maddie's year advisor depicting her as a dedicated, conscientious and hardworking student. I congratulate Maddie on her exceptional achievement as the Zonta International Achievement Award recipient for 2021, and wish her every success in the future.

### **SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson)**—It's Small Business month in NSW. However, small business is a big part of the NSW economy. There are more than 800,000 small businesses employing over 1.6 million people and who contribute \$400 billion to the state economy each year. Small Business Month 2022 has a focus on bouncing back from the economic impacts of the pandemic and now also from flooding. In my electorate of Davidson, small businesses are an integral part of the community. The various challenges of recent years have inspired some great agility, as local cafes jumped into making take home meals and supplying ingredients to home cooks. The NSW Government's Dine and Discover and other vouchers have been welcomed by hard hit small businesses and an enthusiastic public. So too have the free TAFE courses to develop in-demand skills - and the various NSW Government assistance grants. The NSW Government's Faster Payment for Small Business scheme further assisted, with payment times improving from 20 days in 2018 to just five days in 2021, improving cash flow for small operators. I commend all concerned for their efforts to support and grow small business in NSW and congratulate my local businesses on their resilience.

### **BUS STOP FILMS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—I wish to highlight the fantastic work of Bus Stop Films, who have recently set up their new office at Shopfront Arts in Carlton. Bus Stop Films are an award-winning film school and production company who use film making and the film industry to raise the profile of people living with a disability. As a not-for-profit organisation, they achieve this goal through education, content creation and advocacy. This year is the biggest yet, with Bus Stop Films expecting more than 180 students to apply for their programs. They operate 14 classes in 9 locations, including those online. I extend my well wishes to Tracey Corbin-Matchett, Chief Executive Officer, Peter Tonagh, Chair, who I had the pleasure of meeting in February. Congratulations to all those involved – your work makes our community stronger.

### **KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2021 – LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—I congratulate Leonie Bell and John MacRitchie at the Kogarah School of Arts, for their respective first and second place wins in the Kogarah Historical Society's 2021 Local History Awards. First prize winner Leonie Bell submitted an essay titled Oatley Park – Volunteers and Local Government in Partnership. Second prize winner John MacRitchie submitted an essay titled Conscription and Anti-Conscription. Entries for the 2021 awards were required to focus on any aspect of the history of Kogarah or Georges River Council area including environmental heritage, built heritage, events and personalities. I also extend my congratulations to the Kogarah Historical Society, which is now in its 52nd year. It was founded in 1970 with the aims to encourage the study of Australian History and promote awareness of the history of the Kogarah Municipality. The Society arranges speakers and displays, to conduct excursions to places of historical interest for the benefit of their members and general community. I congratulate the Kogarah Historical Society for all its efforts to keep the vibrant history of our area alive.

### **HINDI SCHOOL KOGARAH**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah)**—I wish to acknowledge Kogarah Community Hindi School who celebrated Holi this March. Over two hundred people gathered at Dolls Point in March at an event which included food, music, and dancing. Holi, also known as the Festival of Colours, marks the onset of Spring in India. It is a fun celebration involving the playing of colours. I am told this tradition teaches us about diversity and how we should look to forget the differences that set us apart. Kogarah Community Hindi School are proud to be the first community school in the South Sydney region to celebrate Holi, a tradition they have proudly carried for more than 7 years. I extend my thanks and support to Manisha Shirodkar and all the other volunteer teachers at the school, along with Bhavin Patel and the Patel Brothers Supermarket for their efforts in organising the event.

### MY MEDICAL PRACTICE

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

### THE HEALTH CARE CENTRE CROOKWELL

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

### RACHAEL JACKSON

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly—Minister for Environment and Heritage)**—I would like to acknowledge the tireless hard work of Rachael Jackson who heads "Project Rachael". This project aims to raise money for the Dalwood Spillstead service in Seaforth that has been in operation since 1978. The service provides help and support to vulnerable families during difficult times and provides a wide range of services such as Psychologists, therapists and counselling in a safe and supportive environment. Project Rachael aims to raise \$100,000.00 towards refurbishing and renovating the Kitchen, Bathrooms and communal areas of the service. Rachael's personal journey led her to start Project Rachael and her work and character is a great example of someone giving back to their community. I applaud her on a wonderful initiative.

### FRENSHAM AQUABLISS

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—Former Olympian James Magnussen has generously given of his time and talents inspiring some of Wollondilly's young swimmers to pursue their dreams, both in and out of the pool. Swimmers at Fensham's Aquabliss were lucky enough to benefit from Mr Magnussen's coaching and practical wisdom during a swim clinic held on the 12th of March in preparation for the nationals in Adelaide next month. Magnussen, a four time Commonwealth Games gold medallist, encouraged aspiring athletes to work hard, and develop a 'just do it' attitude in order push through the discomfort that comes with gruelling training schedules. The swim clinic was a great success and I am sure everyone learnt a lot from Magnussen's experience. I wish all the young swimmers at Aquabliss the very best in the upcoming nationals.

### BOWRAL ART GALLERY

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—I want to acknowledge the ongoing work of the Bowral Art Gallery and the great benefit they bring to the Southern Highlands community. Originally the Berrima District Art Society, the organisation was formed in 1950 by Kate Smith and a committee of passionate locals. In 2006, the name changed to The Bowral and District Art society to reflect their main location on Short Street in Bowral, and then finally became the Bowral Art Gallery in 2017. Throughout the name and location changes, the Bowral Art Gallery has worked to make art accessible to everybody in our community for over 70 years. The association supports local artists, fostering a love and appreciation for their craft in the local community. They provide tutoring opportunities and classes, as well as competitions for artists, whatever their skill level. Bowral Art Gallery hosts exhibitions throughout the year which provide a wonderful opportunity for local residents and tourists alike to cultivate a taste for art and culture. I want to thank the Bowral Art Gallery committee for their continuous passion and commitment to giving artists and art lovers a home in the Highlands.

### SAMUEL ROBB

**Mr NATHANIEL SMITH (Wollondilly)**—A special young man in my electorate, Year 3 student Samuel Robb, has won the NSW Parliament School Holidays Drawing competition which asked students to "Create your own Coat of Arms, and motto". Samuel invested a lot of time designing his personal Coat of Arms, drawing on Bowral's unique flora and fauna for inspiration. Included in the Coat of Arms is the 'Bowral Welcomes You' sign that Samuel drives past each day on his way to school as well as his depiction of Fitzroy Falls, a colourful Rosella

and a Kookaburra. The birds are native to the area and Samuel sees them around his home and school. He also included a tulip in recognition of the popular Southern Highlands event, Tulip Time festival, which I am excited to announce will be held later this year in Corbett Gardens. Samuel said he chose for his motto the phrase 'Stay Healthy', he said, "because of COVID and I also want everybody to be safe". Overall it is quite a wonderful and thoughtful piece of art! Lucky for me, I had the opportunity to meet this impressive young artist last week, and I encouraged him to keep up his creative efforts.

### **FIJI ABBOITTOIR WORKERS LISMORE HEROES**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to place on the parliamentary record the selflessness and heroism of 45 Fijian abattoir workers who put their lives at risk and saved hundreds of Lismore locals during our catastrophic flooding event. They only arrived in Lismore a few weeks ago but wasted no time getting stuck in and helping our community. They are now part of our community and we love them. The workers work at abattoirs in Booyong and Casino. They saved aged care residents carrying them out one by one wading through fast moving and fast rising flood water. They worked with the SES volunteers and saved 63 aged care residents lives. Since the flood they haven't stopped. Going house to house, business to business helping with the muddy task of the clean-up. Every Lismore local knows who they are and we will never forget the moment they gathered in Molesworth St to sing beautiful hymns for our community. One of the workers Semi Sailosi Lutua said that "I wanted to do my part and we all just want to make our country and families back at home proud". I'm sure they are proud of you. I know we are.

### **MURWILLUMBAH VOLUNTEER HUB**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to thank and commend to the incredible team at the Murwillumbah Volunteer Hub. Lead by coordinators Tom Cornish and Soraya Queaine with an outstanding team of over 40 full time volunteers the Murwillumbah Volunteer Hub was the focal point of the community lead rescue and recovery effort. Tom talks about the effort best in his own words when he writes "The volunteer hub has been the central point for flood affected residents to access different trades like mechanics, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, aborists and mould-experts. We have also coordinated hundreds of mud army volunteers, sending them to local families in need. These volunteers have been shovelling mud, moving furniture, clearing gardens and generally helping our community regain a sense of normality. The hub has consistently liaised with smaller communities in the 2484 region, such as Uki, Tumbulgum, Tyalgum, Mt. Jerusalem, Doon, Mt Burrell, Kunghur, Byrrill Ck, Cedar Creek and Nimbin. We have sent many car-loads of supplies to each of these towns, working with their hub leaders to make sure they're getting what they need." I thank the volunteers and M Arts for hosting the hub. What an incredible community recovery effort.

### **THE CHANNON EMERGENCY HUB**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I wish to thank and pay tribute to the extraordinary community effort which is the Channon Emergency Hub. This was established after the recent flooding and landscape collapse event that devastated communities across the Lismore Electorate. In the Channon, Dunoon, Tuntale Creek, Terania Creek and Whian areas they were heavily affected by dangerous landscape collapse. It started in the Channon Public School and then moved to the Channon Hall when school went back. Over 30 volunteers Emergency Hub provided an emergency response for 300 people who were completely isolated (Terania Crk Road and Wallace Road due to landscape collapse). The Hub supported flooded people in the Channon and surrounds. Speaking to volunteers they preferred not to be named. It was an amazing community effort. People used their own machines to clear roads and hazards themselves which was dangerous work. Nowhere else in the Lismore LGA was affected more by landscape collapse. The community generosity of people helping each other was immense. They did this for 10 days with no phone or internet providing essentials like medical support and food. I commend the Channon community for this selfless and outstanding effort.

### **PATRICK MCGAHON**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise the sensational musical ability of Patrick McGahon from St Joseph's Regional College who was recently awarded the first ever LaMattina Drum Scholarship for his rhythmic talents and positive attitude to learning. The LaMattina Drum Scholarship is modelled from a remarkable educator and drumming magician of the United States Mr John LaMattina who awards an annual scholarship worth one year of drum tuition to a promising student who displays the passion and drive to succeed. Carrying on the tradition in Australia, teacher Mark Spence, Leader of Drums and Percussion was excited to announce Patrick McGahon as the first recipient honoured from the Parish to receive the LaMattina Drum Scholarship. Patrick was awarded the scholarship for his work ethic, humility, kindness, curiosity, willingness to help others and overall musical abilities. As a reward of receiving the inaugural scholarship, Mr LaMattina shipped a copy of his books to Patrick to support his drum studies. A young music protégé in the making, I congratulate Patrick for his achievements.

## **JUNE RELF**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise June Relf who is one of the Camden Haven's quiet achievers who regularly goes above and beyond to serve her community. Leaving a legacy of service for over half a century, Mrs June Relf has literally done it all and more since moving to the Camden Haven region with her late husband Arthur in 1972. June is one of those rare, beautiful souls who devotes her life to making a difference in people's lives through her active volunteer service which still continues to this very day. Establishing her roots in her new home, June wasted no time in finding a cause, joining the Laurieton Legacy Health Centre, now known as Camden Haven Community Health. June has been the Parish Secretary for the Camden Haven Anglican Church, an active member for Community at 3, a volunteer at North Haven Public School, Chairperson and Treasurer of Laurieton Frank Whiddon Homes and founder of the social golf group for women which is still going strong 40 years on. Following the March 2021 floods June donated her mobile scooter to another resident who lost his belongings in flood waters. I thank June for her invaluable service to others.

## **MATTHEW HOBBS – SHAVE FOR MID NORTH COAST CANCER INSTITUTE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I highlight a recent fundraiser for the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute by Port Macquarie man Matthew Hobbs who shed his curls to support people living with cancer. Unfazed about losing his locks for a good cause, local fisherman Matthew Hobbs was recently urged at the 2022 Golden Lure Tournament to lose it all for charity, and true to his word the challenge was undertaken. Understanding the heartbreak of losing family members to cancer, a campaign was launched by Matthew to raise \$1,000 for the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute with the community attending the shave off event in strong numbers. Renowned for his mullet and the anticipation of many at seeing Matthew bare-headed, the event collected a grand total of \$2,250 to help those living with a cancer diagnosis. Overwhelmed by the generosity of the community, Matthew was thankful to all who attended and donated money towards his charity. Following the success of the event, Matthew intends to grow another mullet in five years for another shave for the Cancer Institute. Congratulate Matthew on raising vital funds to support others in our community.

## **STREET SIDE MEDICS – DR. DANIEL NOUR (YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2022)**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I am delighted to recognise and applaud the exceptional work of Street Side Medics, and particularly the organisation's founder, Dr. Daniel Nour. The mission of Street Side Medics is exemplary and consistent with core Australian values of philanthropy and assisting those who need it most. Street Side Medics vocation is to provide medical care to the homeless in Sydney. The burdens faced by the homeless community in accessing primary healthcare was what motivated Dr. Nour – a full-time doctor at the Royal North Shore Hospital - to found Street Side Medics. It provides services such as examinations, diagnosis and treatment, immunisations, pathology, and referring the homeless to appropriate medical sub-specialities. The endeavours of Street Side Medics speak to the charitable spirit in Australia that always needs to be encouraged. Dr. Daniel Nour received the Young Australian of the Year 2022 and I congratulate and thank him for his wonderful work.

## **BUTTERFLY FOUNDATION – CROWS NEST**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I wish to recognise and commend the tremendous work of the Butterfly Foundation based in Crows Nest. The Butterfly Foundation leads the way in Australia in shining the light on Australians affected by eating disorders and body image issues. This is a problem that is unfortunately on the rise in modern times, but it is organisations such as the Butterfly Foundation that change lives for those people suffering. Highlighting the realities for those seeking recovery, The Butterfly Foundation emphasises the critical importance of prevention and early intervention strategies, including operating a National Hotline providing support over the phone, reaching 20,000 people a year. As body image and eating disorders disproportionately affect Australia's youth, the Butterfly Foundations outreach with school programs deserves particular commendation.

## **ABBIE LEE RUSSELL**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock)**—Congratulations to Abbie Lee Russell who is the 2021 Community Education Student of the Year award winner. Abbie enrolled with Atwea College in 2020 and completed a pre-vocational program in Aged Care. Abbie continued her studies and enrolled to complete the full Certificate III in Individual Support (Aging) in February 2021. Abbie was an early school leaver and young mother. She supported her young family for a number of years before she had the opportunity to study again. Abbie has turned this opportunity into a new career, obtaining employment in the aged care industry before completing her studies which have now been completed. Abbie attended Atwea College Newcastle. A wonderful achievement for a Cessnock Electorate local.

### FUNDRAISING EVENT 'LADIES NIGHT'

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate everyone involved with the fundraising event held by members from The Country Club and Choice Pharmacy Vincentia and Bay and Basin Community Support Group. A massive \$9,000 donation was made to the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre which was recently fundraised at the event called the Ladies Night of indulgence. The huge donation will go into a trust fund for patients of the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. A gala, fashion show, make-up masterclass and shopping spree all rolled into one, Ladies Night in association with local business Choice Pharmacy Vincentia. Bay and Basin Community Support Group also contributed to help put together the fundraiser and even made a meaningful contribution to the event's donations. The lead up to the final amount was a combination of ticket sales and contributions from all three organising groups. Just under 100 community members attended the fundraising event including nurses from the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. What outstanding event I was delighted to hear the significant amount of money that had been donated. What a pleasure it is to see our community come together to help support those in need.

### CINDY POULOS - INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Mrs Cindy Poulos who spoke on International Women's Day at the office of Moree Trans4m Rail. Trans4m Rail Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager Jodie Grant saw Cindy's experiences as an opportunity to expand on this year's theme Breaking the Bias in relation to the construction industry. Cindy's birthplace is China where girl babies were often rejected in preference to a male. Cindy's mum became her inspiration as she observed her Mother's strength in her various roles in the community. This became Cindy's theme at this occasion to speak of powerful women leaders in all walks of life be it company director or stay at home mum. Jodie and Community Liaison Officer, Rhiannan Barr coordinated the event with an afternoon tea hosted by the Moree branch of the Country Women's Association. I congratulate Cindy on her presentation to more than 150 Inland Rail staff. I commend Jodie and Rhiannan for organising this important event along with the Moree CWA for their contribution.

### CHARLIE PERRY - AUSTRALIAN ZANDA MCDONALD AWARD

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Charlie Perry for the qualities that have earned him the Australian Zanda McDonald Award which recognises talented and passionate young professionals in the agricultural sector from Australia and New Zealand. Since taking over management of the family farm, Trent Bridge, in 2016, Charlie has become an expert on Wagyu Beef, generating substantial growth of the business, focussing on productivity gains, genetic indicators and sustainability. His enthusiasm for the industry led him to serve as president and chair of the Australian Wagyu Association. Charlie's experiences have given him a clear understanding of the challenges that face both his own business and the industry. I congratulate Charlie on winning this award which will provide a trans-Tasman trip to net-work, observe other professionals in the industry, and gain from a \$10,000 education package. I commend Charlie for his enthusiastic involvement in agriculture bringing his previous success in business consulting to the Wagyu Beef industry.

### MOREE PHYSICAL CULTURE CLUB

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the Moree Physical Culture Club and its commitment not only to the enjoyment of dance but in striving to bring out the best in each individual. Members of the Moree Physical Culture Club range in ages from youngsters to the more mature and it is the fun and sense of achievement that keeps the club growing. The 2021 Zone Competition took place this year after COVID postponements and Director, Sam Cosgrove was pleased to enter 35 girls and ladies. From ages 7 to 50 Moree earned 7 places, with 10 finalists and all other competitors qualifying for the semi-finals, including an inexperienced but enthusiastic women's team. Pippa and Sophie Fleming, Ayda Lin Evans, Matilda Madden and Eva Williams qualified for the Nationals. Sam also qualified for and attended the ladies Nationals event in Sydney, placing her in the top 15 of Australia for the 2021 Physic year. I congratulate the members of the Moree Physical Culture Club for their results in the 2021 New England Zone Competition and for participating in the National events in Sydney. I commend Sam Cosgrove for her commitment to the Club and the values of physical culture.

### KYLIE PUSSELL

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I was excited to announce Camden's Kylie Pussell who was named a finalist in the 2022 NSW Woman of Excellence Award. It was my great pleasure joining Kylie at the 2022 NSW Women of the Year Awards to see her receive the award as a finalist along with four other outstanding women. Kylie is the CEO and co-founder of the Miracle Babies Foundation, working to provide vital services and resources to families with a premature or sick baby. Kylie has been working to develop and expand peer support services for families in need of support and community. Inspired by her own experiences, Kylie is motivated to

create spaces for babies and their families challenged by prematurity or sickness. Thank you Kylie. You are a very deserving finalist and the impact you have made on premature babies and their families is invaluable.

#### **STEVE COOPER, JUSTIN O'BRIEN AND SIMON SUTERS**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—I acknowledge Camden Community Garden President Steve Cooper and volunteers Justin O'Brien and Simon Suters who have worked through numerous nights during the March 2022 floods to save 19 bee hives. The team powered their way through waist-deep flood water to get to the hives. Some of the hives weighed close to 100 kilograms including the frames, honey and some carrying up to 60,000 bees each. After numerous stings and over two dozen bees inside their suits the move took over several hours to secure all the hives to higher ground. I again recognise Steve, Justin and Simon and thank them for their efforts and the care they provide to the Camden Community Garden.

#### **VOLUNTEERS OF CAMDEN**

**Mr PETER SIDGREAVES (Camden)**—As the water recedes the clean-up in Camden began. A number of Camden's residents have had their homes, businesses and livelihoods destroyed. Similarly, sporting facilities, roads and local bridges were inundated with flood waters, including Cowpasture Bridge, Macquarie Grove Bridge, Bicentennial Equestrian Park, Camden War Memorial Pool and others. Without the work of SES, RFS, and other local emergency responders, many of who are volunteers, the clean-up process would have been much more daunting. On behalf of the residents of Camden, I thank all of our emergency services and our local volunteers for their selfless contributions they make that continue to serve our community.

#### **GRAFTON REGIONAL GALLERY**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to Grafton Regional Gallery who recently won the Minister's Award at the 2022 NSW Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia [IPWEA]. The Award was present to the Gallery's Director, Niomi Sands, at an event in Canberra. This Award was in recognition of the Gallery's recent upgrade and was the first large scale project to utilise Clarence Valley Council's Project Management Framework. This \$7.6 million project was a collaboration between Complete Urban and NSW Public Works funded by Create NSW and the Gallery Project was on time and on budget which, with all of the restrictions in place due to COVID-19 was a huge achievement in itself. Congratulations to all involved.

#### **AUSTRALIAN-SOUTH EAST ASIAN NETWORK**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 12 March I was delighted to attend the Australian-South East Asian Network [ASEAN]'s joint initiative in promoting Australian values and building stronger social cohesion by the Khmer Krom, Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese communities. I recognise my colleague, Mr Anoulack Chanthivong, Member for Macquarie Fields who attended the recent launch of ASEAN. At the joint initiative event I was joined by my federal Parliamentary colleague, Deputy Leader, Senator Kristina Keneally to discuss important issues such as democracy, human rights and social cohesion. The commitment to advocacy by Khmer Krom, Lao, Cambodian and Vietnamese communities in Western and South Western Sydney is a strong reminder that despite our differences, we have much in common. There is strength in our diversity and we must all continue to work together to foster harmony and embrace our shared democratic values. I congratulate all members of ASEAN for using their voices to engage with governments and Parliamentarians at all levels for the betterment of citizens both in Australia and in their homelands. Thank you to Sawathey Ek, OAM, Founder and Spokesperson for the kind invitation to join members from Cambodian, Lao, Khmer Krom, Vietnamese, Burmese and Malaysian-Singaporean communities on the day.

#### **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was privileged to attend the International Women's Day Event by the United Indian Associations on 13 March 2022. As the first ever woman to represent the Granville electorate, events such as these really resonate with me. The UIA includes many member associations including: Australian Indian Medical Graduates Association; Basava Samithi Australasia; Bengali Assn. of NSW; Gujarati Samaj of NSW; India Sports Club Inc; Indian Senior Group Hornsby; ICSOA; Marathi Association Sydney; PB Group; Sandalwood Arts & Entertainment; Sydney Kannada Sangha; Sydney Malayalee Association; Sydney Sindhi Association; Sydney Tamil Manram; Telugu Association. I was most interested to hear the keynote speech from Professor Veena Sahajwalla 2022 NSW Australian of the Year and Founding Director, Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology, University of NSW. Thank you Dr Sunil Vyas, President for the kind invitation to attend and join representatives of the associations as a guest. I acknowledge the many people who attended and it was marvellous to meet face to face again after 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic. My congratulations to the UIA and their member associations for a successful event.

**SCHOOL LEADERS FIGTREE HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)**—Today I acknowledge Regan Smith, Alice Coleman, Benjamin Melrose, Mikaela Kokkin, Elia Giles, Jaymz Smith, Cassandra Persinidis and Phillip Duleski who have been named as the 2022 Figtree High School leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to be a leader. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extra curricula activities. Each of them will spend 2022 acting as role models for their peers. These students have thrived even though they have faced a number of hurdles during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have no doubt that they will carry out their new leadership roles with great pride. I congratulate Regan Smith, Alice Coleman, Benjamin Melrose, Mikaela Kokkin, Elia Giles, Jaymz Smith, Cassandra Persinidis and Phillip Duleski on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year of high school.

**SCHOOL LEADERS EDMUND RICE COLLEGE**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)**—Today I acknowledge Jed Chandler, Balunn Simon and Elijah Hurley who have been named as the 2022 Edmund Rice College leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to be a leader. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extra curricula activities. Each of them will spend 2022 acting as role models for their peers. These students have thrived even though they have faced a number of hurdles during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have no doubt that they will carry out their new leadership roles with great pride. I congratulate Jed Chandler, Balunn Simon and Elijah Hurley on their achievement and wish them all the best for their final year of high school.

**SCHOOL LEADERS FIGTREE HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)**—Today I acknowledge Theodore Rainford, William Humphrey, Miley Reh and Kelaela Smith who have been named as the 2022 Figtree Heights Public School leadership team. Being named as a school leader after being elected by their peers is a testament to their dedication, hard work and demonstrated ability to be a leader. Each of these students works exceptionally hard and have been highly involved within their school community throughout their time at the school. I am confident that they always strive to do their best with their studies and extra curricula activities. Each of them will spend 2022 acting as role models for their peers. These students have thrived even though they have faced a number of hurdles during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have no doubt that they will carry out their new leadership roles with great pride. I congratulate Theodore Rainford, William Humphrey, Miley Reh and Kelaela Smith on their achievement and wish them all the best for the year.

**CONGRATULATIONS BRIAN FULMER – LIFE MEMBER ASQUITH RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—Brian Fulmer has had a long and successful association with Asquith Rugby League Club. He first played for the Magpies in 1964 as a junior and was selected in first grade in 1970, at 17 as a tough but fair lock forward. Brian was part of three first grade premiership teams in 1974, 75 and 81. In 1976, he was awarded the Kevin Moore Memorial Shield for Most Outstanding Player. In 1969, Brian commenced coaching juniors at just 16 years of age, and that year he was awarded Coach of the Year. He was first elected to the Club committee in the early 1970s. Brian Fulmer has served for fifteen years as a Club Director whilst developing and leading key strategic plans for the Club, and successfully managing the Club through tough financial times. Brian has served five years as Club President, including the current term. I know Brian Fulmer to be a natural leader who will find a way to achieve a positive result through any challenge. Awarding Life Membership to Brian Fulmer for his incredible commitment to the Asquith Rugby League Club, is an appropriate recognition.

**MARK DOWEL – LIFE MEMBER ASQUITH RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Treasurer, and Minister for Energy)**—I know Mark has been a tireless volunteer for both ARL Football Club and Leagues Club for decades. He commenced by coaching the Under 8s in 1988. For fifteen consecutive years Mark coached a junior team as well as held a senior committee role. He was elected President of both the Football Club and Asquith Leagues Club from 1999, performing these dual senior roles for nine years. Mark Dowel is greatly respected across Sydney rugby league circles as he represented the Club to North Sydney Junior League, Manly Junior League and Parramatta Junior League. In addition, he served on the North Sydney Junior League Board for 15 years and was elected as a Life Member of that body in 2008. Mark's CV for the Club and the sport of rugby league, clearly demonstrates it has been a big part of his life. I know he is very proud of the impressive Club achievements during his time leading the Club. He continues to serve



today in the role of Club Delegate. Awarding Life Membership to Mark Dowel for his incredible commitment to the Club is an appropriate recognition.

#### **WYNDHAM COLLEGE STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I would like to acknowledge Wyndham College which is a fantastic Year 11 and 12 public school based at Nirimba Fields for students in the Seven Hills Electorate and Greater Blacktown. Wyndham College do a terrific job in working closely with Western Sydney University and TAFE at the education precinct to provide their students with valuable employment skills before leaving high school and entering the workforce. I would like to recognise the Year 11 students who were recently elected to the SRC. I congratulate Carlos Jimenez-Maistry, Tyleen Saipale, Egan Jasson, Tahlia Keenan, Ziah Burns, Rachael Banks, Joanne Mghames, Tahlia Gallagher, Nada Shahid, Vansh Kumar and Amity Lownds. I wish all these students all the very best in their leadership role, and also their transition into senior school. I would also like to recognise the school principal, Mrs Karen Smith, who does a fantastic job in leading the Wyndham College community and affording great opportunities to all students. I look forward to hearing about all the fantastic things that the students of Wyndham College continue to do in the 2022 school year.

#### **BARRY WADEMAN OF BLACKTOWN SES UNIT**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills)**—I would like to recognise Barry Wademan from the Blacktown SES Unit for his 44 years of service to the community. Barry begun his service as a cadet at Seven Hills High School in 1977, and has since moved through the ranks over the years to now lead the dedicated members of Blacktown as the Unit Commander. It is always great to hear a story about a local who has been a terrific community leader for so many years and to acknowledge them for their service. The Blacktown SES Unit do a lot of work throughout the electorate of Seven Hills, in places like Seven Hills, Lalor Park, Kings Langley and Toongabbie. Barry also spends a lot of time in other parts of the State helping floor rescue missions and other natural disaster damages. I know he has worked immensely hard recently to assist the Blacktown community with the recent floods in the northern part of the LGA and beyond. I congratulate and thank Barry for his dedication and outstanding service to his unit, and the greater community, for such a long time.

#### **WILLIAM HUNT**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—One of Mulgoa's talented young Motorcycle racers William Hunt competed earlier this month in the opening round of the Australian Superbike Championships at the home of Motorcycling, Phillip Island. 12 year old William, was competing in the Oceania Junior Cup series opener and it is a classic story of never giving up. In Race 1 William got off to a nervous start but worked his way back to 11th out of 20 by the end of the race. In Race 2 he got off to a brilliant start before red flags went up for Geese on the track. When the race restarted William fought hard and with enormous determination he finished first. During the race, William was 2/100ths of a second off beating the Oceania Junior Cup lap record which is an amazing achievement. Since then William has been invited to compete in the 2022 F.I.M Mini GP Series in Port Melbourne where he will compete to win a spot to travel to Spain for the World Championship. Good luck William and I wish you all the best in your Motorcycling future.

#### **WALLACIA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—I would like to acknowledge local firefighters from Wallacia Rural Fire Brigade [RFB], who had organised and facilitated their Annual Santa Run late last year. Last year's Wallacia RFB Annual Santa Run took place on Friday 24th December (Christmas Eve), where Santa swapped his usual sleigh for a fire truck and visited the local community with members of the Wallacia RFB supporting him. Santa started his trip at 3pm on Christmas Eve in William Street, before making his way around the streets of Wallacia to greet all the boys and girls and hand out lolly bags to all those children who had been good. After an incredibly challenging year, the volunteers at Wallacia RFB were really looking forward to helping Santa get back out into the local community to bring joy to families. A big thank you to the Wallacia RFB volunteers for all they do for the community and helping brighten the spirits of others after such a difficult time.

#### **KIRSTEN DUFFY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa)**—After the recent flooding, it has been amazing to witness the extraordinary efforts of people to help others in their attempts to recover. St Clair local, Kirsten Duffy is one of many Australians rolling up their sleeves to do what she can to help others. Using her small business, Kirsten is running an appeal to donate blankets to rescue organisations and shelters around Australia left in need of supplies after the flood damage. Kirsten started her business, Bespoke Creation Co, in 2020 combining her passions for sewing and her puppy Banjo. Initially a hobby, it is now bigger than even Kirsten expected it to be. After seeing the number of people desperate for help, Kirsten responded by making and donating blankets herself. After posting her idea to Facebook, the Bespoke Blanket Appeal kicked off and has so far reached donors from all over Australia

and even as far as Canada. Thank you for your generous efforts Kirsten and I commend you on your selflessness to help others facing adversity.

### **I LOVE CHARING CROSS**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee)**—I wish to acknowledge the wonderful work of the Charing Cross Precinct and Waverley Action group are recently presented a series of fantastic short films about their local village. The Premiere Screening was held at the Eastern Suburbs Legion Club on Bronte Road in Charing Cross on Wednesday March 16th. These great short films highlighted the unique and diverse history of the area and were a fantastic example of why locals love Charing Cross and why the precinct and the local community are working so hard to protect their local heritage. They films also highlighted the Waverley Council Precinct System, especially through the stories of the prominent Australians buried at Waverley Cemetery. Congratulations to the Charing Cross Precinct and Waverley Action group on a wonderful event.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:34 until  
Tuesday 29 March at 12:00.**