



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday 24 May 2023**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bills .....	1
Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 .....	1
First Reading.....	1
Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023 .....	1
First Reading.....	1
Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 .....	1
Second Reading Speech.....	1
Second Reading Debate .....	3
Visitors .....	8
Visitors .....	8
Presiding Officers .....	8
Temporary Speakers .....	8
Question Time .....	8
Active Kids Program .....	8
Paediatric Heart Transplant Services .....	9
Public Land Sale .....	9
Public Education .....	10
Water Ownership .....	11
Health Services .....	12
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice .....	13
Affordable Housing .....	14
Ultimate Fighting Championship .....	15
Rural and Regional Roads .....	15
Domestic and Family Violence .....	16
Building Industry .....	17
Regional New South Wales Services.....	18
Student Support Services.....	19
Personal Explanation .....	20
Member for Cabramatta.....	20
Business of the House.....	20
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business .....	20
Bills .....	23
Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Digital Evidence Access Orders) Bill 2023.....	23
First Reading.....	23
Second Reading Speech.....	23
Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 .....	24
Second Reading Debate .....	24
Members .....	26
Inaugural Speeches .....	26

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Business of the House.....	32
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Public Interest Debate .....	32
Bills.....	33
Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 .....	33
Second Reading Debate.....	33
Public Interest Debate.....	37
Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport.....	37
Bills.....	45
Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 .....	45
Second Reading Debate.....	45
Members .....	53
Inaugural Speeches .....	53
Community Recognition Statements .....	65
Loretta Walker .....	65
Eastwood Thornleigh District Tennis Association .....	66
Scrapbooker's Confetti Box .....	66
Allan Crouch, OAM .....	66
Leppington Volunteer Organisations.....	66
Ku-ring-gai Little Athletics Annual Awards .....	66
Sergeant Brendan Donnellan and Senior Constable Paul Doyon .....	67
Mrs Anna Pistillo.....	67
World Rescue Challenge .....	67
Willoughby Theatre Company .....	67
Sinilia Radivojevic.....	67
Rye Park Memorial Hall Centenary.....	68
Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre.....	68
Pitch Up Wagga Wagga.....	68
Emu Plains Lions Club .....	68
Vena Stoneham, OAM.....	68
Maryanne Duggan .....	69
Wollondilly Electorate.....	69
Riverbank Public School .....	69
Freemans Reach Cricket Club .....	69
Dulux Trade Centre, Lismore .....	69
United Hospital Auxiliary Grafton Branch.....	70
Holsworthy Electorate Mandaean Community .....	70
Hoxton Park Community Health Centre.....	70
Gail MacLeod Jones .....	70
Embedding Entrepreneurship Education Project.....	70
Stars of the Border Dance for Cancer.....	71
Australian Islamic Medical Association .....	71

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Advance Ganmain Committee.....	71
Private Members' Statements.....	71
Racism .....	71
Badgerys Creek Electorate.....	72
Blacktown Electorate.....	73
Moree and Inverell Crime.....	74
Get NSW Active Program .....	75
Wollondilly Electorate.....	75
Volunteering .....	76
Clarence Electorate Water Security .....	77
Western Sydney Transport Services .....	78
Boorowa Water Supply.....	78
Port Stephens Electorate .....	79
Kiama Electorate Infrastructure.....	80
Wollongong Electorate Infrastructure .....	81
Albury Electorate Eating Disorder Services.....	82
Northern Rivers Economic Environmental Recovery Plan .....	83
Coffs Harbour Electorate .....	84
Flood Response.....	85
Reading Friends Australia .....	86
Hawkesbury Telecommunications Infrastructure .....	86
Written Community Recognition Statements .....	87
Sutherland Shire Relay for Life .....	87
The Smiles of Macleay Youth Laneway Festival .....	87
A/supt. Schultz.....	87
Volunteers.....	87
New Citizens In the Riverstone Electorate .....	88
Allen Kruse.....	88
Mother's Day Classic Walk for Breast Cancer .....	88
Nowruz New Year 2023 .....	88
Ramadan 2023 .....	88
Guildford West Public School Anzac Day 2023 Commemoration .....	89
Ryde Group Volunteer of the Year.....	89
Ryde Young Volunteer of the Year .....	89
Ryde Volunteer of the Year Award .....	89
Oak Flats Bowling Club Anzac Day March 2023 .....	90
Kidswish House and Kidsrock.....	90
Rebecca Dunning.....	90
Illawarra Older Women's Network 25th Anniversary .....	90
Clarence Valley Council Building Bridges Emu Projection Project .....	91
Xueyi Tao .....	91
Chen Wang .....	91

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Josephine Nip.....	91
Lola Styles – NSW State Under 14 Girls Surfing Champion.....	91
Jorja Schofield is 2023 Young Citizen of the Year .....	92
40 Years of Ken Little's Fruit & Veg In Port Macquarie .....	92
Big Red Cafe.....	92
Platypus Release .....	92
Associate Professor Matthew Dun.....	93
Fire and Rescue NSW.....	93
Hunter Surf Lifesaving .....	93
Brody Riant.....	93
Kirralee Kelly, Kellie Williams and Bae-Phoenix Kelly.....	93
Dora Creek Landcare Group.....	94
Fridgys 4 Eugowra.....	94
Grazing Down the Lachlan .....	94
Early Years Music School .....	94
Erina Rotary Club Student Artwork Exhibition .....	95
Donors Heroes Night .....	95
Kincumber High School Ssu Courtyard Café.....	95
Cronulla Polar Bears Swimming Club .....	95
Young Citizen of the Year Finalists Adam Kelly and Bailey Laidlaw .....	95
Cronulla RSL – No Dog Left Behind.....	96
Mr Lloyd Bruce .....	96
Arthur and Rosie Lathouris .....	96
Mrs Pat Hughes.....	96
Australian Small Business Champion Awards 2023 - Sienna Jovcevski .....	96
Ansto 70th Anniversary Celebrations.....	97
2nd Mortdale Scouts Arp Presentation .....	97
Grant and Ann Prendergast.....	97
Sanita Lole .....	97
Balranald Football Netball Club.....	97
Mosman Environmental Foundation Funding Environmental Conservation .....	98
North Sydney Bushcare Celebrates 30 Years.....	98
Bill Purdy Celebrates 100th Birthday.....	98
Rev. Scott Petty .....	98
Artarmon Maestros Cricket Club.....	98
Sean Corcoran.....	99
Harden District Education Foundation Celebrates 21 Years .....	99
Cam HART - Nsw's Number One Reinsman .....	99
Harry Waters Wins National Young Auctioneers Title.....	99
North Narrabeen Surf Club Presentation Night.....	100
Sarah Morris .....	100
Francesca Dolly – 2101 Facebook Group.....	100

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Centenary of the Kogarah Bay Progress Association .....	100
Patrick Slattery OAM .....	100
Andrew Traill OAM .....	101
Mina Skandari Book Launch .....	101
Slow Food Hunter Valley's Pumpkin and Squash Seed Library .....	101
Maitland Regional Art Gallery Win Prestigious Australian Museum & Gallery Association Awards	101
Ashleigh Handsaker – Winner of the Brett Graham Scholarship .....	101
92nd Bingara Show .....	102
Warialda Celebrate 118th Agricultural Show .....	102
Kate Horrobin .....	102
St Vincent de Paul Society .....	102
Colin Mccabe .....	102
Australian Celtic Festival Glen Innes .....	103
Hayley Walsh .....	103
Carol and David Stanley .....	103
Dennis Roots .....	103
Sid Harvey and Bernard O'Connor .....	103
Georgia Wilson .....	104
Kiama Citizenship Ceremony .....	104
Jamberoo Gets A New Community Space .....	104
Pacific Avenue Tops the Charts! .....	104
Miranda Public School's Student Leadership Team .....	104
Como Public School's Student Leadership Team .....	105
Taren Point Public School's Student Leadership Team .....	105
Wellington Show Young Woman - Eliza Whiteley .....	105
Dubbo Pink Angels .....	105
National Volunteer Week Twpz .....	105
Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre .....	106
Eva Gawel .....	106
2023 Cumberland Police Area Command Medal and Awards Presentation Ceremony .....	106
International Women's Day Celebrations – Tamil Valarchi Mandram and Sydwest Multicultural Services .....	106
2023 Western Sydney Wanderers FC Medal Night .....	107
Rotary Club of Five Dock 50th Anniversary .....	107

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 24 May 2023**

**The Speaker (The Hon. Gregory Michael Piper)** took the chair at 10:00.

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

## *Bills*

### **GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (GRANTS) BILL 2023**

#### **First Reading**

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

**The SPEAKER:** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

### **ELECTORAL FUNDING AMENDMENT (REGISTERED CLUBS) BILL 2023**

#### **First Reading**

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

**The SPEAKER:** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

[*Notices of motions given.*]

### **GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (GRANTS) BILL 2023**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (10:18):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Accountability, transparency and integrity need to be at the heart of government. That is why New South Wales Labor made an election commitment to bring integrity back into the grants system, and I am pleased to be able to bring that about today by introducing the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. The former Liberal Government's track record on administering grants was simply appalling. Despite mounting evidence—indeed, damning evidence—that the administration of grants in New South Wales was broken, the former Government persistently refused to legislate to restore faith in the grants system. I do, however, recognise the steps it took but it refused to take the step that Labor will now take to legislate those protections. We are fixing the system now.

Every year in New South Wales the Government typically spends around \$4 billion on grants. When done correctly, grants can be a highly effective mechanism for providing government support to people across New South Wales, including individuals, organisations and local communities. As all members know, grants programs provide significant benefit to people right across this State. That makes it even more critical that a strong framework for regulating grants is in place, ensuring they are administered fairly and achieve value for money. It is essential that taxpayer money—public money—spent on grants is money spent wisely. Grants are not a plaything of a political party, and they are not the gift of the government of the day. It is essential that they are directed towards enriching the lives of people across New South Wales. The bill before the House is directed at this very cause. The integrity and transparency enhancements will be mandatory; they will be entrenched in the law.

Under the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023, amongst other integrity measures, a Minister must not approve a grant unless satisfied that its expenditure is efficient, effective, economical and ethical and that it would be value for money for the people of New South Wales. The bill will build on the existing framework for regulating government grants to help ensure that we deliver effective, efficient and ethical grants for the people of New South Wales. The framework was forged from much scrutiny in the previous Parliament, and it is bolstered by the bill today. The *Grants Administration Guide*, issued in September 2022, contains overarching principles that apply to all government grants and imposes specific requirements that must be complied with when administering grants. The guide is issued under a Premier's memorandum, making it legally enforceable and binding on Ministers and officials. Compliance with the mandatory requirements of the guide is necessary by law under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018.



The bill will not replace the framework for the regulation of government grants in New South Wales. That framework and its definitions will continue. However, the bill will make amendments that bolster the existing framework, strengthening the integrity of government grants. On behalf of the Government, I place on record the appreciation we have for the careful work of the Auditor-General, Margaret Crawford, and her team. They have done outstanding work in this area, in particular the work they did by examining the administration of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery program, which led to the report that was released in February this year. The Auditor-General's report found that the fast-tracking stream of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Program was not effectively administered. It stated:

The administration process lacked integrity ... and the assessment process for projects lacked transparency and consistency.

Further, it found that the then Deputy Premier's office set a threshold that resulted in the exclusion of all shortlisted projects located in Labor Party electorates. No-one could deny that the issues of transparency and integrity in public officials were key parts of the recent New South Wales election and, indeed, last year's Federal election. They are matters of genuine concern to the public. The former Premier infamously took a very relaxed attitude to the historic levels of pork-barrelling her Government engaged in, saying it was just something everyone expected. The people said otherwise at those State and Federal elections.

The public did not expect that bushfire recovery grants would be calibrated in the Deputy Premier's office—one of the highest offices in our State—to exclude electorates not held by the government of the day. The public did not expect that a skydiving park would receive \$11 million in those grants while an entire local government area of the Blue Mountains—half of which was burnt by those devastating bushfires—would receive nothing. Other areas in the Central Coast, and Tenterfield in the Lismore electorate, also received nothing, despite the fact that the Central Coast local government area suffered more than \$163 million in economic impact. The public does not expect that to occur and was rightly horrified by it. That is partly why those issues were so prominent in the two most recent elections. During a disaster the Government should be asking people how it can help, not who they voted for.

I could not introduce the bill without referring to the long debates that were had in the last term of Parliament on the Stronger Communities Fund, 96 per cent of which went to Coalition electorates. When the Parliament chased the approvals paperwork it was told not only that the paperwork was not there in the first place but also that it had been destroyed. It was the good work of the committees of the Parliament that discovered the documents were shredded and that the electronic backups were deleted. That is the only reason why that approvals paperwork was not available. That is the history that we move away from today as this bill comes before the Parliament.

It is a serious matter for all members, whatever side of politics we are on, when the administration of funds erodes people's faith in government. That loss of faith has a flow-on effect across society that is bad for all of us. It weakens community ties and increases the susceptibility to fringe views. I call on all members of the House to back this improvement and back the changes that were made by the former Government and are being strengthened by this Government. One thing we can do to turn the tide on that cynicism is to support the provisions of the bill.

I turn to the specifics of the bill. The bill will make two amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act. The first amendment, new section 10.3A (2), will require that a Minister must not approve a grant unless satisfied that the expenditure would be an efficient, effective, economic and ethical use of money, and that it achieves value for money. That will import into the Government Sector Finance Act a modified version of section 71 of the Commonwealth Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013, applying specifically to grants expenditure. That provision aligns with the key principles in the guide relating to accountability, transparency and value for money.

In relation to grants expenditure specifically, the amendment will also implement recommendation No. 2 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption report on its investigation into pork-barrelling in New South Wales, known as Operation Jersey. In that report ICAC recommended that the amendment of the Government Sector Finance Act include a provision that reflects section 71 of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act and also that consideration be given to whether the expenditure represents value for money. The second amendment to the Government Sector Finance Act, new section 10.3A (3), will require the decision-maker for a grant, in approving or declining a grant, to have regard to the key principles for administering grants set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*.

The guide specifies the seven principles to be applied in administering grants as robust planning and design, collaboration and partnership, proportionality, an outcomes orientation, achieving value with relevant money, governance and accountability and probity and transparency. Those principles reflect the government sector's core values and provide a strong foundation for grants administration. In making this amendment, the bill will reinforce

the centrality of those concepts and ensure that they guide key grant decisions. The procedural aspects of grants administration, which are more susceptible to change, will remain in the guide. They should remain in the guide so that they are flexible and able to change as we learn more about what is required. That will retain the flexibility of the current settings relating to process and procedure.

The bill will also transfer the existing duty to comply with the *Grants Administration Guide*—currently in schedule 1 to the Government Sector Finance Act—to new section 10.3A (1) and make other consequential amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act. In addition to amending the Government Sector Finance Act, the bill will also amend both the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 to make certain grants information "open access information". The object of the Government Information (Public Access) Act is stated in section 3 of that Act as being to "open government information to the public" through various mechanisms. One of those mechanisms is by specifying that "open access information", under section 6 of the Act, must be made "publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information".

Part 3 of the Act lists the government information that is "open access information" for the purposes of section 6, including, under section 18 (g), "such other government information as may be prescribed by the regulations as open access information". The bill will amend the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation to include certain grants information as open access information. The grants information that is specified in the bill as open access information includes the information that must be published in accordance with the requirements of the *Grants Administration Guide*. It mirrors those provisions but lifts them up into legislation.

The bill will also amend the Government Information (Public Access) Act and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation to require publication of this information on the New South Wales Government grants and funding finder website, which is specified in the guide. Of course, one of the key things we can do is make this information more public and bring more sunlight to the process. Those amendments will work to reinforce the importance of transparency in grants administration and are consistent with the existing publication requirements under the guide. I note the bill provides that the amendments will commence on 1 July 2023. That will allow sufficient lead time for agencies to adapt their existing grants administration practices as necessary to bring them into line with the new requirements. They are significant changes and agencies need time to adjust their processes. It is an important culture change across the public service.

The amendments in the bill will deliver on the Government's commitment to strengthen the regulation of grants administered in our State. But we are not done there. The bill is part of a suite of reforms to improve transparency and integrity in government. We committed that if we formed government we would ensure that all major natural disaster relief packages would be automatically referred to the Auditor-General. All grants would be forwarded for review within three months and fast-track grants would also be subject to performance reviews. That was a key recommendation of the ICAC. It is informed by the previous bad behaviour in relation to some of those grant programs, which I referred to earlier. It is informed by the good analysis previously done by the Auditor-General. We made that commitment and we will carry it out. The former Premier issued Premier's memorandums on integrity matters but the community expects the recommendations to be made law. We do that today. We look forward to further improving the regulatory framework to ensure that the expenditure of grants in New South Wales is money spent well and fairly. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (10:34):** The Opposition does not oppose the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. Clause 31 of schedule 1 to the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 was inserted into that Act by the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Act 2022, which commenced on 1 July 2022. That provision requires those making decisions on grants, including Ministers, to comply with all mandatory requirements contained in the *Grants Administration Guide*. The current guide was issued on 19 September last year by the previous Coalition Government.

**Ms Lynda Voltz:** Far too late.

**Mr MARK COURE:** The member for Auburn will have her chance to speak. It was one of the many measures undertaken by former Premier Perrottet to strengthen and safeguard integrity in public administration.

**Ms Kate Washington:** After a decade of pork-barrelling.

**Ms Anna Watson:** You don't know what integrity is.

**Mr MARK COURE:** Order!

**Ms Kate Washington:** You are not in the chair.

**Mr MARK COURE:** Mr Assistant Speaker—

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I was momentarily distracted. The Chamber seems to have quietened down.

**Mr MARK COURE:** Section 1.3 of the guide states:

The Guide provides best practice guidance and includes some mandatory requirements. Where a requirement is mandatory, this is indicated by the use of the word '**must**' or the words '**must not**' in relation to that requirement.

Section 3 of the guide summarises the mandatory requirements for Ministers, including that they:

... must administer the grant in accordance with the grant guidelines

... must not approve or decline a grant without first receiving written advice from officials on the merits of the proposed grant or group of grants.

... must record the decision in writing, including the reasons for the decision (and any departure from the recommendation of officials), having regard to the grant guidelines and the key principle of achieving value for money.

Those requirements apply to one-off or ad hoc grants as well as to competitive grants. The bill, as well as transferring the existing provisions in clause 31 of schedule 1 to the Act to new section 10.3A, adds two additional provisions, which are outlined in new section 10.3A (2) and (3). I will deal with new section 10.3A (3) first. It states:

When approving or declining a grant to which the Grants Administration Guide applies, a person must have regard to the key principles of grants administration specified in the Guide.

It does not appear to introduce any additional legal obligation on grant decision-making whatsoever, as it is already a mandatory requirement in the guide that "the key principles ... set out in the guide must be met for all grants". New section 10.3A (2) provides:

A Minister must not approve a grant to which the Grants Administration Guide applies unless satisfied that the grant—

(a) is an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of money, and

(b) achieves value for money.

The phrase used in paragraph (a) of that provision is lifted from section 71 of the Commonwealth's Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 and is essentially a more verbose way of expressing what is put more succinctly in paragraph (b) as "value for money". This provision does not seem to impose any new obligation on Ministers as long as it is understood in the light of the concurrent obligation to comply with all the mandatory requirements of the *Grants Administration Guide*. It is worth noting that the guide has an extensive section 5.5 on "Achieving value for money". It makes significant observations about the range of matters that ought to be considered under that key principle of grant decision-making, stating:

This should include consideration of all benefits and costs – economic, social, cultural and environmental – both monetary and non-monetary. The new provision directing Ministers' attention to achieving "value for money" must be understood from that broad perspective. In discussing how to achieve value for money, the guide outlines a range of approaches, depending on the total cost of a grant program or of an individual grant. For those over a certain value set in the relevant Treasury policies and guidelines—currently \$10 million or higher—a business case, including a cost-benefit analysis, is required. In discussing a cost-benefit analysis, the guide states:

A CBA offers the most comprehensive means of assessing value for money; it incorporates the complete range of expected benefits and costs across the grant life cycle. It can consider economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits and costs, as well as their distribution across the community. Benefits and costs that cannot be quantified can be accounted for qualitatively.

...

The benefit-cost ratio (BCR) and the net present value (NPV) are key metrics produced in a CBA. A BCR greater than one and a positive NPV indicate that quantified benefits outweigh the quantified costs. These metrics are not the sole means of demonstrating value for money but, where CBAs are required, decision-makers should be provided with these metrics in the formal advice from the assessment team. Decision-makers should also consider non-monetary benefits and costs, distributional analysis (i.e. how costs and benefits are distributed across different groups or parts of the community), and the appropriateness of the proposed grant activity in meeting government objectives.

Those very relevant observations stress the need for grant decision-makers—especially Ministers, who act on behalf of the Government elected by the people of New South Wales—to bring their minds to bear on all relevant aspects of grant programs and grant applications. Value for money is not reducible to a mathematical formula but requires real judgement, after careful consideration of all the key principles of grant administration and the good of the whole community. It would be helpful for members to know whether the Government has received any advice regarding this specification:

A Minister must not approve a grant to which the Grants Administration Guide applies unless satisfied that the grant ... achieves value for money ...

Without further definition or qualification, that legal obligation can be read as a standalone obligation, detaching the possible meaning of "achieves value for money" from the richer context in which it is discussed in the guide. If so, that could potentially give rise to legal challenges by unsuccessful grant applicants who claim a jurisdictional error by a Minister who failed to select them for a competitive grant, despite a more favourable BCR for their proposal than for a successful applicant who was selected based on other relevant factors set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*.

The amendments proposed in schedule 3 to the bill merely duplicate existing requirements about open access to grants information in the mandatory *Grants Administration Guide* by also inserting those requirements into the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018. That does not raise any concerns. The Opposition is happy to build on its track record of supporting integrity measures in grants administration by supporting the bill.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (10:42):** I speak in favour of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023, another piece of legislation that the people of New South Wales need because of the rorts and waste inflicted on them by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. We are delivering on our election commitments, and the bill will deliver a much fairer grants system for all of New South Wales. As members opposite know, I am extremely passionate about my community members and their right to a fair go when it comes to government grant spending.

After spending 12 years in opposition, I know full well the damage that can be caused by a government that is hell-bent on spending grant money based solely on political purposes. Over the past 12 years we have watched the Liberal Party and The Nationals rort every single dollar that they could to prop up their marginal electorates. The limited funds available to the Government cannot be treated as a personal piggy bank so that members in Liberal or Nationals electorates can pretend that they are somehow masters of negotiation when it comes to securing grants for their communities. The people of Shellharbour know that that is not the case and that pork-barrelling is just a rort. They are sick of watching Liberal and Nationals MPs swan around the State saying how hard they have worked to secure funds for their electorates, and taking photos and putting them up on Facebook. It is just an absolute load of rubbish, and everybody on this side of the House knows it. The projects were funded because their electorate, nothing more. Funding had nothing to do with hard work by the MP, and enough is enough.

The people of Shellharbour have had enough of being treated as second-class citizens, with grant funding continually funnelled into other electorates based on nothing more than who the local member is. Previous pork-barrelling of grant funds means that there has not been nearly enough funding to assist councils in the Shellharbour electorate to keep up with the growing demand for infrastructure, particularly in our community sporting facilities. I called out the previous Government in this House for pork-barrelling on numerous occasions, time and again. It is important that, now that we are in government, we also condemn that unfair and unethical practice and legislate to ban it. That is why we have introduced the bill.

It is indeed a sad day when we must legislate to require that a Minister not approve a grant unless satisfied that the expenditure would be "an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of money" and that it "achieves value for money". But here we are, and I am happy that I am part of a government that will fix up the mess. I am also excited about the proposed changes to make certain grants information open access, so that it must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against its disclosure. That change will shine a light on key elements of the grants process, ensuring that everybody gets a fair go.

Fighting for my community when it comes to grant funding has not always gone down well with those opposite. Just last year, after calling out the previous Government on the disparity between grant funding in other electorates versus Shellharbour, one former Liberal Minister—now an Independent—was obviously offended that I called out the former Government's addiction to pork-barrelling. The truth hurts, does it not? He was so offended that he wrote a media release that included numerous disparaging statements about me personally, including stating that I had a bratty face and comparing me to his pet dog. He is an absolute disgrace and never apologised; he is a shameless MP. Such lame personal attacks by those opposite will never stop me from fighting for my electorate when it comes to grant funding. Because my community has many projects that deserve to be funded, I am confident that the bill will indeed benefit the people of Shellharbour going forward. I fully support the passage of the bill, which will make a real difference to the people of Shellharbour and to our entire State.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (10:46):** As The Greens spokesperson on integrity, anti-corruption and democracy, I contribute to debate on the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. I am pleased to continue that important work, noting the tireless advocacy in this place of my predecessor as member for Balmain, Jamie Parker. The bill is intended to address the Government's election commitment to return integrity to the grants system following evidence of widespread pork-barrelling by the previous Government across a range of grant programs, including the Stronger Communities Fund and the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.

Bringing integrity to the administration of grants and allowing the community to have confidence in the allocation of public money is core work for The Greens. Concerns with the administration of grants were initially investigated and explored in the Public Accountability Committee's inquiry into the integrity, efficiency and value for money of New South Wales Government grant programs, chaired at the time by The Greens' David Shoebridge. I am pleased to see the bill brought forward in response to a key recommendation made by the ICAC in its investigation into pork-barrelling, Operation Jersey, and I am also pleased to see that it draws on the work of the New South Wales Auditor-General in her review of the bushfire recovery grants.

The Greens welcome legislation that improves transparency but also recognise that it needs to go further. The Greens have long called for integrity, efficiency and value for money in those grant programs. The people of New South Wales deserve a scheme that treats public funds with due care and that strives to ensure that public money is applied to do the greatest public good. We would like to see the guidelines improved and note that we need mandatory independent scrutiny of all grant program allocations. While we welcome the amendment, we encourage the Government to be more aspirational in its approach to this work in the coming days, to make sure that our grants are administered fairly and openly.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (10:49):** I contribute to debate on the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. I also acknowledge my work experience student, Tristan, who is present in the public gallery, and welcome him to the New South Wales Parliament. He is all the way from the Central Coast.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Welcome to Tristan.

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** I will begin by reflecting on the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery [BLER] grants process. Mr Assistant Speaker, you were not a member of Parliament when we had the devastating bushfires across the east coast of New South Wales. They hit the Gosford electorate just before Christmas time in 2019. The Bushfire Local Economic Recovery grants came out in 2020. The Gosford electorate had \$63 million of damage. In the first round of grants, the Gosford electorate received zero money. I welcome the new member for Oxley, who is not presently in the Chamber, but make the point his electorate received \$11 million for a skydiving pond without his electorate having suffered anywhere near the same amount of damage as did the Gosford electorate. Zero was allocated for an electorate with \$63 million worth of damage and, for much less damage, in Oxley a skydiving pond was delivered for a local business. This made me so cross. It disappointed the people of the Central Coast to such a large extent that, when I questioned former Premier Berejiklian, I was thrown out of Parliament.

I knew that something was terribly wrong and this was not an ethical process. It is shameful that we have to bring legislation to Parliament to make parliamentarians—people who represent the community—act ethically and fairly with taxpayers' money. For too long, the grants process has lacked transparency and accountability. As the Auditor-General's report on the fast-tracked stream of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery program concluded, the administration process lacked integrity. That report was published just before the election whereas so long ago I knew that in the depths of my heart. So many Labor members knew for so long that the grants process had not been okay. The BLER was not an isolated incident. Where was the transparency for the Stronger Communities fund, the Regional Cultural Fund and the sports rorts? We saw that lack of transparency at State and Federal level by Liberal governments. It is shameful that we have to legislate to try to fix it. That we must legislate to ensure that our leaders distribute funds appropriately and effectively to our communities and to guarantee that the negligent mismanagement of public funds will not occur in the future is an absolute disgrace.

New South Wales is currently deficient in its statutory framework. I welcome the opportunity to bring trust, accountability, transparency and, most importantly, integrity back into our grants system. The Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 will do that by importing a modified version of section 71 of the Public Performance, Governance and Accountability Act 2013. Our Commonwealth counterparts must not approve expenditure unless it would be an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of funds. This concept is introduced in proposed clause 10.3A (2) in schedule 1 to the bill, which stipulates that a Minister must not approve expenditure unless it would be an efficient, effective, economic and ethical use of money and that that expenditure represents value for money for the taxpayers of New South Wales.

This provision not only is a reflection of section 71 but also is direct implementation of recommendation No. 2 of the report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption on its investigation into pork-barrelling in New South Wales. Imagine that that even had to occur! Proposed clause 10.3A (3) reinforces the significance and centrality of the key principles for administering grants as set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*. For example, governance and accountability, as well as probity and transparency, are all concepts that are at the heart of ensuring the grants system is both transparent and working in the best interests of our communities. The mandatory duty to adhere to the seven obligations is clear and re-establishes trust in our grants.

The seven key principles to be applied in administering grants are robust planning and design, collaboration and partnership, proportionality, an outcomes orientation, achieving value with relevant money, governance and accountability, and probity and transparency—principles that I am sure our public sector has as part of its core values. I have spoken to many people who have not been comfortable that the process that has been highlighted by the public sector has been completely overridden by Ministers when distributing taxpayers' money. I thank officers of the public sector for their very important work of overseeing the grants processes. This legislation will ensure that they are not being overridden by Ministers engaging in inequitable pork-barrelling in marginal seats across New South Wales in the future.

Transparency is at the heart of the amendments to the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 as well as the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation. Certain grants information will be open-access information that is made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosures. This information would include information that must be published in accordance with the *Grants Administration Guide*, therefore elevating a single guide provision to a statutory rule. That is really important for all the community organisations across New South Wales that spend countless hours on applying for grants and have their heart set on receiving New South Wales Government funding in support of their communities.

I know that there are so many organisations involved. Our local councils spent hours and hours to prepare an application for the first round of the BLER, and what did they get—nothing! I thank those organisations and I want those organisations to know that there will be valid protection from what had happened in the background. These amendments are the start of strengthening the administration of grants in New South Wales. I am proud to be part of a New South Wales Labor government that will continue to look for ways to improve regulatory frameworks to ensure New South Wales taxpayers' money is spent equitably and fairly for the benefit of people across the State. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (10:55):** I support the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023, which provides for transparency, ethics and efficiency around the administration of the grants process. It would be nice if this legislation was not necessary, but 12 years of a Coalition government made it clear to everybody that there was no transparency, no equity and certainly no efficiency in the manner in which grants were considered under the previous Government. The member for Oatley gave an interesting speech. Perhaps he should send it to the former member for Penrith.

**Mr Matt Cross:** Send it to Ros Kelly.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ:** That is pretty good, coming from a member on the Coalition side of the Chamber, who may want to have a look at the Penrith Panthers \$12 million that the former Coalition Government gave to them for a community sports facility and ask himself: Where is that community sports facility for which they were given \$12 million by the former member for Penrith? The former member for Penrith's own department said to him, "We don't think we should be giving this grant, unless the Federal Government department actually approves this grant."

Somehow in the correspondence to get Federal Government approval there was a letter from his partner, Senator Marise Payne, to the then Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack. Apparently that was the Federal Government's approval to obtain a grant for a community sports facility that has never, ever appeared. How was that a good use of money? The \$12 million that came out of the Office of Sport and went to the Penrith Panthers was used to build a convention centre and a car park. It would be good if that was just one isolated incident but, unfortunately for members on the Coalition side of the Chamber, this is how every single sporting grant was decided under the previous Coalition Government.

It was interesting to hear the pleas from the member for Oatley that in the dying days of the former Government they came up with some guidelines about transparency and the Government Information (Public Access) Act [GIPAA]. He should go back and look at the huge number of GIPAA requests directed to the former Government; he will see that not once did anyone get information. For some reason, no information ever came forth from the Coalition side of the Chamber. It was so bad that the upper House had to use Standing Order 52 just to ascertain what the former Government was up to.

It was pretty disturbing when we found out what the former Government was up to. For example, one application was for the Blacktown City Council for an Olympic bike path—the member for Blacktown will remember that—that under the guidelines got a score of 22 but it did not go through to the second round. Another application was from the Concord Golf Club in the electorate of Drummoyne that received a score of 12 under the guidelines. Somehow, the application that received a score of 12 from the Office of Sport went through to the second round but the Olympic facility, which was given a score of 22 by the department, never went through to the second round.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Order! Members will come to order. It is difficult to hear the member for Auburn.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** The reality is that guidelines had to be introduced, and this Government has committed to putting guidelines into legislation. That is absolutely necessary in order for the public to have confidence in the grants process. There is absolutely no way sports groups will continue to apply for grants when they see their applications disappearing into the never-never.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** It being 11.00 a.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for question time. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I warmly welcome guests of the Premier to the gallery, including essential workers and representatives. I welcome student leaders from Morisset High School, guests of the member for Lake Macquarie. I acknowledge guests of the member for Oxley, including his partner, Brigitte, and children, Ashton, Pierson and Lleyton. I welcome the Mayor of Kempsey Shire, Leo Hauville. I welcome Oxley electorate staff members Holly, Susan, Jodie, Benn and Alice. I welcome friends and National Party supporters. I also acknowledge special guests of the member for Myall Lakes: her mother, Julie, and husband, Ben.

#### *Presiding Officers*

#### **TEMPORARY SPEAKERS**

**The SPEAKER:** Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 19, I nominate the following member to act as Temporary Speaker whenever requested to do so by, or in the absence of, the Deputy Speaker and the Assistant Speaker:

Stephanie Marie Di Pasqua.

#### *Question Time*

#### **ACTIVE KIDS PROGRAM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:06):** My question is directed to the Minister for Sport.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Oatley will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition has the call and will be heard in silence.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** On 20 March, when asked about extending or recommitting to Active Kids vouchers beyond 30 June, the now Premier said, on camera, "We're going to roll them over, similar to the New South Wales Government."

**Mr Chris Minns:** We just did it.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I will ask the question again. On 20 March, when asked about extending or recommitting to Active Kids vouchers beyond 30 June, the now Premier said, on camera, "We're going to roll them over, similar to the New South Wales Government." Does the Minister stand by the Premier's statement?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:07):** I acknowledge the—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister often has trouble being heard in this House. He will be heard in silence. The Minister has the call.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is a little gun-shy and could not ask the Premier the question. Let me be clear: I stand by every statement our fabulous Premier makes. The important point is that the Liberal-Nationals Coalition defunded the Active Kids program. Let us be clear on who made the decision and when it was made. It was made in 2022. The Office of Sport prepared a submission to the Expenditure Review Committee [ERC] to continue Active Kids—

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members, particularly those on the front bench, will come to order. The Manager of Opposition Business has a point of order. Members will act with courtesy. The member will be heard in silence.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question is very clear. Does the Minister support what the Premier said?

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** The member for Wahrenoonga should be ashamed of himself. The ERC refused to even consider the proposal. Who was the chair of the ERC at the time? It was the former Treasurer, the member for Hornsby. At the end of 2022, the Office of Sport tried a second time to get Active Kids funded. Again, it was the former Treasurer and his department that said no. They refused to even consider the proposal. That is two occasions— [*Time expired.*]

### PAEDIATRIC HEART TRANSPLANT SERVICES

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:10):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on the Government's commitment to bringing a permanent paediatric heart transplant service to New South Wales?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:11):** I can. I thank the member for Parramatta for her question. It is an important question. To set the scene, I need to talk about a young boy, 15-year-old Ahmad Maskaleh. A few weeks ago the Minister for Health and I met Ahmad and his mother, Souha, on Mother's Day at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. It is an amazing story that goes to the ingenuity, professionalism and wonder that is performed in our public health system every single day of the year. In 2021, when Ahmad was 13 years old, he went into surgery for a routine throat operation but had an undiagnosed muscular dystrophy problem with his heart. He immediately went into cardiac arrest. He passed away on the table and the doctors knew that, unless he had a near-immediate heart transplant, he would not survive. The problem is that paediatric heart transplants in Australia take place at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. They do an amazing job down there.

Because of COVID and the circumstances of Ahmad's condition, Dr Ian Nicholson and his team had to perform that surgery in New South Wales for the first time. They saved Ahmad's life and, in a media conference with the Minister for Health and me, Souha said that they owe Dr Nicholson for Ahmad's life. It was truly moving. It is an example of the professionalism and dedication in the New South Wales public health system. During that period it became impossible for children in New South Wales to travel to Victoria for this lifesaving heart transplant procedure, so professors and surgeons had to do the job in this State. They were able to do it at scale. As a result of that, this Government is proud to announce that it will commit \$1.8 million to permanently establish paediatric transplant services in this State.

I need to say that this is not in any way a State of Origin clash with Victoria. In fact, the people of this State owe the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne a huge debt of gratitude because for decades it has provided the children of this State with lifesaving heart transplant procedures. However, as this State grows and there is a greater pull or take, if you like, for paediatric heart transplant services around Australia, it is important that we provide this service to the people of New South Wales. That is exactly what we will do going forward. I take this opportunity to highlight that 122 deceased people donated their organs to other Australians in this State in 2022. [*Extension of time*]

One hundred and twenty-two people donated their organs so that other Australians could survive, and 319 transplant recipients were recorded in New South Wales, including 50 heart transplants. I can only imagine the huge trauma associated with the decision of a family member to donate a vital organ of their child to another child, but it is a huge gift. They can at least rest assured that gift goes to the life of another person in this State. I also report to the House that in 2022 there were 54,769 new registrants to the organ donor program in this State. I acknowledge the previous Government for that. Organ donation is an important part of any transplant procedure and process in this State, and we need to make sure that funding it continues.

As a result of this change, we can provide this capacity in the New South Wales health system. Many members would have seen in the media in recent times that Dr Yishay Orr, who is a world-renowned paediatric heart transplant surgeon, relocated to Texas because there was not that kind of service offered in our public health system. The Government believes this is crucial to retaining and recruiting paediatric heart transplant surgeons in this State. It will make a difference to the health services provided to the taxpayers of New South Wales. The bottom line is that it will save lives.

### PUBLIC LAND SALE

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (11:15):** My question is directed to the Minister for Lands and Property. Has the Premier or the Treasurer sent the Minister any privatisation targets on the disposal of public land to private developers?

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



**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:16):** I thank the member for Cootamundra for her question. After 12 years of Coalition inaction, New South Wales is facing a housing supply and affordability crisis. That is why this Government is committed to making greater use of public land to deliver more social and affordable housing. That is in contrast to the approach of members opposite, who privatised our energy assets, water assets, road assets, public transport and health assets. That is what those opposite did.

This Government will address the housing crisis in this State. At the same time, it will end the reckless privatisation agenda of the former Government, which drove up the cost of living for families. On 1 May I issued a request to Ministers that they direct the agencies with their portfolios to immediately pause the sale of government-owned land and property. The pause is to allow time for the Government to review its assets sale policy and the framework that governs the approval of government-owned property for sale. The review will enable alignment to the Government's election commitment to strike an appropriate balance between the retention—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: My point of order is direct relevance, under Standing Order 129. The Minister was asked whether there are any privatisation targets for the sale of public land. He has not answered that question.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. I ask the Minister to be cognisant of the question that was asked, but at this stage his answer is in order.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I think I have been directly relevant to the question. The member for Wahroonga is getting very desperate. The Government will retain public assets for the benefit of the people of New South Wales. Property declared surplus to requirements by the government landowner will be used to deliver on Government policy, including social, affordable and universal housing, as well as social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, which members opposite do not like.

I have made a commitment to complete the review expeditiously so that landowning agencies across the sector can be advised of the outcome and what the new policy and governance framework is. The transfer of land across government agencies to allow them to provide enhanced services and better infrastructure will not be impacted by the pause. My message to the House is clear: If you want to continue the housing and cost-of-living crisis in New South Wales then take your lead from the member for Cronulla, but if you want to address the housing crisis in this State—*[Time expired.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! As a leader in this place, the member for Wahroonga should assist the Speaker in maintaining order in the House.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (11:20):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Minister update the House on the challenges facing the New South Wales public education system and the immediate actions the New South Wales Government is taking to fix them?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:20):** I thank the member for Leppington for his great question. He is the first ever member for Leppington and I congratulate him on his election. Because I know how much work the member for Leppington put into being elected to this place and how many houses in his growing area he doorknocked, full of young families, I know he is well aware that this Government has been elected to fix the chaos and mismanagement in the New South Wales education system that those opposite created. We did much work together on schools in Leppington and we will do much more in the future. Should we not be proud of our schools, our teachers and our principals? Should we not be proud? Instead, over the past 12 years under the previous Government, those people were treated with contempt by the Liberal Party and The Nationals—utter contempt.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Rubbish. You don't believe that.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Those opposite are the types of people who would watch *Dead Poets Society* and think the Robin Williams character is the villain. They think teachers and principals are the ones to blame.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Unlike the former Government, we recognise the challenges facing our teachers. We acknowledge that there is a staffing crisis, that they are overworked and burnt out, and that so many of them—too many of them—have been forced into unstable and insecure work. This lot opposite, who were in government for more than a decade, are simply delusional if they think they can stand on a record of so many teachers quitting

that vital profession. In the last term of the previous Government, just in the past four years alone, teacher resignations doubled. Think about that. How could you possibly be proud of what you have done when that is your record? Last year alone more than 1,850 teachers quit, and the results speak for themselves.

We know that year 9 students are struggling with writing to minimum standards. We know that Programme for International Student Assessment testing shows that internationally our New South Wales students dropped from sixth to twenty-third in reading, ninth to thirty-first in maths and third to twenty-third in science. On this side of the House, we know that the people of New South Wales spoke loudly and clearly and, as their new Government, we have moved swiftly to take urgent action. We are acting with urgency. On job stability, we are delivering on our commitment to make 16,000 teachers and support staff permanent. [*Extension of time*]

I announce today to the people of New South Wales and to the House that not only is this first tranche underway but also more than 1,000 offers are out the door already for teachers and support staff.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** One thousand!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** One thousand people in secure, stable work. We are updating the time line of the new curriculum to bring it in line with what was recommended to the previous Government.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are ensuring that we get the basics of English and maths right with the new curriculum because, funnily enough, teachers actually need time to prepare to teach it properly. As I outlined yesterday, we are funding additional administrative support and overhauling the incredible number of policies that teachers have to put in place. The truth is the people of New South Wales know that those opposite—who are in opposition for many reasons, including for what they did to public schools—have not learnt. They are a mob that think teachers are not overworked.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Macquarie will come to order.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The Leader of the Opposition thinks he needs 25 shadow Ministers. Then he looks around and thinks, "This is actually really hard work" and so he appoints eight additional assistant shadow Ministers. It is almost like everyone gets a prize—except the member for North Shore. Everyone gets a prize. Even Doogie Howser from Ryde gets a prize, I think as an assistant shadow Minister or assistant shadow intern—or whatever it might be. In contrast, on this side of the House the priorities are clear. We believe in investing in teachers to restore pride in a profession that you destroyed, so we can get our kids back on track in this great State.

**The SPEAKER:** We do not encourage applause from the gallery, particularly for that kind of behaviour by a member. The Deputy Premier's contribution was a fine example of not directing remarks through the Chair. I understand that there is an audience in the gallery today, but I ask the Deputy Premier to be more mindful of that in future. If members can control their behaviour, it will help decorum in the House.

#### WATER OWNERSHIP

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (11:26):** My question is directed to the Premier. Will the New South Wales Government support rural irrigation communities and reject the acquisition of a further 450 gegalitres of water, which is the capacity of Sydney Harbour, and announce a moratorium on water buybacks, just as Victoria has?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:26):** I cannot commit to a moratorium today, but I make the point to the member for Murray that, while we accept the 450 gegalitres of additional water for the environment was an original part of the compact between the basin States and the Commonwealth, this can only be done through water efficiency projects that do not have a socio-economic impact on our regional communities—which is an important caveat. We need to work with the Commonwealth, stakeholders and members of Parliament, like the member for Murray, to ensure that we meet those requirements.

I assure the member for Murray that nobody in this House, and certainly no-one in the Government, is under any illusions about her views and perspective, or her community's perspective, in relation to this. We believe any progress in delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan must be done in a way that supports rural communities. I have been to the Murray electorate myself and met the basin communities, with the local member, in the past. The Minister for Water has committed to going there as well to see for herself the impact of potential changes to policy and to consider the next steps in terms of the policy iteration for this important part of the Federal-State agreement. We will do that in concert with local communities. I reiterate that any agreement in relation to the original compact must be done so that it does not have adverse socio-economic impacts on regional communities.

**HEALTH SERVICES**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (11:28):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health.

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** I am not sure what has happened, but members will come to order. I am trying to hear the question. I ask the member for Cabramatta to recommence his question.

**Mr TRI VO:** Will the Minister update the House on the current challenges facing our health system and what immediate action the Minns Labor Government is taking to support the system through these?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:28):** It is a very good question. I congratulate the member for Cabramatta on his victory—a very strong victory. I know that he will be a strong voice for south-western Sydney. He was previously the president of the non-profit Vietnamese Community in Australia organisation. I thank the member for Cabramatta for his contribution to that community. I know that he will be a very strong advocate for them.

I came to this job and thought there are so many challenges that the former Government did not articulate to the community of New South Wales. I made a commitment from day one that I will not stand up here and say everything is great every day of the week, because it is not. Unlike those opposite, I will not pretend that everything happening in our hospitals is 100 per cent perfect all the time. It does not work like that. We face some serious challenges each and every day. That is why I was surprised last week when I heard the member for Hornsby on Sky News claim that the Premier "made up" the health crisis when we were in opposition. I say to the member for Hornsby: Tell that to the 7,600 nurses who left the system last year.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Tell that to the 7,600 nurses who left the system last year.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Tell that to the 68,000 people who walked into an emergency department [ED] and left without getting treated because of a lack of staffing. Tell that to the 17,000 people who are on elective surgery waiting lists outside clinically recommended time lines because of inadequate staffing. Tell that to them.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Tell that to our hardworking paramedics, who many times are waiting in hospitals for hours on end, unable to get back on the road because of access block. These are the issues that our communities face. When I do my unannounced visits, these are the issues that the hardworking frontline staff talk to me about directly. And these are the issues that we are determined to tackle because the people of New South Wales elected a government to take action. The member for Cabramatta is right in asking exactly what we are doing. From day one, the Premier made a very strong commitment to the people of New South Wales, particularly those in the health workforce. He said that we will focus on our essential workers, on our human capital. [Extension of time]

It is not the bricks and mortar that deliver health services. It is the men and women across NSW Health, in every single facet, who deliver those health services. That is why from day one we established the Surgical Services Taskforce, designed to try to get on top of those 17,000 people who are languishing on elective surgery waiting lists outside that clinically recommended time. It is why we have established the safe staffing task force, designed to make sure that we are putting nurses and midwives back on the floor, starting in our emergency departments, so that our EDs and other parts of the hospital are properly staff and resourced.

When people go to hospital—believe it or not—they do not look at the building. What they worry about is the care they are given. That is what their families and what patients worry about. It is also what frontline healthcare staff worry about. It is why we are working on a landmark inquiry, never before done, a special commission of inquiry, into how we fund health care in New South Wales. I and the people on this side of the House know—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hornsby and the member for Port Macquarie will come to order or I will separate them.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** —that, when you spend \$33 billion of taxpayers' money, you have a responsibility to make sure it is going everywhere it is needed most. My responsibility is to make sure that every single dollar is spent where it is needed most. It is absolutely disgraceful that after 12 years a government turned up in this place and left 1,100 nurses on temporary contracts, without making them permanent. Just after they had worked their guts out during three years of a pandemic, this guy turns up and makes sure that not one of them is permanent—1,100 people—making sure that there is a gap of hundreds of millions of dollars, because they were a government

that did not care about the workforce. Well, guess what? We do. I will be out there every single day, as will the Premier, working for the men and women who deliver health care across New South Wales.

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** Point of order: After the member for Cabramatta asked a question in this place, the member for Oatley made an offensive, racist comment. I ask that that comment be withdrawn. There is no place for racism here.

**The SPEAKER:** I am aware that something occurred. I think the member for Charlestown will understand that I may not have heard what was said. I asked the member for Cabramatta to repeat the question. I am not aware of what occurred. But I ask the member for Oatley, if there was a comment that was offensive, whether he is prepared to withdraw it.

**Mr Mark Coure:** If there was any comment that was offensive to the member for Cabramatta, I withdraw it.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Oatley. That concludes the matter.

#### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (11:35):** My question is directed to the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport. Why did he vote no on the voices against the motion of the Labor member for Wyong in the public interest debate yesterday?

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Mount Druitt will come to order. All members will come to order. I appreciate that this was an unusual circumstance. The question is valid, and the Minister requires the respect of the House in answering it. This is a serious matter.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:36):** I thank the member for North Shore for her question. I note that she was part of the no-show brigade last night. Last night we gave the Liberal and National parties a chance to support the Voice. The Premier of Tasmania took a courageous stand on the Voice. The member for Epping took a courageous stand on the Voice—the member should be acknowledged for that. The member for Cronulla is not fit to carry water for the member for Epping. Last night, when this Chamber called on the Liberals and The Nationals on the Voice, where did they go? They disappeared. They fled like cowards. They ran.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business will not come to the lectern until I call him. I call the Manager of Opposition Business.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question is clear. It asked why the Minister voted no. He has spent all his answer talking about everyone other than himself. The question is about why he said no.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will come to order. The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will hear from the Leader of the House on the point of order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** The answer the Minister was giving to the question is clearly directly relevant to the question asked. This is not the first time the Manager of Opposition Business has taken a completely baseless point of order to interrupt the Minister. The Manager of Opposition Business has an additional responsibility as a role model to other members of the House who might seek to interject. He should not interrupt needlessly. I ask that you deal with him.

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** To the point of order: To ensure that we no longer further politicise the Voice after what was an important debate—

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

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** I ask that the question be ruled out of order because it does not relate to the Minister's portfolios.

**The SPEAKER:** We are a long way down the road. There is no point of order. I will ask the Minister whether he has more to contribute but he is certainly sailing close to the wind. I grant an extension of two minutes. The Minister has the call.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I end with this: Last night we gave those opposite the opportunity to express themselves and to show their conviction. I sacrificed myself to give them an opportunity and they failed to do it. Shame on them.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (11:40):** My question is addressed to the Attorney General, representing the Minister for Finance. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's plan to create a fairer, simpler and more targeted scheme to help more first home buyers pay no tax or a reduced rate?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (11:41):** I thank my friend the member for Auburn for her question. Before I answer it directly, I make a few comments about housing affordability, which is what the question is really about. Looking at the way the former Government conducted itself over 12 years in relation to housing affordability and observing the tragic depth of the housing emergency in which we find ourselves in New South Wales, it is clear that the former Government simply did not do enough. That is the point of the past. In going through the state of the budget and the State's finances now, we are hindered from rectifying that emergency by the discovery of black holes in our way—and I spoke about that yesterday. Looking at the way Opposition members conduct themselves with respect to a bill that is presently before this House, we see that they have a bewildering disregard for ordinary people and families.

The question that the member for Auburn asked me was about a fairer, simpler and more targeted scheme. I thank the Minister for Finance for her advice, and it is as follows. I inform the House that the Government's plan will ensure that anyone who pays less than \$800,000 for their first home will not pay any stamp duty from 1 July this year—none. They will receive that help from the Government—and this is the crux—without being forced to pay a land tax. Further, people paying up to \$1 million—and these figures capture the lion's share of people buying their first home—will receive a concession on their stamp duty. This Government will not force them into a land tax to avoid the stamp duty. That is what the former Government's program did.

Further, 84 per cent of first home buyers will benefit from the Minns Government's program—not the very fortunate few who can buy a home without help from the taxpayer. That is what the schemes are all about. I am aware that the Leader of the Opposition, no doubt advised by the member for Hornsby—I like the Leader of the Opposition. I got on well with him as the former Attorney General and I have respect for him. But, Mark, do not listen to the member for Hornsby. He led the whole former Government up the garden path.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney General will direct his remarks through the Chair.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Mr Speaker, can you tell him?

**The SPEAKER:** I will pass it on after question time.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I am aware that the Leader of the Opposition wants to continue to provide the biggest reduction in stamp duty to only the 13 per cent of people paying the higher prices for their first home. That is simply unfair. That means that, under the Opposition's reckless scheme, a first home buyer with \$800,000—that is most of them—will receive half the assistance that is directed to someone who has—*[Extension of time]*

Under the Opposition's scheme, a first home buyer with \$800,000 to spend will receive half the assistance that is directed at someone with \$1.4 million to spend—\$64,000 versus \$29,000. It is simply not fair. That conduct wreaked of unfairness, and it still does. I further inform the House—talking of black holes and mines laid for us as we do our hard work—that the cost of running both these schemes would add another \$700 million. The Leader of the Opposition and his Treasury spokesperson have learnt nothing from the black hole they left us in the budget. We spoke yesterday about debt—about a thousand nursing positions in hospitals, about vulnerable kids in out-of-home care, Active Kids vouchers and cybersecurity, which were all underfunded.

Those opposite need to have a good look at themselves and at the level of pain suffered by people and families, particularly young people, who rejected them en masse in March. They need to have a good look at their policies and remember that the policy that the Premier and the Treasurer want to introduce is not our policy—it has been endorsed, stamped and delivered to us, lock, stock and barrel, as a mandate by the people of New South Wales. They should get out of the way and stop being so obstructionist.

### ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (11:46):** My question is directed to the Minister for Sport. How many Active Kids vouchers could be created using the \$16 million the Government has allocated to subsidise Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] cage fighting?

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:46):** I thank the member for Miranda for her question. I would like to talk about UFC and our announcement. It is really important to do that. Over the next four years Sydney will play host to three UFC events. The first UFC event—UFC 293—will take place on 10 September, just four months from now. That will be the first time a UFC event has taken place in Sydney for more than a decade. I know that many members on the opposite side of this Chamber do not follow sport, especially the former sports Minister. So let me explain to them why this is a big win for our State. Right now, there are more than 700 million UFC fans—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question is not about UFC; it is about how many Active Kids vouchers can be funded with the \$16 million for the UFC fights. It is a mathematical question.

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. Members will come to order while I rule on the point of order. I understand the point of order, regardless of whether the member uses the correct terms. I uphold the point of order. The Minister was not being relevant to the question. It would be helpful if he could become more relevant more quickly. The Minister has the call.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I am trying to reinforce the economic value of the UFC and how important it is, and to emphasise the lack of appreciation across this House. If those opposite want to work it out, they have a calculator—they can sit down and work it out themselves. That is not my job.

**The SPEAKER:** Opposition members will come to order.

### RURAL AND REGIONAL ROADS

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (11:49):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister update the House on what immediate actions the New South Wales Labor Government is taking to improve road conditions in rural and regional New South Wales?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (11:49):** I am so excited! After question time yesterday I was nearly chased out the door by Opposition members who want to meet with me because they know they have been sitting there waiting for 12 long years for their roads to be fixed. We had the member for Oxley, we had the member for Myall Lakes—

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We are going to meet, and I know there are a few others who have letters in the queue. I met with the member for Port Macquarie and I met with the member for Bathurst. Those members increased their margins at the last election against the trend—obviously the member for Port Macquarie did it at the expense of The Nationals, which is a bit of a reality check for them. This is about getting work done, and that is what we are all about. I do not want to leave out the member for Barwon. We are going to meet, and we have some great news about Silverton Road. We are getting to that as well. For me, Regional Transport and Roads is the most important portfolio—even if I do say so myself. It is a social determinant of health, education, opportunity and jobs. If you do not have working roads, then you do not get to where you need to go.

I should have acknowledged the member for Monaro earlier. What a great result! He is a massive advocate for his community, and won the seat off the Nats. He is a really good person to have in this place. While I am speaking about The Nationals and roads, let us talk about their policy on fixing roads. Then Minister Pavey went to the 2019 State election with an up to 15,000 kilometres reclassification promise. Remember the great photo opportunity? Members opposite—a lot of them have gone now—stood there for photos and said, "This might be reclassified." Fantastic! What a great commitment. They said, "We are going to change the label on the road"—no more money, unfunded commitment—"but we're not going to do anything". Labor's commitment in 2019 was to allocate \$900 million for local roads. The guys opposite could not match that; they just said, "Let's get a photo and change the label." That is how they were going to fix it.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Are you going to do it?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I acknowledge the interjection. I would love to do it; I would so love to do it. On 8 November, before the last election, we begged the Minister in the other place for the report. Remember how we got the interim one? It took a while to get out. The report lay on the Minister's desk for four months. Unfortunately, despite our repeated pleas for him to release the report, he could not quite squeeze it out. I think it is still sitting in the upper House. We have real issues with this report because we have not seen it.

**Mr Steve Whan:** I seek additional information from the excellent regional roads Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The problem is—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will wait until I grant the extension. Give me a break. A two-minute extension is granted.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is all about delivery, Mr Speaker. We want to get out there and deliver. I travelled around the State and spoke to lots of councillors and mayors. There is so much confusion about this mythical report that was in production for three or four years. Some, like Albury City Council, thought because they had the word "city" in their name they were not eligible to apply. They were, but they did not know that because the communication was so poor. Some were concerned that they would miss out on Federal assistance grants if they gave back their roads. Some thought they would lose their labour force. Some thought they had to get the roads up to standard before they would be taken back and others had, in those three or four years, moved on. Remember the renewable energy zones [REZ]? We have the REZ. In many cases, road usage has changed because they are carrying heavy vehicles. If councils had known four years ago when the roads were built, they might have put different infrastructure in place.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

Again, I acknowledge the interjection. What are we going to do? We have done it. We have announced the \$390 million that we are going to put on the table. Rather than all those regional councils having a nice label change on their roads, they are going to get cash and will be able to fix their roads because that is what it is actually all about. The shame for Opposition members is that they will be known for time immemorial as the "gunna Government". They were gunna do this and they were gunna do that, but they never did. That is the problem. Unfortunately, I have to give the House the sad news that the roads reclassification has basically died a very slow, agonising and painful death on the Minister's desk. We will give the money to councils, and I pay special tribute to the country mayors and representatives of regional cities whom I have met. I have explained it to them, and they are on board. They want the cash. They want to see roads in our regions fixed, instead of waiting on promises from the lot opposite.

### DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (11:55):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. What domestic violence services could have been funded under the \$16 million that her Government is using to subsidise the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] cage fighting?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (11:55):** I thank the shadow Minister for her question, and congratulate her on her appointment. There is no doubt that members on this side of the House and certainly you, Mr Speaker—indeed, everyone in this Chamber—agree that the issue of family and domestic violence must be taken very seriously indeed. As the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, I reiterate this Government's strong stance against all forms of domestic violence. It has no place in this State. We are making significant investment and leading a range of reforms and initiatives to prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence. Already the actions of the Minns Government when it comes to family and domestic violence, and women's health, reflect just how serious we are about addressing both issues. I thank the Premier for the stance he has taken in supporting women in New South Wales.

To that end, in April the New South Wales Government announced \$7.5 million to extend and expand two pilot programs helping survivors of domestic violence. This funding will ensure that a specialist domestic violence support worker is available at every local courthouse that hears domestic violence matters, and it will embed specialist support workers within selected police stations. On top of that, there is the continuation of Core and Cluster, with \$426 million being spent on those programs. I was very pleased—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, it is a very important issue. The question was about what domestic violence services could be provided in place of the \$16 million for UFC cage fighting.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the question. I thank the Manager of Opposition Business. I am certain that the Minister also understands the question and is doing her best to give a comprehensive answer. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I was saying, \$426.6 million is being committed to the expansion of women's refuges. I was very pleased to be in Penrith recently with the member for Penrith to open the first of the Core and Cluster refuges in partnership with women's community shelters. It was a great day. On top of that, there is the Government's commitment to women's health centres. We know that women's health centres provide an incredible amount of support to people who have experienced domestic and family violence. We are doubling the funding for women's health centres to \$100 million over five years. Our commitment is clear.

### BUILDING INDUSTRY

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (11:59):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. Will the Minister update the House on the immediate action taken by the New South Wales Government to strengthen the quality of building and construction in the State?

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (11:59):** I thank the member for Campbelltown for asking that important question. As he and I know—as many members with electorates in south-west and north-west Sydney know—the development and construction industry is so important as we try to cater for housing supply for our communities. That is why the reform agenda that the Government has for the building industry is central to creating confidence, to attracting investment and to increasing quality of supply.

The Minns Government is moving quickly on implementing its election commitment to restore confidence to the New South Wales construction industry. The residential construction industry alone is undertaking about \$36 billion worth of building stock in New South Wales, creating quality homes and communities and great jobs for people in the State. In fact, the industry accounts for about 8 per cent of our gross State product—about \$50 billion—and employs over 400,000 people. That means good jobs for good people, which supports our economic growth. The Government's reform agenda will support industry to deliver compliant, safe and resilient buildings while adding to the housing supply stock. As all members know, supply is critical to housing and rental affordability in the current industry. All members know how important that aspect actually is.

But we must never sacrifice quality for the sake of quantity. We must ensure that purchasers are confident in the quality of their housing. That will drive investment in the sector. The equation is quite simple: Our building reforms will increase confidence, quantity and quality, investment and supply and will reduce prices for people in our community as they seek to rent a house or buy their first home. We want to create incentives for financiers and insurers to enter the market, creating jobs and the homes that people need for the long term. To support the Government's work to unlock more housing supply, we want to establish a fit-for-purpose building regulator to be the cop on the beat.

The work of the Building Commissioner and the building regulator over the past few years has led to world-leading transformation of the New South Wales apartment sector. The Government, of course, provided bipartisan support for that reform agenda, which is starting to restore confidence to the construction sector. It is about calling out bad players and giving consumers and industry the tools that they need to make informed decisions about who to buy from and what businesses to deal with. While those measures have been effective, we can certainly always improve. We need a concerted effort to expand on the gains that have been made in the apartment sector to transform the entire building sector. [*Extension of time*]

That is why the Government will establish a building commission to oversee the regulation, licensing and oversight of the entire construction industry. The commission will be tasked with building new capacity and capabilities to tackle the issues we are now seeing in low-rise residential building work. The Government will ensure that the commission is properly equipped with the expertise, capacity and powers to respond to defective and untrustworthy design and building work across the sector. The Government will establish the building commission by the end of the year, with the commission fully stood up in about 2024 as it recruits the right and necessary team and skills to drive the Government's work to restore confidence to the sector.

To support the building commission, the Government will also create a plain English building Act to consolidate existing building legislation, reduce red tape and empower consumers and building owners to make informed decisions. We will modernise the New South Wales building laws to ensure that we are not only able to effectively regulate the existing construction sector but also prepared for the industry of the future. That includes modern methods of construction, trends in financing and responding to the increasing complexity of buildings. The Government will release draft legislation to the industry and the community this year, and will look to



introduce legislation to the Parliament in the first half of 2024. We will ensure that we have a modern, customer-centric regulator working with a consistent and fit-for-purpose regulatory framework. We will transform the building sector and give buyers the confidence they need to make one of the biggest purchases in their life: buying a house for themselves and for their family.

### REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES SERVICES

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (12:05):** My question is directed to the Premier. I congratulate him on formation of government, and I look forward to his attention to regional communities. I appreciate the attention of his Ministers already to the issues of service delivery in Barwon across the health, education, police and youth portfolios. Has the Premier had an opportunity to form a view on the adequacy of the services in Barwon and regional New South Wales and the need to carry out a deep review and plan to bring them up to an adequate standard?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:05):** That is a good question from the member for Barwon. I have to tell the House that we are coming from a long way back. For the past 12 years The Nationals largely abandoned regional New South Wales. While the Liberal Party was behaving as if people like paying tax, the National Party was not spending a lot of money at all. I can report to the House that the independent Parliamentary Budget Office revealed that zero dollars were allocated for new and regional roads for the 2022-23 years under the National Party's election commitments—not one dollar. In fact, The Nationals' signature policy for the 2019 election—not the election just passed but the one prior to that—was to take regional roads and reclassify them under the New South Wales government. They nominated 15,000 kilometres worth of local roads that the State would take responsibility for. Guess how many kilometres were reclassified? Five kilometres. Guess where they were? Blacktown. It is a shameful record.

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will come to order. The member for Barwon asked the question and he must be able to hear the answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The former National Party leader had a plan. Members might not have heard of this, but a policy called "cars for children" was announced in the last election campaign. He was going to give \$5,000 to every 18-year-old in the State to buy a brand new car. The previous Government was going to go down to the local mosh pit and hand out five grand to 18-year-olds. "Don't worry about fixing the road up; we'll give you a brand new car." That was The Nationals policy. A lot is going on in the National Party. I can report to the House an article in *The Daily Telegraph* from 18 March titled "Nats at war over leader".

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

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

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. The question was about the people of Barwon, not about issues within the National Party. The Premier has strayed off topic and he should be brought back to the leave of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will come to order. It is very hard to hear. As the member for Barwon asked the question, he will interpret whether the standing order has been breached. He does not appear to be incapacitated and unable to seek the call to make that point. As the member for Barwon has not shown any inclination to do so, I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The article states:

Two senior Nationals figures slammed Mr Saunders, accusing him of being a "puppet" for former leader John Barilaro ...

The article quotes one figure, who said, "He doesn't have any policies, he just wants to be king."

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

**The SPEAKER:** If it is the same point of order as the previous one regarding relevance, it will not be upheld. I am not entertaining it.

**Mr Roy Butler:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** But I will entertain the member for Barwon.

**Mr Roy Butler:** Mr Speaker, it is very difficult to hear up here. I seek additional information.

**The SPEAKER:** I grant an extension of two minutes.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He said, "He doesn't have any policies, he just wants to be king." All those quotes are anonymous, but there is nothing wrong with that—a lot of whistleblowers are anonymous. There are only six

Nationals MPs and two are quoted in the article, so one-third of the caucus is anonymously leaking to the Telegraph. The sources go on to criticise the member for Dubbo because he said that some people viewed The Nationals as "sucking on a straw in a paddock". How dare he represent The Nationals like that? That is shameful.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. It is not up to the member for Barwon to take a point of order; it is your ruling, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** I appreciate the commentary and the point of order from the member for Hawkesbury. It is my ruling and I have made it. I ruled on the point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business. No member is more attuned to the issue than the member for Barwon. There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It gets better, because the end of the article states, "Liberal Party sources told *The Daily Telegraph* they were tired of the squabbles within The Nationals." Members opposite have even exhausted the Liberal Party, the home of squabbles. Government members take seriously what the member for Barwon said, and we believe that there is scope in this Parliament for this House to review service delivery for rural and regional communities. I suspect that the House could move to establish a service delivery committee, and I can think of no finer member than the member for Barwon to chair that committee. In fact, Government members would support such an application.

### STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:11):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister update the House on the immediate action the New South Wales Government is taking to better support students experiencing disadvantages?

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Minister for the Hunter) (12:12):** I thank the member for Cessnock for his question. I have stood alongside the member in this place for many years and have watched him continually stand up for those who are experiencing disadvantage, so I know how much this answer will mean to him and his community. I answer the question with great pride because the Labor Government is rebuilding a vocational education and training system that is for everyone. That is in contrast to members of the former Government, who never saw a part of TAFE that they did not want to chop. They cut courses, they sacked teachers and they sat idly by while enrolment and completion rates plummeted. The only TAFE cuts under the Minns Government are the wonderful chops prepared by the butchery students for me and the member for Granville when we visited Granville TAFE recently.

Last year I outlined Labor's vision for this portfolio under a Minns Labor government, which is a vision for a vocational education system that is for everyone—for those who did not finish school, for people with a disability, for those who do not speak English as a first language and for people from low socio-economic backgrounds. We do not just want those members of our community to gain a skill and be connected with work; we need them to do so. In this labour market, with low unemployment but crippling workforce shortages, we need to reach out to those most disadvantaged in our community, to match their ambition with work opportunities. If we want them to access vocational education then we need to support them to be able to do so.

Students who experience disadvantage have a 15 per cent lower completion rate for their courses when compared with overall completions under Smart and Skilled, which is not a small difference. Those numbers need to go up. With the right support in place, they will, and those students will thrive. That is why I am so proud that one of the very first decisions I made as a Minister in the Minns Labor Government was to boost support for disadvantaged students. We are doing that by lifting the cap on needs-based loadings to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with a disability and the long-term unemployed. Previously, Smart and Skilled providers could only receive one needs-based loading per enrolment. [*Extension of time*]

For a student with a disability who had also been unemployed for long time, too bad—the provider could only receive support in one of their areas of need. Under Labor, that ends. Government members recognise that providing only a little bit of help to VET students is just not good enough. If we want to see those students truly succeed, we have to provide the support that they not only need but deserve. Because TAFE, our public provider, trains a far higher proportion of students experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage than other providers, over 90 per cent of that support will go to them. That means students will have better access to counsellors, mentors and Auslan interpreters—the things that they need to complete their courses and pave the way for employment and further study.

Lifting the needs-based loading cap is not an announcement that grabs headlines. It sat in the bottom drawer of the previous Government because it did not pass its three tests for doing anything: First, it was not flashy enough; secondly, there were not have enough votes in it; and, thirdly, no dodgy mates would benefit from it. But

it is important for every person who left a course because their needs could not be accommodated or they did not have access to guidance and support—who went home feeling like they were not smart or were not good enough, or that they would never be able to succeed. I say to those people: You are smart, you are extraordinary, we need you and you will succeed. We say to them that we will back them and, with the removal of the needs-based loading cap, their provider will back them too.

**The SPEAKER:** I recognise Tristan Livingston, who is doing work experience with the member for Gosford. I hope he has enjoyed question time. I did not get the chance to throw the member out; she often gives me those opportunities, but I resist. Welcome.

*Personal Explanation*

**MEMBER FOR CABRAMATTA**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (12:17):** By leave: During question time I made a comment towards a new MP. It was a poor attempt at humour and was not intended to cause any offence. I withdraw the comment once again and apologise to the member in question. As a former Minister for Multiculturalism, I celebrate the diversity in our society. It is our greatest asset. The comment I made was not intended or considered to focus on an individual's background. I again withdraw the comment and again apologise to the member of Parliament.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:19):** By leave: Given the member for Oatley has apologised for his offensive comment that was directed to the member for Cabramatta and his request to withdraw it, I request the member for Oatley to not only withdraw the comment but also recognise that he caused offence to many members in the Chamber. When racist comments of such disgraceful proportions are made, their withdrawal and apology should be made to all members because there is no place for that kind of racist comment in the Chamber.

**The SPEAKER:** I will consider the comments of the member for Newtown and give my ruling at a later time.

*Business of the House*

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

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:20):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit forthwith the giving of general business notice of motion item No. 71 to establish a select committee to investigate the sufficiency of study, training and experience of frontline emergency services and their interactions with people with lived experience of cognitive impairment and cognitive decline.

I ask colleagues to endorse this motion for a very important reason. I am sure that all members are absolutely stunned by the events that relate to Clare Nowland. I know investigations are ongoing in this matter and no-one in this House should seek to prejudice those investigations. But as a former Minister for disability services who established the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission to guard against abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disabilities, and as the proud member for Kiama who saw our town, Kiama, become the first dementia-friendly town in Australia, I believe that we can do a lot better, not just with regard to police but right across the public service to make sure that our frontline staff have the training, study and experience they need to support people with cognitive impairment and cognitive decline.

Every member in this House should want to satisfy themselves that our most vulnerable are protected. As we are living in a community with an ageing population, cognitive impairment and decline conditions are becoming more prevalent. We should seek to stand up for those people. But to do that we also have to better understand and be able to engage. It is not just police. Other frontline responders have been in contact with my electoral office to reflect on the training, or the lack thereof, that they have. The sector also has reached out to me. I thank all of those people who either have publicly commented on the need for this inquiry or have contacted me directly to say that the training that is offered is not sufficient and that we can do better. No-one wants to see the events that occurred happen again.

I emphasise that this is not about a witch-hunt relating to any particular field or department. This is about having this Parliament exercise its oversight obligations. All of us have a role in ensuring that the policy positions of the Government are as they should be and in assisting the Government to ensure that they are as they should be, as well as to hear from experts who can assist to make sure that recommendations are as they should be. As someone with his own story of disability, I would not move this motion if I did not believe it to be important. This motion is not about politics. In fact, the more that we can take that out, the better we all will be, including vulnerable people.

We should have this debate. We should seek to establish this select committee. It should be allowed to do its work. In the motion I have proposed for three Government members, three Opposition members and two

crossbench members to oversee the inquiry, hear from experts and report to Parliament as soon as possible. I do not think that is an unreasonable ask because I know some members in this House genuinely care. I thank members from all sides of politics who have discussed this committee with me. I know that people may have their party allegiances, but I also know that members of all political persuasions are concerned about these circumstances. They are also concerned to ensure that we are adequately engaging and responding, not just to the public concern but also, most importantly, to the support that frontline officers and frontline public servants are calling for. That is why this inquiry would seek to assist and support all of our frontline services—ambulance officers, prison officers and police officers.

I am asking the House to suspend standing orders to bring on debate of this motion forthwith. The House could then establish the inquiry. The inquiry could then do its important work and all members of Parliament could be satisfied that the work that our frontline responders do is adequately buttressed and supported by the appropriate training and experience they want, need and are calling for so we can do everything possible to protect our vulnerable and to support our frontline emergency services in this great State.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:25):** The Government opposes the attempt to suspend the standing orders of the House to proceed with the motion, notice of which has been given by the member for Kiama. There is nobody in this House, this country or anywhere around the world who is not moved or shaken by the events that occurred only six days ago, but I remind the House that currently three investigations are inquiring into what occurred six days ago. A police investigation into the incident, a critical incident investigation and a Law Enforcement Conduct Commission investigation are taking place. The latter is independent and has statutory independence and reporting responsibilities. It cannot be directed by the Government.

As the Premier and police Minister have indicated to the House, it is important to let those matters proceed. What this House should be focused on is supporting the Nowland family, who are in quite tragic circumstances. We should allow the police and the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission to do their work. They do not need a parliamentary inquiry. People do not need to currently view the footage that has been obtained under the Surveillance Devices Act. In fact, that footage is protected footage that cannot be distributed. I would think that the two silks on the Opposition side of the Chamber would have read the Act and would know how that footage should be used.

I do not accept from the member for Kiama that this is a bipartisan genuine attempt to establish a committee at this point in time. If he is genuine about the need, I remind him that he was a Minister of the Crown and that the former Government was in office for 12 years. The circumstances that may well have impacted upon the need for training in respect of this matter were apparent for those 12 years. If it was not apparent, it was pretty clear from the evidence given in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and the terrible reporting that came out of that royal commission. There was no movement from members opposite and there was no movement from the member for Kiama when that terrible report was released. It demonstrated the shocking position in Australia of the way in which we treat our aged people in aged care facilities. If the member for Kiama was genuine, he would not have rushed two days ago to *The Daily Telegraph* to say he was being blocked by the Minns Government. He phoned me and, as a matter of courtesy, I indicated to him that the Government probably would not have its legislative program interfered with.

The reality is that this is not the right time for this matter to be heard. I am extremely disappointed, and have been for the last couple of days, at the manner in which this issue has been politicised by suggesting that there was any wrongdoing by anyone involved. I know that this is the bearpit and I know that for decades there has been a custom in which this House has conducted itself. I also understand that we are a newly elected Government and that members opposite are a new Opposition and are struggling to find a position in their role. But I must say I am extremely disappointed in the member for Kiama, who I believe knows better. If he needed something done urgently for people who either have a disability or are intellectually impaired, he could have written to the Government and asked for something urgently.

This is a straight-out political stunt by the member for Kiama. I am disappointed in his approach. In fact, I must say this week I am extremely disappointed in the approach of the Opposition generally. They are led by a person who is a reputable silk, a former Attorney General and a highly regarded member of the bar. It is disappointing that he would stoop to the level he did yesterday. To see the member for Kiama do so is also extremely disappointing.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:30):** In reply: The Leader of the House is entitled to his own opinions and views, but he is not entitled to his own facts. I need to respond to what he just said in his address. Firstly, he asked what I did when I was in government. I established the Ageing and Disability Commission. He voted for it. In fact, he tried to frustrate it in this place, but we got it established to guard against abuse, neglect and exploitation. Robert Fitzgerald is doing an excellent job. I take great exception to what the member said. I thought it was very

unfortunate. Secondly, the Leader of the House said that if I was genuine about disability issues I could write to the Government. That is exactly what the member suggested I do in relation to a motion that I wanted to move regarding the NDIS and disability supports, and I did exactly that. So the suggestion he made that I did not do that is also wrong. What he suggested to this House was deliberately misleading and very disappointing.

The Leader of the House suggested that there has been some politicisation. It is convenient at best for the Government to confuse politicisation with democratic parliamentary oversight, which is entirely appropriate and in fact what we are elected to do. I am not seeking oversight in relation to the police and the inquiries that the member outlined are rightly underway. I acknowledge those. This is about the broader support that frontline emergency services are asking for. They are ringing my office—and I suspect the offices of members on both sides of the House—suggesting that this is entirely appropriate.

The Leader of the House mentioned that we should acknowledge the Nowland family. That is the first point in the motion that I am seeking to bring on for debate: It acknowledges and expresses our sympathies. Does the Leader of the House not believe that we should do that? If members of the Government believe that too, that is a matter for them. I would not be angry about that; I would just be disappointed about it. I think it is an appropriate discussion to have. I think it is an appropriate inquiry. I think it is a really valuable use of the time of this House. I invite members to reflect on all of the inquiries that this Government has announced since it has been appointed. There are so many.

I cannot think too many things more important than to ensure we inquire into whether not just police but all frontline emergency services have the support they need at this particular time. Clare Nowland may well be the catalyst for the inquiry, but she is not the reason it is required. It is one of the many things that we should look at, but the inquiry should cover, as I have said, a much broader range of issues. For the Leader of the House to mischaracterise this and go to the point of actually attacking me on my record as one of only two members in this House with a disability was baseless, disappointing, erroneous, false and wrong.

I ask members to think about the seriousness of what I am asking for and the importance and the gravity of what is needed. If they are satisfied that the training is adequate, then they can vote against the motion. If they agree with the Leader of the House and think that this does not require an inquiry, then they can vote against the motion. But if they think we can do better and provide the support that frontline officers want and that psychologists and psychiatrists are calling for, they will know that this is an appropriate thing to do. If they have read a paper, listened to the radio or spoken to their local community and frontline workers, they will also know that this is an appropriate thing to do. We need to do this, and it is the right thing to do.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....36  
Noes .....54  
Majority.....18

#### AYES

Amon, R	Hodges, M	Singh, G (teller)
Anderson, K	James, T	Sloane, K
Ayyad, T	Kean, M	Speakman, M
Clancy, J	Kemp, M	Taylor, M
Cooke, S	Lane, J	Thompson, T
Coure, M	Layzell, D	Toole, P
Cross, M	Marshall, A	Tuckerman, W
Crouch, A (teller)	Petinos, E	Ward, G
Davies, T	Preston, R	Williams, L
Di Pasqua, S	Provest, G	Williams, R
Hannan, J	Roberts, A	Williamson, R
Henskens, A	Saunders, D	Wilson, F

#### NOES

Aitchison, J	Greenwich, A	O'Neill, M
Atalla, E	Hagarty, N	Park, R
Bali, S	Harris, D	Quinnell, S
Barr, C	Harrison, J	Regan, M
Butler, L	Haylen, J	Saffin, J (teller)

## NOES

Butler, R	Hoenig, R	Saliba, D
Car, P	Holland, M	Scully, P
Catley, Y	Hornery, S	Shetty, K
Chanthivong, A	Kaliyanda, C	Smith, T
Cotsis, S	Kamper, S	Stuart, M
Crakanthorp, T	Kirby, W	Tesch, L
Daley, M	Leong, J	Vo, T
Dalton, H	Li, J	Voltz, L
Davis, D	McDermott, H	Warren, G
Dib, J	McGirr, J	Washington, K
Donato, P	McKeown, K	Watson, A
Doyle, T	Mehan, D	Whan, S (teller)
Finn, J	Minns, C	Wilkinson, K

**Motion negatived.**

*Bills*

**LAW ENFORCEMENT (POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES) AMENDMENT (DIGITAL EVIDENCE ACCESS ORDERS) BILL 2023**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Michael Daley, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (12:41):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Digital Evidence Access Orders) Bill 2023. The bill amends the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to enable a digital evidence access order to be sought in relation to a search warrant issued under section 40 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988. These small but important amendments were raised with the Government directly by the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and they work to ensure that the ICAC's powers to investigate corruption and maladministration in New South Wales remain current and fit for purpose.

Last year the former Government introduced the digital evidence access order scheme, which passed through Parliament with the support of the Labor Party. The scheme enabled police officers and officers of the New South Wales Crime Commission to seek orders alongside a search warrant that empowered them to issue a direction to a person requiring that person to provide assistance to unlock a digital device connected to the search warrant. Failure to comply with such a direction is a criminal offence punishable by up to five years' imprisonment. These powers reflect the emerging need to support the modern realities of serious investigations.

Search warrants provide the authority to search a place and the things found within it, including digital devices. But unlike traditional physical documents, such as paper files or journals, digital devices are frequently protected by passwords or other forms of security that can frustrate the exercise of these powers. The bill will ensure that ICAC officers also have access to these orders and powers in connection with the search warrants under the Act and related to their investigations.

The digital evidence access order scheme was originally targeted to address law enforcement investigative needs as part of a package of legislative reforms responding to organised crime, but the issue goes beyond organised crime. Corruption and misconduct by public officials are incredibly serious matters. The New South Wales community expects those who are trusted to perform public functions to act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the public, not for their own personal gain or advantage. Such actions erode the trust in our public institutions which is absolutely critical for a safe and stable society. That importance is reflected in the existing and extraordinary powers that the ICAC already has, similar to a royal commission.

The Parliament has long recognised that the ICAC's critical functions warrant such special powers of investigation and inquiry. The Government has heard directly from the Chief Commissioner of the ICAC how locked digital devices are just as pertinent to corruption investigations as they are to investigations with respect to organised crime. Without this power, potentially critical information may remain unintelligible and

significantly frustrate ICAC investigations. There is a clear public interest in ensuring that the ICAC is able to execute investigations in a fulsome manner, without being frustrated by access controls on digital devices. That is exactly why we are acting to close this gap and provide the ICAC with the powers that it needs. In this, we also follow Queensland and the Northern Territory, where comparable corruption commissions have access to the powers the bill provides.

I turn to the detail of the bill. Clause 3 of the bill makes two amendments to the definitions underpinning the digital evidence access order scheme in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. First, the definition of "eligible applicant" under section 46 is amended to include an officer of the ICAC for a digital evidence access order in connection with a search warrant under section 40 (1) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988. Second, the definition of "search warrant" under section 76AA is amended to include a search warrant issued under section 40 (1) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988.

The effect of these two amendments together is that ICAC officers will be able to make an application to an "authorised officer" for a digital evidence access order under section 76AB of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. Authorised officers are magistrates and registrars of the Local Court. If the order is issued, the ICAC officer will then be authorised under section 76AM of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to direct the person specified in the order to give the officer information or assistance reasonable and necessary to (a) enable the officer to access data held in or accessible from a digital device, or (b) copy or convert data to another device.

Under section 76AO of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, it is a criminal offence for a person to fail to comply with such a direction or give false or misleading information to an officer executing a digital evidence access order without a reasonable excuse. It is not a reasonable excuse that complying with the direction would incriminate the person or expose them to a penalty. This offence attracts a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment or a fine of \$11,000, or both. I stress that the bill does not make substantive amendments to the digital evidence access order scheme itself. The powers which I have described are already available to police officers and officers of the New South Wales Crime Commission.

The bill simply extends the scope of the scheme to include ICAC officers when they are executing search warrants under their legislation. This means that the existing processes and safeguards of the digital evidence access order scheme will apply to ICAC officers seeking such warrants, and this is given effect by the consequential amendments which are contained in clauses 3 (3) and (4) of the bill. Application processes for digital evidence access orders are aligned to those of search warrants. They can only be issued by an eligible issuing officer. In the case of ICAC search warrants, such officers are magistrates or a registrar of the Local Court. These officers are already empowered to issue ICAC search warrants.

As with search warrants, applications will be considered *ex parte*—that is, without the subject of the warrant in attendance—and are not required to be heard in a courtroom. In the case of authorised officers who are judicial officers, they will be heard in the personal capacity of the magistrate. Importantly, although the commissioner of the ICAC may issue a search warrant under section 40 (1) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, they may not determine an application for a digital evidence access order. This ensures that such powers are only granted following independent, third-party determination, consistent with the current digital evidence access order scheme. It also reflects the significance of the power to breach the privilege against self-incrimination.

Further, a digital evidence access order must be sought in connection with a search warrant. That means that the order cannot be granted as a standalone. An accompanying search warrant must exist for the digital evidence access order to be made. This reflects that the policy purpose is to augment search powers to ensure that they are fit for purpose where the authority to conduct the search already exists. The bill represents an important extension of the ICAC's investigative powers to make sure that they keep pace with the modern realities of investigations. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (GRANTS) BILL 2023**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (12:51):** As I was saying before question time, the great tragedy is that members opposite wasted the time of numerous sporting organisations because applications for sports grants were submitted but they were never considered. Looking at the number of application forms submitted and considering

the guidelines that were laid down by the Office of Sport, we can see why sporting organisations have no confidence in the process because higher marked applications were not considered when lower marked applications were. The last round of the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund grants went to the electorates of Castle Hill, Mount Druitt, Drummoyne, North Shore, Mulgoa, Camden, Ryde, Miranda, East Hills, Parramatta, Lane Cove, Penrith, Ku-ring-gai, Hawkesbury, Hornsby, Heathcote, Pittwater, Strathfield and Prospect.

Looking at that list, Camden, East Hills, Parramatta, Penrith and Heathcote are all electorates that were lost by members opposite. The whole list of those grants went to targeted electorates. The former Government used public money that should have been used for community sport to shore up their electorates. It did not work because the public are not fools. When they see places like Ku-ring-gai High School on the list, they understand. I have got nothing against Ku-ring-gai High School receiving grants, but its website states the reason it is the right choice for your children is:

Set amongst 10.8 hectares of beautiful bushland adjoining the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park ...

Our expansive grounds feature two full-sized soccer fields, a full-sized hockey field, tennis courts, and basketball courts. In 2020, we unveiled the refurbishment of 15 learning spaces across the school, including music and drama amphitheatres, the construction of our new multipurpose hall, and an additional two performing arts learning spaces.

Compare that with Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School. The former Government built a creative and performing arts high school that has no creative and performing arts space. While Ku-ring-gai High School was receiving sports grants, Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School got nothing. Principals from high schools around Birrong complain to me that they know of families of 18 living in two-bedroom flats. Principals say to me, "How do you teach children living in those circumstances?" When we compare the money that went to those schools with the money that went to other schools and where the sports grants went, constituents in my electorate are horrified. They were rewarded for those decisions at the election because the former Government lost the electorates it targeted. The electorate called bullshit on it. That is exactly what it is. It is a load of bullshit that those places were getting grants.

The Old Barker Rugby Club received \$863,563 for an upgrade to its women's facilities. They did not even have a women's team. But a netball facility that wanted to expand its facilities so it could fit all of its 900 players and install lighting got knocked back. The reason they get knocked back is because Old Barker Rugby Club is attached to an elite private school and it said it was going to expand women's sport even though it has no women members. They got the grant. Apparently the netball facility did not tick the box for expanding women's sport. Even though it is supporting women's sport, it did not get a high enough grade to go through to the second round. It is an absolute disgrace. It would not matter so much if the money had been given to Southern Districts Rugby Club, which is within a Liberal electorate. Even though it has no changeroom facilities for women, it still held women's grand finals and representative games. But even it did not get a look-in. How did this rugby club get the grant for its facilities?

More importantly, how many of the grants went to gymnastics, dance and netball? Those are the three big sports women participate in, and they got absolutely bugged all. When members opposite talk about giving money to women's sport, they give the money to male-dominated sports, which is not where it should be going. That is why there needs to be a transparent process. We need to make sure that every sporting organisation is on a level playing field. More importantly, volunteers take months, sometimes years, preparing applications, spending the club's money to make sure written reports are submitted because they think they are going to get a look-in. It is a disgrace to their volunteerism that this happens. They are people we should be supporting.

I note that during the giving of notices of motions this morning the member for North Shore said, "We want the Government to commit to the \$11 million that was supposed to go to North Sydney Oval because that is the home of the Bears." What about Lidcombe Oval, the home of Western Suburbs? It is also the home of one of only three velodromes in the Sydney Basin, which has to store its bikes in the changerooms. If we are going to talk about which oval should be getting money to upgrade its facilities, we would think it would be the multi-sport one, but Western Suburbs did not get a look-in when it applied for the WestInvest program and the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund. Somehow, the member for North Shore is bleating about North Sydney Oval. I can tell members that because of the rotten system members opposite came up with, Cumberland City Council has no money to put into its sports facilities. I am sure that North Sydney has got plenty of money.

**Debate adjourned.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.



*Members***INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** In accordance with an earlier resolution, the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for Oxley will now proceed. Before I call the member for Oxley, I welcome everyone in the gallery. In particular, I acknowledge the following very important people: the member's wife, Brigitte, and sons, Ashton, Pierson and Lleyton; the former member for Oxley, Melinda Pavey; Andrew Fraser and Joe Lundy from the NSW Nationals; the Mayor of Kempsey Shire Council, Leo Hauville; the member's electorate staff, Holly, Jodie, Ben, Susan and Alice; the member's mother, Kerry, his stepfather, John, and father-in-law, Jonathan; and, of course, all of the member's friends, family and supporters who have joined us here today for this very important occasion. It is my great honour to call the member for Oxley.

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (14:32):** Thank you, Mr Temporary Speaker. According to the 2021 Census, over 80,000 people live in the Oxley electorate on the mid North Coast. It is a wonderfully varied population, with 9.1 per cent identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage. Interestingly, it has the highest rate of personal care workers, in both paid and unpaid work, in the State. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and all of the Birpai, Dunghutti and Gambaynggir nations, who are the custodians of the land on which we walk and where we live. I acknowledge the Elders of the past, the present and those that will emerge. Welcome to everyone here in the Chamber today, to my friends and family in the Speaker's gallery and to those joining us online from the mid North Coast and further afield.

Oxley is a stunning region that stretches along the eastern coast of New South Wales. The region boasts incredible landscapes, from the rugged shorelines and sweeping beaches of the Pacific Ocean to the tranquil rivers, lakes and rainforests that are spread within the hinterland. It is a breathtakingly beautiful region. In and amongst this natural wonderland is the most vibrant array of differing communities. Oxley encompasses four magnificent valleys: the Hastings, the Macleay, the Nambucca and the Bellinger. It is famous for its beauty, its flora, its fauna and its farming. It is home to small plateau towns like Comboyne and Dorrigo, where it drops five degrees as soon as you get to the escarpment. It is where quiet streets wind amongst the hills, and avocado and cattle farmers abound. It is the quiet, laid-back atmosphere that draws you to these solid country people.

It includes coastal villages like Crescent Head, South West Rocks, Nambucca Heads, Urunga and Valla—villages that cater for the tourist, the retiree and the thrillseeker all at once. These communities have people and businesses that continue to work all year round—importantly, serving locals throughout winter to be able to provide for the tourists during the peak of summer. There are upriver communities like Long Flat, Willawarrin, Bowraville and Thora that sit on the banks of creeks and rivers, with rolling hills, significant wooded areas and the sounds of gurgling water. The farmers and inhabitants are loyal, hardworking and trustworthy men and women who go about their lives, just getting it done.

There are the rural town bases of Wauchope, Kempsey, Macksville and Bellingen that are surrounded by beautiful open farmland. They house small businesses that keep the area running smoothly. This area, that provides food, minor manufacturing, tourism and a relaxed way of life, is our home. It is our passion. It is our everything. On top of the people here and the small businesses that house our hardworking people, we also have the home of the Akubra—made in Australia. We are the birthplace of MILO—how many scoops do you do?

The people of Oxley are unpretentious farmers and tradies. They are artists, artisans, creatives and innovators. They are carers, teachers, healthcare professionals, police and emergency service folk. They assist and serve visitors out of the big smoke. They volunteer and they collaborate, spending hours of their own lives helping others. It is high time we recognise and acknowledge the important contribution our country folk make to the fabric of New South Wales. In short, they are a microcosm of the bigger world, just in one region—our region. And all these people I serve with humility and pride.

Today I stand amongst my esteemed colleagues, within this venerated institution, committing to the region and people of Oxley that they will always be at the centre of every decision I make. As I progress through this term, I will call on the current Government to reduce any city-centric policies, to maintain the necessary levels of infrastructure, and to improve and expand upon the current healthcare facilities, as well as increase the numbers of police and healthcare professionals. I recognise that it is difficult to police vast areas and that rural people have to travel for acutely specialised care. I will rally to work with the Government to deliver the resources Oxley needs in these two critical areas. In fact, I have requested meetings with both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism already, because access to health care and feeling safe are significant priorities for our electorate.

To the people of Oxley, who have faced years of drought, the Black Summer bushfires in 2019 and 2020, and the devastating floods of 2021 and 2022—not to mention COVID—I know you are looking for someone who

will speak their mind, keep true to their values and word, and someone who has the strength of character to represent your interests. I pledge to uphold your expectations with my behaviour and through the example I set. That level of behaviour is held already by so many people in our electorate, from the teachers educating our kids to the nurses looking after our families, and the surf lifesaving clubs and emergency services making us feel safe.

One example of that type of person is Richard Swan. "Tiny" is his nickname. I will not be giving any rewards for guessing his dimensions. It is the typical Aussie reverse humour. Suffice to say that Tiny is a larger-than-life guy who has done deployment after deployment with the Rural Fire Service. This was highlighted when he spent 53 days straight fighting the fires in 2019 and 2020. He also did back-to-back missions up to Lismore with us to help clean up after its devastating flood experience. I cannot tell you the total number of deployments he has done, but Tiny epitomises giving to others in the community. He is a shining light for resilience.

Another example of resilience is the way in which our four mayors and general managers have dealt with the repeated disasters our families have endured over the past few seasons. It has been a difficult time, and our society has fought, every step of the way. That was under the leadership of our councils. To have the support from our local community means the world to me, and I will be making it my goal, for as long as I am in this place, to ensure that the Oxley electorate is known for its people, not just its landscape.

My story is one of not quite getting it right early, and making mistakes. I am thankful that my environment allowed me to learn from those mistakes. It is a story of finally accepting the support of a couple of mentors after many before them had tried. It is one of working hard and making the most of the opportunities within our culture and our society. Finally, it is one of work ethic and attitude providing the opportunity, where in other countries I might not have had so many second chances.

There are so many people to thank, and so many moments in my life that have led to this point of being sworn into this place as a member of Parliament. I am unable to thank you all, and I want you to know that I value all who supported me at each crossroads in my life. I ask that you all realise I carry with me that support in many different ways. I can describe but a few here today. The first group of people are the voters of Oxley: those that went out and voted for me as their preference, those that could not support me as first preference but put me in their priority list, and also those that did not support me. Thank you for being a part of one of the most democratic processes in the world.

I thank The Nationals' head office and members in the gallery—those awesome people who decided to preselect me and jumped at an opportunity to get behind me in the campaign, such as down-to-earth people like Jim Kerr, who is sitting in the gallery. Jim put down what he was doing for a few months to get me over the line. He committed fully and is a great mate. Janine Reed, the campaign director, was consistently putting in the hard work behind the scenes. Thank you.

On the campaign trail I nearly sidelined the longest serving, most loyal and service-oriented person I know. You see, I was Brian Irvine's treating clinician for a cardiac condition. I was concerned he would have a heart attack with any increased stress when putting up signs or standing out in the sun. He must have listened to my treatment because he is in the gallery after being the consistent glue that kept a team of people working towards success. Mate, it will take much more than a campaign to stop your heart.

That Nationals family includes all the members and people who got out in the rain and heat to have chats with others and hand out for me on pre-poll and election day. It was a great campaign that brought local issues to the fore. It is something I am very passionate about. I am certain I can learn a lot about campaigning from the people in this Chamber, but I for one was taken aback that more than 250 local Oxley people would want to give up their time to meet with me, to help guide me on each and every one of those particular issues facing their valleys, and then to follow through on hand-out roles despite their busy lives. I thank them.

Tragically, we lost Paul Welsh quite unexpectedly during the campaign. Paul and his wife, Sylvia—who is also part of that Nationals family—were two of the first people to invest in me as a politician. I have chosen to dedicate this moment to them. Sylvia is a vibrant, caring superwoman who connected immediately with me, particularly due to her genuine, curious and, most of all, compassionate nature. My heart goes out to you, Sylvia, and to your extended family.

I sincerely thank my staff and the patients of Keystone Health. As an employer in a small town, I have always thought about making myself available, about listening and about giving time for people to speak. I have always thought that was the best way to connect. When considering politics, I realised that I would have to give my all to the families in Oxley and that I would be unavailable to the staff and patients. I asked Sara Hollis-Watts and Chris "Bear" Gray, "How about running my clinics? How would you feel about managing someone else's business?" I gave them one week's notice. I can tell you that both of those employees and my wider staff have

absolutely stepped up and are coping with great composure. Their attitude and application have allowed me to focus wholly on getting elected and representing the down-to-earth families in Oxley, without conflicting priorities.

Speaking of the families in Oxley, I will characterise their struggles and continue to ensure the local people—yes, you, the people living on the mid North Coast—are provided for on a level playing field by the New South Wales Government. To my family and friends, thank you. I will need the support of all of you. There were many nights during the election when sleep was difficult to fit into the 24 hours. My incredible boys, Ashton, Pierson and Lleyton, put in many extra hours during the campaign and coped with Dad being away more than normal. They got up early, went to functions, handed out and really took it in their stride. Thank you, boys. You are amazing.

The support I received from my extended family was invaluable. I will forever remember and cherish the respect I have for all of you. I cannot name you all, but to Brigitte's mum, Marian, and Marian's husband, David, who time and again help out wherever needed in our lives, I say thank you and tell the following story. When I needed a couple of extra volunteers I thought I had it sorted because they were coming up from Canberra. I thought, "Excellent. I've got two more on the booth". When David got there, he flat-out refused and told me that there was no way he was handing out unless he was wearing a red shirt. He went on to explain that he was a staunch Labor supporter and could not bring himself to hand out for the Nats, not even for me. Despite my despair, David then smiled and volunteered for the longest, most boring and difficult job on the day: looking after me. Despite the way he votes and his conviction to do so, we cherish the support we feel from Marian and David's selfless attitude. Thank you both so much.

The support networks made up of friends and acquaintances were immense. I am sure I will be saying thank you for the next four years. To my wonderful wife, Brigitte, you own half of this speech. I wish the rules were different and you could be right here, holding my hand, revelling in the knowledge that you caused this, as much as anyone. For those that have not heard it, I was asked to consider running by my predecessor, Melinda Pavey—more on her later. To Mel's suggestion that I might consider running, I said, "I'm not sure that I'm the right person." Let me tell you that when I told Brigitte what Mel said, she immediately responded, "No, you should do it. You will fight for what is right. You won't be swayed by temptation. It's what makes you tick." I can tell you, I immediately knew that with that level of support I had to run. I had to make her proud. Brigitte's support is unwavering. I am sure many members in this Parliament have a partner who is unwavering—someone who ensures that the sum output of both of you is way more than what you or I could ever imagine. So, babe, thanks for putting up with me and giving me to the community at your expense. I could not do it without you.

"You've got big shoes to fill"—Melinda Pavey, if I have heard this once, I have heard it 1,000 times. Mel told a story during her valedictory speech of the aunty in Menindee Lakes saying, "Missus, I know why you were shy about taking your shoes off. Look at the size of your feet." Importantly, not only does Mel have large feet, but she also has much larger respect from the wider community, and I will be doing very well if I can fill some of the void she has left. The high level of respect from our community shows just how valuable a spokesperson you have been. We saw investment in the regions occur in the last few terms of the former Government, all under your guidance. I ask the current Government to continue providing strong support for our regions. The level of assistance I have received from Melinda has been amazing. Her anecdotes, her knowledge and her professionalism in this environment are second to none. Melinda, I will strive to continue the immense legacy that you have created in Oxley. Some of you may not know it, but Mel is long-term supporter and volunteer of many organisations across Oxley, especially surf lifesaving. To Melinda, Warren, Jack and Emily, thank you for your contribution of over 20 years to the people of New South Wales.

For those who remember my early days in the Macleay Valley, it is safe to say that I might not have got it all right in my teens. However, I am pleased to say that my parents instilled in me the work ethic to try to improve—to try to excel. And I did do well in one area—sport. By the age of 15, despite having a few difficulties, I had two mentors from football who had more impact on shaping me than they ever knew. I never told them. To Paul Feain and Tony Kellerman, thank you for making the effort to continually work towards guiding me into being a better person. I may not have said it—and you may never have seen it—but, boy, did it make a difference. I ask all of us to keep mentoring and giving adolescents a second chance. That chance may lead to a chance to excel.

Following that time, I joined the military at the age of 20. During my time in the forces I found the final pieces of the puzzle in teaching me the discipline and reliability that I was missing. I took to the regimented way quickly. After all, there was excitement and structure. Imagine a young fellow who gets to fire big guns and lob "grenades" at imaginary targets. It was a lot of fun, and I was sold! The time I spent in the air force and, prior to that, in the army reserve, was instrumental in making me the man I am today. To anyone thinking about joining the military, investigate it—ask questions—as our Australian military provides you with a wide range of

employment options. It is a very noble and respectable career in keeping our country safe. It may even lead to a life of service to community, as it did for me. To this day, I still miss the camaraderie, mateship and structure, and I salute all members of our military who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, have served or are serving today. Lest we forget.

From the time I left the military, my determination and relentless drive to serve saw me attend the University of Newcastle. I pursued a physiotherapy degree that taught me to look critically at the evidence available and to always listen to the other side of a conversation or decision. You cannot have robust, open and fair debate without the pure act of listening to those who have a different opinion. A cool head is required when making decisions that affect our wider community, and I hope that skill in itself has set me up to be a much better representative of our people. I pledge that I will listen to the Government and crossbench, and work with them and my colleagues to better represent our families and the diverse community of Oxley.

The vision for Oxley that I hold is one of respect, of parity and of practicality. I would like to see the city and major towns acknowledging the importance of the regions and all the small villages in between. I would like to envisage a world where all parties acknowledge and respect the contribution of our rural folk, rather than keeping the cupboard down to the bare essentials. I went to the election looking for funding for Valla Industrial Estate, which is a crucial release of land halfway between Sydney and Brisbane that would bring much-needed economic stimulus. I asked for funding for the Wauchope Sporting Precinct, a critical project for an overcrowded town that is lacking in sports facilities like no other I have seen. I sought funding for the Bellingen and Wauchope hospital upgrades that are beyond necessary. Both buildings need upgrades that I will be requesting the Government to fund during this term.

I also requested funding for more child care in Kempsey through a building to be built on the Kempsey District Hospital grounds, which would allow critical skilled mothers and fathers to return to essential work. There was a host of other measures that were brought up after travelling throughout the electorate as far and wide as I could. Some of the service provision measures were more police, more healthcare workers and enticements to recruit and retain our quality healthcare staff, teachers and emergency workers, as well as more funding and capability to improve our roads. Those projects will remain my focus for the next four years, as well as ensuring that we have sufficient housing, both affordable and available, and better planning rules to ensure that zombie development applications are dissolved.

By the way, as the Oxley electorate sits between Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour, it is important to have great ties with our neighbouring areas, and I look forward to working closely with Gurmehsh and Leslie. Of course, it would be remiss if I did not mention Adam, who sits up on the tablelands. I look forward to working closely with him as well. It is also important that I acknowledge the Federal representatives in my region—Pat Conaghan and David Gillespie, two great mentors who have provided some fantastic advice and are amazing local members for their regions.

It has been a pleasure to talk with you today, and I look forward to joining those here in the Chamber for a few drinks and a bite to eat after the speeches. We will all be celebrating together as soon I can make it home to catch up with the people who are watching online. In summary, I am very driven, and I would like to end with a commitment to my colleagues and the electorate of Oxley: I will live up to the responsibility of office and represent you with true, local, grounded and practical views, and a transparency that our constituents expect. Each decision I take will involve my values of fairness, openness, genuine warmth and empathy for those involved, and the decisions will be guided by accountability and transparency.

I invite all constituents to look into my voting decisions and, if you disagree, spend time asking why. These values are the ones that resonate within me. They remain the driver for my need to be reliable, consistent and fiercely accountable to the people of Oxley, because those hardworking people, those reliable people, those happy people—they are Oxley people. It is high time we acknowledge the regions and have uniform mindsets in this place for all of New South Wales.

*Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.*

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** I welcome to the gallery the family and special guests of the member for Myall Lakes. It is my great honour to call the member for Myall Lakes.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (15:02):** I would like to firstly acknowledge the Gadigal people, the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and the First Nations people of the Myall Lakes electorate, the Worimi and Biripi people, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. As I stand here this afternoon, proud and full of nervous energy, I am reminded of a cherished childhood memory. I recall a time when my youthful spirit, combined with an unyielding determination, which now translates to sheer stubbornness, led me to conquer this one particular hill near my family home on my bicycle. With the wind in my

hair and the exhilaration of the downhill ride, my—with the need to be PC in this place, mum, how would we put this?—well-nourished body would pedal fiercely and, even as my chubby ankles would clip the sides of the pedals and blood would be pouring down my feet, nothing could break my unwavering spirit to get to the top of that hill. My mum is nodding. She understands. That spirit is what has led me here today, ready to embark on this journey, humbled and privileged to be elected as the youngest and the first female representative of Myall Lakes on behalf of the National Party—a party that has long been, and will always continue to be, the strongest voice for rural, regional and coastal communities.

Only two others have held this seat before me: John Turner, who gave 23 years of service to the people of Myall Lakes, and the late Stephen Bromhead, who sadly passed away on 16 March. Stephen was an amazing local member. He was a dear friend and mentor, not only to me but to many, and he served his community selflessly for 12 years. His tenacity and unwavering determination to make a difference in the lives of those around him is truly inspiring. It is an honour to follow in his footsteps and I will work tirelessly, just as he did, towards a better future for the Myall Lakes community and greater electorate.

So many people have contributed so much of themselves to help me on this incredible journey. To try to name them all would simply be too impossible a task for the risk of missing someone, so to every single volunteer and supporter that stood for hours on end, day after day, for pre-poll and on polling day, those that put up corflutes, handed out brochures, doorknocked, attended forums in support, packed booth kits and put up booth kits on polling day, and so much more, thank you just does not seem to cover the immense gratitude I feel. I acknowledge and thank the entire Nats family—Joe Lundy, Andrew Fraser, Wendy Machin, Tory, Franny, Nick, Brook, Cosmo and the whole head office crew. There were times when this was not an easy campaign, particularly towards the tail end, and I am so grateful for the way you all wrapped around me to support me when it was truly needed the most. I am so very proud to be a member and representative of the New South Wales National Party.

To all the Ministers, MPs and MLCs who travelled to Myall Lakes throughout my campaign, thank you for your guidance, for your advice and for your support. I would like to give a special shout-out to Mr Scott Barrett. Scott, to me, you are the epitome of a true National Party person. Your commitment to the party and to this election campaign cannot be matched. You travelled all over the countryside in support of your peers, and I thank you for teaching me how to gatecrash a Country Women's Association [CWA] meeting and how to distinguish different types of cows simply by gazing at their rear ends. He does it well!

To my family, my daughters Bianca and Lucy and my stepdaughter Asher, who are here today, thank you for coming on this crazy roller-coaster ride with me. I am so incredibly proud to be your mum. To my husband, Ben, from the first day I came home to tell you "the plan", you have been the most amazing support. My rock of Gibraltar, you continue to believe in me with every single step I take. Thank you for your dedication to corflute placement, giving up your weekends for market stalls, securing the best spot to hand out at pre-poll and stubbornly never moving from that, for dancing in the rain, listening to all of my speeches, and for keeping the lights on while I quit my day job to be a candidate. This just would not work without you. Thank you. To those that cannot be here today—my sister, Kylie, and brother-in-law, John; my nephew and niece Frankie and Deanna; James and Sarah and family—thank you all for your love and support. To my work family, Sasha, Jenny, Nikki and Gary, thank you.

I would like now to acknowledge my amazing parents, my mum, Julie, who is wiping her tears away, I can see—hold it together, mum—and who has travelled a long way to be here today, and my dad, Mick, who I know is watching from home because, unfortunately, he is not well enough to be here today. Thank you for the lifetime of unconditional support. You have taught me resilience, to be independent, and that hard work and respect for others will take you far in life. You are both my greatest inspiration. Like others that have delivered their inaugural speeches before me, I too have a unique story to tell. Born in Tenterfield, the middle child of a brickie and a nurse, my mum and dad packed us up when I was still a baby and moved to Port Macquarie to give us a coastal life.

I watched my parents work incredibly hard to make sure that we did not want for anything. Weekends were for sport, household chores and a sneaky hour or two watching *Rage* on the TV in the morning with my sister. I absolutely loved school, with the exception of maths homework—which we won't talk about, will we, mum? No. I was never far away from a stage, a microphone or a basketball court. At 13 I got my first gig at a local fish and chip shop called Macquarie Seafoods. My sister, Kylie, had recently started working there. I was watching her wardrobe expand and her CD collection grow, and I decided one Friday night to accompany my mum on the trip into town to pick her up from work. It was there that I had my first job interview, decked out in my finest pyjamas.

The interview went a little something like this. Someone said, "I hear you're looking for a job." I said, "Yeah." They said, "Do you have white sneakers?" I said, "Yep." They said, "Do you have white shorts?" I said, "Mum, do I?" Mum said yes. I said, "Yep", and they said, "Fantastic! Learn this menu. You can start tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock." I went home that night and I think I pulled an all-nighter because I learnt that entire menu,

front and back, and fronted up full of enthusiasm and ready to start adding to my own wardrobe and music collection. I absolutely loved it.

I continued to work for John right up until I finished my HSC. I might add that I am also very blessed to have John as my brother-in-law. I thank him not only for the many ways he has supported me throughout my life but for teaching me to always give 110 per cent in your work, regardless of what that job may be. When I was 19, John and Kylie called to let me know they had found a location for a new shop and asked if I would like to move to help them set it up. So I packed up my life and hit the road to begin a new chapter. Luckily, I did not have to travel too far; that road lead me to the beautiful Myall Lakes.

My home for well over 20 years, the Myall Lakes boasts the best of all worlds and is without a doubt the most beautiful electorate in all of New South Wales. We are blessed with pristine beaches, such as One Mile and Lizzy, the crystal clear Wallis Lake and the mighty Manning River. Dolphins frolic daily in all our waterways, teasing drivers making their daily commute over the bridge. In fact, our waterways are so fantastic that a 13-metre southern right whale came for an extended holiday in Wallis Lake in June 2021. She almost brought the entire town to a standstill for a glimpse of her majestic beauty.

But the Myall Lakes is not just about boating and beaches. Rural hinterlands that stretch as far as the eye can see can be found in Wingham, Upper Lansdowne, Mount George, Moorall Creek and Bulahdelah, just to name a few places. Tourism is extremely important to the electorate, but so too are our agriculture and primary industries. Not only do we have some of the best meat exporters and dairy farmers there, we also have one of the biggest Sydney rock oyster nurseries in the State. So, my friends, as you can see—and I hear no objections in the House—the Myall Lakes really does have it all.

Like so many places along our coastline, the Myall Lakes has had its fair share of disaster. The devastation of the Black Summer fires in 2019 and 2020 and the floods that saw homes float down the Manning River in 2021 have certainly tested the strength and the fortitude of our communities. But we are a strong bunch and it is through our determined spirit that we see families and businesses finally starting to rebuild and regroup. On the back of Volunteer Week, I stop to acknowledge and thank our volunteers and emergency service workers who worked tirelessly, day after day, to help all of those affected by the fires and floods that tore through our communities. You are the true heroes of our electorate.

As we look towards the majestic waters of the Great Lakes and the Farquhar Inlet, we see we must continue to confront the challenges that sedimentation and sand shoaling poses to our tourism and other industries. The present state of the rivers is impacting greatly on all users and many businesses, in particular the iconic Amaroo Cruises, which runs dolphin and whale watching cruises. It is a longstanding family business, first established in 1978. Skipper Matt has been unable to conduct his famous whale watching cruises as *The Amaroo* cannot safely pass under the Forster-Tuncurry bridge due to the build-up of sand. With another whale watching season rapidly approaching, it is crucial that the Wallis Lake be prioritised for dredging. I call on our new Government to take positive action to rectify the situation.

Just as the Wallis Lake faces its challenges, so too does the mighty Manning River, with the fight continuing to progress the permeant opening of the river. Creating reliable entrances to the Manning has the potential for great economic growth and positive social change in our region. It was evident that the community is in full support when close to 14,000 signatures were gathered through a petition that was tabled and debated in this place last year. Given the positive outcome of the debate and the allocation of funding given by the previous Coalition Government, I was somewhat shocked to learn that the new Government has pulled said funding and shelved the project. Opening the channel will not only provide environmental and economic benefits but also assist with flood mitigation. We have all seen firsthand the damage that floods can do in the area. It is critical that we install the infrastructure needed to protect our communities now and well into the future. I take this opportunity to thank the Manning River Action Group for its continued advocacy for this project. It is not over yet.

In the realm of public health, I am unwavering in my determination to see the completion of the Forster public hospital and the stage two and stage three redevelopment of Manning Base Hospital. Cardiac issues are the number one cause of death in the Myall Lakes electorate and, with the oldest demographic in New South Wales, we need to continue to invest in the healthcare needs of our growing communities. But my drive for better health care extends beyond the walls of the Manning and the Great Lakes. Am I keeping you up, Gurmehsh? I'm joking!

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** The member for Coffs Harbour will behave himself.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON:** In Bulahdelah our vibrant constituency desperately needs a multipurpose service facility. Up until 2012 Bulahdelah had a small hospital, which included a two-bed emergency department and 11 acute care beds. The acute care beds were also used for respite and palliative care as the need arose. The hospital closed due to the local doctor becoming ill and a replacement doctor not being able to be found. At

present, residents of Bulahdelah have to travel a minimum of 74.8 kilometres for medical assistance, often for relatively simple procedures, such as sutures.

In May last year Anglicare closed the doors of the only aged-care facility, Cedar Wharf Lodge. The 32 residents were rehomed many kilometres from family and friends. With quite a few partners either being unable to drive or on restricted licences, visiting loved ones is problematic. Tragically, many residents died in the first few weeks of being moved. This leaves the Bulahdelah community with very little by way of health care and only home care for the elderly. One-third of the population is aged over 65. Many of the elderly residents are struggling on at home as the thought of leaving the area and their spouses and family is too much. I am committed to advocating for this cause for the welfare of the Bulahdelah community at large and because every person in New South Wales has the right to the best health care, regardless of their postcode or political preference.

Our roads are the arteries of our local economy and region. Road improvement and safety are not mere aspirations but absolute necessities, and I applaud the previous Coalition Government for its support and investment in the improvement of our road networks as it was faced with some of the toughest natural disasters across our great State, including in the Myall Lakes. There is still a lot of recovery to be done, and I call on the new Government to retain vital funding programs such as the Fixing Local Roads Program implemented by the Coalition Government.

Furthermore, our community deserves a second bridge in Forster. Stephen Bromhead tirelessly advocated for this cause, presenting 10,000-plus signatures to this very Chamber. His relentless efforts reflect the aspirations and demands of our community for not only the duplication of the bridge but also the upgrade of the Failford Road and The Lakes Way intersection and for the reclassification of The Lakes Way. This reclassification is not just a mere label. It represents the challenges and frustrations endured by our community on a daily basis. The burden of maintaining and improving The Lakes Way falls heavily on the MidCoast Council, which already shoulders the responsibility of overseeing an extensive network of 3½ thousand kilometres of roads. It is time to reinvigorate the efforts of this reclassification to ensure that our constituents' needs are met and their road safety is guaranteed.

It may appear from my earlier comments that I come to this place with the sole experience of a fast-food cook. However, I have in my short 44 years managed a small business and worked as a property manager, a legal secretary and an electorate officer. I am also a mum to five beautiful daughters. I bring with me a raft of lived experiences—some of which have changed the very fabric of who I am—including domestic violence and losing my younger brother to suicide in 2015. In recent years there has been growing recognition of the importance of mental health. As we heard last night from the member for Davidson in his wonderful inaugural speech, there needs to be an increased focus on destigmatising mental health issues. I will forever be an advocate for having those conversations and I thank my parents for allowing me to share our story so that others may not feel the void we feel with Michael's absence.

Some might say these next four years will be a challenge. To that I say, "I am here for it." Premier Minns, I say to you today graciously and with all due respect: Please do not forget about the people of regional New South Wales. I implore you, Premier Minns, to keep the needs of regional New South Wales at the forefront of your agenda. Do not forget about our regional seniors and our regional apprentice and university student travel cards for those who do not have access to public transport services. Do not forget about the active and creative kids vouchers and back-to-school initiatives that have eased the burden on our local families facing a very real cost-of-living crisis.

While our cities may be the bustling hubs of economic activity and stadiums soon to be full of avid Bon Jovi fans just "livin' on a prayer", it is the regional areas where the heartbeat of our State truly resides. It is a tremendous honour to represent the good people of Myall Lakes in the New South Wales State Parliament and a responsibility that I do not take lightly. Over the next four years and beyond, I will wholeheartedly dedicate myself to demonstrating to my constituents that their trust in me is not misplaced. I will serve my community with the passion and drive they deserve, and I will always fight to ensure they receive their fair share. I thank the Chamber for the courtesy and attention afforded to me today.

*Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.*

*Business of the House*

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: PUBLIC INTEREST DEBATE**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (15:27):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the public interest debate to occur at 4.00 p.m. this day.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (15:27):** The Opposition received notification of the order of business this afternoon, which indicated that the public interest debate would occur at the usual time of five o'clock. It does become difficult to organise our speakers if the routine of business is at short notice—literally within an hour of that notification—changed in such a way. I am not making a personal attack on the Leader of the House, but I am saying that we would like an orderly progress of business and as much notification as possible if there are going to be changes to the usual routine. After all, the standing and sessional orders were only passed a matter of weeks ago and we are already departing from the usual routine of business.

We propose that the public interest debate occur immediately after lunch. I am hoping that this suspension of standing orders by the Government may be a small step to agreeing with us that it would be good to have the public interest debate at 2.30 p.m. It would enable a much more orderly progress of the daily routine of business. I encourage the Leader of the House to take that on board. It may make for better organisation of business than changing the routine of business through a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders. Having made those observations, the Opposition is able to proceed at four o'clock, so we will not oppose the motion on this occasion. But I ask the Leader of the House to give us as much notice as possible of any changes to the routine of business. We obviously do not want this to develop into a habit where we are running around dealing with an item of business after being notified that it would occur at five o'clock under the usual routine of business, only to be told an hour later that it would occur at four o'clock. It may make for a better organisation of business, rather than changing the routine of business through suspension of standing orders in this manner.

Having made those observations, Opposition members can proceed at four o'clock, so we will not oppose the motion on this occasion. But I ask the Leader of the House to give us as much notice as possible of any changes to the routine of business of that kind, because we do not want it to develop into a habit. We were told that the debate would be at five o'clock and only notified about an hour ago that it would be an hour earlier than the usual routine of business.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (15:30):** In reply: As the Manager of Opposition Business well knows, the routine of business changes from time to time. For example, the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023 that was on the agenda for today was removed for further consideration at the request of The Nationals. Yesterday there was a request from the Government side to reverse the order of Government bills and they were changed, so the routine of business changes regularly. I was conscious that this proposed change would not prejudice the Opposition at all because Opposition members are moving the motion and gave notice quite some time ago. I anticipated that they would be ready. As soon as a decision was made to bring the public interest debate forward, or within five minutes or so, my office telephoned the office of the Manager of Opposition Business to indicate that we proposed to do so.

I acknowledge that the Manager of Opposition Business observed that the Opposition wanted public interest debates to be brought forward to a much earlier time. He will recall with great precision the request made by the former Opposition for that to occur, which was declined by the former Government for reasons that were obvious to the Opposition. When that request was made of this Government by the Manager of Opposition Business, I adopted his reasoning in deciding to retain it at five o'clock. In this instance a decision was made to bring the debate forward, consistent with what both this Opposition and the previous Opposition sought to do. It was not intended to inconvenience Opposition members, because I chose a debate that I anticipated they would have been ready for this morning.

The Government has the ability to determine the order of business of the House, and it does so to get to its business as efficiently as possible. Informal discussions often take place regarding bills that are before the House where members, including those on the Opposition side, seek consideration for certain provisions in the bill. As the Manager of Opposition Business would know from being in my position, those things are occurring constantly throughout the day. That also involves a change in the order of business, although that is not the cause of this change. I assure the Manager of Opposition Business that the debate is not being brought forward in an effort to prejudice Opposition members or catch them unawares, because the motion to be debated is theirs.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Bills*

### **GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (GRANTS) BILL 2023**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**



**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (15:34):** I am pleased to support the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 because it makes two important amendments to the legislation to enshrine transparency and equity in our government grants processes. Firstly, it amends the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 to require that decision-makers, in approving or declining a grant, must have regard to the key principles for administering grants set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*. It requires that the Minister must not approve a grant unless satisfied that the expenditure would be an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of the money, and that it would achieve value for money. Secondly, the bill updates the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 [GIPA Act] and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 [GIPA regulation] to make certain grants information open access information, which must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of that information.

That is vital as the New South Wales Government administers some \$4 billion in grant funding each year, and the past 12 years have seen some shocking examples of what could only be described as maladministration and pork-barrelling of grants processes. As a Parliament, we need to come to terms with that. I acknowledge that the former Government issued the *Grants Administration Guide* in September 2022 in a Premier's memorandum, but those opposite paid very poor attention in administering grants in the past. In the shocking situation of the bushfires, some communities were not given funding because of how they had voted. We have just come out of an election where people have resoundingly declined to go down that path anymore and have rejected that business model. The \$4 billion in grant funding that is allocated in New South Wales comes from the fees, charges and taxes paid by every taxpayer in this State. We need to make sure that we are getting value for money and that the money is allocated in a fair and equitable way.

Over the past 12 years those opposite just threw money around, often at their own electorates or those on the margins and not at others, and made a joke of good governance in this State. My electorate of Maitland was lucky because, before the redistribution, the entire Maitland local government area was in the State electorate. When the former Government allowed Parliamentary Secretaries or other members of Government to make decisions about a grant in my electorate, they could only spend it there by giving it to the Maitland local government. I know in other local government areas that straddle electorate boundaries money was selectively put in The Nationals' electorates rather than being allocated for the good of the community. That is really important to my community.

Coming into the 2023 election, I was very much motivated that we needed either a change of government or a change of the member for Upper Hunter. With a section of my electorate going to Upper Hunter, I did not want the vast majority of people in Maitland to be denied funding because it would be allocated along electoral lines by a member of the previous Government. Allegations of lack of process and maladministration of grants have been canvassed again and again in the media and the ICAC, and that is just not good enough. It was interesting today to hear the inaugural speeches of the member for Oxley and the member for Myall Lakes. They seem like very upright and well-intentioned people, and I just wonder how in 12 years we got to such a low point in The Nationals as to allow someone to continually push billions of dollars of taxpayer dollars into projects simply based on who those electorates voted for, rather than on their need.

That is why it is important that, while we have the *Grants Administration Guide*, which will still be in play, we codify the seven key principles of grants administration, as set out in the guide, directly into law. That is why Labor's election campaign commitment to greater transparency in grants administration is so important in order to ensure more transparency for the public. Labor wants to see the seven principles applied to grants. It is amazing that it took those opposite 12 years to get to them. The principles are: robust planning and design, collaboration and partnership, proportionality, an outcomes orientation, achieving value with relevant money, governance and accountability, and probity and transparency. As a new Minister, I was shocked and appalled when I spoke to my department about some of the grant processes, even within my own portfolio, that were carried out before my time, and the election commitments that had been made on a thought bubble or on a whim. It is shocking. We should not accept this as good governance.

The second part of the bill is also important. The amendments to the GIPA Act and the GIPA regulation will ensure accountability in the process. As a Minister responsible for the administration of a large proportion of grant funds across the State, I make the commitment that, through all the projects of government, Labor will always look at the evidence base. The Government will always look to meet the principles of good grants administration so that robust planning and design, collaboration and partnership, proportionality, an outcomes orientation, achieving value with relevant money, governance and accountability, and probity and transparency will inform everything that we do. The people of New South Wales should expect nothing less.

I make that commitment to the people of New South Wales as part of my contribution to the debate on this bill. I also very strongly commend the bill to the House. As I have said, I was in a strange position as a member

of the previous Parliament. The electorate of Maitland was always the example that proved what had gone wrong in the rest of the State. Up until the past election, the previous Government could not pork-barrel my community. If there was money for all councils, it had to go solely into my electorate. It is a disgrace that the Coalition did not work that way in so many other electorates and instead pork-barrelled in them. The bill goes some way towards fixing that issue, and will prevent future governments from doing the same thing. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (15:42):** I make a short contribution to the debate in support of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. I acknowledge the Minister for Transport and member for Summer Hill, who spoke first on the bill, and the contributions to the debate made by my colleagues the member for Auburn, the member for Maitland, the member for Shellharbour and the member for Gosford. I also acknowledge the contribution of the member for Oatley, which was much better than his puerile slur during question time.

I acknowledge that the Opposition does not oppose the bill. The question is why members opposite did not take the opportunity offered to them during their 12 years in government to enact such a fair, transparent and integrally honest piece of legislation. As the Minister indicated, the bill addresses the need to make the grants system much fairer. There will always be a need for a government grants system. There are great benefits for the people of New South Wales with an honest, fair and robust system of grant distribution. The responsibility of this legislative body is to scrutinise the bill and ensure that the legislation eliminates the faults of the previous Government in the allocation of public moneys.

The bill will ensure that integrity and transparency are legally enforceable. It amends the Government Sector Finance Act to provide further duties in relation to approving or declining grants in order that the grant is an efficient, economical and ethical use of money and achieves value for money. It requires the grant decision-maker to have regard for the clear principles of administering grants as set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*. As we have just heard, the principles are: robust planning and design, collaboration and partnership, proportionality, an outcomes orientation, achieving value with relevant money, governance and accountability, and probity and transparency. It also provides that open access information may be required to be made publicly available on a website maintained by the agency.

Where did the former Government go so wrong? As has been mentioned by other members, the Auditor-General found that the former New South Wales Government lacked integrity, transparency and consistency in the administration of the bushfire recovery grants in the wake of the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfire season. The disaster impacted the Bega electorate more severely and more greatly than many other electorates. Across New South Wales, 5.5 million hectares were burnt, 2,500 homes were destroyed, 600,000 hectares of pasture were destroyed and, tragically, 26 lives were lost. People are still suffering in the aftermath of that catastrophe some three years later.

In the shadow of this terrible event, funding was manipulated to pork-barrel local communities. I was not yet elected at that time, and the Bega electorate was still in the hands of the Liberal-Nationals Government. Monaro, the neighbouring electorate to the west, was held by the National Party Prince of Pork-Barrelling. As a consequence, the Bega Valley and Eurobodalla did quite nicely out of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery grants. The Bega Valley Shire Council received nearly \$40 million of funding for 34 projects. The Eurobodalla Shire had 12 projects funded to over \$28 million, including a fast-tracked project.

Let us compare the grants across five local government areas [LGAs]. The South Coast, which was not at that time held by my Labor colleague, had an economic impact of \$345 million, which was equivalent to 13.7 per cent of the economic impact across the State. It received four grants to a total of nearly \$12 million, which was 6.7 per cent of the total grants funding. The Bega Valley Shire LGA had an economic impact of \$218 million, which was 8.7 per cent of the economic impact across the State. It received 10 grants to a total of just over \$8 million, which was 4.6 per cent of the total grants funding. Wagga Wagga and Snowy Valleys had \$188.7 million of economic impact, 7.5 per cent of the economic impact of the State, and received 13 grants to a total of over \$45 million or 25.4 per cent of the grants funding.

Clarence Valley had 7 per cent of the economic impact of the State and received three grants to a total of over \$15 million, which was 8.6 per cent of the total grants funding. However, Swansea, The Entrance, Gosford, Wyong, Lake Macquarie and the Central Coast received nothing. In fact, 26 out of the 27 projects that achieved fast-track funding were in Coalition-held electorates. Three highly impacted LGAs in Labor-held electorates—Blue Mountains, Central Coast and Tenterfield, in the Lismore electorate—were excluded.

This was not just an issue of disaster funding. Three-quarters of Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund grants went to Coalition electorates. Some 92 per cent of Smart Energy Schools Pilot Project funds went to Coalition-held electorates, and 96 per cent of the \$252 million Stronger Communities Fund went to councils in Coalition-held or marginal electorates. When I entered Parliament last year following the 2022 by-election, a good man and a good

mentor, former member of the Legislative Council Mick Veitch, told me, "When you read a bill, read each paragraph and apply it to your electorate." In this case, I already knew what my electorate wanted.

Before each election, whether it be local, State or Federal, the little village of Tuross Head has a "meet your member" session in the Kyla Park Hall. It is a real grassroots democratic process. In 2022, voters in my electorate already knew the smell of a pork barrel; they could just about taste the crackling. In my electorate, the katabatic wind that descends from the Great Dividing Range and neighbouring Monaro was contaminated by the Prince of Pork-Barrelling's twin brother, the former member for Bega. Voters had had enough. They preferred to receive no money rather than dirty money—they wanted integrity, transparency and good governance. That is why we have a New South Wales Labor government in 2023, and that is why I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (15:49):** I contribute to the debate in support of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. The Minns Labor Government is coming into government committed to governing with integrity, transparency and honesty. It is drawing a clear line under the Government of the past, which doled out grants in an unforgivably unfair way. It was a government whose second-highest ranking officer revelled unashamedly in his title of "Pork Barilaro". But I do not want anyone to think that pork-barrelling was limited to one particular person. We know that is not the case. We also know that a lot of Opposition members were very happily the beneficiaries of the former Government's pork-barrelling time and time again.

Other members have spoken in this debate about some of the grants and the egregious processes that the former Government followed, and the manner in which it failed to apply any sense of equity, fairness or justice to communities across New South Wales. One of those grants was the Stronger Communities Fund, where the Auditor-General found in 2022 that 96 per cent of the \$252 million fund was allocated to Liberal-Nationals electorates. Thirty-six per cent of that particular fund went to one council, the Hornsby Shire Council, in the area that the former Treasurer of this State represents. He is now the shadow Minister for Health. The Auditor-General found that the grant was administered with no proper assessment. It was a grant designed to support communities that had been affected by the forced council amalgamations that the former Government imposed in a harsh way. It was a double whammy. The former Government forced communities into merged council areas and then created a fund that was pork-barrelled to Coalition electorates. It was an extraordinary finding, and one that the former Government did not respond to.

The Auditor-General said that it looked like the Stronger Communities Fund was signed off by former Premier Gladys Berejiklian and the former Deputy Premier John Barilaro, and that their process was to get the cash out the door in the most politically advantageous way. That is not how any good government should operate, which is why this bill is before us today. The most egregious example of what we are stopping today was highlighted by the Auditor-General in another review of grants, and many members have spoken about it today. The member for Bega spoke very personally about the impacts on his electorate, as did the member for Gosford. There is no doubt the member for Blue Mountains has as well, because the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery program was the most egregious example of what the former Government did.

The Auditor-General found that the administration of the grant lacked integrity, transparency and consistency. The overwhelming majority of the bushfire grant was given to electorates held by the former Government, meaning the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast and Tenterfield in the Lismore electorate—areas that were burnt black by the Black Summer bushfires—missed out on the first urgent round of grants. They should have been the clear beneficiaries. We have heard from only one Opposition member during this debate today, and I am not surprised. Members of the Opposition should be embarrassed because they failed to act in any proper way whilst they were in government, and then they failed to act in response to the parliamentary inquiry in 2020, the Auditor-General's report in 2022, the ICAC's report in 2022 and the Auditor-General's report in 2023, all of which highlighted the fact that pork-barrelling was unfair to the people of this State.

All of the communities that we represent here deserve to have faith that taxpayer funds are being spent where they are needed, not based on how people voted. The pork-barrelling of the former Government was not limited to just grants; it went further. It went to public housing, it went to public schools and it went to public education. The former Government pork-barrelled public funds in a way that meant even essential services in communities like mine in Port Stephens missed out not only on grants funds—because they were given to Coalition electorates—but on essential services. We all missed out. The families in our communities missed out on essential services in housing, health and education. The way that the former Government operated was shameful.

With this bill, the Minns Labor Government is delivering on its commitment to strengthen the regulation of grants in New South Wales. This Government is drawing a clear line from the former Government's pork-barrelling. With this bill, taxpayers can have confidence that grants will be delivered efficiently, effectively, economically, ethically and in a way that achieves value for money. That is what this bill embeds in the law. With

this bill, the Government is sending a clear message to the people of New South Wales that it will govern for all. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:56):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. Grants are a significant way in which the New South Wales Government can offer financial support to the State's communities, organisations and individuals. This support is sizeable, at about \$4 billion per annum. I commend the Special Minister of State for his work towards bringing this bill to the Parliament in the other place and delivering upon a crucial election commitment of the New South Wales Government. This bill is before us today because of the disgraceful way the former Government handled grants in a discriminatory manner. Members who spoke before me highlighted where that discrimination has occurred, with high percentages of grants going to Coalition-held electorates.

As the member for Port Stephens indicated, it goes beyond just grants. The former Government was good at one thing: discriminating against non-government electorates. That is what it was good at, whether it was grants, schools, infrastructure or even COVID lockdowns. I will never forget former Premier Gladys Berejiklian locking down electorates in Western Sydney. In the electorate of Penrith, which was divided between Labor and the Liberals, only one half was locked down, believe it or not. Only the Labor-held part of Penrith was locked down, and not the Liberals-held part. The former Government was discriminatory in every aspect, which is the reason that Labor has made the election commitment to reverse that and bring integrity and transparency to the way that grants are managed by the Government.

Given the extent of this important support and the magnitude of the funds in question, it is essential that they are spent judiciously to ensure that the people of New South Wales derive the greatest benefit. The objective of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 is to augment the existing regulations concerning government grants. It serves to bring about greater transparency and integrity, while ensuring that New South Wales grants are utilised in an effective, efficient and ethical manner.

**The SPEAKER:** It being 4.00 p.m., and in accordance with the earlier resolution, debate is interrupted for the public interest debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

*Public Interest Debate*

**MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS, MINISTER FOR LANDS AND PROPERTY, MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURALISM, AND MINISTER FOR SPORT**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:00):** I move:

That this House notes the incompetence, mismanagement and unprofessionalism of the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Sport.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** What a shameful motion.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It is with a heavy heart that I move this public interest debate motion. I hope that Government members will give me the courtesy of allowing me to speak without interruption. It is not my intention to single out an individual through this debate. Rather, I seek to highlight the fact that the newly-elected Minns Labor Government is not up to scratch when it comes to demonstrating true competence in portfolios. It is as though Government members are on training wheels and nothing I have seen has convinced me otherwise. This has been demonstrated time after time when Ministers—and I use the word in plural—have failed to adequately answer relevant questions about policies or the Government's intentions to fund or axe successful programs initiated by the previous New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government that have been applauded and embraced by families across New South Wales, in particular the Active Kids and Creative Kids voucher programs. Those vouchers have proven to be a cost-of-living relief measure for families all over New South Wales.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** So why did you cut them?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** You are in the Government. You make the rules on what you want to include and exclude.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** You cut them. You defunded them.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Mr Speaker, I would appreciate being able to deliver my speech without the rude interjections from across the table. I recall talking to a grandmother from a disadvantaged family in Hawkesbury when the Active Kids vouchers were first launched. We were standing on the local netball courts when she said, "My granddaughter has never, ever played community sports before. There was no money for registration, no money for a uniform and no money for shoes. She could never participate as a regular girl in a team sport." The program was a game changer for that family. For the first time her granddaughter would fit in as a regular team player. She would learn about teamwork and camaraderie, and be considered a regular team

contributor without being judged. That conversation has stayed with me for many years and it gives me the impetus, drive and energy to make sure that we commit to the Active Kids vouchers going forward.

Like that Hawkesbury grandmother, other families across western Sydney and throughout the State have applauded the program, and they want it to continue. Labor must come clean with New South Wales families and tell kids and their parents why it is considering cancelling those vouchers, which would increase cost-of-living pressures on them at the worst possible time. At the start of this year more than 4.85 million vouchers had been redeemed, saving families \$481 million. The Liberal Party and The Nationals want the program to continue for New South Wales families because it helps take the pressure off family budgets and our kids to get active. Why would a Minns Labor Government not support this program? Labor is in government. It creates the budget. It can deliver on this program and continue to offer financial relief and good health benefits for families across this State. Labor controls the purse strings.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** You cut the budget.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** And you have a budget to prepare and to deliver in September. On 11 May 2023 I asked the Minister for Sport:

Will the Minister assure the people of Hawkesbury and Western Sydney that the Government will not cancel previously announced WestInvest community sporting grants such as the \$30.3 million grant towards the upgrade of Richmond pool?

After some soul-searching, the Minister's response was, "I will take that question on notice". I am still waiting for a response. That was on 11 May, and as the days draw on the silence gives me no confidence at all. In its last term of government, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition also announced \$5 billion worth of funding through the WestInvest grants program. That funding was directed to 15 Western Sydney councils to provide major community assets. I make particular mention of the WestInvest funds that the Hawkesbury received—almost \$70 million for four projects, including \$30.3 million for the Richmond Swimming Centre upgrade, \$6.7 million for the Oasis Aquatic Centre, \$29 million for upgrades to the North Richmond Community Precinct and \$9.8 million for Tamplin Field. I could go on, but let us look at other electorates. What about other WestInvest areas? Some \$52.4 million was dedicated to Burwood Council and \$5.2 million to Wollondilly Shire Council.

Funding was announced for other great projects, including \$53.4 million for Liverpool City Council to deliver the Carnes Hill aquatic and leisure centre, \$21.3 million for Camden Council, \$19.1 million for Penrith City Council to upgrade a park, and \$16.7 million for Campbelltown City Council. Those are now Labor electorates and I would have thought that Premier Minns would not want to puncture the opportunity to nurture them. My fear is that the Minns Labor Government will dismantle the WestInvest program as it scours the landscape to rob the community of those much-anticipated programs.

Do I have confidence that the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport will acquit his portfolio in an incredible way? His performance to date has not led me to believe that. He wears many hats and has many portfolios. I want to have confidence in his ability to juggle all of his responsibilities and to deliver what New South Wales has experienced in the past—strong leadership and a commitment to deliver to the people of New South Wales, as the previous Liberal-Nationals Government did.

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (16:07):** I have heard some bad public interest debate topics before, but this one is really next level. When I first became a member of Parliament, I made a commitment to myself that I would always play the ball and not the person. This public interest debate is so personal. Why does the member for Hawkesbury even refer to the Minister by his portfolios? Why call him the Minister for Small Business or the Minister for Multiculturalism? Why not just say that this public interest debate is about Stephen Kamper? Why not make that the topic, Stephen Kamper? Just put his photo in the motion. There is too much text in the Parliament anyway and not enough use of visual aids. Just insert his photo instead. What is the public interest debate? Just stick his photo on the motion.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Can we use the older one?

**Mr JASON LI:** Yes, use the one when he was younger and looked better. This public interest debate is so directly personal that I think the topic is out of order. I will not get personal, but I do want to talk about something that was deeply personal to me. We heard something in question time that I found deeply offensive. I am not going to get personal, except to say that when my family came to Australia we worked in catering. Some 70 per cent of residents in my electorate of Strathfield are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Many of them are in catering, many of them are in cleaning, many of them drive taxis—and that is okay. They work hard to make a living because they shared with their families the dream of Australia.

Now a few of us, not many, are MPs in this place. A few of us, not many, are judges in courts. A few of us, not many, are CEOs or on the boards of our biggest listed companies. But it emphasises to me whenever there

is racism—it may not be in your face; sometimes it is in the nature of a casual joke—that we cannot let these things slip. We must call it out every time it happens, particularly in this place. I do not want to get personal, but that comment was deeply personal to me because it says to me, people who look like me, people who work hard and people who work in catering in this place, "You don't belong." That is not acceptable in this place. Let us return to the substance of this debate.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** There is no substance.

**Mr JASON LI:** Yes, there is no substance to this debate. I withdraw that comment. Let me go straight to rebuttal about the Active Kids program. If it was so great, if members opposite beseech us to continue it, why is it not in the budget? Why is it not in the forward estimates? They are the facts. We cannot look inside their minds or the mind of the former Treasurer. I do not think we would want to. Who knows what dark, dystopian landscapes and worlds we would find in there. We can only infer what was really going on. The first inference is that it just did not happen, that they forgot about it. It was meant to go in there but it disappeared—the PowerPoint slide fell out of the PowerPoint presentation.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Someone did not press "send" on the email.

**Mr JASON LI:** It was a version control problem. Version 3.3 came in and the former Treasurer just clicked, "Accept all." But the problem was it was actually in version 3.4. It is a version control problem. Who knows. Let us call this one the incompetence inference. Maybe that happened. There is another inference, though, that maybe they just did not—*[Time expired.]*

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (16:12):** I start by acknowledging the words of the member for Strathfield. Like him, I am focusing on playing the ball and not the person. I acknowledge his comments in that regard. As the member for Hawkesbury said, we do not want to single out one Minister. My focus is more that this is the actions of a Minister. Perhaps what we should be focusing on is the worrying trend over the first few weeks of Parliament. In that sense I have spoken candidly. Following the election, I have said that I wish the new Government well because if the Government goes well New South Wales goes well. But in the first few weeks we have had before the House such bills as the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023, which members on both sides of the House would consider is important because we recognise the importance of getting the balance right and protecting rights for tenants. But it was punted off to a committee because as the Government seeks to end secret rent bidding, the crossbench drew to its attention that the legislation would only be entrenching rent bidding. Another bill before the House is the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023.

**Mr Matt Cross:** What happened to it?

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** What happened? The Premier gave his second reading speech. He said the bottom line is that Government members believe in safe, reliable, publicly owned water as a constitutional right, except that constitutional right ignored two-thirds of New South Wales. It ignored that Warragamba Dam is under a State-owned corporation that will not be constitutionally protected. Forty-two water storages and 89 local water utilities across New South Wales are not protected. The concern is that the debate today is just a reflection because though we wish the Government well, worrying concerns and trends are starting to emerge. The conversation and concern around where this Government is going has started. We understand that the training wheels are on, but the early start is not as hopeful as we would like.

The catalyst for this debate, as raised by the member for Hawkesbury, comes down to the Active Kids program. When families are doing it tough, this program is helping support them. More than 4.85 million vouchers have been redeemed, saving families \$481 million. The member for Hawkesbury shared personal anecdotes—we each have them—of families in our communities being assisted through this grassroots support program. We want to see this program continue for families. In rebuttal to the member for Strathfield, I say that the Premier said before the election, "We are going to roll them over, similar to the New South Wales Government." At the end of the day, when the Minister for Sport was called on to support the Active Kids program, he chose instead to speak about the Ultimate Fighting Championship. We want the Minister for Sport to stand and fight for the Active Kids program. At the end of the day, that is his responsibility as the Minister for Sport. The ultimate fight is to champion our kids. But when it comes to acting for the kids in our community, the response from the Minister is silence.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (16:17):** I make a brief contribution to debate on this erroneous motion brought to the House by the member for Hawkesbury. I note that the motion is a little bit more comprehensible than the member's contribution to the previous fortnight's debate. There is no mention of communism or Big Brother or Kevin '07. I give her that. However, I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting all words after "House" and inserting instead:

"commends the excellent work of the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport in contrast to the performance of the former Government, particularly in relation to multiculturalism."

I take up the point that was raised so competently by my colleague the member for Strathfield when leading for the Government in debate of this motion. Today we have clearly seen the difference in character between the current Minister for Multiculturalism, the member for Rockdale, and the Liberals' and The Nationals' representative, the member for Oatley. The member for Albury talked about things we have seen over the past two weeks. Let me say to the member for Albury that this House is less than two weeks into its Fifty-Eighth Parliament, and it is already dealing with a racist, offensive and disgusting remark. Far out! Is it not 2023? The members in the place who represent our communities should be better than this. It is an appalling reflection on Opposition members.

That comment was not made by just any member of this House, not that it is acceptable for anyone to make. It was not made by a new backbencher. The comment was made by the shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, a former Minister. The member's behaviour leads me to think that he has no credibility representing the multicultural communities in New South Wales. Making such a comment that he says was an attempt at a joke is just shameful. It has to be called out in Parliament. That is our responsibility to the people of New South Wales and the families that the member for Strathfield spoke about. Would such behaviour be tolerated in any other workplace? We know what the answer is—absolutely not.

This incident is well and truly a line-in-the-sand moment for the Leader of the Opposition. He can demonstrate today the standards he will accept from members on his front bench. It is up to him. He can choose to strip the member for Oatley of the portfolio; that is entirely within his control. We will wait to see what he does. It is a question of leadership and standards. I cannot honestly believe—and I do not think, hand on heart, that any member on either side of the Chamber would believe—that anyone would be comfortable being represented on multicultural issues by someone who thinks they were making a funny joke. If they are, they too should be ashamed.

What is the member for Oatley saying to the diverse and rich multicultural communities in electorates across our State such as Ryde, Holsworthy, Winston Hills and Oatley, for goodness sake? What is the member saying to multicultural communities in his electorate? He is saying that making what he thinks is a funny joke and hoping to get away with it is acceptable behaviour for someone who has only recently been re-elected to serve the community of New South Wales in this place. The question is: What does the Opposition stand for? I thank the Opposition for bringing this silly motion to our Parliament for debate this afternoon. It has given us an opportunity to put a challenge to the Leader of the Opposition.

We will see how the Leader of the Opposition values the growing communities across our great State. Unfortunately, we have already seen the Leader of the Opposition abandon the member for Epping's bold and principled stance on the Voice—which we welcomed when we were in opposition; we were not above doing that when it was the right thing to do. The member for Epping stood with the Prime Minister and other State and Territory leaders and said, "This is the right thing to do for our nation going forward." By abandoning that stance, the Leader of the Opposition is showing what sort of strength he has. Surely he is above betraying the values of multiculturalism in one of the most successful multicultural communities in New South Wales and the world.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (16:22):** I speak in favour of the motion, but I begin by placing on record that I think Minister Kamper is a good and decent individual. The motion is not about that. In a democracy like we have in New South Wales, the role of the Minister is critical to responsible government. We as the Opposition are here to hold the Government and its Ministers to account. Ministers, regardless of their political affiliation, need to be competent and professional at all times. So I was deeply concerned yesterday—and I suspect the Premier and the Deputy Premier were also concerned—by two actions of Minister Kamper. Regarding the first action, I read a recommendation from a 2022 Legislative Council report:

That the NSW Government, in the termination of agency heads for which Ministers have direct managerial responsibility, adopt a practice whereby Ministers have the decency, integrity and professionalism to communicate the termination directly themselves and give also their reasons for the termination.

The Australian Labor Party supported that motion in 2022. But in government it does not support that practice. They say, "Do as I say but not as I do." One would have thought that if the position of an agency head needed to be terminated, a number of things could be done. First, schedule a face-to-face meeting with them; secondly, pick up the phone and chat to them; thirdly, a less professional approach would be to send a text message or email. But a completely unprofessional approach that would mismanage the process is to do what the Minister did—nothing. I understand it was the Minister, or the Minister's office, that let the media know under the cloak of darkness at 6.00 a.m. Public servant Lee Shearer found out that she had been let go as OneCrown administrator during a radio interview with 2GB. I think all members in this House agree that public servants deserve our respect. Lee Shearer deserves our respect, and she deserved respect from Minister Kamper.

My second concern from yesterday is that Minister Kamper disregarded his own Cabinet's decision and voted against the public interest debate to support the Voice. I note the member for Sydney's comments yesterday that we do not politicise that referendum. It deserves the respect of all members in this House, including Minister Kamper. His actions yesterday were extremely unprofessional. The people of New South Wales deserve better from a Minister, not one who disregards public servants. The people of New South Wales deserve better than a Minister who votes against his own Government's policies. I ask Minister Kamper to lift his game, and I ask the Premier and the Deputy Premier to lift the standards of their team.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (16:26):** It is my absolute privilege and honour to speak about the great virtues of the outstanding member for Rockdale, Minister Kamper. I speak about him as a friend who has seen him in so many different contexts and who knows the kind of person he is. I have heard so many things from other members. All of them seemed to say, "There is nothing personal." Every single thing about this motion is personal. There were any number of things that members could have said but they did not. I heard the member for Hawkesbury say, "You control the budget." Let me remind her that it was her Government that destroyed the budget. It left us with a \$7.1 billion black hole and over \$180 billion in debt. They too controlled the budget, but they lost control.

The member for Albury, who I have enormous respect for, said that he wants to play the ball, but this is absolutely about playing the man. He would not have wanted to contribute to this debate because he is a very decent human being, but he was asked to. I welcome the new member for Davidson. I thought he was very good, but I will give him a little tip. Before you start talking about decency and integrity, look in the mirror and at the people you are sitting with. I would not rate some of the things they have done over the past 12 years as decent or that they were done with integrity. I could give you a whole history lesson.

When we started talking about the idea of public interest debates, they were meant to be a chance for the Opposition to bring an argument to the fore—to create a contest of ideas. This is their second one, and they have got personal. Their leader said, "There's an idea. We're going to work with it." But they have raced to the bottom. The Minns Labor Government will not race them to the bottom because we are better than that. Opposition members should enjoy those seats because they are going to be sitting on that side of the Chamber for a long time if they want to go to the bottom. This motion does the exact thing that people hate about politics—it is a personal attack. We have a member who is trying his guts out, who has integrity, honesty and decency, and yet the Opposition is trying to create a scare campaign.

I love how those opposite keep saying that we are cutting the Active Kids program. They are not kidding anybody. They did not put it in their budget. They are pretending that they put it in their budget. They are a party of smoke and mirrors. Once we got into government and got our hands on the books, we saw just how fake they were. They had chances to do things and they did not. They love to talk up a big game. Now they are saying, "It's not our fault." We are in this budget position because of the decisions their Government made. Do not bring up integrity and decency when we know that we are waiting on stuff.

Remember the issue about a New York trade commissioner or something or other? How do you go through a process? "Hello, 1800 Dial-a-Mate. There's a job going—do you want it?" That is how the guys opposite operate. Minister Kamper owned up and said that it was a mistake, and it was an honest mistake, and I respect him for that. Not enough people in this Parliament have had real-life experiences where they own up and say, "Do you know what? I did the wrong thing." Let me make it very clear: This contract was going to expire in four days' time. He made the decision and made the phone call, and I respect someone who says, "I got it wrong." I respect him for that, and I challenge anybody to do the same when they want to talk about decency.

We keep hearing about the Active Kids program. The truth is that the now Manager of Opposition Business was the Minister for Sport. Guess what he did? He forgot to put in a budget bid. But those opposite pretended, "We've got it." They do not have it. And if they want to talk about the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC], I have a great quote here. Everyone knows I am into boxing—my brother was a boxer, so I follow the boxing—and I was excited. It was in February this year that the previous Government said that it would "underwrite a super welterweight world title fight coming to Sydney", and the key words from the now Manager of Opposition Business were "a city that punches above its weight to produce unforgettable sporting moments". He was quite happy to do it. As I said before, smoke and mirrors are what those guys opposite are all about.

If they want to talk about appointments, let us look at what the Minister has done. In one month, Minister Kamper has done more than his predecessors have done in years. The former Government created plum jobs for themselves and looked after themselves. They do not talk about things. They do not want to accept what they have done and the black holes that they have left us. They do not care about process. They just care about the politics—they have proven it. I am so disappointed, because there are so many good people on that side who are not doing the things that I know are true to their heart. They are playing the politics—exactly what they say



they do not want to do. But do you know what? The people of New South Wales can see right through it. Let us have these debates, but let us not come in here and make it personal and pretend it is not. Every single thing about this is personal and every single day I will support the member for Rockdale.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:32):** I contribute to this public interest debate and express the dismay that I think the member for Strathfield and others have expressed in relation to the fact that there is very little about this public interest debate that is in the public interest. It is very clear and very disappointing to see in the Chamber today actions that have demonstrated that the intention of Opposition members, as a result of being put on the Opposition benches, is to punch down, attempt to whip up really offensive behaviour, and behave in a way that demonstrates their insecurity at the loss of their power and influence by trying to intimidate and have an impact on other members in the Chamber.

I share solidarity with the member for Strathfield in recognition that my family also worked in catering. My dad, as an international student, after studying to be an accountant, decided that he could make more money starting a restaurant with his mates. They used to enjoy going to the markets in Adelaide. They would buy the squid which Australian folks would buy as bait—it was very cheap at that stage—and have feasts, as they were struggling to make ends meet in the restaurant industry. I also worked in catering as a hospitality staff person to pay my way through my studies. I recall that I wrote an academic paper for the *Court of Conscience* journal of the University of New South Wales on the inequality of the pandemic and the impact that it had. I wrote in the conclusion:

In my workplace, the New South Wales Parliament, most of the people who look like me and those who reflect the real diversity of our community are actually not those sitting in the Chamber. They are the ones serving the food, cleaning the offices and keeping things moving day-to-day.

The reflection that I make on the comments made earlier by the shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, the former Minister for Multiculturalism, is that we would do well in this Chamber to reflect the diversity of the people who work in catering in this building. It is a great pleasure to see, following the election this year, that when people make racist comments in this Chamber, we can have a mini caucus just outside; it is not the Chamber looking to me alone and wondering whether I will call out the racism. That is a credit to many people in the community who have got behind and backed in to ensure that our parliaments are starting to reflect the diversity of our community. Whether someone makes a racist joke or a racist flippant remark, it is still racism, and the racism sticks and lingers; it infects people's public perception.

In our role, as members of Parliament, we could and should hold our public perceptions strong. It is for no member of this place to determine how we put ourselves forward as representatives in this place. While it might be well and good for someone to stand up and apologise in this place, the impact that that racist remark has on that member in the long term, into all the Google searches, all of the records, all of the discussions, and the impact it has on their community and their family is real. I know this all too well—the member for Bankstown and I have discussed it before—because the main time we get a media scrum is when someone is a racist pig to us, basically, and then everyone is interested in knowing what we have to say.

When the police trolled my public Facebook page after I had been a member for a short period of time, they wrote the most disgraceful and disgusting things about my family, about my father and about me. For years after that, every time any media story came up, in any of the searches, results would come up showing the most offensive and vile things about my dad which were quoted in those media stories. You cannot take that back with an apology. The impact of that lasts. I urge every member of this place to think about what they are saying, and to think about what they are taking away. What they are doing is taking away people's ability to participate in this Chamber as equals.

They are taking away our ability to behave as we want to behave without being tainted by whether we will be angry, whether we will be enraged or whether we will be upset and hurt by the actions that are taken. Members will note that the member for Strathfield and I—and he does a much better job at it than I do—have been very measured and calm in this debate. I can speak only for myself to say that my rage and my hurt at what was said in this Chamber today is so strong—but if I come in here and yell, I will be further marginalised, so I have to put on my nice and reasonable voice to face the racists that continue to try to stop us from participating in society.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:37):** In reply: I thank the member for Strathfield, the member for Albury, the member for Londonderry, the member for Davidson, the member for Bankstown and the member for Newtown as well for their contribution. I note that the member for Strathfield talked about Active Kids vouchers not being in the budget. Others have commented on that as well. It makes me wonder: Does that infer that the Minns Labor Government is hamstrung and cannot make any changes to the budget going forward? Why is the Government having a budget announced in September if those opposite are saying they cannot do anything with the budget?

**Mr Steve Whan:** That is not what anybody said.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** Government members have said it was not put in the budget. They can put it in the budget because they are in government and they have until September to think about this. The member for Albury talked about water and how it is a constitutional right. That was said by those in government. I also saw Government members scurrying around the Chamber when they realised that they had omitted WaterNSW from this legislation. The Government's comments are an excuse, not a reason.

**Ms Julia Finn:** What has that got to do with your silly question?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** It is a very good question; it is why I stand here and ask myself why we are talking about racism when this public interest debate is about the unprofessionalism and mismanagement of a Minister in the Minns Government. Mr Speaker, I would appreciate being able to be heard without the interjections so rudely being made by those opposite. The member for Londonderry commented off topic in her speech about multiculturalism and the Voice—anything else but the public interest debate topic.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting. The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Hawkesbury will resume her seat.

**Mr Steve Whan:** I take a point of order under relevance. I point out to the member for Hawkesbury that there is an amendment to the motion, which makes relevant all the things that she is claiming to be not relevant. Mr Speaker, I ask you to bring her back to the leave of the amendment to the motion.

**The SPEAKER:** I will be polite and say that this public interest debate is one of the more interesting ones I have witnessed. The debate has been quite wideranging. I have had to refer to the motion and to the amendment a number of times. At this stage everything that has been said is in order.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** While we are talking about being "in order", I note that I was one of the best waitresses at the Black Stump in Liverpool many years ago in my catering days. The catering industry does not just encompass people from other nationalities; it encompasses every nationality. It is not just inclusive of one particular area; it is for everyone. I was really delighted to contribute to the Black Stump, and I waited on tables very happily in my days as well. This public interest debate is about lifting the standard and raising the benchmark for the Government, which I do not see happening. [*Time expired.*]

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hawkesbury has moved a motion, to which the Deputy Premier has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....54  
Noes .....35  
Majority.....19

#### AYES

Aitchison, J  
Atalla, E  
Bali, S  
Barr, C  
Butler, L  
Butler, R  
Car, P  
Catley, Y  
Chanthivong, A  
Cotsis, S  
Crakanthorp, T  
Daley, M  
Davis, D  
Dib, J  
Donato, P  
Doyle, T  
Finn, J  
Greenwich, A

Hagarty, N  
Hannan, J  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Holland, M  
Hornery, S  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kamper, S  
Kirby, W  
Leong, J  
Li, J  
McDermott, H  
McGirr, J  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
Minns, C

O'Neill, M  
Park, R  
Quinnell, S  
Regan, M  
Saffin, J (teller)  
Saliba, D  
Scully, P  
Shetty, K  
Smith, T  
Stuart, M  
Tesch, L  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Whan, S (teller)  
Wilkinson, K

## NOES

Amon, R  
 Anderson, K  
 Ayyad, T  
 Clancy, J  
 Cooke, S  
 Coure, M  
 Cross, M  
 Crouch, A (teller)  
 Davies, T  
 Di Pasqua, S  
 Griffin, J  
 Henskens, A

Hodges, M  
 James, T  
 Kean, M  
 Kemp, M  
 Lane, J  
 Layzell, D  
 Marshall, A  
 Perrottet, D  
 Petinos, E  
 Preston, R  
 Provost, G  
 Roberts, A

Saunders, D  
 Singh, G (teller)  
 Sloane, K  
 Speakman, M  
 Taylor, M  
 Thompson, T  
 Toole, P  
 Tuckerman, W  
 Williams, L  
 Williams, R  
 Williamson, R

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Division called for and Standing Order 185 applied.****The House divided.**

Ayes .....55  
 Noes .....36  
 Majority.....19

## AYES

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

Hagarty, N  
 Hannan, J  
 Harris, D  
 Harrison, J  
 Haylen, J  
 Hoenig, R  
 Holland, M  
 Hornery, S  
 Kaliyanda, C  
 Kamper, S  
 Kirby, W  
 Leong, J  
 Li, J  
 McDermott, H  
 McGirr, J  
 McKeown, K  
 Mehan, D  
 Minns, C

O'Neill, M  
 Park, R  
 Quinnell, S  
 Regan, M  
 Saffin, J (teller)  
 Saliba, D  
 Scully, P  
 Shetty, K  
 Smith, T  
 Stuart, M  
 Tesch, L  
 Vo, T  
 Voltz, L  
 Warren, G  
 Washington, K  
 Watson, A  
 Whan, S (teller)  
 Wilkinson, K

## NOES

Amon, R  
 Anderson, K  
 Ayyad, T  
 Clancy, J  
 Cooke, S  
 Coure, M  
 Cross, M  
 Crouch, A (teller)  
 Davies, T  
 Di Pasqua, S  
 Griffin, J  
 Henskens, A

Hodges, M  
 James, T  
 Kean, M  
 Kemp, M  
 Lane, J  
 Layzell, D  
 Marshall, A  
 Perrottet, D  
 Petinos, E  
 Preston, R  
 Provost, G  
 Roberts, A

Saunders, D  
 Singh, G (teller)  
 Sloane, K  
 Speakman, M  
 Taylor, M  
 Thompson, T  
 Toole, P  
 Tuckerman, W  
 Williams, L  
 Williams, R  
 Williamson, R  
 Wilson, F

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

*Bills*

**GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (GRANTS) BILL 2023**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:55):** I continue my contribution to debate on the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. At present, grants are administered based on the direction of a document issued under a 2022 Premier's memorandum called the *Grants Administration Guide*, which is legally enforceable. That means that the requirements for grants administration were set out in consultation between the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Productivity Commissioner to permit sufficient flexibility to deal with changes and developments in the field over time while still providing a firm framework with which the involved parties, including the Ministers and officials, must comply.

The strength of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 is that it enhances the existing regulations. The guide shall not be replaced as a result of the bill and will continue as an enforceable framework that will deal particularly with procedural details. The bill will amend the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 to require an official deciding whether to approve or decline a grant application to take the seven key principles concerning grant administration set out in the *Grants Administration Guide* into account. Those principles are robust planning and design; collaboration and partnership; proportionality; an outcomes orientation; achieving value with relevant money; governance and accountability; and probity and transparency.

The Government was elected with a mandate to deliver greater transparency and integrity in our State, and this bill is the means by which the Government will do that in the administration of grants. I earlier mentioned the \$4 billion per year in vital support offered to the State's communities, organisations and individuals. That can be an immense support to worthy causes but, as with any other aspect of the decisions made by government, we are compelled to ensure that taxpayer funds are used in a way that delivers the best possible outcomes. Members are obliged to welcome scrutiny by the people we represent in this House.

The bill will cause the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, or the GIPA Act, and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018, or the GIPA regulation, to be amended to make certain grants information open access, except in instances where there is an overriding public interest in not doing so. The *Grants Administration Guide* already stipulates that certain information of that nature must be published, but this amendment will clarify that the obligations set out by both the guide and the GIPA Act can be met in one publication. That ensures that the obligations caused by the bill do not require such information to be published repeatedly.

The amendments to the GIPA Act and the GIPA regulation will result in the pertinent information being published on the New South Wales Government grants and funding finder website, which will fulfil the requirements. The bill is pragmatic in its approach; it bolsters the existing framework as found in the *Grants Administration Guide* while keeping that guide in effect. It clearly articulates the requirements for public disclosure of grant information while not demanding that the information be published multiple times, thus not causing unnecessary administrative burden.

Lastly, the amendments are due to commence on 1 July 2023. Providing sufficient lead time to enact the provisions set out in the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 will permit the relevant agencies, officials and Ministers to fulfil the mandate that the Government was elected to deliver on. It shall restore confidence in the grants administration process—confidence that the essential support given to deserving communities, organisations and individuals has been justly given, which was needlessly lost in the past 12 years under the previous Government. I again commend the work by the Special Minister of State in the other place. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:00):** On behalf of The Greens, I support the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. I note the contribution of the member for Balmain, and I recognise the work of The Greens spokesperson in this space, Ms Abigail Boyd. As the member for Ballina, I have had a lot to say about grants over the past eight years. In 2020 I was pleased to make a submission to the grants inquiry and I was invited to be a witness at one of the hearings. Early on in my first term I saw what I believed to be a slush fund of pork-barrelling of public moneys by the Coalition, particularly by The Nationals in regional electorates. That belief proved to be valid.

Mr John Barilaro infamously referred to himself as Pork Barilaro, and former Premier Gladys Berejiklian—someone I very much respected—said that pork-barrelling is not illegal, with ICAC later saying that it actually is. For my entire two terms as a member of this House, I constantly felt gaslit every time I asked about the administration of public moneys. Members of the Ballina community constantly raised with me the inequity and hypocrisy of well-deserving projects not being funded versus projects in Coalition electorates that were. I also acknowledge the work of Senator David Shoebridge when he was an MLC in the other place. He and people like John Graham in the Labor Party did a lot of incredible work to expose systematic robbing and misappropriation—maladministration, at the very least—of public moneys. The Greens welcome any improvements on the transparency of the way in which grants are administered in New South Wales because, at the end of the day, grants are funded with taxpayers' dollars.

People became incredibly cynical with democracy and politics when they saw how grants were administered over the past eight years. The Greens welcome this legislation. While we do not intend to get in the way of Labor's election commitment, we would like to see a lot more rigour. However, we are happy to see some runs on the board for Labor before we weigh in. We resisted moving amendments because we want to see this legislation implemented as early as possible. I offer much gratitude to the Treasurer and his department for briefing crossbenchers on the forthcoming budget and where we are at in the State. It is very timely to have this legislation so that we do not see money spent for political reasons rather than based on need. In my world I would like all grants to be only needs-based, but at this stage that is probably a fantasy land.

The Greens recognise and appreciate the necessity to urgently legislate some protections, which is why we support the bill. We take the Government on good faith for now that the work to improve oversight of grants administration will continue and that the full suite of recommendations emerging from the ICAC and Public Accountability Committee reports will be incorporated into future legislation. I encourage the Minister to give those assurances in his reply, if he has not already done so. As I have said, The Greens will not move amendments to improve the bill but, perhaps at a later date, we would seek to move the legislation beyond the limited constraints of the Premier's memorandums and *Grants Administration Guide*. The Greens amendments would include a fulfilment of further recommendations of ICAC's Operation Jersey report. One of the matters The Greens were disappointed about was the failure to incorporate recommendation 1 of Operation Jersey, which states:

That any whole-of-government guidelines concerning grants funding be issued pursuant to a statutory regulation.

That recommendation, more than any other reform, would go the furthest towards devolving the consolidation of power and opportunities for corruption away from the arbitrary discretion of Ministers and empower this Chamber to do its job of advocating in the best interests of the people of this State. I believe there is nothing in this legislation to disrupt the bias of particular programs that may benefit some sides of politics and not others. The Greens feel that that recommendation is an important power that should not be taken lightly.

Further recommendations The Greens would pursue relate to transparency and accessibility of information, including the removal of redactions for Cabinet confidentiality on all information relating to the administration of grants programs. What is that about? Lately I have seen a lot of fulsome information—in a very different context—regarding my constituents' uptake of flood grants through Service NSW, yet we are expected to live with redactions for Cabinet confidentiality. That is the wrong way round. The Greens would seek to further devolve the discretionary powers of the Minister and codify instances of broader consultation beyond just members of the party in government. Perhaps most importantly, we would expect those principles and requirements to be brought into legislation and codified, thereby protecting them from arbitrary amendment at the whim of a future government. That is just common sense.

The Government should consider that The Greens will be paying very close attention to ensure that the integrity of the grants administration scheme is improved and that we may seek much stricter laws around that. We do not want to create a situation in which we have a whole lot of motherhood statements, but practical implementation of the law places us in a similar position to what we have been in. I know I speak for every member of the House who takes seriously the recommendations applying to Community Building Partnership grants. I know that we are not allowed to promise that money to members of the community. There is a panel process and an eligibility process, but sometimes I feel uncomfortable even with that. While people argue that MPs are well placed, in my ideal world—and I am certainly not suggesting that the Premier should take away the Community Building Partnership grants—there is room for improvement, even in that. For truly merit-based and needs-based grants distribution, I do not see how political views are necessary. Again, that is probably considered an extreme view.

Not long ago I joined the member for Blue Mountains and others to talk about the horrendous situation with the bushfire recovery grants. Our electorates suffered millions of dollars in damage but did not receive any funding. Our communities did not receive support for recovery. I will be very interested to see the granular detail about the way the flood recovery grants were administered by the former Government. The Government Sector

Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 heralds a new era. The Greens members welcome it. We understand why the bill has been introduced and we support it. But we are certainly not rubber-stamping it. We have engaged with the detail. We have concerns, and we are definitely paying close attention to the administration of public money on behalf of our communities. It is fundamental to democracy that members do not get to spend public money to feather their own nests.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:10):** I support the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 because it will provide far greater fairness, transparency and accountability for the \$4 billion in grants that is provided each year across New South Wales. Labor made a commitment to change prior to the last election after experiencing outrage after outrage with the way the former Government administered grants. Time and again, grants were distributed on the basis of not the quality of the application or any other measure but how the majority of people in the electorate had voted in the previous election. There was no transparency in the process, but when it was examined and the figures were tallied it became very clear that there was a bias against the seats that were not held by members of the Coalition.

The Government Sector Finance Act 2018 will be amended to require that in approving or declining a grant the grant decision-maker is to have regard to the key principles for administering grants as set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*. It will be a requirement that a Minister not approve a grant unless they are satisfied that the expenditure will be an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of money. It must achieve value for money. The bill seeks to amend the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 to make certain grant information open access that must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against its disclosure.

Last year the *Grants Administration Guide* was issued under the Premier's memorandum in response to the particular outrage over the administration of bushfire recovery grants. Previous grants had also raised huge concerns. The *Grants Administration Guide* contains overarching principles that apply to government grants, and is legally enforceable. It is binding on Ministers and officials, and compliance is mandatory. The bill does not replace that framework for reporting but puts it into effect in legislation. It effectively codifies the seven key principles of grants administration that are set out in the guide.

The key principles are robust planning and design; collaboration and partnership; proportionality; outcomes orientation; value for money; governance and accountability; and probity and transparency. The principles are important to ensure trust and faith that the \$4 billion in grants allocated every year is spent appropriately. As a number of members have noted, it was particularly disgraceful how certain council areas were excluded from receiving bushfire recovery grants. Those council areas happened to be in the Labor electorate of Blue Mountains, on the Central Coast and in the Tenterfield council area in the Lismore electorate. Not a single cent went to those burnt-out communities. That is ridiculous, and it continues to disgust the people of New South Wales.

It is absolutely disgraceful that, after the worst bushfires this State has ever experienced, there was political interference in the administration of grants to ensure that bushfire-affected communities that voted Labor in the 2019 election were excluded. I am glad we are moving on from that. But it was not only the administration of bushfire recovery grants that was disgraceful. Time and again, sports grants in particular were not distributed in a fair or equitable manner. Three-quarters of Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund grants went to Coalition-held seats, even though the Coalition held far fewer than three-quarters of the seats in Sydney.

I draw the attention of the House to one example. My electorate was fortunate to receive one of the grants. The Granville electorate was one of the very few Labor-held electorates to receive a grant in the 2018-19 round. Some \$2.74 million was provided to the Cumberland City Council for the redevelopment of the grandstand—which is now known as Eric Tweeddale Stadium—at Granville Park. It is a very good project. However, as the member for Granville, I was not notified about the announcement. Instead, the then Liberal candidate for Granville announced that the council had received the money under the Greater Sydney Sports Facility Fund. That candidate did not hold any position with the council or the rugby club. There was no reason he should have been invited for the announcement instead of me, as the local member, other than to try to win votes at the 2019 election.

It was even more disgraceful that during the same election campaign the former Premier went to Orange to announce an enormous investment in sporting facilities for the electorate. It is on the public record that those facilities would be built only if the people of Orange returned the seat to the Coalition. I know the people of Orange really wanted those sporting facilities but, instead of taking the bribe, they were disgusted. They were so disgusted that it helped the very capable member for Orange to increase his vote quite a bit. Even when people are the recipients of this largesse, they do not like it. People like to think when they receive government investment in their area—when they receive grants—it is done in the proper manner and because it is a really good project, not because it might deliver an election outcome for the government of the day.

People certainly do not like to think their community missed out on grants because of how they voted at the previous election, and they do not like to be told that they will miss out if they do not vote for a certain candidate in an upcoming election. Members of Parliament need to have far greater accountability than we have had in the past. Time and again, people in this State were disgusted by the actions of the previous Government when it came to the administration of grants. Grants can and do provide important and much-needed community facilities, but we need to know that they are going to those who are most deserving. This needs to be done in a transparent process. The bill delivers on the Government's commitment to make that happen, and it will ensure that there is far greater probity and transparency going forward, rather than the dodgy, disgraceful, random methods used in the past.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:19):** It is a pleasure to see the member for Upper Hunter in the chair this evening. I congratulate the Temporary Speaker on his re-election and appointment. I support the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. I do so because it essentially deals with fairness and seeks to achieve greater equity and transparency in the grants process in this State. I reflect on a couple of the provisions in the bill. We are hearing all the right things from the Government, but we need to dive deeper into the bill itself to see whether or not the right things will actually occur. The Government says it wants to treat everybody fairly, but I am a bit sceptical of that. I cannot even get the Premier to answer a question during question time. If those opposite want to treat everyone fairly as far as grants go, it would be nice if that was extended to common courtesies in this place, but I will not hold my breath.

I turn to the provisions of the bill. Let us have a look to see whether it delivers what the Government is saying it will. I say at the outset that there is nothing wrong with doing the work of a good local member and fighting hard for grants. As I was a Minister for 2½ years, I can say that local members will come to see you and ask you to make certain decisions. There is nothing wrong with Ministers making decisions; that is why they are there. There is sometimes a tendency to want to sanitise the process so that bureaucrats make decisions, but I like it when elected people fight for and get outcomes for their community. However, as many members have rightfully reflected, there are examples where that has not happened and where there has been an overt politicisation of processes.

I think everyone would agree that the way that some of the bushfire recovery grants were handled is an example of that. I come from a community that was affected by bushfires and that benefited from those grants. But I am aware there were other members who should have received support and did not, so I understand the genesis of this legislation. If we are going to be genuine about this, let us have a look at the legislation and see if it is actually going to work. In the explanatory note, schedule 1 [1] sounds reasonable. It states:

- (a) A Minister must not approve a grant unless satisfied that the grant—
  - (i) is an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of money, and
  - (ii) achieves value for money.
- (b) When approving or declining a grant to which the Grants Administration Guide applies, a person must have regard to the key principles of grants administration specified in the Guide.

I always did that when I was a Minister. In fact, whenever I went to a member's electorate, whether they were an Opposition member or a Government member, I always told them that I was coming and consulted them on investments that were being made. I am amused that I have heard from members of the Government about how terrible so many of the processes were, yet they are using the same *Grants Administration Guide* that the former Government had. The *Grants Administration Guide* referred to in the legislation is dated September 2022. Those opposite say that there are all of these problems with the way that grants are administered, but they are using the same guide the former Government did. That is in the text of the legislation.

Schedule 2 [1] and [2] provide that open access information prescribed by the regulations under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, section 18 (g), may be required to be made publicly available on the website prescribed by the regulations instead of a website maintained by the agency. That makes total sense. It is about transparency. It is a simple provision, and it is good. Schedule 3 talks about public access regulations and prescribes information relating to grants administered by the agency as open access information if the information is required, under a mandatory requirement of the *Grants Administration Guide*, to be published by the agency on a website specified in the guide. That is the guide I mentioned earlier. It also prescribes the website specified in the *Grants Administration Guide* as the website on which the information must be made publicly available for the purposes of the Government Information (Public Access) Act.

That is essentially what this piece of legislation is. It is not very long. There are essentially three schedules in it. If someone does not comply, what happens? We have been told that a person must comply with those principles of efficiency, accountability and transparency. That is all great stuff that everyone should support. But if you do not comply, what happens? Do you get a nasty letter from the Premier, followed by another nasty letter

from the Premier? Do you get a rap across the knuckles at Cabinet? Do you get told off? Do you get your toys taken away? There is no consequence. A piece of legislation has been offered up as a great trumpeting of fairness, but there are no consequences for its breach. I am going to help the Government out—and I suspect that I will be doing that a lot over the next four years—and propose an amendment. If those opposite are fair dinkum about this, which I assume they are, and if this is not just window-dressing, they will accept my amendment to make a breach of the Act a breach of the ministerial code.

I like a lot of the members who sit opposite, sometimes more than members on this side of the House. I acknowledge that some Ministers are having trouble getting staff, so I will help the adviser over there who is busily scrawling notes to ensure that this is addressed in the Minister's speech in reply. Clause 3 of the code of conduct, which is also contained in the ICAC regulations, means that any Minister who breaches the law technically breaches the code. Hence if this becomes the law, a Minister would technically be in breach of the code. If members opposite think this is the right thing to do, which I think it is, let us make sure there is some codification so that if there is a breach there is a real consequence. At the moment, under this regulation, you can pork-barrel to your heart's content and nothing will happen other than the fact that you may have breached the law. Why don't we be fair dinkum about that?

I suggest another thing, and I admit that I am plagiarising what the member for Barwon suggested in the last Parliament. Plagiarism is the sincerest form of flattery. I was reticent to support him then, even when I was on the crossbench, but I will propose that amendment now—namely, that if members want to be transparent around grants, they should tell the local member in the area that a grant is being announced prior to it occurring. I give the House notice of those two amendments. One is to give this legislation some teeth and the other is to ensure that a local member is given notice so that they are aware that a grant is being announced. I do not think that is unreasonable. I do not think this bill is unreasonable. Members of the Government have today highlighted some great examples of decision-making that disadvantaged electorates to the benefit of others.

When governments get elected, they have priorities. Sometimes there are priorities that do not support a particular region over another, but that is based on whatever calculus of thinking goes on in a Minister's mind and in the Cabinet's mind. There will always be conjecture about that, which is why we have a Cabinet government. We have a Westminster parliamentary system. People get elected, decisions get made and people are accountable for those decisions. I appreciate what those opposite are endeavouring to do with this legislation, which is about additional transparency. The Government should be commended for that, which is one of the reasons why I support the legislation, with or without my amendments.

I come back to the first point I made: If you want legislation to have some teeth, there has to be consequences for its breach. At the moment, one could say that the code of conduct as it stands is sufficient. Let us make that clear, just like those opposite are making it clear that there are certain things that need to be considered when awarding a grant. That is a good suggestion. It is a shame that we actually need to do this, because you would think that all Ministers would do that anyway, but I understand the reasons for it. There has rightfully been tumult because that has not occurred. Let us firstly give that some support and real impact so that people know that there are consequences if they do not do that.

Secondly, let us also ensure that every member of this place is treated with respect, regardless of whether they are in government one day, in opposition the next or on the crossbench. I have heard a lot of people say they want to do that, but will they do it? It is appropriate that local members are advised about grants. But that will not stop members like me who will continue to bash down the doors of Ministers to get outcomes for their electorate. I appreciate those Ministers in the new Government who have engaged with me. It is a really tough job but a great job that allows a person to do wonderful things for the State—albeit we all recognise that there are constraints and one person can only do so much. Ministers are in an incredible position to make real decisions, and I genuinely wish this Government the very best in steering the State and making good decisions. Good decisions come from having transparency and accountability. Sunlight is the best disinfectant. That is what that this bill suggests, and that is why I support it.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (17:30):** Mr Temporary Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment. It is good to see you in the chair this evening. It is the first time I have had the pleasure of your being in the chair during one of my contributions. I am delighted to make a brief contribution to debate on the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. I commend the Minister and the Premier for bringing the bill to the Parliament. It is not just a Labor election promise; it is an ethical position that we took in opposition. We felt that we must have fair distribution of grants and wealth to those in need across our State.

I have said many times in this place that good governments govern for all. They govern equally, on a needs basis. I take that approach when representing my electorate. I am privileged to be the member for Campbelltown. I do not care how people vote. I represent every man, woman and child equally, without prejudice, in the pursuit of their prosperity and of a fair and equal society. That is particularly so when it comes to distributing the State's



wealth. Let me be very clear: The Government does not have any money. The State's wealth is the wealth of the people of New South Wales. It is their money. It is the same ethos behind the Government's anti-privatisation position. It is only fair and equitable that the State's wealth is distributed where its people need it most.

I will speak to the many good reasons the bill should be supported by those opposite, but it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge what I view as the previous Government's misuse of taxpayers' money—local families' money—in New South Wales. We saw the distribution of that wealth for the political prosperity of the Liberal Party and the National Party, for their communities. It was not based on need; it was based on their politics. Areas of our State have been affected by multiple natural disasters. Bushfires caused devastation on the eastern seaboard, particularly on the South Coast, and in rural and regional New South Wales. The floods followed. People from rural or regional New South Wales, or those who, like me, have family and connections in country New South Wales, will recall that that occurred when those local communities and economies were recovering from drought. Consider the money that could have gone to those communities recovering from drought, from fire damage and from floods.

Of course, then COVID-19 came along. It was yet another source of devastation to our State's economy, to whole communities and to many local families. I acknowledge my colleagues the member for Prospect and the member for Blacktown. We and other members representing south-western and Western Sydney electorates remember the serious effects that the imposition of lockdowns had on our communities during the second wave of COVID-19. We had the harshest restrictions but the least support. We know that the second wave broke in the eastern suburbs. People in south-western and Western Sydney were locked inside, away from our families, watching on TV as others enjoyed the luxuries that we could not. Whilst this is not related directly to grant funding, I raise it because it demonstrates the previous Government's inequitable approach to governing the people of New South Wales.

We must never lose sight of the fact that we are privileged to serve the people of our electorates in this place. Each seat in this Parliament is a privilege bestowed by the people. They are not our seats. I am privileged to hold the seat of Campbelltown, but it is not my seat. It is the seat of the people of Campbelltown, and without them I would not be here. The Premier sits over there in the Premier's seat. I know him personally. He and all of my colleagues know that once elections are out of the way it is time to get on with the job. Good governments govern for all, equally and without prejudice. We did not see that from the previous Government.

It is crucial that we have a strong and robust framework for regulating grants and ensuring they are administered fairly and achieve value for money. It is an investment in creating community, whether it be legacy infrastructure, investment in social services or whatever it may be. To me, that is a fundamental principle for the collection and distribution of wealth not only in this State but, indeed, at any level of government in any Parliament in this great nation. Each year the Government spends around \$4 billion in grants—a worthy and vital investment in each and every one of our communities. We should never again see taxpayers' money used for political purposes. There should be a meritorious approach based on need. I will be frank: If a Labor government fails to do that, I will be critical of it. My approach is not isolated to our political opposites. This is a fundamental principle that must be stood by.

I agree with the member for Kiama on one point: It is the role of a local member to advocate for their community and get the best outcomes they can. I know that many members, regardless of which side they are on in this place, do that day in, day out with the best interests of their community at heart. I commend them for that. I also give credit to some Ministers in the previous Government who always gave me a hearing when I was seeking funding, whether for capital investment or for services in my community. As an example, I draw the attention of the House to the \$632 million investment in Campbelltown Hospital, which I was proud to stand with my community and fight for.

I have always given credit to my community, because they are the people whom I was privileged to support in the pursuit of that funding. I remember Premier Mike Baird pulling me aside after question time. He said, "Look, I need to talk to you." I said, "Yes, of course, Premier. How can I be of assistance?" He said, "I'll be announcing tomorrow the \$632 million investment. Please keep it under your hat. And, of course, you won't be there for the announcement or the sod turning or the ribbon cutting. But you're a smart politician—go and do your own sod turn and cut your own ribbon." So that is exactly what I did. That said, I really did not care, because it was a lot of money being invested in my region and our community. That is all that mattered to me. I do not care about the photo-ops or the Facebook posts or the popularity contests that some seek. To me it is about the outcomes, and the best outcome for the future of grants—about \$4 billion worth of investment—is to support the bill. *[Extension of time]*

The bill provides certainty and assurance to the people of New South Wales so that when they go to the ballot box, they need not vote in fear. I want people going to the ballot boxes in Campbelltown to say, "I support Greg because I think he is a good local member and a fair man." I would not like to think that any members of my

community—and I am sure other members share this sentiment—go to the ballot box feeling like they have a leash around their necks, thinking, "We better vote this way because, if we don't, we won't get that." That is not democracy. That is not a progressive way for people to think when they go to the ballot box. They should go to the ballot box with their conscience as their guide, voting in the best way they feel, without any undue influence or imposition. The bill is an important step in that direction.

I close with the point that an investment in a community is an investment in a better society. To support the bill is to support never again having a government use taxpayers' money for its own political prosperity rather than the prosperity and the subsequent pursuit of a better community across New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House and urge all my colleagues to support it.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:42):** Mr Temporary Speaker, I also congratulate you on your appointment. I am pleased to see you in the chair. I certainly remember the last time you were in the chair and I was on the other side of the Chamber that we had some issues from a nasty individual who almost lost his seat. I hope he has grown up since then. I was giving a private member's statement, and you held your ground very well. I thank you for that. I support the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023, which amends the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 to require a grants decision-maker, when approving or declining a grant, to have regard to key principles for administering grants set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*. The bill will require that a Minister not approve a grant unless satisfied that the expenditure would be an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of money, and that it achieves value for money for the people of New South Wales.

The bill will also amend the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 to make certain grants information "open access information", which must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information. That amendment will strengthen the grants system in New South Wales. Importantly, it will ensure that government grants are delivered fairly and equitably to our communities through the creation of clear and detailed regulations to deal with key aspects of government guidelines for grants funding.

In September 2022 the *Grants Administration Guide* was released. It contains overarching principles that apply to all government grants and specifies the requirements that must be complied with when assessing and administering grants. The guide is legally enforceable. It was released as a Premier's memorandum, which makes it binding on all Ministers in this House and in the other place and all officials of this Government. Under section 31 of schedule 1 to the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, compliance with the mandatory requirements of the guide is required under law. The amendments proposed in the bill will not replace the framework specified in the guide. The guide will continue to have effect; however, the bill will strengthen aspects of the guide through legislative frameworks.

The amendments will strengthen the grants decision-making process by effectively codifying seven key principles of grants administration set out in the guide, bringing those principles into law. Procedural aspects of grants administration, which are likely to change due to bureaucratic processes, will remain in the guide. The bill will also include new requirements that align with and are complementary to the guide, ultimately strengthening the regulation and integrity of government grants in New South Wales. The bill inserts new section 10.3A in the Government Sector Finance Act 2018. It states:

**Administration of government grants**

- (1) The following persons must not knowingly breach a mandatory requirement contained in a Grants Administration Guide—
  - (a) a Minister,
  - (b) a person employed by a Minister under the *Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013*,
  - (c) an employee of a government sector agency within the meaning of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*, other than a person employed in or by a State owned corporation.
- (2) A Minister must not approve a grant to which the Grants Administration Guide applies unless satisfied that the grant—
  - (a) is an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of money, and
  - (b) achieves value for money.
- (3) When approving or declining a grant to which the Grants Administration Guide applies, a person must have regard to the key principles of grants administration specified in the Guide.
- (4) In this section—

***Grants Administration Guide*** means a Grants Administration Guide issued from time to time by the Premier and published in the Gazette.

***mandatory requirement***, of a Grants Administration Guide, means a requirement contained in the Guide that is expressly identified by the Guide to be a mandatory requirement.

The amendments also specify the omission of part 4 of schedule 1, "Savings, transitional and other provisions". Schedule 2 to the bill amends section 6 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 by omitting "a website maintained by the agency" and inserting instead "a relevant website". Further, schedule 2 to the bill inserts new section 6 (7), which specifies:

*relevant website* means—

- (a) a website maintained by the agency, or
- (b) for open access information prescribed under section 18(g) for which a website is prescribed by the regulations—the website.

Those amendments will make certain grants information open access information, which will work to reinforce the importance of transparency in grants administration in New South Wales. In the 2023 State election, the Minns-Car Labor team promised to strengthen the regulation of grants, and the people of New South Wales clearly indicated that they wished to see more transparency in the process of grant review and approval. The bill will deliver on that election campaign promise we made to our communities. The grants system serves an important function in the Prospect electorate community, which I serve.

It is an opportunity for local community groups, churches, schools and sporting clubs to provide and support their communities with funding for critical initiatives and infrastructure processes that benefit their lives. That is especially vital in the Prospect electorate and across Western Sydney where the community has displayed a strong sense of social justice and community spirit—where people take the initiative to create projects such as building a local community garden; organising social events for the elderly and multicultural groups; providing social services; running community cafes; and carrying out beautification works in our local parks. Grants are integral to ensure that those projects have the funding to be carried out efficiently and promptly, improving the lives of our residents, our young people, the elderly, the disadvantaged and our young families. The projects are vital to our community in Prospect, which is made up of a vibrant and diverse population.

Often community groups, individual representatives or local residents approach me to discuss the necessity of funding local community projects such as those supporting women who are fleeing or experiencing domestic and family violence; providing employment support; focusing on youth crime prevention; or supporting refugee and migrant communities. In Western Sydney our communities recognise the diversity that makes up our population, and we take up the initiative to provide services or organise infrastructure projects where there is a lack of support. Western Sydney does not deserve to be let down time and time again because Ministers in the former Liberal-Nationals Government prioritised other areas over communities where funding is needed most. The bill will ensure that the grants administration process is tightened, more transparent and equitable, ensuring that communities such as the one I represent in Prospect and others across Western Sydney are not ignored. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (17:51):** I speak in support of the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. I do not know one member in this House, or any local groups, who do not love grants, particularly for our local communities and charitable, recreational, sporting, cultural or social groups. But we all want to know that they are fairly assessed and allocated. Grants are the allocation of public moneys. Given that governments are the trustees, the public needs to be assured that all grants are allocated fairly and without any bias, favouritism or pork-barrelling, as it is often referred to.

In New South Wales about \$4 billion per annum is spent on grants, and we all need to know that the framework for their administration is proper and professional. The Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023 does just that. It was a clear election commitment of the now Government—then the Labor Opposition—and the bill gives full expression to that commitment. Importantly, it gives full expression to integrity in grants. In the Government's words, the bill will ensure the delivery of effective, efficient and ethical grants for the people of New South Wales. There is already in existence the *Grants Administration Guide* of September 2022, which is legally enforceable as it is binding on Ministers and officials.

Legally, its mandatory requirements must be adhered to in accordance with the Government Sector Finance Act 2018. The guide will remain, and the bill will strengthen its integrity, hence strengthening the whole framework. The bill makes two changes. The first is that a Minister cannot approve a grant unless satisfied that the expenditure is an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of money, and that it achieves value for money. That does not include favouring that particular Minister or the Minister's party. The first change also picks up an ICAC recommendation found in its Operation Jersey report, aka pork-barrelling. It includes a provision that reflects the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 and requires consideration of whether expenditure represents value for money.

The second change requires a decision-maker for a grant, in approving or declining the grant, to have regard to the key principles for administering grants set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*. The bill also

amends the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 to require the publication of that information on the website. That is a key principle of administrative law—that decision-makers make decisions ethically and transparently, and that they, importantly, provide reasons. The bill makes changes to the law to do just that. I understand that the bill will commence on 1 July 2023.

I now turn to some of the circumstances that necessitated the changes. I made a statement entitled *Statement on bushfire funding rorts* in February this year, and I read some of it. I said:

The people of Tenterfield would be justified in feeling ripped off by the NSW Government—the Coalition Government, as it was then—

as details of the bushfire grants rort continue to come out. The Auditor General's report into the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery grants has exposed the lack of integrity, guidelines and transparency, which saw LGAs in Labor held electorates miss out on the first round of grants. The report found former Deputy Premier and Nationals leader John Barilaro inserted himself into the grants process, and added a criteria that projects had to be for a minimum of one million dollars.

No-one knew about that. That was not public and was not part of the condition of the grants. It also worked to exclude projects from councils in Labor-held electorates. I said at the time that it was unconscionable for a party leader to be pork-barrelling with disaster relief funding. It should not happen with any public funding, but to do it with disaster relief funding defies comprehension. I said that John Barilaro said that he wore the nickname Pork Barilaro with pride because his focus was on getting a fair share of the grants for regional communities. The regional community of Tenterfield did not see it that way. I want to get a fair share for regional communities too. That is my job when I come into this place; that is what I do at home. We all want to do that, but it has to be done fairly, properly and ethically.

I asked at the time how Mr Barilaro could deny bushfire recovery funding to Tenterfield when 60 per cent of the local government area was burnt in fires that raged for more than five months. I was out and about with the community during all of that time. I know the extent of damage—there was not only physical damage but also psychological damage to a lot of our farmers. The Tenterfield mayor, Councillor Bronwyn Petrie, was calling for reparations. I said that it was a reasonable request, as Tenterfield Shire Council did not get a fair go through the process. I know that they had some good shovel-ready projects. They were some of the circumstances that gave rise to the bill.

When the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery grants came out, I saw one announced, and I thought, "Where did this grant come from?" I started to look for the program it belonged under and I could not find it. Grants were being announced even before the announcement of the round. At the time the media did not pick it up. It was only later that it got picked up in the Auditor-General's report. I saw one of them announced and I was curious as to where it came from. There were other things. The Auditor-General's report shows how corrupted the process of some of the grants has been. We know that integrity in government matters very much for the community and for the public. It has been an issue at every election and, in fact, has been at the heart of public debate for decades.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** It being 6.00 p.m., in accordance with the earlier resolution, debate is interrupted for inaugural speeches. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later time.

#### *Members*

#### **INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Before calling the member for Heathcote, I warmly welcome all of her friends and supporters to the gallery. It is lovely to see some very familiar faces. I welcome the member's husband, Russell, the member's daughter, Sarah, and some familiar faces to us, General Secretary Dom Ofner, Mark Morey, Shaye Candish, Leighton Drury, Alex Claassens, Mark Diamond and all of the member's friends and supporters. I warmly welcome and introduce the member for Heathcote.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (18:01):** I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we meet and work, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. I wish also to acknowledge the Dharawal people of the country on which the electorate of Heathcote sits. As the traditional custodians and occupants, they have a spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationship with the lands and waters. I thank them for their stewardship over the past 65,000-plus years and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I extend an acknowledgement to any Indigenous brothers and sisters here. I am a strong advocate for social justice and First Nations justice. I am proud to be part of a progressive New South Wales Labor Government that will work on a treaty in New South Wales. We have committed to starting treaty discussions with Indigenous

communities. I look forward to the national referendum to give our First Nations people a voice and the recognition they deserve.

The electorate of Heathcote is a very special and unique part of New South Wales. It takes in the Royal National Park—the second oldest national park in the world—as well as the iconic Sea Cliff Bridge and the Woronora Bridge. Both bridges were proudly built by Labor State governments. The Royal National Park is characterised by coastal cliffs, secluded beaches, eucalyptus-rich bushland, ancient Aboriginal sites and native wildlife. New South Wales Labor governments since 1947 have gazetted 150 national parks and, in the last Labor Government, we protected 123. Given the significance of the Royal National Park to my electorate—which covers from the Sutherland shire in the north to the Illawarra in the south—this is a track record of which I am incredibly proud. We are not averse to bushfires in the Heathcote electorate, and we know how important it is to address climate change in order to avoid a repeat of the 2019-20 catastrophic fires. I love the beach, the surf, the smells of the salty air, our coastal waterways and our bushlands—they are my happy places. I am so grateful to have lived here for most of my life.

The Heathcote electorate is extremely diverse. It consists of traditional mining towns and some of the most creative and artistic communities throughout New South Wales. Four generations of my family reside there. This community really does mean the world to me. It has been an aspiration of mine for a very long time to be here on the floor of this Chamber in Australia's oldest Parliament. It is an honour and a privilege to serve the people of Heathcote and New South Wales in this House over the next four years. Rest assured, I do not—and will not—take this responsibility and opportunity lightly.

I am the youngest of seven children and have six older brothers. I was born in Quirindi, as our dad worked on the railways and was stationed at Werris Creek. I was so lucky to be born into a loving family with so many protectors. You can only imagine how nervous my husband, Russell, was when I first brought him home. When I was four, we made the move back to Engadine. I was raised in a three-bedroom house, not very far away from where I live now. Dad was a train driver and a locomotive inspector. He taught many train drivers, including my good friend and Secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, Alex Claassens, who is here with us today.

Dad was very well respected in the railways and went on to become the employees' representative on the State Rail Authority Board. Dad's role as employees' representative was to assist his fellow employees right across New South Wales. Dad received many phone calls—on the landline in those days—asking for his help or advice on an industrial or workplace matter. Remember, these were shift workers who used to call Dad, night or day, seven days a week. I heard his empathy for his colleagues, some of whom were particularly vulnerable. Dad advocated for and supported them until he eventually retired from the railways after more than 45 years of service.

My mum was a secretary to the Director of Music at the ABC. At the time, the Commonwealth Public Service Act of 1922 was still in force and female Commonwealth Public Service employees were required to resign when they married. Therefore, Mum resigned from that position after marrying Dad. Thankfully, pressure from the public, the Opposition and members of the Government led to the removal of the marriage bar back in 1966 on the grounds that it wasted female talent in the community; that women, rather than the State, were best placed to manage the demands of work and home. Thank you to those suffragettes and activists for their passion for women to have this right to choose. The New South Wales Labor Government would look very different if that draconian Act was still in force.

To our parents, faith, family and friends were so important. They were selfless, kind and loving people, and they made many sacrifices for us. Being the only daughter, my dad and I were very close. In later life, Dad had a desire to go into politics—into the Senate, in fact. However, as Mum's health began to deteriorate, my dad decided not to pursue the Senate. Dad and I were always talking about politics. When we were young, we were always encouraged to play sport, especially team sports. We had a big backyard and played tennis on a cement slab with two outdoor benches as a pretend net. We also played cricket, touch footy, had chickens and a whole Royal National Park to explore for tadpoles and blackberries. Life was good. Mum and Dad provided all they could for us.

Poor Mum did not enjoy cooking or making seven lots of school lunches, and she absolutely detested Vegemite. Mum also did the housework. Can you imagine the washing and ironing for nine people? She ironed hankies and pillow slips, tea towels, everything. She was a devoted wife and mother and was so loving. Mum did not enjoy good health in her later life, but she always remained selfless. Upon visiting her, she would always ask after everyone else. She would never complain; she was strong and resilient. In 2016 Mum passed away surrounded by her family. The palliative care team from the local area health service and the aged care nurses and staff were incredible. Mum had dignity and respect right till the end.

In 2020, four years later, our father passed away. The difference in care was stark over those four years. The nurses at the Sutherland public hospital intensive care unit [ICU] were incredible to Dad and to us every time

Dad was admitted. The last time, when we were told there was nothing more they could do, Dad wanted to go home. Dad was in the same nursing home as Mum but this time there was no palliative care team flying squad. His experience was very different and extremely painful. Thank goodness Dad had us close by to advocate for him. Our family has always been close, and my brothers and I, along with our families, were there for Dad. It was a privilege to be there for Dad; however, it was obvious how health and aged care over those four years had deteriorated. We had aged-care workers in tears and apologising. Those same workers had looked after Mum and they knew the care at every level was not as good for Dad as it was for Mum.

During the recent campaign I spoke to a woman who had a similar story. Her mum was at the end of her life. I said to her, "I totally understand and, if elected, will treat your mum like my mum." I often wonder about those who have no family or friends to advocate for them. What must their last few days look like? My hands were tied then but they are not anymore. I will advocate for us, as a civil society, to resource and support palliative care teams to provide dignity and respect to all at end of life. I thank all New South Wales nurses for their commitment to their profession and note the need for safe staffing levels for all hospital workers. I acknowledge the wonderful NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association. Shaye Candish, the secretary general, is here with us today. I have stood with them for well over 10 years in advocating for more nurses.

I wish to pay particular attention to Judy from the Sutherland Hospital ICU and Colette from the emergency department, who is here with us today. I know how hard they had to fight for personal protective equipment and face shields during the COVID outbreak. There have been many times over the past few years when it was too much for Colette—continually having annual leave denied and the sheer exhaustion of backing up every day to face the masses with COVID and knowing they were short staffed yet again. They faced excessive workloads daily, fatigue and high staff turnover. I am so proud to be part of a New South Wales Labor government that will prioritise the welfare of frontline workers like nurses, teachers and our wonderful paramedics. It is not just about wages for our State's frontline workers; it is about respect for their profession and conditions of employment. Thank you for hanging in there, Colette. We have your back and I will continue to be a strong advocate.

I attended local schools and sat my HSC at St Patrick's College Sutherland. Russell and I have been so fortunate to have many lifelong friends, many of whom are here today. For years they have put up with me and my political discussions. We have laughed and cried over many things in our lives. I cannot thank them enough for always being there for me and my family. My first full-time job was with the Trades and Labor Council, now Unions NSW, working in the occupational health and safety training unit. I realised then and there that this was my calling. I could not help workers with my feet under the desk. So I began my community activism in the Australian trade union movement.

It was at a time when the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1983 was passed and we were training construction workers and union members building Darling Harbour. That is how long ago it was. There was a video that was shown in the training course called "Alice's fight for life." It was about a woman who acquired asbestosis from washing her husband's overalls after work. Alice died a slow and painful death from mesothelioma. It was incomprehensible to me that someone could not return home to their loved ones after a workplace accident or could acquire a terminal disease just by doing their job. My dad used to talk to me about the union struggles and strikes to achieve decent conditions. Dad's father, Pa, was an engineer in the tin mines in Emmaville. He was a proud member of his union. I have his union badge with me today.

I have been a lifelong union member since I was 14 years and nine months old in my first job at Woolworths Engadine. We must never forget the struggles of those who came before us. I stand on the shoulders of great people: unionists who have battled for the right to have safe workplaces and to be paid fairly, and for conditions such as occupational superannuation, which is now often taken for granted. I have worked for many unions over the years, including the Australian Services Union, the Public Service Association, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union. The Rail, Tram, and Bus Union continued my love for trains that was instilled in me by my father. I look forward to working with our wonderful transport Minister, Jo Haylen, to provide a great network—a network that is world class and one we can actually be proud of.

TAFE is another great passion of mine. I studied industrial relations at Gympie TAFE and began organising workers. I am a very proud beneficiary of TAFE. However, in those days TAFE was a vibrant hub for learning, not the ghost towns they have become today. Make no mistake, TAFE changes lives and sometimes saves lives. At a time when we have significant skills shortages, we really need our TAFE more than ever. A stronger advocate for TAFE you will not find. I will work hard to ensure we can save and rebuild our TAFE in New South Wales with our committed Minister, Tim Crakanthorp. Education provides knowledge and knowledge gives you power. Like good-quality health care, regardless of your postcode or your parents' bank account, quality education should be offered to all to provide a lifetime of opportunity. I pay my thanks and respect to all teachers and support staff—though you deserve more than just thanks; you deserve fairer pay and better conditions—something Premier Chris Minns and this New South Wales Labor Government are committed to delivering.

I thank the Deputy Premier and education Minister, Prue Car, for working with the department and the unions. It would also be remiss of me not to thank these frontline workers for putting their lives and the lives of their families at risk every day during the pandemic and beyond, especially friends and family in the teaching profession and education sector: Leonie, Dianne, Bernadette, Kim, Julie, Joanne, Leanne and my nephew Matthew—to name a few. I believe if you have the capability and the drive you should help those that are unable to help themselves. I am a fighter—always have been, always will be. I will champion tooth and nail for our fires, our New South Wales police, our public transport workers and all our wonderful New South Wales public sector workers. I stood with the local community to save from demolition the education precinct at Loftus—a TAFE college and a University of Wollongong campus with a special needs school for local students.

I will fight for the environment and nature to address the climate and biodiversity crisis. Over the years I have campaigned and won to save the Royal National Park from having a freeway, the F6, tear through it. This was a ludicrous idea from the former Government. It would not have been a "freeway" anyway, given it was to have a \$10 toll each way for a car and \$30 each way for a truck. I helped save a wildlife corridor that was a known koala habitat in Woronora Heights from being cleared and developed. Recently in Heathcote National Park, volunteers Tom Kristensen—who is here with us today in the gallery—and Steve Anyon-Smith found a disease-free colony of 80 koalas. I can report today that the colony is prospering, and we now have over 160 koalas. One of those koalas is named Maryanne and one is named Minns after our Premier. To my New South Wales Labor Environment Action Network colleagues, you have taught me so much and we have undertaken great initiatives in this State. With our new New South Wales Labor environment Minister, Penny Sharpe, we will create so many more. I am super excited.

I will continue my work for those with a disability in our community. They have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and the right to quality of life. My good friend Kym Flowers was to be here but she has unfortunately been hospitalised. Kym was a victim of the privatisation of group homes in New South Wales. She was homeless and stranded in Sutherland Hospital for over seven months whilst trying to find a medical home that could accommodate her complex health needs. Her struggles with fairness under the NDIS continue today. Her mum, Penny, is here and she is incredible. Every day she works to give her daughter the voice she deserves. Kym, I hope you are watching from hospital. I will not give up until you have the quality of life you deserve. And, Penny, I will not give up until you have the peace of mind you deserve.

I have had a strong commitment and length of service in both the industrial and political wings of the Labor Party, joining the Australian Labor Party when I was 21. It was because of the Labor values of dignity, respect, equality, fairness and opportunity that I was drawn to standing up and speaking out, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. For me, it has been a long journey to arrive here: three campaigns and 12 years or more all up, at times with many obstacles and roadblocks. But I conquered. As Michelle Obama says, "When they go low, we go high." I have gone high. Here I am and I have the wisdom, life experience and resilience to be a great member for Heathcote. But no-one ever does it by themselves.

I pay tribute to and thank the following for their unwavering support: Unions NSW for their Essential Workers Deserve Better campaign; the Electrical Trades Union; the NSW Teachers Federation; the Fire Brigade Employees Union; the Maritime Union of Australia; the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association; the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union; and the Communications Electrical Plumbing Union. To all the many local branch members, friends and family who have stood with me for many, many years, I will never, ever forget.

I point out two very special friends: Sharryn Usher, a TAFE teacher from Grafton who could not be here because she is teaching at TAFE this evening, and Graham Ottley who should be in the gallery. Graham is a NSW Fire and Rescue officer and was our comic relief during pre-poll. Both Sharryn and Graham never left my side during early voting. I especially wish to mention a local branch member, Peter Ikin. Peter stood beside me on train stations and street stalls for years. He was there rain, hail or shine. Last year he became a life member of the Australian Labor Party and I was honoured to witness that. Unfortunately, Peter passed away the Saturday before the State election.

The last is my beautiful, supportive, caring and loving husband, Russell. None of this is ever easy on our partners. He is my rock, my best friend, and I am so lucky our paths crossed. He is very smart, very kind and most of all makes me laugh. After 30 years of marriage, I still love waking up next to you, sweetheart. We have been blessed with two happy and healthy children. I have had many personal challenges keeping pregnant, with two miscarriages and one stillborn. I share this very personal and painful story to let other women know who I am and that I understand. Russell and I cherish our two cherubs: Sarah, our creative, talented and very bright young woman; and Max, who is currently studying in the United Kingdom, making new friends and new memories. Thank you, children. You are my inspiration. Dad and I are super proud of you both and love you to the moon and back. It is never easy on your family and goodness knows my family have had to make many sacrifices over

many, many years to help me get here. Thank you for believing in me and for your determination and strength too.

My gratitude extends to the Hon. Bob Carr, who is unable to be here today. He has been a great adviser, supporter and bushwalking buddy. To our NSW Young Labor Flying Squad and the mighty Illawarra Young Labor Association and the Southern Sydney Young Labor Association, an enormous thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your many doorknocks and phone banks. You are all amazing and very special to me. To Ryan Park, the Minister with responsibility for health, regional health and for the Illawarra and South Coast, and member for Keira, thank you for all your support and counsel over many years and thank you to your beautiful staff. I am so proud of you in the Health portfolio. You are such a strong advocate for quality health care. Thank you also to my other Illawarra friends and MPs, particularly the member for Wollongong, and Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Paul Scully, and the Federal member for Cunningham, Alison Byrnes. You have long been by my side, doorknocking and providing advice.

To the women and supporters from EMILY's List, thank you. Notably, I am the first woman elected to represent Heathcote in the New South Wales Parliament. To all the wonderful women mentors I have had and continue to have in my life, you provide me with great comfort. I thank the NSW Labor team: Bob Nanva, Dom Ofner, my campaign organiser Alex Costello, Max Kennedy and many more who have supported me for years. I have always appreciated your friendship and experience.

I thank the Clerk of the House and all in the Department of Parliamentary Services for your helpful inductions. It has been a relatively smooth transition. Finally, to brothers in arms David McKinley and Mark Buttigieg, I would not be here without either of you. Your tenacity and advocacy have not faltered for me. You are a great doorknocking buddy, Mark. And, Dave, you are a great adviser. Together you can be a bit of hard work, but I truly thank you and your beautiful wives for your belief in me.

Since being elected I have hit the ground running. As Russell says, I am just like Winnie the Pooh who has fallen into a big honey pot. I feel so comfortable in this role. I have already started visits to schools, day care centres, hospitals, police stations and businesses. I have met a koala named Teddy who was rescued after being orphaned. Teddy was eventually released back into the wild, where he belongs. Recently I was present with Minister Sharpe in the Royal National Park to see female platypuses released back into the park after a 50-year absence. Witnessing that was one of my greatest joys. I look forward to watching them prosper like the koala colony in Heathcote National Park.

When I met with the Sutherland shire police area commander recently, I asked him, "What are the three biggest local issues?" He advised that they were domestic violence, youth support and mental health. It is the hidden discrimination and violence against women in the home and in the workplace that I am most passionate about. I am just one voice, but now we have 50 per cent women in our New South Wales Parliament—women in their rightful place. I commit to working with the Sutherland commander, our local NSW Police Force and youth services and health professionals to help keep all safe and healthy in our community.

Thank you to Premier Chris Minns and Deputy Premier Prue Car for your brave and progressive agendas. I look forward to delivering improvements to Heathcote Road, better public transport services and connectivity, additional hours in the Urgent Care Centre at Bulli Hospital and a school hall at Sutherland Public School. I also look forward to addressing issues such as homelessness, housing and rental reforms. Those measures are desperately needed for our young people and so many others. I thank the people of Heathcote for your trust and confidence in me. You witnessed my determination, my hard work and my love for our community with advocacy and leadership. As a result, you rewarded me by electing me your member for Heathcote.

I have loved your many congratulatory messages, such as "You deserve it," "It's about time," and "You've worked so hard." Know that I will not let you down—all 57, 500 of you. My hard work for you has just begun. I will enjoy my time getting to know each and every one of you. I am super excited to be working with my colleagues in the Minns New South Wales Government to deliver positive outcomes for the people of Heathcote and New South Wales. Apart from the beach and the bush, I have arrived; I have found my happy place.

*Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.*

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Heathcote for her inaugural speech. It was really wonderful to hear about her personal life and so much of the history of the political career that brought her here.

Before calling the member for Balmain, I welcome our guests in the gallery to this sitting of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament in Australia's first and oldest Parliament. This is where democracy started in this country, and it is on best display in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. Do not be confused with the upper House, the Legislative Council; democracy happens in the Legislative Assembly.



I acknowledge in the gallery her husband, Vid, and three children, Maya, Amari and Xavi. I welcome you all. I am sure you are very proud of your wife and mum. I also welcome the member's mum and dad, Jo and Barry. I also acknowledge—because I cannot miss seeing him—the former member for Balmain, Jamie Parker, a good friend to this House. I nearly referred to him as "the honourable". He is one of the most honourable people I ever served with in this House. Joining all of those people in the gallery are so many special guests of the new member for Balmain. Welcome to you all.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (18:39):** I start by acknowledging that we are meeting here today on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that is now the Balmain electorate, where I live and work, the Wangal and Gadigal people, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here with us today. While I stand here today, in the oldest Parliament in Australia, I think it is important to recognise that with the establishment of this place and the arrival of the British colony decades earlier there came severe and lasting implications for the Aboriginal inhabitants of Sydney and New South Wales. I look forward to progressing treaty and truth-telling in this State. We have so much to learn from Indigenous Australians about how to be good custodians of this land, how to live sustainably and how to make sure we have a liveable planet to hand over to future generations.

What an incredible honour it is for me to be standing in this Chamber representing the people of Balmain as part of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament of New South Wales. I am deeply grateful for this responsibility. They say that we stand on the shoulders of giants. In my case, when it comes to the former member for Balmain, I stand on the shoulders of a literal giant in Jamie Parker. Jamie served our community as the member for Balmain for 12 years, the first Greens MP ever elected to the Legislative Assembly in New South Wales. Jamie's presence in this place was large in more ways than one. I have not met another MP who worked with Jamie, no matter which side of politics, who has not had a kind word to say about his positive impact in this Parliament. I am told of his warmth, integrity and ability to work across the Parliament to get positive outcomes for our community and for the people of New South Wales. As many have told me, I do indeed have big shoes to fill. I thank Jamie Parker for being such a great supporter and for trusting me to continue his important work in the New South Wales Parliament.

When Jamie was elected in 2011, he showed the community that a vote for The Greens was not a wasted vote but in fact a vote for a committed local member who will not only work tirelessly to put the needs of the community and the environment first but hold the government of the day to account. Shortly after followed the election in 2015 of the member for Newtown, Jenny Leong, and the member for Ballina, Tamara Smith, whom I am very lucky to be able to now stand alongside in this place. There are also our fantastic Greens colleagues in the other place: Cate Faehrmann, Abigail Boyd, Sue Higginson, and the newly elected Dr Amanda Cohn. I note they are in the Speaker's gallery tonight. What an honour it is to work with such an incredible team of Greens women towards a better future.

I am so proud to stand here as an elected representative of The Greens, a movement that is so much bigger than me. I hope that my success at the recent election is celebrated as a win not only for every member, volunteer, supporter and elected representative of The Greens but also for everyone who has taken a stand to protect our natural environment, everyone who has worked on social justice causes, everyone who has sought peace, and all those who have worked to improve participatory democracy. Those four principles underpin everything that The Greens do, and everyone who has been a part of this movement—past and present—has played a part in my standing in this Chamber today. It is also the first time in Australia that a lower House Greens MP has retired and a new Greens member has been elected in their place—a momentous occasion for The Greens and something I am immensely proud of.

The electorate of Balmain has changed so much over the last few generations, from an industrial heartland to busy inner-city villages full of important heritage, beautiful green spaces and much-loved high streets. Although it has retained some of its industrial history, for many of us who live in Balmain today it is nearly impossible to imagine the old coalmine in Birchgrove—just up the road from Birchgrove Public School—where apartments now stand. It is hard to imagine the bone boilers in Annandale where we now have the beautiful Whites Creek Valley Park, complete with wetlands, a native nursery, community gardens and a food forest. It is hard to imagine the many factories and refineries that dominated the waterfront land around the electorate. Despite the creeping gentrification, Balmain remains an eclectic and diverse community, a place of both immense wealth and immense need, known for its working class and political history and a strong sense of community.

One thing that has not changed about Balmain is the long and proud history of activism. Perhaps that is why I feel so at home. My mum, Jo, who is in the gallery this evening, made sure that my brother and I never accepted that something had to be a certain way because someone more powerful than us said so. She taught us

to question decisions and stand up to those in power if we did not think something was right. I have carried that lesson—to challenge and stand up to power—my whole life.

I can think of many examples of the people of Balmain doing that very thing. In the late 1980s, when the Caltex refinery at Ballast Point was due to close and the land was to be rezoned for expensive residential apartments, the community recognised the desperate need for open green space and spent the next 15 years campaigning for the land to become a public park. We now have the beautiful, award-winning Ballast Point Park. When the State Government proposed to build two expressways straight through the middle of Ultimo and Glebe in the early sixties, destroying homes and heritage in its path, resident action groups and the Glebe Society organised—backed by the wonderful Jack Munday and the Builders Labourers Federation—and stopped the destructive road project. When Callan Park was at risk of sell-off, the community—led by the Friends of Callan Park—rallied to save the parklands over the next 20 years. With the help of Jamie Parker, we have seen \$20 million of investment in the park. It is one of the most well-loved areas of open green space in our part of the inner city.

But perhaps my favourite story of activism is that of Clontarf Cottage. Shortly before I was born, the 1840s stone cottage in Balmain was slated for demolition. It had been neglected for decades, but the community recognised its important heritage significance and the need for more shared community spaces, and decided it was worth protecting. Women conducted sit-ins around the clock, bulldozers were stared down and people were thrown into paddy wagons. When a huge demountable site office was installed on the site to finally get the demolition and development underway, the whole office mysteriously disappeared one night, only to be found early the next morning—a Monday morning—on the footpath of Macquarie Street, just outside this Parliament. The demountable was emblazoned with 10-foot-high letters reading, "Hands off Clontarf". Clontarf Cottage was saved. Some of those people who saved the cottage are here in the gallery this evening.

These days, New South Wales protest laws would have seen a very different outcome. Those incredible, brave people would have faced severe punishment, and I dare say we would not still have the beautiful Clontarf Cottage to enjoy today. I am so inspired by those stories. I am incredibly grateful to the community members for their bravery in staring down power with their vision for something better, and for us to be able to enjoy the wonderful open spaces and heritage buildings across the electorate that have been so hard fought for and won. I am determined to see the right to peaceful protest restored in this State so that people are empowered to shape the decisions that affect their lives.

I grew up in Perth, on Noongar Boodja, Noongar country. We had moved to Perth because my dad, Barry, who is also in the gallery, took a job as a firefighter, which he did for the next 30 years. Listening to my dad's stories of rescues and fire calls and, during particularly bad fire seasons, watching him roll in exhausted, smelling of smoke after long days of fighting fires out in the bush, I felt incredibly inspired by his public service. Dad's job out in the community, caring for people and working together with his team, was such a great example of a meaningful profession. Since I was young I have always wanted to work for my community too—although I recognise that firefighting was perhaps not for me. It also showed me how critical our frontline workers are. Growing up with a parent who works in the emergency services, it is impossible not to recognise what an important role our frontline workers play in our society. All public sector workers across this State, including our teachers, nurses, bus drivers and paramedics, should be paid properly for the work they do and should be able to afford to live in the communities that they serve.

I am a proud product of public education and my childhood was a simple one, mostly spent with my head in a book or playing on the beach. Mum and Dad had a permaculture garden and a worm farm. We were taught to tread carefully on the earth. My teen years were full of lively political debates around the dinner table. Mum had grown up with the politics of Gough Whitlam and had been a Labor staffer in her twenties. Do not worry, she is a firm Green now. We set the world to rights night after night and had much to rage about after Howard was elected. The Howard Government's handling of the Tampa crisis and the two decades of demonisation of refugees and asylum seekers that have followed is what led to my involvement with Mums 4 Refugees, an incredible organisation of women working to advocate for and offer support to asylum seekers and refugees. My friend Dulce Munoz, the national convener of Mums 4 Refugees, is in the gallery tonight. Dulce is a wonderful, tireless ally of people seeking asylum, and I am so glad to know so many people across many organisations advocating for refugee and asylum seeker rights. Everyone deserves the chance to live a safe and meaningful life, free from persecution.

One of the things that I am most proud of as a representative of The Greens is our commitment to social justice and an interest in the struggles of marginalised communities across the world. It is that commitment to social justice that compels us to address the glaring inequalities that also persist in our own society, and informs our desire to make sure that all people have access to quality education, affordable housing and decent health care. Before I found myself in this place, my career was spent working in fraud prevention. I worked in credit card and

internet banking fraud, where my teams saw large sums of money laundered and shifted overseas. Many of the people were victims of complex scams where perpetrators would deliberately target vulnerable people.

What has shocked me in recent years is the parallels that I see between those who were victims of scams and fraud, and those who are victims of gambling harm. Similarly, those who often fall prey to the harmful, predatory gambling industry are those who are vulnerable, those who are lonely and those who can least afford it. More money is lost per capita to gambling in New South Wales than anywhere else in the world. That can and must change. Political decisions must be made in the best interests of our communities and not in the best interests of the gambling industry. I am so proud that The Greens have taken such a strong stance on gambling, and I will continue to press for meaningful gambling reform during my time as an MP.

Like so many people in my community and across the State, I have been frustrated by a lack of decisive climate action. That frustration led me back to university to study community development and sustainability. I felt a pressing need to make sure that we were handing over a liveable planet to future generations, and that resolve has only been strengthened since having our three kids. Over the last decade I got more involved with The Greens, organised local climate actions, worked with businesses on sustainability initiatives, campaigned to protect green space and championed the need for better cycleways across the inner west. I have met thousands of people on a similar quest, growing, re-using, sharing and connecting. It is our moral responsibility to protect and preserve the precious ecosystems that sustain life on earth, to keep our air and waterways free from pollution and to protect our native forests. So many people I talk to share my determination that we can live differently, more sustainably, if only governments will get on board.

I am a passionate believer that we can build cities and regional communities that put people and the planet first, if we only have the political will. Instead, what we have seen is a love of polluting toll roads rather than investment in public and active transport. Our community has been torn apart over many years by WestConnex, a project that will inevitably result in more cars on the road and cost the public a fortune in tolls, all to be funnelled into the pockets of private toll operators. That is not the way to create cities of the future. The people of New South Wales deserve world-class public transport and to be able to get from one place to another safely on their bikes or on foot. That would bring the benefit of not only making our neighbourhoods more liveable but also making people healthier. It is a critical step in working to reduce emissions and to tackle the climate crisis.

Similarly, when we look at housing, we see development that is driven by developer profit, instead of by the need to provide people with a safe place to live. We continue to see public land sold off forever, with very little set aside for public or affordable housing. When we have over 50,000 applicants on the social housing waitlist in this State, more of our public land should be used for public and affordable housing, not a small portion. We also see cheap, inefficient homes being built because the need for developer profits is put above all else—above the need for people to live in comfort, above the need for people to have bills they can afford to pay, and above the need to reduce emissions. It is time that we see policy made in the best interests of the people who live here, not led by property developers, the gambling lobby or the fossil fuel industry.

It would be reticent of me to finish this speech without talking about women and the need for more women to be involved in public life. I am so glad to see that this Fifty-Eighth Parliament is more representative of our community, and I congratulate the Government on a ministry that is 50 per cent women. As many other women in New South Wales Parliament would know, it is not a straightforward journey being a mother of young children and representing your community in this place. I am grateful to every woman who has come before me laying the foundations for more equal representation. I was pleased to see the member for North Shore with her little two-year-old son on her lap on the first day of Parliament when we were sworn in.

This world is very different to the world faced by my grandmothers. My nana Gwen had to fight with the Department of Education to do something as simple as send her daughters to school in winter in warm and practical pants. My dad's mum, Dossy, had to leave her job as a teacher because she dared to get married. A woman's place is in the House—in this House—representing our communities, making laws and creating change. There are so many people to thank, without whom I would not be standing here. To Jamie Parker, your family Shelley and Beatrix, thank you for giving so much of your time. To Eleanor, who is watching online with her new baby, Max, and the amazing staff who have stuck with me since the election, Ned, Anastasia and David, thank you.

To The Greens NSW, those campaign staff and the Balmain campaign team who worked so hard, Zoe, Lucy and Courtney, thank you. Thanks to my Greens colleagues in the New South Wales Parliament, Tamara, Jenny, Cate, Abigail, Sue and Amanda, and to our colleagues in the Federal Parliament, Senator Mehreen Faruqi and Senator David Shoebridge, who previously represented us in this Parliament. To my fellow Greens councillors on the Inner West Council—Liz, Justine, Dylan and Marghanita—and City of Sydney Deputy Lord Mayor Sylvie Ellsmore, thank you for your support. To my friends, my village, who have stuck alongside me, thank you.

To Rochelle Porteous, who handed me the baton on the Inner West Council and started my political career, thank you. To the Port Jackson Greens, the Inner Sydney Greens and those who volunteered and worked huge hours, Jen Barron—who is also watching online—Chris Holley, Michael Davis, Wally Sloss, Ismet Tastan, and the wonderful Federation of Democratic Kurdish Society Australia who stood with us, Leo Edwardsson, Elly Baxter, Hall Greenland, Michael Hanna, Sandra Langtree, Derek Bolton, Ben Prag, Adrienne Schilling and Michael West, thank you. There are many more of you, another couple of hundred wonderful, important volunteers. I am sorry that I cannot name all of you, but I want you to know I am so very grateful for every bit of work that you did during the campaign to hand out flyers, put up corflutes, letterbox and talk to your neighbours about how politics can be done differently.

To my mum, Jo, thank you for showing me what it means to be a strong, fearless woman in this world. My dad, Barry, is thoughtful, funny and kind—I cannot look at you because I will get upset. Thank you for teaching me how to listen. Thank you both for dropping everything to be here and to keep our family functioning. I am so glad that you have both been able to be here tonight. To my husband, Vidyut, who has stepped up and taken on so much to give me the space to be here, thank you for coming on this wild ride alongside me. Thank you for understanding what drives me and for always bringing so much humour and energy to our family. To your family, our family in the UK—Ravi, Vijaya, Devika, Ashwini, Shaku, Jonathan and Stef—we have felt your love and support from afar.

To our beautiful kids, Maya, Xavi and Amari—small but mighty—you are the reason I am here. Thank you for sharing me with our community, for keeping my feet firmly on the ground and for not being embarrassed about getting around everywhere on the back of my bicycle. I promise to do everything that I can in this place to give you and all the children who are here and those who are yet to be born a safe future. I promise to get home to read you a bedtime story as often as I can. I should also say while we are here, Amari, happy birthday for tomorrow.

Finally, to the people of Balmain, thank you for giving me this incredible opportunity to represent you in the New South Wales Parliament. No matter who you voted for, I will do my best to listen and to represent your values. I will work every day to make our State a fairer place to live and to create a more sustainable society that we can all be proud of. Thank you.

*Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.*

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the earlier resolution, the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for Drummoyne will now proceed. I take this opportunity to welcome specifically some of the guests of the member for Drummoyne. I recognise the parents of the member for Drummoyne, Carlo and Betty Di Pasqua; sisters, Claudia and Olivia; the member's partner, Andrew Manny—welcome, Andrew—grandmother Maria Biriano; New South Wales Liberal Party State Director, Chris Stone; President of the Young Liberal Movement of Australia, Dimitry Palmer; Drummoyne State Electoral Conference President, Hugo Robinson; City of Canada Bay Councillor Michael Megna and Councillor Anthony Bazouni; and I wish to recognise the former member for Drummoyne, John Sidoti. John, it is wonderful to see you. It is now my privilege to call the member for Drummoyne.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (19:14):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. In my first contribution to this House, I congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker of the House and thank you for appointing me to serve as Temporary Speaker. I look forward to working with you. I begin by acknowledging the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the land on which we meet today. I also acknowledge the Wangal people, the traditional owners of the Drummoyne electorate, and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

I stand here today with immense gratitude for the people of the Drummoyne electorate who have elected me to be their member of Parliament. It is an incredible honour, and the privilege that has been given to me is something I will carry in my heart every day in my service. To my community in the suburbs of Abbotsford, Breakfast Point, Cabarita, Canada Bay, Chiswick, Concord, Concord West, Drummoyne, Five Dock, Homebush, Liberty Grove, Mortlake, North Strathfield, Rhodes, Rodd Point, Russell Lea and Wareemba—thank you.

I am a 27-year-old woman, the granddaughter of Italian migrants, the first in my immediate family to go to university, the youngest-ever Liberal woman to enter this Parliament. Let my election be a message to young people, to women and to people with last names that are hard for others to spell and pronounce: You belong in this place. Like all good stories, mine starts with family. The way I see the world, the values I hold and my beliefs all stem from my family. It comes from my Italian culture, the way I was raised and the lessons I was taught through the example of my parents and grandparents.

My family story is just one in a rich tapestry of migrant stories in my multicultural community. Approximately 40 per cent of the Drummoyne electorate is from an Italian or Chinese background—stories that

centre around hope and gratitude for this lucky country, Australia. In the 1960s my grandparents migrated to Australia from Italy. My maternal grandfather, Giuseppe, was born in Lipari and my nonna, Maria, was born in Salina—both part of the Eolian Islands located off Sicily.

My nonno was the hardest worker I have ever known and in many ways I inherited his work ethic, but what I am most proud of is that I carry his big heart and his love for people. I often hear the joke that you cannot go to an Italian nonno's house without getting fed. Well, that is how it was at my grandparents' house too. At family lunches and dinners, Nonno would go around and put an extra piece of meat on your plate. Even if you were full, you could not say no. You had to eat it, or Nonno would get offended. If you stopped by his home for a quick hello, you could not leave without eating something. How Nonno felt about making sure people ate is often something we make fun of and remember fondly, but really it is quite poignant. My grandparents knew what it meant to be hungry. They wanted to make sure no-one else felt that way. It is the reason they came to Australia and worked so hard—all for their family so they will never be hungry.

My nonna, Maria, who is in the gallery today, has passed on many of her recipes to me and she is the best cook I know. She is warm, caring, wise and kind—and I am sentimental, just like her. My nonno was a tiler and he probably tiled almost every house owned by an Italian in my electorate—and, no joke, that is actually a lot. As a child I loved when we visited the CBD, not just because of the pretty sites but because my dad would point out all the places and job sites that Nonno worked on. When I go to the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney, I do not look at the many different stores. Strangely enough—hear me out first—I look at the floors because my nonno laid the tiles in the QVB, and indeed laid the tiles in many places and buildings all over Sydney. For me, it is a permanent reminder, and indeed a physical one, of the contributions migrants like my nonno have made to our country.

My paternal grandfather is also a Giuseppe. He was strong, stubborn and undoubtedly Sicilian. He had a heart of gold. He came to Australia alone to try to make some money for his family, leaving his widowed mother and sister in Italy. For the first few years in Australia he worked in Queensland cutting sugar cane during the season. He settled in Sydney and worked hard as a factory worker. His proudest achievements were his family and the house he built with my Nonna Angela in Concord West. My nonna was a working mum of four children. She and my nonno juggled family and work to get ahead. I think I get my independence from her.

My nonno would tell everyone that I was his granddaughter—he was so proud. When I was elected to council, he would always make sure to keep a copy of the newsletter that would be sent to each household. The back page of each edition lists the contact details of each councillor. I used to be about third on the list—which, I am told by staff, is chosen in no particular order. I went to visit my grandparents one afternoon, and I could see that my grandfather was concerned. I asked him what was wrong, and he said, "Why have you moved down the list? What did you do?" Well, Nonno, my one wish is that you were here to see this victory, because now I will be sending out my own newsletter as the proud member for Drummoyne.

In 2020 my world changed. In the time before that, I had spent 25 years of my life blessed with all four of my grandparents. Sadly, in exactly one year and two days, my family lost our two "Mr Joes", as they liked to call each other. This was a pivotal moment in my life. The grief I felt changed me. I still hold this grief today, but now I have the strategies and the mindset to manage it. I am the biggest advocate for mental health services because of what I have been through. My life felt like it had been shattered to pieces. How do I live without the people that have shaped me? I now realise I do not have to, because their example is enshrined in all I do.

Over the past few years, I have been able to gain a sense of maturity that I believe only comes from feeling deep pain. In that time, my family and I cared for my grandparents. We had to navigate death, health scares, personal tragedies and some really difficult situations. In 2020 my nonna and nonno also lived with us. In those few short months, I learnt so much about life and about living. I learnt qualities of patience. I became very persuasive, often debating with my nonno to eat some food and take his tablets. So, to the colleagues I will debate in this Chamber—watch out; I have had great practice!

What I came to understand is that ageing is a privilege. Time is not something that we are all gifted in this life. Growing old should be treated with dignity and respect. Our systems should not just give up on someone because of their age. If a person shows they are willing to fight then we must advocate and do all we can to enable them to do so. In this Parliament we must govern for all people, including those who are marginalised and vulnerable. In my electorate we have a broad spectrum of demographics and economic and social groups, and we have a diverse multicultural make-up. It is something I will remember each day of my service.

I had the best childhood. I grew up with my family, cousins and friends around me—many are in the gallery today. I have fond memories of making tomato sauce in my grandparents' garage, making homemade pizza in the backyard oven, making salami in wintertime, watching my nonno make homemade wine and eating the fruit and vegetables grown in the garden all year round. I want to make sure that we encourage people to connect with

different cultures and backgrounds. I would like to see policies that encourage people to learn a language other than English. Learning about different cultures brings perspective and it makes us empathetic.

Every person in this place is the product of a strong education system. It is important we invest in our children and give them opportunities to learn and particularly to be immersed in other cultures and languages, because that is how we open ourselves to new ways of thinking. Australia is the most successful and free multi-faith and multicultural country in modern history. As a representative of a diverse community in this Parliament, it is my obligation to ensure we protect this.

I grew up in a household with two sisters. My parents made sure that we always knew we would be judged on who we are as people. We were empowered to be strong-willed, independent and compassionate. Growing up, I never once felt inferior to my male counterparts. My parents made sure we tried our best in everything and that we treated all people with respect and dignity. At Christmas, my mum took us to the local nursing home to sing Christmas carols. I still remember, as a teenager, walking the streets of Drummoyne and doorknocking with my sister for the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal. Funnily enough, that was actually great practice for the doorknocking that would come some 15 years later when I decided to run for Parliament.

I am a product of a Catholic school education—an education I am proud of because it did not just teach me about subjects and topics, it instilled in me the importance of social justice, consideration, compassion and tolerance of others. I went to Domremy College in the heart of my electorate in Five Dock. Domremy is a school of the Order of the Presentation Sisters, where we are inspired by two strong women: St Joan of Arc and Nano Nagle. At school we were taught to "light the lantern and keep it burning bright" in all that we do and everywhere we go. That message has stayed with me since leaving high school. It is the reason why I feel so strongly about service and this vocation. I take pride in my integrity, in my character and in authentically being me.

I am proud of my Catholic faith and I am thankful for the way religion has shaped me. It has shaped my community too. In the latest census, Drummoyne had the second highest number of Catholics in the State. My upbringing, my education, my teachers and my parents all made me believe that I could do anything. Up until my late teens, when I left school and I started university, I believed that. It was not until I became an adult that I felt that perhaps women do get overlooked, not because of their ability but because of their gender. It is something many of us in this room know all too well. I want to work for a society—indeed, a world—where women are liberated by choices. We have come so far, but we still have so far to go.

When I was first encouraged to think about running for the seat of Drummoyne, I thought long and hard. Contrary to what people may think, I was not sure I wanted this life just yet. I was encouraged to run because people told me, "You don't have children yet. You're not married. You don't really have anything to hold you back." That infuriated me. Do we say these things to men? If those things need to be a consideration, they should be a woman's consideration. Frankly, it should not be up for discussion by anyone else. My motivation is to give back to a community that has given my family and me everything we have; it is my passion for the people of the Drummoyne electorate; it is because I listen and because I stand up for what is right. I want to be a role model for girls, for young people and for women, so they can know that they belong in this Parliament, in their workplaces and in their community—that, indeed, they can feel empowered to make decisions that are best for them and that merit truly wins and means the best candidate for the job.

I want young women to believe in themselves and to be accepted for who they are and what they offer—not to be evaluated by whether or not, as professional women, we might have a baby or choose to get married. None of that impacts on our ability to do our work and have a career. I want to be part of policy development that brings innovative solutions for working mothers, from the perspective of someone who hopes to have children soon, and that might assist women experiencing similar circumstances to me. I am proud to be a Liberal. I am proud to stand with a party that represents my values of family, community and hard work. I believe in sensible, common-sense and centre-right policies. I believe in equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome.

I will work to ensure that every person in my community and in this State has the opportunities available for them to succeed. It is why I will advocate for education, starting in early childhood and following on to both public and private schools. I know firsthand how life-changing a holistic education is. I want our local children to be educated in the best facilities that promote learning and that have the necessary funding and resources to do so. I know that knowledge is power. I want to empower young people and provide them with options at school to learn practical skills for the future, like how to save, how to prepare taxes and how to invest.

I value small business and the people who choose to start a small business for the opportunities that they give others. I started working at the age of 14. Small businesses gave me my start in life. For several years, I juggled working three jobs as I had aspirations to save money for my own home. Working in small businesses taught me how to communicate, taught me to show initiative and gave me the skills to work in a team. I have

taken these skills with me to this place. My community has a thriving small business hub. It is home to established names, was the birth place of the Victa lawnmower and is home to people who are working hard and trying their best. I want to see policies that slash red tape, abolish payroll taxes and help businesses thrive. More often than not, small businesses are the ones that give young people a go.

I do not pretend to know what it is like to own a small business and to worry about how I will pay all of my employees, but I do promise to listen and consult with my business community so that I can best represent them in this place. In a time when the cost of living for households is rising, and where there is increased global and economic uncertainty, it is now more important than ever that politics is about people. It is why I ran a grassroots campaign focused on talking to people and listening to their concerns. I promise to do that each day of my service. I want to be an accessible leader—one that is seen in the community every day, not just at election time.

People told me during the campaign that they worry about housing affordability. I am part of a generation of young people that cannot afford to own a home where they grew up. It is a difficult thought that my children may not have the same upbringing that I had. That is why I will work in a bipartisan manner to be part of solutions to this problem. I am someone that appreciates and listens to both sides of an argument. I try to find solutions that are balanced because I believe good policy is robust and based on comprehensive consultation. Throughout the campaign, I spoke to many self-funded retirees who are struggling. I want to advocate for and see policies where their circumstances are better reflected.

I spoke to many elderly migrants that worked labour-intensive jobs and saved everything they had to buy property to support their retirement. They often were not educated enough to understand or trust the stock market and preferred to put their money into physical assets that they could see. Due to an obsession with land tax revenue by successive governments, they are now struggling to pay their bills. After paying land tax and all outgoings, they are left with little. That has a flow-on effect for renters and small businesses, and it results in rising costs. It is just one example of where we need to develop policies that consider both sides and collaborate better with the Federal Government to find solutions.

I come to this place having served as a councillor. I was first elected to the City of Canada Bay Council in 2017, and in 2022 I was elected unanimously by all of my colleagues to serve as deputy mayor. That is right; Labor and The Greens voted for me. I think that shows who I am as a person. I am someone who works across party lines to achieve results for my community. It is something that I will continue in this place. My time in local government has shown me that there is an overwhelming need for reform of the planning system. It requires comprehensive policy changes made holistically. Planning that is ad hoc, rather than a thorough or integrated process, has drastic impacts on local amenity and the environment. I have come to believe that communities are not just made but developed through forward thinking. When we talk about planning, we need better dialogue between local and State governments that considers transport, employment opportunities, infrastructure, open space and community hubs. Without these things, and without this vision, we cannot foster the communities of tomorrow.

I acknowledge the 14 members of Drummoyne that have come before me, including my immediate predecessor, John Sidoti. Before me, there has been only one other female member for Drummoyne, and I am the first Liberal female member for Drummoyne. I recognise former Federal member for Reid Craig Laundry for his guidance. I acknowledge all of my predecessors and thank them for their contributions and service to our community. Drummoyne was held by Labor for 49 years prior to the Liberal Party winning the electorate in 2011. I am proud that my community has chosen me—someone who is born, bred and raised in that community—to represent them. It is a little-known fact that in 1968 a young John Howard ran unsuccessfully for Drummoyne. Thankfully, he went on to lead an outstanding life of public service and inspired a generation of people, including me.

It was the Liberal Party, and a Liberal member, that delivered a legacy of infrastructure for my community after 49 years of Labor. That includes the \$341 million stage one redevelopment of Concord hospital and the completion of the congestion-busting WestConnex project. It is an electorate where every train station and ferry wharf is inclusive for all due to accessibility upgrades. There are three new schools, and the game-changing Sydney Metro West will have three stops in the electorate. I too wish to be a part of visionary contributions to infrastructure in the inner west and beyond. I will continue to advocate for our community because there is still so much work to do. I will fight for Concord hospital and the resources and facilities that it deserves. During the recent election campaign, I was proud to stand with former Premier Dominic Perrottet and former health Minister Brad Hazzard to announce a new emergency department and intensive care unit for Concord hospital. That is something that Labor did not commit to.

I will be working hard to make sure that this upgrade is delivered for our community. In the future I want to see local residents and families being able to access Concord hospital for expanded services like paediatrics

and obstetrics. I want our growing population to be able to access healthcare services close to home without having to travel out of the area. I will advocate for an upgrade to Concord High School, which is the only public high school in my electorate. I want to see better transport for our community, especially buses and ferries, and I will fight for the metro to be delivered on time because our community desperately needs fast and efficient transport options. I will advocate for our beautiful local environment and encourage active and healthy lifestyles through promoting access to our 35 kilometres of foreshore, maintaining our picturesque Bay Run and planning the creation of a second Bay Run. I want our community organisations and sporting clubs to know that, in me, they will always have a supporter.

This election campaign was won because of our vision for our community. My campaign was about the future. It was about important investment in infrastructure and supporting and enabling our local community to thrive. It made me proud that I had such strong support. I was stopped on the street many times during the campaign by people saying that they had never seen a local candidate with so many corflute signs in front yards. I had mums telling me that their kids were playing games in the car where they would count the number of signs from point A to point B. The local level of support was extremely humbling. I thank Dominic Perrottet for his support of me when he was Premier. He visited Drummoyne every chance he could and offered encouragement, both publicly and privately. To the many Ministers who visited during the campaign, who helped me and showed my community that I was well supported, thank you. I will not forget it.

To every single person in the gallery here tonight, you have contributed to this result. Thank you. My victory is your victory. I could not have achieved what I have without your efforts—and what a mammoth effort it was. To all the volunteers—some are loyal Liberal Party members and others just wanted to support me—it is impossible to name each and every one of you, but please know that I have immense gratitude for what you have done for me. Thank you for manning pre-poll and polling booths, for joining me at train stations and ferry wharves on weekends and for doorknocking with me. Thank you for braving heatwaves and rain to support me. This was an amazing effort and I appreciate all that every volunteer has done for me.

To my campaign manager, Hugo, who by the end became an adopted family member, I am grateful for your time, encouragement, energy and support. To my campaign team—Dimitry, Chris Rath, John, Jan, Peter, Ben, Doug, Mas, Laura, Chanel, Aiden, Alexandra, Ben, Frank, Nick, Georgia, Terry, Chi, Simon, Michael, Anthony, Ken, Sandra, Chris, Lisa and Anne—thank you. To my family, I love you all so much. I know that you are making a sacrifice for me. To my parents, Betty and Carlo, I am so proud to be your daughter. Thank you for keeping me grounded, for loving me, for supporting me and for giving me the best foundation in life that has made me the person I am today. To my two sisters, Claudia and Olivia, I hope you know in your hearts how strong you both are. You are smart, intelligent and kind-hearted, and you both make me proud.

To my grandparents and my nonna, Maria, who is in the gallery, I am so blessed. I will never forget the sacrifices you made so that your children and grandchildren could have endless opportunities in this country. To Andrew, I love you with all my heart and I am so grateful to have you in my life. You are my rock. I fell in love with you because of the beautiful person that you are and for our shared values of family. I cannot wait to start a family of our own. Finally, to my community, I make a solemn promise that I will lead with humility and serve with my heart in the right place. I promise to listen. I promise to collaborate and work constructively with all of my colleagues to achieve positive outcomes. I wake up grateful each day for the tremendous honour of being your representative elected to this Fifty-Eighth Parliament. I will not take this privilege for granted. Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues.

*Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.*

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Drummoyne. I am sure all of her guests in the gallery, particularly her family and close friends, are very proud of her.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I commend the member for Drummoyne for delivering one of the most beautiful speeches given in this Chamber. I thank her for the insight she has given the House into her life and her journey to Parliament. I know she will be a fantastic advocate for her community.

*Community Recognition Statements*

**LORETTA WALKER**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (19:47):** I recognise Loretta Walker. Loretta started attending Doonside Little Athletics Centre in 2008 with her two boys, Liam and Rhys. Loretta, together with her husband, Wayne, immediately got involved and helped wherever needed, including time keeping and recording, setting up tents at carnivals and supporting junior athletes. Her canteen duties are onerous, including watching out for specials to stock the canteen, scheduling volunteers, cooking sausages and backing up in the off-season for school carnivals. Loretta is generally the first to arrive and the last to leave. Loretta has held various committee positions,



including treasurer and canteen manager. Loretta is one those dedicated people who keeps on volunteering even though her children are no longer there. Loretta works in our education system and volunteers for the bakery run to have fresh bread and food for the school's breakfast club. I thank Loretta for her endless commitment to the club and the school. I congratulate Loretta Walker on becoming a life member of Doonside Little Athletics Centre.

#### **EASTWOOD THORNLEIGH DISTRICT TENNIS ASSOCIATION**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:48):** As an avid fan and regular player of tennis, I was honoured to be invited to the 100th anniversary of the Eastwood Thornleigh District Tennis Association located in Pennant Hills Park. With the electoral redistribution, Eastwood Thornleigh District Tennis Association joined the newly formed Wahroonga electorate. This visit marked my introduction to the club. It was a warm and welcoming place with people from across all generations in attendance. I enjoyed a sausage sizzle and had a tour with the honorary secretary, Clare Perry, and the president, Mary Baker. The club was formed in 1923 and has been growing ever since, as evident from the large community turnout on the day and the dedicated and knowledgeable management team. I look forward to a strong relationship with the club. They are one of the many great sporting clubs in the Wahroonga electorate, and I congratulate them on 100 years of operation.

#### **SCRAPBOOKER'S CONFETTI BOX**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism) (19:49):** I acknowledge Carol and Pat Deal, Helen Ryan and the crew from The Scrapbooker's Confetti Box for the support they provided to those impacted by the Black Summer bushfires. Communities impacted by the bushfires, especially those in the South Gippsland region of Victoria, lost everything. Wanting to do what they could to help out, Carol, Pat, Helen and the crew ran a craft drive to gather new supplies for those who lost theirs. The team received an overwhelming number of supplies. In fact, they were able to fill a storage container with donations from our shores as well as from around the globe. At Christmastime the team went and distributed all the supplies across the South Gippsland region. This was greatly appreciated by all. I thank Carol, Pat, Helen and all those involved for their efforts. Their generosity has certainly touched many lives.

#### **ALLAN CROUCH, OAM**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:50):** Allan Crouch, OAM, is the toast of Woolgoolga, with a prestigious award from the Returned and Services League of Australia. Allan, who is the Woolgoolga RSL sub-branch vice-president, has been honoured with one of only four national 2023 Anzac of the Year awards. This recognises his support and dedication to the RSL and community engagement in Woolgoolga. Award recipients have served their fellow Australians and the community positively, selflessly and compassionately. For more than 60 years, Allan has dedicated himself to serving his nation and people, beginning with a career in the Army Reserve, in addition to his civilian employment and family responsibilities. For decades Allan has been involved in community service organisations including Lions and Meals on Wheels. He is renowned for his feats on the hockey field and for Masters hockey in particular. I congratulate Allan on this well-deserved recognition of his selfless service to our community.

#### **LEPPINGTON VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:51):** Last week was Volunteer Week. To mark the occasion, I recognise some of the amazing volunteer organisations that are dedicated to the community of Leppington. The State Emergency Service has worked tirelessly the past few years, helping communities respond to over 80,000 requests for assistance in 2022 alone. I was proud to do my bit for Wear Orange Wednesday, donning a stunning orange tie in thanks to the work of SES units at Liverpool, Campbelltown and Camden. I thank them for their service to the people of Leppington. I pay tribute also to volunteers in our local sporting clubs and associations. Game day would not be possible without the tireless work of those fabulous volunteers. Finally, I pay tribute to the many members of the various Parents and Citizens Associations across Leppington. As a P&C member, I know how much time volunteers devote to fetes, discos, sausage sizzles, cake drives and other fundraisers in support of their schools.

#### **KU-RING-GAI LITTLE ATHLETICS ANNUAL AWARDS**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (19:52):** I was honoured to join the Ku-ring-gai Little Athletics at its annual awards presentation on Sunday 30 April 2023 by West Lindfield Sport and Recreation Club. It is an amazing volunteer-run organisation that provides opportunities for our youth in our local area to get involved and excel across various track and field events. Founded in 1977, Ku-ring-gai Little Athletics is now in its forty-sixth season. As a keen runner, it was wonderful to spend time with our little athletes and present them with their awards. I acknowledge President Michael Hooton, Vice-President James Fisher, Secretary Simon Clatworthy and other amazing volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the course of the season. I look forward to engaging further with Ku-ring-gai Little Athletics and wish them every success as they prepare for their next season.

**SERGEANT BRENDAN DONNELLAN AND SENIOR CONSTABLE PAUL DOYON**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:53):** On behalf of the people of Auburn, I thank Sergeant Brendan Donnellan and Senior Constable Paul Doyon, who retired earlier this month. Both men graduated from the New South Wales Police Academy in Goulburn in 1989 and have had varied careers across policing in Sydney. They were two of the most experienced members of the Auburn Police Area Command, with Sergeant Donnellan serving 34 years and Senior Constable Doyon serving 33½ years in the NSW Police Force. Sergeant Donnellan spent 15 years as police custody sergeant at the Silverwater jail, having previously been relieving inspector with the Holroyd Local Area Command for four years, between 2002 and 2006, and a member of the police media unit. Senior Constable Doyon was the education officer at Auburn for six years, having previously served as weapons instructor for nine years, and was heavily involved in training and development of NSW Police Force officers for many years. On behalf of the Auburn community, I thank Sergeant Donnellan and Senior Constable Doyon for their ongoing service to the NSW Police Force, the New South Wales community and, in particular, the people of Auburn.

**MRS ANNA PISTILLO**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:54):** Today I recognise Mrs Anna Pistillo for her contribution to the City of Griffith and its outlying districts over the past 58 years. Anna moved to Griffith in the mid-sixties and immediately embraced the town, and the town embraced her. To this day Anna is recognised as Miss Anne, from her role as host of *Romper Room* and *The Birthday Book*, broadcast live from MTN9 studios in Griffith in the sixties. She was involved in amateur theatre, conducted the Italian choir and compered fashion parades. Mrs Pistillo also taught at over nine schools through her career and worked with DoCS, TAFE and the Charles Sturt University campus at Griffith. A tireless advocate for multiculturalism in the community, she taught English as a second language, established the Catholic Multicultural Resource Centre, was the regional multicultural adviser to schools and a member of numerous committees, including that for the SBS broadcast tower. Other community contributions included committee memberships for Griffith Italian Museum, Griffith Regional Theatre and the annual Vintage Festival. Miss Anne remains a local identity who is much loved in the community.

**WORLD RESCUE CHALLENGE**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:55):** We know that our emergency service heroes are world class, but some of them compete on the world stage to prove it. In September a number of Port Stephens SES rescue members were selected to represent Australasia at the 2022 World Rescue Challenge in Luxembourg. The local team was up against 71 units from around the globe to demonstrate its rescue skills. Teams had to respond to multiple scenarios involving road rescues and complex extrications. It is wonderful to know that local SES members David Douglas, Jane Huebner, Ken Hepplewhite, Ken Douglas, Tim Troon, Steven Young, Tony Northbrook-Hine and David Cockbain are world-class extrication operators and acknowledged for what they do. Separately, Marine Rescue Lemon Tree Passage volunteer Chris Dando recently took home gold in the Australasian Police and Emergency Services Games in New Zealand. Chris competed in the two-kilometre ocean swim event in Rotorua, taking out first place in a time of 37 minutes. Our emergency service members are superstars on and off the field, and I commend those local residents for representing Port Stephens in international events. Volunteers not only keep us safe but also make us proud.

**WILLOUGHBY THEATRE COMPANY**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (19:56):** I take immense pride in the artistic talent that abounds in my electorate of Willoughby. On Friday 12 May my daughters and I attended a superb performance of *The Sound of Music* by Willoughby Theatre Company. Located in Chatswood, Willoughby Theatre Company is a non-profit community organisation that presents a variety of performances, from full musicals to concerts, and strives to reach new levels of artistic excellence. On Friday night the company achieved just that with its outstanding production of *The Sound of Music*. My little girls and I were enamoured with this iconic musical and the rendition of some of the most famous songs ever performed on stage. I offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to the talented cast, backstage crew, ensemble, leadership, support staff and all involved in making it happen, including the many guests present. With such wonderful music, sets, costumes, dancing and choreography, this was one of Willoughby Theatre Company's best performances yet.

**SINILIA RADIVOJEVIC**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (19:58):** I thank Sinilia Radivojevic for her invitation to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Australia's Biggest Morning Tea on Saturday 6 May 2023 at the Holiday Inn near Cabramatta. This was a heartwarming occasion. I recognise the efforts of Sinilia, who has hosted this event in my community for the past 30 years without fail. For nearly four decades Sinilia has selflessly volunteered for Cancer Council NSW

and is well known in my community for her strong commitment towards promoting cancer awareness. I express my sincere appreciation to Sinilia for her remarkable efforts. I am fortunate to have individuals like Sinilia, who tirelessly strive for a better future, within my community.

#### **RYE PARK MEMORIAL HALL CENTENARY**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:58):** I acknowledge the rich history of Rye Park Memorial Hall, which recently celebrated its 100th year since its formal establishment. It was originally known as the Smiths Hall in 1920, but due to successful fundraising it was renamed Rye Park Memorial Hall in 1923 to commemorate those who served in World War I. Extensions later occurred in 1953 to commemorate those who served in World War II. In acknowledging the hall and beautiful history of Rye Park, including those who call the village home, I simply cannot thank the current committee enough. This group of 14 volunteers does an outstanding job. The hall is made available for a variety of events within the village, such as weddings, wakes and birthdays. It is an exceptional asset for the community. It was a real honour to spend 22 April with the Rye Park community. The memories created are ones I will forever cherish.

#### **WESTERN SYDNEY MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (19:59):** On Saturday 13 May I attended the Women in Leadership Workshop organised by the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre in my electorate of Liverpool. In partnership with Aspire Leadership Institute and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, or FECCA, the program was established to deliver transformative leadership training for women in south-west Sydney. Along with my Federal colleagues Anne Stanley, MP, and Dai Le, MP, I spoke to an audience of culturally and linguistically diverse women about the challenges facing female leaders and shared with them my own strategies that they can utilise to advance their own professional development. Also in attendance was Dr Rawaa Al-Ayoubi, who conducted the Aspire Leadership training interactive workshops, and Rachel Haywood, who delivered effective communication skills to manage stakeholder engagement. I congratulate the Migrant Resource Centre and thank it for organising the event, with particular thanks to Nadia Bouchti, the program lead. I also recognise board chair Rola Hijwel and Anita Kumar for their continued advocacy of newly arrived migrants in my electorate. I look forward to providing ongoing support to these inspiring women and the hardworking staff at the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre.

#### **PITCH UP WAGGA WAGGA**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:00):** I acknowledge the work of Pitch Up Wagga Wagga, a venture that allows grassroots, for-purpose organisations to share their story, raise vital funds and grow to a whole new level, supporting more people in the local community. At the inaugural event in March, more than \$72,000 was raised for local charities Carevan, Pro Patria, and Bloss Riverina Pregnancy and Baby Loss Support. Each charity shared stories of local community members who have been positively impacted by their work. The stories remind us of the profound impact of charities and are an excellent method of garnering community support. Pitch Up Wagga Wagga was made possible by The Funding Network Australia partnering with WDF Accounting and Advisory, Macarthur Real Estate and Hume Bank. I thank those organisations and draw attention to the key people involved, including Andrea Bradley and Annette Davies from WDF Accounting and Advisory, Clare Rowland from Hume Bank, and Mark Macarthur and Steve Bollinger from Macarthur Real Estate Agency. I acknowledge the generosity of those who attended Pitch Up Wagga Wagga and made donations, and I thank all those involved in the event.

#### **EMU PLAINS LIONS CLUB**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (20:01):** It was a pleasure to celebrate with Emu Plains Lions Club last month on its thirty-fifth anniversary of helping the local community and charities, with an anniversary dinner at Leonay Sports Club. The dinner kicked off with Jessie McKinless of Nulunga Dreaming, who organised a group of young dancers, the Kooly Deadly Kids Dance Group, to entertain guests before dinner. Emu Plains Lions Club distributed \$18,000 on the night to local charities WestCare; The Haven; Paying it Forward; Little by Little, Kurambee School; Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy; Sailability; the Australian Lions Foundation; the Nepean Family Room of Ronald McDonald House; and the Cancer Care Centre at Nepean Hospital. Emu Plains Lions president Cheryl Devine said, "These donations couldn't be achieved without the support of the local community." The club also awarded Ian West with a Melvin Jones Fellowship Award, the highest recognition of local service, presented by John Choma, a founding member of Emu Plains Lions Club, who has 49 years' service with Lions.

#### **VENA STONEHAM, OAM**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (20:02):** It is my pleasure to recognise Cherrybrook resident Vena Stoneham, OAM, and congratulate her on her Australia Day 2023 honour of being awarded a Medal of the

Order of Australia for service to the community, particularly through her work with the church. Vena is 91 years of age and has taught scripture voluntarily in local primary schools for 50 years, the majority of time at Cherrybrook Public School but also at West Pennant Hills and John Purchase public schools. Before volunteering as a scripture teacher, Vena taught Sunday School at Bethlehem Uniting Church at Thompson's Corner. For over 50 years she has played the organ at both Cherrybrook Uniting and Bethlehem Uniting churches. She has also achieved 40 years as a church elder. Vena Stoneham says that volunteering has been a big part of her life, and I congratulate her on the extraordinary work she has done for our local community over many decades. Our community and our country are better places because of Vena. I thank her for her enormous contribution and congratulate her on her well-deserved recognition.

#### **MARYANNE DUGGAN**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (20:03):** I recognise Maryanne Duggan, a tireless community advocate for the Strathfield electorate. Maryanne has had a long, illustrious career spanning over 30 years in public administration in State and Federal governments, human resource management and academia. Maryanne has also served in leadership roles, including as a councillor on Strathfield Council and chair of the Cooks River Alliance. Maryanne is a beloved member of the Strathfield Labor branch, joining in 2013 and serving as its secretary since 2017. I thank Maryanne for her many years of service to our community and, on a more personal level, for the constant support and advice she has provided to me and our team as senior electorate officer. Maryanne is moving on to look after her mum and will be greatly missed by all of us. But this is not goodbye; instead, it is a "see you later". I know that Maryanne will be back serving the local community after a well-deserved break. I look forward to continuing to work alongside her to contribute to the wellbeing of our wonderful electorate.

#### **WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (20:04):** Thank you, Mr Temporary Speaker, for allowing me to take this opportunity to make an acknowledgement. I acknowledge the efforts of a local group led by Councillor Paul Rogers and Pam Browne, who have brought together a group of people to reignite the neighbourhood watch. They have sought to work together with many groups in the area, such as the scouts, and to instigate a pay-it-forward system with me.

#### **RIVERBANK PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (20:05):** I recently had the privilege of attending Riverbank Public School's student parliament. During the parliament, students move motions on issues that are important to them and the school community, from extra playground equipment to planting trees throughout the school. Students then vote to decide on the merits of each motion. This approach, adopted by the school to promote learning, performance and relationship building, is creative, innovative and inspiring. One of the challenges facing education today is managing to keep students engaged, and Riverbank's student parliament successfully addresses that challenge. Every single student in attendance was enthralled and participated with enthusiasm. The parliamentary sitting has a positive impact on the students' learning, as it enhances their understanding of Parliament, public speaking, debating, self-esteem, discipline and other life skills. The effort and understanding of the students' performance could not be overstated. I commend the students for their performance and acknowledge the teachers for the hard work and planning that went into such a well-organised event. I also acknowledge principal Mrs Jeanie Brown for her successful strategy for providing students with an understanding of the workings of Parliament and an appreciation of Australia's democratic processes.

#### **FREEMANS REACH CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:06):** I congratulate the Freemans Reach Cricket Club on its stellar performance for the 2022-23 season. The club has existed for 106 years, and this season ranks as one of its most successful seasons, boasting four premierships. I congratulate the under-13s, under-15s, third grade and first grade teams on taking home the winning trophies. The performance of other grades is to be applauded too, and I congratulate the coaches, managers, scorers and families on their contributions to the club's success this season. The club has a long association with many of its sponsors, which is a testament to the reputation that Freemans Reach Cricket Club has earned. Participating in community sport has been an important part of Hawkesbury's recovery from devastating bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a big club that boasts some legends, including president George Greentree, who this year celebrates 50 years in executive roles within the club. I congratulate Freemans Reach Cricket Club on a stellar 2022-23 season.

#### **DULUX TRADE CENTRE, LISMORE**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (20:07):** I offer congratulations to long-established Lismore paint supply business Dulux Trade Centre, which has made the difficult decision to leave its flood-damaged CBD premises and put down fresh roots in South Lismore, in a major commitment to our city's future. The business'

new premises boast modern facilities and a spacious showroom, and the business is looking forward with confidence once more after a very tough 14 months. Dulux network area manager Phil Kenrick is anticipating a strong turnout for the official opening ceremony on 5 June, with food, drinks and prizes on offer to lucky opening day customers. Despite their own struggle to get the business back on its feet, key staff led by Chris Jones decided to gift \$140,000 worth of flood-damaged stock—the paint inside the tins was unaffected—to the local community to help in recovery efforts. Chris and his team also donated a further \$80,000 to various flood-related relief efforts, including the Lismore Flood Appeal. That is exactly the sort of open-hearted generosity and business acumen we need.

#### **UNITED HOSPITAL AUXILIARY GRAFTON BRANCH**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:09):** I congratulate the United Hospital Auxiliary [UHA] Grafton Branch on its recent Mother's Day morning tea. The event was held at the Clarence River Jockey Club on 3 May. I know that President Kerrie was absolutely thrilled with the support shown after quite a few quiet morning teas due to the pandemic. Some 170 people attended the morning tea and enjoyed homemade treats—sandwiches, scones, chocolates and heaps more. Kim Connor played some live music and the emcee, Ray Smith, kept the audience amused with some classic bad dad jokes. There were tons of prizes, tombolas and, of course, the odd lucky door prize. Some \$5,000 was raised. The UHA also operates an op shop in Pound Street, and I congratulate it on its efforts and look forward to the next morning tea, which will be the Christmas morning tea in December.

#### **HOLSWORTHY ELECTORATE MANDAEAN COMMUNITY**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (20:10):** I recognise the contribution that the Mandaean community makes to the diverse Holsworthy electorate. Holsworthy has one of the largest populations of Mandaeans in the world, with some 9,000 residents in the local region. This small but vibrant group of people has made significant contributions to the cultural diversity and social fabric of our community. As baptism is an essential sacrament, it was necessary for them to find a home near living water. They have a rich and fascinating history, and their unique culture and traditions have survived over centuries. That is a testament to the resilience and determination of the Mandaean people. They have worked hard to preserve their culture and heritage, while also integrating into the wider Australian community. They have also built strong relationships with their neighbours and are valued members of the Holsworthy community. As we celebrate and recognise the Mandaean community, let us acknowledge the challenges they have faced and continue to face, including discrimination and persecution in their home countries. Let us also celebrate their many achievements and contributions, and let us commit to building a more inclusive and welcoming society for all.

#### **HOXTON PARK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (20:11):** International Nurses Day was 13 May. I took the opportunity to visit Hoxton Park Community Health Centre with the member for Liverpool, Charishma Kaliyanda, to show our support for community nurses. Community nurses are often under-recognised, and we wanted to acknowledge their hard work and the important contribution they make to the health system. Our nurses in the South Western Sydney Local Health District have been through a tough few years. During the pandemic, community nurses paid regular visits and provided check-ups to locals infected with COVID within their homes. This critically important piece of primary health care ensured that pressure was taken off the strained health system and patients were able to recover in the comfort of their own homes. I thank all community nurses for their commitment and compassion, and a big thankyou for having us for afternoon tea. I also give a special shout-out to A Lazy Daisy Florist for the amazing bouquet of flowers that they prepared for my visit to the health centre.

#### **GAIL MACLEOD JONES**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (20:12):** This evening I recognise the exceptional career of Mrs Gail Macleod Jones, also affectionately known as Mrs Mac, who will be retiring from Regentville Public School after 31 years of dedicated service. Mrs Mac has been an integral part of the school community for over three decades, and during that time she made an immeasurable impact on the lives of countless students, colleagues and parents. It is worth noting that Mrs Mac began her teaching career at Regentville Public School long before the suburb of Glenmore Park existed, and her dedication to her students and the school has been unwavering ever since. As the longest serving teacher at Regentville Public School, Mrs Mac will be dearly missed by all. She leaves behind a legacy of kindness, compassion and excellence in education that will continue to inspire future generations of students and teachers. On behalf of the community, I extend our heartfelt thanks to Mrs Mac for her many years of service and wish her all the best in her retirement.

#### **EMBEDDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION PROJECT**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:13):** I acknowledge Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections [LNC] located in Warwick Farm, which I visited on Tuesday 16 May. Liverpool Neighbourhood

Connections is an amazing not-for-profit organisation that provides relief from poverty and disadvantage as well as training programs to help women to get ahead. During my visit I was amazed by the success of the Embedding Entrepreneurship Education [EEE] project, which sponsors TAFE courses for women while also providing free childcare services to ensure their studies can be fully undertaken. It was great to learn about Nicole, a graduate of the EEE project, and how the opportunities provided to her changed her life. The project helped Nicole overcome her anxiety to achieve a diploma in hospitality and start her own nail business. As a result, Nicole's mental health has improved significantly and she is now a support worker at the organisation, empowering other young women. I acknowledge the work of the CEO, Pat Hall, and her staff and volunteers who dedicate their time to supporting the 22,000 people who seek help annually from LNC. I look forward to visiting again and further supporting the work they do.

### **STARS OF THE BORDER DANCE FOR CANCER**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (20:14):** I extend my appreciation to the extraordinary individuals in our community who made the 2023 Stars of the Border Dance for Cancer's ninth Annual Stars Community Gala event a resounding success. I commend the exceptional efforts of compere, Bronwyn Robertson, and co-host Shane McDowell, along with the stars, Andrea Lever, Sally Smith, Rachel Alexander, Matt Kean—that is the Albury Matt Kean—Greta Guerin, Steve McLennan, Jason Strauss, Kellie Howard, Andrew Reid, Nick Politis, and the supporting dance teachers. Together at Albury's Albion Hotel they produced a showcase of local talent for a good cause, to raise funds for Cancer Council NSW. I acknowledge that the event raised a record amount of over \$378,000, which will go towards the battle against cancer. I thank the community and all of the participants, sponsors, organisers and donors for pushing the boundaries, challenging themselves and demonstrating their support. Their collective impact will make a difference to those affected by cancer and their families.

### **AUSTRALIAN ISLAMIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (20:15):** I was delighted to attend the Australian Islamic Medical Association's inaugural national conference dinner, and I was very grateful for the opportunity to speak. The association brought together more than 300 Muslim healthcare professionals from across Australia. The Australian Islamic Medical Association is a national not-for-profit organisation that provides a platform for Muslim healthcare professionals to give back to their communities and to promote the positive contributions of Australian Muslims. The theme of this year's national conference was "Past, Present and Future of Healthcare". It addressed how Muslim health professionals can play a more prominent role in improving access, inclusion and diversity in Australian health care. I felt privileged to meet the Australian Islamic Medical Association members, many of whom do amazing work in the Canterbury electorate, and I thank them for their work. I acknowledge Dr Muhammed Afzal Kahloon, Dr Muhammad Ashraf and the leadership team and thank them for their great work.

### **ADVANCE GANMAIN COMMITTEE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (20:16):** I recognise the efforts of the Advance Ganmain Committee after they hosted their first ever Gathering of Ganmainians event on 11 March. The Gathering of Ganmainians attracted a respectable crowd of 150 people. Live entertainment was on full display and Michele Seymour Catering prepared delicious food for the evening. The crowd had the pleasure of listening to four-piece band Reckless, consisting of Daryl Day, Garry Salvestro, Rob Campbell and Dave Wilson. Reckless wound back the years by playing a range of classic rock songs throughout the night with both the young and young at heart enjoying all the night had to offer. It is fantastic to see our small communities out and about, enjoying themselves and supporting events like this. The Advance Ganmain Committee recognised the importance of coming together as a community and the result was absolutely superb. A special thankyou goes to the Advance Ganmain Committee and everyone else who was involved by lending a hand to organise such a fantastic evening.

### *Private Members' Statements*

### **RACISM**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (20:18):** What I say is topical on a day like today and is something I often speak about. It relates specifically to the area I represent. On Monday I was on the ABC *Drive* political forum and was asked to reflect on the experience of journalist Stan Grant. I have been asked to reflect on racism in Australia many times in my life. I have tried to make this an inclusive conversation that asks questions of us all. What can we do to make Australia a more harmonious society? As people would know, I have had some horrible experiences with racism in Australia. Many of those are on the public record and a lot of them are the result of cowardly attacks. But I do not believe we are a racist country. What I believe and what I know is that there are racist elements within this country. What we do not do well enough as a society is call it out when we

see it, and we certainly do not call it out early enough. We often refer to the bystander effect. This is wrong. Regardless of our circumstances, age, heritage or background, we must all have the courage to call out racism and inappropriate behaviour at any time. This behaviour excludes people and it also hurts people. It diminishes who they are and it reduces them to a subject rather than a human being with a complex personal story.

As someone who is not Indigenous, I do not profess to understand the depth of Stan Grant's experience of racism, but I do understand what it means to speak out and not speak out. As an elected representative and Minister, I feel keenly my responsibility. Our words and deeds in the Chamber carry great meaning. What we do or do not intend sometimes falls into irrelevance. We are held to a higher standard for a reason and we should hold ourselves to the highest standards. We have a responsibility and an obligation to exercise caution. Some of the cruellest and wickedest things that my family and I have ever been subjected to were meant to be a joke. There is no joke; there is nothing funny or casual about racist comments. Unless you have felt it, you can never really understand the depth to which it cuts. A throwaway remark can cut deep because it might speak to countless experiences that have built up over a lifetime.

Earlier today there was one such instance—a member's remark that I do not believe was intended to offend. But it was a foolish, insensitive and stupid remark nonetheless, which, had it not been picked up, would have been left to slide. That is a tragedy in itself. I say to that member and to all members in this place: Let this be a lesson. Let us learn to treat each other with the respect that we all deserve. We all came to this Chamber on a difficult path. A certain amount of respect is deserved and expected. Let us be the light that we expect from others. Having people like Stan Grant and Tri Vo on our screens sends an important message around the country. There are young boys and girls who look up to them, who can relate to them and who dream of following in their footsteps.

But when they see what is happening to those people and what they have to go through, I would not blame them if they throw their hands up and say, "You know what? I don't want to travel down that path." That is the tragedy of racism; it stops people reaching their potential. It diminishes their future by silencing the potential of the present. More publicly visible diversity and a broader range of faces in public life say to those young boys and girls, "You belong." What does that mean? Growing up I experienced a different Australia to the public one that I saw. I never saw people who looked like me or like any of my colleagues sitting behind me in the Chamber as newsreaders or as heroes in TV shows. They were always the bad guys. I never saw them in leadership positions or in public positions.

But that is changing. This place is changing. If we look at the whole Chamber, we can see the change. It is important. We are the change; we have to be the change. We do so much in this place that we take for granted, but we are inspiring people every day. That is why I want to end on a positive note. I want to celebrate the diversity of my colleagues and what that means: people like Tri Vo, Charishma Kaliyanda, David Saliba, Edmond Atalla, Jason Yat-Sen Li, Daniel Mookhey, Sophie Cotsis, Jenny Leong, Tina Ayyad, Stephanie Di Pasqua and Bob Nanva. We never used to hear those names in places like this. I urge members to think about what that means and why it is incredibly important. Everyone is part of the Australian story, no matter how they got here or how long they have been here. We are all the Australian story. It is incumbent on every one of us to inspire people to know that this is their country too, that we will give them every opportunity to succeed and that we will celebrate every one of their successes. There is no place for racism. There is no such thing as casual racism. There is no joke.

#### **BADGERYS CREEK ELECTORATE**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (20:23):** I speak about the new areas within my electorate of Badgerys Creek, including Oran Park, Cobbitty, Greendale, Bringelly and Badgerys Creek itself. I am immensely proud to represent such a diverse and hardworking community. My electorate is the epicentre of new infrastructure, investment, growth, change, vision and planning the likes of which we have never witnessed before. Sydney's second international airport at Badgerys Creek is being built at great pace, and the surrounding aerotropolis and Bradfield city are at the heart of my electorate. The encompassing precinct developments, enabling infrastructure, connecting infrastructure of roads, rail, metro and freight lines, together with community connections of schools, emergency services, parks and employment opportunities, all combine to create a dynamic environment in Western Sydney. Therefore, it is fair to say that the future success of New South Wales is largely contingent on the success of everything that is happening in my electorate and the plans for it.

Since the March 2023 election, I have not wasted a day in office. I have been out and about in the community getting to know my new constituents, hearing their interests and concerns, to ensure that I represent them with the same passion and strength that I have developed over the many years representing the existing constituents from the former electorate of Mulgoa. I place on record tonight the concerns and needs that have been raised by the residents of Oran Park and those in the surrounding rural communities. As the south-west of Sydney continues to experience rapid growth, it is essential that we address the pressing issues that affect the lives of its current residents and those who will call the south-west of Sydney their home in the future.

Families from Oran Park have been highlighting the strain that the rate of student enrolments is putting on their local primary schools. Ongoing growth in the suburb has created a clear and desperate need for the announcement of more schools and for commitments to the community about their timing and construction. We need new schools in that region. Education is part of the cornerstone of our society, and every child deserves access to quality schooling with necessary resources and infrastructure. I place on record the growing urgency to determine the next suite of primary school locations to meet demand and ensure that our children receive the education that they deserve. In addition, the Oran Park community is anxiously awaiting news of the construction of the Gregory Hills and Gledswood Hills high schools. It is crucial that the Labor Government fast-track those plans and provide our young people with the educational opportunities they need to thrive. I will be a strong advocate for the timely establishment of those much-needed educational institutions.

Another pressing issue raised by Oran Park residents is the determination of the location of the next major hospital. The construction of Bradfield city is underway, and Oran Park and surrounding areas continue to grow, so it is essential that we plan ahead and identify the site for the next major healthcare facility. Under the previous Liberal-Nationals Government, it was determined that this part of Western Sydney would be Sydney's third city. Accessible and quality health care is a fundamental right, and I will advocate tirelessly for the best possible outcome for our community. Lastly, there is an urgent need to confirm the region's next police local area command. As the population grows around Sydney's second airport, the aerotropolis and Bradfield city, as well as surrounding communities, it is crucial that the community feels safe and protected. I will work closely with law enforcement agencies and the police Minister to ensure that the necessary resources and infrastructure are allocated to establish an efficient and effective local area command to meet the growing needs of our community.

I extend my gratitude to the Oran Park community for sharing their thoughts and aspirations. Together, we can build a future where every individual has access to quality education, reliable infrastructure and a safe environment within which to pursue their aspirations. I place on record that I want to ensure that the community I represent always feels that they can come to me at any time with their issues, concerns and aspirations. I assure the residents of the Badgerys Creek electorate that I will fight for their needs and concerns. I will work tirelessly to engage with government agencies, local councils and community organisations to address pressing issues. Together, we will strive to create a vibrant and prosperous community where every resident can thrive.

#### BLACKTOWN ELECTORATE

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:28):** I thank the people of Blacktown for electing me for the third time to represent them in the New South Wales Parliament, Australia's oldest Parliament. I wish to let each and every constituent know that never a moment goes by when I am not focusing on the important task of ensuring that the views of my constituency are strongly represented in the Parliament. To be elected requires enormous support and help from many people. I highlight some of the campaign team but I apologise to anyone who I miss. No doubt they will be mentioned in future speeches. Rebel Hanlon was my campaign director and Rachael Hanlon is the Blacktown Labor State electoral committee secretary. They are fabulous partners in life and have endless energy for their community volunteering and involvement in the labour movement. I sincerely appreciate the many years of support that they have provided to me and to the community.

Many people helped out at pre-poll, handing out at railway stations and through to election day. Huge thanks go to Maria Car, who helped out for the whole week at pre-poll. I thank those who have provided immense help to me through many elections. They include councillors Carol Israel and Kathie Collins; Emmanuel Tolentino; Adrian and Julie Michaels; Satish Kumar; Chris Pilao; Jenni and Stuart McKinder; Geoff and Cherie Harrison; Tony Jansson; Balraj Sangha and his family; Michele, Jim and Julie Facchin; Carmen Portelli; Frank Mossfield; Jack Miller; Jim Kelly; and Martha Lynch, a life member of the Labor Party.

An army of approximately 140 volunteers came to hand out on the day—too many to list, but I will have a go. I give a special mention to Ian Burr; Seema Balasubramanian; Jay Hosur; Adel Nakhla; Sarat and Anjula Singh; Julie Jones-Webb and Raelene; Keith McMahon; Gus Garcia; Sajana Nand; Parma Ram; Isaac Kisimba; Barry O'Donnell; Bernadette Hartmann; Titilia Brown; Max Pondal; Jade Cadelina; Vijay Singh; Zulfi Khan; Atoy and Tess Sayas; Fiona Scully; Elizabeth Dunlop; Christine Nalzar; Ahlya Rentala; Marival D'jamirze; Edward Dong; Maya Uluc; Yildiz Zeynel; Sudhir Lodh; Bilvika Abburi; and Misha D'jamirze. I thank each and every one of them for their personal support in the campaign.

I give a huge shout-out to all the then shadows, now Ministers, who popped out to Blacktown and the surrounding electorates. I particularly recognise Peter Primrose, MLC, who spent a number of days on pre-poll supporting both the Blacktown and Winston Hills electorates. One of the key reasons that I was re-elected as member for Blacktown is the hard work and dedication of my electorate staff. They go beyond expectations in assisting constituents. They also put many hours of their personal time into supporting my election campaign. The team is led by Elizabeth Banks, who supports and mentors the staff and is a great source of support for me and



my family. I thank Elizabeth for all she does. The remaining jobs are job-shared between Wendy Chen, Kim Campbell, Ebony O'Connor and Justine Ndayi.

Casual staff include John Costelloe, Rameez Parkar and Nicholas Nikolaidis. During the last term, Angela Humphries stood in as the senior electoral officer when Liz was on maternity leave. My family is always a wonderful source of help and inspiration. My sweet bride, Anne, and son, Stephen Junior, were involved in every part of the campaign. Unfortunately, bragging rights in the pre-polling booth results go to my wife, Anne, supported by Maria, my son and the team at the Doonside pre-poll. I was based at the Blacktown pre-poll with Peter Primrose, MLC. While a similar number of votes were cast at both booths, Anne and her team scored 500—or approximately 15 per cent—more first preference votes than me. Maybe I should not be at the polling booths. I thank each and every member of the team. As everyone in this Chamber knows, having the support of the family and all the volunteers goes a long way towards us being here.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank the member for Blacktown. Honest self-reflection is sometimes a good thing.

### **MOREE AND INVERELL CRIME**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (20:33):** It is a great pleasure to speak on one of my first occasions in the Fifty-Eighth Parliament. I wish to bring good news from the Northern Tablelands to the Parliament, as I usually have in the past. But tonight I am sadly here to report and reflect on growing community concern, bordering on frustration and anger, not just in the general community but also in our local contingent of hardworking men and women in blue in the NSW Police Force. That is in response to what can only be described as the limp-wristed approach of the local magistrate in dealing with the repeat offenders who appear in the Moree and Inverell circuits of the Local Court.

Over the past 12 months our community have seen many offenders, particularly young offenders, terrorising people, particularly elderly people, in a number of our communities as part of a broader spike in youth crime. The efforts of our hardworking police, and community working in conjunction with police, have been thwarted by the fact that the Local Court seems unwilling to mete out penalties that are commensurate with the laws of this State and with community standards. I am a great defender—as I am sure every member of this House is—of the independence of the judiciary. It is chiselled into our laws and the conventions upon which our society and democracy are based. But whilst the judiciary is independent, it does not operate in complete isolation from the community in which it works and which it serves. It gives me no pleasure at all to say in this House that in the case of the magistrate servicing the Inverell and Moree circuits, the Local Court is making decisions that are far removed from the expectations and standards of the community.

The community would expect that repeat offenders who continue to steal vehicles and post videos on TikTok; who break into homes; or who attack elderly people, brandishing knives, baseball bats and other implements would be removed from the community and given custodial sentences. They would not expect them to be bailed, given section 9 bonds or section 10 dismissals and put back on the streets, where the police have to spend their time recapturing, re-arresting and putting before the courts again the same individuals for breaching their bail conditions—to which they knew from the outset they would never adhere.

A classic example in the community of Moree was brought to my attention just a couple of weeks ago. Through some excellent police work, the police arrested a gentleman who was carrying a loaded shotgun with 24 cartridges on his person. That gentleman was put before the Local Court in Moree and was bailed—out in the community after brandishing a fully loaded shotgun. Unsurprisingly, the police had to recapture that person because he breached the bail conditions that night. He was re-arrested, but instead the police decided to take him to Armidale to put him before a different magistrate. In that circumstance, one can understand why the community would say, "What the hell is going on here? How can someone carrying a loaded shotgun with 24 cartridges be put back out on the streets after the police have done their good work, arrested them and tried to remove them from the community?"

I have had numerous meetings with local councils, members of the community and victims of crime who are all just fed up to the back teeth with feeling like they are not being supported by the Local Court—they are not being backed up. I have indicated to the police that they will have my full support, as does the community, but I have also instructed the police that they need to instruct the prosecutorial authorities to begin appealing those matters in the District Court. Those poor decisions regarding sentencing and bail have to be overturned. I have reached out formally to the Attorney General and have spoken and met with the police Minister this week, and I will continue to do everything I can to ensure that our Local Court applies the law and reflects community standards. If the magistrate chooses not to then the Chief Magistrate of New South Wales should, quite frankly, move them on. We cannot have a Local Court system that is failing the community, failing our police and allowing

repeat offenders to go back on the streets and reoffend, bashing people and breaking into people's homes. Someone may lose their life, and we do not want to see that happen.

### GET NSW ACTIVE PROGRAM

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (20:38):** I bring attention to an exciting announcement made by the Minister for Transport last weekend that will have a profound impact on my electorate of Canterbury. It is with great excitement that I inform the residents of Canterbury about the proposed construction of a new footbridge across the Cooks River, a project that will enhance connectivity and promote active transport within our community. In total it is a \$39.5 million program. We are very fortunate that our electorate will have five projects under Get NSW Active, a comprehensive program aimed at promoting active transport and creating a more sustainable and connected New South Wales. Under this program, multiple projects have been identified to improve walking and cycling infrastructure in my electorate.

As I have mentioned in this Chamber many times, particularly during the COVID period, thousands of residents of my electorate live in units and in multigenerational family environments. Many do not have a backyard. They do not live in a house on a quarter-acre block. For most families, particularly in Sydney, who live in units or townhouses, open and public space is very important. We saw thousands of people use pathways along Cooks River. Those pathways need upgrading—a lot of work is needed. Particularly during the COVID period, we all saw the demand for open space and pathways for walking. I am so happy and proud that our Minister announced the provision of additional funds statewide. This is such an important program, particularly for young people as well. Enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure is critically important.

The council submitted a number of applications for grants and will deliver these projects. An allocation of \$713,000 will be dedicated to improving walking and cycling facilities along Fore Street in Earlwood. This project will create a safer and more accessible pathway to foster an active and vibrant community. There will be an investment of \$655,000 in improving and enhancing the walking and cycling facilities along Wardell Road in Earlwood. By promoting active transport options, we will reduce congestion and improve health outcomes in my electorate. Moreover, \$300,000 has been dedicated to developing walking and cycling infrastructure in Charles Street, Canterbury, which will offer Canterbury residents safer and more enjoyable routes for active transportation.

I have been quite critical of the former Government with respect to the development it approved along Canterbury Road. The former Government gave the green light without providing proper infrastructure with respect to cycling and walking, and developing footpaths and cycleways. I am very proud that the Minns Government has announced it will commence upgrades not only in my electorate but also in areas across the State. Furthermore, there will be a \$249,000 investment in further enhancing our walking and cycling facilities along Bayview Avenue in Undercliffe, which is near the Woll Creek Regional Park. By enhancing these spaces, we will encourage residents to embrace active transport, which will foster greater community connections and healthier lifestyles.

Finally, there will be a huge \$1,073,000 investment in developing walking and cycling infrastructure along Phillips Avenue in Canterbury. This is a significant investment in our community. I am so very proud of our Labor Government. We need a sustainable and connected community, particularly in areas of high population density. The areas to which I have referred are areas of high population density. Unfortunately there has been a massive mismatch between high population density and infrastructure. I reiterate that I look forward to continuing to work with my colleague and other colleagues to improve our local infrastructure in Canterbury.

### WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (20:43):** Today I speak about the silence about the concerns of the people of Wollondilly, in particular the countless volunteers, advocates and those who have given their own time to my beautiful electorate. Wollondilly does not have the benefit of a single large CBD. It is a string of villages surrounded by farms and environmentally protected lands. The people who live in these villages have to travel for hours to work and to school, while the cost-of-living pressures are constantly at their doors. For a long time the elected local members and parties have taken my electorate for granted. There are many issues that stretch all over my electorate. While some have been fixed or have been delivered by the change of government—and thank you very much for the examples of stopping the Sydney Water sell-off and halting the wall raising of the Warragamba Dam—there is a long list of issues that need fixing right now as well as other issues that are certain to arise.

That is why my speech today in this place, through you, Mr Speaker, is to the people and for the people of Wollondilly. I am here to be their voice. Regardless of whether the benches behind me are empty or full, I will take this opportunity to speak up for every one of them. What has been missing for a long time in politics in

Wollondilly is the simple act of listening to each other and being represented. That is why I am excited to announce my own community groups that are open for application right now. The silence that every person in my electorate has felt from their member has been ended, and the silence that they have been forced into ends with my invitation to join with me to speak up for what is needed.

To that end, I invite every person who is interested in speaking up and giving their opinion on what is important to them in my electorate to join one of my community groups. I am very pleased to be able to host 10 major community groups covering all the areas that the New South Wales State Government delivers funding to or has jurisdiction over. As an Independent, the beauty is that I get to vote with my community on every matter brought to this place—something I am sure that the Government and Opposition benches will envy and hear about many times over the next four years.

While this is an amazing opportunity, without the community's support I would not be standing here. The way I see it, I need members of the community to have their say on every issue relating to them. Both Wollondilly and Wingecarribee councils have community groups that feed information to both councils, but these existing groups do not cross over council boundaries and are reliant on the limited resources of the community service teams at the councils. While there are many very energetic people in these groups, often outcomes are attached to delivery plans and longer outcomes of the councils. The long drawn-out process of the council community groups unfortunately has led to a lot of disenfranchisement of community members and, no doubt, council officers who are frustrated by the process.

My groups will cover all areas including health; education; environment and sustainability; heritage, tourism and the arts; diversity and inclusion; small business, jobs, rural lands and farming; planning and growth; roads and public transport; emergency services and recovery; and sports, recreation and community spaces. The outcomes for these groups will depend on each individual area and topic. The outcomes that the groups will work towards will include but will not be limited to ministerial representation, information sharing, policy framework, legislation review and intergovernmental engagement. The groups are intended to have scopes that cover the major areas of government departments and service provision that are supplied by New South Wales Government funding.

There are a number of areas that are not covered, including justice and more sensitive matters. Obviously those will be worked on directly by me and the office, due to their nature. I hope the membership I am seeking for these community groups will be diverse in experience, gender, age and location. The community groups are not meant to be an echo chamber of my supporters. I strongly believe the diversity of opinions of residents should be valued in each area. I will value these meetings. I am allocating staff members to facilitate and ensure diverse opinions are heard respectfully and that matters are worked on towards providing a voice to the residents' needs.

I look forward to receiving community applications for these groups over the next couple of weeks. Interested members of the community will soon have an application form in their letterbox and applications are open on my website right now. For other people, I am sorry to say that my community groups will be limited to the residents of Wollondilly and Wingecarribee. Others in the Chambers who have been listening will truly know my community is my major priority. I am very glad to invite all of you to come and visit. When you come, if you have the chance, the kettle is on and my staff are waiting for you. There is a welcome mat at the door, the blinds are up and there is even a bowl with some water in it for your dog.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** I thank the member for Wollondilly for the invitation and look forward to that cup of tea—and maybe even a scone.

### **VOLUNTEERING**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (20:49):** I take this opportunity to speak about the role of volunteers and how their work develops a better society. National Volunteer Week was celebrated from 15 to 21 May. New South Wales joined with the rest of the country to celebrate the generosity, time and efforts of volunteers. In Australia nearly six million people have carried out volunteering roles in just the past 12 months. In New South Wales, volunteers generously give more than 235 million work hours each year, contributing an extraordinary \$5 billion to the State's economy. Within my electorate, volunteers apply their efforts to helping local sporting and community groups, emergency services and life-saving facilities such as Mount Druitt Hospital.

Through my numerous conversations with volunteers, I have found that it gives them a sense of satisfaction and happiness when they see that their work has made some positive improvement to the life of another person or within their communities. Not one person has told me that they volunteer to receive any remuneration or acknowledgement. In fact, many volunteers do their good deeds without the need for any personal recognition. Volunteering has become a part of our culture; it is in our DNA to give a helping hand. The sense of duty among volunteers remains abundantly clear. Volunteers are exemplary examples to all of us, both in their determined

efforts and their enduring enthusiasm. They are a model for how we should aspire to live our lives, with purpose and tenacity. Purpose motivates; it gives drive and resilience. It enables good to occur in even the most difficult of circumstances.

New South Wales has had more than its share of natural disasters recently, and the efforts of volunteers to keep the State safe, resilient, and able to commence the vital work of reconstruction, are deserving of recognition. Volunteers have filled sandbags, extinguished bushfires and rescued those caught in floodwaters. They have given their time to coach and referee local sporting competitions, assisted patients in hospitals and raised funds for all manner of community development. They support the elderly. They utilise and share their skills to inspire others and for the advancement of society. The lively and energetic community and cultural events that bring delight to residents and draw in visitors from afar would not be possible without the many volunteers who transform them from a mere vision to vibrant reality.

There are so many benevolent activities that can be attributed to volunteers that it would simply not be possible to outline them all today. National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to express our gratitude for the tireless contribution made by volunteers. It is a timely reminder of the benefits of volunteering, for both the community at large and the volunteers themselves. The volunteers in our community promote its cohesion by strengthening the bonds forged through pursuing a common goal. They can bridge the divisions that we experience as our individual selves.

Through volunteering, an individual may experience personal development and gain career and networking opportunities. Further, a volunteer may gain improved health and wellbeing through the connectedness, social interactions and camaraderie that such activities entail. Our State is indeed a richer place for having volunteers among its people. I commend all involved in the celebration of National Volunteer Week. The work of volunteers makes the country, the State, and in particular my electorate of Mount Druitt, a more coherent, stronger and safer community.

#### CLARENCE ELECTORATE WATER SECURITY

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:53):** Water and water protection is most important to my electorate of Clarence. In fact, I believe it is important wherever we live in New South Wales. If water security and its constitutional protection is important in Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle—and it is; there is no argument from me—it is essential to have the same protection in regional New South Wales. People in the bush should have the same protection as their city cousins. As I am sure all members know and agree, water is an essential commodity—in fact, a basic human right. In the Clarence electorate, Rous Water, Richmond Valley Council and Clarence Valley Council supply water for the towns and villages on the reticulated system. These local councils and county councils have been supplying residents with high-quality drinking water for generations.

This high-quality drinking water should, I believe, be protected under the Constitution. New South Wales should not have a two-tiered water supply set-up. What is good for the city—enshrined in the Constitution—should be good for the bush. It does not matter where the rain falls; it will all end up either in a river or in a pipe. I acknowledge that big cities should have their water constitutionally protected—but so should regional areas. If water is flowing out of the tap in Tweed Heads, in Ballina, in Lismore, in Casino, in Yamba, in Grafton, in Coffs Harbour—in fact, all through New South Wales—I believe it should be protected. I know that at times Labor does not understand regional New South Wales. There is no judgement from me. Frankly, I am struggling to understand Sydney.

**Ms Janelle Saffin:** I understand it.

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** The exception is the member for Lismore—I accept that. Frankly, I am here to listen and learn about the city as well. So far, I have heard that the trains are probably not running on time; yet in the bush we are blessed to have a train once or twice a day. There is a difference between the city and the bush—I acknowledge that, and I am trying to come to terms with the city. When I was the Mayor of Clarence Valley, local government had to fight off privatisation throughout New South Wales from the Rees inquiry in 2007 and 2008. In fact, I remember very clearly attending a meeting at Glen Innes that was heated and at times ugly. I am sure the then water Minister left Glen Innes knowing in no uncertain terms what local government thought about the inquiry.

Back then, I stood up for regional water supply schemes, and I am willing to do it again. Clarence Valley Council and Coffs Harbour City Council have invested heavily in the regional supply—investing over \$180 million in the Clarence Valley Shannon Creek Dam. Just last Friday I met with the chairman and general manager of Rous Water, along with the member for Ballina and the new water Minister. It was an excellent and productive meeting. But those in the bush need the same safeguards as their city cousins. Why should the water flowing out of a tap in Casino not have the same protections as the water flowing out of a tap in Sydney,

Wollongong or Newcastle? Water security is important for the State. It is very important for every community that I represent. It does not matter where the rain falls; it should be protected under the Constitution.

### WESTERN SYDNEY TRANSPORT SERVICES

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (20:58):** I assure the member for Clarence that all Labor members are interested in regional areas. One of the big differences you will find is that it takes about an hour and 15 minutes to drive 15 kilometres in the city, which I do not think you will find happens in the bush very often.

**Mr Richie Williamson:** That is true.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** As the member for Auburn, I recently had some new suburbs added to my electorate: Chester Hill, Bass Hill, Birrong, Yagoona and Sefton. I am excited to have them because I grew up in Birrong, as did most of my family for generations. It always feels a bit like home. But it comes as a big surprise when I visit places like Chester Hill—Chester Hill is one of the busiest stations in the electorate. In 2013 it was earmarked as having the fourth highest priority for a lift. A decade later, it still does not have a lift under the Transport Access Program.

Former Government members spoke a number of times about having the program rolled out and that it was nearly finished. But the reality is that has not happened for stations in Western Sydney, particularly those on the south-western line. Chester Hill has 14,000 people in it—which is not to mention the people in South Granville and Campbell Hill Pioneer Reserve that also use the train station—and 3,200 families. The average weekly income is \$1,335. Fifty per cent of its population is not employed and 22 per cent of its parents are single parents. If ever a station called out for a lift and an upgrade, one would think that based on those figures it would be Chester Hill station.

There may be a reason the former Government did not bother putting a lift in at Chester Hill station. From the time it was elected in 2011, it completely ran down the rail system on the south-western line along Chester Hill and Sefton, and on the Bankstown line between Yagoona, Birrong, Berala and Regents Park. I looked on the internet today to find out how long it takes for someone to go from Chester Hill to Parramatta, which is seven kilometres away. I am sure the member from regional New South Wales who just left the Chamber would be interested to know that it takes 51 minutes. In the old days someone would go to Lidcombe and then catch a train to Parramatta. The advice now is to catch a train to Warwick Farm. Correct me if I am wrong, but is Warwick Farm in the member for Liverpool's electorate?

**Ms Charishma Kaliyanda:** Yes, it is.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ:** Yes, it is. She would have to go to Warwick Farm, towards Liverpool, and then get on another line and come back towards Parramatta. That would take 51 minutes. The next train took 54 minutes, going the same way. The train after that took one hour and 18 minutes to go seven kilometres from Chester Hill to Parramatta. That is because trains no longer stop everywhere. Passengers are advised to go to Redfern station in the city to get the train back to Parramatta. It takes one hour and 18 minutes to go seven kilometres. It is an absolute outrage. It is indicative of the former Government running down train services in south-west Sydney, where some of the poorest people live.

While Chester Hill station did not get any funding, plenty of ferry wharves did. Double Bay Wharf got \$13.5 million, Darling Point Wharf got \$24 million, Greenwich Point Wharf got \$16 million, Manly Wharf got \$22 million and North Sydney Wharf got \$10 million. They are all new ferry wharves. Darling Point has 4,000 people, not 14,000. Double Bay has 4,700 people, not 14,000. Darling Point has only 1,000 families compared to the 3,200 in Chester Hill. The average weekly earnings of those suburbs is \$3,219 and \$3,077 compared to the \$1,335 in Chester Hill. Only 29 per cent of the people in Double Bay are not employed, and only 12 per cent of them are one-parent families. It is with mindless repetition that I have to speak in this Chamber about inequality in Western Sydney and what has happened to its infrastructure. For goodness sake, I am going to beg the current Minister for Transport. If ever a station cried out for priority, it is Chester Hill station.

### BOOROWA WATER SUPPLY

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (21:03):** Boorowa is a mixed farming community situated north-west of Yass and Canberra respectively and is world-renowned for its fine merino wool. Each year on the October long weekend, it proudly celebrates Boorowa Irish Woolfest, with the main drawcard being the Running of the Sheep. That event attracts around 15,000 people annually, which is not bad for a town with a population of nearly 2,000. The community of Boorowa lacks a permanent and secure supply of drinking water and that issue has existed since the 1960s. In 2023, it is more evident than ever that the current Boorowa water supply is not sufficient to meet the needs of a growing community.

As Boorowa's population continues to grow, the town is in dire need of the fit-for-purpose water infrastructure it deserves to foster further social and economic growth. At present, Boorowa's water supply comes from the Boorowa River, a perennial stream that is part of the Lachlan catchment within the Murray-Darling Basin, and is currently treated by the Boorowa water treatment plant. The majority of residents, schools and hospitality venues in Boorowa do not drink the water. According to a 2019 report prepared by Cardno, an environmental consulting services company, "the water source yield is insufficient to meet current and future demands, and treated water quality fails to meet the current Australian Drinking Water Guidelines". Further, a survey confirmed that less than 20 per cent of the population drinks water from the town supply.

I have spoken to residents from Boorowa in recent times about the challenges they face due to poor water quality and insufficient quantity. The water issues are concerning and, not surprisingly, the Boorowa township has been on water restrictions of varying severity since 2003. The township has recorded instances of being on high-level water restrictions for as many as 519 consecutive days. The ongoing water security issues further demonstrate that the current Boorowa water supply is not sufficient to meet the demands of the community. Additionally, I have met with both the current and former presidents of the Boorowa Business Chamber and have been advised over the past few years that several potential business ventures have not progressed due to Boorowa's water situation. The cause and effect is detrimental to the future of Boorowa. It restricts employment, prevents expansion of the town's manufacturing capabilities and hinders further residential development.

In November 2018 Hilltops Council received \$265,000 under the Government's Safe and Secure Water Program to complete an options analysis and concept design for the Boorowa drought security project. That funding was matched by Hilltops Council. At the completion of the options assessment, the Harden to Boorowa pipeline was identified as the preferred option. The proposed pipeline would feed into the existing Goldenfields Water assets in the vicinity of Harden via the connection point known as the Galong offtake, which draws water from the Murrumbidgee River. Hilltops Council has since partnered with the Canberra Region Joint Organisation, seeking drought-resilience funding to commence detailed design. Additionally, Hilltops Council is continuing conversations with the Department of Planning and Environment and Goldenfields Water regarding the Harden to Boorowa pipeline.

It is imperative that the New South Wales Government supports Boorowa by investing in establishing a permanent water infrastructure solution so that the township may thrive and grow both now and into the future. We have already seen several projects funded historically across the Cootamundra electorate by programs such as the Safe and Secure Water Program since it was established in 2017. Those projects are vital, particularly in smaller regional centres, and their importance cannot be overstated. The 2020 draft regional water strategy for the Lachlan stated that the water security risk for Boorowa was "very high". That risk level was based on an estimated population of 1,200 people in 2014. Just nine years later, Boorowa's population has grown to nearly 2,000.

I can only reiterate that the township of Boorowa has been impacted adversely by various water restrictions for over two decades. Given the previous drought conditions, there is an ever-increasing pressure on the town's water supply. I strongly urge the Minister for Water to work closely and collaboratively with Hilltops Council, the Boorowa community and me. It is essential that this critical water infrastructure is delivered to support Boorowa now and into the future.

#### PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (21:08):** For my first private member's statement of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament of New South Wales, I take a moment to reflect on the recent election and the many people who are responsible for me being here again. I am incredibly honoured to be representing my beautiful community of Port Stephens in this place for a third time. Having spent eight years in opposition, I am humbled to be returned not only as the member for Port Stephens but also as a Minister in the Minns Labor Government. They are big responsibilities that I will never take for granted.

Whilst I am the one who stands in this Chamber today, I acknowledge the enormous army of caring people who backed me every step of the way. Because of the enormous effort, hard work and commitment of this army of supporters, we achieved a result that exceeded all of our expectations. After being a safe Liberal seat just eight years ago, this time Labor won every booth across the entire Port Stephens electorate. From Corlette to North Arm Cove, from Hinton to Hawks Nest, I am genuinely blown away by the support. I cannot tell you the number of people who told me they voted Labor at this election for the very first time in their lives, including a 93-year-old local. I thank everyone who placed their trust in me and especially those who changed their lifelong habit.

To everyone in Port Stephens, whether you voted for me or not, I will work hard for you and I will always have our community in my heart. Tonight I want to make special mention of some people whose backing I could not do without. The mighty members of the Tomaree branch of the Labor Party are my second family. We share

a deep commitment to our community. They work so hard for the Labor cause and in support of me. I thank every member of my branch, particularly President Roz Armstrong, Secretary Grant Kennett, and the first ever member for Port Stephens, the Hon. Bob Martin. The same goes for the ever-reliable Raymond Terrace branch members who have had my back from the get-go, especially Giacomo Arnott, Ruby Porter, and Glenys and Peter Francis.

But it was not only Labor Party members who turned out for me at this election. There were plenty of other locals who helped out on market stalls, put up yard signs or allowed me to put signs in their yard, did letterbox drops or handed out material at pre-poll booths and on election day. I thank each and every one of you. I make special mention of my dear friends Jim and Lois Morrison. Six months out from the election, Jim announced that he would wear my campaign shirt every single day until the election—and he did, when he was walking, volunteering, shopping, even when he went to the Tamworth Country Music Festival. Thanks Jim and Lois for your thoughtfulness and care.

Undeniably, my biggest backers are my amazing parents, Bert and Leslie Washington. One month before every election they head north from Albury to Port Stephens, and they stay until the race is run. At the tender age of 82, my dad was single-handedly responsible for putting up at least 150 yard signs across the entire electorate, and my mum was on deck for sage advice and support. To my mum and dad, thank you is not enough. I also thank my children, who have put up with a lot over the past eight years.

I want to make special mention of my incredible electorate office team, who looked after locals during the day and then spent their precious personal time helping on the campaign. Steven, Rachael, Caitlin, Rachel, Leah, Ruby—you are all amazing. Thanks also to Hunter Workers, SDA New South Wales, the Fire Brigade Employees' Union, the Public Service Association, the Australian Services Union, the NSW Teachers Federation, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Health Services Union and the incredible team at NSW Labor head office for their advice and support. Thanks to all of you, I am back, and I am driven to deliver the commitments that we made to Port Stephens and to the State. Every day I am focused on delivering a public high school for Medowie, \$11.8 million to Port Stephens Council and millions to MidCoast Council to help fix our local roads, \$2 million to Port Stephens Koalas to help save our iconic, endangered koalas, and a review of Tomaree Community Hospital's classification and resourcing to help our local nurses and patients alike.

I pledge all this, together with the broader commitments that Labor took to the election—to look after our nurses, to support our teachers and fully fund our schools, to save Hunter Water, end privatisation, rebuild TAFE, protect our environment and to look after the most vulnerable people in our society. This is what we have been elected to do and already we are working hard to deliver. Eight years ago I asked for my community's support. At the time, I said I did not expect their trust but that I would work hard, with integrity, to earn it. Since then, I have always done what I said I would do. As the local member of Parliament and as a Minister in the new Minns Labor Government, I will continue working hard for the people of Port Stephens and New South Wales to make our communities fairer, safer and stronger. Every day, I am thankful for being fuelled by my community's kindness, compassion and support.

### KIAMA ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (21:13):** When I first stood for election, I made a big bold promise: If you vote for me, we will fix the Princes Highway. Come forward to today and I am so proud to have secured funding to duplicate the Princes Highway throughout my electorate, from head to toe. The Gerringong upgrade, the Foxground and Berry bypass, the Berry to Bomaderry upgrade, the South Nowra upgrade and, of course, the Albion Park Rail bypass are achievements of which I am most proud and cherish. In February this year I was delighted to join with my local community to officially open the new Shoalhaven River bridge.

I take this opportunity to thank Fulton Hogan and all of its incredible workers, and the team at Transport for NSW, led by Ryan Whitton, who have not only worked on this project but who organised an amazing opening event. It took the shape of a twilight walk, with thousands of locals walking over the bridge and celebrating this historic and important milestone. I make specific mention of Transport for NSW Regional Director Sam Knight and her team, as well as all of the roads Ministers who worked with me to secure the funding to deliver this project. The bridge completes a trilogy of bridges across the Shoalhaven River, the first of which was opened in 1881. I also acknowledge the Shoalhaven Historical Society, and particularly Lynne Allen, for their advocacy in retaining the old 1881 iron bridge as part of the riverfront landscape.

In anticipation of the opening, the community gathered on the northern and southern sides of the new bridge, held back by a massive green ribbon at either end. In unison, the crowd walked towards the centre of the bridge, holding the ribbon, where we were greeted by the incredible talents of the Doonooch Aboriginal Dancers. A humbling moment happened to me during the opening ceremony when I struck up a conversation with an Aboriginal Elder. She told me that she had attended the opening of the second of the three bridges in 1981. Back then, there was no acknowledgement of country or recognition of our First Nation peoples. Back then, she was

given a slice of the ribbon and told to go home. In 2023 I am pleased to report to the House that this event celebrated our local Aboriginal people. They took their rightful place at the centre of proceedings, with Auntie Ruth Simms providing her characteristically warm welcome to country.

Also in attendance was the former member for South Coast, Shelley Hancock. I specifically acknowledge Shelley, who worked incredibly hard with me to secure funding for this project. This was the last major event that Shelley and her husband, Ozzie, attended prior to her retirement from this place after 20 years of incredible service. I take this opportunity to thank her for her commitment and dedication to the people of the South Coast electorate and our entire region. Throughout the course of the evening, people strolled across the bridge taking in the incredible Shoalhaven vistas. They received a commemorative ribbon in recognition and celebration of this important day.

Since construction began in mid-2020, the project has seen an impressive number of feats, including 2,200 workers—with the overwhelming majority coming from our local community, including apprentices and trainees getting their first start on major infrastructure, women in non-traditional roles and First Nation employees. The bridge has involved more than 890,000 hours of work and used 22,000 tonnes of material to construct the temporary rock platform and install 39 steel piles, 19 concrete double-T deck segments and nine piers, with each of those deck segments using 360 cubic metres of reinforced concrete—enough to fill 60 concrete trucks.

As well as the new four-lane concrete bridge over the Shoalhaven River, the project included upgrading intersections, repurposing the existing bridge to be a footpath and cycleway, and installing additional lanes on the Princes Highway at Nowra. I can hear the Nowra locals reading this speech saying, "What about the bypass?" I remain totally committed to fighting for the Nowra bypass. Through my lobbying, I have been able to press both major parties to make commitments totalling more than \$100 million towards planning for this project. But planning money is not enough. We need the "doing" money, and I will not give up until we deliver it. There is much more to do.

I note that the Government has committed to progressing the East Nowra Sub Arterial. Whilst the Government has only committed planning money at this stage, this project will help unclog the Nowra CBD and take traffic bound for the Shoalhaven's eastern suburbs out of the CBD. This is an important project, and our community will not be satisfied with glossy brochures. I will continue to apply pressure to this Government to ensure that the project receives the allocation of resources required. In the last term of Parliament I was able to secure approval and funding for an upgrade of the Jervis Bay Road Interchange. I look forward to this project commencing, and I want to acknowledge our community that pushed so hard for this result. Finally, I note with concern that the Commonwealth Government has announced an audit of national infrastructure projects. It better not try to take away a single project from our region. I will be watching, and I will be holding it to account.

### **WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (21:18):** I thank the people of Wollongong for their continued support for me to be their representative in this place. While the election might be over, the work to help Wollongong and the Illawarra realise its aspirations continues. The election of the Minns Government will advance a number of things for Wollongong and the Illawarra. Already, the region has its seat back at the Cabinet table—a seat which has been missing since 2015. That is far too long for a region of social and economic significance to the State and the nation to be left out. I congratulate my colleague the Minister for Health on also being appointed as the Minister for the Illawarra and South Coast. Given the challenges our region faces, it is important that the region is represented as a region, with its own Minister at the Cabinet table.

But the change in attitude to the Illawarra with the new Government does not stop with the appointment of a Minister. Within the first few weeks of his premiership, Premier Minns visited Wollongong. In addition to touring the upgrades to facilities recently completed and soon to be completed at Wollongong Hospital—upgrades that would not have been possible except for the advocacy of local MPs who, across the political divide, worked towards regional health improvements—he also visited the Port Kembla steelworks. A fun fact is that, amazingly, he was the first Premier to visit the steelworks since Premier O'Farrell a decade ago.

Every Prime Minister since John Howard has been there, but it seems to have been a bit too much for the last three Sydney-based Premiers to travel down the M1 to tour a facility that not only supports thousands of local jobs and families but has the capacity to be front and centre of efforts to decarbonise New South Wales. After all, there are no renewable energy projects without steel. This is a big change in attitude towards the Illawarra from that of the previous Government. It comes on the back of several commitments to the region that will make a difference to the lives and opportunities for residents.

Transport is a perennial issue in the region. We are a growing community with a busy port. Many residents travel to and from parts of Sydney for work daily. This means the commuter and freight task of the region is



considerable. However, over recent years we have seen both our rail and our roads impacted by severe rain events. At its most extreme, they led to the Illawarra being completely cut off from the rest of New South Wales for a period. The Minns Government is committed to undertaking a \$10 million rail resilience study. The study, vocally backed by local stakeholders, particularly Business Illawarra, will examine options to improve our rail corridor, including an examination of connections to south-western and western Sydney—an important link for communities in both areas for jobs and recreation.

The study will be complemented by steps to improve the road network, most particularly the examination of a connection between Memorial Drive and Bulli Pass and southside on- and off-ramps at Dapto that will help to serve a rapidly growing community and take the pressure off the main street of Dapto, reducing congestion and restoring the CBD's purpose as a location for jobs and commerce, not a transit lane. Members would recall that I have raised the issue of pressures on Wollongong Hospital regularly over the past few years. Our emergency department has the longest wait times outside of metropolitan Sydney and is serving a growing population. This is putting pressure on the already stretched staff. Under Labor, investments will be made in Wollongong Hospital, including improvements to staffing levels, improvements to inpatient cancer treatment, investment in new MRI and CT scanners and, importantly, planning for the next major redevelopment of the site.

These will add to previous commitments I have secured, including a new community health facility at Warrawong, a new ambulance station for Fairy Meadow, refurbishment of the ghost ward at Wollongong Hospital and the addition of cardiothoracic surgery in the region. These are investments in the future of health services that will improve existing services and prepare for the future. The new Government has already kept one of its key commitments to the region, with the land at King Street in Warrawong, on the Lake Illawarra foreshore, being taken off the market. It will remain in public hands. I am working with the Department of Planning and Environment on the process to develop the master plan for the site that we also committed to.

Labor governments have always recognised the role Wollongong can play in building our future. After all, the Bass Strait platforms, sections of the Sydney Harbour Tunnel and contributions to many other projects have come from the Illawarra. We can be at the front and centre of building renewable energy generation and transmission in the region too. That is why the Minns Government will invest in a centre of excellence in domestic manufacturing at TAFE in Wollongong to support the growth of the skilled workforce we will need to help transform energy generation. This will work with the Energy Futures Skills Centre and commitments to TAFE secured by the Federal member for Cunningham. It will also assist in the Illawarra maximising the benefit of the renewable energy zone that I was able to secure for our region in the last Parliament.

Securing this against the preference of the previous Government will support future investment and job creation in the region—not to mention help to lower our emissions and energy costs. I am also pleased that last week on Wear Orange Wednesday the Minister for Emergency Services was in Wollongong to confirm that the SES headquarters will be staying there. The Minns Government will deliver the fresh start for Wollongong that residents, frustrated by 12 years of being ignored by the previous Government, want, need and deserve.

### **ALBURY ELECTORATE EATING DISORDER SERVICES**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (21:23):** Eating disorders impact over one million Australians. They are complex mental disorders that result in significant physical impairment and have high rates of mortality and low rates of early detection and intervention. Albury resident Tina—and I note that that is not her real name—was diagnosed with an eating disorder in mid-2021. This is her story, as related to me by her parents:

Tina attended CAMHs for a little while but was adamant that it wasn't helping. She seemed to be progressing ok and her school results kind of tricked us into thinking she was doing much better than she was.

However, in September 2022 when her heartbeat was checked and I saw her skeletal figure, I realised how bad her eating disorder had got and the suggestion from her GP was that we needed to get something done urgently and that an admission to the hospital was the best course of action.

[At hospital] some observations were taken it was explained to us that she was fine and they had checked her off against a sheet of paper and she was within the safe limits and right to go home .... I noted later that the piece of paper they gave me stated it was not supposed to be used for adolescents.

Our GP ... found out about Westmead Adolescent Eating disorder programme and had arranged us to talk with them. They advised us to go back to the hospital and have Tina admitted ... and they would start with her care or have her transported by ambulance to Westmead as she was now 50kg and getting worse. Westmead contacted the Albury ED to arrange this ... We again attended Albury Base and ... were informed by the attending doctor that he had been advised that the decision was up to Tina if she wanted to be admitted as she was 17 ... She refused.

More calls took place between the two hospitals ... Westmead wanted Tina brought to them – a 3rd visit to the Albury hospital in 6 weeks; Tina was skeletal in appearance and had blackened and swollen legs from oedemas due to her low blood pressure .... Observations were taken in Albury and the parents were informed that "she was not sick enough to be admitted".

The next day we drove Tina to Westmead where she would stay until December 5, being fed through a tube. Her heartbeat hit 30 BPM on her the first night in admission ... I truly believe if we had not taken Tina on that day, if her heart had dropped to 30 BPM while she was sleeping at our house on that night, then she would not have woken up that next morning.

New South Wales has a well-developed plan in relation to eating disorders: the *NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders 2021-2025*. Under the New South Wales plan we are to see the development of local service and workforce development plans for people with eating disorders in every local health district [LHD] in New South Wales. All local health districts developed a local service plan for eating disorders in 2016, reflecting key aims and strategic priorities of the New South Wales service plan. All LHDs developed local steering committees as the local governance structure to oversee the development and implementation of the local service plan. Funding by the New South Wales Government saw the appointment of an eating disorders coordinator in each LHD. In addition, there is the NSW Statewide Eating Disorders Steering Committee.

The Albury community has raised concerns that it does not have the benefit of an eating disorder coordinator to oversee a local service plan. I am hearing that our eating disorder services have low visibility in this community. People find the elements piece by piece, and there can be conflicting decisions between the various services, despite what I am certain to be good intentions and efforts of healthcare providers. The first two goals embedded in the New South Wales blueprint are to ensure equity of service provision across New South Wales to people with eating disorders, regardless of where they live, and to provide resources and support for services that do not specialise in eating disorder treatment to deliver safe, effective eating disorder care closer to home. In short, New South Wales has a strong planning framework for tackling eating disorders in a coordinated manner. This has been rolled out across the State and certainly to this point has been delivered through the LHDs—but Albury does not come within an LHD.

While acknowledging that Albury Wodonga Health is managed by the Victorian Government, I have made representation to the New South Wales Minister for Health on behalf of the Albury community—and I thank the Minister for his consideration—to see that Albury residents do not miss out on equitable provision of eating disorder services through Albury Wodonga Health due to this structural anomaly. Coordination, wraparound support services, visibility and expert treatment near home are needed. In closing, I acknowledge the efforts of the Butterfly Foundation; Helen Haines, the member for Indi; and the families and practitioners who have opened their lives and their stories to me as we all work for better days ahead.

#### **NORTHERN RIVERS ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTAL RECOVERY PLAN**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (21:28):** The electorate of Lismore—and indeed the Northern Rivers—needs a comprehensive economic environmental recovery or re-imagine plan to support our ongoing recovery. I have called for this, advocated and agitated in 2022 and now in 2023. On behalf of our community, I was able to secure a commitment from the Minns Government—a deliberately modest \$250,000 to help advance an environmental economic recovery plan for the Northern Rivers. That is not an entire plan; it is just to start with, to scope it out. When I put the plan forward, I said I wanted it to be done with Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers, in conjunction with Business NSW across the seven local government areas within the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation's geographic footprint. I also said that because I represent Tenterfield and some of the border areas impacted by floods and bushfires, I wanted them included.

I said that the \$250,000 should be used to engage someone with expertise in this particular area—not as a business-as-usual economic environmental recovery plan. I want someone who understands and is an expert in economic development in a broad and international sense, not just economic growth. Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers has also made a sketch of a regional economic recovery plan that I support, as it provides a framework of some essential elements that will not only support our ongoing recovery but also help our area to thrive. I will outline some of the key elements that are scoped in the plan sketch.

I will start with a few chilling statistics, which give some background as to why we need this plan. A total of 989 square kilometres were flooded across the Northern Rivers; 10,000 people were displaced; over 24,000 insurance claims were lodged; and 718 square kilometres of agricultural land, 35.24 square kilometres of residential land, 235.76 square kilometres of other land and 11,000 homes were inundated. Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers has scoped capital works to be worth \$5.4 billion. The Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation at its recent industry event scoped it to be more like \$8 billion. That funding will not appear overnight; it will come over time. That is what I have said. Some people ask me, "Is it in the budget?" I tell them it is not going to be in one budget but it will be in budgets over time. We just need to know that it is happening.

The executive summary that the Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers has outlined in its regional development scoping plan includes five key points. The first is that community often knows best, so consult early and often. The second is that First Nations law is incredibly valuable. The third is that every relevant planning document and all decision-making should be premised on disaster preparedness and mitigation. That is key. They should also be trauma informed for communities who have suffered extensive trauma. The fourth point

is to always seek to build back better. Like the summary says, it is becoming a cliché. I say it is hackneyed, but we mean it. The mantra is strong. We have always done less but we have to do more. The fifth point is to incorporate world's best practice and use other State examples of best practice.

The summary points to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority as a good model, in the hope that it can be translated to the NSW Reconstruction Authority. I know that those organisations work in collaboration and that the NSW Reconstruction Authority reaches out to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. I have driven that approach. I am close to the border and I have seen it work in practice. It will serve New South Wales well. We do not have to mimic, but we can certainly be informed by what already exists and is best practice. Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers outlines its vision and other plans, but the community knows what vision it needs.

### COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (21:34):** I start by thanking the voters of Coffs Harbour for their support and for placing their trust in me to be their local member for the next four years. Our hard work and delivery over the past four years was rewarded with a swing towards us, bucking the statewide trend of a swing to the Government. There were many highlights in the first term. They included opening the \$24 million Wiigulga Sports Complex at Woolgoolga; completing the \$194 million upgrade of Coffs Harbour Hospital; beginning construction on the \$2.2 billion Coffs Harbour bypass, which will reduce congestion in our town all year but especially during peak holiday periods; establishing the first Indigenous language school in New South Wales; a \$10 million regional sports hub; and two new ambulance stations for Sawtell and Coffs Harbour, with the Coffs Harbour station opening very shortly.

We were able to fund three round games of the National Rugby League, with the Cronulla Sharks calling Coffs Harbour their home away from home for three years in a row. I think three wins from three will get them back for a fourth. We also funded four games of Big Bash cricket, with the Sydney Sixers playing various teams and every single time providing spectacular entertainment for the locals, and a new RFS rescue helicopter based permanently in Coffs Harbour. It was a great first term. Our campaign running into the 2023 election was focused on making the Coffs Coast the best it can possibly be. It was a very positive campaign and, based on the events during our first term from 2019 to 2023, we took into consideration things like natural disasters as well as the COVID pandemic.

Good government is not just saying what you do not like. You have to put in place plans, policies and procedures, and that is what we took to the election. But obviously the State of New South Wales voted Labor instead. We made a couple of key election commitments, some of which were commitments if our Government was re-elected. One of them was to get on with the jetty foreshore precinct. We have spoken about that in Coffs Harbour for 30 years. The project has had many iterations, including the latest one involving a community survey of 3,600 people who suggested quite strongly a path that informed a refined master plan, which we hope that the Labor Government will respect.

The second of our commitments was an allocation of \$4 million as part of an \$8 million project to build a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility at Moonee Beach. It was to be matched fifty-fifty by a \$4 million pledge from the Payce Foundation. It is currently in partnership with the Salvation Army to run Adele House, a 40-bed, state-of-the-art drug rehabilitation facility in Bucca. The facility treats 160 men every year and changes their lives by putting them on a positive path. We proposed to fund a 20-bed women's facility, where children could also stay if they needed to, that would help turn around the lives of women requiring drug and alcohol treatment. I will meet with the Minister later in the sitting, and hopefully the Labor Government will help fund that vital facility as well.

The other very important and exciting commitment that we made was for an amenity wall, which would have allowed the co-existence of the two biggest infrastructure projects in the history of our city: the \$2.2 billion bypass and the half-a-billion-dollar film studios in the Pacific Bay Resort precinct. The film studio proposal included a boutique hotel, a film studio and a museum as well as a film school, creating an entirely new industry for Coffs Harbour and for the North Coast. It would transform the economy of the Coffs Coast as well as that of all northern New South Wales. The events of the past few years have changed a lot in New South Wales, and I reflect quickly on my shadow ministries of Tourism, Emergency Services and the North Coast. The events of the past few years will obviously shape what happens in those portfolios, but they also give us some opportunities to deliver a bit more for the North Coast and for New South Wales as a whole. I look forward to working with my Labor and ministerial colleagues in those portfolios.

## FLOOD RESPONSE

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (21:39):** I take this opportunity to address our need to reflect on recent flood disasters across my electorate, to learn from them and, ultimately, to install the necessary measures to protect life and mitigate damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure into the future. We need to do more if there is a chance of jumping off the bureaucratic-driven hamster wheel and do what is possible to break the cycle of devastation and despair following inevitable future deluge and disaster. There were failures in both early warning systems and emergency service responses to the flood event at Eugowra and Cudal in November last year. There were obvious contributing factors which exacerbated flooding in Molong, and there were clear mitigating strategies which would have likely spared Forbes the extent of flooding that it experienced.

It is incumbent upon us, as community representatives, to ensure that comprehensive ongoing review of those devastating natural disasters is undertaken to prevent future threats to people, property and livelihoods, whilst also understanding factors which led to unprecedented levels of flooding. A review must incorporate planning decisions that may have contributed to the flooding, with a view to recommending modifications to future planning and development. Flood mitigation measures, however costly at the outset, will ultimately save future government's significant cost while future-proofing our economy. This should be viewed as critical investment. The Lachlan River flooded multiple times over the past year, and the cost to communities, local council and primary producers in the valley is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Any funding directed towards preventing homes and businesses from being flooded will inevitably save money in the longer term. We need cooperation among local and State governments in exploring permanent flood-protection barriers to protect local communities.

Importantly, any review undertaken must address a home owner's ability to access insurance for their protection and external factors which hinder people from being eligible for affordable insurance. There is a discussion to be had regarding any scope for legislative change to hold insurers accountable in providing their customers fair, reasonable and timely processing and payment of claims. Firsthand experiences by many who have endured the rigorous insurance claims process have been troubling, to put it mildly. Many have resorted to referring their matter to the Insurance Council or engaging legal representation, further victimising already distressed families. The cost and availability of home contents and property insurance have a dramatic influence upon property value, future property sales, investment, personal wealth and the local economy. We are witnessing flood-impacted businesses closing down and, in the absence of changes to protect business owners, there remains an absence in confidence for businesses continuing in some of these areas.

What can be done to mitigate against future floods? We already have the tools and technology to do better. We have the ability to install devices to monitor water levels and flow rates in our rivers and creeks, providing a trigger for early warning in the event of potential flooding and enabling downstream communities to evacuate as necessary and protect their livestock and property. This would also serve to activate emergency services and help to validate calls for emergency services. We have the ability to use satellite and Light Detection and Ranging [LiDAR] technology to map changes in terrain which influence movement of water, and to assist with future planning and development of infrastructure. We can also use this technology to model water depth and velocity flows to assist in planning to prevent unnecessary flood impact on our communities.

We recognise that obstructions in watercourses, such as the railway bridge at Molong, can be re-engineered to prevent damming and redirection of floodwater from its natural course. We can remove obvious debris from creeks and waterways, which can accumulate in the torrent, causing infrastructure to be damaged and again redirecting the flow of water towards low-level homes and infrastructure. I have long advocated for the Wyangala Dam wall to be raised and firmly believe that this is a necessary step to prevent flooding in downstream communities in the Lachlan Valley. It is disappointing that this project, promised by the former Government to be commenced years ago, has been shelved.

The flooding experienced across our State over the past two years was unprecedented. The Lismore flood was an extraordinary event to which the Government had to learn to respond, but I expect we will have learned much in the aftermath in supporting the financial needs of the community. Initial government funding announced for the Central West floods was focused on business and agriculture and, while these are important to support, there was disparity in the support of people and families living in flood-impacted communities. There has been disparity in government support for communities in the Orange electorate compared with communities in northern New South Wales, including buybacks, raising of homes and retrofits. We do not begrudge their support, but people living elsewhere in the State who have been flood-impacted, including my electorate of Orange, deserve the same access to support packages.

### READING FRIENDS AUSTRALIA

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (21:44):** I express my admiration for the incredible efforts of Reading Friends Australia, a non-profit organisation established in 2021. Reading Friends Australia is an organisation entirely powered by volunteers, some of whom I had the delight to meet at the end of last year. Their journey began in 2019 with volunteers in school classrooms to provide reading support to children. It soon became apparent that there were numerous students across the class who required additional assistance. It was also identified that it was a challenge for the teachers and principals to locate, verify, coordinate and retain volunteers to participate in classroom reading. This realisation prompted the volunteers to act and Reading Friends Australia began to work to find a simple, practical and effective solution that would benefit children, teachers, schools and communities.

Reading Friends Australia provides numerous volunteers who assist children with reading practice during school hours. They offer this service to schools for free, with maximum flexibility and minimum disruption for teachers and students. They recruit, train and manage volunteers based on a school's specific requirements, with the school nominating the time, days and students who need assistance. The reading helpers attend schools regularly and, with casuals on standby, this model ensures continuity and consistency for the children. The volunteers are members of the local community who are passionate about children's education and trained to provide excellent support to teachers and school staff. All Reading Friends Australia volunteers hold a current Working with Children Check, and they engage with parents and carers at the school's discretion to involve them in the program.

The Supporting Schools Improving Reading Skills in Children K-6—Expansion was among the successful initiatives announced for the Goulburn electorate under the New South Wales Government's Children and Young People Wellbeing Recovery Initiative. I was delighted to see that the Government had extended support to that worthwhile Reading Friends Australia program—an excellent example of how we can help young people to recover, build resilience and improve their wellbeing by providing them with the tools and resources they need to achieve their full potential.

The Chair of Reading Friends Australia, Luciana De Michiel, has set out to enhance children's reading skills through a range of school-based and community-based activities. I extend my heartfelt appreciation and recognition to Reading Friends Australia and their volunteers for their unwavering commitment. I hope that they will continue to receive the support they need to collaborate with local schools to enhance and improve our students' reading skills. The sense of community and humanity demonstrated by those volunteers is commendable, and I express my sincere gratitude to each and every one of them for their enduring efforts.

### HAWKESBURY TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (21:47):** I bring to the attention of the House the telecommunications issues in Hawkesbury, especially in and around the Macdonald Valley and St Albans area. Last month I joined locals from the St Albans Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and the Macdonald Valley Association to look more closely at and discuss the lack of communication options for locals. This issue unfortunately tends to be forgotten during ordinary circumstances and sadly it often takes a natural disaster to bring it to people's attention. Far too often locals have been left isolated in times of dire need due to the absence of reliable communication channels. Bushfires and floods are a threat even to the most prepared. Can you imagine facing one of those natural disasters and not being able to communicate with your neighbours or emergency services?

In the floods that swept through Hawkesbury last year, some residents of Macdonald Valley were only able to communicate with the outside world via radio. Those without a radio were forced to rely on spotty cell phone service or word of mouth from neighbours for updates on the situation. At the meeting we also had the opportunity to talk to three senior Telstra representatives about the situation. I extend my thanks to Telstra for coming to the table on this very critical issue. It was good to see them come to St Albans as well; it was a good trip. The topics we covered included the best use of funding allocated in previously secured grants, as well as broadband solutions and restoring wi-fi to the village payphone in St Albans. Having a village payphone sounds like an antiquated practice, but for some St Albans residents it is the only tool to communicate with those beyond the valley when the wi-fi goes down again or cell reception fails to reach their homes. Arranging for network providers to assess the areas in need was discussed with the Telstra representatives, as well as funding for fire truck antennas.

COVID-19 has changed the landscape of the workplace, with many businesses transitioning to a working-from-home model. For Macdonald Valley locals, this is a difficult opportunity to come by due to the unreliability of telecommunications. You would think that, for areas as isolated as Wisemans Ferry and St Albans, providing dependable telecommunications channels would be a priority. Improving telecommunications in the Macdonald Valley district is not only a safety issue but also a lifestyle issue. While they are in an isolated area, residents should have the luxury of at least being able to communicate easily with others. Locals who live in and

around the valley often refer to it as the "forgotten valley". We cannot let that be true. Just as telecommunications is an issue at the forefront of locals' minds, so too should we be striving to find a solution.

Again, I extend my thanks to the representatives from the Macdonald Valley-St Albans district for voicing their concerns and to the Telstra representatives. I am currently arranging a face-to-face meeting with senior Telstra officials and will keep the community informed on the progress being made, and whether progress and support is available at a Federal Government level too.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:51 until  
Thursday 25 May 2023 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

**According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.**

**SUTHERLAND SHIRE RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate the Sutherland Shire Relay for Life local volunteer organising committee, including chair Rod Coy, on the success of the 2023 Sutherland Shire Relay for Life. Relay for Life is an annual community fundraising challenge, with all proceeds directed to Cancer Council NSW. This year \$300,000 and counting has been raised for cancer research. The event—which runs over 24 hours—attracted 1255 relayers. Community members joined together to celebrate cancer survivorship, to remember lost loved ones, and to raise money for vital research. As with every year, the success of Relay for Life would not be possible without the hard work of the volunteer organising committee. Many thanks to the organisers and relay participants for their efforts to raise awareness and funds for cancer research.

**THE SMILES OF MACLEAY YOUTH LANEWAY FESTIVAL**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Thousands celebrated Kempsey's first Laneway Festival during this year's Youth Week celebrations, marking the revitalisation of Elringtons and Savages laneways in Kempsey's CBD recently. Proudly funded by NSW Government's Streets as Shared Spaces Program and Office of Regional Youth Autumn Holiday Break Program, the event was made possible thanks to generous sponsorship from Community Housing Ltd and additional funding from the lead organisation, Kempsey Shire Council. I spent a fantastic afternoon at the festival and loved every moment of it. There were heaps of kids' activities, street circus performers, fire twirlers, live art mural installations and street chalk art, market stalls, food trucks and cafes. A great example of the community coming together. I'd like to thank all the artists, organisations, businesses, and volunteers who made this project and festival such a great success. It was a great opportunity to recognise the contribution our youth make, and I look forward to spending more of my time with the young people of our region and championing their talents and skills. I also look forward to enjoying more terrific community events in our backyard.

**A/SUPT. SCHULTZ**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I'd like to acknowledge and note the Acting Superintendent Joanne Schultz has taken on the role of relieving District Commander. She has been heading-up Mid North Coast police while Commander Shane Cribb fills in at Coffs Harbour. A/Supt. Schultz has been in the police force for 35 years. She worked in the region for eight years when she first joined NSW Police, so has knowledge of the Mid North Coast Police District. As part of her role, A/Supt. Schultz makes sure police are well supported and are able to do their job to the best of their ability, recognising the community gets a better response and service from the police when they are better resourced, and their concerns addressed. A/Supt. Schultz also understands the Mid North Coast Police District is a very diverse area with big centres of Port Macquarie and Kempsey, which have different needs and issues. And then smaller towns such as Wauchope and Nambucca, which again, all have different issues. Our local police do a tremendous job, but I believe that there are not enough in our region. I am hoping to address this issue with the Minister for Police, Hon. Yasmin Catley soon.

**VOLUNTEERS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Volunteers generously give their time to the community without expecting anything in return. They are an essential part of the success of our community and the organisations across the shires that rely on them. National Volunteer Week is from Monday 15 May to Sunday 21 May. This is an opportunity to acknowledge the groups that depend on the dedication of volunteers who give their time to a cause or passion. This year's theme, 'Change Makers', celebrates the power of volunteers to drive change and ensure that volunteering is inclusive of all members of the community. Volunteers are often working behind the scenes for groups, organisations, on projects, or just giving a hand to help a neighbour or person who needs support or assistance. They substantially benefit their communities by providing essential services to others and may bring

new insights to the organisations or groups for which they volunteer, increase efficiencies, and improve effectiveness. According to the latest statistics, three in ten people aged over 15 years in Australia participate in voluntary work. Volunteering broadens people's networks and professional skills and serves as an indicator of wellbeing and social cohesion. I'd like to congratulate and thank all our volunteers.

### **NEW CITIZENS IN THE RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—I recently attended a citizenship ceremony in Bowman Hall hosted by Blacktown City Mayor, Tony Bleasdale, which welcomed over 300 new citizens to the Riverstone electorate. I seek to congratulate everyone who attended that came across the seas and has now obtained their citizenship. I warmly welcome you to your new home, Australia. The Riverstone electorate, with residents from highly diverse backgrounds, truly is the best place in the best country in the world to start a new life. I implore all citizens, from our new neighbours to those who have lived in the area for generations, to make the most of my electoral office team and services. We are here to help you. While citizenship may formalise your inclusion into Australian society, I recognise many people have been actively improving their community for years before this special day. Let's continue to work together to ensure everyone is welcome and can share in the community spirit and benefits of living in Sydney's North West. Community spirit is what makes Australia great and it's one of the things makes Riverstone great too.

### **ALLEN KRUSE**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise one of my constituents from the South Coast Electorate, Allen Kruse of Sanctuary Point. Allen has been volunteering for Sanctuary Point Community Pride for over 15 years, with 13 of those years as their President. Sanctuary Point Community Pride's mission is to increase pride in the community, by encouraging residents to come together to increase quality of life and create and maintain a pride in the village for all. Allen has been integral to the amazing work Sanctuary Point Community Pride does for our community, a driving force behind the well-known Spring into Sanctuary Point Fair and so many other amazing initiatives projects for the benefit of all residents and visitors to the village. He recently stepped down as President and I want to thank him for everything he has done and continues to do for our community. Volunteering to help make our community a better place is so important to Allen, and he has inspired so many others to follow in his footsteps.

### **MOTHER'S DAY CLASSIC WALK FOR BREAST CANCER**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise an amazing volunteer group from the South Coast Electorate, the Mother's Day Classic Walk Huskisson. This incredible group volunteer their time to raise money for breast cancer research, this year's Mother's Day Classic saw 350 registrations and the support of many local businesses. I would like to pay particular attention to the extremely passionate and hard-working committee members of this group; Elaine McLemon, Nichole O'Brien, Tara Odgers, Renee Henry, and Vanessa Lloyd with Anna Rogers being the host of this year's event. I'm told by the committee member Tara, "The atmosphere had a vibe that was difficult to describe. It was emotional, uplifting, and full of love and laughter as everyone came together to raise funds to create a better tomorrow for the 1 in 7 women diagnosed with breast cancer." It is local heroes like these women that makes me so proud to live and represent the beautiful South Coast, when we come together as a community, there is nothing we can't fix.

### **NOWRUZ NEW YEAR 2023**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 18 March 2023 I was delighted to attend Cumberland Council's inaugural Nowruz celebration at the Granville Centre in my electorate.

Nowruz, the Persian New Year falls on the first day of the northern Spring, the March equinox, and is a joyous celebration of new beginnings, growth, and renewal. In my electorate, Nowruz is celebrated by the Afghan, Iranian and Kurdish community with lively gatherings, traditional food, music, and dancing. It's a time for families and friends to come together, share their culture, and reflect on the past year. Each year local Nowruz celebrations are bigger and bigger and attract more attention. Nowruz enable us to promote the values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families. It also plays a significant role in strengthening the ties among Nowruz let's embrace the diversity that makes our city great and join together to build a brighter future for all. The program included traditional Iranian dancing by Shiva, music by DJ Allen, performances by Arab Theatre Studio, Kabul Bird Band, Anatolian Dance Academy and Arabian Drummers. Thank you to Mayor Lisa Lake for the invitation to join so many local people in the inaugural event. Nowruz Mobarak."

### **RAMADAN 2023**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I want to acknowledge the holy month of Ramadan and thank the many people from the Muslim community who invited me to break their fast with them at iftar. Ramadan is the month

of sacrifice and personal reflection for the Muslim community, where they participate in a challenging fast as well as consider the suffering of others and contribute to charities to help those less fortunate. In recent years, as our Muslim communities have grown, iftar dinners have become larger and more frequent. Also, there has been a great emphasis on interfaith dialogue and the promotion of mutual respect and understanding. Iftar dinners are held by large corporations, political leaders, community associations, schools, mosques and churches and in people's homes. The Granville electorate is characterised by both cultural and religious diversity. It has a large Muslim community, which includes people born in Australia as well as those who have migrated from the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe. Their country of origin is as diverse as Lebanon and Sierra Leone, Iran and Egypt, Turkey and Afghanistan, Bosnia and Bangladesh. I thank the many organisations who invited me to attend for their generosity, hospitality and friendship.

#### **GUILDFORD WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL ANZAC DAY 2023 COMMEMORATION**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I joined the pupils, Principal, teachers and school community of Guildford West Public School for their ANZAC service at the school on 2 May 2023. I was delighted to join attendees, along with representatives of the Merrylands RSL Sub-branch and Cllr Lisa Lake, Mayor, Cumberland Council. As the daughter of a serviceman who served in the Royal Australian Air Force in World War II, ANZAC Day is incredibly important to me. ANZAC Day honours the bravery and sacrifice of the Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fought overseas. We remember their courage, mateship, and loyalty, and pay tribute to those who have served and continue to serve our country. Through the ANZAC Day ceremony, we reflected on the significance of this day and passed on to the next generation the importance of remembrance and gratitude. I am grateful for the invitation from Principal Kerry Weston to join the school community for their commemoration. Lest we forget.

#### **RYDE GROUP VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the nominees for the 'Group Volunteer of the Year' awards presented at the City of Ryde Recognition Awards event. Each nominee exemplifies the spirit of selflessness and service that lies at the heart of our community. Their tireless commitment to making a difference has touched countless lives and has had a profound impact on our city. The nominees, including AASHA Australia Foundation, Bev Debrincat and Pam Ward (Co-founders of The Habitat), CCA NSW Community Learning Volunteer Tutors, CCA NSW Cuppa Club Volunteers, CCA NSW Front Office Volunteers, Cycling Without Age Sydney North, Eastwood Chinese Senior Citizens Club, FITA/St. Andrews Socio-Religious Justice Inc., Meadowbank Grandparents Support Group, Presbyterian Aged Care Volunteer Shoppers, Rotary Carols on the Common Committee, and West Ryde St. Vincent De Paul Team, have dedicated their time, skills, and energy to support and uplift those in need. Among these incredible nominees, CCA NSW - Community Learning Volunteer Tutors emerged as the deserving winner. Their commitment to fostering education and providing invaluable support to learners in our community has made a lasting impact. We commend their passion, dedication, and the transformative work they have accomplished.

#### **RYDE YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I recently had the privilege of attending the City of Ryde Volunteer Recognition Awards event, an evening dedicated to celebrating the exceptional contributions of individuals who selflessly volunteer their time for the betterment of our community. In the category, "Young Volunteer of the Year," we witnessed the extraordinary efforts of several remarkable nominees. It is with great pleasure that I announce Royce Zeng as the well-deserved winner of the "Young Volunteer of the Year" award. Royce is the current President of the Actuarial Students' Society at Macquarie University but that's just one part of an impressive volunteer CV. He has also worked on a project helping three non-profit organisations for 18 months, helped new students transition into university, raised funds for the Starlight Children's Foundation and fought bushfires. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the nominees for their exceptional contributions. Nicole Debs, Anju Dhanushkodi, James Green, Nune Hoviva, Jasmine Ye, and Yeghia Gharibian who have all demonstrated remarkable maturity, compassion, and civic responsibility. Their dedication and willingness to give back to our community are truly commendable. Congratulations to all nominees.

#### **RYDE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I recently attended the City of Ryde Volunteer Recognition Awards event, an evening dedicated to acknowledging and celebrating the exceptional individuals who make our community shine. There were 26 amazing nominees for 'Volunteer of the Year'. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the nominees who were recognised for their unwavering commitment and dedication. Each nominee has made a profound impact within our community, embodying the true spirit of volunteerism and service. Amongst the remarkable nominees, I am delighted to announce Greg Power as the winner! Greg's outstanding contributions as a volunteer with the NSW State Emergency Service Ryde Unit has made a significant difference to many lives.



I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to all the nominees for their invaluable contributions. Dr. Rex Di Bona, Naome Kaprielian, Pauline Harley, Reza Rostami, Dr. Bruce Sui-Lung Poon, Dr. Yagiz Alp Aksoy, Charles Donald, Margery East, Andrew Hill, Cameron Jessep, Werner Klarenaar, Rochelle Keshishian, Denise Lee, Dr. Felix Lo, John Manenti, Lindsay Mar, Elizabeth Moran, Samantha Profilio, Rolf Schafer, Fran Signorelli, Daryl Tan, Iain Tice, Pamela Wood, Angel Yu, and Sunja Yoon have all shown incredible dedication and generosity of spirit.

### **OAK FLATS BOWLING CLUB ANZAC DAY MARCH 2023**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—Every year, on 25 April, we join together in remembrance of the courageous men and women who have served our country with unwavering bravery. On ANZAC Day this year, the Shellharbour community gathered at various services to honour the sacrifices and bravery of the original ANZACs, as well as the resilience and courage exhibited by our service personnel both at home and overseas during times of conflict and peace. I extend my appreciation to all those who diligently organised and attended the ceremonies within the Shellharbour electorate. I was very fortunate to be a part of the ANZAC Day service at Oak Flats Bowling Club. The event respectfully showcased the true essence of the ANZAC spirit. I would like to convey my deepest thanks to the board members of Oak Flats Bowling Club, namely Chairman Neil Dawson, Don Brown, Jessie Pill, Glen Cowling, Lyn Wilke, Wendy Steyer and Tony Guarnaccia. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to all the staff at Oak Flats Bowling Club for their hard work on ANZAC Day and their efforts in organising this event.

### **KIDSWISH HOUSE AND KIDSROCK**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—On 17 May 2023 I had the privilege of attending the grand opening of KidsWish House in Flinders. This remarkable establishment came into being as a result of the merger between The Disability Trust and Kidswish, two local disability providers. Together, they have created a state-of-the-art building that brings together families, children, and social workers, catering to the unique needs of individuals requiring additional support. The opening of KidsWish house emphasized the vital role that support services like KidsWish House play in the community, providing essential assistance to those in need. Following the grand opening, the spotlight shifted to the incredible musical talents of the KidsRock program. In January 2022, KidsWish joined forces with Mike Barnard, the co-founder of Illawarra Studios and the driving force behind KidsRock. This partnership has enabled the delivery of an extraordinary musical program every Wednesday afternoon, catering to children living with disabilities or illnesses, as well as their siblings. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to KidsWish and the Disability Trust for their remarkable new facility and the outstanding KidsRock music program that they run.

### **REBECCA DUNNING**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I congratulate Rebecca Dunning for her exceptional acts of selflessness in supporting the beloved local icon of Shellharbour, David Williamson also known as 'Scooter Dave.' Dave has gained widespread recognition for his remarkable endeavours of traversing the lake's foreshore on his mobility scooter to collect cans and bottles, recycling them via 'Return and Earn' to raise money for various local charities. Unfortunately, Dave's health has recently taken a downturn, impeding his invaluable contributions to the community. Rebecca, the proprietor of Stand Up Paddle Boarding Shellharbour, graciously seized the opportunity to raise awareness about Dave's endeavours within the community. Her dedicated efforts have garnered an overwhelming response, resulting in the collection of over 5000 cans from the community in less than a week. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Rebecca for her extraordinary commitment and selflessness in assisting Dave. Her actions have not only shed a spotlight on Dave's remarkable work in the community but have also showcased the power of unity and compassion in making a meaningful difference.

### **ILLAWARRA OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK 25TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces)**—I would like to acknowledge the 25th anniversary of the Illawarra Older Women's Network. The idea to start an Illawarra OWN group came from Maura O'Sullivan, a worker at the Bulli Community Centre. The first official meeting of Illawarra OWN was attended by seventeen women and within three years membership had grown to thirty. Meetings were scheduled twice a month with one meeting for business and the other for social activities. Illawarra OWN developed a long association with Illawarra International Women's Day celebrations and Seniors Week initiatives. One of the most popular activities was the SilvertOWNs, a performance choir. With twelve members plus a guitarist, they played to audiences at the Illawarra International Women's Day in 2001 and the following year at the Wollongong Town Hall as a finale to the Illawarra IWD festivities. In 2009, the wellness centre in Coniston was established by Barbara Malcolm and Thelma Prescott providing low-cost physical activity classes, facilitated by professional trainers, in a program designed to help older women remain as active as possible.

Congratulations Illawarra OWN on reaching this significant milestone and best wishes for a long and successful future.

#### **CLARENCE VALLEY COUNCIL BUILDING BRIDGES EMU PROJECTION PROJECT**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to the collaborative team behind Clarence Valley Council's Emu Projection project, which recently won the Events, Exhibitions and Tours category at the 2023 NSW National Trust Heritage Awards. The project featured a series of artworks as seen through the eyes of local First Nations artists celebrating the endangered coastal emu. The works were projected at night during the Jacaranda Festival onto the Sunshine Sugar tower which sits within the historic Grafton Bridge precinct. Led by Clarence Valley Council's Cultural Project Officer, Sarah Nash, the project was part of Council's 'Building Bridges' project which received funding through the former NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund. I congratulate local Aboriginal artists whose works featured on the projection - Deborah Taylor (Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung), Kahlua Charlton (Yaegl), Gareth Charlton (Yaegl), Bianca Monaghan (Bundjalung), her young daughter, Maisie Monaghan (Bundjalung) and Aneika Kapeen (Yaegl). It is wonderful to see this much cherished public artwork project celebrating the Clarence River, First Nations culture and local community recognised by the National Trust, and I congratulate everyone involved.

#### **XUEYI TAO**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I wish to acknowledge Beverly Hills resident, Ms Xueyi Tao, for her contribution to the Chinese Australian community over the past 20 years. Ms Xueyi Tao migrated to Australia in 2002. She joined CASS Huakang Dancing Group in Hurstville as a volunteer dance instructor in the same year. She developed age-appropriate dance programs and fitness activities. She assisted the seniors learn new dance steps, revisit old dance steps and performances at community events. To encourage more elderly members to participate in social activities and maintain physical movements, Ms Tao founded CASS Ashfield social dancing group in 2016 and CASS Huajin dancing group in Kingsgrove in 2017. She was elected as the leader of both of dancing groups between 2017 and 2022. Her love of dancing and desire to help those in need inspired many people in the community to team with her and continue to make a difference. I would like to thank Ms Tao for her amazing volunteer work and long-time dedication.

#### **CHEN WANG**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I wish to acknowledge Hurstville resident, Ms Chen Wang, for her long-time contribution to Asian Women at Work Inc. (AWATW). AWATW is a not-for-profit organisation that has been working to empower and advocate for migrant women with Asian backgrounds. They focus on developing a support network of migrant women by providing individual support, outreach programs, seminars and information sessions, leadership development and training. Ms Chen Wang joined AWATW in 2000. She has been a keen and highly dedicated volunteer in this organisation for more than 20 years. She leads AWATW line dancing groups in Hurstville five days a week. She supports the facilitators at numerous workshops, seminars, info sessions and street stalls. She also helps promote events and recruit participants in the community. Ms Wang's consistent dedication and active participation in AWATW has undoubtedly made a positive difference in the lives of individuals within the Chinese community and the broader community as well. I want to take this opportunity to thank Ms Chen Wang for her enthusiasm and generosity to the community.

#### **JOSEPHINE NIP**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I wish to acknowledge Ms Josephine Nip for her amazing contribution to the St George community. Ms Nip has been part of St George's Hurstville Anglican Church since 2007. As a passionate and versatile musician, she quickly began to serve the church community with her gifts. She started as a pianist for the church, and then took on numerous roles, including musical trainer, and choir master. In 2018, she and another musician founded a Church Intergenerational Orchestra consisting of players from different age groups. Her passion for music constantly inspires the kids at the church. Ms Nip's love for music and heart for young musicians is not limited to church. In 2017, she and her son joined the St George Brass Band. Both soon became part of the band's management committee, helping organise rehearsals and assisting the junior members of the band to improve their skills. During COVID, Ms Nip used her talent to bring joy and hope to many people. She produced music videos and wrote new songs for church. In conjunction with the St George Brass Band, she helped run and coordinate sectionals at Zoom rehearsals.

#### **LOLA STYLES – NSW STATE UNDER 14 GIRLS SURFING CHAMPION**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I congratulate Lola Styles on achieving an impressive number one in NSW in the under 14 girls surfing titles. Lola achieved this accolade on her 13th birthday earlier this month. Since taking up surfing as a seven-year-old, Lola has been committed to her love of the sport. Working diligently with coach Wayne Hudson and totally supported by her family, Lola is also currently

ranked in the top five of junior female surfers in Australia. A Year 7 Hastings Secondary college student, Lola balances successful academic accomplishments, elite athleticism and a passion for the ocean environment. She is ambassador for the local business 'Eco Towels', a Port Macquarie company that produces sustainable beach towels made from recycled plastic waste. Lola's role provides a voice and an advocacy platform for her to share her deep dedication to looking after our oceans. Well done Lola on your dedication to surfing and your success as regional champion and state champion. I look forward to following your career as you pursue your goals as a professional surfer on the WSL Women's Championship Tour, an Olympian and to surf Jaws in Hawaii.

#### **JORJA SCHOFIELD IS 2023 YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise today to recognise the exceptional achievements of Hastings Secondary College Year 12 student, Jorja Schofield, who was awarded Citizen of the Year for 2023. Jorja is a remarkable and persistent young lady who is determined to increase the level of representation of girls and women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) study and future careers. At the young age of 13, Jorja competed in the international FIRST Robotics Competition in Houston, Texas, as a member of the Colleges' robotics team which won the Australian Championships. Now in Year 12, Jorja is the School Captain at Hastings Secondary College and continues to expand her skills, help others and live her passion for STEM. This year, Jorja spoke at the Luminosity Summit for Young People in Port Macquarie on leadership and gender prejudices inhibiting girls from pursuing careers in science. She is passionate about closing the gender gap. An inspiring speaker, a young leader, a determined student and an invested citizen, Jorja's future is sure to be bright. I congratulate Jorja on upholding her inspiring vision for girls in education and forging ahead determinedly with her passion.

#### **40 YEARS OF KEN LITTLE'S FRUIT & VEG IN PORT MACQUARIE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise to acknowledge an iconic, small business in the Port Macquarie-Hastings region, Ken Little's Fruit and Veg and congratulate them on celebrating 40 years serving our community. Ken Little's Fruit and Veg was first established on 9th May 1983, located in the Colonial Arcade Port Macquarie, offering the very best in locally sourced fruit and vegetables from the Hastings. No surprise, the name on the door recognises the hardworking owners Kenny and Judy Little who still manage the business to this very day. From humble beginnings, to a relocation of premises in 1996 at Munster Street Shopping Village, the owners have faced their fair share of challenges from road closures to arson in 2007. Kenny Little's holds "the gong" for best local produce at the Hastings Favourite Foodies Awards and a NSW Premier's Award for their community efforts throughout the 2019 summer bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic. I highlight former employee Pam Hore who started two months into operations and retired after serving 21 years in the store. Today the business employs 52 staff and keeps to its promise of "giving customers what they want". Congratulations.

#### **BIG RED CAFE**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—Small businesses are the lifeblood of any community. They not only provide invaluable services, they also provide tremendous employment opportunities for many local residents. I have been fortunate to witness the incredible contribution of small businesses during my 52 years in Engadine. Today, we celebrate one of those businesses, Big Red Café. It was seven years ago today when the team at Big Red Café first opened their doors. Since that day there has been a steady stream of customers lining up for a coffee or a famous burger. Not only do Ben and the team at Big Red Café help to provide me with a caffeine boost in the morning, they also do it with incredible passion as well. It truly is service with a smile. We know that owning a small business can have its challenges. When you own a business you don't get paid for holidays or overtime. However, there is an incredible sense of satisfaction and belonging from running a small business, like Big Red Café, in a wonderful community like Engadine. Well done again to Ben and the team and here is to seven more wonderful years.

#### **PLATYPUS RELEASE**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge an incredible project overseen by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Taronga Conservation Society, UNSW Sydney and WWF-Australia. Recently, as a result of a project between those four organisations, five female platypuses were released into the Royal National Park. This was an incredibly significant moment given the mammal had not been sighted in the national park for 50 years. I was lucky enough to witness the release and it was a celebration I will never forget. There is so much good that occurs on behalf of community groups in the Royal National Park. From surf life saving clubs to community groups like the RNP Coastal Cabins Protection League, there are so many people who are invested in helping our national park not only survive, but also thrive. The release of the platypuses is another example of likeminded individuals getting together for a great cause to benefit the Royal National Park. Thank you again to everyone who was involved in the relocation of the five female platypuses recently. I look forward to the upcoming release of four males in the national park as well.

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MATTHEW DUN**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Congratulations to Associate Professor Matthew Dun from Dudley, who was recognised as the Lake Mac Ambassador Award for outstanding contribution to the community at the recent Lake Mac Awards. In 2018 Professor Dun's daughter Josephine was diagnosed with diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG). He turned that adversity into an opportunity for others through research at the University of Newcastle. DIPG presents as a lethal brain tumour in an area of the brainstem known as the pons and in 2018 there were no treatments available. An international clinical trial into DIPG was launched in 2022, based on the research gathered by Matt and his team. This was a huge stride forward for Australian families who were affected by the disease, as they no longer had to travel overseas for treatment trials. The 'Wish Lab', a bespoke DIPG research space at the University of Newcastle, allows for the testing of drug therapies. RUN DIPG, a charity founded to support research into the disease, was founded by Matt and has raised more than \$2 million to search for treatments and a cure. Thank you and congratulations Associate Professor Matthew Dun.

**FIRE AND RESCUE NSW**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—As part a state-wide open day held on 13 May, I caught up with the crews at Fire and Rescue NSW station 500 Tingira Heights and Fire and Rescue NSW Station 255 Charlestown. As always, during my visit I was struck by the professionalism and dedication of our crews, who were delighted to have the opportunity to pass on their knowledge to visitors. Local children had the opportunity to sit in the fire truck, hold a fire hose, watch fires being extinguished and savour a delicious sausage sandwich. Throwing open the fire station doors to the community is an important way to spread fire safety messages and information about the services provided by our local Fire and Rescue NSW crews. This is particularly vital for the younger members of our community and hopefully will inspire young ones into the service. As well as leaving with activity books featuring safety tips such as how to stop, drop and roll, Charlestown children learned more about the operations of their local fire station and the importance of having a fire safety plan in place. I thank our local crews for hosting such a successful day for the community.

**HUNTER SURF LIFESAVING**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The 2022-2023 beach season has drawn to a close and it has been an incredibly tough one for our Hunter Surf Lifesavers. The hard-working Hunter patrols completed more than 56,000 patrol hours on our beaches and performed 164 rescues. We know that it is the presence of our surf patrols that keep people, locals and visitors alike, safe on our beaches. Tragically, there were 54 coastal drowning deaths in Australia between 1 December 2022 and 1 March 2023. NSW had its highest number ever recorded, with 28 deaths. All of those deaths occurred either at an unpatrolled area, outside patrol hours, or outside the red and yellow flags. Thank you to our local surf lifesavers who give their time and energy to keep others safe and allow everyone to enjoy the beach. Many locals enthusiastically participate in Nippers programs each year. In fact, in 2022-2023, more than 3000 Hunter kids took part. Thank you to the volunteers and age managers who make this program, teaching our kids beach safety and water skills, possible. I am incredibly grateful for the time, expertise and dedication of all our Surf Life Saving members.

**BRODY RIA NT**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—Ensuring the vitality and health of Lake Macquarie is a passion of mine so I'd like to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of 12-year-old Brody Riant from Morisset Park who has gone above and beyond to take care of our precious waterway. Every weekend and school holidays Brody sets out in either his tinny or home-made pontoon boat to collect load after load of rubbish including tyres, plastics, old bikes and household fixtures from the lake. He has even made his own crane from scrap metal to help him lift heavier items out of the water. Brody, who has ADHD, autism and learning difficulties says his desire to clean up the lake is motivated by the enjoyment he gets from being out on his boat, improving the environment and setting a good example for other kids. He has spent countless hours fundraising for his boat's fuel and the tip fees associated with disposing of the rubbish by recycling bottles and cans through the Return and Earn scheme and managing a GoFundMe page. I commend and thank this remarkable young man for his work. He's a true Lake Macquarie legend!

**KIRRALEE KELLY, KELLIE WILLIAMS AND BAE-PHOENIX KELLY**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to congratulate Kirralee Kelly, Kellie Williams and their daughter Bae-Phoenix Kelly on being selected to play for their respective Australian Indigenous teams in the upcoming OzTag World Cup in Ireland later this year. It's the first time the OzTag World Cup has been held since

2018 and will see the best players from around the world compete on a global stage. Kirralee and Kellie will be playing in the Australian Indigenous women's 30s team, while 16-year-old Bae-Phoenix has been selected into the Australian Indigenous women's 21s side. Kirralee and Kelly are inspirational community members who mentor other young Indigenous women living on Awabakal land in the sport and have both competed at international OzTag events before. Bae-Phoenix has already had an impressive sporting career. Last year she competed in the NSW Koori Knockout where her team, the Waterloo Storm Girls under 15s team, won their division. She was also selected to the Under 15s Knights development squad. This year Bae-Phoenix will also be competing in the Big 4 international Tag series. I wish Kirralee, Kellie and Bae-Phoenix all the best at the OzTag World Cup.

#### **DORA CREEK LANDCARE GROUP**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to acknowledge the efforts of Dora Creek Landcare Group and the Green Team which has spent the past few weeks toiling away at a site near Dora Creek boat ramp. Volunteers have made major inroads against the relentless spread of lantana, asparagus fern and bitou bush in the area, spending hours digging out and breaking down these invasive weeds. They also cleared out mounds of rubbish from the iconic spot to help rehabilitate and restore this valuable habitat. The bushland at the newly rejuvenated boat ramp site is classified as Swamp Oak – Rushland. There is very little of this vegetation type left in the world so the groups are doing some extremely important work in protecting it. It's wonderful when community members come together for the betterment of the local environment. I acknowledge and thank the Dora Creek Landcare volunteers for their ongoing passion to help preserve our natural bushland for future generations.

#### **FRIDGYS 4 EUGOWRA**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I would like to recognise an amazing milestone passed by Bathurst TAFE teacher and refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanic David Conyers and his band of tradie volunteers, known as Fridgys 4 Eugowra. Under the watchful eye of Mr Conyers, Fridgys 4 Eugowra has installed 100 new air-conditioning units in Eugowra, free of charge, helping with the township's slow recovery from November's catastrophic flood event. The units themselves have all been donated by Rotary District 9705 and Central West businesses, with Mr Conyers drawing on 50-years' involvement in the industry to pull together his team of more than 30 willing tradies. They are not stopping - Fridgys 4 Eugowra has another 20 units to install while also identifying other refrigeration issues within the township they can help fix. In a unique spin, Mr Conyers has put the devastation in Eugowra to some use with the replaced units being stripped of copper components by his TAFE students and being sold for scrap. The money is being put towards building a trade school in Uganda. I salute Mr Conyers and Fridgys 4 Eugowra for the work they are doing and the much-needed support they are providing for the residents of Eugowra.

#### **GRAZING DOWN THE LACHLAN**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I recognise Forbes' unique food event, Grazing Down the Lachlan, which is entering its fifth year in 2023. This September, Grazing Down The Lachlan will return to the banks of Forbes' Lachlan River to offer a six-course dining experience which showcases the region's outstanding produce. To keep things fresh, the team of volunteers behind Grazing Down the Lachlan appoint a new creative director, this year being former Rockpool chef Brendan Sheldrick. A treechanger, Mr Sheldrick and his partner Leanne live in nearby Eugowra and run a premium providore business in Forbes specialising in lamb and beef grown on their property. While the menu is kept under wraps until the day, Mr Sheldrick and the chefs involved on the six food stations will draw inspiration from Forbes' Greek cafe heritage. Another unique aspect is the underlying commitment to delivering a zero-waste, environmentally responsible event and recycling of utensils. Funds raised by Grazing Down the Lachlan are directed to the Forbes Arts Society, which have helped with the Sculptures Down the Lachlan display. This is a wonderful event taking advantage of Forbes' beautiful Lachlan River and I congratulate organisers on their commitment to its growth.

#### **EARLY YEARS MUSIC SCHOOL**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise and congratulate Early Years Music School on 10 years of service to the Orange community. Founded by Ruth Thompson, Early Years Music School combines her experience as a classroom music specialist with her training as an early childhood teacher to provide early music experiences specifically targeted for children aged 0-5. Early Years Music School's primary goal is to give children the opportunity to experience music during these formative years. Making sense of sounds around them is the one of the first skills babies develop. Music helps children learn numeracy, literacy and emotional skills and help build overall brain development, imagination and improve cognitive function. Ruth's dedication and hard work has positively impacted the lives of many, reflected through the community's response to her classes, filling them to capacity, week in, week out. The School has broadened the variety of quality, educational opportunities

available to our region's children, as well as fostered a supportive community for families. I would like to congratulate Ruth Thompson and Early Years Music School on 10 years of dedication to education and promotion of music in early years.

#### **ERINA ROTARY CLUB STUDENT ARTWORK EXHIBITION**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to congratulate my local Erina Rotary Club which recently coordinated an exhibition of contemporary artworks by local high school students from Erina and Terrigal High Schools. The exhibition, supported by Central Coast Council, formed part of the celebration of Youth Services Month on the Rotarian calendar and showcases the cutting-edge creativity and culture of you people here on the Central Coast. The theme for this exhibition was Imagine, with the young artists sharing their perspective on the world around them using mixed media and technology to support self-expression. Located in the Erina Centre Gallery, the exhibition was a great opportunity for the students to be able to present their artworks to the broader community as well as their families and friends. The works included Terrigal High School Year 7's digital prints of drawings inspired by American Animator, Gary Baseman, creator of the cartoon Teachers Pet, and Year 11's work focusing on nature. Erina High School's Years 7 to 12 submitted works including landscapes, still life, animation and portrait drawings and paintings. With such a successful engagement from local schools and students, I hope the Rotary Club continues this event next year.

#### **DONORS HEROES NIGHT**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to acknowledge my constituent Graham Harrison, who has been a tireless advocate for organ and tissue donation and transplantation following the passing of his 10-year-old son Ben in 1993. In the aftermath of a devastating surgery outcome, Graham and wife Elayne made the decision to donate Ben's organs and tissue to those that needed them most. As an outcome of Ben's donation, Harrison initiated Donor Heroes Night on May 18, 2020, to celebrate and commemorate all donor heroes. Donor Heroes' Night honours and commemorates the 25,000 donor heroes who have given the gift of life by donating their organs or tissue. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of having a discussion about organ and tissue donation, and to register your intent on the Australian Organ and Tissue Donor Register. This year marks the fourth year for Donor Heroes Night with this year going both national and international. Participants on May 18 were asked to take a photo of their porch/balcony light or light a candle, and in the case of donor families a photo of their donor hero on Donor Families Australia Facebook page.

#### **KINCUMBER HIGH SCHOOL SSU COURTYARD CAFÉ**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—At Kincumber High each week students from the Student Support Unit [SSU] run a cafe for the school staff. The Courtyard Cafe is an integral part of the school's work experience program. Students learn food preparation, food safety and Work Health and Safety, create delicious meals, operate a coffee machine, table service, money handling and everyone's favourite cleaning. Local businesses have supported the students by donating items to be used in the café. Central Coast Floor Master donated a brand-new microwave and Loo Loos Café at Kincumber donates locally roasted coffee beans. I would like to acknowledge the staff at the school for running such a wonderful program and the local businesses for support the school with their generous donations.

#### **CRONULLA POLAR BEARS SWIMMING CLUB**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—On 7 May I attended the season opening for the Cronulla Polar Bears Swimming Club. Members competed in the traditional Bate Bay Cup, a swim from North Cronulla to Cronulla. The club, which is in its 70th year, has swum and competed in the Cronulla ocean rock pool on Sundays since 1953. The Polar Bears are a valued part of the Cronulla community, encouraging members to keep fit and socialise during the winter months. The Polar Bears also support a range of community organisations such as the Rainbow Club (a swimming program for children with disability) and the Dandelion Support Network (a not-for-profit that supports children and families in need) among others. After a reduced swimming program due to COVID restrictions, it was fantastic to see the Polar Bears in action for a full season last year. Sadly the club lost two Polar Bears with the deaths of Brian Stewart and Ian Bourke in 2022. I offer my best wishes to President Scott Simmons, Secretary Paul Cavanagh, Captain Glenn Brown and all the Cronulla Polar Bears for a successful season in 2023.

#### **YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR FINALISTS ADAM KELLY AND BAILEY LAIDLAW**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)**—I wish to congratulate Adam Kelly and Bailey Laidlaw from my electorate on becoming finalists for this year's Blacktown City - Young Citizen of the Year Award. To be eligible for this award, a person must be 21 years of age or younger, be a person who has demonstrated outstanding community service and has attained outstanding achievements in either sports, academics, or the arts. Being nominated for this award is a tribute to all their hard work and commitment. Whilst Adam and Bailey did not win

the Young Citizen of the Year Award for 2023, to be nominated is a fantastic achievement and a tribute to their tireless hard work and commitment to their community. I commend them both for their dedication.

#### **CRONULLA RSL – NO DOG LEFT BEHIND**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Cronulla RSL on winning the 2023 ClubsNSW Clubs & Community Award in the 'Heart of the Community' category. This award recognises the positive impact Cronulla RSL has made on the social, cultural, financial, or environmental wellbeing of its local community. Cronulla RSL won the Heart of the Community award for its 'No Dog Left Behind' initiative. No Dog Left Behind is a fundraising initiative that supports the Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation [AWAMO] and the Sutherland Shire's local veteran war dog. This initiative helps with the costs of veterinary care and pet insurance for ex-military dogs. Cronulla RSL was also recognised as the first RSL club in NSW to establish an AWAMO-supported memorial plaque for war animals and the first club in Australia to provide a retired war veteran dog club membership. Manic, an ex-military dog who served in Iraq and the Tactical Assault Group East [TAGE], has helped Cronulla RSL raise thousands of dollars to support the No Dog Left Behind initiative. In addition to Manic, I recognise the efforts of the Cronulla RSL board and team for their efforts to support the veteran service animals.

#### **MR LLOYD BRUCE**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Mr Lloyd Bruce. Mr Bruce is an RFS volunteer and serves on the Exeter 355 Committee, which manages the Council owned and heritage listed Exeter Village Hall. The original Hall was opened in 1902 with a further extension in 2017. The Hall is a central part of the community, hence the vital role of the 355 Committee in upholding the upkeep and utilisation of the facility. Mr Bruce has been a member of the Committee for near to twenty years and has been the Chairperson for the past ten years. Mr Bruce has a tangible and contagious spirit, which has been demonstrated through on the ground defence to natural disasters as an RFS Volunteer and now more recently in a support role from RFS Headquarters. Mr Bruce's innate drive and passion to serve the community is extraordinary and is to be applauded. I acknowledge and congratulate Mr Bruce on his diligence and drive to protect, serve and amplify the ongoing desire to drive community connectedness and well-being through the roles that he undertakes as a Volunteer. My sincere thanks Lloyd for your work.

#### **ARTHUR AND ROSIE LATHOURIS**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Arthur and Rosie Lathouris. The Southern Highland Croquet Club is in Exeter, where both Golf Croquet and Association Croquet are both played. Arthur and Rosie have held pivotal roles at the club, with Arthur as President and Rosie as Secretary for several years. Not only undertaking these roles in a proficient and enthusiastic manner through the logistics of organising committee and other meetings, Arthur and Rosie keep additional watch over the field, letting members know if it is too wet to play, setting up for competitions, keeping records and supervising the lawn care. Arthur and Rosie are held in extremely high regard by club members and the larger croquet community. Their enthusiasm for the sport, their roles, members, and the club have been demonstrated for many years with an ever-inspiring permeation to all involved. Arthur and Rosie, I congratulate and commend you for the work that you have both undertaken and undoubtedly the passion that you have for the sport of croquet.

#### **MRS PAT HUGHES**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Mrs Pat Hughes OAM. Following a move to Bundanoon, Mrs Hughes main volunteer role lies with the Country Women's Association [CWA] of NSW. The lobbying and advocacy role of the CWA was an attractive feature, along with the broad range of projects and fund-raising activities. Mrs Hughes also acknowledged the collaborative interaction, where all members can have input and make decisions regarding issues that the organisation would adopt to advocate on. It is with an educated, informed, determined and community-focused disposition that Mrs Hughes approaches her roles. Her abilities as an advocate and communicator plays an important and vital role to influence and bring about change to improve such significant services surrounding rural health, women's homelessness, and coercive behaviour as a form of domestic violence. I sincerely acknowledge and congratulate Mrs Hughes on her skills, knowledge, and significant contribution to her volunteering roles over close to sixty-five years, recognising the platform of the CWA to continue to bring about crucial changes within the community.

#### **AUSTRALIAN SMALL BUSINESS CHAMPION AWARDS 2023 - SIENNA JOVCEVSKI**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I rise to congratulate Hurstville local, Sienna Jovcevski, who recently won the junior entrepreneur award at the 2023 Australian Small Business Champion Awards. What an incredible achievement. At just 14 years of age, Sienna is the founder of the skincare brand, Tweeny Skin, an organic product marketed towards girls her age. Whilst not an easy industry to get into by any means, Sienna continues to make a

name for herself using the power of social media and creative marketing. Having run a successful small business myself, I understand the challenges that small business owners face. I absolutely love seeing young business owners succeed and I know that Sienna is very capable of achieving fantastic things over the next few years. I congratulate Sienna and wish her all the best of luck with her business over the next few years. From all of us here in the Oatley Electorate, we are all cheering you on!

#### **ANSTO 70TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I rise to recognise the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (or ANSTO) for 70 years of innovation and scientific excellence. Home to Australia's only nuclear reactor, ANSTO has been integral part of medicinal and scientific research field not only throughout Australia, but throughout the globe. Located at Lucas Heights in Sydney's South, ANSTO has seen thousands of talented researchers and employees pass through its doors. ANSTO maintains excellence to ensure the very highest levels of safety, security and sustainability at their facility. They have certainly been instrumental in dealing with some of Australia's most challenging and complex scientific issues. I'd like to acknowledge Chief Executive Officer for ANSTO, Shaun Jenkinson, for all the work he continues to do for the Scientific Community in Australia through his work at ANSTO. As the Shadow Minister for Jobs, Industry, Innovation, Science and Technology, I commend ANSTO on the fantastic work they have done over the years. I look forward to visiting hopefully very soon and I wish them all the very best over the next 70 years.

#### **2ND MORTDALE SCOUTS ARP PRESENTATION**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I would like to acknowledge the 2nd Mortdale Scouts, who recently hosted their Annual Report Presentation evening, of which I had the privilege of attending. This was a fantastic opportunity to meet and engage with members of the community, whilst acknowledging the work that the 2nd Mortdale Scouts do in the local area. It was wonderful to see so many families and local supporters of the Scouts come together to reflect on the last 12 months. Not only does Scouts teach young people valuable life skills, but it also gives them the opportunity to give back to their local community. They have participated in countless ANZAC Day ceremonies and Clean-Up Australia Day initiatives over the years, and this is something I am so proud of. The Scouts are a local institution in Mortdale, and their hard work does not go unnoticed. I'd like to thank Paul Whitwell, the Group Chairman of the 2nd Mortdale Scouts, as well as all the volunteers, and of-course, the Scouts themselves for their work over the years. I look forward to supporting the 2nd Mortdale Scouts and watching them continue to grow over the coming years.

#### **GRANT AND ANN PRENDERGAST**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—I would like to convey my admiration and appreciation for a local couple from Nunderi, Grant and Ann Prendergast. Together they will have clocked up almost 100 years of dedicated service, Grant after 40 plus years as a Paramedic and Ann, 50 years in the Nursing profession. Grant and Ann both began their careers in Dubbo before arriving in the Tweed Valley. Their invaluable contribution providing excellent care and compassion in high pressure situations is appreciated by many. Ann was also instrumental in the replacement of 9 Automatic External Defibrillators in the Tweed Valley community post the 2022 flood emergency. This year they have said that they are retiring but in the next breath say they plan to return to Kenya in Africa, where they travel regularly to undertake medical clinics in remote communities. You are an amazing couple. We are truly grateful to have you in our community.

#### **SANITA LOLE**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I recognise Sanita Lole, an exceptional member of the Samoan and wider community in Griffith. A truly multicultural woman. Sanita is indefatigable in her position of Cultural Liaison Officer and Pastoral Care Worker at Marian Catholic College. She works hard to include students in a huge variety of projects. Outstanding are: Project Samoa, coordinating Year 12 students to help source educational supplies and raise funds and physically help to rebuild and renovate the Sisters of Mercy primary and secondary schools in Samoa. Fundraising in the aftermath of the Tongan tsunami and the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. In addition, Sanita encourages students to support interagencies, with active involvement in Meals on Wheels, Headspace, Carevan, Safe Haven and Linking Communities. She saw the need for an after-school Study Club which she began seven years ago and continues to actively support. She is instrumental in reviving the IT for Seniors Program at the Griffith City Library. Following the example of St Mary McKillop, Sanita never sees a need without doing something about it.

#### **BALRANALD FOOTBALL NETBALL CLUB**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise the Balranald Football Netball was awarded the Central Murray Football League Club Excellence Ward for 2022. In order to win this award, a club is judged on criteria, ground and facilities, crowd behaviour, player behaviour, paperwork and office works,



communication with league, attitude, and manners by all members of the club, from committee, players, netballers, and junior member/players. The club in question is then measured against 10 other clubs in the Central Murray Football league.

To win is no mean feat. I offer my congratulations to all players, committee, members, and supporters of the Balranald Football Netball Club.

#### **MOSMAN ENVIRONMENTAL FOUNDATION FUNDING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I would like to acknowledge the Mosman Environmental Foundation that are funding a number of projects to protect endangered flora and fauna in Mosman. Four projects have been selected that will share in seventy-thousand dollars that will support environmental work in Mosman. The Sydney Institute of Marine Science received fifty-thousand towards its project to recover declining White's Seahorse populations through a captive breeding program. Zero Emissions Sydney North received eight-thousand dollars that will go towards hosting a Zero Emissions Schools Network Event at Taronga Zoo as well case study reports. Dr Amanda Peterson also received over nine-thousand dollars to deliver crucial research on Mosman's underwater forests. Lastly Jack and Jill Kindergarten received over three-thousand dollars for their project to create a successful vegetable/herb gardening and composting program. I congratulate the successful recipients and also commend the work of the Mosman Environmental Foundation for their support of local environmental and conservation programs. I would also like to add my support in this place for local residents and organisations to consider supporting future environmental work in Mosman and across the state through the foundation.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY BUSHCARE CELEBRATES 30 YEARS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I would like to acknowledge North Sydney Bushcare which is celebrating 30 years of turning weed infested rubbish dumps into flourishing bushlands. Bushcare began when Mosman sisters Joan and Eileen Bradley regenerated local bushland during the 1960s. Little did these girls know they had sparked a movement, with North Sydney residents immediately took inspiration and began working to revive their native bush. The outstanding work of bushcare is thanks to the many volunteers who devote their time. Over the three decades that North Sydney Bushcare has been operating, these amazing volunteers have restored and transformed twelve public reserves that seemed to be a favourite place for some people to dump their rubbish. In recent years, Bushcare has celebrated a number of native animals returning to the local area such as the swamp wallaby, long-nosed bandicoot, and the iconic Australian brush turkey. I would like to thank the North Sydney Bushcare and all volunteers for all their efforts over the years, for your wonderful efforts and expertise in protecting our native bushland and reserves across our local community.

#### **BILL PURDY CELEBRATES 100TH BIRTHDAY**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I acknowledge Mosman local Bill Purdy, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday, marking an incredible milestone. Bill is a well-known resident in my community, particularly through his work with the Mosman RSL Sub-Branch. Bill served as a pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force during the Second World War, flying Lancaster Bombers over occupied Europe. Bill completed an astonishing thirty-seven missions before being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Legion of Honour by France. After returning from the war, he moved back to the retail grocery business before working his way up to being the marketing director of Arnotts. Bill has been part of the Mosman community for the past forty years and actively participates in the Mosman RSL Sub-Branch and other community organisations. Congratulations, Bill, on reaching this important milestone, and thank you for your service to our country in times of war. I wish you and your family all the very best for the future.

#### **REV. SCOTT PETTY**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On Tuesday 2 May, I had the honour of being a guest at St Mark's Anglican Church Northbridge for the induction of its new Minister, the Rev Scott Petty. St Mark's, of course, has a special place in my heart as it was the church where my parents and paternal grandparents were married. It is also just up the road from where my Great-Grandparents built the second house on Tunks Street in 1922. So it was with added pride and spirit that I and our community welcomed to the church its new Minister, Scott and his family. I wish Scott the very best as he commences his new role as Rector of St Mark's Northbridge. I am sure Scott will ensure St Mark's continues to thrive and be an even greater source of love, hope, faith and care for the people of Northbridge and beyond. I would like to again thank the outgoing rector Rev Simon Flinders and his family for their wonderful long service to the church and our community.

#### **ARTARMON MAESTROS CRICKET CLUB**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On Saturday 15 April, Artarmon played host to the Artarmon Premier League at Thomson Park Oval. Organised by the Artarmon Maestros Cricket Club, it was wonderful to see such

great community, family and sporting spirit on display. Affiliated with the Northern Suburbs Cricket Association, Artarmon Maestros attracts local cricketers of all abilities to play the great game and develop new friendships with teammates. While comprised of cricketers from all backgrounds, the Club has a particularly strong representation of players from the cricket-loving South Asian community of Artarmon. I would like to congratulate the Artarmon Maestros and all involved behind organising such a fantastic competition. I congratulate the Red Dragons for winning the Premier League, they have done their club proud. Indeed, the quality of cricket from all sides was outstanding, and above all, the team spirit and sportsmanship of the players on display was exemplary. My young son and I enjoyed the day immensely at Thomson Park Oval and we look forward to the next Artarmon Premier League.

#### **SEAN CORCORAN**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On Friday 3 February, I was honoured to be present at the commissioning of Sean Corcoran as the Principal of Redlands Secondary Campus. Sean comes to his new role as a lifelong-learner and passionate educator who believes in the power and importance of the liberal, holistic schooling that Redlands is famous for. Sean has provided exceptional leadership at Redlands in his role as Deputy Principal over the past two years and as Head of Secondary School for the four years prior to this. In this time, he has made major contributions to the development of the School's strategic plan, pastoral care program, development of academic leaders and curriculum review. Sean succeeds Stephen Webber as the Principal of Redlands and I join with the school community in giving thanks for Stephen's distinguished service and contribution to Redlands. As Sean builds on Stephen's legacy, I wish him well as Principal and look forward to returning to Redlands for many more occasions.

#### **HARDEN DISTRICT EDUCATION FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 21 YEARS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to recognise the Harden District Education Foundation as they celebrate 21 years serving their local community. The Foundation supports youth right from pre-school through to university. Over the course of their existence the foundation has collectively contributed over \$1 million to the community which is simply outstanding. The Foundation, however, provides much more than just financial support. They provide emotional support to students, assist with preparing CV's as they get job-ready, travel and other applications as required. Notably, the foundation is comprised of volunteers who are integral to the ongoing viability, and several community members have been involved with the Foundation for over 20 years, essentially from the outset. The work this Foundation delivers day in and day out for our youth is extraordinary, it hasn't gone unnoticed, and I'd like to thank each, and every member involved for their efforts to date.

#### **CAM HART - NSW'S NUMBER ONE REINSMAN**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to congratulate Cam Hart who recently won the Milbrae Quarries \$100,000 Riverina Championships at Riverina Paceway. Cam is a former Junee local and at just 24 years old, he is quickly making his mark in the racing industry. Cam has won an astounding 841 races to date and is quickly becoming NSW's number one reinsman. Cam has won some of Australia's most prestigious races like the Inter Dominion. The Inter Dominion was established in 1935-36 with representatives from both Australia and New Zealand, it is an event comprised of three heats and a final. Last month on April 14, Cam had his biggest monetary victory when he paved the way for the Jason Grimson-trained Betterzippit, winning the inaugural million-dollar Nullarbor slot race at Gloucester Park. Cam has travelled throughout the country and New Zealand driving winners and being competitive in most of the biggest races in Australasia. When Cam isn't travelling around to various meets, he spends most of his time training at the Club Menangle track. Dedication and commitment are qualities that Cam possesses in spades, congratulations on your achievements Cam.

#### **HARRY WATERS WINS NATIONAL YOUNG AUCTIONEERS TITLE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to extend an enormous congratulations to Harry Waters, a young Stock agent from Gundagai's Elders for winning the prestigious 2023 Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association's (ALPA) National Young Auctioneers Competition at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Harry has previously won the ALPA's New South Wales Young Auctioneer Title last year which is no small feat either. Harry is very community oriented, enjoys working on-site and achieving the best possible results for his clients through auctions. Harry joined the Elders team back in 2019 and has developed quickly into the incredible young auctioneer whom we are very lucky to witness today. I understand Harry wishes to remain in Gundagai and is focused on his role at Elders and wishes to continue playing his part to ensure the business grows now and well into the future. The ALPA National Young Auctioneers Competition is in its 32nd year at present, I look forward to seeing Harry in action again in future competitions, for years to come.

### **NORTH NARRABEEN SURF CLUB PRESENTATION NIGHT**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I congratulate the North Narrabeen Surf Lifesaving Club on a wonderful season. Founded in 1912-13 shortly before WWI, the Club has been a local mainstay for 110 years. Pittwater's hallmark is its natural beauty, and North Narrabeen is nestled in the centre of the best parts of our wonderful community – from the jewel in the Crown – Narrabeen Lagoon; to its iconic rock pool; world renowned surf break; and the unique Bicentennial Walkway over Narrabeen Headland. Most of all, it's the people of North Narrabeen that make it what it is. Your Club is the heartbeat of this North Narrabeen community. Thank you all for your selfless service, making our beaches safe, offering up your Club as host for surfing events, and more. Congratulations to President, Alan Rose, on your stellar leadership of the Club. I also pay tribute to and congratulate Club Member of the Year, Jacque Grimes, for your remarkable service to the Club – 88.75 patrol hours, a 100 per cent patrol record, your contribution to the Golden Girls, your social media prowess for the Club and, no doubt, so much more. Thank you all for your continued service.

### **SARAH MORRIS**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—Sarah Morris is Pittwater – an utter hero. In the midst of the COVID-19 lockdowns, Sarah Morris started Acts of Kindness Community Outreach [AoK] with Paul Shiels. During lockdowns, many charitable groups were not able to continue their services and many in Pittwater and other communities were doing it tough. AoK started a community pantry in Newport and Sarah also led the charge, cooking and preparing meals for distributing meals to those in need. I know the AoK service continues to evolve and, no doubt, in the time I have, I am not able to do justice in describing their full offering. I am so proud to call Sarah a Pittwater local. Recently, Sarah, always looking for more ways to help, reached out to me asking if the Pittwater Electorate Office could act as a drop off location for pantry items to help homeless and those doing in tough. Of course, this initiative is one I am very excited to help AoK with. Sarah, thank you for everything you do. You embody the community spirit which makes Pittwater so great!

### **FRANCESCA DOLLY – 2101 FACEBOOK GROUP**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—Mr Speaker, many Members in this place will know very well the positive role that local Facebook groups play in connecting local community, businesses and keeping residents informed. Seven years ago, Francesca Dolly was a founder of the "2101 Community Page -> Narrabeen, North Narrabeen, Elanora, Ingleside". That group now boasts a membership of 17,614 members. At times, Facebook groups can be rambunctious, somewhat like an episode of Survivor or a re-enactment of Lord of the Flies. My personal favourite is the few inquisitive Group Members who take to the page to ask why there is a helicopter flying overhead in the local area. Thank you to Francesca for running a tight ship and creating an online community to which the overwhelming majority of 2101 residents belong. Facilitating this group takes hours and hours every week. Personally, through the 2101 group, I have been able to find recommendations for local removalists, plumbers, electricians, and stay up to date on local events and goings on. My experience is common. Francesca, thank you for your efforts and, to all Members of the 2101 group - play nicely and go easy on Francesca!

### **CENTENARY OF THE KOGARAH BAY PROGRESS ASSOCIATION**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—Late last month I had the honour of attending the 100th anniversary celebration of the Kogarah Bay Progress Association. It was a privilege to join President of the Association, Mr Jeff Powys, and the Premier and Member for Kogarah, The Hon. Chris Minns MP, along with many others, to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the generations of local citizens who have worked so hard to improve Kogarah Bay over the last century. Some of the most visible of those achievements include the building of the causeway that became Ramsgate Road, the draining and reclamation of the head of Kogarah Bay, and the establishment of the community playing fields and the Beverly Park Golf Course. The association also established the fund that led to the eventual construction of the Kogarah War Memorial Pool in 1965. The less visible but equally important work of the association on local environmental and quality of life issues has also been an example to all. Congratulations to the Kogarah Bay Progress Association on its centenary, and to the many outstanding citizens and residents who have made it what it is today.

### **PATRICK SLATTERY OAM**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Congratulations to Patrick Slattery, who received a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community through a range of roles in the Australia Day Honours. Mr Slattery has contributed to the community through a range of roles, supporting the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service, the Royal Society for the Blind, Newcastle Youth Orchestra, and the Hawthorne Club. He is also serving as President of the

Newcastle Club Foundation and Director of both the Newcastle Club and the Australian Rugby Foundation, and is a member of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT's Customer Advisory Panel. This recognition reflects Mr Slattery's local standing, demonstrating to his dedication to a variety of community and charitable over many years. Congratulations.

#### **ANDREW TRAILL OAM**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Congratulations to Andrew Traill who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community through a range of organisations in the Australia Day Honours. Despite spending over five decades at sea Mr Traill has maintained a strong involvement in community organisations with his service to Wanderer's Rugby, including serving as Vice-President and as Secretary, seeing him made a Life Member in 2019. Mr Traill has also given 15 years to Christ Church Cathedral, chairing the Cathedral Precinct Committee and co-ordinating the Community Outreach Program. His career saw him become involved with the Newcastle Shippers and the Mission to Seafarers, who recognised him as a Local Legend in 2017 for his commitment to giving back. Many organisations have benefited from Mr Traill's dedication, and this acknowledge is much deserved. Congratulations.

#### **MINA SKANDARI BOOK LAUNCH**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown)**—I congratulate Mina Skandari, our 2021 Young Inspirational Woman of the Year and Afghan--Australian author on her book launch, "You Are Amazing and Unique In the Way You Are". Ms Skandari's book is a testament to her warm and kind-spirited nature, with the book helping children navigate their self-belonging, with a number of positive affirmations throughout. The book encourages children to accept their differences and to love themselves just the way they are, without having to change in order to fit in or give up what makes them unique. Not only is Ms Skandari an author, but she is also a hard-working local advocate in our community, helping others and volunteering her time such as a mentor for local high school students. Well done on the release of your book "You Are Amazing and Unique In The Way You Are" and thank you for all that you do for our community in Campbelltown.

#### **SLOW FOOD HUNTER VALLEY'S PUMPKIN AND SQUASH SEED LIBRARY**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Slow Food Hunter Valley has come up with an ingenious way to help local horticulturists to maintain a seed bank for pumpkin and squash while we go through the process of eradicating the varroa mite, with the creation of a pumpkin and squash seed Library. This ingenious idea began in response to the varroa mite eradication program, where pollination of local produce has become difficult due to culling of bees, an issue that has affected produce in the Maitland region. Slow Food have taken concerns about the need for the genetic pool for seeds in the area to be maintained, with a practical approach which will see our iconic Maitland pumpkin and squash seeds harvested by citizen farmers. Through their program, Slow Food Hunter Valley are calling on the community to help grow, hand pollinate and save seeds for local farmers. Community members can register to grow pumpkin or squash and in turn, Slow Food Hunter Valley will train individuals in the art of seed collection. The initiative will help build and maintain biodiversity of pumpkins and squash in the Maitland region, and ensure the sustainability of our iconic pumpkin pickers!

#### **MAITLAND REGIONAL ART GALLERY WIN PRESTIGIOUS AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM & GALLERY ASSOCIATION AWARDS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—The Australian Museum and Gallery Association Awards were held recently, and I am proud to announce that our very own Maitland Regional Art Gallery swept the pool, and took home the National Overall Excellence Award, and were also named Best in Show 2023 for Temporary or Travelling Exhibition category for the 'Nongirrna Marawili: Daughter of the Lightning Snake'. MRAG went further to secure first prize in the Indigenous Project Award with 'Maitland Cultural Resurgence', and Exhibition Award for 'Nongirrna Marawili Daughter of the Lightning Snake' and the Community Engagement and Outreach Award for 'The Maitland Archive!'. The Gallery was also awarded two MAPDA Awards for design, with the 'Nongirrna Marawili Daughter of the Lightning Snake' catalogue, alongside another local business, Newy Digital, who dominated in the Best Digital Learning Experience category with the prestigious 'Arts Health Project.' My heartfelt congratulations to all the talented artists and collaborators who have produced such great work right in our electorate. I congratulate Gallery Director Gerry Bobsien and her team of staff and volunteers for the incredible work they have put into enriching our cultural life in Maitland.

#### **ASHLEIGH HANDSAKER – WINNER OF THE BRETT GRAHAM SCHOLARSHIP**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Young Maitland chef Ashleigh Handsaker recently took out first place in the Hunter Culinary Association's Brett Graham

Scholarship, which was held at Hamilton TAFE. The Brett Graham Scholarship will allow Ashleigh to travel to London to further develop her already award-winning culinary skills. Up against eight other chefs vying for the prestigious scholarship, Ashleigh made it through the first cut, where she faced off against two other chefs, to take out the distinguished prize. The incredible local talent that was on display during this event, and is testament to our promising local food scene - where Ashleigh has been contributing to for a number of years. Ashleigh is employed as a third-year apprentice chef at local Maitland restaurant Fratelli Roma. Her team proudly back her achievement and say they are immensely proud of her, a sentiment that I too convey. What a wonderful opportunity to see such a talented and passionate young individual apply her trade so thoughtfully, passionately and professionally and ultimately achieve her goals. Congratulations Ashleigh, the world truly is your oyster.

#### **92ND BINGARA SHOW**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the fantastic efforts of the hard-working Bingara Show Society members for staging another successful two-day show, the 92nd, on the 19-20 May. The show is the culmination of work by the Bingara Show Society, Gwydir Shire Council and a plethora of workers, volunteers and supporters, being an event the whole town is extremely proud of, and rightly so. I congratulate the Bingara Show President Damien Crump, Secretary Charlie Mills, Treasurer Simon Groth and their fellow committee members, along with the many stewards, who staged another great show and gave so much of their time to assist in many areas before and during the Show. I thank those volunteers who assisted with all pavilion exhibits including - Cooking, Photography, Produce, Crafts, Art, Wool and the running of Horse events; Cattle, Sheep and Poultry exhibits; along with the Bar and Barbecue and Office Stewards. The time and effort put in by all these volunteers to ensure a safe and successful event, is appreciated by the entire community.

#### **WARIALDA CELEBRATE 118TH AGRICULTURAL SHOW**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the fantastic efforts of the hard-working Warialda Show P&A Association for staging another successful show over three days 11-13 May. The show is the culmination of work by the Warialda P&A Association, Gwydir Shire Council and a plethora of workers, volunteers and supporters and an event the whole town is extremely proud of. I congratulate Warialda Show President Don Stevenson, Vice Presidents Douglas Barnett, Mrs Kath Lockhart, James Gilmour and Andrew Coulton; Secretary David Coulton, Treasurer Angela Stewart and their fellow committee members and the many stewards who staged another great show and gave so much of their time to assist in many areas before and during the Show. I thank those volunteers who assisted with all pavilion exhibits including - Cooking, Photography, Farm Produce, Needlework, Art and Wool, the running of horse events (Ring, Show Jumping and Campdraft), Cattle exhibits (Prime and Stud), Sheep exhibits (Prime and Yard Dog Trials), Bar and Barbecue, Entertainments and Office. The time and effort put in by all these volunteers to ensure a safe and successful event is appreciated by the entire community.

#### **KATE HORROBIN**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the 2023 Balmain Local Woman of the Year, Kate Horrobin. For over 10 years, Kate has been a driving force in the campaign to stop cruise ship pollution at White Bay Cruise Terminal. She has rallied the community to stand up for a clean and safe harbour through tireless letterboxing, posterage and public meetings. Her drive and passion were instrumental in last year's historic win of securing shore to ship power at White Bay and she has inspired countless others in our community to get involved in working together for a better Balmain. I want to extend my gratitude to Kate for her work and outstanding contribution to our local area.

#### **ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW in our local area. Vinnies visits hundreds of our community members each month to offer essential assistance with food, clothing and bills, referrals to other helpful services, as well as a friendly face. Their help is especially important for public housing residents in the area and Vinnies has played a key role in advocating for better maintenance and support for those living in public housing. I want to particularly acknowledge the President of the Balmain Conference and Rozelle Regional President Maureen Robinson and Balmain Conference Treasurer Michael Kennedy who I recently had the pleasure of meeting with, as well as all the staff and volunteers of our wonderful local Vinnies shops in Rozelle, Glebe, and Leichhardt.

#### **COLIN MCCABE**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House local resident Colin McCabe who recently came to me with a tool library initiative that aims to save power, the environment and money for local residents. Colin saw a need in our area for community access to seldom-used household tools like hammer drills and mowers that are budget-friendly, rechargeable and easy to use. His proposal to set up a system of lockers

with solar power rechargeable tools available for loan is an exciting initiative and it's great to see members of our local community pursuing innovative ways to help the environment and households.

#### **AUSTRALIAN CELTIC FESTIVAL GLEN INNES**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the wonderful achievements of the Australian Celtic Festival organising committee, Glen Innes Severn Council Mayor Rob Banham, fellow councillors, council staff, and volunteers for staging one of the best Celtic Festivals yet, with more than 7,500 visitors attending various events held throughout Glen Innes from 4-7 May. It is the only Celtic-themed festival in Australia to recognise a different Celtic Nations each year (there are six) and has the unique atmosphere of being located at the nationally acclaimed Australian Standing Stones. I congratulate Judi Toms, Chair of the Australian Standing Stones Management Board, Director of Place & Growth Gayleen Burley, Tourism & Events Officer Rhonda Bombell and Tourism Assistants and volunteers for their work throughout the year to stage such a great festival and thank you to the local community groups Glen Innes RFS, the Lions Club, Lioness and Leo Clubs and Rotary. I thank the sponsors who supported the event and Glen Innes Severn Council staff who went above and beyond to make sure they worked as a team and got things done. Council staff know first-hand what events like this bring to the visitor economy and imparts pride into the community.

#### **HAYLEY WALSH**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Today, I rise to recognise and celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of Hayley Walsh, a self-professed "word nerd" and passionate author. With a deep love for creativity and writing books, Hayley embarked on her journey to fulfill her lifelong dream. At the age of 44, Hayley proudly published her first book in 2020, demonstrating that it is never too late to pursue one's aspirations. "Crayons and Chaos" and "Making March" were among her initial literary achievements that year, captivating readers with their light-hearted fiction. In 2022, Hayley further showcased her talent with the publication of "Not Dead Yet." Hayley's inspiration to write stems from her late father, who tragically passed away with suddenness and unpredictability. Her father played a pivotal role in fostering her creativity and his support continues to resonate within her work. I want to acknowledge Hayley Walsh's dedication, resilience, and the unwavering pursuit of her dreams. She serves as an inspiration to us all, reminding us that it is never too late to embrace our passions and leave our own creative imprint on the world.

#### **CAROL AND DAVID STANLEY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I am delighted to recognise Carol and David Stanley, a couple who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary earlier this year. Their love for each other has been unwavering since they first met at Ashbury Methodist Church and eventually tied the knot at the Dundas Anglican Church. Their dedication to family, faith and community has been truly inspiring, impacting the lives of many individuals in the Glenmore Park area, where they have resided for the past 30 years. Their enduring love and commitment to each other is an inspiration to us all, demonstrating the power of love and devotion. On behalf of the community, we extend our warmest congratulations to Carol and David on this special occasion. May your love continue to inspire and touch the hearts of many for many more years to come.

#### **DENNIS ROOTS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—The Luddenham community is mourning the loss of Dennis Roots, a giant of the community who recently passed away just 17 days short of his 95th birthday. Dennis was born and bred in Luddenham, attending school and growing up there. Under the stewardship of the late Harry Sales, he became a farrier and blacksmith, using his skills to help construct the Warragamba Dam. He and his wife June later started their own business in livestock transport, a job which he loved until his retirement. Dennis was also an active member of the Luddenham Show Society and his contributions to the community will be greatly missed. Roots Avenue, which is in Luddenham, was named in his honour and it serves as a lasting tribute to the impact he had on the community. We extend our deepest condolences to his family, including his wife June, Trevor and Lyla, Carolyn and Ben, and their families during this difficult time.

#### **SID HARVEY AND BERNARD O'CONNOR**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Narrabri boys Sid Harvey and Bernard O'Connor have been selected in the NSW Combined High Schools Sports Association (NSWCHSSA) under 18 boys' rugby union squad after their outstanding efforts for Northwest three-day carnival in Newcastle. Along with their teammates, they finished up placing third after winning four of their five games across the three days. Sid was then named player of the tournament. Sid and Bernard have been playing at club level in the Narrabri Junior Rugby Club's under 18s side. The team have so far played two matches in the 2023 North West Regional Youth Rugby where they won both games. I congratulate Sid and Bernard on their selection for the NSW Combined Schools Sports Association and wish them all the best for their future games.

## GEORGIA WILSON

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Local Cobar resident Georgia Wilson and former employer of CSA mine was short listed for the Women In Mining Awards last year and has now been nominated for the 2023 Women in the Industry Awards. The Women in Industry Awards are held each year to recognise exceptional work and dedication of women in the industrial sectors who are driving change. Georgia has been invited to speak at a NSW Women in Mining event later this year. I congratulate Georgia on being nominated and I am looking forward to hearing the outcome.

## KIAMA CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—I was honoured to welcome new Australian citizens at a wonderful citizenship ceremony hosted by Kiama Municipal Council on Thursday, 18th of May, 2023. I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to Andrew Every, Gregory Finley, Mahlah Grey, David Hadick, Berit Jensen, Wilairat Jitsom, Trang Ngo, and Jessica Roemisch on joining our Australian family. I want to thank them for choosing to call Australia their home. I also want to thank Mayor Neil Reilly, Kiama Municipal Council's events team, and the Pavilion Kiama for hosting such a pleasant ceremony. New citizens make our region more a more diverse, stronger and better place. Australia is the most successful multicultural nation in the world, and I am grateful to have met our newest local citizens. My mum came to this country as a 19 year old. Whilst she has faced challenges, she still believes it was the best decision she has ever made. Mum continues to remind me that whilst no place is perfect, our community is as close to perfect as you'll get; and I couldn't agree more.

## JAMBEROO GETS A NEW COMMUNITY SPACE

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Jamberoo Post Office, which has been a part of the town's history for over 160 years, has finished its restoration and has now reopened as a community space once again. The post office has been in Cameron Paterson's family for over 70 years, run since 1973 by his uncle Frank until it closed in the 1980s. The space has been closed since. Cameron and his wife Charlotte have been working hard to revive the space as the Jamberoo Postie Café, as a place for the community to sit and chat. The restoration aimed to preserve the heritage of the building, as close to the original as possible. I wish to commend Cameron and Charlotte on their commitment to community spaces and the heritage of Jamberoo. Five days a week customers can enjoy freshly baked seasonal cakes, three pence roasters coffee and artisan pizza in what was the original post office room. I look forward to seeing this local business continue to succeed and am excited for the Jamberoo community.

## PACIFIC AVENUE TOPS THE CHARTS!

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—I would like to extend a huge congratulations to local alternative rock band Pacific Avenue for the success of their debut album, Flowers, which has debuted at #1 on the ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Association) Australian album charts and #3 overall, beating out the likes of rock legends The Smashing Pumpkins. Pacific Avenue consists of members Harry O'Brien, Ben Fryer, Jack Kay and Dom Littrich. The band was formed in Gerringong in 2017 when Harry and Ben met after tying second place in a busking competition. The band has released a number of successful singles, leading to an exclusive recording deal with BMG in 2022. They are currently touring the UK before returning to Australia for a run of shows in July and August. Our region is extremely lucky to be spoiled with musical and artistic talent. Our community is enhanced by the artists, venues and audiences who engage in our vibrant arts scene. As a musician, I understand the connection, collaboration and community that music promotes and look forward to supporting the arts in my electorate.

## MIRANDA PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the exceptional student leadership team of Miranda Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the student leadership team for 2023, namely Captains Mason Schwenke and Leela Delic, Vice Captains Sidney Chen and Mia Nurkic and Prefects Lucy Ashman, Jet Leung and James Cominos. With the guidance of their incredible Principal Michael Duffy, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Miranda Public School's motto of 'for the good of all'.

### COMO PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the incoming student leadership student leadership team of Como Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge Como Public School's student leadership team for 2023, namely Charles Prenzel, Emma Barry, Hayley Yan, Bobby Barczak, Owen Sellers, Ruby Cullen, Archer Reid, and Jack Harris. With the guidance of their incredible Principal Nicole Gilmore, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Como Public School's motto of 'quality education in a caring environment'.

### TAREN POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the incoming student leadership team of Taren Point Public School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge Taren Point Public School's student leadership team for 2023, namely Captains Brielle Baalbergen and Bailey Trew and Vice Captains Lara McCrone and Wil Hatton and SRC Presidents Ryan Trevena and Ethan Kinnane. With the guidance of their incredible Principal James Nobbs, I have every confidence that these dedicated students will capably lead their peers through what will be their most important year of schooling thus far and be role models to their entire school community. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify that Taren Point Public School's is the 'pride of the point'.

### WELLINGTON SHOW YOUNG WOMAN - ELIZA WHITELEY

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I recently had the pleasure of attending the presentation of the Wellington Show Young Woman. It was fantastic to see Eliza Whiteley named as the 2023 Wellington Show Young Woman. I have known Eliza for some time, she exudes enthusiasm and passion for her community and her family. Eliza considers Wellington her home and entered the competition to enhance her self-development and gain public-speaking experience. She aims to use her newfound platform to change people's perceptions of her hometown. The competition, formerly known as the Showgirl competition, aims to find female ambassadors to represent their Show Society and community. Entrants are evaluated based on personality, presentation, confidence, general and rural knowledge, community involvement and ambitions. From their local shows the young women progress to Zone Finals and each Zone then selects finalists to represent them at the Land Sydney Royal Easter Show Young Woman finals. I look forward to seeing where the journey of representing Wellington as the 2023 Young Woman takes Eliza and wish her all the best for the next stage of the Young Woman Competition.

### DUBBO PINK ANGELS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Not all angels have wings, some wear pink and live right here among us. I am, of course, referring to the Pink Angels, a Dubbo-based not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting breast cancer patients throughout the Western region. For the past twelve years, the Pink Angels have been a beacon of hope to those battling breast cancer. Breast cancer affects countless lives, and the Pink Angels understand the struggles faced by patients and their families. With no overhead costs, the Pink Angels make a tangible difference in the lives of breast cancer patients by arranging vital services, such as yard care, cleaning, laundry, and home-cooked meals. Recently, the Pink Angels celebrated twelve years of dedicated service with the inaugural 'Walk With Angels' event. On Mother's Day, children and grandchildren joined their mothers and grandmothers to support the Pink Angels at Ollie Robbins Oval. Locals of all ages - including a handful of four-legged friends - turned out, with the rain holding off just long enough for all walkers to stay dry despite some ominous clouds overhead. Congratulations Pink Angels, on a fantastic event!

### NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK TWPZ

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—Even though it was last week, National Volunteer week is a fantastic opportunity to appreciate and recognise the efforts of our dedicated volunteers. Taronga Western Plains Zoo Dubbo and Taronga Sydney rely on nearly 500 volunteers in 40 different roles. These volunteers play a vital role in the zoo's daily operations, helping to connect people with wildlife and support important conservation efforts. The volunteer programs are open to individuals from diverse backgrounds, experience levels, and areas



of expertise, allowing them to experience the unique charm of Taronga while contributing to its mission. Thank you to all the volunteers in the Dubbo electorate, and in particular to those that volunteer at Taronga Western Plains Zoo.

#### **WESTERN SYDNEY MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—On Saturday 13th of May I attended the Women in Leadership Workshop organised by the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre in Liverpool. In partnership with Aspire Leadership Institute and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia [FECCA], the program was established to deliver transformative leadership training for women in South West Sydney. Along with my federal colleagues Anne Stanley MP and Dai Le MP, I spoke to an audience of culturally and linguistically diverse women about the challenges facing female leaders and shared with them my own strategies that they can utilise to advance their own professional development. Also in attendance was Dr Rawaa Al-Ayoubi who conducted the Aspire Leadership Training interactive workshops and Rachel Haywood who delivered effective communication skills to manage stakeholder engagement. I would like to congratulate and thank the Migrant Resource Centre for organising the event, with particular thanks to Nadia Bouchti, Program Lead. I would also like to recognise Board Chair Rola Hijwel and Anita Kumar for their continued advocacy of newly arrived migrants in my electorate. I look forward to providing ongoing support to these inspiring women and the hardworking staff at the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre.

#### **EVA GAWEL**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I wish to acknowledge my local constituent, Eva Gawel. Eva is 13 years old and attends Presbyterian Ladies College. Eva is a young athlete, beginning at Little Athletics, where her talent was nurtured. In April this year, while many students were enjoying the school holidays, Eva was training hard for the 2023 Australian Junior Athletics Championship that was held in Brisbane. Eva ran qualifying times to be selected for the NSW team, representing the state in the Under 15s in the 1500m and 3000m distances. This is a very competitive age group with exceptionally talented girls across the country. Running the 3000m first, Eva executed her race tactic perfectly to take out the silver medal. Eva ran a personal best of 9.59mins which also meant she broke the elusive ten-minute barrier for the first time. Eva then backed up during the competition to secure the bronze medal for the 1500 metres. The week after her performance at the Junior Athletics Championship, Eva represented NSW again at the Little Athletics Under 14 Nationals where she won gold medals for the 800m and 1500m. I would like to sincerely congratulate Eva on her achievements, hard work and dedication.

#### **2023 CUMBERLAND POLICE AREA COMMAND MEDAL AND AWARDS PRESENTATION CEREMONY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was an honour to attend the 2023 Cumberland Police Area Command Medal and Awards Presentation Ceremony on Wednesday 1st March 2023, celebrating the hard work and achievements of our NSW Police Force personnel. The annual Cumberland PAC Medal and Awards Presentation Ceremony is a special day that recognises the exceptional members of our NSW Police Force and their contribution to our Western Sydney community. Every day, these men and women risk their lives, putting others before themselves, to ensure the safety of our families, friends, and communities. It was wonderful to celebrate their service and dedication to our community with their family and friends, who were clearly so proud of their loved ones and their achievements. Congratulations to all the medal and award recipients and nominees for your achievements. Thank you for your constant sacrifice and dedication to keeping our community safe. I would also like to thank Superintendent Andrew Holland, Commander, Cumberland Police Area Command, for an excellent award ceremony and for your leadership and service. I look forward to continuing working with you to keep our community safe.

#### **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS – TAMIL VALARCHI MANDRAM AND SYDWEST MULTICULTURAL SERVICES**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Tamil Valarchi Manram and SydWest Multicultural Services for co-hosting a successful 2023 International Women's Day Celebration on Friday, 10th March at Blacktown Worker's Club. It was great to hear from guest speakers from Western Sydney, across New South Wales, and internationally. We were lucky to participate in a roundtable discussion on the topic of "Women Around the World: Dowry, Domestic Violence and Legal Systems", which was led by a panel of inspiring female leaders. There were also numerous presentations by women who shared their own stories about female empowerment and equity, particularly in the context of diverse communities such as Western Sydney. I would also like to congratulate all the award recipients on the night who were recognised for their contribution to our local Western Sydney community or for their advocacy of culture, language, and arts in our diverse community. Thank you, Chandrika Subramanian, Co-Founder, Tamil Valarchi Manram, Elfa Moraitakis, CEO, SydWest

Multicultural Services and her team, for organisation such a successful event that showcased the inspiring women we are lucky to have in Western Sydney.

### **2023 WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS FC MEDAL NIGHT**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was a pleasure to attend the 2023 Western Sydney Wanderers FC Medal Night on Tuesday, 2nd May. It was great to join friends, families, and supporters of Western Sydney Wanderers FC to celebrate the achievements of the Club and their players. Congratulations to all the awardees who were recognised for their efforts this season in the Liberty A-League and Isuzu UTE A-League. Brandon Borrello who has had a great season (Rod Allen Award Media Player of the Year, Isuzu UTE A-League Members' Player of the Year, Isuzu UTE A-League Golden Boot, and Isuzu UTE A-League Player of the Year); Clare Hunt (Liberty A-League Member's Player of the Year, Liberty A-League Player of the Year); Amy Harrison and Olivia Price (Liberty A-League Golden Boot); and Jordan Crane (Powerchair Player of the Year). I would also like to congratulate Angok Bol for winning The Chairman's Award for an outstanding contribution to Western Sydney and Vanja Vukojevic for winning the Wandercrew Volunteer of the Year. Thank you to Western Sydney Wanderers FC CEO, Scott Hudson, Chairman, Paul Lederer and Head Coach, Mark Rudan for your leadership of the Club for another successful football season.

### **ROTARY CLUB OF FIVE DOCK 50TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I wish to acknowledge the Rotary Club of Five Dock and sincerely congratulate the club on its Golden Anniversary. On Saturday 20 May, I attended a celebration of 50 years of service and contribution to our local community by the Rotary Club of Five Dock. The event was an opportunity to showcase past grassroots and global projects, to reflect on the Club's great work and reminisce on 50 years of memories since the club started in 1973. In that time, over \$1million has been raised and distributed to many worthy causes. Not only has Rotary helped needy groups and individuals it has been a centrepiece for weekly collegial gatherings and education through diverse guest speakers. I acknowledge one of the founding members, Mr Jim Simpson who is still a member of the Club today. Congratulations to Club President, Margaret Noonan, Secretary Alan Laughlin, the Board and Committee Leaders and indeed all members of Five Dock Rotary Club on this occasion. It was a pleasure to join you over the weekend. Thank you for your service to the community.

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