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Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament
First Session**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 30 May 2023

The Speaker (The Hon. Gregory Michael Piper) took the chair at 12:00.

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Shellharbour will resume her seat. I will not hear points of order during the giving of notices of motions.

Later,

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

Governor

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER: I report a message from Her Excellency the Governor regarding the administration of the Government.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I extend a very warm welcome to a guest of the member for Hornsby, who is unmissable in the front row of the Speaker's gallery, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, a former member of this House for 23 years and former member for North Shore. I also welcome to the Chamber guests of the member for Newtown, Mr Geoffrey Long and Lynne Eastaway; and guests of the member for Lake Macquarie, the principal and students from Avondale College. Welcome to the Chamber.

Announcements

HOUSE AND PROCEDURE DOCUMENTS

The SPEAKER: I advise members that the Legislative Assembly House and Procedure team has arranged for printed copies of the *Consolidated Standing and Sessional Orders* as well as the updated *Guide to Chamber Procedure*. Copies may be collected from the Legislative Assembly reception area or in the Chamber.

Question Time

CABINET DOCUMENTS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (12:18): My question is directed to the Minister for Sport. On 24 May, during question time, the Minister purported to disclose the nature of an Office of Sport submission prepared for the Expenditure Review Committee. Apart from that submission, has the Minister asked for, or received, any other draft or final Cabinet or Cabinet committee documents, including submissions, of the former Coalition Government, or been told about any of their contents?

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:19): I thank the member for Cronulla for his question. It is so nice to be talking about sport. I would like to be talking about sport in a better way. At the end of the day, when they were in government Opposition members had the opportunity to pitch—

Mr Alister Henskens: They're Cabinet documents.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: I understand the member for Wahroonga is sensitive about this and I can understand why. He was asked on two occasions to promote the funding of the Active Kids vouchers and do you know what he did? Nothing. He did nothing.

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order: My point of order is about relevance under Standing Order 129. My question was not about the disclosure that was made last week or Active Kids. My question was about any other submissions, Cabinet documents or Cabinet committee documents. Has he received them or has he asked for other documents? It has nothing to do with Active Kids and nothing to do with what I asked last week.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be more directly relevant to the question. I remind members that I cannot direct the Minister how to answer. It is up to the Minister to answer as he sees fit.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: I have received information that it was put to the Minister on a number of occasions and the Minister failed to make a pitch for Active Kids. This stunt over the past few weeks is actually a disgrace.

POLITICIAN AND SENIOR EXECUTIVE SALARIES

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (12:23): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier please update the House on the immediate action the New South Wales Government is taking to keep its promise to freeze politician and executive pay?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:24): I thank the member for his unexpected but welcome question. It has become necessary for the incoming Government to progress this policy change and this legislation because of the reckless budget management of the previous Government. We have received the largest amount of debt ever handed from one administration to another in the history of the State of New South Wales. To put it in context, debt in New South Wales is on track to reach \$180 billion—the largest amount ever in the history of the State. We have an \$11 billion deficit presided over and brought down by former Treasurer Matt Kean. After the change of administration on 25 March the incoming Government discovered a \$7 billion black hole and a wealth of programs and infrastructure projects that are simply not included in the budget documents.

The decision the Government has made means that it is taking action on the explosion in the number of Senior Executive Service [SES] positions in New South Wales. Under the previous Government, Senior Executive Service positions grew three times faster than the number of nurses employed in New South Wales. Under the former Government, the annual wages bill for the SES in State-owned corporations grew to around \$1 billion a year and the number of SES positions exploded to more than 3,600 across government.

That would come as a surprise to many members because at the 2019 election, the previous Government promised that rather than a massive increase in the number of senior executive positions there would be a 10 per cent reduction. It is time to review the record. They promised a 10 per cent reduction but delivered an increase of 23 per cent. When asked, not unreasonably, what was the reason for the massive increase in the Senior Executive Service, the previous Government blamed COVID. It was reported that the former Premier, a good mate of mine, pinned the Government's failure to cut fat cats on COVID-19 and the need to beef up the public service during the pandemic. He said, "We've faced in our State unprecedented challenges over the last four years." Now, he is my mate. He would have been put up to it by Matt Kean. Notwithstanding the public pronouncements that the reason for the growth had to do with the pandemic, let us look at the actual government department figures. *[Extension of time]*

Positions in the health cluster increased from 2019 to 2021. In 2019 there were 299 SES positions and then, in the middle of the pandemic, they went to 309—a growth of 10. In the transport cluster the positions went from 864 to 1,278—a 47 per cent increase in the SES.

The SPEAKER: Government members will come to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Under the party of small government, there was a massive increase in the number of positions in the Senior Executive Service. And it is not just that. They also promised to reduce consultants by 20 per cent. In fact, the cost grew by \$100 million. They promised to reduce advertising by \$30 million. It went from \$70 million to \$135 million. As I have said, there was a promise to reduce the number of SES by 10 per cent but the actual growth was 23 per cent. That was an absolutely reckless approach to budget management in New South Wales. That is why we are introducing these bills. This Government will deliver the promises made in the election campaign and will do it through legislation. I urge members of the Opposition to support our legislation.

CABINET DOCUMENTS

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (12:28): My question is directed to the Minister for Sport. On 24 May during question time the Minister purported to disclose the nature of an Office of Sport submission prepared for the Expenditure Review Committee. Will he explain why doing so was not in breach of his duty of confidence, his oath as a Minister of the Crown, the ministerial code of conduct and Premier's Memorandum—

[*Government members interjected.*]

Mr Speaker, could I please finish my question?

The SPEAKER: The member for Hawkesbury will proceed quickly. The question is almost too long.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON: Will he explain why doing so was not in breach of his duty of confidence, his oath as a Minister of the Crown, the ministerial code of conduct and Premier's Memorandum M2006-08, which expressly refers to draft Cabinet documents?

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:29): I do not know what I should say. I thank the member for the message—for the question. It was a message, really. She should have sent it by email. I am starting to appreciate how sensitive this issue is for the former Minister for Sport—or maybe non-sport.

Mr Alister Henskens: It's about your ministerial duties.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: This is about the former Minister for Sport—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wahroonga will come to order.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: —having received requests to re-fund that he has chosen not to include, not to support, and now he is getting up after the election and making out as if we are—

[*Opposition members interjected.*]

Mr Speaker, they defunded the program. That is what they did.

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business rises on a point of order.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: He should be embarrassed about that.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume his seat. I assume that the Minister has not completed his answer. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Alister Henskens: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question is about whether the Minister has—

The SPEAKER: I interrupt the Manager of Opposition Business. Has the Minister completed his answer?

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER: It has been completed.

The SPEAKER: The Minister has completed his answer.

Mr Alister Henskens: He won't answer.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wahroonga will come to order.

SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY HEALTH SERVICES

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (12:31): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister update the House on the immediate action the New South Wales Government is taking to keep its promise to ensure south-west Sydney has the health facilities it deserves?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:31): I thank the member for Liverpool for the question. The member has been virtually born and bred in Liverpool—I think she was four years old when she came there. She is a terrific advocate for south-west Sydney. She is also a very strong advocate for mental health, particularly for young people. I thank the member very much. I also acknowledge the former member for North Shore—a very good member for North Shore—for her ongoing contribution to the New South Wales health system.

The member for Liverpool understands the challenges we face in delivering health care in south-west Sydney—challenges that are made harder because of the economic situation and the budgetary situation we face. We came to government with a forecast \$180 billion in debt, a deficit of \$11 million and, importantly, \$7 billion worth of unfunded liabilities. Most importantly—and an issue that I will never, ever forget—1,100 nurses in temporary positions, after they gave so much during COVID. That is the fiscal challenge; that is the budgetary challenge that we have inherited from a so-called economically responsible government—which it was not.

Again, I thank the member for the question. I was in Liverpool two or three weeks ago on a Sunday morning at about 7.30 a.m., where I met with emergency department staff. The staff explained to me the constraints on that

emergency department and the challenges of the growing community in south-west Sydney. That is why it was great to be there with the Premier and the member for Liverpool just the other day to talk about the investment that is going into that part of Sydney, which is growing enormously. By the early 2030s, just 10 years or so in the future, more than 1.2 million people will call the south-west Sydney region home. We know that the South Western Sydney Local Health District will experience a 33 per cent increase in its population over the next 20 years. This is a region that is booming. We need to make sure that we keep delivering health care services for those people who call south-west Sydney and Liverpool home. [*Extension of time*]

Apart from the substantial redevelopment of that hospital—a redevelopment that is taking place while the current hospital is in operation; a very challenging task, which we spoke to health clinicians and health workers about yesterday—the Government has made other commitments. The Government is committed to upgrades to Canterbury Hospital, which is something that I know the member for Canterbury, the member for Summer Hill, the member for Lakemba and others are very strong advocates for.

The Government is also committed to redeveloping Fairfield Hospital, which is a very important part of south-west Sydney. We have committed to begin the planning work for a new hospital in the aerotropolis—something that we understand growing communities will need and deserve. As more and more people call south-west Sydney home, the Minns Labor Government is determined to make sure that health care, health services and health infrastructure match the needs of those growing communities and families. It is absolutely critical that, despite the reckless state in which those opposite left the budget, the Government will honour its commitments to the people of south-west Sydney. Those growing communities need and deserve health care, and we will make sure that health care comes their way.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: I thank the communities of south-west Sydney. I thank the local members, who have been terrific advocates for the hospitals and health facilities in south-west Sydney. Despite the challenges faced by the Government, I look forward to returning to Liverpool Hospital again soon. I particularly look forward to announcing the redevelopment of that great local hospital.

WARRAGAMBA DAM WALL

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (12:36): My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the damaging and short-sighted plans to raise the Warragamba Dam wall have been shelved, will the Premier today rule out the raising of the dam wall? Will the Premier also confirm that there are no plans to raise the wall and outline the measures his Government will take to mitigate the risk of future governments wanting to damage the electorate of Wollondilly for the benefit of some land developers downstream?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:37): I thank the member for her question and I welcome her to the House. She gave a wonderful inaugural speech last week. As members will be aware, the original cost of raising the Warragamba Dam wall was estimated to be \$690 million when it was first proposed by former Premier Mike Baird. The estimated cost today is \$2 billion for construction and biodiversity offsets of an additional \$1 billion—we think. It could be higher than that. At the end of the day, the budget for such a massive project is huge for the New South Wales taxpayer. It will surprise no-one in this Chamber that not a dollar was set aside in relation to this project, despite the fact that it had been promised repeatedly by the previous Government. I confirm to the House, and I confirm to the member, that the Government will not be progressing with raising the Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres.

Ms Robyn Preston: Shame on you.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Not at all. The member for Hawkesbury says shame on us. She will not say to the House that 45 per cent of floodwaters in that region come from tributaries and rivers, not over the top of Warragamba Dam. She will not say that, nor will she divulge to the House that the previous Government had a plan to double the population on the flood plain. Faced with doubling the population on the flood plain and Labor's reasonable plans in relation to urban consolidation, they are against both at the end of the day. I thought it was interesting to hear the former environment Minister—he is now the shadow Minister for Health—during the election campaign. In 2019 the ABC reported that he said, "By the time you pay for offsets for the damage done because of the raising of the wall, the cost to offset it will not make sense—the business case will not stack up." Fair enough. The only problem is that a couple of months later he went on to say:

If it's a choice between water lapping up in people's living rooms, or water lapping up in the national park ...

He said to put "people before plants". What a man of principle he is. He then went on to say:

I have been a fierce advocate for our environment, I'll continue to be a fierce advocate for our environment ...

That is notwithstanding the fact that, as the former environment Minister and the member for Wollondilly would be aware, going ahead with raising the Warragamba Dam wall would inundate 4,700 hectares of the World Heritage protected Blue Mountains National Park, and 1,200 Aboriginal sites and artefacts would be inundated as a result of this project. Add that to the fact that there is no money in the budget for it at all. [*Extension of time*]

The bottom line is that, despite the protestations of the member for Hawkesbury, not one dollar and not one initiative was put into the Warragamba Dam wall in 12 years by the previous Government. We are being honest about our intentions in relation to this wall. We will not build it. We will report to the House of any geotechnical risks associated with the wall and take action when it comes about. I say to the House that the 14-metre Warragamba Dam wall, which would cost \$3 billion and inundate the Blue Mountains National Park, will not go ahead under a Labor government.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (12:40): My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister update the House on the challenges inherited by the Government on local government issues?

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:41): I am a great supporter of local government—that vital third tier of government in Australia. I left a little over 10 years ago, when I was elected to this House, with a high regard for many of my colleagues in local government and the work done by councils. But I regret to advise the House that I received a draft report from the Auditor-General a few weeks ago which, if not by now, will shortly be tabled in this House. It paints a frightening picture of local government in this State. When I subsequently met with the Auditor-General, she confirmed the gravity of the situation that local government has found itself in. Out of 128 councils, 43 of them have had qualified audit reports. The 2021-22 audit report discovered errors worth \$1.3 billion. Ninety-four out of the 128 councils reported high-risk audit findings, indicating weaknesses in their processes.

The issue that seems to currently have the attention of local government is the universal complaint about paying the emergency services levy. The local government view is that the State should either pay the increases or, alternatively, yesterday Local Government NSW requested that I amend the Local Government Act and pass those increases onto their ratepayers. I remind the House that local government has been responsible for contributing to emergency services since 1884. They were reduced only 15 years ago to paying 11.7 per cent of the emergency services levy. There was an increase of 19 per cent in the previous Government's budget, which was higher than expected. That related to recent flooding disasters and other critical investments in emergency services in response to the 2022 flood inquiry and the 2019 bushfire inquiry.

Mayors from a variety of councils have been coming to see me and writing to me, talking about the financial sustainability of local government. I point out to them that financial sustainability is not about rate increases; it is about getting their own finances in order. It is about monitoring their own finances and making sure that they are accountable for their own expenses. They are democratically elected to do so. Judging by the Auditor-General's report, local government has got a long way to go to fix its own financial accountability. [*Extension of time*]

They are very good at putting their hand out and taking a 3½ per cent increase from the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal, and spending their time making submissions to upgrade their categories to earn more fees when we are putting through legislation to freeze our own salaries and that of senior public servants. They are quite happy to embark upon some egregious expenses. Kiama council put \$105 million into an aged-care facility, nearly sinking the council's financials in the process. Ryde council spent \$10,000 for a weekend for the mayor and councillors at the Hyatt Regency in Sydney CBD. In 2018 Tamworth council spent \$13,000 on overseas travel, including a trip by the mayor to Nashville, Tennessee. Liverpool council found \$350,000 to rename its council area to the City of Liverpool.

Those are examples of councils across the State. One council in Sydney is spending \$110 million on a new civic centre. Local government needs to face its own expenditure issues before it comes bleating to the State Government and asking for an allocation of funds when it is itself facing a \$180 billion deficit. When I see mayors this week, I am going to have their audit reports sitting in front of me. I am going to ask them about their financial accountability and their expenditure before they start asking the State to pay for the fire trucks going down their street, which they are responsible for paying for.

CABINET DOCUMENTS

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (12:46): My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. In this House on 25 May the Minister purported to disclose the nature of an Office of Sport submission prepared for the Expenditure Review Committee [ERC]. Will the Minister explain why doing so was

not in breach of his duty of confidence, his oath as a Minister of the Crown, the ministerial code of conduct and the Premier's Memorandum M2006-08, which expressly refers to Cabinet documents?

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:47): I have not received, requested or seen any Cabinet document relating to any activities of the former Government. I have had made available to me a variety of documents that relate to the Office of Sport. This has advised me in clear and unambiguous terms that the Active Kids voucher that members of the Opposition keep asking about was not funded by the previous Government in its budget. The advice that I saw—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will wait for the call before coming to the table.

Mr Alister Henskens: The question was why wasn't the Minister's disclosure of draft Cabinet documents a breach of his various obligations? That was the question.

The SPEAKER: I heard the question and I have been listening to the answer. At this stage the Minister is well within the bounds of relevance. The Minister has the call.

Mr RON HOENIG: The document I saw from the Office of Sport indicated pretty clearly that it kept making submissions about how to continue the Active Kids voucher so that it could be progressed to the ERC. The advice in that document from the Office of Sport was that it received no ministerial approval to do so. The advice I saw from the Minister for Sport was that the Office of Sport was concerned about the platform in relation to Service NSW and getting the changes up. It told Service NSW not to proceed without ministerial approval for the purposes of getting the Active Kids voucher approved, but Service NSW proceeded to develop the platform in the event that the Minister for Sport changed his mind, which is inconsistent with what the previous Minister told this House last week.

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business will not come to the table until he has the call. He has done that twice within a minute. I will hear the point of order.

Mr Alister Henskens: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question was not about IT platforms. It was about Cabinet documents.

The SPEAKER: Yes. I have been listening to the Minister. The Minister may continue.

Mr RON HOENIG: I have completed my answer.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

FIRST HOME BUYERS

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (12:50): My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, representing the Treasurer. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is keeping its promise to ensure a simpler, fairer first home buyers scheme?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:50): I thank the member for Leppington for his question. As someone from a growth area of south-west Sydney, he understands all too well the pressures on first home buyers. That is why he wants to give them a fair break. The Government is introducing its scheme to make sure that first home buyers are getting a reduction in their stamp duty. People buying their first home will receive a boost because the Government is eliminating stamp duty for first home purchases up to \$800,000 and providing a discount on purchases up to \$1 million. We are ending the false choice of paying stamp duty now or property tax forever. We are better targeting the assistance to first home buyers for a house in regional New South Wales or an apartment or a modest house in Sydney. Our better, fairer first home assistance program will give these first home buyers an advantage that investors and established home owners at the same price point do not have, making a first home a real choice for more people.

The Government's stamp duty changes will help more young people and families into their first homes. The previous Government claimed to offer choice, but it was a false choice. It gave most of the benefits to people buying a home for more than \$1 million. I do not begrudge people if they want to spend that much money, but they should not be subsidised by people who are paying less. For instance, for people buying a home for \$700,000, the benefit of the stamp duty exemption under the previous Government was around \$10,000. That was pretty meanly balanced against the pain of paying a forever tax on your first home.

The SPEAKER: The member for North Shore will come to order. I call the member for North Shore to order for the first time. I call the member for North Shore to order for the second time.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: But someone paying \$1.4 million was receiving a stamp duty exemption. How much was it under that lot? It was \$61,000. It was \$10,000 if you were paying \$700,000. If you were paying \$1.4 million, you got \$61,000. Under our scheme we will flip it. Under our scheme someone buying a home for \$700,000 will receive a stamp duty exemption worth \$26,590, not \$10,000. And it comes—guess what—without a property tax, without a forever tax on your home. Someone paying \$800,000, which is the price of a modest apartment in Ashfield or perhaps a modest house in Coffs Harbour, will now receive a \$31,090—

Mr Nathan Hagarty: I seek further information.

The SPEAKER: A two-minute extension is granted.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I am happy to give the member for Leppington some further information because our priorities are clear. But the Opposition is not willing to accept the mandate given by the people of New South Wales to introduce these reforms to stamp duty. The Opposition's fiscal recklessness drives it further. Those opposite want to have another \$700 million blow to the budget by keeping both schemes. Under the Leader of the Opposition's reckless approach, a first home buyer with \$800,000 to spend would receive half the assistance of that directed to someone with a \$1.4 million spend.

Not content or satisfied with handing over the largest debt for an incoming Government in New South Wales' history, not content with driving up debt levels to \$187 billion by 2026, not content with leaving a \$7 billion black hole of unfunded promises and commitments—like the 1,100 nurses the Minister for Health was talking about; the \$700 million hole in support for kids in out-of-home care; the \$70 million hole in unfunded cybersecurity; the \$100 million a year cut from the Destination NSW budget, which risks iconic events such as the Mardi Gras and the NRL grand final—not content with blowouts in metro projects all across Sydney, the Opposition wants to double down and double up on the hole it blew in the budget by making sure there is another \$700 million blown out of the budget when it comes to first home buyers. I continue to see Opposition members' shocked looks when all of these numbers are revealed. They are all surprised by what they advocated for. It is time they understood that this Government got a mandate to introduce first home buyer reforms and will do it.

CABINET DOCUMENTS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (12:55): My question is directed to the Premier. Apart from the Minister for Sport, and the Minister for Local Government, has the Premier or have any of his other Ministers asked for or received any draft or final Cabinet or Cabinet committee documents, including submissions, of the former Coalition Government or been told about any of their contents?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:56): Of course not. I do not know of any Cabinet documents that may or may not have been submitted in the previous Government. If we did, I am sure we would have used them in question time. We would love to know what the hell went on in the past four years. There is \$180 billion worth of debt. I would love to see the DNA on that one. How did this happen? We would be exposing that all day long. But I did think it was curious. I have been listening to question time today and paying attention. It seems to be the assertion of the former Minister for Sport that a submission was looked at by the Labor Government. But on 25 May he reported to the House:

... it was asserted by the Minister for Sport that in my capacity as sports Minister in 2022 I took a submission to the Expenditure Review Committee, a subcommittee of Cabinet, regarding Active Kids funding. ... I did not do any of the things the Minister alleged in the House during question time yesterday.

Mr Steve Whan: So no submission.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: So no submission. What are they talking about? Either there is a mystery submission, in which case he has just misled the House, or he has a responsibility to explain what they are talking about. But we are very interested in understanding why we have an \$11 billion deficit, \$180 billion worth of debt, a \$7 billion black hole and why every single program they have demanded be funded has no dollars attached to it. It has been a disgraceful previous Government, and we would be happy to expose it.

POINT-TO-POINT TRANSPORT

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (12:58): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on compliance issues within the point-to-point industry and how the Government is acting to protect passengers?

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:58): I thank the member for East Hills for her question and for her interest in the rights of passengers and how this is impacting members of her community. I want to be very clear here. The vast majority of taxi drivers are hardworking men and women, working in a very difficult environment to earn a living. But we know there are rogue drivers out there, and they are breaking the law every day. We want to be very clear here. We will absolutely throw the book at them because,

under the law in New South Wales, there are no fixed fares for cabs that are hailed on the street or for cabs that are picked up at a rank—no fixed fares. Booking a taxi online using a phone app is completely different.

But if someone hails a cab on the street or waits for one at a rank, taxi drivers must turn on the meter at the beginning of the journey, and the charge that people are due to pay is what the meter says when they arrive. That is the law. They cannot refuse to take a fare. They cannot demand a fixed fare. In the end, they must charge the fare that the meter says. I am particularly appalled to hear stories of people left on the side of the road late at night, unable to get a cab home because drivers are demanding inflated fixed fares or that they get paid in cash. The dangers facing passengers abandoned in that way are obvious. To exploit that vulnerability in order to profit from illegal price gouging is simply outrageous.

Such practices hurt passengers, the good reputation of the majority of taxi drivers in the industry, the industry overall and the reputation of our city as a world-class destination. The Government is acting. We will act to protect the rights of passengers and crack down on those unscrupulous practices. Taxi drivers who commit those offences risk a fine of \$300. The Point to Point Transport Commissioner's compliance team is out on the ranks. They are hailing cabs to bust illegal and unsafe driver behaviour. They are targeting particular locations and major events. Some examples of such behaviour are quite concerning. A covert officer hailed a cab in Pyrmont and asked to go to the Argyle Hotel. He said that he had a Cabcharge. The driver said, "Cabcharge, no problem—\$50." Then, in an intimidatory and dangerous move, he locked the doors. [*Extension of time*]

The inspector asked him to turn on the meter. He said, "No. It's 50 bucks." He then got issued a fine of \$300. Such instances are occurring more and more. I want to be very clear for passengers: It is important that they know that they can report those instances. They can complain to the 24-hour Taxi Fare Hotline by calling 1800 500 410. I encourage people to make those reports. All they need to do is take a photo of the registration—that will record the date and time—and then call the hotline. That hotline has been operating for some time, and yet these practices are still going on. So clearly more must be done.

The fact is that we need to clean up what members opposite left us. I have spoken to the Point to Point Transport Commissioner and to the CEO of the NSW Taxi Council, Nick Abraham. With the council's support we will move to dramatically increase fines for refusing to turn on the meter, refusing a fare or overcharging. The penalty will now be a \$1,000 on-the-spot fine. We will make sure that we crack down on this terrible behaviour. We will work with the commissioner, we will make sure that we get more compliance officers on the road, we will improve driver training and we will ensure that passengers know their rights.

I specifically asked the Point to Point Transport Commissioner to increase enforcement activities, particularly around CBD hotspots. As people enjoy Vivid Sydney over the next month, we want to ensure that they know their rights and are able to travel around safely. I say to the passengers of New South Wales that their Government has their back. We will fight to ensure that they can travel safely, and that they have accessible and affordable travel. Most importantly, I say to those rogue drivers that the next passenger who climbs into their cab might be an undercover compliance officer and the fine will be \$1,000 for illegal behaviour.

CABINET DOCUMENTS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (13:03): My question is directed to the Premier. Given the Minister for Sport and the Minister for Local Government have purportedly disclosed in this House the contents of a draft Expenditure Review Committee [ERC] submission under the previous Government, has the Premier sought advice as to whether that disclosure imposes a legal obligation on him or any other Minister to refer that conduct—and that of any public servant involved—for investigation by ICAC under section 11 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (13:04): All these assertions. You have asserted that. I have not asserted it and neither have any of the answers today. You have asserted it. The only piece of evidence we do have is from the former Minister for Sport. I will repeat it for the House. This is Alister Henskens. He said "the Minister for Sport asserted in the House that I"—Alister—"took a submission to the subcommittee of the ERC"—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Government members will come to order, particularly the member for Wollongong and the member for Keira.

Mr Alister Henskens: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 75. The Premier should refer to members by their correct titles.

The SPEAKER: The Premier has the call.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Active Kids, not so active Ministers. The former Minister for Sport did not get off his backside to put in a submission for the Active Kids program. That is what it comes down to. The assertion from the Leader of the Opposition is that some form of an answer from Government Ministers today asserted that there was an ERC thing floating around. But the only evidence that we do have is from the former Minister for Sport.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wahrenoona will come to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: He said that the Minister for Sport said, "I took an ERC submission"—

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Mark Speakman: The question is not about what the member for Wahrenoona said or did not say. There were disclosures in this House by the Minister for Local Government—

The SPEAKER: I have heard the point of order and I am ready to rule on it. Any reasonable person would say that the Premier is being relevant to the question. The Premier has the call.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The question is based on an assertion by the Leader of the Opposition. The only evidence that we have is from the former Minister for Sport, who said, "The Minister for Sport said I took a submission to the ERC relating to the Active Kids fund. He suggested that I tried a second time at the end of 2022 to get Active Kids funded. I did not do any of the things the Minister alleged in the House." So he did not do it. Did he do it or did he not do it? We do not know whether he put in a submission or not, but he seems to be implying that he put in no submission at all. He should get up and clarify the situation. He should tell us all why he could not be bothered to fund Active Kids for the next four years and is now demanding \$800 million worth of spending when there is no budget at all allocated for it.

SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:07): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, representing the Minister for Housing. Will the Minister update the House on what immediate action the Labor Government is taking to keep its promise to support specialist homelessness services?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (13:07): I thank the member for The Entrance for such a positive question. Having been a former shadow homelessness Minister, I know how strong his advocacy is, particularly for people on the Central Coast. I know that many members in this place are passionate about strategies to address homelessness. We are fortunate to have the Hon. Rose Jackson in the other place. She is a tireless advocate for people doing it tough through homelessness and for vulnerable people in our community.

We are pleased to inform the House that the New South Wales Government has granted a two-year extension of specialist homelessness services and related contracts. Many of us who are familiar with those contracts know the work they do and how important they are in the community. It says a lot that, despite the fiscal challenges that we face as a result of economic mismanagement by the former Government, the Minns Labor Government is determined to look after the most vulnerable people in our community. I know the Minister for Housing in the other place is determined to make sure that we see improvements to the quality of life of people who do not have stable housing. This announcement will provide both stability and continuity for some of our most vulnerable people.

We cannot fix a decade of failure and wrong priorities from the former Government because, unfortunately, it underfunded and neglected the homelessness sector. But governments have the ability to make life better for residents and to create a better future for successive generations to come. The reform will ensure that specialist homelessness services—those like Supported Accommodation and Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra in my electorate and many other services across New South Wales—will have certainty about funding and staffing, and will continue to do the important work needed to support the most vulnerable community members in our respective regions and electorates.

This is about keeping our promise to improve essential services and to put a focus on human capital, something that the Premier talked about from day one. As many members know, we have also committed to legislative changes to help tenants, including a portable rental bond, which will offer genuine and practical assistance to renters who are moving. We know that in all of our electorates more and more people are choosing or are forced to rent. [*Extension of time*]

That is why the reforms are important to many in the communities that we represent. Other reforms designed to support people without stable accommodation are also underway. That is why the Minister announced

that from 1 July people in temporary accommodation will not need to complete a rental diary to demonstrate that they are actively looking for housing—an important change from a government that cares. It is also from a government that understands that many people in our community are facing difficult circumstances around stable housing. We cannot wrap a whole lot of services around those people if we cannot keep a roof over their heads. Because all of the research about all of those issues shows that, without a doubt, one of the first things we need to do for the most vulnerable in our community is make sure they have a roof over their head.

From there we can support them through education, health, financial assistance, and social security and social reform. Those supports are designed to take place when someone has that basic need of housing and shelter satisfied. I thank the Minister in the other place. She has been a tireless advocate for some of the most vulnerable people in the community for so long. She is doing a fantastic job representing those disadvantaged communities across New South Wales. I know that she is determined to make sure that, despite the challenges that we have been left with and despite the terrible way in which the budget was managed, members on this side of the Chamber will continue to focus on and deliver for the most vulnerable community members across our electorates.

SPECIALIST HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (13:13): Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama will be heard in silence.

Mr GARETH WARD: My question is directed to the Premier. Given the answer from his Minister moments ago and given that he has decided to discontinue the Premier's Priority targeting homelessness, will the Premier assure the House that his Government will continue to invest in the Housing First approach and remain committed to halving street sleeping by 2025 and eradicating rough sleeping by 2030?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (13:13): I will take the question on notice. I note that Opposition members groan. As members would be aware, the truth of the matter is that the member for Kiama was previously suspended from the House. He is facing ongoing criminal and legal challenges. I report to the House that I will await the findings of the Privileges Committee before I orally answer the member's questions. I make no judgment at all about the charges that he faces. But I am also not going to pretend that they do not exist.

The SPEAKER: Opposition members will come to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Because he represents an electorate, I will, of course, reply in written form and provide those responses to the House.

CANADA BUSHFIRES

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (13:14): My question is addressed to the effervescent Minister for Emergency Services. Will the Minister please update the House on the efforts to support Canada in its forest firefighting efforts?

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:14): I thank the outstanding member for Blacktown—he can even spell that word, which is fantastic! New South Wales is no stranger to extreme natural disasters. Fighting bushfires has become a core part of our State's experiences. Character—mateship, generosity and the pursuit of excellence—is also core to New South Wales. The memory of the Black Summer fires remains fresh in the minds of all members in this place. The best of New South Wales was on display in the heroism and selflessness of the emergency services personnel at the time.

Our personnel stood shoulder to shoulder with those from international emergency services who came to Australia to help us in one of our darkest moments. Those acts of courage and friendship will never be, and should never be, forgotten. In Canada's hour of need, it is now our firefighters' turn. They are ready to help battle with almost 200 fires that are burning uncontained in Canada. On Friday morning 57 specialists from New South Wales firefighting and emergency service agencies—as part of an Australian and New Zealand contingent of 200 people—made their way to Canada. Canadian fire authorities sought our assistance, and we responded. Our personnel are expected to stay for a 42-day deployment. They include arduous firefighters, incident management experts and other specialist roles from supervisors to aviation management.

Fires have already burnt through over two million hectares this season across the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. Tens of thousands have fled their homes, including some most recently in Halifax. Our thoughts and prayers are, of course, with those facing hardship and loss. We have been there before; we know what it is like and we understand the challenges. We are backing that up with action by sending much-needed help. In a great example of teamwork, the 57 personnel deployed are made up of a range of agencies. Led by the NSW Rural Fire Service, they also include members from Fire and Rescue and the SES, as well as the National Parks and

Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation. That is so good is because it shows what can happen when we bring everyone together. I especially acknowledge the SES. This is the first time it has been deployed in this sort of situation. Equally, I highlight the RFS. It is not the first time that it has aided Canada. It has done so on numerous occasions going all the way back to 2000. [*Extension of time*]

On behalf of the Government, I thank all participating personnel for their professionalism and sense of service, especially when it comes to helping friends in need. Indeed, this sense of service and pride was most evident when RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers and I visited them on Thursday night to wish them the best and to thank them in advance. New South Wales emergency services have always and will always punch above their weight. We saw that on display again only last Thursday when an inferno engulfed a building in the heart of the city. At that time 120 Fire and Rescue NSW firefighters and 30 trucks battled into the night to contain the blaze while also evacuating residents in adjacent buildings and ensuring the safety of the community.

As Minister, I follow a long tradition of taking pride in how our emergency services can fight on any terrain. We saw it on Thursday in the city, we are seeing it now in Canada, and we have seen it in the bush. We hope that they do not have to fight fires, but we have the confidence that they can. Every member of the deployment is ready and capable of stepping up in this emergency. They are there to help Canada, which has asked for our help. International requests for Australian assistance speak volumes to the reputation of emergency services personnel in Australia. Again, it is something that we should all be proud of, regardless of politics.

It is also really important to acknowledge that when New South Wales needed support back in the horrific time of 2019-2020, Canadians were here. They had our back and now it is our time to have their back. That speaks again of our friendship, and I thank them on behalf of the Government. I also thank the families of those personnel for bearing with us at this time and enabling them to go, and I thank their employers for giving them time off work where appropriate. Get home safely, godspeed and all the very best.

Documents

OMBUDSMAN

Reports

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 31 of the Ombudsman Act 1974, I announce receipt of the special report to Parliament by the NSW Ombudsman entitled *More than shelter - outstanding actions to improve the response to children presenting alone to homelessness services*, dated 29 May 2023 and received that day. I order that the report be printed.

PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER

Tabling of Correspondence

The SPEAKER: I table a copy of correspondence from the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser enclosing advice provided to Mr Victor Dominello, former Minister, dated 29 May 2023.

Petitions

PETITIONS RECEIVED

The SPEAKER: I announce that the following ePetition signed by more than 20,000 persons has been lodged for presentation:

Drink Spiking and Sexual Violence Prevention

ePetition requesting the Legislative Assembly implement mandatory drink spiking and sexual violence prevention training for security and bar staff at nightclubs, received from **Mr Tim Crakanthorp**.

The SPEAKER: I set down debate on the petition as an order of the day for a future day.

The CLERK: I announce that the following paper petition signed by 500 or more persons has been lodged for presentation:

South Bowenfels Road Safety

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly request a safety audit of the intersection of Col Drew Drive and the Great Western Highway, South Bowenfels, received from **Mr Paul Toole**.

The SPEAKER: I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

*Members***INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): In accordance with an earlier resolution, the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for South Coast will now proceed. Before I call the member, I make some special announcements about some of our special visitors—and, of course, all visitors in the gallery today are special and I thank them for attending. I give a special thankyou to the partner of the member for South Coast, Barrie Curtis—37 years with the National Parks and Wildlife Service; daughter Emily; brother Geoff; sister-in-law Karen; aunty Mary Brooks, who has spent 55 years as a teacher, which is wonderful; and cousins Mark and Craig. There are a number of special Elders here today, which is fantastic: Aunty Jean Carter; Marie Carter; Aunty Ruth Simms, OAM, who has spent 43 years as a teacher—lots of wonderful teachers here—and Aunty Joan Butler; Aunty Jenny Wellington and Aunty Grace Crossley. Welcome to you all. I call the member for South Coast.

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (14:31): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I begin today by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and I pay my respects to Elders past and present. I also acknowledge the custodians of the South Coast electorate, the Jerrinja, Wandi Wandi and Murramarang people of the Yuin Nation. The place I call home belongs to the Murramarang people. Murramarang Beach is my home beach and where Captain Cook first documented the sighting of our first Australians on 21 April 1770.

I also acknowledge the Elders that have joined us in this place today: Aunty Joan, Aunty Jean, Aunty Marie, Aunty Ruth, Aunty Jenny and Aunty Grace. I am truly honoured to have you here, especially during Reconciliation Week, and I thank you for your continued connection to land and water, and for sharing your culture with all of us. I will continue to advocate with you to protect your sacred burial ground at Huskisson. I am proud to be part of a progressive New South Wales Government that will work alongside you towards a treaty for New South Wales. I look forward to the national referendum later this year to give you, and all First Nations people, the Voice that you deserve.

Aunty Mary, it is an honour to have you here as the matriarch of the Butler family, a teacher in the public system for over 55 years—what an achievement! It is an intriguing road that brings us to this place, and for me I feel it is a journey that was set out for me long ago. It started with the unlikely matching of my parents, Barbara and Jim Butler. Barbara Spence was born into a comfortable and loving family and lived in Duntroon Avenue, Roseville. Mum learned the piano at the Conservatorium of Music from her uncle, Lindley Evans, Mr Melody Man and star of *The Argonauts* on ABC Radio, and after whom the Lindley Evans studio at Ultimo is named. Mum studied at Hornsby Girls High School. She loved swimming and the ocean. Dad always said that Mum had salt water running through her veins.

Jim was a wild boy, born in Redfern. When he was aged three and Aunty Mary was only three months old, the family moved out to Merrylands West when it was still farmland. They were extremely poor, and Nanna knew the only way out of poverty for her children was through education. Dad, however, was seven years old before he started school—apparently it had something to do with his use of profanities. I am not sure how, but Nanna sent Dad to Marist Brothers Parramatta and Aunty Mary went to Our Lady of Mercy College.

When my brothers and I were young, Dad would regale us with stories of his Parramatta boyhood, complete with horse and cart, fuel stoves and outback dunnies, redbacks and red-bellied blacks, cricket, footy and days swimming in the Parramatta River. While from different sides of the track, Barb and Jim met at Wagga Wagga Teachers College and began their married life with Dad teaching in one-teacher schools: Murwillumbah, where my eldest brother Mark was born; Bonalbo, which saw the arrival of Neil and Geoff; Buchanan, my brother Terry; and, finally, Pokolbin, where, as an afterthought, I was born. We were not big city dwellers but small-town folk.

When we moved to Shellharbour, Dad was the deputy principal at Dapto Primary School and, later, principal at Albion Park Rail Primary. Even though Dad was extremely busy, he gave his time at night to teach migrants living in the Nissen huts at Fairy Meadow how to speak English. Dad loved the English language and loved teaching people how to read and write. Mum retrained as a teacher librarian and became the first ever librarian at Shellharbour Public School, a position she held until her retirement. So many friends tell me that their love of books is because of Mum.

Mum campaigned on many issues, including Save the Whales, the Vietnam War and the shocking idea of septic being pumped out into her beloved ocean. In the early seventies, Mum was severely reprimanded and nearly lost her job as a teacher for taking part in a protest over the Vietnam War. The protest march was held on a Saturday. This demonstrates why unions are extremely important as, if not for the Teachers Federation, Mum

would certainly have lost her position. It is hard to imagine this happening to workers today. However, it saddens me that we have gone backwards in recent years around our protest laws.

Mum taught me to always stand up for what I believe in—and to always write a letter. Letter writing has become infamous with my children. Whenever I start to rant about something, they all look at each other and say, "I'll write a letter," and then they laugh. But Mum and Dad taught us all far more. They set our ideals and our beliefs. They taught us to have open and inquisitive minds and, most of all, to show a generosity of spirit to all we encounter. And, of course, there was politics. Dad must have been one of the only four people watching question time because he absolutely loved it and was a regular contributor to the Letters to the Editor section of *The Sydney Morning Herald*. And by "regular" I mean a letter every day. Dad was a man of few words and great wit, and far ahead of his time. His letters were a mixture of humour and shock to maximise his message.

Two of his letters stand out for me and I still remember them. One was about including GST on tampons. Dad stated it was "all a bloody mess". The other letter was about saying sorry to the Stolen Generation—one of the darkest chapters in our nation's history. According to Dad, "John Howard wouldn't say sorry if he was flatulent in church." Both letters were written in the year 1999. It would be nine years later in 2008 that Kevin Rudd, as Prime Minister, delivered a formal Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples. The GST on tampons was not removed until January 2019—20 years after Dad was campaigning. Sadly, neither Mum nor Dad lived to see the outcome on either of these issues.

It is only now that I am older that I have realised that my parents also instilled the same ideals that I hold in many other young people that entered the door of No. 3 Northern Avenue. Ours was a house where you never knew who you may find sleeping in the living room when you woke up or how many people you would find at the dinner table that night. It did not matter who you were or where you came from, everyone belonged at No. 3. As I have gotten older, many friends have told me that the conversations my parents directed around our dinner table or living room opened their minds to issues that were never discussed in their own homes.

From Gough to Don Dunstan, Lennie Lower, down on his luck, playing two-up, Brett Whitely and *Blue Poles* and Sidney Nolan's *Ned*, Patrick White and Henry Handel Richardson, Mum and Dad loved nothing more than to educate. I am honoured that one of those young teenagers is here with us today—Narelle Clay. Barb and Jim would be extremely proud of you and all that you have achieved providing support for young people and for the community sector as a whole, and also for your work with the union movement.

Just over 21 years ago I moved from my hometown of Shellharbour to my now beloved South Coast. The South Coast electorate stems from Nowra in the north to North Durras in the south, some 115 kilometres in length, or two hours travel time. The South Coast is known for its beautiful beaches and national parks, its farmland and escarpments and its unique coastal villages. Yet, for me, it was the people that I fell in love with. The people of the South Coast truly embody the meaning of community. We all say hello as we walk past each other. We know our neighbours, their children and grandchildren and even their dogs. And whenever the chips are down we are there to support each other.

It was at a time of total desperation on the South Coast that I decided that I had to stop throwing things at the television and instead put my hand up to represent my community here in this place. It was my experience of the Currowan fire—a fire that lasted a total of 74 days, and the clincher that made me determined to have a seat here. While the fire had torn through rural properties in its early days, it was the communities of Bawley Point and Kioloa that were the first villages to be hit by the fire in early December 2019. While the media could film our house with 40-metre flames surrounding it, and with the Cross Roads RFS crew miraculously saving it, and when the septic pump-out truck could drive in and out, and the rubbish could get collected, my community could not get food, medicine or even bottles of water delivered. And when I turned to the media to try to get somebody to take action, I was told to stop making a fuss. I immediately turned to Roger Lucas and said, "We need to talk. I'm running for New South Wales Parliament in the next election."

Over the long eight days that Bawley Point and Kioloa were in lockdown, members of the wider community put themselves at great risk by delivering food and medical supplies by boat—some 25 kilometres from Ulladulla harbour, in rough seas and howling winds. I was sick to my stomach every time I knew that a boat was in the water bringing out the supplies I had requested. But this also made me extremely proud of our community. The generosity of people and businesses was incredible. My team of Bawley Angels—Deb, Moira, Bev, Lindy, Sue, Chris and Jill, restaurateur Matt Upton, Mollymook pharmacy, Michael Hoskin, Jake Bond, Scott "Whippy" Dennis, Michael Austin and Sandra Betts—you are all community heroes that I will never forget. What saddened me further was that five weeks later, when the rest of the South Coast burnt, the same thing happened in other communities. It became obvious that there was no plan put in place for a disaster of this magnitude, and once again people put their lives at risk and delivered food and supplies to other communities via boat—and there were heroes in every community.

I will never forget the Rural Fire Service volunteers who worked tirelessly for over two months, and it took its toll on many. Charlie Magnuson was the captain of the Bawley Point Rural Fire Service at the time, and it was his cool head that kept people calm and safe over many weeks. Like many RFS volunteers, Charlie, Hendrik Boone and their crews were involved in a number of extremely dangerous rescues during the Currowan fire, and they saved many lives. But the loss of houses was overwhelming, especially at Conjola Park. My electorate will feel the after-effects of this natural disaster for many years. Post-traumatic stress was felt by many people in the community; and, while we are all healing, the smell of smoke will still cause alarm bells to ring in all of us for some time to come. I am proud of how resilient the community is and how, through adversity, we have all pulled together.

It was through this resilience that my community identified that, in an emergency, the number one concern is the loss of power as, when we lose power, we lose communication. In my community, as we all rely on tank water, our water pumps do not work, so we also lose our water supply. A small committee was formed to work with Endeavour Energy to put Kioloa and Bawley Point onto a microgrid that draws electricity from renewable sources such as solar panels and batteries. With the installation of a community battery, our communities will have a consistent supply of power, which, as we found out, is so important during a disaster. I am proud to be part of a government that will invest in renewables for our future.

Today the South Coast electorate is experiencing another disaster, and that is a housing crisis like no other we have seen before—and it was not caused by the Currowan fire. Over the past 12 years, we have seen record numbers of social housing stock sold off with less than 10 per cent of that housing being replaced. The sale of social housing stock combined with an unregulated short-term rental market has caused the perfect storm to drive the housing shortage to a point where it is at a crisis. It is no longer just marginalised communities experiencing homelessness; it is our essential workers, our retail and hospitality workers and hardworking families. It is affecting our whole community.

There is no doubt that the South Coast electorate needs more housing stock, but how and where we grow is extremely important. The South Coast is special. While we do need to grow, we also need to preserve the character of our coastal villages and protect our endangered wildlife, especially after the devastating fires of 2019-20. Our small coastal villages and our natural environment not only make us all live where we do; they are also why the South Coast is, after Sydney, the most popular tourist destination in New South Wales. The moment we have wall-to-wall houses from the mountains to the sea is the moment that tourists will stop coming to our region, our small businesses will suffer and we will have a crisis of a different kind.

My vision is one where we can develop our major town centres of Nowra and Ulladulla and build up instead of out so we can protect our coastal villages and our environment. In a region where small businesses and not-for-profit organisations are the backbone of the community and where there are minimal transport options, it makes sense to build homes that are accessible to employment and that are affordable to rent or purchase. We need to create vibrant living spaces and revitalise our two major town centres. But in planning for the growth of our town centres we must ensure that we have the schools, hospitals, community services and infrastructure to support the population.

It is not just housing that some families need; it goes far deeper. I am proud to be a part of a government that invests in people; a government that understands that by investing in people it means investing in housing, education, health and the community sector. In recent years Ulladulla has experienced massive growth. Due to the lack of infrastructure planning, we have schools that are overcrowded and a hospital that has been downgraded—so much so that you can no longer deliver your baby locally. Parents are forced to travel over an hour in one direction or an hour and 20 minutes in the other on roads that are extremely dangerous, and their stories are compelling.

I will continue to work with my community to ensure that we get the desired outcomes for our hospital and our schools. We need to break the cycle of poverty and welfare that many in our communities are facing. I will advocate for everyone in my electorate and work with them and the community service sector to address all issues that they face. As a former community sector employee, the privatisation of home care is the best—or worst—example I can give as to why we need to put an end to privatisation. The home care policy was that services should be provided on the basis of need, not on the client's ability to pay—and full fee was considered to be what the client could afford. We now have a public company that makes many millions of dollars each year by providing in-home services. Sadly, many people in my community tell me that they have now cancelled their services as they cannot afford the exorbitant fees. I am proud to be part of a government that is making the public and community sector a priority over privatisation.

There are many people I need to thank today for getting me to this place. It was a marathon, and one I took very seriously. The first people I thank are life members of the Labor Party, Roger Lucas and Paul Mitchell. Thank you for your belief in me. From day one, three long years ago, you supported me. Thank you for all your advice,

your campaigning, your chauffeuring and all the work behind the scenes. Most of all, thank you for the selfless donation of your time. To my campaign staff, Michelle Miran, Oliver Plunkett, Jake Khourey and Stuart Crofts—what a team. You all worked tirelessly to achieve the most amazing outcome. Michelle, this win was for you.

I say thank you to the Labor leadership team, and to all the members who supported me during the campaign, for your belief in me. All those trips to the South Coast paid off. To the member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips; John Kotlash; our branch members; Young Labor; the unions; Emily's List; and everybody that has supported and guided me—those who have been there every step of the way—I say thank you from the bottom of my heart. It was truly overwhelming to me that people who I had never met before gave so much. I will always be grateful. Emily and George, you probably have no idea, but you both gave me the determination and bloody-mindedness I needed to win. George, late last year you sat me down and told me that if I won the seat of South Coast, then Chris Minns would be the next Premier—absolutely no pressure!

Emily, you sat me down and asked me if I was sure I wanted to do this. You said, "It's a huge margin. You probably won't win, and if you do it will be really big news." I just had to prove you wrong. My brother, Geoff, has travelled from Byron today. Geoff, you have always been my rock. You are truly one in a million and loved by all. To your beautiful wife, Karen, I say, "Thank you for looking after him." It is a big job, and having a friend as a sister-in-law is truly special. Bob and Dottie, you are friends who have become family—migrants to Australia in 1975 who never left the table at 3 Northern Avenue. When Mum and Dad died, I was only in my 30s, with young children. You became our family, and we all love you. Thank you for being you.

To my children, Caitlin, Gerard, Emily, Meaghan and Brendan—thank you for keeping everything in perspective. You keep me young at heart and I love being in your presence. I am so proud of each and every one of you. You are beautiful human beings with amazing futures in front of you. Caitlin, thank you for producing the most adorable grandchildren in the world. You can be so proud of Jordy and Charlotte. Barrie, there are no words to adequately thank you. I really do not know how you put up with me. When I wanted to work in the Northern Territory on remote communities, you said, "Off you go," even though Brendan was still at school and doing his HSC. When I said that I wanted to open a business, you said, "Let's do it." When I said I wanted to run for Parliament, you said, "Okay, then." You have washed my clothes and cooked my dinners, you made sure the kids were okay and you walked my dog. You have let me be me and allowed me to follow my dreams. I will always be indebted to you.

Lastly, I thank the people of the South Coast electorate. I stand here today very humble and proud, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in this place. I am well aware of the honour and responsibility that you have bestowed on me, and I will work hard to advocate for the needs and aspirations of our community. Thank you.

Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): In accordance with an earlier resolution, the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for East Hills will now proceed. Before I call the member for East Hills, I welcome everybody in the gallery. You are most welcome. We have some special guests. We have Joy and Arthur Hanneman; Alan Ashton, who is a wonderful former colleague and former member for East Hills; Daryl Melham, who is a wonderful former Federal member for Banks; and Councillor Bilal El-Hayek, who is the mayor of the City of Canterbury Bankstown. All of our other wonderful guests are most welcome. I call the member for East Hills.

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (15:05): I acknowledge that we are gathered here today on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people. I also acknowledge the Dharug people, who are the original inhabitants of the East Hills area. I pay my respect to their culture, heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land, water and people. I pay my respect to all Gadigal Elders and ancestors, and to any First Nations people present today. I am truly honoured and quite surprised my life has brought me here today, representing the wonderful, vibrant and diverse people of the East Hills electorate. It is a role I take very seriously, and I am looking forward to serving my community with enthusiasm and dedication in this new chapter of my life. I love my community of East Hills. It has been my home for over 35 years, and four generations of my family now live there. It is a special place filled with great people with different experiences of life—from families who have lived there for generations to those who have travelled thousands of kilometres to make it their home. It is a place where I feel connected when I walk down the street and run into people I have worked with, volunteered with, advocated for or raised my children with. I am lucky to count so many neighbours as great friends.

The diverse multicultural community of East Hills reminds me of growing up in the suburb of Earlwood, where my mother, Joy, father, Arthur, and sisters, Lynne and Gai, lived in a typical fibro home where Neil Diamond was played loudly on Sunday mornings. Our home was always a welcoming place, open to visitors, where difference was celebrated and embraced rather than feared. It was great growing up with, and being

influenced by, my Maltese, Lebanese and Greek neighbours, many of whom I am still friends with today. I have many happy childhood memories of my time at the local public schools, of fun get-togethers with family and friends, and particularly of holidays down the South Coast at beautiful Culburra. That is where I developed my love of boats and deep-sea fishing.

My first fishing trip was in a small aluminium boat with my dad. Anchoring just outside the heads with a mild rolling swell, I threw my fishing line out. But it was not long before I started feeling sick. Only a minute later, to my excitement, there was a tug on the line and I hauled in a massive 50-centimetre trevally. It was a great first catch for a young child and, like the trevally, I was hooked. But a minute or two later, I threw up. Dad simply said, "Well, lucky you've caught your dinner. We can go home now." My love for boating was shared with my children on the Georges River, which borders a large part of my electorate. My children and I spent many weekends getting in our small boat and cruising along the river or out to Botany Bay while swimming and having lunch along the way.

My father was a plumber who worked for the Sydney County Council and was a union delegate. My mother worked part-time once we were school aged but always made sure she was able to be there when we arrived home from school. I am so grateful to Mum and Dad for the lovely childhood they gave us, the strong family they built and the accepting, inclusive values they instilled in me. They taught me the importance of talking through problems, understanding issues and standing up for others, which has contributed to bringing me to this place today. I acknowledge my parents, who are in the gallery, for their absolute support throughout my life—from teaching me and minding my children while I worked to the great support during the election campaign. My dad certainly enjoyed the political debates at the polling booths. Today is a special day for another reason: It marks my father's eighty-fifth birthday. Happy birthday, Dad.

Marrying my lovely husband, Graeme, has been one of the best decisions I ever made. I met Graeme at work. It was a few years after the sad loss of his first wife to a very cruel and debilitating motor neurone disease. Graeme was a sole parent with three young children, and so was I. Together we have raised our six amazing children—Courtney, Luke, Tyler, Renae, Joshua and Connor—as our own. We are very proud of all of them. They in turn have given us five beautiful young grandchildren, the youngest of whom was born during a very hectic election campaign.

Those who know me know how formative and central sport has been and is to my life. I have always had loads of energy and determination. My mother tells me this started before I was even born. I have always had an interest in playing any type of sport, from touch football to netball to soccer—even ice skating. In my teens I loved ice skating at the Canterbury ice rink, and I really enjoyed taking my three-year-old grandson Cooper there last year, just before it closed, to teach him how to skate. I am so pleased that Labor has committed to restoring that wonderful community facility for future generations.

My love of sport has made me who I am today and has given me so many amazing experiences. From long friendships formed on cold Saturdays at the Deverell Park courts with the East Hills netball club over the past 23 years, through to the elite competition and tough training sessions for the National Touch League games or coaching with the East Hills Rugby League club, I have always been keen to play and volunteer as a coach or an administrator. When my children were young and I wanted them to play touch football, I discovered there was no local competition, so in 2005 I started the Bankstown Jets Touch Football Association. I have served as either president or treasurer for 18 years and watched it grow to over 500 children participating in the competition.

In my early 20s I was very fortunate to be asked to take part in a promotional touch football world tour. We were called the Toucharoos, and it was a very proud moment for me to represent Australia in a game against Canada—a memory I will always cherish. It was also enriching to have the chance to meet wonderful people and showcase the game in so many incredible places around the world. I enjoyed that experience so much that in 2017, together with my sister Gai and my husband, Graeme, I organised and raised funds for a similar overseas tour, but it was not for elite players. That tour gave local Jets players the opportunity to travel overseas and play sport in several friendly games.

Sport has been a mainstay in my life. I remember coming off the touch footy field to breastfeed my children on the sidelines. I remember also being the only female rugby league coach in the district and learning to trust in my experience and knowledge and to stand my ground in a room full of blokes with a lot of opinions. It never occurred to me that being a woman would stop me from participating. That may be because I was brought up in a household with two sisters, and gender restrictions were never placed on us. Grassroots sport has been a pillar in my connection to the East Hills community. Local sporting organisations are vital to strengthening community fabric, building connections, inclusion and improving the mental and physical health of participants. It is that shared interest and passion that transcends differences in race, religion, gender and status. People really do connect and bond over their love for a particular game in a way that fosters a sense of true community and helps them

appreciate one another. For me, sport is all about teamwork, fair play, taking on challenges and building resilience. Those are the qualities I now bring to this new arena.

Serving the community and social justice are really important to me. I was fortunate enough to spend 33 years working in the Federal public service while also taking on advocacy roles as a workplace union delegate and an organiser for the Community and Public Sector Union. It allowed me to have many different experiences, from sitting on executive boards and visiting schools to even inspecting the roof of a building site in a hard hat and steel-capped boots one memorable day while I was eight months pregnant. One of the experiences I found most fulfilling was advocating on behalf of employees for flexible working arrangements. There were clearly benefits to the community in having a flexible workplace but, despite the clear benefits, many women—including me—found it difficult to get approval to take up part-time work. During the 1990s I was proud to have the opportunity to work with so many new mums who were in the same situation. I worked with them to find ways to remove obstacles to getting them back into meaningful work that could actually fit into their lives.

I have been involved for years as a volunteer in several local community organisations. I am driven by social justice principles instilled in me by my parents. I am committed to advocating for and ensuring that all within our communities can access opportunities and participate meaningfully with dignity and respect. Through my involvement with community organisations and clubs, such as Bankstown Canterbury Community Transport and the well-respected Revesby Workers' Club, we have implemented initiatives to subsidise transport for the elderly and vulnerable; supported local schools, hospitals, and community and sporting groups; and provided scholarships to students to create educational opportunities. In 2017 I volunteered to participate in a New South Wales parliamentary trip to the Solomon Islands. The purpose of that trip, hosted by the Australian High Commission, was to conduct a range of forums and training sessions aimed at empowering women to take a more active role in their local communities and political processes.

My involvement in activities such as those shows that each of us can make a positive difference in improving the lives of others. However, the most satisfying community activity I have recently been involved in was to establish the Biyani House Revesby Women's Shelter. Surprisingly, there were no shelters in the area for women and their children fleeing domestic violence. I worked tenaciously with the board to get that shelter open in January 2022 so that women and their children could be safe and get the support they needed to start rebuilding their lives. I have been amazed and really uplifted by the breadth and depth of support freely given by ordinary people, businesses and local community organisations. In the first 12 months of operation, over 100 women and their children received accommodation and wraparound support services or benefited from the shelter's outreach program to help them get back on their feet.

Representing the electorate of East Hills is a natural progression in caring for and serving my local community, which has been a focus in my volunteering efforts. Through my work and advocacy I have learnt that the most useful skills in going into discussions are being open, genuine and empathetic, listening to what is needed by all sides and being able to see new ways to make things happen. Similar skills are needed in coaching, where you have to really take a moment to observe what is happening, break it down and analyse what is needed. Then you can create a plan to get a player or a team from where they are to where they need to be. That is how you make a real improvement. It is those skills that I have honed over many years in the public sector and in my sporting career, finding ways to carefully understand a situation, then working together on how to remove obstacles and solve problems. I look forward to applying them to my work for the people of East Hills.

I am not a career politician and, if you had asked me two years ago whether I saw myself as a member of Parliament, I would have said no. However, it is funny where life takes you. I stand in this place today due to the generosity and strength shared by passionate and dedicated Labor colleagues, friends and family. In particular, I want to thank the following four Labor people for their wonderful guidance, support and great friendship over many years. I thank Alan Ashton, former State member for East Hills, for his relentless energy and commitment to return East Hills to Labor. Alan was tenacious and laser focused throughout the campaign, and I know he is very happy to no longer be known as the last Labor member for East Hills. I thank Daryl Melham, former Federal member for Banks, for his mentorship and wise words in helping me manage through many issues over the years, but also for the friendly banter we have come to enjoy in recent times. I thank Councillor Linda Downey for working relentlessly to improve the lives of the people of East Hills and always being there for me. And I thank Lynda Voltz, the member for Auburn, who I met through the Labor Party and formed a strong friendship with, through our connection to sport. I appreciate Lynda sharing her insights and experiences, which have been invaluable to me.

I also want to thank the team of dedicated Labor Party members and volunteers, together with my large, extended family and friends, who worked so hard throughout the campaign in many ways. Whether it was through letterboxing or having wonderful conversations at street stalls, on the phones or at train stations, or helping out on polling day, I say thank you and I will always be grateful for your generous support. I would particularly like to

mention the doorknockers who worked with me day in and day out: my sister, Lynne; Barbara Kain; Vince Smith; Derreck Russell; Zhi Soon; Grant Lee; Tony and Claire Urban; my son, Josh, and his girlfriend, Jewelay; Anthony D'Adam, MLC; Minister Yasmin Catley; Trish McAloon; Jemma Hardman; and Young Labor Left. What a great walking group! Then there is my beautiful daughter, Renae, who is always very supportive of me and who happily did my make-up at a moment's notice for media events while she was very heavily pregnant or had been up all night with a brand new baby to look after towards the end of the campaign. And little Logan is here with us today.

I would like to recognise the new Canterbury-Bankstown mayor, Bilal El-Hayek, and Sheikh Shadi, and thank Wendy Stevenson, Paul Judge, David Walsh, and Rachelle and Naji Harika, who are also all here today. I want to say thank you to Liam Rankine and James Callow for keeping the campaign on track and for your total support day after day. I thank my campaign manager, Jess D'Arienzo, for her wonderful knowledge and organising skills throughout the campaign and, importantly, her support, guidance and wonderful friendship. I am so grateful to have you working with me now and throughout a very hectic election campaign. And thanks to my beautiful, supportive, intelligent and loving husband, Graeme. Graeme proved to be a true backbone of the operation, stepping up wherever he was needed, as he has always done for me. Thank you, Graeme.

I am extremely thankful for the generous support I received from my now parliamentary ALP colleagues. Premier Chris Minns, Deputy Premier Prue Car, Cameron Murphy, Sophie Cotsis, Rose Jackson, Steve Kamper, and Federal members Jason Clare, Tanya Plibersek, Jenny McAllister and many others all helped enormously throughout the campaign in East Hills. But I especially want to thank Minister Jihad Dib, who gave me guidance, consideration and time out of his very busy schedule to support my campaign. I am very appreciative of the support from the unions, emergency services personnel, nurses and teachers throughout the campaign. The clear message they gave of their struggles made it very real to me why we needed change—change that respects, supports and values our essential workers.

It has been a pleasure to talk to so many wonderful people from my community over the course of the campaign—from the friendly, welcoming crew at Condell Park shops to sharing a traditional communal meal at the Sikh Temple in Revesby, from the vibrant cafes at Picnic Point and Panania to the festive fireworks show hosted by Padstow Rotary. I have always gotten so much joy and energy from meeting people. I would like to conclude by sincerely thanking the people of East Hills, who have placed their confidence in me. We are a wonderfully diverse bunch of people. I am committed to listening, understanding and advocating for your dreams, values and vision. I thank you for welcoming me with open arms into your businesses, local schools, places of worship and community organisations. I share your commitment to making our community a great place to live—one in which we can thrive and help each other to make life better. East Hills was one of the important seats to win for Labor, and it is my great honour to be the new Labor MP. We have to work together, and I guarantee I will be bringing all my energy and determination to bear in loyally representing the people of East Hills.

Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): I thank the member for East Hills for her inaugural speech.

Bills

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (SYDNEY WATER AND HUNTER WATER) BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 10 May 2023.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (15:31): I join members of the House in congratulating the member for South Coast and the member for East Hills on their inaugural speeches. It seems like only yesterday that I was on the other side of the House giving my inaugural speech. I particularly thank the member for South Coast as my electoral neighbour for her inaugural speech. I look forward to working with her on issues that affect both our electorates. I congratulate her and also acknowledge her predecessor, Shelley Hancock, the first female Speaker of the House, who served as a member of Parliament for 20 years.

I pick up where I left off. In 2007 the then Labor Government proposed to group a number of water authorities and sell them off. I noticed that the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023 includes absolutely nothing about water authorities other than Sydney Water and Hunter Water. Now my electorate is unique in that half of it is covered by Sydney Water and the other half is covered by Shoalhaven Water. As a councillor in 2007, I remember the plan by the then Government to group those water authorities together and sell them off—as was done with electricity assets some time ago.

I welcome the amendments that will be moved by members on this side of the House in respect of ensuring those protections also apply to regional water authorities. That is important to many members on this side of the

House. It was disappointing that the bill only focused on two particular water assets. They are, admittedly, under the administration of the State Government, but it is no doubt just as important to make sure that we maintain the integrity of water assets for regional communities like the Shoalhaven. For that reason I encourage members opposite not to ignore the interests of regional communities and to incorporate those amendments into the bill to ensure that there is consistency not just in the Hunter or Sydney or in one particular part of the State that they may seek to represent but across the State. The one thing the bill also leaves out, which I think is fascinating, is the need to actually consider water quality. I quote the then Opposition leader and now Premier from a speech he gave in Parramatta on 19 March. He said:

Labor also believes that a guaranteed right to a safe, reliable, supply of clean water — provided by the government of this state — should be a constitutionally protected right for the people of NSW.

I do not disagree with that, but the question is how to interpret it. Stuart Khan, a professor at the University of New South Wales' School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, said:

I interpret that as now, the Labor government saying that everybody is entitled to clean, safe drinking water and that it will be provided by the NSW government, so they will shoulder the responsibility for ensuring that everybody in NSW does have access to clean safe drinking water

It is confusing that that was left out of the bill in the first place. I worry that, in the earliest days of this Labor Government, we are seeing what we saw in the last days of the former Labor Government, which was a total neglect and ignorance of regional New South Wales.

Mr Stephen Kamper: Oh.

Mr GARETH WARD: I hear the groan from my friend the member for Rockdale. But the reality is Government members could have put it in the bill. It is their bill. I do not know why they did not feel the need to put it in.

Mr Edmond Atalla: It is council controlled.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection from the effervescent member for Mount Druitt, who said, "Oh, it is a council matter." We know that Labor knows it is a council matter, because in 2007 it was going to group those ratepayer assets and flog them off like in some cheap garage sale—without making any difference to local communities. We are all on the one page.

Ms Kate Washington: What has your Government done for the past 12 years?

Mr GARETH WARD: I remind the member for Port Stephens—it might come as a shock to her—that she is now part of the Government. She is in government now; she is not in opposition.

Ms Kate Washington: For 12 years you privatised the State.

Mr GARETH WARD: I point out that I am supporting the bill so she can interject as much as she likes. But I am saying that there is a lacuna—a delta—in the bill, and that is the fact that there is a gap in relation to other State services that should receive constitutional protection. If not one, why not all? There is nothing wrong with suggesting that. In fact, to give members of the House some surety, in 2007 when I was a councillor on Shoalhaven City Council—

Mr Adam Marshall: Humble councillor.

Mr GARETH WARD: Well, the member for Northern Tablelands might have been. I opposed then the Labor Party's proposal to sell off ratepayer-funded assets. I take this opportunity to commend the work of Shoalhaven Water because Shoalhaven Water, in particular, leads the industry on water quality and in its contribution to the sector.

Ms Kate Washington: Sixteen years ago.

Mr GARETH WARD: Yes, it was a long time ago but sometimes history does repeat itself. I am worried that that is going to happen here, with members opposite clearly showing their ignorance when it comes to rural and regional New South Wales. I just hope that those members who are now in government behave like it and think about regional New South Wales and provide the same level of protection that they want to give to Sydney's assets to regional assets. It is not difficult. I am sure this piece of legislation did not take long for Cabinet members to discuss. I am sure that members of the Cabinet, with their wit and wisdom and scintillating diction, did not take long to consider this piece of legislation. I hope that they will support the amendments that have been proffered. I think they are reasonable.

Mr Stephen Kamper: Well, vote against it.

Mr GARETH WARD: It is funny. I am getting all these interjections. I am voting for the bill but Government members are still going on. Anyway, I am obviously going to have to get used to it. That is fine. I support decent legislation. I support sensible ideas, even if they do come from the member for Port Stephens—though I will wait with bated breath. I want to make sure that we protect water assets locally and that my constituents in the Shoalhaven, where I live, and other regional people have the same level of protections proposed for those serviced by Sydney Water and Hunter Water. It is not difficult. I hope that the Government considers those amendments in good faith. I hope that, no matter where someone lives, they get the clean water that the Premier talked about.

I note that there has been an acknowledgement in many a report of some of the issues with regional water supplies, particularly levels of arsenic and other diseases that have been picked up by some regional water authorities. It is important to hold the Premier to the goal that he outlined on 19 March in Parramatta—that we have access to safe and reliable and clean water across the State. That is what he said. It is not just a case of constitutional instrumentality and playing around with the bill.

Mr Stephen Kamper: You're splitting hairs.

Mr GARETH WARD: No, I am not splitting hairs at all. It is about making sure there is quality and reliability of supply. That is what matters most to residents and businesses. That is what I am talking about.

Mr Edmond Atalla: Why didn't you do it for 12 years?

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Mount Druitt. I never saw a proposal, either when I was in Cabinet or when I was in government, for the sale of Sydney Water. I never saw it. The Government is proposing to give an extra level of protection, which I support. All I am saying is: Provide that extra level of support to other areas of New South Wales. If it is good enough for Sydney, the Hunter and Wollongong, why is it not good enough for Nowra, Berry and the Kangaroo Valley? This protection should be offered to everyone in New South Wales, not just those in Labor electorates.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (15:39): I congratulate you, Mr Assistant Speaker, on your elevation to that role. It is well deserved and I am sure you will do an amazing job. I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. It is very interesting looking back at history, and I loved hearing the member for Kiama say that he was not in government when members opposite were looking at these things. He was not in government or in the Cabinet at the last election because he left.

But let us go back and look at some other history. In my office the other day I was surprised and interested to watch the member for Goulburn in the Chamber, which made me think about debates we have had about asset privatisation over the eight years that I have been here. I thought back to a particular debate on 5 May 2021 about asset privatisation, when the member for Cessnock moved on behalf of the member for Swansea that the House not support any further privatisation of government assets or services. Members should have a look at that very interesting debate because they might learn a few things about how this place works. They should read my contribution, of course. At the time I said:

It is interesting to look around the Chamber today and see how many Nationals actually turned up to argue against privatisation—doughnuts.

No-one in this Chamber was here to do it, but I did draw attention to one particular Nationals member who was in the Chamber because she had to be. That was the then Nationals Whip, the member for Cootamundra. I feel sorry for her because she obviously drew the short straw back then and had to be there to back the then Government in opposing Labor's position against any further privatisation of assets. Remember, back then The Nationals were trying to pretend that they did not like privatisation.

It is therefore curious to hear that she will move an amendment to the bill before the House—but more on that later. It is interesting to see her have this "road to Damascus" moment—a path to redemption from her privatising days of the past. Before the 2019 election, the Liberal Party and The Nationals and former Premier Berejiklian herself made a promise there would be no more privatisations. She looked the electorate in the face, stared down the barrel of that camera and said, "No more". Within 12 short months she had broken that promise, and then in 2020 the then Treasurer and later Premier admitted he did not have any plans to continue sell-offs; he had a list. That is what former Premier Perrottet said: "I don't have plans; I've got a list". No wonder those opposite are in opposition, because by 2020 they had already flogged off \$82 billion in public assets, costing thousands of jobs in our communities. At the same time, with all of the magical fiscal genius that those opposite purport to have, they allowed infrastructure projects to blow out by over \$22 billion. They flogged off \$82 billion and then they went down the hole for \$22 billion.

We had the same promise from the member for Epping as Treasurer, when he said he had learned his lesson before 2023. But, of course, the cat was well and truly out of the bag when we saw the member for Goulburn holding up that famous sign saying she was in favour of privatising water assets. She was in the Chamber the other day but, curiously, is not here today. Interestingly, the other person who was in that community meeting, the member for Wollondilly, is no longer in this place at all because he was voted out by his community. That should be a very strong lesson to everyone on that side of the House: When you support privatisation and the sale of \$82 billion of assets, you will be kicked out.

We must never forget that this Opposition, when in government, robbed the public to pay the corporates. Electricity prices went up, up, up after the privatisation of poles and wires. When members opposite were in government, they said that would not happen. Members have a constant stream of people in our electorate offices telling us how concerned they are. Five thousand jobs were slashed at Ausgrid after the Coalition Government sold off half of that provider in 2015. In question time on that fateful day on 5 May 2021—the same day that we had the debate on asset privatisation—the then Deputy Premier and then Treasurer refused to commit to how many jobs would be lost under the new privatisations. We know that jobs have been lost and the reliability of the network has gone down. There are fewer workers going out in storms to restore power to properties. In rural areas like mine that are not connected to town water—and I have lived through this myself—that can mean days of not being able to use bathrooms, have fresh water, flush toilets or have a shower.

During the 2007 *Pasha Bulker* storm, under the former Labor Government, 100 linesmen were employed by Ausgrid in the Hunter. By 2015, after just four years of Coalition government, that number had halved to 50. Fast-forward to 2020, and there were just 17 linesmen to deal with those storms. That is the heart of the problem. That \$82 billion worth of privatisations consists of a laundry list—a mega shopping list—of public assets that those opposite privatised. They include Port Botany, Port Kembla, Eraring, Mount Piper, Wallerawang, Port of Newcastle, Green State Power, Bayswater, Liddell, Colongra, M7 rental payments, Vales Point—what a bargain that was; it was worth \$750 million later on—Transgrid, Construction Services Group, NSW Public Works, Pillar Superannuation, the land titles registry of Land and Property Information, Endeavour Energy, WestConnex and Scone TAFE.

Of course, those opposite already have form in privatising water. Remember the desalination plant? So many assets were privatised under the previous Government. I have talked about the assets; there are also services that were privatised under that Government. But I keep going back to that memorable day in May 2021. Interestingly, when Labor called for no more privatisation of any government assets or services, the Minister for Water, Property and Housing walked into the Chamber that very day with a bill to sell off the land titles registry. What else did she have in her portfolio? She had water. Privatisation was the theme, which is why this legislation is so important.

Let us return to the bill at hand. The member for Cootamundra has flagged an amendment, which is great, but will we really let The Nationals have control of our water? They have been the worst custodians of water resources and assets in the State's history. Not all that long ago we saw up to 80 towns in regional New South Wales counting down to day zero for their water supplies. Not long ago we saw mass fish kills in the western reaches of the State. When it comes to water management, The Nationals will always back the corporate interests. They will always back privatisation over the people of this State. They have been happy to promise new dams but never deliver. They were happy to flog off the State's only desalination plant, built by Labor and sold by the Libs and Nats. When it comes to water security, the Nats are no friends of the New South Wales people; they will side with the privateers every day of the week. The Opposition's amendments are hilarious.

Rose Jackson was at a meeting of the Country Mayors Association with me last Friday talking about this matter. The key thing is that Government members introduced the bill because we have a mandate to do so. We went to the election saying we would not let Sydney Water and Hunter Water be sold off and we would put it in the Constitution to ensure it does not happen. But that does not apply to council utilities, because we did not consult with the councils or say that we would stop them from doing anything with their utilities. We cannot stop them doing what they need to do for themselves. The 89 local water utilities across New South Wales have diverse and complex operations, and of course we will not be the government that says, "Hey, you can't do this; we're just going to make the law without even consulting with you". But has the member for Cootamundra consulted with them? I do not believe so—not to my advice.

Government members are making sure that we deliver on our election commitments to the community and follow the mandate we have been given, which is to ensure that we do not privatise Sydney Water and Hunter Water. We will lock that in and enshrine it in our Constitution. We will not go off-course and pretend that we suddenly had a "road to Damascus" moment after 5 May 2021 and now understood how bad privatisation is, like members opposite, popping up with a little amendment that they will wave around the House as if they are the champions of public assets. That is not the case; that is not the reality. The member for Cootamundra needs to

have a good hard look at herself and her voting record on privatisation over her time in Parliament. She should certainly not be moving such amendments on behalf of local government. It brings us back to that other great Nationals policy of council mergers, which were so well accepted and have done such a great thing for our local government sector—not! I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (15:48): Mr Assistant Speaker, congratulations on your appointment to the position. The day that I have been looking forward to has finally arrived, debating the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023—the centrepiece legislation of the new Government. What an absolute cracker it is. I was really looking forward to this bill, lengthy as it is at one page. I took note of what the now Premier said during the election campaign at a rally against privatisation of water utilities in Parramatta on 19 March. He said, "Labor also believes that a guaranteed right to a safe, reliable supply of clean water—provided by the Government of this State—should be a constitutionally protected right for the people of New South Wales." Taking that at face value, when I picked up this 1¼ page bill I expected to see that right, which was a pivotal piece of the election campaign, extended to all water utilities and all water consumers in this State.

I do not understand what material difference there is between a water consumer in Sydney or in the Hunter and a water consumer at Mungindi, Boomi, Moree, Glen Innes or even in the Far West. In fact, there is no difference. Surely by the principles of fairness, equity and natural justice, and what the now Premier said in his statement, this bill should protect all people of New South Wales. There was nothing in his statement about just people from Sydney and the Hunter deserving a guaranteed right and protection; he spoke about the people of New South Wales. So I was absolutely miffed. You could have knocked me down with a feather when I could not find any mention of rural and regional New South Wales in this centrepiece first bill.

Mr Richie Williamson: Nothing.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I note the interjection from the member for Clarence. There was nothing at all. I could go on about the bastardisation of the Constitution Act for a public policy issue, but I will leave that debate to the silks and the other people who are paid more than me. The fact is that if you are going to enshrine in the Constitution Act a right to public ownership of water utilities, why not include all of them? Why only include a few? I note that question was put directly to the Minister at last Friday's Country Mayors Association meeting. When asked why the bill does not include country water utilities, the answer the Minister gave was an interesting one. First of all, she said that the Government does not have a mandate to do that. You do not need a mandate to maintain the status quo, but if you are going to protect the status quo for one class of water consumer surely the logic holds that it should be the same for all water consumers—unless something else is at play.

The second reason the Minister gave was that amendments would have unintended consequences. The government of the day is the Government. If it agrees with the principle of public ownership of water utilities, it has at its disposal the ability to direct the department to develop amendments that achieve that public policy outcome—unless it has a desire to only protect some water consumers and leave out around 1.85 million to 1.9 million others from that very protection. Of course, the other reason the Minister gave was that the Opposition had not consulted adequately with stakeholders, being the owners of those water utilities, who in this case are general purpose councils. The last time I looked, collectively every member of this House represents those local water utilities. I have six of them across the Northern Tablelands electorate. The Country Mayors Association represents around 80 of them and there are only barely 90 local water utilities in the State. The country mayors spoke clearly to the Minister and with one voice said they want to protect their water utilities. They want to protect their water consumers from a State government in future swooping in, grouping those water utilities and then flogging them off just like what happened with the electricity assets that were vested in local government through county councils.

The now Government has form, and that is at the root of the concern expressed by local government. During 2007 and 2008 when Nathan Rees was water Minister, an inquiry was held into country water utilities. A travelling circus went around the State, and there was a report by the Hon. Ian Armstrong and Dr Colin Gellatly at the time that Minister Rees and future Minister Costa were going around to water conferences. The member for Clarence covered that in his speech. I remember representing Gunnedah Shire Council at a meeting in Inverell. I have a lot of respect for Nathan Rees; he is a good guy. But he left Inverell with his tail firmly between his legs. When he left the portfolio and Minister Costa came in, the report was quietly shoved in the bottom drawer and we never heard about it again. Local government had united and said, "Hands off our local water utilities."

That is the concern that lies at the heart of this matter. This Government has made a decision to deliberately exclude country water consumers from the same protection it is to afford Sydney Water and Hunter Water consumers. The real question is why. I note the presence in the Speaker's gallery of Deputy Mayor Todd Redwood from Armidale Regional Council, which has one of the largest water utilities in the Northern Tablelands. The councils I represent want to know why. What is the real reason they are excluded? It is not that the Government

does not have a mandate. It does not need a mandate to protect the status quo. It is not that the Opposition's amendments will have unintended consequences. If they will but the Government agrees with them in principle then it can move its own amendments. That happens all the time. The third reason the Minister gave was lack of consultation. The Country Mayors Association and local councils are the owners of the water utilities across the State. They have clearly told the Government, the Opposition and all members of this House that they want the future of their water utilities protected.

This is about a fundamental right of fairness and equity. It is a totemic issue in the bush because we have been here before. Those terrible debates of 2007 and 2008 have left a scar across local government that people have not forgotten. When they see a bill like this that deliberately excludes them from protections, they ask why. What is really behind this? What is the agenda? The Minister says, "We would not do anything with your water utilities without consulting you." If that is genuinely the case and we are to take the Minister at her word, then that should be put in the bill. It should not be a problem. But if the Minister continues to exclude country people from the bill and only protect Hunter Water and Sydney Water consumers, then that sends a strong message. The Minister is deliberately making a decision to omit certain water consumers from the protections that she feels are important.

There is also an inconsistency in logic because if the Country Mayors Association is supposed to take the Minister and this Government at their word when they say that they will not corporatise and privatise country water utilities—because we should take the Government at face value—then what is the need for this legislation to protect Sydney Water and Hunter Water? Why do they need protection if the Government's word can be relied upon? You either legislate to protect all water utilities or you do not legislate at all. That is the issue that I and the people I represent have. That is why the Opposition, through the shadow Minister, will put forward sensible amendments to address the yawning chasm in this legislation and protect people who consume water from locally owned water utilities in rural and regional New South Wales.

I wonder how those opposite who do not have constituents within the Hunter Water and Sydney Water areas will vote on the amendments. Will they vote to protect their local water utilities? Are the member for Bega and the member for South Coast going to protect their local water utilities, or are they going to vote for a regime that protects only a certain class of water consumer? I did not think I would see the day in this House when we would say that some people who drink water are more important than some others. It is a sad day if this Parliament passes a piece of legislation that deliberately discriminates against people in rural and regional New South Wales—for whatever reason we do not know. But the corollary of the chasm that excludes rural and regional New South Wales is that the Government has an agenda, and it is to corporatise and privatise water utilities in the bush.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (15:59): Mr Assistant Speaker, I too congratulate you on being elevated to the Speaker's panel. I make a brief contribution to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. The bill delivers on Labor's commitment given at the last election that it will protect Sydney Water from the former Government's mad obsession with its privatisation agenda. We promised that, if we were elected, we would make this a government priority and enshrine the protection in the Constitution, and that is exactly what we are doing today.

The former Premier, and member for Epping, attempted during the election campaign to again deceive the people of New South Wales that his Government had no intention of selling Sydney Water—an empty promise that was exposed by two members of the former Government: the member for Goulburn and the member for Wollondilly. When asked at a candidates' forum if they supported the privatisation of Sydney Water or other government assets, both members responded "yes". The result was that the member for Goulburn turned her seat to a very marginal seat and the former member for Wollondilly lost his seat.

The truth is that the people of New South Wales cannot be taken for granted and they delivered their verdict on 25 March. The public simply could not trust a government that promised there would be no more privatisation when history showed that as soon as they win office all promises are broken and the obsession with privatisation is quickly put back on the agenda. Water is a basic necessity for human survival. Access to clean and safe drinking water is a fundamental human right. Sydney Water is an essential service and should always remain in government control. The privatisation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water should not occur for several reasons. Firstly, privatisation can lead to increased costs for consumers. Private companies are often profit-driven and may prioritise maximising profits over ensuring affordable access to water for all residents. Privatising water services may result in higher water bills and make it more difficult for low-income households to afford this essential resource.

Secondly, publicly owned water utilities like Sydney Water and Hunter Water are subject to greater transparency and accountability measures. Privatisation may reduce public oversight and control over water management decisions. Private companies may not be as transparent about their operations, pricing structures or

investment decisions. That makes it harder for the public to hold them accountable. Thirdly, public water utilities often have a long-term perspective and prioritise sustainability and environmental concerns. They may invest in infrastructure upgrades, water conservation measures and environmental protection initiatives. Private companies driven by short-term profit motives may focus more on immediate returns and be less inclined to invest in long-term sustainability measures.

Fourthly, water quality and safety are critical considerations. Public water utilities are typically subject to stringent regulatory standards and regular testing to ensure the provision of safe drinking water. There is concern that private companies, driven by cost-cutting measures, may compromise water quality or maintenance standards to increase profits. Lastly, water is a vital resource that affects public health, sanitation and the environment. Publicly owned water utilities prioritise the public interest and welfare of the community. Privatisation can shift the focus to shareholders' interests rather than the overall wellbeing of the population, and potentially compromise the equitable distribution and availability of water resources.

I note that the Opposition has indicated that it will support the Government bill with some amendments. It appears that they have arrived at this position kicking and screaming, as it goes against their DNA makeup.

Mr Matt Cross: We are supporting it.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: Yes, stop kicking and screaming; we know you support it. The Opposition indicated that its support will be qualified by amendments. The Opposition was not keen to enshrine this bill in the Constitution as it wants to leave the door open for a future conservative government to again pursue its privatisation agenda. The Opposition's record with its privatisation mania over the past 12 years leaves us in no doubt that, had they won the election, Sydney Water would have been sold off by now. Let us look at some of the former Government's privatisation mania: privatising the NSW Land Registry Services, privatising ferry services in Sydney, privatising education and training in prisons, privatising inner west bus routes.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: In fact, \$82 billion worth of assets have been privatised by the former Government. How could we trust a former government that says, "We will not privatise anymore" when every promise that it has made over the past 12 years—every single one—has been broken? Sydney Water earns the people of our State revenue to the tune of \$2.8 billion annually. Why would one sell an entity that brings an income to the State? The last election was a resounding rejection of the former Government's privatisation agenda. This measure will ensure that a manoeuvre by any future New South Wales Coalition government to privatise these vital water assets will be subject to scrutiny by the Parliament and therefore reflect the will of the citizens of our State. No longer will such important decisions be at the whim or prerogative of shareholding Ministers or the Executive Government tied only to their own ideology and motivations.

It would be an act of recklessness for the Opposition to attempt to weaken this bill by amendments and it must give its full endorsement to this bill. The Government has introduced this bill as its first act to ensure that the essentials in life remain within the reach of all people in our State through the retention of Sydney Water and Hunter Water as public assets. This Government was elected with a strong mandate to instil this amendment into the Constitution Act 1902. It will make any future Coalition government subject to the scrutiny of Parliament and therefore to its current owners: the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (16:06): As the now shadow Minister for Local Government I contribute to the debate on the Constitution Amendment bill—

Mr Edmond Atalla: "Shadow" is underlined.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Shadow. Did I say "shadow"?

Mr Edmond Atalla: Yes, you did.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN: Thank you. I am being verballed again by Labor. Unbelievable! As the former Minister for Local Government I am inherently aware of the fragility of this debate and I am deeply concerned for the 89 regional councils and constituents of these local government areas not covered by the bill. The bill seeks to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to ensure continued public ownership of the Sydney Water Corporation and the Hunter Water Corporation and their main undertakings. Of the eight State-owned corporations governed under the State Owned Corporations Act 1989, three are responsible for the delivery, supply and management of water and sewerage services to the people of New South Wales: Sydney Water, servicing around five million people across Greater Sydney; Hunter Water, servicing around 600,000 people

across the lower Hunter; and, importantly, WaterNSW, a State-owned corporation supplying water in bulk to water utilities across metropolitan and regional New South Wales. This bill seeks to amend only two of them: Sydney Water and Hunter Water. Noteworthy is the fact that Sydney Water obtains its water from WaterNSW.

With this in mind, of significant importance for regional New South Wales is the fact that bulk water is moved using the State's river systems and the WaterNSW network of dams and weirs, yet WaterNSW has been entirely omitted from this bill. It is also worth mentioning that local water utilities are governed in New South Wales by the Local Government Act 1993 and the Water Management Act 2000, as well as other relevant legislative and regulatory instruments. Local water utilities, which are responsible for delivering safe, secure, efficient and sustainable water and sewerage services to more than 1.8 million people in New South Wales outside the areas covered by Sydney and Hunter water corporations, have been omitted from this bill.

Without a doubt, water security, management and infrastructure are critically important, as is our need to ensure those responsible for the supply and delivery of water have confidence in their future. Councils and local water utilities, which in turn supply directly into the drinking water network established throughout towns and villages across 89 local water utilities, are responsible for delivering safe, secure, efficient, sustainable and affordable water supply and sewerage services to 1.85 million people in regional New South Wales, or in its raw state for farming and irrigation purposes. They protect public health and the environment and support economic development and liveability.

Local water utilities are governed in New South Wales by the Local Government Act and the Water Management Act as well as other relevant and applicable legislation. Astoundingly, they too have been left out of this bill. The Opposition will be moving amendments to address this glaring omission. We must ask ourselves why. I have been around long enough to remember the last time that Labor was in government. Although the Minister for Water Utilities at the time, Nathan Rees, was the Minister for only 10 months and 26 days, he managed to turn the certainty around water supply and ownership in regional New South Wales on its head.

By not including council water utilities in this bill, is it the intention of this Government to revisit privatisation of council utilities? Why was the Government not providing safeguards to regional and rural communities through this legislation? Let me be clear: The Opposition will fight for the basic right of all people in New South Wales to access clean water, regardless of where they and their water meters reside. The Government must support the Opposition amendments, thereby demonstrating that the Government is here to govern and provide for all of us and not just Greater Sydney, lower Hunter, Blue Mountains and Illawarra.

Much of the critical water infrastructure work delivered in regional New South Wales during the Coalition's term in government builds upon the legacy of the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program, which was introduced by then Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals, Ian Armstrong, in 1994—and what a great man Ian Armstrong was. The program endured for 23 years. In 2017, it was expanded by the former New South Wales Coalition Government to create the Safe and Secure Water Program with a \$1 billion boost under Restart NSW. The future of the program now hangs in the balance with the New South Wales Labor Government looking to divert funding under Restart to accelerate investment in renewable energy assets.

What, therefore, is the future of the Safe and Secure Water Program? Let's think about communities such as Yass, Bowning, Binalong and Murrumbateman in my electorate that need to ensure stage two and three of the Yass council's upgrade to its water treatment plant is secured. A Labor election promise of \$13.5 million falls well short of the \$30-plus million required. The Upper Lachlan Local Government Area and Boorowa will also be relying on funding to secure their water security for our growing communities and the region. The Safe and Secure Water fund was the targeted funding stream to secure that funding. What will the reallocation of those funds to renewables mean for the fund and the people of Yass, Upper Lachlan and Boorowa, and many communities throughout regional New South Wales? I call on the New South Wales Labor Government to ensure investment so that regional, rural and remote water infrastructure is treated with the same regard as is the Government's intention to invest in renewable energy. The future of many towns and villages depends on it.

If the Labor Government is truly serious about protecting end-to-end water supply in New South Wales, it will support our proposed amendments and not exclude one-third of our State's population simply because of the location of their water meter. Labor has come after council water utilities before. I will be extremely concerned about the Labor Government's intentions if it does not support the amendments proposed for this bill to ensure water security for regional communities into the future. I was really pleased to hear the Premier talk about the fact that water security is a constitutional right, but it is not a constitutional right for just a certain part of the community. It is a constitutional right for every member of this State. We need to ensure that their rights are protected.

I refer to the verballing of me that the member for Maitland gave earlier in the House. I am quite happy to speak to her if she would like to understand exactly what happened during the debate on that night, as I have

previously done. What is extraordinary is that she questioned whether the member for Cootamundra had consulted with any regional country mayors. If the member for Maitland had stayed a little bit longer with the country mayors at last Friday's meeting, she would have been able to determine that that had occurred. I will not be verbalised by the member for Maitland in regard to this matter.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:13): Congratulations, Mr Assistant Speaker. It is good to see you in the chair.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): Thank you.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: I make a contribution to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. Today Labor is keeping a promise to the people of New South Wales by protecting Sydney Water and Hunter Water from privatisation and doing so in the New South Wales Constitution—as our Premier has said, just like it should be. Before I deal in detail with the reasons for this legislation, I point out that it was the former Coalition Government which decided in 2011 that the good work of Sydney Water in the Blue Mountains would stop when we had been rolling out connection to the sewer. The former Government just left out approximately 50 families in the Blue Mountains by stopping that program, despite protestations from my community. I know what it is to have communities hurt. Those communities have never forgiven the former Coalition Government.

Throughout the better part of last year, Dominic Perrottet refused to rule out selling Sydney Water and other essential State-owned assets—a sale that would have meant the risk of higher water charges for New South Wales and over \$7 billion lost in dividends that could be used to help to fund schools and hospitals. Labor in New South Wales pledged there would be no more privatisation and a guarantee that New South Wales water infrastructure will stay in public hands. Today the Government will deliver on that promise. There will be no further privatisation of public assets. Labor is keeping Sydney Water and Hunter Water safe.

Water is a critical public asset that provides essential services to the people of Sydney that include water supply, wastewater management and stormwater services. It plays a vital role in ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of communities by delivering clean and reliable water, protecting the environment and managing the city's water resources sustainability. We know that privatising Sydney Water and Hunter Water may lead to increased water costs for consumers. Private companies seek profit margins and prioritise financial gains over affordability for the public, and that has been the mantra of those opposite for way too long.

Privatisation can result in reduced accountability and transparency. We know that private entities prioritise their own interests and make it challenging to ensure public oversight and involvement in decision-making processes. Privatisation would most likely result in high-quality water standards and infrastructure investment taking a back seat to company profits. I feel like for the past eight years that I have been a member of this place, I have been talking about the impact of privatisation every day and every week. It is so good now to be talking about why the Government will not be privatising.

Public ownership allows for community participation, input and oversight through mechanisms such as public consultations, transparent reporting and accountability to elected representatives. Public ownership of Sydney Water and Hunter Water ensures that decisions are made in the best interest of communities, taking into account affordability, environmental sustainability and long-term planning. Sydney Water, as a publicly owned entity, can prioritise investment in infrastructure upgrades, maintenance and innovation to ensure reliable and sustainable water services for current and future generations. Time and again it has been established that privatisation does not guarantee improved efficiency or cost-effectiveness.

By entrenching the commitment to protect Sydney Water and Hunter Water and other public assets in legislation, the Government demonstrates its dedication to ensuring long-term availability, affordability and sustainability of essential services for the people of Sydney and beyond. One of the problems of privatisation—or, as those opposite have called it for the eight years for which I have been a member of this House, "asset recycling"—is that communities and families are short-changed. That is what the former Government did. "Profit before people" was the mantra of those opposite. The new Government—the Labor Government—puts public interest first. Public interest must be at the forefront. There are many industries that perform an important public service, such as health care, education and public transport. In those industries the profit motive should not be the primary objective. Because I think it is important for the record, I will turn quickly to mention some—it is a long list—of what the Liberal-Nationals sold off, or flogged off, when they were in government.

The list begins with the Sydney Desalination Plant, Port Botany, Port Kembla, Eraring Energy, the Mt Piper and Wallerawang power stations, the Port of Newcastle, Green State Power, the Bayswater and Liddell power stations, Hunter Water Australia, Colongra Power Station, Westlink M7 Base Rent, Vales Point Power Station, Transgrid, the Kooragang Island advanced water treatment plant, Ausgrid, the Public Works Construction

Services Group, and the titling and registry business of New South Wales Land and Property Information. The member for Bathurst never stood up for any of these entities during his time in government. The list also includes Endeavour Energy, Northern Beaches Hospital, all Sydney bus routes, the WestConnex motorway, and more.

For contrast, I put on record some of the fantastic work the Minister for Water has been doing since the Labor Party has been in government. The Minister has been getting out and about across the State. She has been to Ballina—perhaps that is of interest to the member for Ballina. She went to Menindee on 17 March after the mass fish death. She was in Lismore on 21 April, talking about how the Government can support flood-affected communities. The Minister went to Walgett on 29 May to talk to the town about access to safe and secure water. She has been to the North Coast and Ballina and met with a number of organisations there. The Minister for Water is very active, and the Government has a fantastic plan that supports communities and the public ownership of public entities.

I finish by quoting something I said to the then transport Minister. Every day that I have been in Parliament for the past eight years there has always been something to say about how the government of the day was running public transport into the ground. I said to the then Minister, "We know what your endgame is, and we will fight back. We will fight back against your ideological obsession with privatisation. We will stand up for the workers. We will fight back." Today, the Government is fighting back.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (16:21): It gives me pleasure to contribute to the debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. I foreshadow amendments from the Opposition to ensure that water in regional and rural areas is also protected, not just the areas in the city. Members could all speak about how active Ministers have been, and all that—one can be very active as a Minister. If this is the best form of the bill—just a few pages—then I do not know how much consultation has really gone on.

As I travel around the State, I hear from country mayors and regional councils that they want to ensure that their assets are being protected as well. If it is good enough for the city, then it should be good enough for the bush. People in regional and rural areas should not be treated like second-class citizens, and that is what this particular bill does. It does not capture everyone. The Parliament must protect the assets of water utilities right across New South Wales, not just pick a certain area to earmark and protect. All water utilities in New South Wales should be protected, and there are millions of water users across the State.

A Labor government has tried to privatise water before. The bill seems like another sneaky, cheap plan put forward to keep Labor's city friends happy, but it falls desperately short of protecting the people of regional and rural New South Wales. The bill discriminates against the two million water users in regional and rural areas, and also discriminates against people outside of the Sydney Water and Hunter Water areas. It focuses just on the Sydney and Hunter regions and fails to acknowledge the rest of New South Wales. The bill raises serious questions about the future of water for the 89 local water utilities across rural, regional and remote New South Wales.

If the Labor Government is truly serious about protecting end-to-end water supply in New South Wales, it will support the Opposition's foreshadowed amendments. It will not exclude one-third of the State's water supply, when it comes to supporting the people in those communities, simply because of where their water meter is. This is nothing that has not been seen from Labor before. I remember being a councillor—in fact, I was the mayor at the time. I remember Nathan Rees going around the State and talking about corporatising regional water assets. I know that the member for Clarence also remembers this. Nathan Rees was trying to group water assets into different regions, and it would have had a massive impact on water utilities in regional and rural areas.

I have found the original document and the letter I sent at the time talking about the need for water utilities to remain in public hands. I wrote about the need for the status quo. That is what Labor can do today: the Government can ensure that the status quo remains and that water assets remain in public hands. The bill would be strengthened by accepting the foreshadowed amendments from the Opposition. The Opposition is of the strongest opinion that the amendments to be put forward will allow the status quo to remain in place for regional and rural areas.

Over the past several years, councils have taken the necessary steps to ensure the longevity of their future water supply. There are services that councils provide. If the Government is truly committed to constitutional amendments, the amendments should include all water remaining in public hands. In the past, Labor initially supported the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program. It was a good program. Then, in the dying days of the last Labor Government, it started to wind the program back. Less money was put in, and it was a real concern for regional and rural areas.

The lack of funding caused a lot of the issues that the former Coalition Government had to address because of the wind-back in investment in water in the State. Billions of dollars were rolled out through the Coalition's

Safe and Secure Water Program. Those billions of dollars helped towns and communities. The money went into pipelines and weirs to ensure that the water security of communities was held as a necessary right, not something that should just be thought about from time to time.

I draw the attention of the House to my particular area. Let us consider what the Bathurst Regional Council has done over the years. In 2001, \$30 million was spent on expanding the Ben Chifley Dam wall. That doubled the capacity of the water supply to 30,000 megalitres and ensured that the dam structures met all current safety requirements. The council is spending \$16 million on the Winburndale Dam to strengthen the dam wall and protect the town and community for the next drought.

Central Tablelands Water has been doing work to secure water supply for Orange and Blayney. Regional councils have been continually looking at drought management plans and putting in steps to ensure that their areas are seriously looked at. They have ensured that water restrictions are implemented during drought periods with falling dam levels. Councils have been able to reduce water consumption through the implementation of water-saving initiatives. These have all been important measures for water security in regional communities.

I invite members to consider the distances between regional centres in New South Wales. It is important that staff are located in those communities to ensure that maintenance is done and any emergency situations are responded to in a timely manner. It is important that experts are on the ground in those areas so that they know the ins and outs of the local community and know how to deal with problems swiftly and efficiently.

Additionally, the removal of the responsibility of water from local government is likely to reduce the viability of what remains within local government, to the extent, in some cases, of reducing the ability of councils to provide the other services the community expects. Water is a fundamental resource for life, and its availability and accessibility should be prioritised for the wellbeing of all our communities irrespective of where a person lives. Water assets should not be privatised in regional and rural areas. Water is not just a commodity; it is a basic human right. By keeping water assets under public control, we ensure access to clean and affordable water. Leaving water assets in public hands ensures less of a burden for the most vulnerable members of our communities in regional and rural areas. Many of those areas already face economic challenges and need access to water for their homes, businesses and way of life.

Public control allows for greater regulation and oversight, ensuring that water remains affordable for all, regardless of financial circumstances. Local control and decision-making must be preserved. Public control ensures that local voices are heard, empowering communities to participate in decisions that directly impact their water supply and ensuring their wellbeing is upheld. Lastly, emergencies and disaster management require immediate access to water. In times of crisis, whether it is drought or flood, the public control of water assets enables governments to mobilise resources and prioritise the wellbeing of affected populations. Public control ensures a coordinated and equitable response to make sure that all individuals have access to safe drinking water during times of crisis.

The bill must be supported with the amendments. At the moment the bill is so short it seems quite lazy. It could be strengthened by ensuring that regional and rural areas are included. People in regional and rural areas should not be treated like second-class citizens. This bill only looks after those who live in the city and forgets about those who live in regional and rural New South Wales.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (16:31): I congratulate you on your appointment, Mr Assistant Speaker, and reiterate the comments of other speakers. It is good to see you in that chair. I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023 and thank my colleagues for their contributions so far. I say at the outset that it is quite difficult to stomach the hypocrisy we are hearing from those opposite, particularly from the former Deputy Premier, who has come in here with an apparent epiphany about the ills of privatisation. His was a government that spent 12 years selling off everything it possibly could. The member for Bathurst and the member for Northern Tablelands now come into this place talking about the virtues of keeping public assets in public hands when they were responsible for selling \$82 billion worth of public assets over the past 12 years. It is an extraordinary position that those opposite are now putting on the public record. It is completely contrary to everything the former Government did in this place for over a decade.

The bill before us today is a defining part of the recent election campaign. It seeks to ensure and enshrine that future governments cannot engage in the types of fire sales of public assets that characterised the tenure of those opposite. Port Stephens is the dominant drinking water catchment for the lower Hunter and is home to many Hunter Water assets that are vital for the provision of safe drinking water across the region. Grahamstown Dam supplies 45 per cent of the drinking water for the lower Hunter. The Tomago Sandbeds and the Tomaree Sandbeds supply up to 20 per cent when in use. The Chichester Trunk Gravity Main also runs through Port Stephens, connecting the lower Hunter to Chichester Dam, which supplies another 35 per cent of the region's drinking water.

If it comes out of your tap in the lower Hunter, chances are it has come from or through Port Stephens. That is just one of the reasons that protecting our pristine local environment is so important not only for Port Stephens but also for everyone who wants to drink clean, fresh water.

Hunter Water is an essential service, and the agency is highly respected across the region. During my time in this place, I have worked closely with Hunter Water on a number of projects. Perhaps the most important one was the response to the PFAS contamination around Williamtown. Hunter Water stepped up to help residents affected by PFAS. The concern about bore water contamination led to Hunter Water rolling out reticulated water to the entire area. It was a massive project that was not previously on its agenda, but it made it happen so that residents could access safe drinking water. I remain thankful for Hunter Water's efforts and advice to local residents during that difficult period. Being a public asset, it could act in the public good. If it had been privatised by those opposite—which no doubt would have happened if they got into government again and had that opportunity—we would have seen a very different situation. The biggest risk facing our water supply is the threat of further privatisation from any future Liberal-Nationals government. Those opposite have form.

In 2014 the former Government sold an arm of Hunter Water for \$6.8 million. This laboratory testing and service delivery arm is now generating returns for private shareholders, not the people of New South Wales. In 2015 the former Government sold the Kooragang Island advanced water treatment plant for \$35 million, shifting control of this asset away from taxpayers and into private hands again. Those opposite come into the Chamber and pretend that they never had any intention of selling off any of our water assets when they were already doing it. They were doing it by stealth. They were carving and slicing off bits of Hunter Water and selling them off whenever they could. This contributed to the \$82 billion worth of public assets that was sold off over the past 12 years.

Not only did those opposite manage to sell off \$82 billion worth of public assets, but they also managed to leave the State with the largest debt it has ever seen. That is the amazing economic management of the Liberals and The Nationals and their reckless indifference to the opportunities that were presented by public assets that they sold off and privatised so that the public could not get the benefit from them anymore. That has now played out in the worst way possible for this State, leaving us with an enormous black hole, including \$7 billion worth of unfunded liabilities. How those opposite managed to do that is beyond me. We know that the former Government was addicted to privatisation. At the last election Liberal-Nationals candidates refused to rule out more asset sales of the services that the State relies on. We have seen the videos of them at the candidate forums and debates holding up their answers and refusing to rule it out. Is it any wonder that there is now an Independent member for Wollondilly in this place?

Let us look at the record of other assets that those opposite sold off. In 2012 there was the sale of the Sydney Desalination Plant for \$2.3 billion, removing public control from an important part of the State's water security. In 2013 Port Botany and Port Kembla were sold, followed by the Port of Newcastle in 2014. Those three vital ports control our trade with the rest of the world, but those opposite sold them off and gave control to private interests. We have seen the impact of the secret, dodgy deals those opposite did with the Port of Newcastle and the handbrake it put on the Hunter's economy. During a period of economic transition, there could have been a container terminal in development right now. Instead, this vital diversification was blocked for a decade.

Let us now look at the power generators. Those opposite sold Eraring Energy in 2013 and then tried to buy it back last year. They then backed out of the buyback. It is one emblematic example of 10 years of botched energy policy and privatisation by those opposite. Mount Piper and Wallerawang power stations went next, followed by Green State Power, Bayswater Power Station, Liddell Power Station and then Colongra Power Station. The last of the big producers to go was Vales Point Power Station. How much did the former Government sell that for? It was sold for \$1 million and shortly after was revalued at \$722 million. That was from the economic masterminds of the Liberals and The Nationals in government. Next went the transmission lines—Transgrid, Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy. At a time when we need our energy network to meet future demand and prepare for renewables, the New South Wales public has no control of the network they built. Everyone's energy bills have headed in only one direction, and that is up, up and up.

Let us look next at housing, which is perhaps the greatest challenge impacting our State at the moment. Over \$2 billion worth of public housing was sold by those opposite—that is a two with nine zeroes after it. But the public housing waiting list is longer than ever. Where did the money go? Those public housing sales do not include another \$744 million from the sale of other parcels of land and the \$2.6 billion from the sale of the land titles office. Those opposite sold the homes that people had lived in for decades and failed to grow the housing stock in any meaningful way, leaving communities like mine with rising homelessness, like so many other communities across the State.

One of the sales that still galls me as the incoming Minister for Families and Communities is the privatisation of the department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. The Home Care arm was sold off for

\$114 million, which is a fantastic deal for Australian Unity, which acquired 70 per cent of market share and an annual revenue of \$234 million. The bill will prevent fire sales of essential utilities and services.

The Opposition's amendments are nothing more than a cynical stunt. The former Government spent 12 years privatising everything it could. Now members opposite come to this Chamber and pretend to be friends of the local governments that own those utilities they are proposing should form part of the bill. But they forget they forcibly amalgamated those councils, which has put them in their present perilous financial positions. They are the only ones in this place talking about privatising council's assets. Councils should be worried about the Opposition, not us.

We were very clear from the outset—before the election and since the election—that this Government does not believe in privatisation. We could not be clearer: We will not privatise public assets. Now the Opposition is delaying a bill that will safeguard the people of New South Wales from more privatisation. The Minns Labor Government could not be clearer. It has a clear mandate from the people of New South Wales to end privatisation because it does not work. The bill protects people from the reckless and irresponsible economic management of the Liberals and Nationals, which saw this State privatised to the hilt. This Government will proudly put an end to that. I commend the bill to the House.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): Before I call the next speaker, I acknowledge three special guests from Mortdale Public School in the public gallery: Theo Brown, Millie Gambion and Eddie Gambion. Welcome.

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (16:41): Mr Assistant Speaker, I too congratulate you on your appointment to the role. I will make a brief contribution to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill. I support the bill. The prohibition of attempts to privatise Sydney Water and Hunter Water was a State election issue and later became a strong State election mandate for the Labor Opposition who formed Government. I believe that it is fair and reasonable to restrict the sale or disposal of those major State-owned water entities to an Act of Parliament. That would mean that any future moves to try to privatise those assets would be the subject of public debate and, like with any other matter of Parliament, there would be the opportunity for consultation with stakeholders and feedback from the community.

I will speak as well about the proposed amendments from the Opposition to the current bill. I am concerned about the amendments, in particular amendment No. 7, which I believe may impact the ability of water utilities to work in partnership with private entities, such as local Aboriginal land councils for whom water access is a cultural right. It might also affect the real-time operation of the water utilities—for example, the desalination plant—and other operations that involve partnerships with private concerns that are critical to maintaining services.

That said, I support the underlying principle of the Opposition amendments relating to regional and rural utilities and WaterNSW. I commend the advocacy from the shadow Minister for Water on this, and I note the passionate words by members of the Opposition, particularly the member for Northern Tablelands. Privatisation protection should be extended to rural and regional communities. There should not be two sets of communities in New South Wales, so I support a greater expansion of the water entities and assets captured by this legislation. I note the recent support for this from the Country Mayors Association. However, it requires more careful consideration. There must be wide consultation with stakeholders in local government and those who currently operate the State-owned water assets and entities. Currently there are 89 council-owned local water utilities. The president of Local Government NSW stated in her message:

... while we support the intent of moves to protect local ownership ... it is critical to consult with the local government sector on how best this will be guaranteed.

...

One size fits all approaches are rarely the solution for local government, and this is an area that requires close involvement of the local government sector in any proposals for reform.

In my discussions with Minister Jackson, she clearly indicated her support for an examination of this area and of this principle, but she has highlighted a need for closer scrutiny before accepting the amendments in their current form today. I am sympathetic to that view. More time is needed to consult with impacted stakeholders to ensure that there are no unintended consequences. Therefore, in voting to support the bill, I directly ask the Government to assure us that it will fully examine extending water privatisation protections to WaterNSW, and rural and regional water utilities. I would like it to commit to an inquiry to fully examine the proposal put forward to protect rural and regional water utilities, and WaterNSW. I believe a parliamentary inquiry would be an effective way of doing that.

I agree with the statements made in this debate, that it is important to protect the water supplies of rural and regional communities. There should not be two standards in this State. I have always acted on that principle.

However, I think agreeing to the amendments today would not be the right thing to do. There needs to be a much fuller examination. I believe the Government should be open to that. Therefore, I am seeking an assurance from the Government that it will provide an examination within a reasonable time frame so the water supplies of regional and rural communities can be protected from privatisation.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:46): I make a contribution to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. The purpose of the bill is to implement this Government's election commitment to amend the Constitution Act to prevent the privatisation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water. The passage of the bill will ensure that precious water utilities responsible for providing safe and reliable drinking water to Greater Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Illawarra, the lower Hunter and the greater Newcastle regions remain in public ownership. Protecting water supplies is on the agenda because this Government has a mandate to protect Sydney Water and Hunter Water in the Constitution. The reason that protecting water supplies was an election issue is because the people of New South Wales became aware shortly before the election that members opposite were exploring plans to privatise Sydney Water and Hunter Water, which they seem to have forgotten. At this time we are not aware of any other water entities that were being considered for privatisation other than Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

The people of New South Wales have spoken. They were outraged. We are debating the bill today to ensure that Sydney Water and Hunter Water remain in public hands and that will be done by amending the Constitution Act, requiring that there be an act of Parliament to privatise either of those entities. The bill will ensure that the main business activities of Sydney Water and Hunter Water of storing and supplying water, providing sewerage services, stormwater drainage services and wastewater, which are necessary for those water corporations to carry out their business, cannot be privatised. This is incredibly important. Access to water is an essential service. Members opposite privatised many other essential services. Access to water is also a basic human right. It is not part of modern life like the electricity and toll networks or bus services that were all privatised. Throughout the world, particularly in the United Kingdom and United States, there have been all sorts of problems when water supply entity utilities have been privatised. There have been declines in water quality, and only very recently there have been huge problems with sewerage in the United Kingdom.

I am quite astounded that those opposite are now jumping up and down about country water utilities. Yes, they are incredibly important. But guess who was in government for the past 12 years and did not do anything to protect them? Those opposite. This morning the shadow Minister for Water was in *The Sydney Morning Herald* talking about the importance of protecting rural water utilities, yet for 12 years those opposite did nothing. It is worthy of consideration. It was not part of the election issue because, as far as we are aware, unlike the cases of Sydney Water and Hunter Water, there were no plans to privatise any of those rural water utilities. But when those opposite did make reforms to local government, do not forget that, when they put in place administrators on many councils across the State, time and time again they outsourced—effectively privatised—the functions of those councils. That included Cumberland council's waste collection in the majority of my electorate.

Why on earth would those opposite have been looking at privatising Sydney Water and Hunter Water in the first place if they think that water utilities are so important? Could it be because of their poor economic management and the fact that privatisation is how they have been trying to get themselves out of a hole time and again? We are talking about a government that left behind the biggest debt in this State's history—\$180 billion worth of debt. Those opposite are the great economic managers, as we were just reminded, who sold Vales Point Power Station for \$1 million when it was worth over \$700 million.

They went to the previous election saying that they would never privatise WestConnex, but they privatised the entire road, and we are now stuck with tolls until 2060. They privatised water treatment; they privatised the desalination plant. They have recently privatised all the buses and sold off an enormous amount of public housing. They manage Government business by running government into the ground, flogging it off and trying to hide the mess that they are creating. That is probably why they wanted to sell off Sydney Water and Hunter Water as well. We on this side will not do it, and we will make sure that it is incredibly difficult to do, by protecting Sydney Water and Hunter Water in our Constitution.

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (16:52): I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. I do so because water is important in the city, and it is equally important in the bush. It is important to everyone in New South Wales, not just Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle. It is equally essential for regional New South Wales. We in the bush should have the same protections as our city cousins. We are not second-rate citizens in regional New South Wales. Water is an essential commodity. It is a human right. If it is good enough to be protected in the State's Constitution in Sydney, it is good enough to be protected in the State's Constitution in the bush.

In my electorate Rous County Council, Richmond Valley Council and Clarence Valley Council are all suppliers of town reticulated schemes. They do a top job. For generations those councils and the county councils

have been going about their business supplying high-quality water to the good people of my electorate. Without an amendment to the bill, New South Wales will have a two-tiered system. Something that is good for the city should be protected in the bush as well. We cannot have a city-based water supply enshrined in the State's Constitution and not have the same in regional New South Wales. In the big city the water flowing out of the taps will be constitutionally acknowledged and protected, as opposed to the same water flowing out of a tap in Tweed Heads, Ballina, Lismore, Casino, Grafton, Yamba, Coffs Harbour and every other local government area not protected under the State's Constitution. It is just not good enough to have a two-tiered system in New South Wales in this day and age.

This is not the first time that I have had to stand up for my community with regards to the protection of water. The first time was under the Labor Government and its Rees inquiry in 2007 and 2008. That inquiry looked at privatising not only the water in the pipes but the pipes themselves. And they were reaching to the dirty end of the pipe as well: They wanted not only water assets but also the sewerage assets. They wanted both. We had to stand up as a group of councils in northern New South Wales and head to a public meeting in Glen Innes. I can tell you, the inquiry was left with no doubt as to what local government thought about their plan back in 2007 and 2008.

In fact, my council of Clarence Valley Council, which I was on at the time, wrote to the inquiry in 2008 and said, "Council is very efficient in managing our water and sewerage services and should remain on a standalone basis. Council provides cost effective services. Council also provides water and sewerage schemes that have long been enshrined in a strategic planning process, and there is a community expectation that local ownership of those schemes will remain." I agree. So why is it good enough, now, to have a two-tiered system in New South Wales?

We defended local government as a water authority back then but my fear is that, without constitutional protection, it is now at risk. If it is not at risk, put New South Wales regional suppliers in the Constitution as well, not only the water in the pipes, but the pipes and dams themselves. I commend the shadow Minister for Water for the top work that she has done to bring amendments to the bill. In 2008-09 Clarence Valley Council, along with the neighbouring council of Coffs Harbour, invested \$120 million in the Regional Water Supply Scheme, a scheme that has served the area of Coffs Harbour and Clarence Valley well.

Just a couple of weeks ago the member for Ballina and I met with Minister Jackson in Ballina, and we heard of Rous County Council's plans to invest further hundreds of millions of dollars in its scheme in Rous. That is all under risk if the bill goes through, because there is no protection ensuring that that scheme will not be sold. The Shannon Creek Dam is about 30,000 gegalitres and serves Clarence Valley and Coffs Harbour, and there are further plans for dams within the Rous footprint. So it is vitally important that the bill's protections are offered to the citizens of regional New South Wales. If they are important for the city areas of Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle, they are equally important for the good citizens of regional New South Wales. What is the secret agenda? If the safeguards are afforded to the city, why not bring them to regional, rural and remote New South Wales? The water flowing out of the tap in Casino, for example, should have the same protections as the water flowing out of the tap in this building.

Water security is not a two-tiered system in New South Wales. It should not be. So why not offer the same protections to the people of the bush? It is not just selling off the retail arm. Let us protect the assets as well with regards to dams and the pipes. It is pretty hard to have a water supply scheme without the dams and the pipes. In fact, it is probably impossible. So let us protect the lot. Let us not do this in halves. Water security should be enshrined in the New South Wales Constitution, but not only for Sydney. It does not matter where you live, we are all on team New South Wales. Water in this great State should be protected in the State's Constitution. It should not be protected by postcode.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): It being 5.00 p.m., 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.

Senate

SENATE VACANCY

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council notifying that it agrees to meet the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the death of Senator Andrew James "Jim" Molan in the Legislative Council Chamber on Wednesday 31 May 2023 at 3.30 p.m. I set down the joint sitting as an order of the day for 3.30 p.m. tomorrow.

*Public Interest Debate***STATE ECONOMY**

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:00): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that NSW Treasury has advised that the Government has inherited a \$7 billion budget black hole with a significant number of unfunded government programs.
- (2) Notes that the Government has inherited the largest debt ever passed from one government to another, the largest deficit ever passed from one government to another and soaring prices paid by consumers off the back of privatised assets.

In moving the motion, we need to identify what our economic position is at the moment. What is the context of the motion before the House? In 2011, at the last change of government, State debt was \$22 billion, with an annual interest bill of \$1.9 billion. In the current position—the position handed to us by those members who are now in opposition—forward estimates indicates that by 2026 State debt will be \$187 billion, and the interest bill on that will be \$7 billion per annum. That is a huge change in the budget position. It is the worst budget position this State has ever seen and the worst in the nation. The police Minister reminded me before the debate—to give the House and the public some idea of what that \$7 billion interest bill means—that that is more than it costs her to run the whole State police department.

We need to front up to the people of New South Wales and make it very clear where we sit as a government and what we have inherited from members opposite. First, we need to look at how we got here. The black hole is the result of the gap between what those opposite said they would do and what they actually delivered. There are a whole bunch of gaps in what they said they would do and how they delivered it and the outcomes experienced by our community. It exhibits mismanagement of the budget. We heard during question time that those opposite when in government promised to reduce the Senior Executive Service [SES] by 10 per cent. The reality was that, whenever there was a problem in this State, the mindset of those opposite was to throw more managers and more SES at it. The net effect on the budget was an increase in the SES in our State workforce by 23 per cent. Their answer to any problem was to increase the SES.

In some cases, that was understandable. In Health the SES went up by 10 overall during the period of COVID. But in Transport, where they struggled to manage the budget and the State department, there was a 47 per cent increase in the SES over the term of the previous Government. The net result was no improvement to transport for the people of this State. In staffing, they made an assertion that they had employed 1,100 extra permanent nurses. When we were presented with the budget books, we found that 1,100 of those nurses were actually only funded to 2024.

When we had a chance to look at the books we found many more examples of assertions and promises made by members opposite that were unfunded. The promise to raise the Warragamba Dam wall, at a cost of \$2 billion, was never funded. The promise to tunnel under the mountains—everybody reckons that is a great idea—was completely unfunded. There were cost overruns in their projects. Metro West had a cost blowout of at least \$12 billion. Again and again, when we looked at what actually happened under members opposite when they were in government, it was easy to see how we got the black hole that we have been left with.

The black hole is, secondly, a result of their love of privatisation. It is a matter of public record. Some \$72 billion of State assets were privatised during the 12 years of the previous Government. They treated State assets like the magic pudding in the story by Norman Lindsay. Members will recall that the magic pudding's name was Albert. Every time Albert was eaten, he would regenerate so that you could keep eating him forever and ever. Those opposite viewed State assets in the same way. There was always going to be another State asset to sell and privatise to fund whatever it was they wanted to do down the track. But the magic pudding does not exist; it is a children's story. Privatisation does have consequences.

All our constituents know electricity prices have gone up, not down. A constituent of mine who used to work at Vales Point Power Station said to me when I doorknocked his home that, before privatisation, his job was to make sure that all the costs of the business were as low as they could be and to buy in coal as low as he could get it so that the cost of electricity to the people of New South Wales was as low as it could be. He said that after privatisation his job was to make sure that they charged as much as they could to the public of New South Wales. His work life was shattered by that change in how he was to view his service to the people of New South Wales—from doing the best he could do for them to making sure that they paid more than they needed to.

Again, \$3.5 billion of housing was privatised. The cannibalisation of public housing in this State was a reprehensible act by members opposite. It has seen public housing reduce from about 5 per cent of State stock to less than 3 per cent of State stock. If there was any reason for housing being less affordable now than it was 12 years ago, it is the privatisation of our State public sector housing under the members opposite. The books they

left us are shabby. There is red ink everywhere. The entries under the SES column are in pencil so that they can be rubbed out and increased again. The entries for public sector wages are in an invisible little scribble. I encourage the House to support the motion. [*Time expired.*]

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (17:07): I really do thank the member for The Entrance for moving this motion, because it has been quite an informative process for all of us on this side of the House. It shows how little knowledge members opposite have about how the budget process actually works or about any of their own past record of privatisation. But they should not worry; I will get to that. Members opposite do not seem to understand how the budget process works. We have tried a few times to explain it to them, and I will try again to do it really simply for the purposes of this debate. The budget is done annually, and the government of the day considers the projects coming to the end of the allocated funding and then allocates and books funding according to the priorities of the government of the day.

Unfortunately for this State, the members opposite are in government now, so it is they who get to commit the funding for their priorities, which is why we keep asking them to commit to projects like Active Kids. The priorities of this Government are well set in the records of the Government budget papers. When we left office, New South Wales had the strongest economy in the nation. That is without question. It was the top State for economic growth, as demonstrated by the State final demand. We maintained the triple-A credit rating and delivered a path back to surplus, notwithstanding that we were dealing with the worst health and economic shock in a century, the Black Summer bushfires and many other global circumstances.

There is only one risk to the triple-A credit rating in this State, and that comes from all those people sitting on the Government benches. The majority of New South Wales debt was accrued to keep our people and our economy safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that means we spent \$52 billion to protect our State through that very difficult time. We fared better than anyone else in the world. In fact, the net debt to gross State product [GSP] ratio has gone through the same conditions as Victoria and we have had a bigger infrastructure pipeline. The New South Wales GSP ratio was 10.2 per cent when we left government while the debt to GSP ratio in Victoria is double that left under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government, which is 20.6 per cent—less infrastructure, same COVID conditions. As a result, their mate Premier Andrews down in Victoria has had to introduce two new taxes on the people of Victoria in the budget that he handed down at the beginning of this month and has had to lay off 4,000 public sector workers.

When we were in government, New South Wales Coalition members successfully managed to recycle under-utilised and underperforming assets, and we reinvested the proceeds back into our community. A perfect example of that is WestConnex. I note those opposite laughing, but clearly they just do not understand very well the way the economy works. The New South Wales Coalition took asset recycling to elections and received a resounding mandate. The successful asset recycling program enabled critical infrastructure like WestConnex, and that has been a game changer for people in those communities.

In June 2011 New South Wales Government net assets were \$163.3 billion, or \$22,550 per capita. In June 2022 New South Wales Government net assets were forecast to be over \$275.8 billion, or \$33,200 per capita. By June 2025 Treasury projects that New South Wales Government net assets will be \$291.3 billion, or \$35,582 per capita. That is an increase of \$128 billion, or 78 per cent, which is over \$13,000 better value for every man, woman and child in New South Wales. When those opposite were last in government, NSW Labor introduced 11 new taxes and increased taxes 21 times for the people of New South Wales. In the past 12 years, though, the Coalition has delivered 31 tax cuts totalling \$10.5 billion.

Those opposite may have forgotten their record of privatisation, but we have not. When the Premier was chief of staff to then Minister Robertson, he oversaw the privatisation of Parklea prison. In this Chamber, Government members have been avoiding the question of whether they will privatise WaterNSW. They do not have a record to be proud of, and the only way the economy here is safe is under a New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. [*Time expired.*]

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (17:12): I am pleased to make a contribution to this public interest debate, as the economic credentials and incompetence of the previous Government are laid bare. I remember in the last days of the previous Government, when we were sitting on the Opposition side of the Chamber, the former Premier constantly using the refrain, "We know how to manage money". He said it over and over again. It sounded like an advertisement for an investment bank, but I will come back to that. The facts are pretty clear: The State is on track for about \$190 billion of debt in financial year 2025-26. There is \$7.1 billion in a budget black hole and critical things have not been funded—things like nurses, kids living in out-of-home care and cybersecurity. Talk to any major company about what it is investing in at the moment and it is cybersecurity, but there is a \$70 million hole in cybersecurity in the New South Wales budget.

Just as the world is opening up post-COVID, there is a \$100 million budget cut for Destination NSW, and of course we hear all the time about the Active Kids vouchers. We have inherited a deficit of \$11 billion—the biggest deficit ever inherited by an incoming government in New South Wales. That is what in the private sector would be known as a turnaround job, and turnaround jobs are generally left to the most competent of managers to take on. But I think the key is not so much in those facts; it is in the questions that lie behind those facts. I noticed that the member for Miranda used the term asset recycling, rather than privatisation, which is an interesting concept. In theory, I get it; in theory, asset recycling is meant to mean selling an asset and investing the proceeds in a new investment. I get that, in theory. In reality, though, what has it resulted in? It is a triple whammy. In spite of members opposite selling off our essential services, our debt kept going up. It did not result in the lowering of our government debt or prevent the incurring of more debt. Our debt is at record levels, firstly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Opposition members will come to order. The member for Hornsby will come to order.

Mr JASON LI: Secondly, we have lost our dividends. In 2011, just 12 years ago, the State got \$1 billion in dividends. In 2022 that was reduced to \$278 million, and that is not even accounting for the intervening 13 years of economic growth. Most importantly, costs for consumers in the most trying economic cost-of-living conditions have gone through the roof. It is not just the selling off of public assets; it is the selling off of our toll roads to ASX-listed public companies whose purpose is to maximise value for shareholders and to grow their earnings every quarter because, unless they grow their earnings every quarter, their share prices will be hammered. One knows there is a problem when the second pillar of the equity story of the listed company that now owns those toll roads is inflation-linked price escalation. What does that mean? It means that the company's stock is a good bet because when inflation goes up—

Ms Anna Watson: Can't lose.

Mr JASON LI: —they can't lose. When that is the second pillar of the company's equity story, that is great for their shareholders but not great for the people of New South Wales. That is the triple whammy of privatisation or asset recycling for the people of New South Wales. But there is still a question to be answered: If some \$80 billion of public assets have been sold but our debt is still at record levels, approaching \$190 billion, what happened to the money? Where did it all go? I have read about a fund called the NSW Generations Fund, which was seeded with some \$3 billion and had some \$13 billion in it. [*Time expired.*]

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (17:17): I add my two cents to debate on this motion, which I certainly do not support. The problem with Australian Labor Party members is they think the world began in 2011, and they have not looked back at their record when they were last in government. I think everyone in this Chamber will agree the last Labor Government was probably one of the most inept and incompetent administrations in this State's history. I note that the member for The Entrance, who moved this motion, talked about a black hole, but in 2011 the Australian Labor Party left the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government with a \$4.5 billion black hole. Funnily enough, he forgot to mention that. But there are no better economic managers in this State than the New South Wales Liberal Party and The Nationals.

For those opposite who have somehow forgotten, there was actually a thing called a once-in-a-century pandemic. The issue with pandemics is that they impact economic confidence and economic growth, and it is a time when governments need to come together to support and protect jobs and help the most vulnerable in our community. I am very proud of the record, in particular, of Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Premier Dominic Perrottet—as well as the former Treasurer, the member for Hornsby, who is in the Chamber—of making sure that our Government kept people in jobs and maintained employment.

The New South Wales Labor Government of 1995 to 2011, as I said, was one of the worst economic managers in this State's history. But it is not just me who says that. A great book was published a couple of years ago called *The Fog On The Hill: How NSW Labor Lost Its Way* by Frank Sartor. What did Frank Sartor think about Labor's economic management under its last Government, the last Labor Treasurer, a guy by the name of Eric Roozendaal? Mr Sartor said:

Roozendaal was appointed Treasurer and would prove to be the worst the state had had in decades.

He went on to say that Tripodi was empowered and given responsibility for finance. I do not think I need to add any information beyond that. Interestingly when he talked about the 2009 mini-budget he said:

In November, Treasurer Roozendaal brought down a mini-budget that failed in both policy and political terms.

He said that they increased taxes and then something around infrastructure that I think we might be seeing in the current climate in the coming months. He said:

Roozendaal's mini-budget scrapped the north-west metro approved by Iemma, as well as the south-west rail link. With a talent unseen before in NSW politics, Rees and Roozendaal announced a \$5 billion metro instead, which would extend from the CBD to Rozelle. This was the noose that, over the next year, slowly strangled Rees's premiership and carried a negative legacy all the way to the March 2011 election.

Who said that? It was Frank Sartor. But you know what? He said further:

Eric Roozendaal was kept on as Treasurer—another error as we will see from his actions in relation to the power sale and electricity prices.

Very interesting. But it would not be a great contribution without what former Premier Bob Carr thinks about Labor's economic record. When it comes to looking at assets and asset recycling and privatisation, what does Bob Carr have to say? Bob Carr said:

Risk transfer is one of the greatest advantages of the PPP model. That's its public policy beauty.

Wow. There is Bob Carr supporting privatisation or public private partnerships—

Mr Jason Li: It is not privatisation.

Mr MATT CROSS: I will take that interjection. Now I will talk about what Bob Carr thinks about privatisation. Bob Carr said:

Our privatisations also made this point. There were three big ones—the TAB, freight rail and coalmines—but because the Ministers won over the relevant unions, when it came to the last two potentially controversial ones, they got through the system without attention.

How interesting, Bob Carr and his proud record of privatisation. Of course, I go on. In 2002 Bob Carr said—

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: Can the member be brought back to the motion? He has gone completely off track. We have been pretty patient.

Mr MATT CROSS: It is all on privatisation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I will give the member for Davidson a few extra seconds to finish.

Mr MATT CROSS: In this motion we are talking about privatisation. I am simply talking about a former Labor Premier's record on privatisation, which he was happy to promote in his book.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (17:23): Wow. A \$7 billion black hole from a party that thinks it has superior economic—

Ms Eleni Petinos: Can you count to seven?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Miranda will come to order. Such comments are not appropriate. The member for Shellharbour has the call.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Thank you for being a great Deputy Speaker. As I said, a \$7 billion black hole from a party that thinks it is a superior economic manager. No longer can they sit on that side of the House and make that claim after what they have done to the State of New South Wales. They are economic vandals. They no longer have the authority or carriage to make those statements. There are underfunded projects all over the place. I have to say we, on this side of the House, are not surprised. The previous Government left my community, and all communities across New South Wales, with the biggest debt in our State's history.

When I was elected the member of Shellharbour in 2011, the debt was \$22.5 billion. In the 12 disastrous years that followed under the Liberal-Nationals, the debt ballooned to over \$128 billion. The interest on that monstrous debt is \$4.5 billion each and every year, and they think that they are good economic managers. Think again. Imagine what this Government could do for the hardworking residents of New South Wales with the money currently being spent on that interest bill. Those opposite would probably ask for a pay rise. Well, guess what, they are not getting one.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

I am fine with that. What about all the sneaky cuts made by the previous Government? They did not want to tell the public during the election campaign what they had done. They did not want to fess up to that. I am happy to let the people of Shellharbour know exactly what they did. Those opposite left 1,100 nursing positions unfunded, which will leave a \$380 million black hole over the forward estimates. They left a \$700 million black hole in support for children living in out-of-home care. They conveniently forgot to fund the Active Kids voucher program, seemingly so that they could blame us. What a joke! That was exposed in question time today. Seniors from Shellharbour also took a hit. When we opened the books, we found out that the Regional Seniors Travel

Card program was also underfunded from 30 June this year, which will leave another \$400 million black hole in the budget.

We know what will come next: those opposite will try to rewrite history. They will blame Labor, they will blame the bureaucrats—maybe the dog ate their homework, I do not know, but that is who they will blame. Whether they are current members of the Liberal or National parties or recent converts to the crossbench, such as the member for Kiama, they just love blaming Labor or blaming the bureaucrats for their stuff-ups. Just like with the M1 Princes Motorway in my electorate, Labor has been tasked with cleaning up the mess created by the former Government. Now that the adults are back in charge, we will go about cleaning up the carnage created by the toddlers opposite that ran the previous Government, and they will throw their toys out of the cot because they cannot handle hearing the truth. We have already established an Expenditure Review Committee to ensure that funding decisions are made in the best interests of the community. It does not get any better than that.

The amazing thing about the state of the budget is that in the past 12 years the Liberal-Nationals have sold every single public asset that they could. They would have sold Sydney Water, the water supplier for Shellharbour, but luckily for us they ran out of time. The previous Government sold \$72 billion worth of public assets, and what did we get for it? Did we get lower bills? Not a chance. Did we build new assets with the money from the sell-offs? Not a chance. It is a complete and utter myth that the privatisation by the former Government was paying for assets; 80 per cent of the infrastructure pipeline was funded by debt. What we got for all of this so-called asset recycling was higher tolls, higher prices and loss of jobs. We will now pay the price for this poor economic management by the previous Government. Servicing the massive debt will be harder for future taxpayers because interest payments will likely increase by billions of dollars over the next few years—and that is on the Opposition.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the past few weeks I have seen no remorse from those opposite. They are completely shameless. Any reasonable Opposition would agree that with a new Government now is the time to take a careful and conservative approach to government expenditure. But not that mob. The myth that the Liberal Party is a superior manager of money is dead—and dead in the water forever. The Liberal Party could not run a chook raffle. Members of the previous Government should hang their heads in shame because they have created ongoing generational debt for years to come.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (17:28): I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting after paragraph (2):

"(3) Won't support the privatisation of all water assets across the State, including regional New South Wales."

What an embarrassing performance by those opposite. They could not even read the propaganda provided to them by the Premier's office with a straight face. The member for The Entrance could gather all the enthusiasm of a hardboiled egg, and the reality is that he knows that this attempt to clean House by those opposite is just an excuse for them to basically break all the promises that they made during the election campaign. This is just an excuse for Government members to break their commitment and to rip millions of dollars from the hardworking families of New South Wales by taking away the Active Kids vouchers. Mr Speaker, this is just another excuse they are trying to manufacture to deny regional apprentices their travel card.

Ms Jodie Harrison: Point of order: Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask that the member for Hornsby address you by your correct title. You are not "Mr Speaker".

Mr MATT KEAN: I acknowledge the point of order and apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I was getting so carried away by all the lame excuses Government members are offering—their fake news—to give an excuse to cut funding for programs of vital infrastructure such as the Great Western Highway. The Government will take a razor gang to the bush and cut all the programs for those who live in rural and regional New South Wales. This debate is just a pathetic grab bag of excuses that Government members have manufactured to justify what Opposition members know this Government is all about—not delivering on its promises.

Madam Speaker, do you know the worst promise that Government members will break in this period? The promise they made to the hardworking New South Wales public servants. Chris Minns went to the election and promised public servants huge pay rises. He claimed Labor had a mandate, but where is the Government up to in delivering on that mandate? What legislation have we seen to remove the wages cap? Nothing, crickets, zero! That is because Government members know that they cannot deliver on that commitment. Government members know that they will have to go to every health worker in New South Wales and every public servant who was expecting a huge pay rise and say, "Sorry, we can't deliver it." Everyone knew that the Labor Government could not deliver it. Chris Minns went to the community and said, "I'll keep the budget in the black. I'll keep the surpluses that the Coalition set us up to deliver, but I'll also give huge pay rises to public servants." Now the public servants will find out that he has been lying to them.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: The member for Hornsby is not going anywhere near the subject of the motion. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the motion. He is going off on a completely different tangent. He has no idea of what he is talking about. He needs to talk about the mismanagement of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government under his watch.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The member for Hornsby may continue.

Mr MATT KEAN: I acknowledge the point of order taken by the member for Shellharbour. I must say that the member for Shellharbour is one of the poor hardworking backbenchers who will have to go to every public servant in her community and say, "Sorry. Chris Minns is actually not going to deliver on the things that we promised you to get elected. Now we're in office, we can't do anything. We've manufactured this excuse. We've got this fake news, these alternative facts, about the budget position." Let's get the facts on the table. The former Government got us through the worst health and economic shock in over a century. We did so by spending \$52 billion, which was largely debt finance. We also delivered one of the biggest infrastructure programs ever seen in this State—building the roads, hospitals, health institutions and schools that we had missed out on during 16 years under Labor.

What did we deliver? Debt to gross State product [GSP] of 10.2 per cent whereas Victoria, which is delivering half the infrastructure of New South Wales and went through the same pandemic, has a debt-to-GSP ratio of over 20 per cent—double that of New South Wales at 20.6 per cent. What do we have under that Labor administration with its debt bomb: increased taxes and punishment for every hardworking person in Victoria. That is what the people of New South Wales can expect from the Labor Government—huge tax increases, huge cuts to programs and huge broken promises.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:33): In reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Miranda, Strathfield, Shellharbour, Davidson and Hornsby for their contributions to the debate. In closing the debate, I ask Opposition members: What is it that the Opposition believes in? The member for Miranda retold the story of *The Magic Pudding*. She suggested that because State assets are increasing it will make a bigger magic pudding to enable us to sell and privatise assets whenever we need public money. That point was supported today in the other place by the Hon. Chris Rath, who said:

Those opposite—

He was referring to Labor Members—

should look carefully at their language when they say that privatisation has been bad for this State. I think it has been a very good thing ...

That is the position adopted by the Opposition, but they need to work out what their position actually is. They say that in one breath and in the next breath they demand that we protect all the water assets in the State from privatisation. If there is any group in this place that needs to work out what it believes in, it is the Opposition. After 12 years Opposition members have tied themselves in knots. They have one policy—the magic pudding policy of Norman Lindsay—to sell a public asset whenever they need money, forgetting that the real public asset that the people of this State desire, demand and voted on in the last election is better public services delivered by public servants—real human beings dealing with the community face to face. The people of New South Wales unarguably voted at the last election to improve and invest in public assets, and to end privatisation of all public assets in the State. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The member for The Entrance has moved a motion, to which the member for Hornsby has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Bills

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (SYDNEY WATER AND HUNTER WATER) BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (17:37): I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. The bill will amend the Constitution Act 1902 to ensure continued public ownership of the Sydney Water Corporation and the Hunter Water Corporation and their main

undertakings. The Opposition acknowledges that the aim of the Government is to provide protection to the State's water utilities. The Opposition supports that aim and will support the bill. However, the Opposition will be moving amendments to ensure that the bill covers the whole of New South Wales. Those amendments are important because they will strengthen the bill to ensure it deals with the people of New South Wales, not just a minority.

The constitutional protections in the bill are deficient and too limited in their extent. Many aspects of water need protection. The Opposition supports protecting our water because it is so incredibly invaluable to the people of New South Wales. I love to repeat a phrase from Mark Twain. He said, "Whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over." It is a great saying and one that we understand all too well in the bush. Water is important for farmers, for industry and for residents. It is important for people across the entirety of New South Wales.

The importance of water in regional New South Wales is growing, especially when one considers the Hunter Valley and the prospects for hydrogen industries in the future. There is huge potential in this area. The Federal Government and former State Government invested hugely in this new potential industry, which could end up powering this entire State. It has potential to be a huge export industry and that is why the Government should continue to invest in water infrastructure.

Some of the infrastructure projects proposed and delivered by the former Government have made a significant difference in the Hunter Valley and the Upper Hunter. For example, Restart NSW funds were used to deliver the Water Security for Regions Program. It was a great honour to be at the opening of the pipeline, which runs all the way to Murrumbidgee. The town of Murrumbidgee really suffered during the drought. Water had to be trucked in and that left very deep concerns about the availability of water. The former Government solved that problem by investing in water and infrastructure.

Water infrastructure is very important and that is why members are discussing the constitutional right of everyone to have safe, reliable water. Yet some towns in my electorate still do not have a safe, reliable water supply. There is more work to be done. During the election campaign the former Coalition Government promised to provide additional funds to build a pipeline to the town of Sandy Hollow to help residents with their water supply. At present the water comes from a bore and it is very salty. The salt is damaging household equipment, including dishwashers and washing machines. After I received a tanker load, I can assure members that it is not the best water to drink. That project needed additional funds. Unfortunately, Labor did not match the commitment. I will be working very hard with the current Labor Government to try to get the final funds needed to make the project happen and to ensure that Sandy Hollow has good drinking water. I will continue advocating for that constitutional right for safe drinking water. That is a proper conversation that members need to have, particularly for the people in Sandy Hollow.

Water delivery across the State relies on a very large and extensive system. The Upper Hunter's water supply is provided in several areas by Hunter Water. In addition, it is serviced by Singleton Council, Muswellbrook Shire Council, MidCoast Council and Upper Hunter Shire Council. All those organisations deliver safe and reliable water, or as much as their resources will allow at the moment. The Government needs to help those organisations to continue their work. It needs to put money into infrastructure to allow them to deliver water to every single person in New South Wales, which is their constitutional right. They are entitled to access water in a variety of ways. That is why the Opposition acknowledges that the Government aims to provide protections to water utilities.

The Opposition acknowledges that water is precious in everything that is done in New South Wales. What the House has not seen is an equitable approach. The bill demonstrates a very city-centric policy, and I believe the Labor Government has been blinkered in its approach. Sydney Water and Hunter Water are just the tip of the iceberg when considering water infrastructure in New South Wales. The foreshadowed amendments that the member for Cootamundra will move will try to address the hole in the public policy under discussion. The amendments will include all the utilities in regional areas and they should be supported by members on both sides of the House. In some regards, I am shocked that there is such strong argument against the simple amendments. The bill is even simpler and obviously has not been thought through.

Parliament must ensure that all water utilities across New South Wales are kept in public hands, and that safe, clean, reliable water is provided to the whole State. That should be the aim of the bill and the subject of discussion. Instead, members have heard Government members debating the pros and cons—less of the pros and more of the cons—of privatisation. The debate should be about the bill that is before the House. It should be about its aims, strengths and weaknesses. Guess what? There are a lot of weaknesses. What will the bill do for the people of New South Wales? More importantly, what will it not do for the people of New South Wales? That is what members should be discussing; that is what we should be focused on, and that is what we need to fix.

The bill must consider the whole end-to-end water delivery system. It should include every utility from Sydney all the way to Scone. I agree that Sydney Water and Hunter Water are large assets. There is also

WaterNSW, which feeds 89 different local water utilities. At present, the bill is a half-measure. It is a half-baked attempt at trying to address what was previously a media release. But any bill that comes before the House must be addressed with thoroughness. It must address all the concerns. It is not just about addressing an election campaign media release. Neither side has a mandate to do half the job. The people of New South Wales expect the Government to do the right thing. They expect the Opposition to point out the holes. They expect Parliament to produce a bill—an amended bill—that serves everyone.

If Parliament is considering a constitutional change, then the bill must address all concerns. Those assets are for the whole of New South Wales. The Constitution of New South Wales is for the whole State. An equitable approach is needed. That being the case, additional issues need to be addressed to ensure that equitable approaches are taken to water utilities across the State. For example, in my area of Dungog the local government area is served by Hunter Water. It serves all of Newcastle, with a great reach for that city area. But where does Hunter Water get its water from? The water comes from regional New South Wales and goes all the way up to Dungog.

Because of the catchment a number of restrictions are placed on the people of Dungog and the local government area about what they can do, how they can get economic growth and how their planning systems work. The way the people of Dungog live has so many restrictions and yet the beneficiaries of Hunter Water are in city areas. That is the sort of equitable approach that members should be working on into the future. If safe, reliable, publicly available water is the aim, and it is a stated Constitutional right, then members should support the foreshadowed amendments. Parliament needs to ensure that equal protections exist for both metro water users and regional water users.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:47): The Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023 will amend the Constitution Act 1902 to ensure the continued public ownership of the Sydney Water Corporation and Hunter Water Corporation and their main undertakings. The bill represents a commitment made by Labor during the recent election campaign. It will deliver on that election commitment squarely. In its drafting, the bill is quite clear in what it intends to do.

I encourage the House to support the bill. In terms of the amendments being foreshadowed by those opposite, it brings to mind a statement from a British Liberal politician in the 1880s that "we are all socialists now". I think that was probably a bit premature in the 1880s, but, if the amendments foreshadowed by those opposite reflect a sentiment that is honestly and genuinely held, then I think we have reached a moment where we can say that we are truly all socialists now in New South Wales. As a democratic socialist all my life, I welcome that, if it is honestly and truly held. Those opposite need to work out what they believe in. I referred to that in a previous debate. What do those opposite really believe in? On the one hand, they want to protect public assets via this amendment. But in a previous debate they continued to defend the magic pudding policy of asset recycling. They continue to have members in the other place, like the Hon. Chris Rath, who say that privatisation is a very good thing. What do those opposite really believe in?

I cannot predict the outcome of the amendments before us, but I welcome the sentiment. If it is genuinely held, I look forward to working with those opposite to protect public ownership in this State and extend the boundaries of socialism to the four corners of New South Wales in this Parliament. In the meantime, I encourage all members of the House to do what they can today with the bill before us, which squarely addresses a precise election commitment to protect Sydney Water and Hunter Water. Let us do that today and then work together as a House to protect all our public assets and make our public services better—those services that the people of New South Wales say they want but did not get from the previous Government. We can do that together, but today we need to pass this bill.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (17:51): As a very proud member of the former Liberal-Nationals Government, I feel obliged to make a contribution to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. I say "obliged to" because this is the first piece of legislation introduced in the House by the new Labor Government, and it is a crude attempt at showing some admirers of the Labor Party that it is going to stamp out privatisation. There is no problem with that. Those opposite made that commitment before the election. They are not happy with privatisation, and they have brought before us a crude attempt at a bill to stamp it out. Unfortunately, from my perspective, this bill is perpetrated on a simple lie. I say that quite fairly because if those opposite were going to sincerely bring a bill to the House that was thought through it would not have the gaping holes—like the tunnels on the Sydney Metro Northwest—that currently exist in the bill with the exclusion of WaterNSW.

Every member in this House understands that water is vital and that it is vital we secure it. I place on record, first and foremost, that I am a great supporter of privatisation. I am a supporter of working with the private sector to get outcomes. Not only do I believe in that, but also every government believes in it. Governments have done that and will continue to do it in the future. The examples that I will give in a minute have achieved spectacular outcomes for the people of New South Wales, and the former Government's legacy of delivering

infrastructure proves that. It can be seen in every city and suburb on the thousands of kilometres of roads that people travel on, on the rail lines, on the light rail, in the 180 new and upgraded hospitals, and in the hundreds of schools that the former Government delivered. That legacy is there, and no-one can deny it. We could not leave this Chamber and convince anyone that that legacy of infrastructure was not delivered by the Liberal-Nationals. It is an absolute fact, and everybody gets that.

I say that this bill's attempt to secure the assets of Sydney Water and Hunter Water and put them in the Constitution is based on a cynical lie because the Government has left out WaterNSW. Perhaps the cat has been belled. This legislation was taken off the table last week after being introduced, and is now back. The Liberals and The Nationals exposed the fact that WaterNSW was not in the legislation, which is why we proposed an amendment. It is a sincere amendment—

Mr Steve Whan: It was taken off the table at the request of the National Party.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I remind the member for Monaro that I gave every member of this House the courtesy of listening without interrupting or interjecting. I think I deserve the same courtesy. By not including WaterNSW, the bill leaves out the majority of the authorities that supply water across regional areas. Ironically, if this legislation is passed by the House without amendment—if I hypothecate on that for a moment—the greatest water asset of the people of the Sydney metropolitan area, Warragamba Dam, could be privatised. That could happen. Warragamba Dam could ultimately be privatised under this legislation that the Labor Party has introduced, and so too could 42 water storage areas. I mention one of the greatest ones in Western Sydney, which is the Prospect Reservoir. The Labor Party has already suggested that there could be other water uses for the Prospect Reservoir.

I start to wonder whether there is an agenda here, whether those opposite are not going to support the Coalition's amendments to the bill. Are they sincere about ensuring that the water assets of New South Wales are in the Constitution or are they not? That is my concern. Ultimately, there are 89 separate authorities, and one of the closest to me happens to be in the Hawkesbury City Council. That is in a neighbouring electorate and council area to where I live. It operates and runs its own water and sewerage services on behalf of its communities. It is not a regional council—it is still in the metropolitan area—but it has that authority, as do another almost 90 authorities across New South Wales and regional areas. They could be picked off one by one and privatised. People might take that comment flippantly and suggest it would never happen, but it did. It happened in 2007 under a previous Labor government that was looking to parcel them up and privatise them.

I say that this legislation in its current form is perpetrated on a cynical lie. I do not think that can be questioned if the State Labor Government does not amend the legislation to include WaterNSW. Members have talked about privatisation many times in this debate. I think some members on this side of the House have alluded to the fact that people believe privatisation started in 2011. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. I raise a couple of simple issues. I go back to 1998, when Bob Carr privatised the TAB. People might ask, "But what did he get for it?" He privatised the TAB for \$1 billion. In 2010 there was NSW Lotteries. People might ask, "But how much did we get for NSW Lotteries?" We got another \$1 billion. FreightCorp was privatised and sold for three quarters of a billion dollars by the former Labor Government. I will run through a couple of others. Who will ever forget the gen trader privatisation?

Mr Steve Whan: Are you going to go back to 1816?

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Excuse me, member for Monaro. I gave you the courtesy of listening to you. I like to listen to your contributions to debates, so you will give me the courtesy of listening to mine. On 14 December 2010 Kristina Keneally sold the first tranche of New South Wales electricity assets for \$5.3 billion. I place on the record those particular issues because governments now, governments in the past and governments in the future will all work together with the private sector. They are some of the privatisations the previous Labor Government made between 1995 and 2011. I have not mentioned the Cross City Tunnel, the Lane Cove Tunnel, the M4, the M5, which were all tolled, or the M7—the toll was put on that by the Labor Government.

Rather than suggesting that all the so-called woes of New South Wales are from privatisation, I prefer to say that the privatisation of assets that we undertook, which work together with the private sector, for the 12 years when the previous Liberal Government was in power, has delivered a legacy like no other. That legacy includes something very important. People say that we sold off the farm. Well, let us have a look at the farm. In 2011, when the Liberal-Nationals came to form government, the total net worth of assets in New South Wales, that is everything the people of New South Wales own publicly—the roads, rails, schools and hospitals—was valued at \$160 billion. Today it is valued at \$250 billion. That is a great outcome for the people of New South Wales.

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (18:01): Those opposite are just all over the place. When I was in the chair as Assistant Speaker, I listened to a number of contributions to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney

Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023 from those opposite, and I thought they had had an epiphany. Having based their entire economic strategy on privatisation, all of a sudden they had become champions of public ownership. I thought this was an epic transformation—not just a transformation; it was like a metamorphosis, like those opposite had gone into their chrysalises as privatisation caterpillars and had emerged as beautiful public ownership butterflies.

That is what I thought was going on. It made me think of the epic transformations and metamorphoses in history and in literature such as Ebenezer Scrooge, Jean Valjean from *Les Misérables*, Sydney Carter from *A Tale of Two Cities*. But then came the public interest debate and the contribution from the member for Kellyville to this debate, and we saw their true colours. They are flip-flopping here and there. My head is spinning. They are all over the place, which goes to show that, at the heart of this, their amendment is entirely political. It is not genuine and therefore it should be rejected.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:02): Thank you, Mr Temporary Speaker—

Mr Steve Whan: You can be as short as he was if you want.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: I might not be quite that short—I was enjoying the contribution of the member for Strathfield. I will make a brief contribution to the debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. I will quickly pick up on the last comment by the member for Strathfield, because I think that the member for Kellyville made some good points, particularly in relation to the value of our assets in New South Wales. He said that they were worth \$160 billion and are now worth \$250 billion. Of course, they are the assets that the electorates of those opposite have been the beneficiaries of, thanks to the people on this side of the House. New schools, new hospitals, new roads—the communities of those opposite have all been the beneficiaries.

I will give a quick summary of the bill. As others have mentioned, it is to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to ensure continued public ownership of the Sydney Water Corporation, the Hunter Water Corporation and their undertakings. What has been highlighted by a number of other speakers from this side of the House is that what concerns us, particularly those of us living in regional New South Wales, is not so much what is in the bill but actually what is not in the bill. That is why I was surprised to hear the contribution from the member for The Entrance—I will come back to that in a little bit.

I think we on this side can conclude that this bill is scant and it falls short. If those opposite are serious about protecting assets in New South Wales from privatisation, why have they picked up a few that impact only on those in metropolitan Sydney? What about the people of regional New South Wales? Those opposite, by this action and the words put into this bill, are saying that the people of regional New South Wales do not matter and that our water assets do not deserve the same protection. It is incredibly disappointing. As has been previously highlighted, they are discriminating against some 1.85 million people who, just like everybody else in the State, rely on our water utilities, not just the ones in Sydney Water and Hunter Water. It is incredibly disappointing.

The member for The Entrance said that we should just all band together, sing *Kumbaya* and pass this bill today. He was virtually admitting that it is not perfect. He said we should come back and fix it up later. That is what I heard from this side of the House. If the member for The Entrance really values the assets that are there for the people of regional New South Wales, he would accept the Opposition amendments and make sure that all people in this State, no matter their postcodes, have their water utilities protected. As others on this side of the House have stated, we encourage and urge those on the opposite side to accept our amendments because it is the fair thing to do, it is the right thing to do and it values everybody who lives in the State of New South Wales.

Unfortunately, you just cannot rely on Labor in government to deliver infrastructure in regional communities. We have seen that in the past, whether it is schools, roads or hospitals. We on the Coalition side have delivered when we are in government. When it comes to water, we have the legacy of the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program, as established in 1994 by a former Deputy Premier and Nationals leader, Ian Armstrong, who has been mentioned in this debate. We followed that up with the creation of the Safe and Secure Water Program with a \$1 billion boost under Restart NSW. Again, my community in Port Macquarie was a beneficiary of that.

I will briefly talk about two significant water assets in my community. My electorate of Port Macquarie covers two council areas. Port Macquarie Hastings council area is one of the fastest growing urban areas in Australia. It is a local government area that covers 34 communities spread right across the coast and the hinterland, in urban, suburban and rural environments. Everybody knows it has absolutely pristine coastal and hinterland environments, but it is growing. It is critically important that we continue to develop our water assets. Our population is concentrated in the centres of Port Macquarie, Laurieton and Wauchope, and we have some smaller villages. I commend the council on the initiative it has taken to secure and improve our water assets for the future.

Two significant Port Macquarie water projects are currently being investigated. In fact, we signalled when we were in government that they would be State significant infrastructure projects because we wanted to make sure that we could speed up the assessment process, recognising that these have potent economic and social benefits. If approved, these two projects would support some 7,000 new homes in Thrumster, Greater Sancroix and Fernbank Creek, and cater for an existing 3,000 homes in Port Macquarie. They would make sure that we have safe and efficient water services for the thousands of residents in the growing Port Macquarie community, and they would create some 240 construction jobs. As I said that water infrastructure is absolutely critical in our growing community, and I was pleased that the Port Macquarie Hastings Council welcomed that the projects have been flagged as State significant projects by the State Government. That is critically important.

I also mention MidCoast Council, which operates six water supply systems across the MidCoast region and produces around nine billion litres of water per year. I conclude my comments by urging the Government to let its actions speak louder than words and to signify to the 1.8 million people who live in rural and regional New South Wales that it cares about them and that it values the water assets that they rely on, by supporting the amendments put forward by the Opposition.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (18:10): On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. I acknowledge that my colleague the member for Ballina led for The Greens on the bill and made our position very clear in relation to both the bill and the Opposition amendment that has been foreshadowed. The bill amends the Constitution Act 1902 to insert new part 10, which ensures that Sydney Water Corporation and Hunter Water Corporation and their main undertakings remain in public ownership. It prevents any sale of a water corporation or a main undertaking of a water corporation but does not prevent a sale that would occur in the ordinary course of business of a water corporation or result in the main undertakings of the water corporation remaining in public ownership.

Since this debate started, we have seen an interesting shift in the discussion. I recall that we started off with the new Premier's delivery of an election commitment to make sure that we would not see the privatisation of Sydney Water or Hunter Water. That was in response to 12 long years of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government doing nothing but privatising anything that it could possibly get its hands on. In fact, during my time in this place, that Government built entire motorways and managed to privatise them, because it was so obsessed with the idea of privatisation. We saw an endless sell-off of public housing under the former Government, whose members are now sitting behind me. The only bad news about the new Labor Government stepping in and moving to the government benches is that it means I have to sit with the members behind me. I mean no offence to the member of Port Macquarie, who just left—I made sure I said that after she had left.

It is critical that we remember that the reason we are putting protections in the Constitution is that nobody trusts Coalition governments when it comes to privatising things. The Greens stand 100 per cent in support of the new State Labor Government's attempts to stamp out the privatisation agenda of the Liberal Party and The Nationals. We stand in support of this bill, and we call out the enormous hypocrisy of the now Opposition members. I could not quite believe it when I heard the former Nationals leader and Deputy Premier, now in opposition, crying out and begging for the Government to care about the public interest. Which public interest did Opposition members care about when they were in government, flogging off public assets, flogging off public land, and flogging off and contracting out every service they could think of? Their privatisation agenda involved consultants and individuals, and if something did not stand still for a second, they wanted to privatise it. One of my favourites was when the then water Minister, Melinda Pavey, who was also the housing Minister, announced the New South Wales housing strategy. The flagship announcement was an easy-to-access website for developers to put in pitches to buy up public land. That was their approach then, and now they pretend to care about issues of privatisation.

I have full faith in the current Minister for Water and her commitment to work collaboratively regarding the concerns that have been raised as a result of the wedge politics and hypocrisy that have come from the Opposition, in a way that will genuinely address those concerns. She has committed to consulting with Local Government NSW and regional mayors. The Greens look forward to being part of any process that allows that consultation to occur and that puts in place any mechanisms to ensure no further privatisation in this State. When it comes to the now Opposition, we know that we can never have enough scrutiny of our legislation to try to protect it, in the future, from the sort of privatisation that has been inflicted on this State in the past 12 years. If additional changes and improvements can be made, in consultation with mayors, experts, Local Government NSW and others who have a say, then we should absolutely make them. The Greens look forward to being part of that process.

I return to the fact that this bill is a real win; it is a commitment to stand against privatisation and the threat of Sydney Water and Hunter Water being privatised by a future government. I congratulate and acknowledge the Australian Services Union [ASU], which is my union, and its secretary, Angus McFarland, for all the campaigning

and work that they did around this issue in the lead-up to the election. As the ASU has said, a major issue for the community at the recent State election was the privatisation of public assets in New South Wales, and, in particular, there was a very real concern about the potential for New South Wales water assets to be further privatised, corporatised and outsourced. The ASU has made its position very clear when it comes to the public interest, and it is the position of our community. It is not the public interest that the former Deputy Premier and Nationals leader was talking about, and not one that might give them a free shot in the media, but it is a genuine commitment to public interest.

Privatising our essential assets—our public land or public housing—and selling them off to the highest bidder is a very short-term view of future needs. I see in my electorate the demand for housing, health care and schools. We know that in the dark days of the previous Labor Government, a public school and a public hospital in Redfern were sold off. There were threats to Erskineville Public School, an amazing local public school which is now at capacity. When governments have an agenda and get a taste for the idea of making money from privatisation, the community interest disappears and we see private interests and private profits corrupting those in power. That is why it is so critical to make this change, and The Greens are absolutely supportive of it.

There has been a lot of talk recently about the broader issue of privatisation and whether the sell-off of public land and public housing is included within a privatisation agenda. I urge the current New South Wales Government to do whatever it can to make sure that we do not sell off public land or public housing and that what is called surplus public land is not used to fund the building of public and social housing. It is absolutely critical, when we take a stand against privatisation, that we stand against it in all its forms. At the end of the day, we cannot compromise on holding in perpetuity land, assets and things that are critical to looking after the people in this State. Once we sell those assets off, it is so difficult to get them back. Not only is it costly, but the political argument needed is strong.

We have seen commitment and determination from the new Labor Government to protect Sydney Water and Hunter Water from privatisation in our Constitution. I hope to see a similar, ongoing commitment not to sell off any public housing or public land. I hope to see an absolute commitment to bringing things back into public control. I hope that we start having a conversation about getting under control some of the horrific shifts that we saw under the last Government towards contracting out, privatising and tendering everything under the sun, which decimated our public service and removed its expertise. It also decimated the public housing, public land and public assets that are so critical to delivering for the people of New South Wales.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (18:19): I am pleased to speak in debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. Imagine coming into government after 12 years and introducing legislation that is essentially unnecessary, that sets a dangerous precedent and that represents little more than a stunt. Members opposite had a dozen years to bring forth, research, prepare and develop a legislative agenda and their first bill is founded upon a false political scare campaign. The bill is hollow and an example of a total lack of depth and substance from members opposite. Not only is it founded on a fiction because the Coalition was never going to sell Sydney Water and Hunter Water, as we have made abundantly clear time and again, but an ordinary Act of Parliament—rather than putting Labor policy into our State's governing document—would have done the job. I will return to that shortly. More than one flimsy fiction underscores the bill. Members opposite know that and have, in effect, admitted as much:

... it is extremely unusual for any State Parliament to insert into the Constitution provisions related to what might be termed a matter of policy.

Who said that in relation to the bill? It was, in fact, the Premier of South New Wales, Chris Minns. Who said the following in relation to the bill:

This extension of the ambit of the Constitution Act to include a policy matter is not something that the Government takes lightly.

Once again, it was the Premier. Yes, even the Labor leader himself says it is "extremely unusual". Yet, in spite of his words, Labor is taking it lightly. It is taking an unusual step and it is taking this extreme measure without any real need to do so. It is extreme, it is unusual, and it extends the ambit of our State Constitution. That is how much respect Labor has for how government operates in New South Wales. What is next under Labor—another Medicare-style campaign founded upon lies and mistruths? Then what—another change to our Constitution? Labor has opened the door to that and it is now the Labor standard. It is a very slippery slope indeed to scare, grandstand and politicise our governing document.

It is such lazy, flimsy and hollow politics from members opposite and they should, frankly, be ashamed of themselves. Since when does Labor propaganda become a constitutional matter? The answer should be never. The New South Wales Constitution Act has existed since 1902. There is over 120 years of respect and regard for our Constitution and how our State is to be governed. It had never been politicised until Labor came along in 2023 and, in a hollow, lazy, Labor-like fashion, decided to put in some Labor policy. And that is being generous,

because this is not real policy. It is scaremongering, politics and spin because the threat it seeks to address has never been real. It is, frankly, stunning. Again, this is now the Labor standard: spin over substance.

I mentioned before that this issue could have been dealt with in an ordinary Act of Parliament, not in our Constitution. Other pieces of New South Wales legislation preclude the power of the Executive to do certain things and to take certain actions and they are not included in the Constitution. For example, section 99A of the Transport Administration Act 1988 precludes the closing of a railway line without an Act of Parliament. Members opposite have failed a basic test in the debate. Is the bill necessary? No, it is not. At the same time, the debate has been characterised by members opposite seeking to absolutely demonise any form of privatisation. They ought not and we will not be lectured by them.

To be crystal clear, we absolutely accept that water utilities should remain in State hands. That has always been so for us. We have not and do not contend otherwise. Labor should be consistent about that by supporting our sound amendments. But when members opposite cry foul over privatisation, let us remind the House who privatised Qantas. It was Labor. Who privatised the Commonwealth Bank? Labor. Who privatised the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories? Labor. Who privatised the last tranche of Telstra? Labor. Members might say that those are all Federal entities, but what about the private interests in the following: Who privatised the Cross City Tunnel? That was Labor. Who privatised the Lane Cove Tunnel? Labor. Who privatised the Eastern Distributor? Labor. Who privatised the M7? Labor.

But wait, there is much more in New South Wales. In fact, the Parliamentary Library helpfully provided a list. Let me take the House through a few examples. Between 1995 and 2011, 26 entities within the remit of the New South Wales Government were privatised. Who privatised TAB Limited? That was Labor. Who privatised FreightCorp? Labor. Who privatised a range of power retailers, including Energy Australia? Labor. Who privatised NSW Lotteries? Labor. Who privatised major environmental solutions enterprise WSN? Labor. Who privatised Gentrader for billions of dollars? Labor.

Let us be crystal clear that members opposite are rank hypocrites when it comes to the matter of privatisation. The hypocrisy is galling. Privatisation when they are doing it: Nothing to see here. Privatisation when others are doing it: The sky is falling in. It is too much to bear, and it is hollow, hopeless and hapless, just like the vessels that characterise NSW Labor. It's first bill in government after 12 years in opposition is a dangerous and unnecessary stunt. Government members cannot even be consistent or clear about it. Members should put this first Labor bill down as one of many Labor failures to come when it comes to getting laws right for the people of New South Wales.

We are not asking for that much. We are, helpfully, seeking to amend the bill so at least the Government can be consistent and clear in its position and avoid a two-tiered style of constitutional amendment that treats people across our State differently. Maybe Government members should have thought about that some more before they introduced the bill. Our Constitution, of course, should uphold that every resident be treated equally. Our foreshadowed amendments seek to achieve that. The people of New South Wales deserve so much better. Labor should accept our amendments and move beyond this political stunt.

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (18:27): I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. Having heard the list of privatisations from both sides of the Chamber, I do not want to split hairs. I will not focus on a list; instead, I will talk about discrimination of city people versus country people. Some 1.85 million people around New South Wales will not be protected under the bill as it currently stands. Up to 40 per cent of Sydney's water comes from WaterNSW, a State-owned corporation. But it is not just involved with the city. Adequate and clean drinking water is one of the basic needs of all people. Every person in New South Wales deserves the same rights as Sydney and Hunter residents. I will engage with all city-centric policies in this place because we should definitely focus on the rural-city balance. Labor does not care about the regions. Water security is not a two-tiered system. Our water is equally as important as the water that is in this building—in your electorate, Mr Temporary Speaker. So far Labor members have delayed the policy, which shows that they have listened to the Coalition and crossbenchers—for a short time. Well done, but why not amend the bill? I recommend this legislation heads to a committee to ensure we have the most amenable and fair policy for all of New South Wales.

Members might think that there are more city dwellers than country dwellers. In fact, although there are more city-based folk, rural and regional people are relied upon because they produce the food that all of those residents consume in the restaurants in Sydney, as well as 40 per cent of the drinking water. As a rural inhabitant I am used to having to deal with policies coming out of this place—some lopsided, some fair and some great. I am calling on the Minns Government and the wider Parliament to treat all people fairly and with respect. My aim is to ensure the scope of the bill shows parity for the people of Bellingen, Wauchope, Kempsey, Macksville and all of the towns throughout Oxley, as well as here in Sydney.

What is the purpose of an election promise if it creates a two-tiered society? Why are Government members sticking so strongly to a flawed policy? "Don't worry about the people who live outside the cities," I hear them say. "Don't worry about their access to good, clean water." I cannot believe Labor has not learned from 2007 and 2008. All I hear them saying is "Who cares about the water of people from Urunga and Dorrigo? Who cares about the farmers around Bowraville? Who cares about the drinking water of the nurses and teachers that hail from Telegraph Point, Long Flat, Willawarrin or Nambucca Heads?" All this Parliament needs to do is accept The Nationals' amendments or shelve the bill. By the way, it would also be acceptable to the people of wider New South Wales to spend more effort on protecting the water and focus on efficient and fair ways to deal with the Murray-Darling Basin, rather than following through and wasting time debating a lopsided bill.

I have enjoyed outlining the reasons that the Government should support our amendments. It is very important to me to outline how we can use common sense to amend the bill to include everyone equally or to put it to bed. I ask Mr Minns: How can I support the bill in its current form? He should feel free to actually consult with regional people whenever he likes. Our mayors have made it clear, and the election campaign made clear to me the need to keep the people of Oxley at the fore. I will put the Premier in touch with people who actually live in the regions. He can come to my office; it is room 1213, if he is wondering.

In summary, each and every inhabitant of New South Wales deserves the right to parity of treatment. The fact that there are a lot of red Labor zones around the cities of Sydney and Newcastle at the moment does not mean that people in other electorates should not be afforded the same rights. Legislate to protect our water, by all means, but include WaterNSW and our regional council water utilities. Should Minister Jackson not wish to pull the bill on the basis of a lack of regional consultation, having possibly made an honest mistake in not thinking it through—which we have all done—then I urge her to follow through by also protecting WaterNSW and all of the local government utilities.

If we legislate to include just Sydney Water and Hunter Water, what happens when WaterNSW turns off the tap? Who will be responsible then? Will it be on Premier Minns' head that all those city folk have to worry about their water, just at a time when the cost of living is causing great concern? Imagine turning off the tap that supplies 40 per cent of the water Sydney consumes. The 1.85 million hardworking country folk—those nurses, teachers and emergency service people—also deserve to have their water protected. The people who grow your food deserve protection too. Do what is right. We all make mistakes, but do not double down out of pride; just fix the bill.

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (18:34): I am pleased to speak in favour of the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023, which is the first bill on which I will be contributing to debate in this Chamber. I will be supporting the Coalition amendments to the bill. As I said in my inaugural speech, which I believe will form the tracks of my time here in this place, I believe the Liberal Party and The Nationals are parties both of the built environment and of the natural environment. I can think of nothing more important to any of our communities than water. In my own community, the wonderful Middle Harbour goes through the middle of the electorate. Water is just so important and cannot be taken for granted. I am pleased that during the election campaign, when there were instances, I was asked by constituents at both public and private events whether I supported any sell-off of Sydney Water or Hunter Water, of course my answer was "Completely not". I, 100 per cent, do not support it. I am very proud to make that absolutely crystal clear in this Chamber.

The New South Wales Liberal Party and The Nationals have always been crystal clear regarding those two assets as well. On 7 March 2017 the then shadow Minister for Water, Chris Minns, asked the question on notice, "Does the Minister guarantee not to privatise Sydney Water?" The answer from the Coalition Government Minister was "The New South Wales Government will not privatise Sydney Water." The Coalition has always been consistent and crystal clear on the record.

In the lead-up to the 2023 election, then Premier Dom Perrottet was asked continuously, both publicly and privately, about whether the New South Wales Liberal Party and The Nationals would privatise those two assets. On 17 March 2023 Premier Perrottet said, "I don't know anyone in the history of our Government that has ever spoken about Sydney Water". That was in the context of any sell-off. He went on to say, "Now you have the unions and Labor running a campaign on lies." If Government members need to prove it, why are all members in the House agreeing that we definitely need to protect those two assets? Who else confirmed that there were no plans for privatisation? It was Sydney Water. We all know that hardworking public servants do not mislead on those types of issues, so I thank them for their transparency on that.

One would expect a party coming to government would have a 100-day plan, a transition plan and some priorities. Instead, members opposite have brought on this legislation that I believe has been quite rushed. That is why I am really proud that the Opposition is moving amendments to make sure that we are protecting all water assets. We want to protect all water assets from privatisation, and Government members are sadly failing to achieve that with this bill. As it currently stands, the bill will not protect Warragamba Dam from privatisation

because WaterNSW is not included; nor would it protect any of the 42 water storages owned or operated by WaterNSW from privatisation. As my Nationals colleagues have very articulately stated, the regional water supply and assets operated by the 89 local water utilities in New South Wales would also not be protected from privatisation. Labor claims to be protecting water assets, but sadly the bill is not comprehensive enough to do that.

Hearing many members opposite talk about the bill, they seem to think that the world began in 2011. They do not take into account what happened under the previous Labor Government or, in fact, what took place in the 1980s and 1990s under a person called Paul Keating. For any members who do not know, Paul Keating was the Treasurer and Prime Minister and, as we all know, one of the heroes of the member for Macquarie Fields. One of the most notable cases of privatisation by the Keating Government was the privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank. It also privatised Qantas between 1992 and 1995. In 1994 Labor also privatised Commonwealth Serum Laboratories [CSL]. It is not that Labor members did that in a previous life and have now had a big change of heart; in 2016 former Prime Minister Paul Keating said in relation to the Commonwealth Bank, "It's the most valuable bank in the world and my label is glued all over it." Paul Keating is proud that he privatised the Commonwealth Bank.

Of course, I cannot contribute to a debate about privatisation without talking about the Labor Premier who Government members most look at government through the lens of, and that is Bob Carr. As members know, Bob Carr loves to write books. In one of his books he wrote about the many privatisations that his own government did. In fact, he has a "privatisation policy" section in the index. In relation to one of those privatisations, he states:

Ten years later, in 2002, I was proud that my government was to privatise FreightCorp—incidentally producing a great result for the taxpayer and doing it with the support of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and its secretary ... who could see no future for his members' jobs if FreightCorp were left in public ownership.

That privatisation was a good example of a mature working relationship between a Labor government and a trade union.

Those members lecturing the Opposition and stating that they do not believe in privatisation, claiming that members on this side of the House are the villains of privatisation, need to look at the world before 2011. I note a wonderful publication from the New South Wales Parliamentary Library and pay tribute to it for the work it does. It did an issues backgrounder paper on privatisation in New South Wales, which included a nice table of all the privatisations in New South Wales. I am very happy to read from it.

What happened in 1997? The Sydney Market Authority was sold for \$0.626 million. As I alluded to in the quote from former Premier Bob Carr, FreightCorp was sold in 2002 for \$669 million. Also in 2002, Integral Energy Gas Pty Ltd was sold for \$2.1 million and Powercoal Pty Ltd was sold for \$323.6 million. Pacific Power (International) Pty Ltd was sold in 2003. In 2007 Energy Australia Pty Ltd was sold for \$207 million. These are all Labor privatisations—and you know what? The list keeps going on. In 2010 Labor sold NSW Lotteries for over \$1 billion. It sold Country Energy Gas Pty Ltd for \$107 million.

But all members will recall one of Labor's privatisations in the dark of midnight by then Premier Kristina Kenneally and then Treasurer Eric Roozendaal: the Gentrader transactions. In 2011 the Country Energy retail business was sold for \$1.3 billion. The next one was the Energy Australia retail business, sold for \$1.48 billion. The final Gentrader transaction was the Integral Energy retail business, sold for over \$1 billion. All were sold in the dark of night and the directors of the respective boards resigned in protest.

Labor members come into this House and lecture that they do not believe in privatisation anymore. Well, certainly they once believed in privatisation. They were extremely proud of their record in privatisation. Bob Carr was so proud that he wrote about it in his book. I am proud to be a member of a party that is pragmatic and believes that certain things need to stay in public hands. I am proud to support Sydney Water and Hunter Water remaining in public hands. We need to strengthen this bill to make sure that all New South Wales water assets are included, which is why I support the member for Cootamundra's amendments. I thank the member for Cootamundra for stepping up and exercising leadership to make sure—

Mr Gurmesh Singh: The outstanding member.

Mr MATT CROSS: I note the interjection. She is the outstanding member for Cootamundra. She has made sure that proper consultation does take place, which is sadly not something that this Government has done in rushing this bill. It has come into office not having a 100-day plan or priorities. I look forward to the consideration in detail stage and thank the member for Cootamundra for strengthening this bill.

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (18:43): I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. Mr Temporary Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment to the chair. I do not think I have spoken whilst you have been in the chair.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich): Thank you.

Mr PHILIP DONATO: The object of the bill clearly states:

The object of this Bill is to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to ensure the continued public ownership of the Sydney Water Corporation and the Hunter Water Corporation and their main undertakings.

I note that this was an election commitment by the now Premier. It was one of the first items of legislation introduced by the new Government and is of high priority. I have listened carefully to other members on both sides of this debate, both in the Chamber in the past half-hour or so and on the monitor in my office for the last couple of hours. There have been discussions in relation to the privatisation of assets. It would be fair to say that, historically, neither side of politics has clean hands in relation to this. I think all members in this Chamber would concede that. Nonetheless, it was clearly an election issue.

I recall watching the candidates' forum on social media in the lead-up to the election. It was held down in Goulburn and attended by former member for Wollondilly Nathaniel Smith, who was a good friend of mine, and the member for Goulburn, amongst maybe half-a-dozen other candidates. They were asked a question specifically in relation to the privatisation of Sydney Water. The candidates were asked to hold up a sign in response—yes or no. The then member for Wollondilly and the member for Goulburn were the only two who said "yes" to supporting the privatisation of Sydney Water. Clearly it was on the agenda of the then Government should it be re-elected. It was a foreseeable possibility if you consider its track record of selling off ports, electricity assets, poles and wires, toll roads, and the land titles office.

When that footage became public it rightly caused an outcry. People were concerned. The government of the day went into defence mode and said that the privatisation of Sydney Water was off the agenda. But clearly it was not so at the time of the candidates' forum, with not just one but two candidates who were Government members simultaneously holding up "yes" signs. I ask the House: What are the chances of that being a coincidence? Opposition members now deny it, but I think it speaks volumes of their intention. Had they remained in government, this issue could foreseeably have raised its head. As I said, they have form.

I support the bill to ensure that the protection of these assets, these resources—the fundamental human right to water—is enshrined in the Constitution. Previous speakers in this debate have raised issues that it is unprecedented, untypical and rare to do so. However, there is precedence for it—in other jurisdictions as well. Having read the second reading speech of the Premier, who introduced the bill, heard from other members and done my own research of the bill, it is clearly something the Government wants enshrined as a constitutional right. That is why it is not a specific bill but an amendment to the Constitution.

As a regional MP, I hear the concerns raised by the member for Cootamundra that relate to her proposed amendments. I have thought long and hard about those amendments and spoken to a number of people in my area. In principle, I do support those amendments. But I have concerns about the way that those amendments have been introduced and their unintended consequences.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

I note the interjection from the member for Coffs Harbour. I am interested to see what he has to say when he speaks. But we do not know what impacts these amendments have on pumped hydro schemes. What impact do they have on council-leased water assets? These are legitimate questions that need certainty, clarity and consultation, not just amendments rushed through last week with limited opportunity to address them.

I will not support the amendments moved by the member for Cootamundra. I thank her and the member for Barwon for briefing me last week on these issues. Important State-owned assets like water utilities and water resources need to be properly considered, not rushed through. There must be proper consultation and stakeholders must be legitimately engaged. I ask the Leader of the House in reply to provide an undertaking that consideration will be given to protecting regional water assets, and that a proper process into that will be conducted. It is important that regional people also have afforded protections that water assets will not be sold off into the future. I will not support the amendments, but I will support the bill.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:50): I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. I acknowledge the member for Cootamundra, who is in the Chamber this evening. I thank her for moving these very sensible amendments to the bill. I believe that the Manager of Opposition Business will speak in reply because the Premier does not want to be anywhere near it. He was happy to introduce it but he will not come into the Chamber until the division, which shows that the Government is concerned about the bill and its holes. Constituents in my electorate received letters saying, "We are going to privatise Sydney Water."

The Central Coast Water Authority is completely excluded from the bill. I will speak in detail about the importance of the Central Coast Water Authority not just to the people of the Central Coast but also to the people of New South Wales. This has been an appallingly badly mismanaged stunt that has played out over the past two

weeks. The Government has been scrambling because it has realised that while doing a show pony act to try to introduce a Medicare-style campaign on the privatisation of Sydney Water it has suddenly forgotten about the rest of New South Wales, including the people of the Central Coast and the other areas not covered by Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

It is interesting to note which members have not contributed to debate on the bill. I notice that quite a few regional members have been missing in action during the debate. Obviously they are not covered by the bill. They had to go back to their electorates and explain to the good people of Lismore or Bega or the Central Coast why they have been excluded from this amendment to the Constitution. I note the contribution last week from the member for Swansea. She spoke about the rampant privatisation under the former Government. She discussed the privatisation of buses and how appalling it was, I believe. I highlight to the member for Swansea that both of the Central Coast bus companies are privately owned. Red Bus Services is a 90-year-old family-owned company on the Central Coast. I note the concern from the member for Wallsend. Is it Wallsend?

Mr Steve Whan: Charlestown.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: Charlestown. I had forgotten where the member was from. I ask those opposite how they will explain to the good people of the Central Coast that they want to take away the work of two very good privately owned bus companies—Red Bus Services and Busways. The irony is that there was a rumour going around over a year ago that Red Bus Services was going to potentially lose the contract for work. Labor members raced to defend it and say that it is terrible that the government could be considering taking that work away. What they failed to mention is that they were defending a privately owned bus company. In the same breath, they are demonising privately owned bus companies. I ask the member for Swansea, the member for Wyong, the member for The Entrance and the member for Gosford to take a long look at the great work some privately owned and well supported companies are doing before they start demonising privatisation, especially companies like Red Bus Services on the Central Coast, which is doing the first electric hydrogen trial in New South Wales.

It has been interesting to hear the contributions from members on this side of the House. I reflect on the contributions by the member for Kellyville and the member for Willoughby, who spoke about the privatisation agenda and the massive demonisation of privatisation since 2011. Somehow those opposite have forgotten about all of the things that they privatised when they were in government and it suited them, including billions of dollars' worth of public assets. To rewrite history and say that this only ever happened after 2011 is, quite frankly, misleading and disappointing, but nothing we are not used to.

The Sydney Market Authority had \$620,000 sold off. Tabcorp was a beauty, with over \$1 billion privately flogged off by those opposite. FreightCorp was a big one, with \$669 million sold off. Integral Energy had \$2.1 billion sold off in 2002. The list goes on. The former Labor Government completed over 26 different privatisation projects in this State. We all remember the multi-billion-dollar sale of the gentraders, which will live in infamy in New South Wales. We saw a government prorogue Parliament to sell off public assets without any scrutiny. That was in the dying days of a bad government that was flogging off anything that was not nailed down to try to protect what it had done. It is interesting reflecting on those. In the public interest debate today members opposite spoke about privatisation and completely forgot about all of the things they had sold off.

Private-public partnerships can work well in some instances. Private operators like Busways and Red Bus Services have done a great job. The bill is nothing more than a stunt. Letters were sent out all over New South Wales despite the Premier publicly acknowledging that there would be no sale of Sydney Water. But that did not matter. We are talking about a party that flogged off anything that was not nailed down in 2011. But somehow that never happened and the people of New South Wales are expected to not take any notice of that.

I move to the real nub of the issue. I congratulate the member for Cootamundra, who I think has about 11 water authorities in her electorate, which is more than most members on the other side of the House will ever have to deal with. None of those water authorities are supported in this dodgy and poorly written piece of legislation. The bill somehow forgot the bulk of people in New South Wales outside Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong, which is what "NSW" stands for to Labor. I find it interesting that prior to the election four members of the Labor Party on the Central Coast—two of them are now in Cabinet and two of them are now Parliamentary Secretaries—ran around talking about the representation in Cabinet defending the Central Coast. Where were they when the bill was being constructed? At no point does it leave the Central Coast with any protection whatsoever.

The member for The Entrance said very nervously in the Chamber, "We will work positively with those opposite." I say to the member for The Entrance that his chance to do that was over the past two weeks. He had two weeks to realise that these are good amendments moved by the member for Cootamundra. The amendments say to the 365,000 people of the Central Coast that they have been completely forgotten. The two Ministers in Cabinet are too busy scoffing down Tim Tams and not paying attention to the legislation.

When our Labor-run council went into administration with half a billion dollars' worth of debt, Labor members were saying, "They could sell off the water authority to try to raise money to bail the council out of debt," which the Labor mayor had helped it get into. It is interesting because privatisation was foremost in the argument. This bill could provide protection to the Central Coast Water Authority, but where is that protection? It is nowhere to be seen in this one-page piece of legislation. It is a show pony. It is a dog and pony trick. It is appalling. This is Labor's premiere piece of legislation. The Premier said, "This is what we will mandate." I have some bad news for the Government: It did not get a mandate because it is a minority government. The only "M" word here is "minority", not "mandate". The people of New South Wales are still rightfully concerned and want to see—

Mr Steve Whan: How many votes did you get?

Mr ADAM CROUCH: I am still here and that is all that matters. Where were the four members from the Central Coast, who now sit in government, when this bad bill was being constructed? It completely excludes the 365,000 people of the Central Coast. They were nowhere to be seen. If they were, they would have said, "Whoa! This doesn't cover all of our people in our region. What it does do is assist everyone who lives under Sydney Water or Hunter Water. We'll protect you but there is nothing for anybody else." That is absolutely appalling. I have some data about the Central Coast Water Authority. It is an interesting document and I suspect my Labor colleagues—especially those who represent electorates on the Central Coast—have not read it. Had they read the document, they would have realised the significance of the Central Coast Water Authority and the important role it plays. [*Extension of time*]

I thank members for their indulgence because this document states some important information. The Central Coast Water Authority is the third-largest urban water supply system in New South Wales. Yet, somehow, that information has been completely omitted from this sham of a bill. The water supply system serves the Central Coast region which has a population of more than 365,000 people, delivering water to more than 135,000 homes and businesses. The system incorporates three dams, three weirs, three water treatment plants, over 50 reservoirs and more than 2,000 kilometres of pipeline. It supplies the region's drinking water, which is drawn from Mangrove Creek, Mooney Mooney Creek—which is in Gosford—Ourimbah Creek and Wyong River.

Interestingly, all of our major infrastructure is in Labor-held electorates. That is really telling. I am not sure what the member for Gosford was doing but significant pieces of water infrastructure sit in her electorate, which she has failed to protect. The Mangrove Creek Dam, the largest dam on the Central Coast, sits in the Gosford electorate. Constructed in 1982, it is 80 metres high and holds over 190,000 million litres—or megalitres—of water. It has a catchment area of over 100 square kilometres and is currently 98 per cent full. However, it is completely unprotected by the Government's bill.

The Mardi Dam, which is located four kilometres south of Wyong, was built in 1962. It is 26 metres high, has a capacity of 7,000 million litres of water and is currently 99 per cent full. Although it is in the Wyong electorate, it too is not protected by members opposite. Built in 1961, the Mooney Mooney Dam also sits in the Gosford electorate. It is about 60 per cent full. We have incredibly valuable public infrastructure. The four members of the Labor Party on the Central Coast at no time said in or outside Cabinet or in caucus or wherever it is they meet, "Hey, we have a problem with the bill because it completely leaves the Central Coast unprotected for any future investment."

Let's be clear: The almost \$4 billion water asset is owned by Central Coast Council and the people of the Central Coast. If those Labor Party members who live on the Central Coast want to arc up about privatisation, I remind them that they will leave 365,000 people on the Central Coast completely unprotected if they do not support the sensible amendments foreshadowed by the member for Cootamundra. It is a simple thing to do. What we are saying is that everyone gets treated fairly and equally, including those outside Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Considering the weirs, water treatment plants and infrastructure that provide water to over 365,000 people on the Central Coast, Labor members have a lot of explaining to do if they do not guarantee that the water supply will not be privatised.

The simple and right way to do that is to adopt the Opposition amendments. Those Central Coast Labor members will have a lot of explaining to do to their colleagues and to the people of my region if they fail to implement those sensible, well-managed amendments, which say to everyone in regional New South Wales that we care. It is the right to do. They just need to talk to the people of the Central Coast. They never want to see their water authority privatised. Those Central Coast Labor members scared people when the council was put into administration—and rightfully so—after racking up half a billion dollars' worth of debt. The council was under a Labor mayor at that time. There were concerns that the council would flog off the water authority because it had racked up half a billion dollars' worth of debt and had not told anyone.

Members opposite should listen to regional MPs. It is not a simple matter of turning on the tap and hoping water comes out. It is about managing those—in our case—multibillion dollar assets. They should grow a spine, do the right thing, stand up for good amendments and support what the member for Cootamundra is putting forward. Otherwise, they can come to the Central Coast and explain to 365,000 people why they completely ignored them when creating, quite frankly, this dog's breakfast of a bill. All they had to do was include one page of all the necessary water authorities, most of which are council owned, including the one on the Central Coast. They belong to people in the regions, including the Central Coast.

Members opposite should park their egos at the door. They should realise these are good amendments. They cannot say they have not had enough time to understand them because they have had them for two weeks. I say the same to the crossbench members who have said, "We haven't had enough time." Members have had two weeks to look at the sensible amendments foreshadowed by the member for Cootamundra—who is in the Chamber. I thank her for the amendments because they say to the people of the Central Coast, "We care about protecting your public assets. We will go further. We will enshrine them in the Constitution Act, along with all the other water authorities right across New South Wales. We will not treat you as second-class citizens." I commend the amendments to the bill to the House.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:05): I contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. When I was elected to this place in 2019, New South Wales was under the grips of the worst drought—certainly in my living memory—in a very long time. Water was of the utmost importance in my campaign as a first-time candidate, and also in the first few years of being a member of Parliament. Towns not far from where I lived were trucking water in because they had basically run out of water. I can see the member for Clarence sitting in the Speaker's gallery. Earlier today he alluded to the fact that a number of years ago Coffs Harbour invested heavily in its water infrastructure. Even during the worst of that drought, water supplies never fell below 80 per cent. At that time when many big water catchments were sitting in the single digits or slightly in double digits, ours never fell below 80 and it was because we had invested in our water asset early on.

The bill will amend the Constitution Act 1902 to ensure that the Sydney Water Corporation and the Hunter Water Corporation cannot be privatised. Eight State-owned corporations are governed under the State Owned Corporations Act 1989. Three of those are responsible for sewerage services and the supply and management of water to the people of New South Wales. Sydney Water services around five million people across Greater Sydney and Hunter Water services around 600,000 people across the Lower Hunter. Importantly, WaterNSW is a State-owned corporation that supplies water in bulk to water utilities across metropolitan and regional New South Wales. But the bill deals with only Hunter Water and Sydney Water. Let us take a closer look at the purpose and operations of the omitted WaterNSW, the State-owned corporation that supplies two-thirds of the water used in New South Wales.

WaterNSW has five functions. Two of those are to protect the Greater Sydney drinking water catchment and to supply raw water from its storages to communities, customers and the environment. WaterNSW manages a total of 42 storages, dams, weirs and reservoirs across New South Wales, which include 11 major supply dams in Greater Sydney, including Warragamba Dam. Sydney Water obtains its water from WaterNSW and, for some reason, WaterNSW has been entirely omitted from the bill. It is safe to assume that, by omitting WaterNSW, the bill fails to safeguard a future government from selling off the assets held by WaterNSW. One must wonder if that omission is deliberate, prepping the ground for a fire sale of water assets in regional New South Wales.

In his second reading speech the Premier stated that we should all have access to "safe, reliable, publicly owned water". By not protecting regional New South Wales, this spin is typical of this Labor Government, which prefers style over substance and talk over action. The Premier is discriminating against the 1.85 million people who obtain their water from utilities other than Sydney Water and Hunter Water. He very cynically used a Mediscare-style campaign in the run-up to the election and is now refusing to back our amendments to protect water in regional New South Wales. That has got to leave us scratching our head about the New South Wales Labor Government's secret agenda in relation to any future privatisation, especially of WaterNSW and the 89 local water utilities across regional and remote New South Wales. Water is critical in New South Wales. Over the past few years we have endured one of the worst droughts in living memory. On 10 May Premier Minns stated in this place:

Members on this side of the House believe that drinkable water is an essential constitutional right, and it will be interesting to see what the Opposition does in relation to that important constitutional change.

We, in opposition, will fight for the rights of all people in New South Wales to access clean water, regardless of whether they live in Sydney, the Hunter or regional New South Wales. We will not discriminate between them. The bottom line is that Government members have said in this debate that they believe safe, reliable, publicly owned water is a constitutional right and, therefore, should be in the New South Wales Constitution. But they are

not backing that up for regional New South Wales. If Labor is truly serious about protecting end-to-end water supply in New South Wales, it will support the Opposition's proposed amendments and not exclude one-third of our State's population simply because of the location of their water meter.

I thank shadow Minister Steph Cooke and the member for Wahroonga who have put in a lot of work and revealed who the grown-ups are in this building. They have shown up a government, with all the resources of 52 Martin Place and departmental offices spread around the State, that put together a bill with 33 lines of text that seeks to do what Labor said it would do during the election campaign. But very quickly, on the day after the bill was introduced, we could see a glaring omission. If we could see it, without the resources the Government has, we have to wonder why the Government deliberately left regional New South Wales out of the bill.

Minister Jackson said in the media this week that voting for the amendments could have unintended consequences, without going into any detail at all about what those potential unintended consequences could be. I know, as many in the Opposition and in regional New South Wales know, that that is a smokescreen as political cover because the Government does not want to admit that it has made a mistake. Those opposite do not want to admit that regional New South Wales was an oversight and an omission on their part. We are here for regional New South Wales, we are here representing the interests of our constituents, and the amendments that the member for Cootamundra and shadow Minister will move shortly will seek to include regional New South Wales in this bill that the Premier and the Labor Government describe as being so important.

The member for Orange used Labor's line about "unintended consequences". I will highlight something else he said. He said that the amendments had been rushed. I do not necessarily disagree with him, but that is because this entire bill has been rushed. There is no urgency in this matter. We ask Labor to consider taking this bill off the table, doing its homework and getting the boffins in its departments and its offices to include regional New South Wales properly in the bill. In the real world there is no urgency for this bill. It is fake urgency because the Government wants to avoid some sort of political embarrassment. But how will Labor members face their communities? Labor does have a few regional MPs. How will they go back to their communities and say to them, "Sorry"—

Mr Steve Whan: Almost as many as you.

Mr GURMESH SINGH: Yes, you do. I note the interjection by the member for Monaro. How will they say to their communities, "Sorry, but we don't think you are as important as Sydney is."? That is what Labor is saying to the communities of regional New South Wales. It is telling them that they are second-class citizens in the eyes of New South Wales Labor because they were a complete oversight in this bill. [*Extension of time*]

Whilst the member for Orange did articulate that the amendments are rushed, again I contend that the entire bill has been rushed and that the Labor Party should withdraw it or support our amendments. The Government needs to do the right thing and include regional New South Wales. In her remarks earlier today, Minister Aitchison spoke about country mayors and about discussions that were held in the Parliament last Friday with the Country Mayors Association of NSW. I thought it was interesting that the Minister failed to recall conversations held on that day. I have with me today, and I will read it verbatim, a media release from the Country Mayors Association dated 30 May 2023. The headline is "Don't Touch Our Water" and it states:

Country Mayors Association of NSW (CMA), on behalf of its members, is calling for an expansion of the scope of the Bill to include all local government-owned assets to stay in the hands of Local Government to ensure Local Government will never lose control of its most important asset—our water. ...

Mayor Chaffey said "CMA held our quarterly general meeting in Sydney at Parliament House last Friday with more than 85% of our membership in attendance. Minister for Water, Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health, Youth and the North Coast, the Hon. Rose Jackson was a guest speaker. Ms Jackson spoke of the proposed Constitutional change and stated: "Both Sydney Water and Hunter Water are statutory state-owned corporations and can be safeguarded against privatisation by an amendment to the Constitution Act."

...

Mayor of the Forbes Shire Council Cr Phyllis Miller said: "In response to my question about Local Government retaining ownership of Local Water Utilities in regional NSW that I asked at the meeting of Country Mayors, the Minister for Water, Rose Jackson's response was that it would be the case and I understood this to mean that she supported this being enshrined in the constitution."

Deputy Chairman of CMA Mayor Rick Firman stated: "Our CMA members have spoken loudly and clearly, especially through our recent survey results. It is critical that water remains in the hands of our communities, through local government. We strongly and respectfully call on our new State Government to please include the protection of our water in the NSW Constitution. Water gives us life—it really is critical that our members are listened to."

There we have it, in black and white, from the Country Mayors Association. Its members were here in Parliament House on Friday and, for the avoidance of doubt and for the benefit of those who walked out after delivering their speeches and did not hang around to connect with the mayors or talk to them one on one, that is what they said and what they think.

About 90 minutes ago members supported a motion that said in part that the House will not support the privatisation of all water assets across the State, including regional New South Wales. We ask that the Labor Government and the Independents, none of whom are in the Chamber, do not flip-flop on the motion that they supported 90 minutes ago. Ninety minutes ago they said that they will not support the privatisation of all water assets across the State. Shortly the shadow Minister will move amendments and enshrine that in this bill. I urge the member for South Coast to talk to her colleagues between now and when the amendments are moved and encourage them to support the amendments.

They are sensible amendments. Hopefully, we will be able to give some surety to the people of regional New South Wales that their water will be protected to the same standard and that they will have the same rights as people living in Sydney and across the Hunter. We are in this place to stick up for the people of regional New South Wales, and Labor's regional members should do the same. That is how they will prove to their constituents that they will not only be listening to their party bosses but also taking the concerns of their constituents—and the concerns of all constituents across New South Wales—to the Labor leadership.

It has been two weeks since the bill was introduced. Labor members have had plenty of time to talk it through. They have had plenty of time to review the proposed amendments and have had plenty of time to come up with some reasonable objections to the amendments, but we have not heard a single one. Labor members should vote for the Opposition amendments. If they do not want to or cannot for any reason, they should pull the bill. They should take the time to draft the bill properly. They have two weeks between now and the June sitting to review the bill properly. Let us support water assets across all New South Wales—not just in Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong.

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:20): I briefly contribute to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023. Everyone relies on the certainty of water supply. Water is a cherished resource that should not suffer discrimination, but the bill before the House is the height of hypocrisy. The Minns Labor Government created a false and damning fallacy when it went to the 2023 election saying that Sydney Water would be sold off. Said who? Said Minns. No fact—just false accusations. Now, to add to the smoke and mirrors, this disgraceful bill cherry-picks the locations around New South Wales that Labor and The Greens feel need protecting.

I watched the faces of Government members scouring the landscape for answers when we raised the issue of selective protection for privatisation of water assets. They forgot about WaterNSW, to name one. Let's face it: Labor has made a mistake. Government members totally dropped the ball on this bill. They did not do their homework and now they are too embarrassed to admit it. It is such an amateur attempt at changing legislation. Why would they guarantee no privatisation of one utility and not another? I cast my mind back to a damning example of a similar circumstance, when Labor thumped the lectern during COVID and said that Western Sydney was being discriminated against with locational lockdowns. Do members remember the big hoo-ha of that? I do. Labor made a big song and dance of that.

It is the height of hypocrisy for the Labor Government to blanket Sydney Water and Hunter Water with protection from privatisation and exclude other water assets, such as WaterNSW and local government utilities throughout New South Wales. The elephant in the room is that WaterNSW looks after Warragamba Dam. Guess what? Premier Minns and his Ministers totally forgot to protect Warragamba Dam from falling into private ownership through the bill. How does Labor propose to resolve that dilemma? It is clear that the Minns Labor Government once again has turned its back on Western Sydney and the Hawkesbury. Today the Premier strutted up to the lectern and again announced that he would turn his back on the 70,000 people who live below the Warragamba Dam by refusing to raise the dam wall.

It is not good enough to say that other tributaries flow through to the Hawkesbury so there is no point in raising the dam wall. Labor members should tell that to the farmers who have lost everything—the infrastructure that has been destroyed, the schools that have been washed away and the riverbanks that have been destroyed. They should tell that to the residents who lost everything. Go and tell them that and see how happy they will be. Labor members offer silence as a possible solution. How do they intend to offer any protection to those farmers, families, communities and businesses, and to the infrastructure that has been pummelled by floods that crippled the community? Labor members should be ashamed of this bill. It is sloppy. It smacks of amateur attempts at amending the Constitution Act 1902. They forgot about New South Wales outside of Sydney, the Hunter and Newcastle.

What about the Central Coast Water Authority? Regional New South Wales does not even rate a mention. For Labor members to hang their hat on this legislation is a disgrace. They should hang their heads in shame. Go back to the drawing board and get this right. New South Wales needs certainty—certainty that a Minns Labor Government just cannot deliver. The amendments foreshadowed by the member for Cootamundra must be supported. Warragamba Dam must be protected. Labor has failed on its first attempt. I rate this Government an

"F" for failure—for forgetting and for refusing to acknowledge the problem. Premier Minns, listen to the amendments, support them, and show some support for New South Wales. Do not discriminate.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (19:25): On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: In reply: I thank the members who contributed to debate on the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023: the Premier; the Leader of the Opposition; the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism; the member for Cootamundra; the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education; the Leader of The Nationals; the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety; the Manager of Opposition Business; the member for Ballina; the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General; the member for Albury; the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast; the member for Tamworth; the member for Shellharbour; the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads; the member for Mount Druitt; the member for Goulburn; the member for Northern Tablelands; the member for Blue Mountains; the member for Bathurst; the member for Port Stephens; the member for Granville; the member for Clarence; the member for The Entrance; the member for Kellyville; the member for Terrigal; and the member for Orange—and anyone else I might have missed.

As members would be aware, the bill proposes amendments to the Constitution Act 1902 to safeguard Sydney Water and Hunter Water from privatisation. The bill will constitutionally enshrine water utilities in public ownership. During the election the Government committed to safeguarding the public ownership of the State's critical public assets. The bill will ensure that the Executive Government cannot sell or dispose of Sydney Water or Hunter Water without authorisation by an Act of Parliament.

I now deal briefly with matters raised during debate. The bill will not limit the procurement activities of a water corporation. A water corporation will be permitted to procure goods and services necessary to enable the corporation to carry out its statutory functions. For example, the bill will not prevent the procurement of contractors to assist Sydney Water with maintenance work on existing infrastructure used in the storage or supply of water, the provision of sewerage services or stormwater drainage systems, or the disposal of wastewater—nor will it prevent Sydney Water, for example, to engage private contractors to assist with the construction of a new treatment plant or an upgrade to an existing plant.

However, the bill will prevent the disposal of an asset that is necessary to enable the water corporation to carry out its principal functions. In other words, the bill does not constrain the operations of those two corporations. New section 57 (2) expressly provides that transactions in the ordinary course of business are always permitted provided that the water corporation's main undertakings remain in public ownership. New section 57 (1) prohibits a water corporation selling or disposing of any of its four main undertakings: water supply, sewerage services, drainage and wastewater services. New section 57 (3) prohibits a water corporation from selling or disposing of an asset that the water corporation needs in order to carry out one or more of the four functions. There is no restriction at all on contracting out any business activity or any form of procurement, unless the transaction breaches one of the two prohibitions.

Following dialogue with members of the crossbench, the Government is pleased to make a commitment to further explore the issue of regional water utilities. The Government will introduce a motion to set up a joint committee to look at how we can protect regional water assets from privatisation.

This is a complex issue with 93 water utilities across the State and any changes must be made in consultation with local councils and community members—this is vital. Members must work with regional communities to get the best outcomes, and the committee will be the first step in that important process. The committee will look into local water utility governance and how these precious assets can best be protected from privatisation. This will be done in a way that consults with local government and that factors in the distinct nature of these bodies and their complexities. Members will clearly understand that protecting precious assets of this nature from privatisation is fundamentally part of the Labor Party's DNA and is not an issue that Labor would ever depart from. But this is not about fundamentally changing the nature of these entities as local water entities. It is about how the Government can better support them. We will be guided by the voices of our community and the locals on the ground on how to best do this.

I thank the Minister for Water, the Hon. Rose Jackson, from the other place, for her leadership in working with the crossbench. The Minister was instrumental in ensuring that we were able to move forward with this vital piece of legislation. The Government is committed to taking a serious approach to a serious issue—unlike those opposite, who are willing to make major changes to the State's Constitution without consultation and without fully understanding the implications for regional communities. The passage of the bill will ensure that the water utilities responsible for providing safe and reliable drinking water to Greater Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Illawarra, the lower Hunter and the greater Newcastle region remain in public ownership. I commend the bill to the House.

The SPEAKER: The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.**Consideration in detail requested by Ms Steph Cooke.****Consideration in Detail**

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

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:33): By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 8 on sheet c2023-004E in globo:

No. 1 **Water Utilities**

Page 2, clause 1, line 3. Omit "*Sydney Water and Hunter Water*". Insert instead "*Water Utilities*".

No. 2 **Water Utilities**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed Part 10, lines 4–7. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead—

Part 10 Public ownership of water utilities and undertakings

57 Water utilities and undertakings to remain in public ownership

No. 3 **Water Utilities**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 57(3), line 18. Insert "as a water corporation" after "under an Act".

No. 4 **Expanded meaning of sale or disposal**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 57. Insert after line 19—

(3A) To avoid doubt, a partial acquisition by a water corporation of an asset being an asset necessary to enable the water corporation to carry out its principal functions under an Act as a water corporation, where the remainder is owned by an entity that is not a public entity, is also taken to be a sale or disposal of a main undertaking of the water corporation.

No. 5 **Expanded meaning of sale or disposal**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 57(6). Insert after line 30—

public entity includes the following—

- (a) the Crown in the right of the State,
- (b) a Minister,
- (c) a State owned corporation within the meaning of the *State Owned Corporations Act 1989*,
- (d) a public or local authority,
- (e) a water corporation,
- (f) a subsidiary of an entity referred to in paragraphs (a)–(e).

No. 6 **Water Utilities**

Page 3, Schedule 1, proposed section 57(6), definition of *water corporation*, lines 31–33. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead—

water functions means the following—

- (a) the storage or supply of water,
- (b) the provision of sewerage services,
- (c) the provision of stormwater drainage systems,
- (d) the disposal of waste water.

water corporation means a public or local body that exercises water functions or holds assets in connection the exercise of water functions, and includes the following—

- (a) the Sydney Water Corporation,
- (b) the Hunter Water Corporation,
- (c) Water NSW,
- (d) a water supply authority within the meaning of the *Water Management Act 2000*,
- (e) a local council or county council exercising water supply functions under the *Local Government Act 1993*, Chapter 6, Part 3, Division 2, but only in relation to the exercise of water functions.

No. 7 **Critical assets to be owned by water corporations**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 33—

58 Water Corporations not to lease or use private critical assets

- (1) A water corporation must not, unless authorised by an Act of Parliament—
- (a) lease a critical asset from an entity that is not a public entity, or
 - (b) enter into an agreement or arrangement with an entity that is not a public entity for the use of a critical asset owned by the entity.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a renewal of a lease, agreement or arrangement that was in effect at the commencement of this section.
- (3) In this section—
- critical asset** means any real property, plant or equipment necessary to enable a water corporation to carry out its principal functions under an Act as a water corporation.
- public entity** has the same meaning as in section 57.
- water corporation** has the same meaning as in section 57.

No. 8 Water Utilities

Long title. Omit "the Sydney Water Corporation and the Hunter Water Corporation". Insert instead "certain water utilities".

On behalf of the Opposition I have moved these amendments with the intention of improving and strengthening the bill before the House. I ask all members to support them. The object of the bill is to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to ensure continued public ownership of the Sydney Water Corporation and the Hunter Water corporation and their main undertakings. But it falls desperately short when it comes to protecting the basic rights of people, wherever they may live in the State, to access, as the Premier said in the second reading speech, "safe, reliable, publicly owned water". Put simply, it discriminates against the 1.85 million people who obtain their water from water utilities other than Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

There are several problems with the bill and the Opposition's amendments seek to provide real solutions. Of the eight State-owned corporations [SOCs] governed under the State Owned Corporations Act 1989, three are responsible for the delivery, supply and management of water and sewerage services to the people of New South Wales: Sydney Water, Hunter Water and, importantly, WaterNSW. The bill deals with only two of them: Sydney Water and Hunter Water. WaterNSW has been left out. It is a truly glaring omission, especially considering that WaterNSW supplies two-thirds of the water used in New South Wales.

WaterNSW protects the Greater Sydney drinking water catchment and supplies raw water from 42 storages to communities, customers and the environment right across metropolitan and regional New South Wales. By omitting WaterNSW, the bill fails to safeguard against a future government selling off the assets held by WaterNSW. In *The Sydney Morning Herald* today Minister Jackson said:

... both Sydney Water and Hunter Water are statutory state-owned corporations and can be safeguarded against privatisation by an amendment to the Constitution Act.

So, too, can WaterNSW, as a SOC, be safeguarded by an amendment to the Constitution Act.

If the House supports the Opposition's amendments as circulated, it will ensure that WaterNSW is afforded the same protections as Sydney Water and Hunter Water. In addition to WaterNSW, 89 local water utilities that are responsible for delivering safe, secure, efficient, sustainable and affordable water supply and sewerage services to 1.85 million people in regional New South Wales, that are governed by the Local Government Act 1993 and the Water Management Act 2000, have astoundingly also been left out of the bill. The Opposition's amendments address this omission.

I reject, in the strongest possible terms, the suggestion by Minister Jackson that regional councils had not been consulted in the preparation of these amendments. The Minister herself was a guest speaker and heard directly from members of the Country Mayors Association at their quarterly general meeting here in Parliament House just last Friday. Some 85 per cent of the membership was present. The mayors sought support from Minister Jackson for local water utilities to be included in this bill. The mayor of Forbes Shire Council, Councillor Phyllis Miller, said:

In response to my question about Local Government retaining ownership of Local Water Utilities in regional NSW that I asked at the meeting of Country Mayors, the Minister for Water, Rose Jackson's response was that it would be the case and I understood this to mean that she supported this being enshrined in the constitution.

Last week a board meeting of Central NSW Joint Organisation resolved as follows, "That the board (1) advocate regarding the local government water ownership and, (2) that Central NSW Joint Organisation supports an extension to the current protection from privatisation be extended to WaterNSW and local water utilities." It is little wonder the local water utilities that I have consulted are nervous right now about being omitted from the bill

and are looking to this Parliament to ensure they are protected—hence our amendments. They remember all too well the 2007-08 inquiry established by then water Minister Nathan Rees to examine sustainable water supply and sewerage management in non-metropolitan New South Wales.

During the second reading debate, we heard from members who were involved in local government at the time, including the member for Kiama, the member for Clarence, the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Bathurst, about the shock waves that inquiry sent through local water utilities across New South Wales and the fight by local councils against the removal of water and sewerage services from their control. I repeat: Retaining ownership and control of their water assets remains as important today as it was in 2007-08. Returning to the views of country mayors, they were unequivocal in a media release issued today. I quote:

Country Mayors Association of NSW (CMA), on behalf of its members, is calling for an expansion of the scope of the Bill to include all local government-owned assets to stay in the hands of Local Government to ensure Local Government will never lose control of its most important asset - our water.

Deputy Chairman of the CMA, Rick Firman, stated:

Our CMA members have spoken loudly and clearly ... We strongly and respectfully call on our new State Government to please include the protection of our water in the NSW Constitution. Water gives us life – it really is critical that our members are listened to.

Finally, Chairman Mayor Chaffey said:

CMA has long held the position that our water and sewer utilities must remain in the hands of Local Government, not State Government or any other entity or be privatised. Do not touch our water. Add Local Government to the Constitution change.

I say to all members of this place—those from the Government and the minor parties and the Independents—that our chance to make this happen is today. Support these amendments. On 10 May Premier Minns stated in this place:

Members on this side of the House believe that drinkable water is an essential constitutional right, and it will be interesting to see what the Opposition does in relation to that important constitutional change.

In today's edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Minister Jackson stated, "We do not take amendments to the Constitution lightly." Let me be clear that we on this side of the House do not take amendments to the Constitution lightly either. That is why we have worked hard to ensure that this "important constitutional change", to quote the Premier, is done correctly and thoroughly. We have identified in the bill gaping holes that are big enough to drive a B-triple through and have sought to brick them up. The gaping holes mean that the constitutional safeguards in the bill are afforded only to the people living in Greater Sydney, the Illawarra, the Blue Mountains and the lower Hunter. Those exact same safeguards are not afforded to the people of regional, rural and remote New South Wales.

The Government must support the amendments, thereby demonstrating that it is here to govern and provide for all of us, not just those in Greater Sydney, the Illawarra, the Blue Mountains and the lower Hunter. Amendments Nos 1, 2 and 8 change references to Sydney Water and Hunter Water to "water utilities", reflecting our determination to increase the scope of the bill beyond just those two entities and ensuring that all water utilities in New South Wales are afforded the same treatment under the Constitution. Amendment No. 5 inserts a definition of "public entity". Amendment No. 6, importantly, expands the scope of "water corporation" in the bill to include:

- (c) Water NSW,
- (d) a water supply authority within the meaning of the *Water Management Act 2000*,
- (e) a local council or county council exercising water supply functions under the *Local Government Act 1993*, Chapter 6, Part 3, Division 2, but only in relation to the exercise of water functions.

Amendment No. 7 inserts a new section that the Opposition believes improves and strengthens the provision relating to privatisation. In closing, the Opposition believes water security should be enshrined in the New South Wales Constitution Act, and this should be the case regardless of where a person lives. I remind the House of a key statement by the Premier in his second reading speech. He said:

The bottom line is that Government members believe safe, reliable, publicly owned water is a constitutional right and should therefore be in the New South Wales Constitution.

If the Government and, in fact, all members of this place are truly serious about protecting end-to-end water supply in New South Wales, they will support the amendments and not exclude one-third of our State's population simply because of the location of their water meter. I commend the Opposition amendments to the House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (19:45): The Government opposes the amendments moved by the member for Cootamundra. I do not accept for one minute that the amendments proposed are genuine. As I look around the Chamber, I notice that the only members in here, apart from those on the crossbench, are members of the National Party.

Mr Adam Marshall: That's right. The brains trust have turned up.

Mr RON HOENIG: The brains trust. I know when I say that Labor fundamentally believes in the public ownership of essential water utilities and is looking for a way to make it effective, I have the support of not only the Government and the crossbench but also the National Party. I note that the Manager of Opposition Business had one look at the Opposition benches, saw he was the only Liberal Party member and scurried out of the House. The amendments are so poorly written that I can see the Manager of Opposition Business' fingerprints all over them. I know, and members of the National Party know and believe deep in their heart, that Labor is genuine in its effort to ensure the permanent and continued public ownership of water assets in this State and is looking to achieve an effective way of doing so. Members of the National Party know full well that the Government does not genuinely believe their amendments as proposed will achieve that objective. There is a large number of unintended consequences that the Government wants to see resolved.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Name them.

Mr RON HOENIG: I will name them. The former Minister should be patient, just like we had to be patient with him and his predecessors for 12 long years. It is Labor's fundamental belief and philosophy that water is a human right and should not be sold off. I have to say this about the former Government, which those in the National Party were a part of: If anybody was responsible for selling off as much of the State's assets as possible, then it was National Party members opposite, as part of the Coalition. They were responsible for that. It is their conduct that has caused the Labor Party's mandate given to it at the last election to ensure that Sydney Water and Hunter Water are protected.

The attempt by those opposite to try to wedge the Government with amendments of this nature, hoping that they will achieve some sort of objective, is ultimately going to fail because they are not genuine in their process. I advise the House of some of the shortcomings in the proposed amendments. Amendment No. 7 will prohibit the current arrangements and use of the Sydney Desalination Plant, which provides approximately 15 per cent of Sydney's water supply. It is Sydney's only source of rainfall-independent supply, which is critical during drought and in managing water-quality risks arising from bushfires and floods. The Sydney Desalination Plant has been in operation consistently since 2019 and is now a critical asset in managing the resilience and reliability of Sydney's water network. This would also prohibit the expansion of the Sydney Desalination Plant, which is the quickest and most cost-effective option to increase Sydney's water supply.

Amendment No. 7 would also prohibit the current commercial model that Sydney Water relies upon to operate the Prospect Water Filtration Plant that treats approximately 80 per cent of Sydney's drinking water supply. Amendment No. 7 may impact upon Hunter Water's operations during times of drought or national disaster by limiting its ability to acquire treatment capacity plant and expertise without an Act of Parliament. Amendment No. 7 would also impact upon Hunter Water's ability to lease land at Walsh Point from the Port of Newcastle for the proposed drought response desalination plant under the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan. If these arrangements cannot be maintained or entered into, the provision of safe drinking water to Greater Sydney and the Hunter will be significantly undermined. It also creates potential legal and sovereign risk on existing contracts.

Amendment No. 6 proposes to include a water supply authority within the meaning of the Water Management Act and a local council under the Local Government Act. It goes significantly beyond the intent of the bill to keep State-owned assets within public ownership. It would extend to local government owned assets as well as entities such as the Sydney Olympic Park Authority, the Central Coast Council and Essential Energy when they undertake any water-related activity. Many of the entities caught by the definition do not provide drinking water but instead manage stormwater, provide irrigation services or deliver environmental outcomes. These amendments broaden the scope of the bill in such a way as to impact local government and other non-State government assets that have not been consulted or had the opportunity to consider the impacts. This may give rise to legal challenges and compensation claims. Amendment No. 4 would further restrict the ability of a State-owned corporation to rely on commercial arrangements for its regular business activities. Limiting partial acquisition potentially limits the partnership opportunities for water filtration and wastewater plants run by private sector operators contracted to Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

I repeat the commitment that I made to members of the crossbench on behalf of the Government in my reply to the second reading debate to explore further the issue of regional water utilities. I will propose that this House set up a joint committee with the other House to look at how we can protect regional water assets from privatisation. It is clearly a complex issue with 93 different water utilities across the State. Such changes are complex and difficult. We are looking to representatives of this House and the other place to be able to ensure that regional water assets are protected from privatisation. It is fundamentally within Labor's DNA for that to occur, and I give that commitment on behalf of the New South Wales Government.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (19:53): It was great to hear the Leader of the House—Rumpole of Heffron—talk on the amendments. Apparently, there was some problem with me leaving the House to go and get my notes.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Point of order: The member should refer to members by their proper title.

The SPEAKER: I note that the member for Wahroonga took the same point of order earlier today. I uphold the point of order. The member for Wahroonga will refer to members by their proper title. The member for Prospect has won his point. He will remain silent.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I commend the member for Cootamundra for bringing forward these amendments. Of course, it was disappointing to hear the Leader of the House say that the deficiency in the bill was limited to regional water assets. Warragamba Dam—hardly what we would consider a regional water asset—is not covered by this legislation but is covered by the excellent amendments by the member for Cootamundra. WaterNSW is a State-owned corporation, just like Hunter Water and Sydney Water. It is not covered by the legislation brought forward by Labor members, who say they are so against privatisation but would allow the privatisation of Warragamba Dam through their own legislation.

It is a disgrace that members opposite went to the public during the election campaign and said that they were against the privatisation of water assets. They ran a dishonest scare campaign when it was never the agenda of the Coalition Government to privatise water assets. Yet they left out Warragamba Dam. Can members believe it? These amendments are significant in their scope. First of all, they cover all water assets in New South Wales that the Government left out, both in Sydney and in the regions. Two-thirds of the water assets of New South Wales are left out of Labor's bill, which is a complete and utter disgrace. It is a betrayal of what they told the people of New South Wales that they were going to do.

Secondly, the Government leaves out the possibility that new water assets could be privatised, which is what the excellent amendment by the member for Cootamundra to new section 58 deals with. Of course, the proposed amendment also makes it clear that these amendments do not in any way interfere with current arrangements. That deals with the scare campaign that the member for Heffron tried to suggest in his speech referring to unintended consequences. There are no unintended consequences. Preservation of the status quo is quite clear. There is no allowance for backdoor privatisation through future acquisition of water assets and there is coverage of the field so that the whole of Sydney's water assets—not part of them—are included in the bill, together with all regional water assets.

According to the Government, the poor people in our regions are some sort of second-class citizens. They are not second-class citizens, and the people that are represented by the National Party and the regional Liberals are not second-class citizens. They are included in the amendments. They should be included in the bill. The amendments would even the playing field between city and country, between some parts of Sydney and other parts of Sydney. The amendments are absolutely excellent. The bill as originally drafted was grossly deficient.

Mr Greg Warren: Then why didn't you do it in 12 years?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: There was never an agenda to privatise water assets. If the Government was going to trumpet the fact that it would "protect" our water assets against privatisation, it should do it properly and comprehensively, not in a half-arsed way like this bill.

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

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: These amendments will do the job properly. The member for Cootamundra should be congratulated. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (19:59): Mr Chairman, it is a great pleasure to rise to speak—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Mr Chairman?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: It is "Mr Chairman", because we are in committee of the whole. He is the Chair of the committee, not the Speaker.

Mr Ron Hoenig: It is not a committee anymore.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: No? Did you change the standing orders for that as well?

Mr Ron Hoenig: No. You did. The House is considering the bill in detail.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Sorry. I will take your advice.

Mr Ron Hoenig: It was you who changed the standing orders, not us.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Thank you. I speak in support of the amendments from the member for Cootamundra. Whilst I appreciate the comments from the member for Heffron, all that I ask as a member of this House is that the Government match its words and commitment with action and deeds. The fact is that if the intent of the Government is to enshrine in legislation, whether in the Constitution Act or otherwise, a mechanism to chisel into law the public ownership of water utilities, and if the Government acknowledges that it wishes to also include regional water utilities, then it is open to the Government to do so without needing to ram through this House a bill which, by the Government's own acknowledgement now, according to the member for Heffron, is deficient. That was acknowledged by the member for Heffron in his reply. It is an admission that the bill is deficient.

The Government's remedy to that is to ram through a bill that is acknowledged to be deficient and then, as an afterthought, set up a select committee to try to find a solution. That is not the way to govern. The Government should withdraw the bill, request the department to draft amendments that achieve that public policy outcome and bring the bill back. There is no rush. I know that it is awfully embarrassing. This was the centrepiece of the legislative agenda. This was the first piece of legislation for this Government, and it has bugged it. But that is okay. It is more important to get it right, not to pass faulty legislation and then try to jimmy up a fix to it later on. I know it is late in the hour, at the eleventh hour, but I implore the Government to do that—it is a far better and more appropriate mechanism—so that the Parliament can properly consider those amendments, rather than asking this House to pass what the Government now finally acknowledges to be deficient, faulty legislation. That would be a better remedy.

Mr Paul Toole: Flawed.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, flawed. I acknowledge the interjection. I know the member for Heffron and trust his genuineness, but I must reject the assertion that the intent of the member for Cootamundra, the shadow Minister and other members of the shadow front bench and the Opposition is not genuine in this regard. As the member for Heffron would know if he were listening to me the way I listened intently to him, instead of rudely talking to his colleagues—he cannot even look at me now—I do not take to my feet in this House unless I am genuine in my conviction. The Opposition is genuine about protecting rural water utilities, as are New South Wales country mayors and all mayors and local councils in the regions. It is a glaring omission, a chasm, a gap in this faulty legislation. Establishing a joint select committee does not quite cut it for me. The appropriate remedy is to withdraw this bill and then come back with the proper amendments. The Government can introduce them to amend its own bill on the floor, and we would happily join the Government in supporting that legislation once it is corrected.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Ballina, I welcome to the gallery Jim and Rachel McFadyen and Max, who have come all the way from Lord Howe Island. It is quite an unusual visitation for us. It is wonderful to have you here as guests of the member for Port Macquarie.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (20:03): I have the chorus behind me. I acknowledge the amendments put forward by the Opposition and contribute on behalf of The Greens. I feel like I am in the upside-down world when the member for Willoughby, whom I have listened to for many years and who has quite different views, is sounding like a communist. It is strange indeed to have The Nationals and the Liberals trying to up the ante in terms of preventing privatisation. We share not wanting to see the privatisation of any water utility. So we are agreed.

I respect the member for Cootamundra and her work. I think no-one in this place would doubt her work in this space. But the amendments put forward by the Opposition are ill considered and could have perverse and unintended consequences for the operation of the 89 local water utilities. I also mention The Greens water spokesperson Cate Faehrmann, MLC, who has reached out and spoken to country mayors. We are not convinced that this amendment will do what it sets out to do, and we do welcome the Government's and the water Minister's commitment today that there will be a select committee inquiry to look at water security more broadly. I note that the member for Cootamundra spoke about water security, and that is something that I, as the member for Ballina, am certainly passionate about. The inquiry needs to look at governance and a whole range of issues. I see the member for Lismore here, and I know that she would agree that some serious governance issues in our region are impeding water security. It is the same for most regional MPs. We welcome that opportunity.

The Greens see that there are fundamental issues with these amendments. Honestly, I cannot keep track, because some members of the National Party are saying that the bill is not good enough. Others are saying, "It's fine; just add this." The Liberal Party is saying that we do not need it. The member for Willoughby got up today and said that we do not need it and that there is no issue here. We are losing track of what this legislation does. At this juncture The Greens respectfully do not support the Opposition amendments. But I respect the member for Cootamundra and her efforts. I look forward to strenuous and robust submissions to the inquiry, at which I will be very pleased to make a submission.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (20:07): I support the Opposition amendments. It was clear and plain, right from the word go, that Labor has made a big mistake. In the rush to bring forward its signature piece of legislation for the non-privatisation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water, it forgot about the 1.8 million other residents of New South Wales—namely, regional New South Wales—and the 93 water utilities, who said, "What about us?" The Government should admit that it has made a big mistake. You can hear the truck backing up from miles away: Beep, beep, beep, beep! "How the hell do we get out of this? Pull it together. Come on, boys. Bring it in tight. Let's send it to a committee. Let's send it to an inquiry. Bring it in tight, team." The Government thinks that is the only way in which it can save face.

I take umbrage with the member for Ballina, who talks about country mayors not being consulted. That is an insult in relation to the country mayors in regional New South Wales, who have put out a press release today to say, "Keep your hands off our water." The country mayors who put out that release and the regional members who come to this place in support of their communities live and breathe this. It goes back to the time when Labor looked at privatising, back in 2007, 2008 and 2009. So to have Labor say that the consultation has been minimal is quite disingenuous, given that we talk to our mayors all the time.

So there is a major hole; there is a major mistake. For Labor to now say that it will send the issue to a committee is disingenuous. I call on Labor to think about including WaterNSW, the utilities and a local council or county council exercising water supply functions under the Local Government Act 1993. The Government has made a big mistake. Members opposite know they have made a mistake. They should put their hands up, own it and include the rest of New South Wales in the bill as well as Sydney and the Hunter.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (20:09): We have heard a lot of anti-privatisation rhetoric from The Greens during the eight years I have been in Parliament, but I cannot believe that The Greens do not support amendments that seek to protect regional water assets from privatisation. I cannot believe that a regional Green like the member for Ballina does not support amendments that will protect regional water assets from privatisation. Regarding the proposed inquiry, I make the point that if the amendments potentially have unintended consequences, why does the original bill not have potential unintended consequences? The bill was never subject to any inquiry. It was a thought bubble of the now Premier during the election campaign. There has been no consideration of whether the bill has been correctly formulated.

We only need to consider that Warragamba Dam is not covered by the bill to know that there are unintended consequences. Why is the whole bill not being sent to a committee if there are so many "unintended consequences"? We know that unintended consequences are coward's corner—a place to go when you have made a mistake in this place. It is the place to which you refer things when you have got something wrong. Why should the whole bill not be referred to a committee for unintended consequences, if there really are any? Why, with the resources of 430,000 public servants, can the Government, after the amendments were flagged last week, not identify one single unintended consequence? It has had them for a week. Why are we not hearing any precision or specificity around the so-called unintended consequences? Because there are none. It is a facade. It is a smokescreen. It is opacity writ large.

Government members are just trying to fudge the fact that they have got the legislation wrong. They know that it has been wrongly constructed. They know that Warragamba Dam should be included in the bill. If they were serious about protecting the water assets of Sydney and the Illawarra, they would have included Warragamba Dam, yet it is not in the bill. So they must pretend that we need to go off to a committee for so-called unintended consequences, when they have not been able to identify one—not one—that warrants investigation. I challenge the member for Heffron, who uttered the ridiculous words "unintended consequences", to come forward and name one. The reality is that there are none. If there are unintended consequences with regard to the amendments, they would equally apply to the original legislation. The whole thing should go off to a committee. But they cannot admit that they got it all wrong.

I encourage members to see through the façade and to recognise that the amendments proposed by the member for Cootamundra are beautiful in their precision and design. They ought to be supported by the members of this Chamber because the issue is an important one. The Government campaigned on this issue. It is the first bill of this Parliament in this Chamber, and the people of New South Wales are entitled to the Government doing it properly. The fact that the member for Cootamundra has picked them up and identified where they have not done it properly ought to be reason for Labor to support the amendments, not to try to fob them off in a disrespectful way to people in regional New South Wales and people in Sydney who rely on Warragamba Dam. I submit to the members of this House that they ought to support the amendments.

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:15): I had to look up in the dictionary what the word "genuine" meant because I thought for sure that the member for Heffron was not using the word correctly. Genuine means authentic and sincere. If the member for Heffron was being authentic and sincere, then he would refer the

entire bill to a joint committee, not just regional water. I also wonder why there is such a rush to get the bill through in its entirety.

Mr Adam Marshall: Because the upper House has run out of business.

Mr GURMESH SINGH: We know that. That is definitely a factor. But why is there a rush to get this bill through without it being a whole and complete bill? Are there members within the Cabinet from whom the Premier has to protect Sydney Water, who are desperate to privatise it very quickly? That is probably not the reason, but questions must be asked about why the Labor Party will not support the amendments. "Unintended consequences" is the same trope that has been trotted out by four or five different members today. At least three members of the Labor Party have trotted it out. Members of the crossbench also trot out the same line again and again.

The only unintended consequence of the bill is the political embarrassment for the Government from rushing through its signature piece of legislation. It has mucked the bill up, and members opposite have realised that they mucked it up. They held it off for a week and now they are going to take it off to a committee. The people of regional New South Wales might have to wait a month, two months, six months or a year. Who knows how long they will make the people of regional New South Wales wait while they sort out their issues rather than getting the job done right the first time round. We have a two-week gap after this parliamentary sitting in which the Government can consult with its department and come up with a series of amendments that we would support that also protect water assets in regional New South Wales. I will not say too much more, but I implore the Government and crossbench members to consider carefully voting against amendments that will protect water assets on the North Coast—I know that is where the member for Ballina resides—as well as across western New South Wales and in Monaro, Lismore and Cessnock. Those water assets deserve the same level of protection as those in Sydney and the Hunter.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (20:17): I will not speak to the substantive details. We have heard a lot about the unintended consequences of the amendments. I will not go into the detail that was outlined in debate, but it is important to be clear that the Opposition does not have any good intentions in relation to the amendments. It is clearly an attempt to undermine a commitment of the new Labor Government to prevent the privatisation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wahroonga will come to order.

Ms JENNY LEONG: I hear absolute hypocrisy coming from Opposition members, who did nothing for 12 years to stop the privatisation agenda. Now we have to sit in this place and listen to them as if they care about it. Let us be clear that the intent of the bill is to prevent the privatisation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water. The reason there is such outrage on the Opposition benches is that Opposition members do not know what it is like to not have the numbers to get their stuff through all the time. Because we know what happened when they had the numbers. Late at night Opposition members would be ramming through the privatisation agenda that they were driving for 12 years. I sat in this Chamber for eight years. Opposition members rammed their legislation through and did not take heed of a single amendment that we moved, and now they have this confected outrage. We were moving sensible amendments.

The SPEAKER: Opposition members will come to order.

Ms JENNY LEONG: I encourage Government members to give Opposition members a taste of their own medicine and really consider whether they want to listen to the kinds of amendments that those members bring to this Chamber. When they had the majority in this place, they rammed everything through. They did not want to hear any sensible amendments from non-Government members to fix the laws, did they? From now on The Greens and the crossbench want to work collaboratively with the Minister—I acknowledge that she is listening to the debate—to allow us to make the laws better for people in New South Wales.

We do not make the laws better for people in New South Wales by attempting to wedge new Labor Government members over an amendment without any consultation with the people impacted. We do it simply by working collaboratively. That means that we might address some of the concerns being raised in relation to the governance and in relation to the desal plant, which we did not support. But now that it is there, we need to look at the realities. We need to recognise that that is where we are headed with this Government. I encourage the Opposition to get on board with that.

I am sure that they are welcome to participate in the inquiry if they are genuinely concerned about the privatisation of regional water. My guess is the reason we are not hearing all of the members in this place raise those concerns is that, in actual fact, some of them love privatisation. They have not spoken in support of these amendments because they love privatisation. The Greens do not like privatisation. We commend the Minns Labor

Government for delivering on this promise. We want to see the water bill passed because it is great to see the delivery of election promises and an end to privatisation in New South Wales.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (20:22): I make a further contribution. I support the amendments. I call on members opposite to support the amendments moved by the shadow Minister. This, no doubt, is a lazy bill—a bill that does not support all of regional New South Wales. It is a bill that should have ensured that all public assets are retained in public hands. We are talking about 89 water utilities. I say to the member for Newtown, who referred to going to the bush, that she would probably go as far as the Sydney parkland and think that that was the bush. Get out to regional New South Wales and talk to the councillors and councils. They want those assets to remain in public hands. Has the member for Ballina spoken to her council?

The SPEAKER: The member for Bathurst will direct his comments through the Chair and stop baiting other members.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am not; I would never do that. Have the member for South Coast and the member for Bega spoken to their councils? Let me tell members why I am asking them that. We stood with the mayors and the councillors in 2007 and 2008 when a road trip was undertaken by Nathan Rees looking at corporatising water utilities in New South Wales. That was a privatisation path. That Government was going to group assets into regional areas to privatise them. If members opposite think the bill is good, they should make it better. They should strengthen the bill by including regional areas. Do not leave them out. They are treating regional New South Wales like second-class citizens.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Those regions have been looking after those assets for a number of years. They rely on the councils. Whenever there is drought, floods or emergency situations to deal with, the councils have the expertise and the knowledge in those communities to support the needs of those local areas. Those local councils have put in drought management plans. They have ensured that, when there are dry periods and when those dam levels are falling, measures are in place to ensure that those communities have water security. The amendments would ensure that that occurs for a long time.

The member for Monaro would have been in Parliament in 2007 and 2008. He would be very much aware of the sneaky, underhanded path taken by the Government of the day to take away assets that were being controlled by councils. I ask him to stand up for regional New South Wales because I know that the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council would be concerned about this. I know that the Snowy Valleys Council would be concerned about this. He has an opportunity to ensure that the councils that stood up at Country Mayors last week and that have written to him can retain their assets. They have asked him to include the amendments in the bill.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Members opposite have an opportunity to amend the bill tonight. They have an opportunity to agree to these amendments, which are so important for the people of regional New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: The member for Campbelltown will cease interjecting across the Chamber.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Do not treat them like second-class citizens because they deserve better. The bill needs to be improved. To do that, members opposite should accept the amendments tonight.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (20:26): Mr Speaker—

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (20:26): I move:

That the member for Wahroonga be not further heard.

Question put.

The House divided.

Ayes45
Noes34
Majority.....11

AYES

Aitchison, J
Atalla, E
Bali, S
Barr, C

Finn, J
Hagarty, N
Harris, D
Harrison, J

O'Neill, M
Park, R
Quinnell, S
Saffin, J (teller)

AYES

Butler, L
Butler, R
Car, P
Catley, Y
Chanthivong, A
Cotsis, S
Crakanthorp, T
Dalton, H
Dib, J
Donato, P
Doyle, T

Haylen, J
Hoenig, R
Holland, M
Hornery, S
Kaliyanda, C
Kirby, W
Li, J
McDermott, H
McKeown, K
Mehan, D
Minns, C

Saliba, D
Scully, P
Stuart, M
Tesch, L
Vo, T
Voltz, L
Warren, G
Washington, K
Watson, A
Whan, S (teller)
Wilkinson, K

NOES

Amon, R
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
Roberts, A
Saunders, D

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

PAIRS

Daley, M
Davis, D
Kamper, S

Provest, G
Thompson, T
Anderson, K

Motion agreed to.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (20:33): The amendments were circulated last week and, at the request of The Nationals, the Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023 was removed as an order of the day and placed on the agenda for this week to enable genuine discussions and genuine consultation. After giving The Nationals more time, all we have had is a filibuster. That is not acceptable to the Government. I move:

That the question be now put.

The House divided.

Ayes47
Noes34
Majority.....13

AYES

Aitchison, J
Atalla, E
Bali, S
Barr, C
Butler, L
Butler, R
Car, P
Catley, Y
Chanthivong, A
Cotsis, S
Crakanthorp, T

Hagarty, N
Hannan, J
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J
Hoenig, R
Holland, M
Kaliyanda, C
Kirby, W
Li, J
McDermott, H

Park, R
Quinnell, S
Regan, M
Saffin, J (teller)
Saliba, D
Scully, P
Stuart, M
Tesch, L
Vo, T
Voltz, L
Warren, G

AYES

Dalton, H
Dib, J
Donato, P
Doyle, T
Finn, J

McGirr, J
McKeown, K
Mehan, D
Minns, C
O'Neill, M

Washington, K
Watson, A
Whan, S (teller)
Wilkinson, K

NOES

Amon, R
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
Roberts, A
Saunders, D

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

PAIRS

Daley, M
Davis, D
Kamper, S

Provest, G
Thompson, T
Anderson, K

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 8 on sheet c2023-004E be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes34
Noes52
Majority.....18

AYES

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
Roberts, A

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

NOES

Aitchison, J
Atalla, E
Bali, S
Barr, C
Butler, L
Butler, R

Hannan, J
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J
Hoenig, R
Holland, M

Park, R
Quinnell, S
Regan, M
Saffin, J (teller)
Saliba, D
Scully, P

NOES

Car, P	Hornery, S	Shetty, K
Catley, Y	Kaliyanda, C	Smith, T
Chanthivong, A	Kirby, W	Stuart, M
Cotsis, S	Leong, J	Tesch, L
Crakanthorp, T	Li, J	Vo, T
Dalton, H	McDermott, H	Voltz, L
Dib, J	McGirr, J	Warren, G
Donato, P	McKeown, K	Washington, K
Doyle, T	Mehan, D	Watson, A
Finn, J	Minns, C	Whan, S (teller)
Greenwich, A	O'Neill, M	Wilkinson, K
Hagarty, N		

PAIRS

Daley, M	Provest, G
Davis, D	Thompson, T
Williams, R	Kamper, S

Amendments negatived.

The SPEAKER: The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (20:45): On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:45): We have heard a lot of reasons why the bill is not what it needs to be tonight. That was the point of the amendments and, to the member for Heffron, I was hoping we could look at doing what we have suggested, which is taking away the whole bill and bringing it back with the amendments in place, which he could have helped work on. That is obviously not going to happen.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS: We need to put on record very clearly that for regional communities water security is about more than just a provider. It is the dams, the pipelines and the treatment plants. It is all the other systems that ensure a reliable supply of clean water. We have heard about that directly from the Premier. Keeping our State's water infrastructure in public hands is a necessity. It is necessary not only for Sydney and the Hunter but also right across New South Wales, and that includes regional New South Wales. The bill as proposed by the Government does not address that need for our regional communities. It is as simple as that. I wish it were not the case, but it is. That is why today we have put forward sensible amendments.

If Labor had taken our views on board and amended its bill, The Nationals would have happily supported it. But it is impossible for us to stand here and propose amendments and then, should they fail, simply fall in line because we have no guarantee that the Government will fix the gaping hole that currently exists when it comes to regional and rural New South Wales. The people in our electorates sent us here to represent them only two months ago. Today we saw a media release from country mayors specifically asking us to stick up for them, so we need to do that. We need to stand up for people who elected us to be their representatives. If we do not do that, we will let regional New South Wales slide away, as the Government is proposing to do. It is not concerned because Sydney Water and Hunter Water are included in the New South Wales Constitution. But people in regional New South Wales are concerned because, after the blink of an eye since the election, the Labor Government is already ignoring regional New South Wales. They are fine with Sydney and Hunter, but why would they not include regional New South Wales?

The scare campaign on privatising Sydney Water that we saw from Labor during the election was tasteless and deliberately designed to hurt our Coalition partners in metropolitan areas. It did not really impact on us in regional areas because we are not dealing with the privatisation of Sydney Water or Hunter Water, and neither was the Coalition as a whole, particularly the Liberal Party. It did not work, though, because we have seen fairly clearly tonight that the Government still had to put crossbenchers on the payroll to get them to vote with them on

the bill. That is what has happened. The regional members that support the Government need to answer to their councils and their constituents about why they would not stand up and ensure that regional areas are in the Constitution, if that is where it is decided it is going to be, along with everyone else.

We know that this is just another attempt at a scare campaign. It is Mediscare 2.0 and it is not working. The issue needs to be put to bed, and that will happen. But it does not change the position that this bill has left out the entire National Party and all those we represent. We need full recognition and to be included in the bill. Everyone, irrespective of their geographical location and their financial status, deserves fair and equal access to clean and safe water. Public ownership ensures that equity. Water assets are public goods that serve everyone in the community. We cannot afford a situation where those services become focused solely on profitable areas and leave some communities unaccounted for.

Public water utilities and asset managers must be directly accountable to the communities they serve. In regional New South Wales, as we have heard throughout this afternoon, they are especially important as water resources are managed to ensure equitable access for town water, agriculture and irrigation, and the environment—which is what we deal with in regional New South Wales. If Labor is serious about enshrining water security in our Constitution, I urge it to support us and avoid a situation where we have one standard for the city and another for the regions. As has been pointed out, the Leader of the House showed that there is a deficiency in the bill. If the suggestion is to refer the bill to a joint select committee, why would it not examine the whole bill to make sure that everyone is included in it?

During the public interest debate earlier today, members supported an amendment that the House will not support the privatisation of all water assets across the State, including in regional New South Wales. The entire House accepted the proposition that we will not support all water assets across the State being privatised, including regional water utilities. We must do the right thing. I inform the House that National Party members will be doing the right thing for regional communities. We will introduce a bill to ensure that regional areas are absolutely looked after, as they should be.

The SPEAKER: The question is that this bill be now read a third time.

The House divided.

[In division]

The SPEAKER: I note the restricted space on the right of the Chamber. I declare the top two rows on the southern side of the Chamber to also be for the ayes.

Ayes 77

Noes 9

Majority 68

AYES

Aitchison, J
Amon, R
Atalla, E
Ayyad, T
Bali, S
Barr, C
Butler, L
Butler, R
Car, P
Catley, Y
Chanthivong, A
Clancy, J
Cotsis, S
Coure, M
Crakanthorp, T
Cross, M
Crouch, A
Dalton, H
Davies, T
Di Pasqua, S
Dib, J
Donato, P

Hagarty, N
Hannan, J
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J
Henskens, A
Hodges, M
Hoenig, R
Holland, M
Hornery, S
James, T
Kaliyanda, C
Kean, M
Kirby, W
Lane, J
Leong, J
Li, J
McDermott, H
McGirr, J
McKeown, K
Mehan, D
Minns, C

Preston, R
Quinnell, S
Regan, M
Roberts, A
Saffin, J (teller)
Saliba, D
Scully, P
Shetty, K
Sloane, K
Smith, T
Speakman, M
Stuart, M
Taylor, M
Tesch, L
Tuckerman, W
Vo, T
Voltz, L
Ward, G
Warren, G
Washington, K
Watson, A
Whan, S (teller)

AYES

Doyle, T
Finn, J
Greenwich, A
Griffin, J

O'Neill, M
Park, R
Perrottet, D
Petinos, E

Wilkinson, K
Williams, L
Wilson, F

NOES

Anderson, K
Cooke, S
Kemp, M

Layzell, D (teller)
Marshall, A
Saunders, D

Singh, G (teller)
Toole, P
Williamson, R

PAIRS

Daley, M
Davis, D
Kamper, S

Provest, G
Williams, R
Thompson, T

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery our Jacaranda Queen, Amanda Daffey, and Isaac, who have come all the way from Grafton.

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) 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 time.

FIRST HOME BUYER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023**Second Reading Debate**

Debate resumed from 23 May 2023.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (21:03): The contrast could not be clearer. On this side of the House, the Opposition stands for giving first home buyers a choice; those opposite do not. I speak in opposition to the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 insofar as it seeks to abolish the First Home Buyer Choice scheme. In his second reading speech, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces made mention of the Government's "comprehensive plan to address housing affordability". I ask the Minister, "Where is the plan?" There is no plan. The new Labor Government has presented nothing more than this bill, which is a significant retrograde step when it comes to housing affordability in Sydney and New South Wales.

The bill is another sign that the State will stall—or worse, go backwards—under the new Labor Government. Sydney, and much of New South Wales, is facing serious housing pressure and rental pressure. The solution to this pressure is not to remove a policy that has been taken up by more than 8,300 first home buyers since the First Home Buyer Choice scheme opened on 16 January 2023. That is around 440 first home buyers benefitting every single week. First home buyers have voted with their feet in favour of the Coalition's First Home Buyer Choice scheme.

In his second reading speech, the Minister claimed that the First Home Buyers Choice scheme has been rejected by the people of New South Wales. If it had been rejected, first home buyers would not have embraced it. If it had been rejected, why have two in every three eligible first home buyers taken it up? Of the more than 5,000 properties opted in to the First Home Buyers Choice scheme, 45 per cent have been in Western Sydney. A first home buyer purchasing a median-priced house in Parramatta will avoid an up-front fee of \$59,000 under the Liberal-Nationals Coalition scheme. In Rockdale, it is a \$63,000 up-front saving on a median-priced house. In Kogarah, it is a \$70,000 up-front saving.

Members know that the First Home Buyer Choice scheme can cut up to two years off the time needed to save for a deposit. Removing the scheme will simply make it harder for people to enter the property market. It will force people to move away from their jobs, away from their support networks and away from their home communities. Individuals and families across New South Wales have collectively saved more than \$197 million since the scheme opened on 16 January 2023. Under the new Labor Government's so-called solution to housing

affordability, thousands and thousands of first home buyers will be denied the basic choice between a small annual tax and a large up-front fee.

I also address the proposed changes to stamp duty exemptions and concessions contained within the bill. It takes simple maths to demonstrate that for many first home buyers purchasing a property between \$850,000 and \$900,000, the Coalition's First Home Buyer Choice scheme would still be more attractive than paying between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in up-front stamp duty. For at least the overwhelming majority of first home buyers purchasing a property over \$900,000, the scheme offers a better deal. The Opposition believes that merely adjusting the stamp duty thresholds does not begin the real tax reform needed to move away from what is widely agreed to be a bad tax.

The Liberal-Nationals Coalition introduced the First Home Buyer Choice legislation not only because it offers savings to first home buyers, but as a significant first step toward broader reform of what is widely agreed to be a bad tax. Stamp duty was first introduced in 1865. This 158-year-old tax is what Labor is seeking to bring back to thousands of property transactions in New South Wales each year. It is far from a fresh start for New South Wales. When the new Labor Premier became the leader of the Labor Party, he sought to build a name for himself as someone focused on policy, engaged in a battle of ideas—even likened to Paul Keating. That was before the election. Since the election, Labor has abandoned its battle of ideas.

Four of the very first actions of the new Labor Government are a sign of what is to come over the next four years. First, promising to protect Sydney Water and Hunter Water, only to completely forget about WaterNSW, leaving out critical assets like Warragamba Dam. Second, playing verbal gymnastics over privatisation to justify the sell-off of publicly owned land. Third, refusing to confirm funding of Active Kids vouchers. Fourth, now repealing the first-of-its-kind, fair, popular, highly successful First Home Buyer Choice scheme. As I said before, the bill is another clear sign that the new Labor Government is taking the State backwards.

Housing affordability is at a crisis point in Sydney. Compared with average incomes, our city has some of the most unaffordable housing in the English-speaking world. It is against this backdrop that Labor seeks to remove the basic choice between a small annual tax and a large up-front fee. The Opposition cannot and will not support such a significant backward step. If the bill passes in its current form, future generations of first home buyers will be deprived of a choice between stamp duty and land tax. Thousands of first home buyers will be unable to unlock the dream of home ownership sooner. The Opposition will seek to amend the bill. It will seek to delete schedule 2 to the bill and seek to index the new thresholds set out in schedule 1. These amendments would ensure that first home buyers still have the ability to choose. They would ensure the bill provides stamp duty concessions to first home buyers as property prices gradually grow over time. The Opposition seeks to amend the bill because first home buyers in Sydney and across New South Wales deserve choice.

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (21:10): First of all, I draw to the attention of the House the fact that the Leader of the Opposition, who just made a contribution to debate and has left the Chamber, has absolutely no support on his position. That is interesting. I am delighted to contribute to the debate on the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The purpose of the bill is simple. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to amend the *Duties Act 1997*—
 - (i) to require a person to reside in a home as the person's principal place of residence for a continuous period of at least 12 months to be eligible for a duty exemption or concession, and
 - (ii) to revise values for property to be eligible for the purposes of the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme, and
- (b) to amend the *Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022* to prevent a person making an election to pay property tax rather than stamp duty on a transfer of land occurring on or after 1 July 2023, and
- (c) to amend the *First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000* to require first home buyers to reside in the home as their principal place of residence for a continuous period of at least 12 months to be eligible for a First Home Owner Grant.

The great Australian dream of owning your own home has never been so unattainable for many. That is a fact that cannot be disputed. Rents have risen sharply, as have house prices and, more recently, interest rates. All of those factors have made it increasingly harder for first home buyers to enter the property market. They are disappointed and disillusioned at their prospects of ever owning their own home. I can understand why they feel that way. I was alarmed when I looked at the figures regarding households in mortgage or rental stress within the Heathcote electorate. A household is considered to be in mortgage stress when it spends 30 per cent or more of its income on rental or mortgage payments. Make no mistake: Figures available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics paint an extremely grim picture for suburbs in my electorate.

Let us take Engadine as an example. In 2016, 4.9 per cent of households were in mortgage stress; in 2021 that number had almost tripled to 14.1 per cent. I shudder to think what that number is today. Sutherland residents also saw their household budgets stretched even further, with those in mortgage stress climbing from 7.5 per cent to 15.9 per cent in the same period. It is important to note that was before interest rates began to climb,

which means it is likely that more households are in mortgage stress now. Spare a thought for those renting. The bad news keeps on coming. In 2016, 4.6 per cent of households in Engadine were in rental stress; five years later, that number had risen to 38.7 per cent. I repeat: That is 4.6 per cent to 38.7 per cent in the space of just five years. Helensburgh renters also experienced a tough five years, with the number of households in rental stress rising from 4.8 per cent to 35.6 per cent. Bulli, Thirroul and Sutherland also rose from 8.5 per cent, 6.2 per cent and 16.4 per cent to 35.1 per cent, 30 per cent and 32.5 per cent respectively.

What exactly do the numbers mean and how do they impact the everyday lives of those households? Let us take a prospective first home buyer, for example. If they are contributing more than 30 per cent of their income towards paying the rent, it means that there is not a lot left over at the end of the day to save for a home deposit. It means the divide between the haves and have nots in terms of property ownership has only widened. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel for first home buyers in the form of a new stamp duty scheme being proposed by the New South Wales Government. How would it work? Those first home buyers purchasing a home between \$700,000 and \$800,000 would not be required to pay stamp duty. It equates to a saving of up to \$31,090. Those purchasing a property for \$850,000 would save more than \$23,000, with the savings continuing for those purchasing properties valued at up to \$1 million.

In simple terms, the New South Wales Government is proposing to increase the exemption threshold from \$650,000 to \$800,000 and the concession threshold from \$800,000 to \$1 million. Those savings would make an incredible difference to the lives of many people who desperately want to get a foot in the property market. The difference between the policies of the members on this side of the House compared to the policies of those on the other side is stark. Those on the other side wanted to introduce a land tax; we on the progressive and sensible side of the Chamber are focused on putting more money back in the pockets of New South Wales residents. The Minns Labor Government's first home buyer changes would see up to five out of every six home buyers receive a boost. I will say that again: Under the Minns Labor Government's stamp duty changes, five out of six first home buyers would be better off.

As I touched on earlier, the bill also aims to amend the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022 to prevent a person making an election to pay property tax rather than stamp duty on a transfer of land occurring on or after 1 July 2023. Members opposite will tell you that their proposed tax on first home buyers was a good thing and that it would have provided home buyers with a choice. It was a choice, all right. You could pay hefty stamp duty as usual or pay an ongoing tax year after year. It was nothing but another way for the former Government to prey on vulnerable households doing it tough. It was another excuse for the former Government to pillage the pockets of hardworking residents throughout the State, including in my electorate of Heathcote.

It was another example of a policy from a former government that forged a reputation for profiting from the vulnerable while lining the pockets of the ultra-wealthy. The land tax was one of many failed policies and decisions that led to the former Government now calling that side of the Chamber home for at least the next four years. I say "at least" because, if the sentiment in my electorate is anything to go by, those opposite will be stuck on that side for many more years to come. I have lost count of the number of local families I have spoken to that are doing it tough at the moment.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): The member for North Shore will come to order.

Ms MARYANNE STUART: I know from my own family that young people are struggling with rents. Wanting to be closer to work and independent, they feel they will never be able to get ahead or have housing security for the future. Whether they live in Bulli in the southern end of my electorate or in Kirrawee in the northern end of my electorate, their concerns are the same. Rising power bills, rising grocery bills and rising fuel prices have placed an incredible strain on many household budgets. Increased rents and mortgage repayments have only added to the stress being placed on the bottom lines of households. That is why the amendments in the bill make sense. The amendments in the bill will provide much needed and welcome relief, particularly for those from younger generations who are desperate to enter the property market.

The amendments in the bill will actually help first home buyers achieve the great Australian dream of owning their own home. The bill will not tax the hip pockets of first home buyers. I am extremely proud to serve in a New South Wales Labor government that values all people. This New South Wales Government does not discriminate by electorate. It is a government for everyone. That is something the former New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government cannot claim. One need only look at the bushfire grants saga or the Stronger Communities Fund debacle to see clearly how those on the opposite side of the House—those in opposition—put politics before people. They were more interested in rescuing their fledgling political careers than serving their communities. They were reckless, mismanaged the budget and had no fiscal restraint when it came to trying to save themselves.

Ms Felicity Wilson: Point of order: I raise the matter of relevance. The member is currently talking about Black Summer bushfires, not the first home buyer scheme. I ask that the member be returned to the bill that is before the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): I have listened carefully. The member for Heathcote has the call.

Ms Felicity Wilson: Is your ruling that she is being relevant or not being relevant?

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): She is being perfectly relevant. I will listen further.

Ms Felicity Wilson: That is interesting. Maybe you weren't listening.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): I remind the member for North Shore that she is on two calls to order. The member for Heathcote has the call.

Ms MARYANNE STUART: They were reckless, mismanaged the budget and had no fiscal restraint when it came to trying to save themselves, and that showed at the polls on 25 March. Residents of our State have long memories. They take notice of their local members and the decisions they make. Importantly, they hold their elected representatives to account. That is something those on the other side, in opposition, seem to have forgotten. To stand in this Chamber and represent our community is an honour and a privilege. It is not a right. We take an oath to serve our communities and we do so by making sure we represent the interests of all residents. It does not make a difference whether they be nine months or 99 years of age. That is why I commend these amendments.

The needs of our youngest generations were continually ignored over the past 12 years by the former Government. We on this side of the Chamber listen and act. The Minns Labor Government has done and will continue to do things differently. We will help first home buyers get a foot in the property market through changes like these to stamp duty. The objects of the bill, as I have already outlined, are simple and sensible. I commend the Treasurer for his commitment and great work in this space. The many first home buyers who benefit from the changes will be grateful to the Treasurer for prioritising their needs and their future. I look forward to welcoming more and more first home buyers into the electorate of Heathcote—whether they choose to purchase a property in the northern end of my electorate, in Engadine, or in the middle, in Helensburgh. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (21:20): I make a brief contribution to the debate on the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which will replace the recently started First Home Buyer Choice scheme with greater access to stamp duty exemptions and concessions by lifting existing thresholds. Home ownership in Australia is declining, particularly by young people. Housing prices have ballooned and are now out of reach for those on low or moderate incomes. We know that owning your own home provides stability and security, particularly when life circumstances change, with wider community benefits. That is why I will not oppose the bill and why I did not oppose the previous Government's scheme. I support changes to increase resident requirements from six months to 12 months, which will help ensure that subsidies target genuine first home buyers. The existing requirement—for owners to live in their new home for only six months—makes it attractive to anyone buying with the intention of flipping the property as an investment.

I accept the Government's argument that the vast majority of first home buyers—84 per cent—purchase a property for under \$1 million and will be better off under the bill. Those first home buyers will pay either no or low stamp duty, while not incurring an annual land tax. I accept the Government's concern that half of the cost of the current scheme has gone to those purchasing a home for between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, when those purchasing such a home make up only 13 percent of first home buyers. Some think that both schemes should be in place, but I cannot justify supporting an estimated further \$700 million being diverted to first home buyers, away from homelessness. Subsidies must focus on those most in need.

Those looking for their first home for between \$1 million and \$1.5 million may be concerned about now having to pay stamp duty, but the evidence suggests that first home buyer subsidies do little for housing affordability and can even inflate prices. Indeed, a September 2022 Productivity Commission review found that nearly \$3 billion given to first home buyers in subsidies worked against improving affordability, concluding that this money would have been better spent on preventing homelessness. The reality is that most people accessing first home buyer subsidies would be able to buy a home eventually anyway, while those experiencing housing stress or who are at risk of homelessness will never have the option to buy a home and to take advantage of these reforms. We must shift the focus on housing affordability to strengthening safety nets for those who will never be able to afford a home, including by increasing access to social and affordable housing and by making the private rental market fair and affordable.

Right now, low-income earners, those who are frail, those who have complex needs in physical health, mental health, or drugs and alcohol, and women escaping domestic and family violence are being left behind.

Their future is dire in what can only be described as one of the tightest rental markets in the State's history. If we do not act, homelessness rates will become out of control. Funding needs to be directed towards the shortfall of around 50,000 social housing homes. We need to build 5,000 new social housing properties every year just to deal with the current social housing waiting list. We need to improve the quality of public housing, provide more accessibility options and support older people who are being squeezed out of the private rental market. We need to work in partnership with the community and cooperative housing sectors, while expanding the shared equity program. Much needs to be done, and I look forward to working with all sides of the House to improve housing affordability for those most in need.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (21:24): For too many young people in my electorate of Charlestown, across the Hunter region and all across New South Wales, home ownership has become a pipe dream. For far too many right now, the Australian dream is way too far out of reach. Skyrocketing prices, flat wages, interest rate increases and the economic turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic, the recession and 12 years of a Liberal-National Government aimed at helping its mates at the big end of town have hurt first home buyers. Either they have delayed purchasing a home, putting off other big life events as a result, or they have given up on ever stepping foot on the ladder of property ownership. This has economic consequences for not just individuals but also the broader community. It means more people living in insecure housing for longer; it means more economic insecurity and more stress.

I will talk about property prices for a moment. In the suburb of Charlestown in my electorate, the median price for a house is \$900,000; five years ago, in May of 2018, the median price for a property in Charlestown was \$600,000. It is a similar story in other suburbs in my electorate over five years. Kotara has seen median house prices rise by more than \$300,000. Prices in Warners Bay have gone from \$625,000 to \$910,000. Cardiff has seen the median price rise to \$707,500 from \$490,000. In Eleebana the median price has climbed by half a million dollars, from \$770,000 to \$1.23 million. These increases, which have come across the board, have been absolutely demoralising to potential first home buyers in my electorate. I have heard directly from constituents in acute housing stress, so far away from owning their own home that it no longer factors into their short-, medium- or long-term thinking at all.

One New Lambton resident who has rented a two-bedroom apartment in the area, where the median price of a home has risen from \$700,000 to just over \$1 million, said to me, "It's pretty much a non-starter for me. I am a really good saver. I don't really spend money. But, with house prices the way they are, I just can't see ever really owning my own home. Even renting is getting unaffordable in this area." It is not surprising that young people are giving up on the dream. Rents are spiking. We are all familiar with the impact of the cost of living on so many household budgets. Just making ends meet can be difficult, let alone saving for a house deposit. That is why this bill is so important. The First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill will help alleviate these pressures for five out of six first home buyers. It will help more people, more singles, couples and families, take their first steps onto the property ladder.

The bill will amend the Duties Act 1997 to make the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme more accessible, raising the threshold for stamp duty exemption from \$650,000 to \$800,000. It will reduce stamp duty for first home buyers of properties worth up to \$1 million. It will amend the First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000 to make sure that the First Home Owner Grant goes to people who will actually live in a home for a reasonable amount of time. It will also meet one of Labor's key election commitments: The Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022 will be amended, doing away with the former Government's complex, unfair "forever tax". As the Premier has said, the bill will create a fairer and simpler system to ensure more first home buyers have a chance of owning their first property. From 1 July this year, these changes will apply to first home buyers who sign a contract to purchase a home and the changes will ensure that the assistance will be better targeted, with protections to ensure the integrity of the scheme.

The legislation will help more young people, particularly those on average incomes and in regional areas such as Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. I note that a lot of debate in this place on the previous bill was about people on the other side having a commitment to regional communities. I do not know why they do not support this bill in its current form, because it is aimed at assisting people who are living in the regions. More importantly, the legislation will not disadvantage the people who opted into the land tax scheme. They will not be expected to pay stamp duty retrospectively. This Government's scheme will help more first home buyers, who currently would potentially be locked out of ever owning their own home, to take that step and buy a property so they can raise a family in a place that is safe and secure—a place that they can call home.

We will do that in an economically responsible way. I understand that members on the Opposition benches want to move amendments to keep their unfair forever tax system and adopt our fair and sensible proposal. That would cost the taxpayer some \$700 million. At a time when an incredible budget crisis has been left to us, that is

totally economically irresponsible. Taxpayers' funds are not a magic pudding. That was obviously what those on the other side thought when they were in government and why we are in a huge financial mess in this State, with \$180 billion worth of debt, an \$11 billion deficit and \$7 billion of unfunded risks that those opposite hid while they were in government.

Unlike the previous stamp duty or forever tax scheme, the benefits of this Government's policy will not go disproportionately to the more well off. Under the previous model, those purchasing more expensive homes got bigger discounts, funded by the New South Wales taxpayer, compared with those purchasing a more modestly priced property. Everyone in New South Wales bore the cost of that scheme, but only the 13 per cent of people who could afford a million-dollar property for their first home received the lion's share of the benefit. The bill is good for our State. It is good for the majority of first home buyers, but it will be especially good for people living in my electorate and in regional electorates. After all, 45 per cent of people who received first home buyer assistance in the last financial year were based in regional areas. In contrast, 16 per cent benefited from the previous Government's land tax scheme.

In addition to our first home buyer scheme, this Government has ensured that our policies will support some of the most vulnerable members of our community. The member for Sydney rightly raised the plight of people who are homeless and who are victim-survivors of domestic violence. I appreciate and am thankful for his concern. I am pleased that the Government is expanding the Shared Equity Home Buyer Helper program to include access for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. We have established a taskforce to improve housing outcomes for domestic violence victim-survivors, and I am incredibly pleased that Domestic Violence NSW has agreed to join that task force. Recommendations from the taskforce will be considered as part of the process in preparing the upcoming budget.

Providing safer housing and greater financial security is an incredibly important way in which the New South Wales Government can support domestic violence victim-survivors to achieve better long-term outcomes. It is one step that the New South Wales Government is taking in what will be an ongoing path towards making New South Wales a safer place for victim-survivors. This Labor Government is absolutely committed to helping people—especially those people who most need help—to access safe and secure housing, and to fixing the housing crisis in this State. The bill is an important first step. I commend it to the House.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (21:33): I contribute to debate on the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. We come to this place amidst a crippling housing affordability crisis across our State, particularly in Sydney. The context of the debate is that we are looking at an increase in the average Sydney house price in the last quarter of 1.5 per cent—that is about \$18,300—to a median sale price of \$1.459 million. Unit prices have increased 0.7 per cent over the three months to March to a median price of over \$758,000. When we look at those facts and at what the housing market is currently doing for buyers across Sydney, we should be quite concerned about the position that the Government is taking today. In legislating its changes, it is shutting out the vast majority of people who are trying to buy a home from accessing any support as first home buyers.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Rich people like your mates on the North Shore. Some can afford it more than others.

Ms FELICITY WILSON: Those opposite do not seem to understand that people who want to buy a home live everywhere across this State, in every community—regional communities, city communities, in my electorate of North Shore and in the electorate of the member for Prospect. The member can make his own contribution to the debate; he does not need to contribute during mine. We just heard from the member for Charlestown that even in her community the median house price is well over \$1 million in a number of suburbs. What the Government is proposing to us and to the people of New South Wales is a massive step backwards in any support for first home buyers trying to tackle the housing affordability crisis.

Everybody knows that stamp duty has been around for an incredibly long time. It was first introduced in 1865. The Minns Government is stating that that tax from the past is its tax of the future. It is winding back any attempt at reform of stamp duty in New South Wales when it is commonly agreed that stamp duty is an incredibly bad tax. We have known that since at least the 2010 Henry Tax Review, although most of us knew it was a problem before that. That review stated unequivocally that reforming stamp duty, and particularly abolishing stamp duty, would have significant impacts on housing affordability. Labor is reinstating stamp duty for more people across New South Wales without giving them any choice. It is also saying that it wants to govern for the few rather than the many.

About half of those in my community rent, about 20 per cent of people own a property with a mortgage and about 30 per cent of people own a property outright. It is a community where 50 per cent of renters are facing the incredibly difficult challenges of rising rental costs and reduced availability of rental properties. They also

cannot get onto the property ladder. Labor's bill says to that 50 per cent of my community who are renters that they cannot live in their community if they want to own a home, because in my community the average price of an apartment is over \$1.3 million. What does that do? The demographics in my community skew younger; millennials are the main demographic. We have young professionals. I speak on this bill as a representative of a community that has a lot of young people who cannot afford to buy a home, and as a millennial myself.

Labor is saying to younger people in this State that it has no view on ensuring that all young people can access the property market, when we know how crucial access to property ownership is for individuals' long-term financial security. That is what the Government is saying to people in communities like mine and across New South Wales, including many individuals in Charlestown, Heathcote and Prospect. All the communities represented in this Parliament will have many first home buyers who will be shut out of accessing the market because of the retrograde step that Labor is taking with this legislation. The former Government tried to provide choice by legislating on this issue. We said to individuals that they are best placed to determine their own financial pursuits and the best way to utilise their own money, whether that be buying an investment property without these kinds of incentives or buying a first home and choosing to have a short-term land tax cost versus the huge up-front cost of stamp duty.

I referred earlier to that \$1.3 million average in my community. That attracts over \$55,000 in stamp duty. Under the reform that we introduced, first home buyers would instead pay just over \$3,000 in annual property tax. That would get them into their first home much sooner. I acknowledge that members opposite have this notion that the tax is forever. They do not seem to have noticed the stats that state that first home buyers generally stay in a property for a maximum of 10.5 years. First home buyers are shackled by stamp duty today. We know that stamp duty is an impingement on mobility. When the stats state a maximum of 10.5 years, members opposite know for a fact that it is not a forever tax and that it is a choice. No longer giving individuals choice about their access to the housing market is taking away their ability to get into the property market. I refer to the Herald's editorial on 24 May. Obviously, Labor made a promise at the election to abolish stamp duty in some way or form, but the article stated:

But it delivers little benefit: the eligibility to escape stamp duty is so limited it does little to help young people shut out of home ownership, not least because average and median house prices are way above the stamp duty-free threshold or concessional rate.

Labor is legislating concessions that people will not even be able to access. I refer to the thousands of home buyers that will be left out in the cold. In suburbs such as Camden, Oran Park and Sutherland, the median house price is between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. The legislation that Labor is putting before the House will shut people out of home ownership in their communities and in my community. It will shut them out of home ownership forever. Government members might have called First Home Buyer Choice a forever tax—a misnomer—but they are now shutting first home buyers out forever.

People in my generation, as the member for Charlestown said, are opting out of the notion of ever being eligible to buy a home in Sydney or across New South Wales. That might seem like a strange concept to most people in this place, particularly members on the other side of the Chamber, because generationally they have had access to the types of incentives that young people have not had. I am a renter. I am a single mother with small children. Where is the capacity for people like me to get onto the property ladder? They do not have the opportunity to access the property ladder. This legislation entrenches that for the long term. We strongly believe that people should have the choice to make decisions that best reflect their personal financial circumstances and this legislation takes that choice away.

This legislation was an obsession for Labor members last year. They were obsessed with it during the debate. I am not sure if they understood the crux of it and the choice that it was providing people in the communities they represented then and in the communities they represent now, having won more electorates in the election. They are forcing young people to pay tens of thousands of dollars—\$40,000, \$50,000 or \$60,000—in stamp duty and if they cannot put down a 20 per cent deposit, they have to pay lenders mortgage insurance on top.

Members opposite are not just putting people back years from buying a home; they are telling them they can never buy a home. That is in almost every postcode across Sydney, let alone outside of Sydney. The local community that I represent has a high young and working population because it is so close to the city. I am incredibly concerned about what this legislation will do to them. As I said, half of my community rent. There is a notion that they will always have to rent and therefore be at the whim and vagaries of the rental market, property availability and increasing prices, as is currently occurring, rather than having the financial security and long-term stability of getting into the housing market.

The evidence proves over and again that stamp duty is a reductive tax. We know it prevents mobility. We know it prevents people from making choices about their lives. It does not reflect the way in which we want people

to make decisions or take up opportunities, which will ensure they can move between communities and do things that are best for them. Whacking this huge up-front cost on individuals ensures that only those who already have a lot of wealth can dream of owning a property. I know Labor members want to throw out a lot of misnomers about silvertails and wealthy individuals, but they are actually lambasting their own communities where the median property price is also over a million dollars. We know that leading real estate bodies and experts have rallied against this legislation. [*Extension of time*]

I note that one of the key components of the Liberal-Nationals election campaign was to extend access to First Home Buyer Choice to women and particularly victim-survivors escaping domestic violence. A number of members talked about domestic violence this evening. Older women are the group that has experienced the highest increase in poverty in our nation. The evidence shows that owning a home is more significant for long-term financial security than even having a high superannuation balance. The commitment that we made to ensure that those escaping domestic violence, even if they may have purchased a property with a former partner, are considered and counted among first home buyers has been left out of this legislation. That is very concerning because we all agree that this cohort of individuals deserves a new chance and an opportunity. They are more often women than men and quite often women with children who need and deserve a secure home. I encourage members opposite to consider that and incorporate it into the legislation. They still have a chance to do that.

I will end on another quote from the Herald op-ed on 24 May, which was pretty scathing of Labor and its approach. We all understand the housing affordability crisis and every member will talk about it. I do not know how many people in this House live the housing affordability crisis. We are well paid compared to the rest of the community. We are incredibly privileged compared to most of the community. If we want to walk in the shoes of the individuals who need and deserve access to this sort of support to get into the property market, then we should be listening to and engaging with all those individuals and looking at the barriers that are preventing them from achieving long-term financial security. The Herald talks about its support for phasing out stamp duty. It stated:

Lifting the threshold on eligibility to avoid paying stamp duty is an illusory fix for the housing crisis.

The Minns government's persistence with an outmoded money raiser ... is a retrograde step that risks NSW falling behind as other governments look at reforming a major source of revenue for state coffers.

I call on the Labor Government to reconsider this "retrograde step" of continuing with stamp duty as the main tax on first home buyers getting into the property market. I ask them to consider long-term reforms and how incredibly negative stamp duty is for people across New South Wales, and to take bold steps to create change that will contribute to addressing the housing affordability crisis.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (21:47): It is an absolute pleasure to address the House on the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which is another key piece in the reform agenda of the Minns Labor Government. It comes from a commitment during the election campaign to help young families, individuals and couples who need a home. This piece of legislation is key to the reform agenda for New South Wales and will lead to greater affordability for first home buyers not only in my community in Prospect and throughout Western Sydney but also throughout regional New South Wales.

The bill will amend the Duties Act 1997, the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022 and the First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000. It will help more people buy their first home and give them assistance during the current housing affordability crisis that was caused by the previous 12 years of a Tory government that did nothing to help working families throughout New South Wales. Under the bill, the first home buyer stamp duty exemption threshold will increase from \$650,000 to \$800,000. The concession threshold will increase from \$800,000 to \$1 million. Stamp duty will be abolished for first home buyers buying houses up to \$800,000 and will be significantly reduced for homes between \$800,000 and \$1 million.

That reflects my community and the house prices in Prospect. In fact, those are the house prices in the communities of Mount Druitt, Wollongong, Heathcote, East Hills and other places. They are not multimillion-dollar houses like those on the North Shore or in the eastern suburbs. It is houses at around \$800,000, which families want to be able to afford to buy. My own family bought a house in Greystanes in 2011—the first home for me and my young family. The average price was \$495,000, which was how much we paid for it. House prices have gone through the roof since then. In my suburb they are increasing by around 30 per cent a year, which is unbelievable. We need to address that. Schedule 1 to the bill will amend the Duties Act 1997 No. 123:

Schedule 1 [1] amends various residence requirements under the *Duties Act 1997* to require a person to reside in a home as the person's principal place of residence for a continuous period of at least 12 months to be eligible for a duty exemption or concession.

Schedule 1 [2] provides that to be an eligible agreement or transfer for the purposes of the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme, a property having a private dwelling built on it must have a dutiable value of less than \$1,000,000, rather than \$800,000 as is currently the case. ...

Schedule 1 [3] provides that to be exempt from the payment of duty under the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme in relation to an eligible agreement or transfer, a property having a private dwelling built on it must have a dutiable value of less than \$800,000, rather than \$650,000 as is currently the case. ...

Schedule 1 [7] inserts a transitional provision to make clear to which agreements or transfers the proposed amendments to the *Duties Act 1997* apply.

Schedule 2 to the bill will amend the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022:

Schedule 2 prevents a person making an election to pay property tax rather than stamp duty on a transfer of land occurring on or after 1 July 2023, unless the transfer conforms with an agreement for sale or transfer entered into before 1 July 2023.

Schedule 3 to the bill will amend the First Home Owner Grant and Shared Equity Act 2000:

Schedule 3 requires first home buyers to reside in the home as their principal place of residence for a continuous period of at least 12 months to be eligible for a First Home Owner Grant.

Those quite clear reforms overturn some of the things the previous Coalition Government put in place that really benefited only the wealthy end of town and did not help families in Western Sydney. The home buyers in the electorate of Prospect are young families, couples and individuals—hardworking members of our community. Five out of six future first home buyers in the electorate of Prospect will benefit from the scheme. I am sure that is reflected throughout New South Wales and certainly in our Western Sydney community.

Mr Alister Henskens: So one in six will not.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT: Here is the man who called himself Rumpole. Do you have something to say?

Mr Alister Henskens: No.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT: No? You should be hanging your heads in shame rather than yelling out abuse. Five out of six future first home buyers will benefit from the scheme. That was not the case for the previous legislation from the previous Government. The targeted assistance will provide first home buyers with an apartment or a modest house in Western Sydney. That is important because people want a home to raise their families in and feel secure. It is becoming increasingly difficult for young people, families and couples to buy a home for the first time, especially when they are competing against wealthy investors and established home owners. The bill will help more young people, more working people on average incomes and more people in regional areas to become home owners. About 84 per cent of first home buyers pay less than \$1 million for their first home. Just 13 per cent of home buyers can afford a home between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. The bill will apply to first home buyers who sign a contract to purchase a home on or after 1 July 2023 and will improve the integrity of first home buyer assistance programs in New South Wales.

I will give some examples in the electorate of Prospect where the bill will have a positive impact. First, a family in Seven Hills paying about \$755,000 for their first apartment will not pay any stamp duty and will save \$21,844 under the bill introduced by the Minns Labor Government. A family buying their first home in either Smithfield or Fairfield West, where the average apartment price is some \$906,000, will only have to pay \$16,000 instead of the \$36,000 that they had to pay under the Liberals—plus they will not have to pay land tax. A number of concerns have been raised by the Opposition. The old Liberal-Nationals Government's scheme only gave first home buyers the option to avoid stamp duty if they were prepared to pay the land tax.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): Order! The member for Wahrenonga will come to order.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT: That gave too much assistance to people who could already afford homes worth more than \$1 million and not enough to the majority of first home buyers who are saving to buy more modest first homes. The Liberal-Nationals Government's scheme just replaced one tax with another tax and looked after the wealthy end of town, not working singles, couples or families in Western Sydney. The First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 will support first home buyers who want to achieve their dream of buying their first home and finding a safe and secure place to live and raise their family. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (21:55): The Greens support the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. While The Greens want to see an equitable transition from stamp duty to a broad-based, progressive land tax, that is not what the First Home Buyer Choice scheme amounts to. Thanks to our Greens colleagues in the Australian Capital Territory, who helped to shepherd in a landmark stamp duty reform in collaboration with the Territory Labor Government, we know what genuine reform in this area looks like. The First Home Buyer Choice scheme is simply not it.

The inquiry secured by The Greens in the upper House when the scheme was first introduced by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government showed us that the First Home Buyer Choice scheme was neither a housing affordability measure nor an equitable transition away from stamp duty to land tax. So what was it? It

was little more than a half-baked attempt at housing policy reform that was always intended to be temporary and that the former Coalition Government rushed through in the final sitting weeks before an election. The Greens did not support it as good policy then, and we do not support it now. While we absolutely support long-overdue reforms to stamp duty in this State, and we want that reform to go further towards implementing a progressive land tax system, we cannot have the complex conversation required to do that if we use scare-tactic rhetoric about a forever tax on the home. The Greens and progressive housing tax advocates expect better from Labor, and I hope that as the conversation continues we can leave that kind of rhetoric aside and talk about the big challenges we face in the housing system.

In the past six months since the scheme was introduced, it is reported to have "saved" first home buyers \$199.8 million in stamp duty. But to put it another way, the State Government has forfeited almost \$200 million to subsidise the private property market. Imagine what that almost \$200 million could have done to actually support housing affordability in the midst of a worsening crisis. We could have built new public housing. We could have refurbished existing public housing dwellings that are currently uninhabitable and therefore sitting empty. We could have provided cost-of-living support for renters struggling to meet their weekly housing costs. The list goes on. Instead, nearly \$200 million was used to marginally subsidise the cost of home ownership, predominantly for the slim minority of first home buyers who buy properties worth between \$1 million and \$1.5 million.

Over the past few weeks we have heard from people in our communities and we have heard concerns being raised within the Newtown electorate and beyond. Understandably people are concerned that rising property prices are making it impossible for them to make the jump to buy a family home near their schools, their public open spaces or their communities. We know that many people are absolutely desperate right now to scrape funds together to purchase a home so that they can escape the completely cooked rental market, even if it means going into massive debt and buying into an overheated property market to do so.

It is clear that the entire private housing system is broken for renters, first home buyers and people with a mortgage across the board. The only ones not suffering now are big investors and property developers who are continuing to profit from other people's desperation and housing insecurity. It is also clear that funding private home ownership is not the solution. Instead, we need to reform rental laws to better protect tenants, offer longer leases, implement rent controls and freeze interest rates now, as well as rents. Federally, we need to address tax handouts and concessions. We need to advocate for more than what the Federal Government is investing in funding for public and social housing.

Rental prices have continued to ascend to astronomical heights as vacancy rates have plummeted, painting an incredibly grim picture for people who rent across the State. In their contributions to this debate a number of members have talked about the rental crisis in their areas. I urge members to look at this more closely in the coming weeks when I lead for The Greens and introduce a rent-freeze bill to this Chamber. We can look at putting in place a two-year rent freeze to help ease the pressure on people who are currently facing a rental crisis while we move through the reforms this new Labor Government has introduced that address things like ending unfair no-grounds evictions and other changes that would see a pressure lift on the cost of living.

We need time to get that legislation and those reforms right. I note the Minister for Planning is in the Chamber. He has a vision for how we can increase supply. We need to increase the supply of affordable housing in New South Wales. While we go about working together on that project and ending unfair evictions, putting in place a two-year rent freeze would be a sensible measure. We saw the benefit it had during the pandemic. It is a sensible measure that will take the pressure off families and other people renting right now while we make those legislative changes. Rental prices have continued to increase to astronomical heights. There is cold comfort in the promise of being able to choose between a lump sum, stamp duty and an annual property tax for the two-thirds of low-income renters who can barely afford to pay their weekly rent, let alone even think about the idea of purchasing their own home.

The Greens support raising the stamp duty exemption threshold in this legislation to \$800,000 and the concession threshold to \$1 million in recognition of the fact that 84 per cent of first home buyers purchase a home for less than \$1 million. We welcome the extension of residence requirements for first home buyer benefits from six months to 12 months. The Greens will always support closing any loophole that allows investors to reap the benefits that were made for people who intend to live in their homes. We know that the real issue underpinning every debate on housing affordability in this place is the fact that investors and property developers are still making a profit from housing, which should be a universally accessible human right.

Stamp duty may be an old-fashioned tax that we want to see phased out, but it is far from the only barrier that people face when it comes to housing affordability in this State. Stamp duty should never have been scrapped at the expense of losing revenue that could have been used to fund real solutions to the housing affordability crisis, like providing public and social housing, and homelessness and crisis services for those who need it most. A

healthy tax base that can fund the social services our communities need is one of the best ways to redistribute public wealth, and address inequality and financial disadvantage.

While The Greens absolutely support the bill before us and rejected the so-called First Home Buyer Choice scheme, we recognise that it is important to talk about the idea of a shift from stamp duty to a broad-based progressive and equality-based land tax. But we will never be able to have that very hard and complex debate if we resort to tactics where social media tiles and media grabs start using phrases like "a forever tax on your home". We need to move beyond that. The people of New South Wales expect better from us. We need to find a solution to move forward and we need to have a complex conversation about developers, investors and those who are making a profit out of the insecure housing market that is causing people in our communities so much stress.

The Greens support the bill. We look forward to seeing well-thought-out and substantive reforms that deal genuinely with improving housing affordability in this State. We hope that we can move beyond the wedge politics that invokes discussions of forever taxes, nimbys or yimbys. We hope to find a solution that focuses on delivering affordable social housing and significant rental reforms for our communities.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (22:04): I make a brief contribution in support of the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I commend the work by the Treasurer in the other place, and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, in introducing the bill to the House as one of the Government's mandated bills to address housing affordability for first home buyers. Owning a home has traditionally been considered the great Australian dream. Owning your first home is often seen as a significant milestone in life, representing financial success and a form of investment for the future. The former Government's scheme known as the forever tax only gave first home buyers the option to avoid stamp duty if they were prepared to pay a yearly land tax instead. That scheme will not help first home buyers with the affordability crisis. In fact, that scheme will destroy the Australian dream by imposing a forever tax on those that are vulnerable and very desperate to enter the housing market for the first time.

At the election we promised that, if Labor formed government, we would reform this area for first home buyer grants and tax incentives. The bill goes to the heart of that commitment, and we ask the Opposition to respect the mandate given by the people of New South Wales. I understand that the Opposition will be asking that we keep both schemes—that is, that we keep the former Government's forever tax and Labor's proposed first home buyer grant scheme. However, if both schemes are kept, each of the two programs will cost the people of New South Wales \$700 million per annum, a total of \$1.4 billion annually.

This proposal by the Opposition goes to the heart of the reckless spending that the former Government has been accustomed to. In fact, since coming into government and having the finances of the former Government exposed, we find that we have inherited a massive debt that will be \$187 billion by 2026. We have inherited an annual interest bill of \$7 billion, a budget black hole of \$7.1 billion and a current deficit of \$11 billion. History will show that former Government members were not economic managers. In fact, they are now exposed as economic wreckers or vandals.

The voters of New South Wales resoundingly endorsed our approach to address the issue of housing affordability for many first home buyers. In fact, 84 per cent of first home buyers will receive a boost to help them compete with investors and established home owners. The bill ensures that the assistance given by the Government is appropriately targeted to those who need it most—

Mr Alister Henskens: You didn't write this.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: I did—without bringing about detrimental impacts upon the broader housing market. I note my contribution to debate is above the member's intelligence level. It is worth examining precisely how the bill will meet its objectives in aiding first home buyers in our State. In introducing the bill, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces clearly articulated the specific measures that will address concerns. They are worth mentioning again, given the extent to which the bill will instigate profound enhancement to the lives of so many people in this State.

I mentioned that this bill will better direct Government support to first home buyers, and one way in which it achieves this is through making the eligibility criteria for a duty exemption or concession more stringent. The Duties Act 1997 will be amended to require a first home buyer to live in the property for at least 12 months, which is longer than the current six months, to meet the eligibility criteria. This measure will more accurately target Government support to first home buyers—those wishing to purchase a place in which to live—rather than those looking for a place in which to invest. The bill will further amend the Duties Act 1997 to increase the values of properties that fall under the scope of the First Home Buyer Assistance Scheme. The first home buyer stamp duty exemption threshold will increase from \$650,000 to \$800,000, and the concession threshold will increase from \$800,000 to \$1 million. For example, a family in Western Sydney—similar to the example given by the member

for Prospect—who purchases their first home for under \$800,000 will not pay any stamp duty and will save around \$22,000 under Labor. This will apply to first home buyers who sign a contract to purchase a home on or after 1 July 2023.

The legislation will also improve the integrity and targeting of first home buyer assistance programs by increasing the requirement to live in the home from six months to 12 months. This residence requirement will apply to the First Home Buyer Assistance Scheme, first home buyer grants and duty deferral for off-the-plan purchases. The former Government's forever tax will end on 30 June 2023. People who choose this tax will continue to pay land tax until they sell that property. They will not be asked to pay their stamp duty retrospectively. The applicable values for vacant blocks of land remain unchanged. The former Government's land tax, described as a "forever tax", was introduced just before the election without a mandate. The election was a clear judgement on the former Government's signature policy, which in the long term will result in first home buyers who opted for the forever tax paying thousands of dollars more than what is proposed under this bill.

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces made it clear who were the beneficiaries of the policies of the former Government. In summary, it was the purchasers of properties valued between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, who could opt out of paying stamp duty and opt in to paying a forever tax, or land tax. This Government wants home ownership to be within the grasp of as many people as is practicable. The amendments brought about by the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 will go quite some way towards achieving this goal. I thank the Treasurer and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for their work in introducing this important bill to the House. It will be the difference between people owning their first home or remaining in the rental market forever and crushing their Australian dream of home ownership. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (22:12): I join in debate on the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 to point out that the legislation builds on one part of the Coalition's existing program to assist first home buyers by extending the threshold by \$150,000 and by requiring a person to reside in a home as the person's principal place of residence for a continuous period of at least 12 months for that person to be eligible for a duty exemption or concession. That is pretty much it—the beginning, middle and end of what Labor calls reform. The important part of Labor's thin policy lies in what it does not do for our State. Housing is one of the defining issues of this generation. Across the nation in almost every city and town there are issues of affordability, supply and suitability. First home buyers face a tough market, particularly now with interest rate increases biting hard. Inflation has been rising.

Families are helping out if they have the means. Students are needing accommodation; short-term rental properties are locking out first home buyers; and there are tourism, migration and post-COVID impacts on housing choices. The list of factors affecting property prices and availability is extensive. I make two points in relation to this bill. First, why is the Government so afraid to give the people of New South Wales choice? On the Opposition side of the Chamber sit members of parties who work to give people choice in their lives and options for their decision-making. We do not look at a problem with our first thought being, "Can we trust the people of New South Wales to make their own choice?" or "What can we do that has been done before, and present it to the media as something new and insightful?" Choice should not be underrated. Revenue NSW data from 30 May reveals that 5,210 properties were purchased by taking advantage of the Coalition's First Home Buyer Choice.

This is about real people. In human terms, that is 8,461 home buyers who have been helped already, 2,865 of whom are aged 30 or younger. The up-front duty saved by these new home owners amounts to \$199 million. In the Murray-Lower Darling the up-front duty already saved is \$181,000; in the Riverina, it is \$543,000. First Home Buyer Choice offers an alternative and it is an opt-in decision. It is not mandatory. The former Government made it available and the public responded by taking up the opportunity. First Home Buyer Choice should not be thrown away just because it perhaps does not fit with Labor's ideology, or because giving people choice about how they will spend their money is not the Labor way. People are signing up. They are saving money. They are getting into their first homes.

Secondly, where is the Government's ambition to be better—to be smarter than to offer just a raising of the threshold? It was the NSW Productivity Commission's submission of September 2021 to the Federal inquiry into housing affordability and supply in Australia that pointed out the challenge for government—and what will be the true test of its economic credentials. The Productivity Commission noted that among the State's major revenue sources, stamp duty on property is widely considered the most inefficient tax. "Inefficient" means that stamp duty imposes the largest economic cost of all existing taxes. The commission contrasted this with a policy direction in favour of a broad-based land tax on the unimproved value of land, which it described as "the most efficient tax available to the States ..." and said:

Switching, therefore, from transfer duty to a broad-based land tax would enhance economic efficiency in the housing market and support a more equitable distribution of the tax burden. It would also provide a stable and sustainable revenue source to fund government services.

The commission also argued that, without underlying tax system reform, a government risked making things worse for home buyers through its dabbling in the housing marketplace—I emphasise that point. In the words of the commission, the problem with first home buyer assistance is that it can "significantly increase housing demand without necessarily increasing supply". The commission also stated:

Moreover, the incentives bring forward purchases that may have happened anyway, as well as bring people into the market who would not have otherwise been there.

The Productivity Commission concluded:

Without a commensurate supply response, this places upward pressure on prices and reduces housing affordability.

The other comments the Productivity Commission makes are around mobility. We talk about the youth of today and the challenge of entering the housing market that is related to the ability of young people to find secure employment. As part of that, they may need to travel to other locations and will also need to find housing in those situations. We can keep going on the good advice from economic professionals by taking this back to the Ken Henry led tax review of 2010, which concluded that stamp duty on property transactions is "inconsistent with the needs of a modern tax system". *The Sydney Morning Herald* editorial of 13 June 2022 uttered a sigh of relief when the Coalition got stuck into turning these important messages into action. The editorial read:

A much-needed overhaul of property taxation is finally afoot ... There is an encouraging consensus about what should replace stamp duty. The Henry review, the Australian Productivity Commission and the 2020 NSW Review of Federal Financial Relations are among many to conclude a broad-based tax on land is the right substitute.

Does the Government want to be thought of as a progressive government? If so, it should try to follow this endorsement from *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

The Herald supports the abolition of stamp duty and welcomes the fresh momentum for property taxation reform in NSW and beyond. Perrotet has shown strong leadership in championing the overhaul of stamp duty. If he succeeds in ridding the state of this antiquated and inefficient tax it will deliver lasting social and economic benefits.

In a comment on Tuesday to *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the writer noted that, "Apart from the Australian Capital Territory, no other State or Territory has had the courage to introduce the reform to land tax." It should be noted that the Australian Capital Territory introduced that land tax reform under the current Commonwealth Labor Minister for Finance, Katy Gallagher. Even Victoria's Government now sees no downside—but plenty of upside—in replacing up-front stamp duty with an annual property tax for commercial and industrial property. Even the Labor Government of Victoria gets it. Ideology from those on the Government benches is making way for tax reform that benefits the State economy—although the party still struggles with the idea of giving people ongoing choice and options.

When it comes to progressive reform of the State's economy to make our State fit for the future, this "VIP Lounge" Government prefers to sit quietly in its own comfy lounge. It is a government that thinks reform is about removing "VIP Lounge" signs. It is a government that will remove reform when it comes to stamp duty and will lift the concession rate. It is a government that prefers to sit quietly in its own comfy lounge rather than dig into what needs to be done, whether it be gambling reform, truly assisting first home buyers across the State, or keeping the State's economy agile and responding to need. Where is the Government's sense of reform? All I can see is timidity.

Under the Coalition, New South Wales was the leading State in the nation. It had the strongest economy. It was the greatest builder of infrastructure and was the biggest funder of meaningful social improvement programs. Now we have a government lacking the stomach for reform. The Government is trying so hard not to upset certain interests that no-one has any hope it will get things done. I am committed to choice. I believe the citizens of New South Wales can be trusted to make the decisions that suit them best, and I have read the data that shows First Home Buyer Choice is working.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (22:22): I contribute to the debate on the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I congratulate the member for Albury on his excellent contribution. One of the key matters he emphasised was the fact that the bill does not represent true reform at all. In fact, what the bill does is what governments over many, many years have done, which is to seek to assist first home buyers by merely raising the threshold by which they do not pay stamp duty and give concessional rates for a certain segment of values. What has that actually achieved in the past? What it has achieved, in fact, is ever decreasing percentages of home ownership amongst young people between the ages of 25 and 34.

It has been a failed policy in the past. This Labor Government shows that it is backward thinking rather than forward thinking. It is not prepared to actually embrace a new way of doing things, like the Coalition's

First Home Buyer Choice legislation of last November. In failing to do so, it will condemn young people to not having their own home. That is the shame of the bill. The bill reduces choice and flexibility for first home buyers, which inevitably will reduce housing affordability for many people throughout Sydney, including in my electorate, which is why I oppose the bill unless it is amended.

Significantly, the bill—unlike the Coalition's bill last year—will provide no support whatsoever for first home buyers of properties between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. Those properties are right in the sweet spot of median home prices within Sydney, and certainly within my electorate. The Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022 was introduced in Parliament last year to support the hopes and dreams of young people wanting to enter into the property market for the first time. Let us be clear: Home ownership is part of the great Australian dream and provides young people with financial stability and social stability. It is vital that young people are given the opportunity to enter the housing market, if they choose to, so that they can set themselves up for future success. It provides a great platform for their families and for their future security. Members know that the cost of stamp duty places a significant burden on people when they look to purchase a property. It can take people years and years to save up enough money to pay a lump sum stamp duty payment.

Just eight years ago, when I made my inaugural speech in this place, I said that stamp duty is a terrible tax. It is a tax against transactions. It is a tax against the economy. It damages so much and is such a bad tax that it should not exist. What the Coalition did in a small way last year through the First Home Buyer Choice legislation was to actually take away the distorting effect of lump sum stamp duty and replace it with a much more evenly spread tax over the life of property ownership. It is significant that the rhetoric from Labor about a "forever tax" ignores the fact that the average first home buyer sells their property within 10 years of purchase. They were financially better off by paying the First Home Buyer Choice land tax than they would have been paying a lump sum stamp duty—the sort of lump sum stamp duty that the Labor Party is perpetuating for properties between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. That includes many properties throughout Sydney, including many properties in my electorate.

Members know that the rate of home ownership in New South Wales has fallen from 70 per cent in the 1990s to just 64 per cent last year. In Australia, just 41 per cent of people aged 25 to 34 own a home, and the average age of a first home buyer has now risen to 34. The bill is not reformist legislation like the Coalition's First Home Buyer Choice legislation, which it will repeal. It is, in fact, just a slipping back to the same old way. I think it was Albert Einstein who said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and thinking you are not going to get the same result. What Labor is doing is just going back to the sort of approach with regard to first home buyer support that has failed in the past and has decreased home ownership for young people progressively over decades.

We cannot do the same thing over and over again. The more the Government ignores the challenges of home ownership for the younger generation, the harder it will be to enter the property market. The signature legislation—the brainchild of Dominic Perrottet—that the bill will repeal was truly something different. The proof of the pudding is in the tasting, and people flocked to take advantage of the Coalition's reform. They flocked to pay an annual land tax rather than a large, up-front, lump-sum fee.

The Coalition's legislation gave people a choice. It showed confidence in people to make a decision about what was in their best interest. If they thought they were going to hold the property for 30 years, they would be better off paying a lump sum. If they thought they were going to hold the property for the average period of under 10 years and then upscale and buy another property, they would be better off paying an annual land tax. The Coalition gives people a choice and ignores the great flexibility and variety of people's circumstances within the community; Labor has a one-size-fits-all, Stalinist, "we know best for you" approach, which will make many people worse off as a consequence. Many people will simply be left out of any assistance at all, even many first home buyers who are buying a property under the median house price in Sydney.

This legislation is poor public policy. It is looking backwards rather than looking forward. It is ignoring the great benefits of the Coalition's reform that was introduced last year. It is unfortunate to see, after a promise of a new dawn for many young people, that their hopes and dreams are being snatched away by the Labor Party and this piece of legislation. It is a shame. More than 8,300 people have already taken advantage of the Coalition's policy since January of this year. An incredibly large number of first home buyers are recognising the benefits of the Coalition's policy. Here, the dreams of young people are being snatched away by the Labor Party yet again.

Unfortunately, there is a trend that this new Labor Government has no new ideas. It only has old ideas. Those opposite are plagiarists. They plagiarised their constitutional water reforms from Jeff Kennett and the Victorian Labor Party. They ran a scare campaign on tolls like Bob Carr did in the 1990s. They have got no new ideas. They do not respect a new idea like the Coalition's Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022. They just want to keep being conservative. In fact, they are Tories, if you think about it. They do not like change, they do not like innovation and they do not like progressive ideas like the Coalition's first home buyer choice

legislation. It is unfortunate that we are condemned to four years of such a backward-looking, uninventive, uncreative Labor government.

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (22:32): I oppose the First Home Buyers Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I do so specifically as it seeks to abolish the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act 2022. I wrote to the constituents in my electorate last year, saying:

I am writing to inform you about the NSW Governments new first home buyers policy to help get people into their first home faster ... The new policy means that eligible first home buyers can ditch upfront stamp duty in favour of a smaller annual fee on properties purchased up to \$1.5 million.

I wrote that letter because the policy would have appealed to the more than 50 per cent of people in Manly who are renters and to the great bulk of my entire electorate who are renting. In the initial months after the policy was implemented by the previous Government, it was the suburbs of Curl Curl and Dee Why, which are both in my electorate, that saw the most significant uptake of the program. In fact, they were in the top three suburbs making use of the program. First home owners and unit owners certainly did not reject the policy; rather, they enthusiastically embraced it. The median home price in Manly is sitting at more than \$3.8 million. It is nearly impossible to purchase a home. It is nearly as challenging to buy a unit, with median unit prices at around \$1.79 million, but you can sneak in under \$1.5 million up around the Curl Curl and Dee Why area. That is why First Home Buyer Choice was so enthusiastically embraced by people buying in my electorate.

This evening I have heard from members opposite about how the previous Government initiative helped "those who are well off". To those members who have said how much this will benefit their communities, let me tell them about my community. The people in Manly, Curl Curl and Dee Why work just as hard as those in other parts of New South Wales. In Manly, Curl Curl and Dee Why there are households where both parents work. They work two jobs, juggle the pick-up and drop-off, get grandma and grandpa to help with the kids, look at the cost of groceries, watch the bank account to make ends meet and work their guts out—just as much as other people in this State—to get their foot on the property ladder. In fact, statistics show that it is families and parents in my electorate who disproportionately have both parents back at work full-time to either afford their first home deposit or pay the mortgage.

To have a choice to not pay stamp duty up to \$1.5 million was a godsend. It was the difference for hardworking young people in my community to finally get their foot on the property ladder. Those opposite are taking away the choice. They are taking away the opportunity to buy a property in the place that these people love—where their kids go to school, where they have made friends and where they live with their family. It is an unfair bill. It is a retrograde piece of legislation.

For good reason, the Opposition seeks to amend the bill. We on this side will seek to delete schedule 2 to the bill and we will seek to index the new threshold set out in schedule 1. These amendments ensure first home buyers still have the ability to choose. They ensure the bill provides stamp duty concessions to first home buyers as property prices gradually grow over time. The Opposition seeks to amend the bill because first home buyers in Sydney and across New South Wales deserve choice. I say to my constituents and people who want to live in Curl Curl and Dee Why that this Government will be shutting the door on your opportunity to do that on 1 July when it axes First Home Buyer Choice. From that point, in the eyes of this Government, you are on your own.

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (22:36): I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Tonight it gives me great pleasure to talk about an issue I spoke about in my inaugural speech: home ownership, specifically in relation to housing affordability. I spoke in my first speech about the challenge of home ownership in Sydney, particularly for my generation, generation Y. I stood for election to this place because I passionately believe that members need to play a role in making sure that everyone can have a home in this city, particularly a home they actually own. In my first speech I quoted the great Darryl Kerrigan, the character in *The Castle*, who said, "It's not a house, it's a home." But Darryl Kerrigan also said, "Tell 'em they're dreaming." That is what I say to the Labor Government today as it puts forward this reform. It is abolishing the great choice the current legislation provides. People can either choose up-front stamp duty or a broad-based land tax.

When coming to this place it really should not surprise me that Government members want to abolish this. From what I have seen, they have no 100-day plan. They have no legislative agenda and no ambition for economic reform. Earlier today I quoted from Bob Carr's book, in which he spoke about his great achievements when it came to privatisation. I cannot quote Bob Carr's book for this contribution as he actually did not do a lot of economic reform. Members know that in the last 16 years of Labor the amount of economic reform that took place under that Government was zero.

When members think about great authors and great books, we cannot go past author and journalist Paul Kelly. In his book *The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia*, he wrote about the great

Hawke-Keating Labor Government that made economic reform but went on to write about the continued economic reform under the Howard-Costello Government. All members of this House can agree that the floating of the dollar, asset recycling and the GST were all good economic reforms. As a part of the GST reform there was discussion about abolishing a lot of State taxes, including stamp duty and payroll tax.

Sadly, this Government is not committed to economic reform. It does not have that great burning passion that Hawke and Keating had for micro-economic reform. Post-pandemic it is more important than ever to undertake economic reform and be bold in our agenda because it is all about increasing productivity. Sir Robert Gordon Menzies spoke with great vision about housing affordability. It was only 81 years ago last week that he started his "Forgotten People" addresses about homes material, homes human and homes spiritual. I quoted him in my inaugural speech, and I expand that quote now. Menzies said about home ownership:

The home is the foundation of sanity and sobriety; it is the indispensable condition of continuity; its health determines the health of society as a whole.

Members in this place would agree that home ownership is important for the state of our society. Home ownership is harder to achieve now than it was in the past. In 1981 it took five times the annual salary to buy a Sydney median house. In 2021 it is now 14 times the annual salary. That is extraordinary. When speaking about housing and economic reform we must consider two things: supply and demand. Supply is simply about needing to have more homes in Sydney, but the bill is about needing to support the demand. The best way to assist the demand is the choice between stamp duty or land tax.

I give credit to former Premier Dominic Perrottet, who in his premiership during a third term of government started undertaking the bold economic reform that I spoke about and that Paul Kelly described in *The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia*. Perrottet put together an expert panel, which included the former New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English, to look at the Federation. The panel came up with a number of proposals, including the broad-based land tax stamp duty swap. That led to the economic choice that is at the heart of economic liberalism because it embraced the free market. It is the choice between stamp duty and land tax, which is an economic freedom that leads to liberty. When then Treasurer Perrottet, who went on to be Premier, put forward that reform I supported it. I wrote an opinion piece that appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on 6 December 2021. I said:

What challenges can be solved for the long-term? Housing affordability is a challenge, particularly for young people. Home ownership is their pathway to economic security.

Last year, then-Treasurer Perrottet announced a bold economic reform to give homebuyers the option to pay a long-term broadbased land tax over upfront stamp duty. Stamp duty is a major barrier, costing around \$50,000 based on Sydney's 2020 median house price. This reform is just one of the many credible ideas being considered. But the sooner we get it started, the sooner we get a solution.

It was heartening that former Premier Perrottet got on with it. The Liberals and The Nationals did not take that to an election hoping to win first and then implement it later. It passed the lower House at the time because we had the numbers to pass legislation. The other place is always a bit more challenging. But we made the tough decision to roll the dice and take the challenge, and we were able to pass that reform. In 2020 the then Federal shadow Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, who is now the Federal Treasurer, made an interesting comment about Perrottet's plan. He said:

Subject to the details, we have an open mind to changes of this nature which could make the tax system fairer and improve labour mobility and access to housing.

Thank you, Mr Chalmers. Assistant Treasurer Stephen Jones said, "Stamp duty on housing puts a brake on growth. It hampers labour mobility. It is also a barrier to downsizing and freeing up capital for retirement. It is a State tax, but it has national consequences." I appreciate those words from current Federal Labor politicians. But it does not end just there. Many people on the other side might remember Luke Foley. It is interesting that he put forward an idea, in the 2015 election campaign, that he would be helping first home buyers in New South Wales by allowing them to pay stamp duty on property purchases in instalments of five years. Labor lost that election, so it did not go ahead. But I am keen to acknowledge that Luke Foley put forward a policy that was at least about giving home owners more options in relation to paying their stamp duty.

Finally, one person who needs to be quoted and whom the member for Albury quoted is the Victorian Premier. Last week, in relation to the Victorian budget, although not talking about first home buyers, he talked in a media release about stamp duty reform to boost business, industry and jobs. It said:

The Andrews Labor Government will deliver a landmark reform to abolish stamp duty for commercial and industrial properties, boosting business growth and expansion.

That type of thinking in Victoria, despite it not being for home owners, does actually support businesses. A Labor Government in Victoria, one that has been in government for far longer than the one here, is still coming up with

ideas and embracing ideas thanks to people like Perrottet, who pushed reform in that area. I quote further from Daniel Andrews' media release:

Removing upfront costs on commercial or industrial buildings will make it easier for businesses to get established and thrive, boosting economic activity, jobs and growth. It means a retail business can be more confident about moving to a new location, or a transport operator requiring additional space will have fewer barriers to expand.

You can see fighting words there from Victoria. I will ask something in my last 20 seconds. What happened when we put this great choice? Well, 8,354 first home buyers took up the offer. They saved \$197 million on 5,140 properties. I say to those opposite that 2,331 live in Western Sydney. I do not support abolishing choice in this bill.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (22:46): I speak in opposition to the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 insofar as it seeks to abolish First Home Buyer Choice. The contrast could not be clearer. On this side of the House, we stand for giving first home buyers a choice. Those opposite do not. This bill is another sign that our State will stall—and, even worse, go backwards—under the new Labor Government. Effectively, this bill will remove the choice, currently available to first home buyers purchasing a property valued at up to \$1.5 million, to opt for a small annual property tax instead of up-front transfer duty. It will extend the residency requirement for which a first home owner or an eligible Department of Housing, community tenancy scheme or Aboriginal Housing Office tenant must occupy a home or otherwise incur a full transfer duty from six months to 12 months.

This change also applies to provisions about the principal place of residence for owner-occupied off-the-plan purchases and raises the threshold for a full exemption from transfer under the First Home Buyer Assistance scheme from \$650,000 to \$800,000 and the threshold for a concessional rate of transfer duty from \$800,000 to \$1 million. Note that no change is being made to the threshold for full exemption for transfer duty for the purchase of a vacant block of residential land, which is currently \$350,000.

Much of New South Wales is facing serious housing pressure and rental pressure. The solution to this pressure is not to remove a policy that has been taken up by over 8,300 first home buyers since First Home Buyer Choice began on 16 January 2023. Around 440 first home buyers are benefitting every single week. First home buyers have voted with their feet in favour of the Liberals' and The Nationals' First Home Buyer Choice legislation. I note that the Minister in his second reading speech claimed that First Home Buyers Choice has been rejected by the people of our State. If it has been rejected, first home buyers would not have embraced it. If it has been rejected, why have two in every three eligible first home buyers taken it up? Removing the First Home Buyer Choice scheme will simply make it harder for people to enter the property market. It will force people to move away from their jobs, their support networks and their home communities. Individuals and families across New South Wales have collectively saved more than \$197 million since the scheme opened on 16 January 2023. But under the new Labor Government's so-called solution to housing affordability, thousands of first home buyers will be denied the basic choice between a small annual tax and a large up-front fee.

I address the proposed changes to stamp duty exemptions and concessions contained in the bill. It takes simple maths to demonstrate that for many first home buyers purchasing a property between \$850,000 and \$900,000 the Liberal-Nationals scheme of First Home Buyer Choice would still be more attractive than paying between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in up-front stamp duty. For at least the overwhelming majority of first home buyers purchasing a property over \$900,000, the First Home Buyer Choice scheme offers a better deal. The Opposition believes that merely adjusting the stamp duty thresholds does not begin the real tax reform needed to move away from what is widely agreed to be a bad tax. The Liberals-Nationals introduced First Home Buyer Choice not only because it offers savings to first home buyers but as a significant first step toward broader reform of that widely agreed bad tax. Stamp duty was first introduced in 1865. A 158-year-old tax is what Labor is seeking to bring back to thousands of property transactions each year. It is far from a fresh start for New South Wales.

As I said, the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 is another clear sign that the new Labor Government is taking our State backwards. Housing affordability is at crisis point. It is against that backdrop that Labor seeks to remove the basic choice between a small annual tax and a large up-front fee. The Opposition cannot and will not support such a significant backward step. The Opposition will seek to amend the bill because first home buyers across New South Wales deserve a choice. For decades, governments have announced policy changes that tinker at the edges and exemptions and grants that over the years get introduced, wound back, introduced, modified, abolished and then introduced again. Sure, those policies have helped a limited number of first home buyers at a given point in time. But more exemptions and more grants have not solved the problem. They do not get to the heart of the issue. It is time for this Parliament to stick to real reform that offers lasting hope for future generations.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (22:52): When I think about home ownership and housing, I cannot go past a quote of former President Ronald Reagan when he said, "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it.

And if it stops moving, subsidise it." That has been the view of governments—Liberal and Labor—in both Sydney and Canberra over many years when it comes not just to how we deal with taxes around housing but also the planning system and a number of regulatory instruments that relate to housing and housing affordability. I think that all of us in this place would honestly say that we would support any change that genuinely helps particularly first home buyers into the market. All of us would agree that it is harder than ever before to capture that great Australian dream of home ownership and to be able to enjoy that piece of paradise that you can proudly call your own.

I come to the debate on the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 with a blunt sense of honesty and say that I have seen great policies, but I have also seen a lot of failures. There is no one piece of legislation—and this is no exception—that will be the silver bullet and resolve all those issues. Labor members went to the election saying that they had a plan to raise the stamp duty threshold from \$650,000 to \$800,000. They are delivering on that promise today, but all of us would agree that this is a long way from what actually needs to be done. I commend my colleague the member for South Coast, who gave an exceptional inaugural speech in this place today. She talked about the need to increase housing supply in places like Nowra and close to services, transport and the things that people want. Having people moving around at night also helps with crime prevention. I agree with the contribution that she made.

Indeed, the bill is not a planning bill. I know that it will not resolve those issues. I certainly hope that councils, which can do a lot in relation to housing supply, will address those issues. I certainly look forward to working with the member for South Coast and other members of the House as we continue to deliver outcomes that see lower prices for property owners right around the State, as people really struggle with not just home ownership but also rents and the cost of living. I extend another bouquet to the Government. As a former social housing Minister, I commend the Government for its proposal for Homes NSW. Having the four agencies that regulate social housing under one roof, so long as they have the right levers to actually do something, is a sensible move.

I remember that in my time I was frustrated with the fact we had the Land and Housing Corporation, the Department of Communities and Justice, the Aboriginal Housing Office and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment under one roof. That made it so complex to deliver even the most basic outcomes to people who were doing it tough, including people who were living in homelessness and those in social housing, as well as getting people out of social housing by moving them along the housing affordability trajectory into, potentially, affordable housing and their first home, along with the things that support people to deliver that.

In my electorate, depending on which part of the electorate you talk to, there are different median housing crises. In Shellharbour the average housing price, according to realestate.com.au, is \$1.1 million. In Kiama it is about \$1.4 million. In the Shoalhaven it is around \$1 million. These things are difficult to deal with. None of the people who are looking to purchase those properties will benefit from the proposals before the House. That is why I come to this debate wanting to see both systems fused so that we can ensure that people have a genuine choice when it comes to home ownership and so that people who are in properties under the \$800,000 threshold can benefit from Labor's plan.

I do not see why the Government would want to change the current situation in relation to giving people a choice for properties over that threshold. I say that for two reasons. One is the obvious reason that people should have a choice if their personal circumstances are such that they would like to pay a broad-based property tax over the life of the property. Secondly, I cannot understand how Treasury would be in favour of the bill from the point of view that a broad-based tax that people have opted into provides greater budget certainty in the provision of revenue, which provides for services over the longer term. I do not quite understand why the Government would not simply say that that makes good economic and strategic sense. I will be supporting the amendments that have been brought forward to ensure that the first home buyer scheme remains, because I believe in empowering people to make their own decision.

As I indicated, in my electorate the median housing price is well above the \$800,000 that the Government's policy provides for. For that reason I do not want to deny people who are looking to purchase their first home in my electorate the benefits of this package. But I also say to the Treasury that I would have thought that, for good fiscal planning such as the Australian Capital Territory has enjoyed for many years, the policy makes sense and would have made sense should it have been allowed to continue to give people genuine choice, if that assists their circumstances.

On average, people save for about 2½ years to pay the stamp duty alone. Those are New South Wales Government figures, not mine. If people have the option of deferring that, like we do with land rates, and paying it at a broad-based level, and they decide to make that choice—particularly for people who move around—I do not see why it should be prevented. I do not understand why the Government is seeking to limit that choice when, in so many electorates around the State, property prices are well above what is being legislated for. It may be

different for people in unit blocks, and I accept that that argument has been made by members of the Government. But I also think that you can have both, and I do not see why we would not have both. I do not understand the public policy or strategic implications for moving in this direction.

Of course, there needs to be a much broader conversation when it comes to housing, and I mentioned at the start of my speech the excellent contribution from the member for South Coast in her inaugural speech today. But we also need to turn our minds to superannuation. Union-led super funds have been doing well off build-to-rent schemes that keep people in rental rather than home ownership. Every report I saw as the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services and any report that anyone wants to look at have said and will say that home ownership and poverty are interlinked. If we have the courage to unlock some components of super that people can use for their first home, that can make a real difference to people's lives: their life trajectory, and their chances of success and stability in retirement.

Whilst I appreciate the reasons that the Government has introduced this legislation—and whilst Government members may agree or disagree, publicly or privately, with the reasons for my position on the bill—this is just one element of a broad tapestry of measures relating to home ownership. To any member of the Opposition who might say, "This is all terrible; they are wrong," or any member of the Government who might say, "This is all terrific; you are also wrong," this is part of a broad matrix of reform that is required. As a Parliament, we should be mature enough to have that discussion—not just in isolation but also over the course of a number of pieces of reform—and also to advocate to the Commonwealth for changes that can make a real difference.

There are people in my electorate—and I am sure in many electorates—who are struggling along the housing continuum. Housing is a continuum. From those people I have met and seen on our streets through to those people who live in the lap of luxury, it is a broad continuum. But a large bulk of Middle Australia, of average people, just want to get by. They just want to be left alone and to be able to make the right choice for them. That is why I take the genuine view that the position of the former Government in relation to this matter made sense. It gave people an option to pay stamp duty up-front or to elect to pay a broad-based tax. Whilst I appreciate the reasons behind the Government's legislation, I do not understand why it is guillotining those choices that people can make that are right for them and for their family.

I simply say to the Government that I look forward to seeing more legislation that deals with housing affordability. This will be the start of many pieces of legislation that, to its credit, the Government has said it wants to introduce. I look forward to that. I look forward to the discussions around planning reform, density—building on the comments of the member for South Coast earlier today about density—transport corridors and services that address some of the most vulnerable. It might interest members of the House that the fastest growing rate of homelessness in New South Wales is women over the age of 55. They are people who generally may not have a huge amount of super who are looking for home ownership and who are wanting to get in. Supply is also a conversation that we should have. Assets, like super, is a conversation that should be had at a national level. For all the reasons that I have outlined, I will always stand on the side of first home buyers. I will always stand on the side of choice. I understand the reasons for the Government's legislation, but I will be supporting the Opposition's amendments to the bill.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (23:02): Housing affordability is one of the single biggest issues affecting young people. Tonight I speak in opposition to the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 insofar as it seeks to abolish First Home Buyer Choice. The great Australian dream of home ownership has got much easier for a generation of young families. People have saved huge sums of money on the biggest purchase of their life under the First Home Buyer Choice program. To quote the former Treasurer, who is in the Chamber tonight, First Home Buyer Choice has significantly reduced up-front costs, reduced the time needed to save for a deposit and will see a majority of first home buyers paying less tax overall.

We are giving people the opportunity to decide for themselves what best suits their financial situation. Those buying a home to live in for life can still pay stamp duty. But for many, paying an annual tax for the limited time they actually live in the property will make more sense. The contrast could not be clearer. On this side of the House, we stand for giving first home buyers a choice; those opposite do not. We are the party of providing that choice and providing an opportunity for all; those opposite do not. In his second reading speech the Minister made mention of his Government's comprehensive plan to address housing affordability. I ask the Minister where is his plan? As I said, housing affordability is the single biggest issue affecting young families, particularly in my electorate but also right across New South Wales. We see here that there is no plan. There is no plan to support young Australians in New South Wales to own their home sooner.

The new Labor Government has presented nothing more than the bill, which is a significant retrograde step when it comes to housing affordability in Sydney and across New South Wales. The bill is another sign that our State will stall and—even worse—go backwards under this Government. This is poor public policy. There are no

new ideas and no hope for young people. Sydney, and much of New South Wales, is facing serious housing and rental pressure. In fact, it is more than just pressure; it is a crisis. The solution to this is not to remove a policy that has been taken up by over 8,300 first home buyers since First Home Buyer Choice opened on 16 January this year. That is around 440 first home buyers benefiting each and every week. The solution is to support it and to encourage the take-up. First home buyers have voted with their feet in favour of our First Home Buyer Choice. That is very important.

This Government, on the other hand, has no mandate to withdraw the scheme. I note the Minister claimed that First Home Buyer Choice has been rejected by the people of our State. It has not been rejected; it has been embraced. Two in every three eligible first home buyers have taken it up. Of the over 5,000 properties that opted into the First Home Buyer Choice scheme, 45 per cent have been in Western Sydney. A first home buyer purchasing a median-priced home in Parramatta will avoid an up-front fee of up to \$59,000 under the Liberal-Nationals First Home Buyer Choice.

Ms Anna Watson: Would you take a forever tax?

Mr MARK COURE: You have had your chance. In Rockdale it is an up-front saving of \$63,000 on a median-priced home. In the electorate of Oatley it is roughly the same at about \$68,000 to \$69,000. We know that the First Home Buyer Choice scheme can cut up to two years off the time needed to save for a deposit. Under First Home Buyer Choice members on this side of the House provided a ladder of opportunity for young people and many working families not just in western and south-western Sydney but also in my electorate. Removing First Home Buyer Choice will make it much harder—in some cases, almost impossible—for people to enter the property market. It will force people to move away from their jobs, families and support networks. It will force them away from their home communities. Individuals and families across New South Wales have collectively saved more than \$197 million since the scheme opened in January of this year. What we will see under the Labor Government's so-called solution for housing affordability will be thousands of first home buyers who will be denied a basic choice between that small annual tax and that large up-front fee.

I conclude by repeating that housing affordability and the cost of living are some of the biggest issues affecting young people in my electorate and across New South Wales. I am asking the new Government to think deeply about this. We already have a policy that is working. It is a policy that has been taken up by thousands of people right across New South Wales—45 per cent in Western Sydney alone. This is about making it easier for families entering into the property market for the first time and reducing up-front costs and the time needed to save for a deposit. It would see a majority of eligible first home buyers paying less tax overall. That can only be good public policy.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (23:09): The Opposition opposes the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 in its current form. I foreshadow that I will move amendments to the bill. In my second reading speech introducing the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Bill 2022, I said that that legislation:

... gives first home buyers a choice when buying a first home as to whether to pay an up-front stamp duty or to opt in to a small annual property tax. This legislation is founded upon a cornerstone value of this Government—the freedom to choose.

...

This reform will allow first home buyers to overcome one of the greatest barriers to home ownership and achieve their own Australian dream. Buying a first home is one of the most important milestones in a person's life. Homes are where families are raised, where they share time with friends and make memories to last a lifetime. However, too many young people today see the dream of owning their own place as out of reach.

That is why it is essential that the Property Tax (First Home Buyer Choice) Act not be repealed. I said:

Overall, rates of home ownership in New South Wales have fallen from 70 per cent in the 1990s to 64 per cent in 2021. For younger people aged 25 to 34, the national rate of home ownership sits much lower, at around 41 per cent in 2019-20. It is taking first home buyers longer than ever before to save the funds they need for a deposit and to pay stamp duty. In the 1990s it would take the median New South Wales household, putting aside 15 per cent of their income, around six years to save for a 20 per cent deposit on the median property in New South Wales and one year to save for stamp duty. It now takes that same household around 10 years to save for a 20 per cent deposit and two years to save for stamp duty.

The Opposition is committed to helping more young people across this State open the door to home ownership that too many feel is shut to them. That is why we will fight to preserve the opportunity for more first home buyers to enter the market. The Government is seeking to disempower first home buyers who want to fast-track their path to home ownership by choosing the option that best suits their own financial circumstances and personal aspirations. I call on all members in this place to lend their support to the initiative that will empower first home buyers across New South Wales to realise their aspirations of home ownership and vote against the repeal of the right to choose.

The Government is seeking to deprive first home buyers of what has proven to be a very popular choice: to opt out of paying a large amount of up-front transfer duty of up to \$66,700 and accept instead a small annual

property tax. The bill would reimpose transfer duty of between \$40,090 and \$66,700 on those first home buyers who purchase a property for between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. Additionally, it would create a less favourable situation for most of those purchasing a property for between \$850,000 and \$1 million. In his second reading speech on the bill, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces said:

A family buying their first home for the average price of \$906,000 in Fairfield will pay around \$16,000, instead of the \$36,000 they would have paid under the Liberals—and, again, no land tax.

The Minister misstates the amount of transfer duty paid under Labor's plan by about 33 per cent. It would be \$21,247, not around \$16,000, as he misleadingly told the House. He also misleadingly states that under the Liberals they would have paid \$36,000 in transfer duty. That is misleading because it ignores the key element in the excellent scheme that the bill seeks to abolish: choice. Under the Liberal-Nationals First Home Buyer Choice scheme, those first home buyers could choose to avoid the up-front \$35,860 in transfer duty and pay a small annual property tax. For a typical house in Fairfield valued at around \$900,000, the break-even point would be around 29 years. That is well past the average 10 years that first home buyers stay for in their first home before moving on.

If First Home Buyer Choice remained an option with Labor's proposed concessional transfer duty, then it would still be around 15 years before the break-even point for a house and about 33 years for a unit. What the Minister described as "a sliding concession where a first home buyer purchasing just above \$800,000 pays a small proportion of the full stamp duty that would otherwise be payable and a first home buyer purchasing just below \$1 million will pay most of the full stamp duty that would otherwise be payable" when compared with the existing First Home Buyer Choice starts to be less favourable somewhere around a purchase price of \$850,000, depending on whether it is a unit or a house and on the ratio between purchase values and land values in a particular area.

What the Minister forgets is that the median house price in Sydney is now \$1.2 million. That means Chris Minns and Labor are locking out first home buyers from many suburbs across our State and, I daresay, from many of the suburbs in your electorate, Mr Speaker—certainly many of the suburbs in my electorate and the member for Coogee's electorate. Many of the members in this House will see first home buyers not able to get into the market in their electorates. Under Labor's policy, first home buyers will have to pay full stamp duty to buy a median-priced home in, for example, Marsden Park, Bossley Park, Bankstown, Sutherland and Camden. Those suburbs are hardly in the top end of town. Traditionally, many young first home buyers would look to those suburbs to enter the market, yet they will be unable to receive any Government support. They will be locked out of those suburbs. In fact, according to CoreLogic's Home Value Index, which was released in April 2023, only the outer west and Blue Mountains regions have median house prices that would allow first home buyers to qualify for total stamp duty exemptions.

To preserve the choice that first home buyers have eagerly embraced, the Opposition will move an amendment to delete schedule 2 to the bill. That would have the effect of maintaining the First Home Buyer Choice scheme in full, and not just for those who were fortunate enough to take advantage of it before 1 July 2023. The amendment would leave in place the parts of the bill that increase the thresholds for a full exemption from transfer duty and a sliding concession on transfer duty. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government raised the threshold at which no transfer duty was to be paid by first home buyers to \$650,000. The Opposition has no objection to raising the threshold further to \$800,000. We must do everything we can to get aspiring working families into affordable first homes. That measure will save first home buyers up to \$31,000 in stamp duty.

The Opposition will move a set of amendments to index the thresholds to annual changes in the median price of house transfers in Sydney for the June quarter each year. For example, the median price for the June 2022 quarter was 5.83 per cent higher than in June 2021. Indexing the thresholds to reflect fluctuations in the median cost of homes is a more sensible approach than waiting for the benefit of the threshold to be eroded for several years before increasing it in legislation. The third measure would increase the residency requirement for first home buyers to occupy their home for a continuous period of 12 months, up from six months. That requirement is also to be applied to eligible tenants purchasing a home under section 278 of the Duties Act 1997.

An eligible tenant is defined as a person who is a tenant of the housing department, a tenant under the community tenancy scheme administered by the Department of Family and Community Services or a tenant of the Aboriginal Housing Office. On the face of it, it seems counterproductive to the goal of freeing up public and Aboriginal housing to give a tax break in the form of an exemption from transfer duty to tenants seeking to purchase a home. Circumstances can change unforeseeably and that can affect where people need to live. Someone who has purchased a first home, or any home under section 278, should not face the unanticipated imposition of transfer duty because of unforeseeable circumstances such as new work opportunities, educational needs for children or adults, or family matters including illness.

The Opposition welcomes clarification from the Minister on that aspect of the bill. While we will vote against the bill as it stands, we will support it if it is amended to preserve a genuine choice for first home buyers. Finally, I note the Opposition will include an amendment to make victim-survivors of domestic violence eligible for stamp duty concessions under the scheme.

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (23:18): In reply: I thank the Leader of the Opposition and the members representing the electorates of Heathcote, Sydney, Charlestown, North Shore, Prospect, Newtown, Mount Druitt, Albury, Wahrenonga, Manly, Davidson, Goulburn, Kiama, Oatley and Hornsby for their contributions to debate on the bill. The hour is late and the views of members have been aired, so I will be brief in my reply. But I need to point out a number of things that were touched on during the debate.

Opposition members may not like it, but the Government was elected with a clear plan for addressing housing affordability and home ownership. Home ownership is an important goal for many Australians, and the Government intends to support each and every Australian in their pursuit of that commendable goal. For that reason the Government went to the last election with a clear policy platform to support first home buyers, targeting assistance to those buying a home for up to \$1 million by expanding the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme. It was a clear election commitment and, while a number of Opposition members suggested that the Government does not have a mandate for it, the fact is that the people did have their say on 25 March.

Through the bill, the Government is increasing the stamp duty exemption threshold for first home buyers from \$650,000 to \$800,000. The concessional duty threshold is also being raised from \$800,000 to \$1 million. That increased support will help first home buyers compete with investors and existing home owners in securing their first home. A lot was said about and a lot has been made of the suggestion that median prices in certain suburbs might mean that the concessions and the extension of the exemptions will not apply to many first home buyers, but I remind Opposition members that that stylised view of who the first home buyer is does not actually reflect reality. If they talked to most first home buyers, they would realise very quickly that first home buyers are buying the properties they can afford; they are not necessarily buying at the median price in any particular suburb. That said, the median price and the price that they can afford may coincide in some suburbs, and we are working to make sure that the targeted first home buyer assistance will support those lower income households. We are providing financial assistance to those who need it the most.

That is why Labor's assistance measures support first home buyers purchasing a home of up to \$1 million, which roughly corresponds with the median home price in Sydney. When Government members say that this is a targeted policy, it does not mean that most people will not benefit; it is quite the opposite. In fact, Labor's first home buyer assistance package covers around five out of six or 85 per cent of first home buyers, who can now purchase their home with a stamp duty exemption or concession without the burden of an ongoing property tax on their family home. Further, a full 71 per cent of first home buyers will now pay no stamp duty whatsoever after the reforms.

I leave my comments there for the second reading debate, but I point out that in many of the contributions there was not a great deal of defence of or advocacy for the Opposition's amendments to the bill. Arguably, they skate close to the wind regarding standing orders like Standing Order 243. However, we will discuss those in depth during consideration in detail. I commend Labor's bill, Labor's reforms to stamp duty and Labor's efforts to build a fairer and more equitable first home buyer scheme to the House.

The SPEAKER: The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided.

Ayes51
Noes33
Majority..... 18

AYES

Aitchison, J
Bali, S
Barr, C
Butler, L
Butler, R
Car, P
Catley, Y
Chanthivong, A
Cotsis, S

Hannan, J
Harris, D
Harrison, J
Haylen, J
Hoenig, R
Holland, M
Hornery, S
Kaliyanda, C
Kirby, W

Park, R
Quinnell, S
Saffin, J (teller)
Saliba, D
Scully, P
Shetty, K
Smith, T
Stuart, M
Tesch, L

AYES

Crakanthorp, T
Dalton, H
Dib, J
Donato, P
Doyle, T
Finn, J
Greenwich, A
Hagarty, N

Leong, J
Li, J
McDermott, H
McGirr, J
McKeown, K
Mehan, D
Minns, C
O'Neill, M

Vo, T
Voltz, L
Ward, G
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
Perrottet, D
Petinos, E
Preston, R
Regan, M

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

PAIRS

Daley, M
Davis, D
Kamper, S

Williams, R
Provest, G
Thompson, T

Motion agreed to.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Matt Kean.

Consideration in Detail

The SPEAKER: By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 be agreed to.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (23:30): By leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 15 on sheet c2023-032 in globo:

No. 1 Principal place of residence requirements

Page 3, Schedule 1[1], lines 2 and 3. Omit all words on the lines.

No. 2 Application to victims of family or domestic violence

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 3—

[1A] Section 69A

Insert after section 69—

69A Regulations must apply scheme to victims of family or domestic violence

- (1) The object of this section is to enable a victim of family or domestic violence to be eligible for a concession or exemption from duty on a similar basis to a person acquiring a first home if the victim—
 - (a) leaves home as a result of the violence, and
 - (b) within a reasonable time after leaving home, acquires a home.
- (2) The regulations must contain provisions that give effect to the object of this section.
- (3) Subsection (2) does not have effect until 1 September 2023.
- (4) In this section—

acquire a home includes acquire a vacant block of residential land intended to be used as the site of a home.

victim of family or domestic violence means a person who has been the victim of a domestic violence offence within the meaning of the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007*.

No. 3 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1[2], line 5. Omit "\$1,000,000". Insert instead "\$1,000,000, as indexed in accordance with subsection (3A)".

No. 4 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 5—

[2A] Section 74(3A)–(3D)

Insert after section 74(3)—

(3A) On 30 September 2024 and on 30 September in each subsequent year, the amount in subsection (3)(a) must be adjusted—

(a) in line with the percentage change between—

(i) the amount reported for the June quarter in the same year, and

(ii) the amount reported for the June quarter in the previous year, or

(b) if an amount is not reported for the purposes of paragraph (a)—in accordance with an equivalent methodology prescribed by the regulations.

(3B) In subsection (3A), **amount reported** means the amount in the Median Price of Established House Transfers (Unstratified); Sydney as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

(3C) The Chief Commissioner must, before 30 September in a year, publish the adjusted amount that will apply on 30 September in the year.

(3D) The adjusted amount must be published in the Gazette.

No. 5 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1[3], line 7. Omit "\$800,000". Insert instead "\$800,000, as indexed in accordance with subsection (4)".

No. 6 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1[4]. Omit "\$1,000,000" from the formula. Insert instead "A".

No. 7 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1[4]. Omit "\$200,000" from the formula. Insert instead "B".

No. 8 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 9—

[4A] Section 78A(2), definitions of "A" and "B"

Insert after the definition of N—

A is the amount referred to in section 74(3)(a).

B is the amount referred to in section 74(3)(a) minus the amount referred to in subsection (1)(a).

No. 9 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1[5], line 11. Omit "\$800,000". Insert instead "the amount referred to in subsection (1)(a)".

No. 10 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1[6], line 13. Omit "\$1,000,000". Insert instead "\$1,000,000, as indexed in accordance with section 74(3A)".

No. 11 **Indexation of amounts**

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 13—

[6A] Section 78(4)–(7)

Insert after section 78A(3)—

(4) On 30 September 2024 and on 30 September in each subsequent year, the amount in subsection (1)(a) must be adjusted—

(a) in line with the percentage change between—

(i) the amount reported for the June quarter in the same year, and

(ii) the amount reported for the June quarter in the previous year,

or

- (b) if an amount is not reported for the purposes of paragraph (a)—in accordance with an equivalent methodology prescribed by the regulations.

- (5) In subsection (4), **amount reported** means the amount in the Median Price of Established House Transfers (Unstratified); Sydney as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- (6) The Chief Commissioner must, before 30 September in a year, publish the adjusted amount that will apply on 30 September in the year.
- (7) The adjusted amount must be published in the Gazette.

No. 12 **Application to victims of family or domestic violence**

Page 4, Schedule 2. Insert after line 2—

[1] **Section 4A**

Insert after section 4—

4A Regulations must apply scheme to victims of family or domestic violence

- (1) The object of this section is to enable a victim of family or domestic violence to be eligible to opt to make land subject to property tax on a similar basis to a first home buyer if the victim—
- (a) leaves home as a result of the violence, and
- (b) within a reasonable time after leaving home, is the transferee under an eligible transfer.
- (2) The regulations must contain provisions that give effect to the object of this section.
- (3) Subsection (2) does not have effect until 1 September 2023.
- (4) In this section—

victim of family or domestic violence means a person who has been the victim of a domestic violence offence within the meaning of the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007*.

No. 13 **Retention of First Home Buyers Choice**

Page 4, Schedule 2, lines 3–10. Omit all words on the lines.

No. 14 **Application to victims of family or domestic violence**

Page 5, Schedule 3. Insert after line 2—

[1] **Section 7A**

Insert after section 7—

7A Regulations must apply scheme to victims of family or domestic violence

- (1) The object of this section is to enable a victim of family or domestic violence to be eligible for a first home owner grant on a similar basis to a first home owner if the victim—
- (a) leaves home as a result of the violence, and
- (b) within a reasonable time after leaving home, enters an eligible transaction.
- (2) The regulations must contain provisions that give effect to the object of this section.
- (3) Subsection (2) does not have effect until 1 September 2023.
- (4) In this section—

victim of family or domestic violence means a person who has been the victim of a domestic violence offence within the meaning of the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007*.

No. 15 **Principal place of residence requirements**

Page 5, Schedule 3, lines 3 and 4. Omit all words on the lines.

Mr Alex Greenwich: Point of order: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to Standing Order 243. I believe all the Opposition's amendments are in a breach of that standing order as they would classify as a form of appropriation, either by the indexation, proposing a new tax or broadening the scheme.

The SPEAKER: I happen to have before me Standing Order 243, entitled "Message from Governor". It states:

The House shall not pass any vote, resolution or bill for the appropriation of any part of the Consolidated Fund, or for any other tax or impost to any purpose which has not been first recommended by message of the Governor ...

I am sure all members are very well versed in that particular standing order. I was aware that there could be a conflict, so I have given some consideration to the matter. The member for Sydney proposes that all the Opposition amendments, Nos 1 to 15, are in conflict with that standing order. I respectfully disagree that that is the case with all the amendments. However, amendments Nos 2 to 14 are in conflict with Standing Order 243, which is based on section 46 of the Constitution Act 1902. They relate to a financial measure, which should be proposed by a Minister or recommended by a message from the Governor. Therefore, to prevent establishing an inappropriate precedent, I rule amendments Nos 2 to 14 out of order.

I draw to the attention of the member for Hornsby that that leaves on sheet c2023-032 Opposition amendment No. 1, which relates to a principal place of residence, and amendment No. 15, which likewise relates to principal place of residence requirements. I leave it to the member for Hornsby to decide whether he wishes to proceed with amendments Nos 1 and 15. The member for Hornsby has the call.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (23:34): Notwithstanding the Speaker's excellent ruling, the Opposition will proceed with amendments Nos 1 and 15. It stands by the position that first home buyers should have more choice and that more people should be able to enter the property ladder in New South Wales. That is why I commend the amendments to the House.

The SPEAKER: The member for Hornsby has confirmed that he is proceeding with Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 15 on sheet c2023-032. I call the Minister.

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (23:35): The Government opposes the amendments.

The SPEAKER: The question is that Opposition amendments Nos 1 and 15 on sheet c2023-032 be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes35
Noes51
Majority.....16

AYES

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
Regan, M
Roberts, A

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

NOES

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

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

O'Neill, M
Park, R
Quinnell, S
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

NOES

Finn, J
Greenwich, A

Mehan, D
Minns, C

Whan, S (teller)
Wilkinson, K

PAIRS

Provest, G
Thompson, T
Williams, R

Daley, M
Davis, D
Kamper, S

Amendments negatived.

The SPEAKER: The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 be agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr PAUL SCULLY: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

*Business of the House***SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Mr RON HOENIG: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit private members' statements that would have been given at this sitting to be given over the following sittings on 31 May and 1 June, and for the House to adjourn without motion at the conclusion of community recognition statements, until 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 31 May 2023.

Motion agreed to.

*Community Recognition Statements***MAITLAND FIRE STATION**

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (23:44): On behalf of Gerda Alexander and the residents of Oakwood Village, Gillieston Heights, I acknowledge Fire and Rescue NSW, specifically Deputy Captain Patrick Levesque and the firefighters from the Maitland station. Mrs Alexander called the station earlier this year to inquire what could be done to assist her neighbours, who are struggling to remain on top of fire safety issues in their homes. As part of Fire and Rescue NSW's fire home safety visits program, the crew at Maitland Fire Station visited the village en masse to aid the residents. During the safety visits, smoke alarms were checked for suitable location and working condition. For those without alarms, long-life battery-powered smoke alarms were installed. Firefighters also gave personalised fire safety information and tips, including winter fire, cooking, heating, electrical, barbeque and gas safety. Winter is a time of greater risk of injury from fire starting in the home, and Fire and Rescue NSW's preventive fire safety checklist and home visits are designed to reduce the risk. I thank Patrick and the Maitland team for their dedication to protecting residents from the dangers of fire.

LIVING SEAWALLS INSTALLATION

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (23:45): Last week I had the pleasure of officially opening the new Living Seawalls boulders installation at Lavender Bay. The project was the brainchild of the terrific Sydney Institute of Marine Science [SIMS] and local business Sydney By Kayak. Living Seawalls mimics natural habitats like rock pools and the root structure of mangroves, converting the flat surface of man-made seawalls into habitats for marine life. Sydney By Kayak's co-founder, Laura Stone, in partnership with the SIMS and North Sydney Council, came together to fund the new Living Seawalls boulders project. These boulders will increase Sydney Harbour's biodiversity while filtering harmful pollutants. I enjoyed the opportunity to test my kayaking skills, or lack thereof, by joining Laura and the SIMS team to inspect the progress of the boulders that have already been installed. I acknowledge the terrific work that Laura is undertaking in my local community to protect and preserve marine conservation, and the incredible ongoing work that the Sydney Institute of Marine Science does in marine research and collaboration. As Australians and Sydneysiders, we should all be very proud of this innovation.

TRIBUTE TO DR ANTHONY PUN, OAM

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (23:46): I am deeply saddened by the passing of Dr Anthony Pun, OAM. The Australian-Chinese community has lost one of its most ardent, courageous voices and fearless champions. He was one of our community's best larrikins. He enjoyed the game. He believed in and supported me. Tony raged against racism and discrimination, and he was not afraid to be direct and confronting. He was a stirrer, an agitator and an activist—a thorn in the side of complacency. He hated obsequiousness and rejected the "don't rock the boat" school of migrant activism. Even as he grew older and frailer, Tony never stopped stirring the pot, calling out prejudice, speaking loudly for the voiceless and quietly supporting those he believed in. He was a massive supporter of the Voice, understanding how experiences and histories of dispossession speak powerfully to many migrant communities. There are not many Tony Puns out there. We will miss him. My thoughts and deepest sympathies are with his family.

ALL ABILITIES SWIM SCHOOL

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (23:47): I recognise the All Abilities Swim school in Dubbo, one of three recipients of the Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award at the Royal Lifesaving Society's "Aguas". It was the first awards gala of its kind for almost two decades and saw over 50 nominations across 10 categories. Two-hundred guests from industry, government and the community got together to recognise the outstanding contributions and dedication of individuals and organisations in the prevention of drowning and the rise in aquatic participation. Founder Catherine Kelly and instructor Trinity Rufus lead disability-friendly lessons at the Yawarra Community School in Dubbo. They have created a safe and inclusive environment for people of all ages and abilities to learn how to swim and improve their water skills. It is a shining example of the impact that can be made through inclusive practices, showing that with patience, empathy and a willingness to adapt, everyone can enjoy the benefits of swimming. I congratulate All Abilities Swim school on this very well-deserved award.

WE ARE STUDIOS

Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (23:48): We Are Studios is a not-for-profit organisation empowering artists with a disability to reach their creative potential. Rosalind, Ebony and Jordan met with me to discuss their amazing work across Western Sydney. We Are Studios is an inclusive, accessible studio that empowers artists living with a disability to strive to reach their potential in a safe and supportive environment. Many existing art programs are not tailored to meet the creative needs of most people with a disability. We Are Studios seeks to bridge that gap by delivering programs led by experienced mentors that offer career opportunities for beginner, emerging and established artists. Those programs are also supported by strong partnerships with Blacktown Arts and the Art Gallery of NSW. I thank the wonderful team at We Are Studios for their creative spaces that provide autonomy, self-expression, creativity and pathways to employment for artists living with a disability.

COLO HIGH SCHOOL

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (23:49): I commend the Colo High School parents and citizens group for its successful application for a Community Building Partnership grant of \$18,000. The funding was used to upgrade the school library. It is one thing to obtain a grant, but I also applaud the school and families for the execution of the grant that has delivered an amazing space for students and staff to learn in. I visited the school recently and was impressed with the expansive areas both within the library and in the school grounds where it is nestled. The upgrade to the library was made available by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government's Community Building Partnership program—an excellent program that I hope the Minns Labor Government will continue to fund. Many Hawkesbury community groups have been able to deliver outstanding improvements and new local infrastructure through it. I congratulate the parents and citizens president, Jennifer Majarres, and relieving principal Tara Cullen for their leadership in seeing the project through to fruition.

MOTHERLAND AFRICAN FESTIVAL

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (23:51): On Friday 19 May I had the immense privilege of attending the Motherland African Festival at Macquarie Mall in Liverpool. The event ran throughout the weekend and brought residents from across south-western Sydney together to celebrate the contributions that the African community have made to our region. It was a weekend full of fun and festivities, with music and dancing lighting up Macquarie Mall. The festival included everything from delicious food to artisan markets. I was fortunate enough to run into my artist friend Emmanuel Asante, who was exhibiting his artwork, *Warmest Hug*, which depicts a mother with her infant child. It is an honour to represent the people of Leppington, a multicultural community that is proud of their diversity. I extend my gratitude and congratulations to the fantastic council workers who put the event together as well as every participating business that set up a stall.

LUKE GARDNER

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (23:52): Last weekend a new milestone was achieved in Hunter Valley Group 21 rugby league. I congratulate Luke Gardner on his 200th appearance for the Singleton United Greyhounds. This Singleton born and bred centre is understood to be just the fourth player to reach the double century with the Greyhounds. Luke's playing career highlights include being captain for 82 games and winning four first grade grand finals. His club honours range from selection in the team of his era, which was 1996-2016, through to earning the respect of the Greyhounds old boys to be capped a Top Dog and awarded life membership. Luke's father, Gary—a highly revered player in his own right—is also a Singleton club life member who played 200 games for the club. Jake Smith, another Greyhounds legend, said, "He gives 110 per cent and leaves nothing in the tank." In addition to his on-field performance, Luke has been president, vice-president and a committeeman of the Singleton United Rugby League Football Club.

ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (23:53): On 2 April 2023 I had the great pleasure of joining with our local community to celebrate and welcome in the 6,773rd Assyrian New Year at Fairfield Showground. The celebrations were well attended, with people coming from far and wide to partake in festivities that included live music, dancing, rides, cultural plays, traditional food, demonstrations and a range of exhibitions. Those who have never attended before would be in awe at what is on offer and at the talent on display throughout the celebrations. I commend and congratulate the Assyrian National Council of Australia, especially the president, Mr Hermiz Shahan; the vice-president, Mr David David; members of the board; the organising committee; and the numerous outstanding volunteers on their tremendous hard work in hosting yet another incredibly successful festival. We all look forward to seeing what is in store for next year's celebrations.

ADORE ME HAIR AND BEAUTY

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (23:54): I sincerely congratulate Adore Me Hair and Beauty, which is located in my electorate. At the 2023 Inner West Local Business Awards earlier this month, Adore Me was named the winner of the hairdresser category. The competition was tough and there were many amazing local businesses that were finalists in the category, but winning the award is recognition of the magnificent customer experience offered by the Adore Me team. I sincerely congratulate salon owner, Alicia, her family and her hardworking staff at Adore Me, including Venessa, Beatrice, Rebecca, Bella and Monique, on this wonderful achievement. Alicia and her team often work long hours, including early mornings, late nights and on weekends, to accommodate times that suit their clients. Alicia prides herself on owning and operating a safe and friendly environment, and that is evident from the moment you walk into the salon. I am proud of all of our local small businesses. It is a fantastic achievement. I congratulate Adore Me Hair and Beauty.

PENRITH RELAY FOR LIFE

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (23:55): I commend the Cancer Council for this year's successful Penrith Relay For Life at the Penrith paceway. Relay is a fun and moving experience that raises vital funds for the Cancer Council's research, prevention and support services. It is a chance for the community to recognise and celebrate local cancer survivors, and those going through a cancer experience and their carers; to raise money to help save more lives; and to honour and remember loved ones lost. Every day Cancer Council supports families affected by cancer when they need it most. It empowers people to reduce cancer risk and find new ways to better detect and treat cancer. This year there were 350 dedicated relay participants from 36 teams, and they have raised \$52,108 to date. We heard from Chris Planer, the organising committee chairperson, who shared his personal story. There is no-one in our community who has not been touched by this insidious disease. Let us all continue the fight for a cancer-free future.

LINDFIELD FUN RUN

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (23:56): I was thrilled to be invited to fire the starting gun for the Lindfield Fun Run on Sunday 28 May. The brilliant event consisted of two-, five- and 10-kilometre races, and it was particularly remarkable to have over 1,700 people from the community participate. I ran the 10-kilometre course around the back streets of Lindfield and Roseville—one of the hilliest races in all of Sydney. I particularly recognise the fantastic efforts of Ku-ring-gai Rotary, led by President John Hepburn, who oversaw the organisation of the event. I also pay tribute to all of the sponsors of the fun run, who are all from the local area. The net proceeds from the event were donated to the Ku-ring-gai Youth Development Service and the Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Women's Shelter, which both provide incredible services to our community. I congratulate all those who took part in the event. Well done to the winners of their respective races. As a passionate runner, I look forward to participating in the Lindfield Fun Run in the future and raising money for many worthwhile causes, particularly in relation to mental health and local homelessness.

STOCKTON SHARKS

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Minister for the Hunter) (23:57): With their sleeping bags and hoodies, the Stockton Sharks under-13s women's rugby league team tackled the Sleepout for Soul and raised money for the charity, which supports vulnerable people. Sleepout for Soul is an annual event that sees participants spend a chilly night outdoors—something that has been experienced by many of the people that Soul Hub has supported. The young Sharks embraced the event with open arms and set a goal of raising \$500. They passed that and then some, raising over \$4,000 to be amongst the top 10 fundraising teams. That is an amazing effort and will help Soul Hub to assist more people in need. I congratulate the Stockton Sharks.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AID

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (23:58): On 19 May I had the honour of attending the annual Christian Community Aid [CCA] Gala Dinner at the Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club. The annual fundraising event celebrates the hard work of the organisation and its staff and, of course, raises valuable funds to continue supporting children's mental health programs. I recognise the hard work of the board, led by chairman Peter Gerrard; treasurer and vice chairman Stephen Thorp; secretary Stephen Kemp; and board directors Toula Serna, Anthony Ching, Narelle Barker, Ben Binskin and Mandy Van. Because of their dedication, and that of their forebears, CCA has operated for over 50 years. With more than 450 volunteers, it is one of the more successful social service providers in Ryde. I salute CCA for its outstanding work and express my gratitude for its invaluable contributions to the wellbeing of our community. CCA's commitment to serving others and uplifting lives is truly commendable, and I am honoured to recognise its remarkable accomplishments. For its contribution to the community, we owe it to CCA to continue supporting its ventures. May next year's annual gala be bigger and better than ever before.

MOTHERLAND AFRICAN FESTIVAL

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (23:59): I too acknowledge and celebrate the Motherland African Festival held in Liverpool on Sunday 21 May, which celebrated the rich culture of African communities in south-western Sydney. The festival featured an exciting display of many timeless traditions not limited to dance, cuisine, music and fashion. It was extraordinary to see the wide cultural presence at the event, which transcended linguistic and religious boundaries to portray customs from various countries such as Sudan, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Egypt and Mauritius. The dazzling fashion show showcased an array of African materials by Fabrics of Multicultural Australia, which reflected on the depth and creative history of African cultures. The fabulous dance and drumming performance courtesy of global performer Lucky Lartey brought the event together to make for an excellent night. I thank everyone who supported and took part in the event, particularly the organisational efforts of Liverpool City Council and the events team in pulling the festival together. I look forward to celebrating African communities in the Liverpool electorate going forward.

WAVERLEY CLIFFTOP WALK

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (00:00): In July 2023 construction will finally begin to repair sections of the clifftop walkway at Dover Heights and Vaucluse. With \$2.95 million in funding from the former Coalition Government, the important upgrade overseen by Waverley Council will deliver a safer boardwalk that will be extended and widened so that more visitors, tourists and local residents can better enjoy the uninterrupted harbour views. I am pleased to hear that as part of the project, council will expand the indigenous vegetation along the walk and constructed material will be limited to enjoy as much of the natural environment as possible. I look forward to working with Waverley Council and local residents to ensure the best outcomes for our community.

DHARAWAL CUP FESTIVAL OF FOOTBALL

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (00:01): On 21 January it was my great pleasure to attend the second Dharawal Cup Festival of Football. Held at Ron Dine Reserve, the day was hosted by Camden Tigers Football Club through its Indigenous Football Program. The day kicked off with a welcome to country conducted by Auntie Joyce followed by games of football, each featuring an Indigenous side taking on the Camden Tigers equivalent. Highlights of the day included the Lyrebird Cup, featuring two girls' youth teams, and the Reconciliation Cup, featuring an over-35s game. However, the main feature remained the Dharawal Cup, which kicked off at 5.00 p.m. following an excellent rendition of the Australian national anthem by Monique Ray in both Dharawal and English, and a smoking ceremony by Uncle Ivan. For those whose primary interest was not the football, a sausage sizzle, kids' rides, face painting and a weaving workshop were also on offer. I congratulate Camden Tigers Football Club, particularly president Rodney Ciantar and director of the Indigenous Football Program, Uncle Phil. Thank you for my boomerang trophy. I look forward to next year's festival.

PROFESSOR JUDITH TROTMAN

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (00:02): I recognise Professor Judith Trotman's outstanding accomplishment on being recognised globally for her work in researching rare lymphoma. Head of Haematology at Concord Hospital and a founding director of the Foundation for A Bloody Great Cause, Professor Judith Trotman recently received the global Peter S. Bing Award in Madrid for humanitarian and activism on behalf of patients with the rare lymphoma Waldenström macroglobulinemia. Alongside Professor Trotman's hard work at Concord Hospital and with the foundation, she has led the global development of the novel enzyme inhibitors, providing an effective chemo-free option for patients with this type of lymphoma. She also established WhiMSICAL, a global registry with patient-derived data from more than 650 patients with this rare lymphoma. I sincerely congratulate Professor Judith Trotman and express how proud our community is of her achievements.

SAFER CITIES PROGRAM

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (00:03): Throughout May, Central Coast Council has been collaborating with the Safer Cities: Her Way program, striving to improve the safety of the Gosford town centre. A survey has been designed to identify places where members of our community feel unsafe. The study has been able to listen to the voices of women, girls and gender diverse patrons, gaining community perspectives on how we can improve safety in our region. The Safer Cities Program will lead to the identification of what and where Gosford CBD is lacking in the sense of community safety. This initiative has engaged our community in a discourse of gender-based harassment, drawing us closer to a future where every individual feels safe and encouraged to patronise our transport and our city. We want our community to feel safe and welcome inside our own region and this program is an excellent step in the right direction. I thank Central Coast Council for collaborating with the New South Wales Government to get the best outcome we possibly can as part of this \$30 million initiative.

HUNTER REGION BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (00:04): I bring excellent news from the Upper Hunter in the form of the Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards. I inform the House that Balanced Beans, run by Karen Burgess and Brodie White, won an award for being highly commended for their professional service. Brodie White also won Business Woman of the Year 2023. That is a fantastic effort for a brand new small accounting firm that looks after the people in the Hunter. But that is not all. Amy Foster won the Young Entrepreneur Award for Expressions School of Dance, a dance company that performs all over the Hunter Valley, and Vines Restaurant at Hollydene Estate won an award in the highly commended category. I congratulate all winners.

QUEANBEYAN RECONCILIATION WALK

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (00:05): I am very proud of my community in Queanbeyan. Hundreds of people, including students from every school, turned out on this chilly morning today to participate in Queanbeyan's Reconciliation Walk for 2023. Queanbeyan has been doing its Reconciliation Walk since 2000, with the famous walk across the Harbour Bridge. There has been some progress made when choosing the important issues to march for, though it has been slow progress. It took seven years to get an apology and 23 years to get a referendum on constitutional recognition and a voice. We have made slow progress to address powerlessness and give respect to our First Nations peoples, but we have taken steps. I am proud that in Queanbeyan on this date almost every year since 2000—depending on a pandemic and very cold weather—people from all cultures have walked side by side with First Nations people to show that they support reconciliation, respect and form. It is great to be part of a community that shows that so regularly.

VAUCLUSE BOWLING CLUB

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (00:06): Vaucluse Bowling Club is currently undergoing a major revamp, with \$3.7 million in funding from the former New South Wales Government to make it a more accessible and welcoming community and sporting hub. The upgrade being delivered by the Woollahra Municipal Council as the Crown land manager will provide new access ramps, a new main entry, an accessible toilet, and structural repairs to the building walls, floors, fencing and kitchen. The club's playing surfaces and garden shed will also be upgraded. I congratulate the club on receiving the funding. I acknowledge the club leadership, including chair Kim Hanna, treasurer Lyn Bourke, secretary Rhonda Denton, and board members Ian Nicol and Elspeth Sharp. I look forward to visiting the club very soon when the upgrades are complete.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (00:07): I extend my congratulations to the captains and prefects of schools in north-west Sydney for their active participation in the inaugural inter-school Student Representative Council [SRC], which took place recently at The Ponds High School. It was an honour for me, along with local

State MPs, Deputy Leader of the Government and Minister for Education and Early Learning Prue Car, Stephen Bali, and Federal Minister for Communication Michelle Rowland, to be invited to observe proceedings and listen to the student's concerns firsthand. Leaders from public and private schools came together in collaborative groups to generate ideas for enhancing the local area, promoting student wellbeing and achieving improved educational outcomes.

The inter-school SRC represented an impressive total of over 22,000 students. It was fitting to hold the event in the heart of the Riverstone electorate, which has the highest concentration of children and adolescents in New South Wales. The voices of those young individuals are crucial in the shaping decisions that will impact the future of the area. I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of those who organised the forum, particularly Giovanna Anika Tabanag and Alexander Zastavnikovic from The Ponds High School. Those exceptional young leaders played a vital role in coordinating the event. I eagerly anticipate witnessing their contribution to the forums and their endeavours.

MR MATTHEW LEWIS

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (00:08): I congratulate my local constituent Mr Matthew Lewis. Matt started racing dragon boats in 2019 with Dragon Sports Association, based in Rhodes. At the time, he was looking to rejoin competitive sports. Having previously competed in rowing in years past, being on the water appealed to him. He quickly fell in love with the high-paced, adrenalin-fuelled racing and the close-knit team environment that dragon boat racing offered. This season was his first campaign with the State team. He competed in the opens, mixed and pursuit events, where he achieved gold, gold and silver, respectively, which is a wonderful result. I sincerely congratulate Matt for his achievements. May Matt keep it up and keep doing our community proud.

VOICES OF THE VALLEY

Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (00:09): I congratulate the youth of the Bega Valley on the successful Voices of the Valley event, which I attended on Friday 28 April. Voices of the Valley was the result of eight Bega Valley youths in collaboration with Reclink and filmmaker Blake Kendall. Reclink Australia provides evidence-based sport and recreation programs to disadvantaged Australians to create socially inclusive, life-changing opportunities. Reclink was supported by local businesses to make the event a great local success. I was pleased to meet Mr Peter Cullen, AM, the director of Reclink, and the young filmmakers who celebrated our local heroes, sharing their life stories. The youths, who were aged between 12 and 25 years, were assisted by five facilitators in the creation of storyboard ideas and the writing of scripts, as well as acting in and editing their films.

SURF LIFE SAVING SYDNEY AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (00:10): Last Saturday I joined Surf Life Saving Sydney at its Awards of Excellence evening to celebrate some of our most valued community volunteers—our surf lifesavers. In Vaucluse we are lucky to have not just one but two of the oldest surf lifesaving clubs in Australia patrolling our iconic Bondi Beach. Their dedication and local talent were acknowledged with numerous awards on the night. I congratulate Bondi Surf Bathing Life Saving Club, whose Bondi Masters team won Surf Sports Team of the Year, with awards also for patrol efficiency and most operational awards in the Waverley area. The Douglas patrol team won Patrol Team of the Year, and Digital Transformation Project Bronzie HQ won the Safe365 innovation award. Club Member Kerry Briody was named a life member of SLS Sydney, and Ronald Krite was named rescue watercraft member of the year. North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club members also won their share of awards. I congratulate them all.

ALBERT PARK

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (00:11): It gives me great pleasure to see that competitive baseball is back in a big way in Lismore, after Far North Coast Baseball's Albert Park baseball and softball hub was decimated by last year's floods. Sport is a major focus of community life in regional towns like Lismore. After a major rehabilitation effort by Lismore City Council and master contractor Bennett Constructions, Albert Park was able to play host to the School Sport Australia Baseball Championships in May. Eight teams from across Australia, featuring some of our very best high school baseball players took part, with the New South Wales team taking out the final on 13 May. It is estimated the championship injected some \$350,000 into the local economy, providing much-needed stimulus for local businesses. I congratulate all those who got Albert Park up and running for the championships, including Lismore City Council Infrastructure Services Manager Matt Brady, Mick Furchtman and George Tily from Bennett Constructions, and Far North Coast Baseball Commissioner Craig Scheibel.

CAMDEN MUSICAL SOCIETY

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (00:12): I congratulate the Camden Musical Society for its fantastic performance of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. Starting with the information night over seven months ago, in October, with auditions that weekend, the production team has worked tirelessly over the intervening period to ensure that a brilliant production was put on for the local community. The whole performance was of the highest quality, from the fantastic singing and music to the brilliant acting and stage direction. I particularly shout out to all those people who were involved with making the production possible; to all the backstage staff for direction, lighting, sound and music; and of course the incredible performances from all those acting in the production. It was truly a delight to see all the hard work behind the scenes produce such a brilliant performance to be showcased for the local community. Their performance was toot-sweet.

The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 00:14 on Wednesday 31 May until 10:00 the same day.

Written Community Recognition Statements

According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.

MR PARKINSON

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Chris Parkinson has volunteered with Trial Bay Marine Rescue at South West Rocks for sixteen years as a rescue radio operator. After spending his childhood holidaying at SWR, Mr Parkinson made the town home in 2000 and along with his mother and sister joined the Trial Bay Triathlon Committee and shortly after, the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol which is now known as Marine Rescue. The Parkinson family successfully completed their radio operating training. The role of Radio Operator involves monitoring the vessels that have logged on to Marine Rescue Trial Bay and checking that vessels have returned safely. Sometimes a tow back or rescue is needed, and this is when volunteers like Mr Parkinson assist with communicating with all parties. Mr Parkinson says he enjoys volunteering and providing a service to the community – and while the role can sometimes be challenging, he feels confident with the manuals and processes at hand. The Marine Rescue Trial Bay is recognised in the community as a very valuable service, and I thank Mr Parkinson and all those volunteers who make a tremendous difference to our communities.

MANTOVA ART PRIZE

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—I'd like to congratulate the winners of the EJ Mantova Art Prize – an annual event held in conjunction with the Bellinger Show and run by the Bellinger River Agricultural Society. The prize attracted 95 entries across four categories, each with a first prize of \$500 and a second prize of \$200. The exhibition opening event was attended by exhibiting artists, locals, and visitors. Former Mantova winner and esteemed local artist Chris Hundt declared the EJ Mantova Art Prize open, while judge Cath Fogarty provided a commentary on the winning entries. Selected by Cath and fellow judge, Jo Besley, the winners of the four categories are as follows. Section 1: Open 1st Prize – Lazlo Jeffrey, 'A Highway Classic', pen and watercolour. Section 2: Landscape 1st Prize – Erik De Jong, 'Neverend', oil on board. Section 3: Works on Paper 1st Prize – Charlotte Blesing, 'Partial Eclipse', collagraph print. Section 4: 3D/Sculpture 1st Prize – John Tuckwell, 'Bitten Once', porcelain. Held since the 1970s, the EJ Mantova Art Prize pays homage to Ernest John Mantova (1882-1952), considered Bellinger's first professional artist, who spent 20 years in the town producing countless landscape works and helping local artists establish their own creative practice.

MARGARET JOPLING

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Aldavilla's Margaret Jopling spends many hours within the Macleay community volunteering, from sport, to art, education, and social work. At the PCYC in Kempsey, she volunteers about 14 hours of her week jumping between reception and customer service duties, helping with kids classes and the gardening group. Ms Jopling is a volunteer staff member at Dunghutti-Ngaku Aboriginal Art Gallery in South Kempsey and the volunteer coordinator at the Macleay River Historical Society Museum where she spends her Sundays and helps with special events. As a life-long swimmer, she is the Treasurer of Kempsey Swimming Club assisting at club nights, carnivals and swimming lessons for both children and adults. Ms Jopling can also be found teaching the 'Balance and Bones' exercise class at Kempsey Macleay Valley University of the Third Age, known as U3A. She is on the committee and their Social Coordinator while making time to also take classes. Ms Jopling says she volunteers because she relates to the line in John F Kennedy's Inaugural address, 1961: "ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country". My heartfelt thanks to Ms Jopling's dedication and commitment to the community.

YOUTH HEAR YOM HASHOAH COMMEMORATION

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Monday 17 April 2023, I joined members of the Jewish community at the Youth Holocaust Education And Remembrance [HEAR] Yom HaShoah Commemoration event at Moriah College. Themed 'Stories of Hope,' the event was dedicated to eradicating antisemitism in our society by raising awareness of the atrocities of the Holocaust among young Australians. It was inspiring to hear from Holocaust survivor Peter Halas, who delivered a touching address to the event. Peter was born in Budapest in 1939 and went into hiding with his family during the Nazi occupation of Hungary in 1944. His mother and grandparents, among other Hungarian Jews, were brutally murdered by the Nazis. After surviving the war, Peter escaped communist Hungary before emigrating to Australia with his brother and father in the 1970s. I'm proud to represent the Davidson electorate which is home to a large Jewish community. I would like to acknowledge the 30 volunteers led by CEO Julia Sussman, for hosting this sophisticated event. Founded in 2017, Youth HEAR plays an important role in our community and I look forward to continuing to engage with them in the future.

YOM HASHOAH COMMUNAL COMMEMORATION

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—I was proud to join members of the Jewish community on Sunday 16 April 2023 at the University of New South Wales for a solemn commemoration of Yom HaShoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day. The event was named 'Heroism in the Holocaust' as we acknowledged the 80th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. We remember the bravery and courage. Special guest speaker Thomas Keneally AO, whose book *Schlinder's Ark* inspired the cinematic masterpiece *Schindler's List*, delivered an inspiring keynote address. At the event, I was handed a candle to light in memory of one individual. I was given Mashe Lewin, who was murdered at age 20 in Woronowo Ghetto, Poland. The event was organised by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. I would like to acknowledge CEO Darren Bark, President David Ossip, and Shoah Remembrance Committee Chair Dane Stern. I also pay tribute to the Sydney Jewish Choral Society, led by Musical Director Rose Grausman. Their performance throughout the commemoration was very moving. I am proud that the Davidson electorate is home to a large Jewish community. I stand with them to ensure the Holocaust is never forgotten and never repeated.

PASSING OF COUNTRY MUSIC LEGEND JOY KIRKPATRICK, OAM

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—It is with sadness that I acknowledge the passing of Davidson resident Joy Kirkpatrick OAM, better known as Joy McKean. Joy and her husband David Kirkpatrick AO MBE, who you will all know as Slim Dusty, lived in St Ives for many years. Joy was awarded the first ever Golden Guitar at the Tamworth Country Music Festival in 1973 for her composition "Lights on the Hill". She wrote many of the songs that were made famous by her husband. Joy and Slim made many joint song writing credits. Together they produced over a hundred albums, sold more than eight million records and earned 45 Golden Guitar awards. Joy was a co-founder of both the Tamworth Country Music Festival and the Country Music Association of Australia. Having been born in Tamworth, I am proud of this annual event. Joy was also chair of the Slim Dusty Foundation, which built and operates the Slim Dusty Centre in Kempsey. I extend my condolences to Joy's family and her many friends. Joy was a legend and a true icon, not just of country music but of the wider Australian music industry.

38TH ANNUAL MULTICULTURAL EID FESTIVAL AND FAIR 2023

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—On 30 April I was delighted to attend the Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair at Fairfield Showground. Eid al-Fitr is one of two major holidays celebrated by Muslims around the world. It can be translated as "the feast of fast-breaking" as it commemorates the end of the holy month of Ramadan in which Muslims who are able to do so will fast from before dawn until after sunset each day. MEFF is the first, largest and longest running Multicultural Eid festival in Australia and was started by the late Dr Qazi Ashfaq Ahmad OAM when he noticed that Eid was only celebrated in people's private homes. Back in his home country, Eid was celebrated in large gatherings and festivals. He wanted to have the same celebration here with his friends and families so MEFF was the first event where Muslims could gather and celebrate Eid in a fun festival atmosphere. Since then, it has grown due to the popularity and support from the Multicultural community. MEFF gets bigger and better every year and my thanks go especially to the MEFF consortium leadership team for their kind invitation to attend this special event.

AUSTRALIAN MALAYSIAN SINGAPOREAN ASSOCIATION EID LUNCH 2023

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—On 29 April 2023, I was delighted to attend the Australian Malaysian Singaporean Association's Eid-al-Fitr lunch at Mamu Penang Coffee Stall in Guildford in my electorate. Eid al-Fitr is one of two major holidays celebrated by Muslims around the world. It can be translated as "the feast of fast-breaking" as it commemorates the end of the holy month of Ramadan in which Muslims who are able to do so will fast from before dawn until after sunset each day. AMSA was established in 1970 to provide support for

Malaysian and Singaporean migrants coming to Australia. In the 21st century there has been an increase in the number of younger members of AMSA with roots from Malaysia and Singapore and who are now living, working or operating a business in Australia. I was delighted to meet many of the newer members, as well as to hear more about AMSA's refocusing on advocacy and empowerment, professional and social networking as well as community engagement and support. My thanks go especially to President Thomson Ch'ng and the team at AMSA for their kind invitation to attend this special event.

SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA EID CELEBRATION 2023

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—On 29 April I was delighted to attend the South Asian Muslim Association of Australia's Seniors Eid Get-together at Berala Community Centre. Eid al-Fitr is one of two major holidays celebrated by Muslims around the world. It can be translated as "the feast of fast-breaking" as it commemorates the end of the holy month of Ramadan in which Muslims who are able to do so will fast from before dawn until after sunset each day. SAMAA is a non-profit incorporated association which aims to provide care to the elderly of South Asian Muslim Community. They are a public benevolent institution which strives to provide services to the elderly and disabled. It carries out its mission by interacting with relevant government and non-government bodies and all people of good will, to develop programs to enhance the human dignity of our elderly. My thanks go especially to Public Officer, Zahid Jamil and the team at SAMAA for their kind invitation to attend this special event.

TSU CHI MOTHERS DAY

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I had the pleasure of attending the heart-warming Tsu Chi Mother's Day event in Eastwood, alongside Council colleagues Mayor Sarkis Yedelian and Councillor Justin Li. This event held special significance as we came together to honour and celebrate the selfless love and dedication of mothers in our community. I want to express my gratitude to Former CEO Stephen Kan and Kim Lee for extending their gracious invitation to this remarkable occasion. Attendees from the local community were privileged to witness the meaningful activities and initiatives undertaken by Tsu Chi Foundation. Their unwavering commitment to social welfare, disaster relief, and community service is commendable, and their efforts truly make a positive impact in the lives of many. Attending the Tsu Chi Mother's Day event was a poignant reminder of the importance of appreciating and cherishing the immense contributions of mothers in our society. Their unconditional love and sacrifices deserve our utmost admiration and respect. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in organizing this event, as well as the incredible volunteers who selflessly dedicate their time and efforts to support Tsu Chi Foundation's noble cause throughout the world.

WEST RYDE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—Today, I wish to acknowledge and commend the new West Ryde Business Chamber executive committee for their work re-establishing the forum post-COVID-19. Despite facing tremendous hardship and challenges, they have revitalised the long-standing community business chamber into a thriving networking forum. It is a testament to the team, led by President, Artin Etmekdjian, Vice President, Fazal Hameed, Secretary, Rob Senior, Treasurer, Nora Etmekdjian, and Board Members Jerry Yessaeian, Kedarnath Pagaddinnimath, and Christopher Galloway. Despite only being in their first year as a committee, they have injected new energy and activity which I am confident will positively shape the future direction of the Chamber. The resurgence of the West Ryde Chamber of Commerce symbolises the fortitude and adaptability of our local businesses, who bring vitality and diversity to our wonderful Ryde community. Their spirit of enterprise is woven into the fabric of our community, fostering social connections, providing essential services, and creating local employment opportunities. As we look to the future, I am confident that under the leadership of the new committee, the West Ryde Chamber of Commerce will continue to thrive and flourish.

THE MIRAL KOREAN DISABILITY FESTIVAL

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I had the privilege of attending The Miral Australia's Korean disability festival on Saturday, May 13, 2023. This event was a celebration of inclusivity, bringing together 450 people from across Sydney to honour individuals of all abilities, and exhibit service providers that specialise in supporting culturally diverse communities. The festival featured a performance concert, engaging family-friendly activity stalls and was an opportunity for attendees to learn more about NDIS service providers. Miral is a volunteer-driven organisation based in West Ryde. With a strong presence in the Korean-Australian community, Miral fosters connections between people living with disability and the broader community, extending an open invitation to individuals from all backgrounds. Every Saturday, Miral hosts activities and lunches, bringing together a diverse group of 40-50 individuals of all abilities. These gatherings create a warm and welcoming environment, where everyone feels included and valued. The success of the festival was made possible by the dedication and hard work of over 75 volunteers, whose commitment to creating an inclusive community is truly commendable.

I particularly acknowledge Hyungyu Kang, Jisung Chang and Min Hyoun Kim for being such gracious hosts, and for their work coordinating the day. Kam-sa-ham-ni-da!

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE, BERESFORD ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL CROSSING SUPERVISOR MS LANETTE SAVILLE

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—I would like to congratulate Ms Lanette Saville for 37 years of service as the Beresford Road Public School crossing supervisor. During this time, Lanette has helped thousands of school children and their families travel safely to school outside Beresford Road Public School – and always with a smile on her face. Lanette has helped generations of families cross the street, and anyone who has had the pleasure of meeting her, knows the passion and care she shows every day in her vocation. School crossing supervisors are integral for keeping our primary school aged children safe from harm, particularly in school zones and during school pick up or drop off hours. During these times there are high levels of traffic. School crossing supervisors not only ensure that our children are safe, but they play an important role in ensuring that traffic flows smoothly for other families, local residents, and teachers. On behalf of the Beresford Road Public School community, we thank you Lanette for your dedicated service, ensuring that our children and their families are kept safe while they travel to school.

2023 POLICE AND COMMUNITY EXPO

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—It was a pleasure to attend the 2023 Police and Community Expo at Fairfield Showground with members of our Western Sydney community on Saturday, 20th May. The annual Police and Community Expo is a wonderful and exciting opportunity for members of our community, including children and their families, to learn more about and engage with NSW Police, community groups, law enforcement and government agencies. It was great to see residents and families across our Western Sydney community come together to participate in fun activities and meet various units within the NSW Police Force and learn about how they uphold the safety and wellbeing of society. Thank you to the NSW Traffic and Highway Patrol, Department of Communities and Justice, NSW SES, Lifeline Macarthur and Western Sydney, NSW Police Legacy, PolAir, Corrective Services NSW, and NSW Police Dog Unit for attending the Expo and speaking with community members. I would also like to thank Superintendent Michael McLean APM, Commander, Fairfield Police Area Command, for inviting me to this fantastic community initiative. Congratulations to your team for organising another successful Police and Community Expo for our community.

KAMBAN KAZHAGAM AUSTRALIA - 16TH ANNIVERSARY KAMBAN TAMIL LITERARY FESTIVAL

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—It was a pleasure to attend Kamban Kazhagam Australia's 16th Anniversary Kamban Tamil Literary Festival on Saturday, 4th March 2023. Kamban Kazhagam Australia is a wonderful Tamil organisation that promotes Tamil prose/verse, music, and theatre. Every week, Kamban Kazhagam Australia organises classes and events that engage our Tamil community with literature. Over the past 16 years, they have shared the moral teachings and lessons of diverse Tamil literary texts, to audiences across Australia particularly Tamil youth. The Kamban Literary Festival is Kamban Kazhagam Australia's major annual event which aims to showcase the variety of dynamic Tamil literature through speeches and debates by guest speakers and students and theatrical play performances. It was great to join members of our Tamil community in Western Sydney with my colleagues, Donna Davis MP, State Member for Parramatta, Clr Lisa Lake, Mayor, Cumberland City Council, and Clr Suman Saha, Deputy Mayor, Cumberland City Council, to celebrate Tamil literature and presentations from members of our Tamil community. Thank you to Jeiram Jegatheesan, Founder/Chairman, Shanjivevan Gunaratnam, President, and committee members of Kamban Kazhagam for organising a fantastic event. I look forward to continue working with you.

SHELLHARBOUR NETBALL CLUB – 50 YEARS

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Shellharbour Netball Club on the occasion of their 50th anniversary. Over the past five decades, netball in Shellharbour has undergone significant transformations, and the club has played a crucial role in shaping the sport in the community. On this momentous occasion, past and present members of the Shellharbour Netball Club will gather at the Warilla Sports and Recreation Club to celebrate its 50th anniversary. One of the most remarkable changes the club has experienced in its five-decade journey is its membership growth. Despite competition from other female sports such as women's AFL, the club's loyal and tight-knit community, characterised by a strong sense of family, has continued to grow. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I thank club President, Chantal Ward, and all the members of the Shellharbour Netball Club on their remarkable 50-year journey of dedication to netball in our community.

DEMI MICALLEF

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Demi Micallef, a year 8 student at Corpus Christi High School in Oak Flats. Demi's talent and dedication recently led her to secure a victory by placing 1st in the 10-14 girls age category at the prestigious 2023 Australian Wakeboard National Titles held in Mildura. This outstanding accomplishment grants her the well-deserved opportunity to participate in the upcoming Nautique WWA Wakeboard World Championships. Scheduled to take place from August 30 to September 3, 2023, in Ferreira do Zezere, Portugal, this global event showcases the pinnacle of wakeboarding excellence from around the world. Demi, your remarkable achievement serves as an inspiration to aspiring athletes everywhere. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our warmest congratulations and convey our sincerest well wishes for your future sporting endeavours.

GRAHAM KOHLER - SHELL COVE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I congratulate Graham Kohler, the coordinator of the Shell Cove Community Garden, as well as all the dedicated community volunteers who contribute to its success. Situated overlooking the picturesque Shell Cove Marina, this bustling little community garden has found its place within the rapidly expanding urban environment of Shell Cove. Originally starting with just eight beds in 2019, the garden has flourished and now boasts an impressive 35 beds, thanks to self-funding efforts and generous contributions from the community. Under Graham's guidance, the garden has become a powerful catalyst for fostering a sense of community among the newer residents of the area, many of whom have relocated from Sydney without established social networks. It has provided them with a valuable social outlet, bringing them together and facilitating connections with one another. I thank Graham and all of the passionate volunteers for their exceptional dedication and commitment to the Shell Cove Garden. Their efforts have made a significant impact on our community, enriching the lives of its residents and exemplifying the power of collective action and shared spaces.

PIPER BAMFORD

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I rise to recognise Ms Piper Bamford of Forster who was recently accepted into Hunter Sports Academy for Swimming along with her team mate Eva Keen. At just 13 years of age, Piper currently swim trains 4 times per week plus has 2 gym sessions every week and should be commended on her dedication and passion. Piper's sportsmanship and kindness towards other competitors is beyond her years. At the recent NSW 2023 Qualifying Trials held in Sydney, Piper broke three of her personal best records! I have no doubts that Piper will be representing her country as an elite athlete in the near future. I congratulate both Piper and Eva not only on their successful admissions to the Hunter Sports Academy for Swimming but for their outstanding sportsmanship.

MANNING SPORTS AWARDS

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I rise to recognise Wil Ruprecht, Tony Lewis, Ivy Hoadly and Kasey Brown who have all received honours at the Manning Sports Awards presentation. Wil has been crowned Sportstar of the Year for his winning performance at the 2022 E2 Enduro GP motorcycle world championship. Tony Lewis was awarded the Hugh McCrindle Medal in recognition of his service to hockey. Ivy Hoadley secured Junior Sportstar of the Year for her promising talent in both athletics and netball. And squash star, Kasey Brown, has been inducted into the Manning Valley Sporting Hall of Fame; the first induction to the hall of fame in thirteen years. Congratulations to you all.

FORSTER SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I rise to recognise Forster Surf Life Saving Club members for their dedication to the safety of the people of the Myall Lakes and beyond at the closure of another season. Forster Surf Life Saving Club recently held their annual awards and recognition night and major award recipients were Katie Tisdell for leading youth patrol hours, Amy Whitehouse for the leading female patrol hours and Ryan Crompton and Brad Verdich were awarded for leading male patrol hours. Col Haywood received the Club Presidents Award and John Quinn and Anne Evans received the Gordon Godwin's Club Person of the Year Award. I take this opportunity to thank once again Forster Surf Life Saving Club and all local SLS Clubs for their tireless commitment to the safety of others on our beaches year after year.

CHARLESTOWN AZZURRI SELECTIONS

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—The young guns from Charlestown Azzurri Football Club were in top form at the recent Hunter PSSA and Polding trials. The club was justifiably thrilled to have seven players selected for representative duties as a result of the recent trials. Congratulations to Abby Low,

Harper Demir, Isla McGugan, Neli Cifrian, Edyn Samuel and Milla Price who were all selected in the Hunter PSSA squad. Alannah Evans was selected to represent Polding as their goalkeeper. Well done to all the Charlestown Azzurri FC players that were selected, and all the aspiring football players from Charlestown who tried out. There is a lot of excitement building in the community, particularly among women and girls who play, with the FIFA Women's World Cup coming to Sydney in the coming weeks. I hope it will go on to inspire more girls like these talented up-and-comers in the future. There is even more reason for Charlestown Azzurri to celebrate in June, when the club will mark its 60th anniversary. What a lasting legacy of sporting excellence and development of junior talent. Forza Azzurri!

HUNTER WORKERS

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—As of 27 April 2023, 45 Australian workers have been killed at work this year. Workplace safety is a vital issue in Australia and that's why I want to recognise Hunter Workers for their contribution to keeping this matter front of mind for workers in the Charlestown area and beyond. Hunter Workers hosted the International Workers Memorial Day on 28 April 2023 at Newcastle Foreshore, gathering together workers from across the region to remember and honour workers who have lost their lives, been injured or fallen ill due to work-related accidents. Hunter Workers represents more than 64,000 workers across 24 unions in the region and has been active in advocating for workers' rights and protections since 1869. The International Workers Memorial Day is a reminder of the importance of workplace safety measures and the need for vigilance in ensuring that workers are protected, and that workplaces are safe.

CENTRAL NEWCASTLE RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—I had the pleasure to join Central Newcastle Rugby League Football Club for its Ladies Day on 23 April. It was a very entertaining day out for everyone who attended to watch the Spider Jones Cup and other matches held at St John Oval, Charlestown. Women's league continues to go from strength to strength in Charlestown and the Butcher Birds are fantastic ambassadors of the game. I congratulate the club on its commitment to women's rugby league and recognise its work in acknowledging the vital role that women play in the ongoing success of the club at large. Congratulations also go to Butcher Birds player Kayla Romaniuk on her selection to the NSW Country side that played City on 4 May, and to Butcher Boy Cameron 'Spider' Anderson on his selection to the NSW Country side that took on City on 6 May. It has been a successful season for the Club's players in terms of representative selection, with Central's Susannah Cooke playing in the Country Championships grand final as part of the Newcastle Maitland Region Knights at Leichardt Oval on 29 April. Go Central!

AMANDA COOPER NSW FINALIST TRAINING AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to recognise Amanda Cooper who has been selected as a finalist for the 2023 NSW Training Awards for the North Coast/Mid North Coast region. The NSW Training Awards are presented annually by Training Services NSW to recognise outstanding achievement in the vocational education and training sector. The awards celebrate and recognise the best and brightest in Vocational Education and Training. Amanda is Secondary School Hospitality teacher at St Columba Anglican School in Port Macquarie and is no stranger to being recognised for her success as an educator. In 2019, Amanda was acclaimed as an outstanding educator at the World Teachers' Day Awards.

Amanda also guided the team of Year 10 hospitality students to take out the crown at the 2019 Annual Recipe Challenge, a national competition developed by the Home Economics Institute of Australia and McCormick Foods. Amanda's passion for the industry and dedication to teaching real life, pragmatic skills have made her a tremendous ambassador for the students she teaches. I wish her well at the finalist ceremony for the Training Awards in June.

GEMMA LAWRENCE NETBALL NORTH COAST MVP

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to recognise Gemma Lawrence, a Year 12 student at Hastings Secondary College (Port Macquarie Campus) as the sole representative of the Hastings Macleay area in the North Coast secondary school netball team. Gemma showcased her outstanding skills as Goal Defence, Goalkeeper, and Wing Defence at the NSW Combined High Schools Sports Association Netball Championships at the three day knock out competition in Orange earlier this month. Eleven regional teams competed against each other, each aiming to not only be crowned the State champion team but each player also vying to be selected to represent the NSW State team. Whilst the North Coast team placed a respectable seventh overall, Gemma was honoured with the title of Player's Player for the Championships, Most Valuable Player North Coast. I congratulate Gemma for her exceptional commitment to and achievement in the sport of netball, an impressive effort

considering she is in the midst of her final year of secondary studies. Thank you, Gemma, for doing a superb job representing our area and Hastings Secondary College.

PAMMIE CONDON, A STUNNING SENIOR INFLUENCE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to recognise the fabulously inspiring Camden Haven fitness and fashion icon, Pammie Condon. Pammie, 73 years young, rises at 3am each morning to commence her laps around the North Haven area. She dons her headlamp and sets out after a black coffee and walks between 10-12 laps - a journey of around 30km. Pammie is renowned for the vibrancy of her active wear, sporting large flowers in her hair, red faux fur trimmed gloves and leopard print amidst fluorescent shoes and scarves. She moved to Bonny Hills twenty years ago after a successful career in interior design and has brought a next level of flair and inspiration to people of all ages. This elegant senior citizen literally walks the talk of 'move it or lose it'. Her vibrant advocacy for exercise and active community involvement is impressive. Pammie strongly supports community causes such as the completion of the Beach to Beach pathway. 'I'd love to see the Beach to Beach Shared Pathway completed, as it would be fabulous infrastructure for people to experience all the Camden Haven has to offer.' Thank you Pammie for bringing joy and inclusion to our area.

CENTRAL WEST POLICE DISTRICT AWARDS CEREMONY

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to recognise the following award recipients at the Central West Police District Awards Ceremony, held on 10th May 2023. Chief Inspector Peter Atkins, National Medal – 2nd Clasp—30 Years' Service, NSW Police Medal - 5th Clasp - 35 Years' Service; Chief Inspector David Harvey, National Medal – 2nd Clasp—30 Years' Service, NSW Police Medal - 5th Clasp - 35 Years' Service; Detective Sergeant Thomas (Brendan) Casey, NSW Police Medal - 2nd Clasp - 20 Years' Service; Sergeant Joanne Little, National Medal – 1st Clasp—25 Years' Service, NSW Police Medal - 3rd Clasp - 25 Years' Service; Warrant of Appointment (Sergeant); Sergeant Darren Rymer, National Police Service Medal [NPSM], National Medal, National Emergency Medal, NSW Police Medal - 2nd Clasp - 20 Years' Service, NSW Police Medal - 1st Clasp - 15 Years' Service; Warrant of Appointment (Sergeant) Sergeant Stuart Milne, National Police Service Medal [NPSM], National Medal, NSW Police Medal - 1st Clasp - 15 Years' Service, Warrant of Appointment (Sergeant); Sergeant Ben Munro, National Police Service Medal [NPSM], National Medal, NSW Police Medal - 1st Clasp - 15 Years' Service. Congratulations to you all. Well done.

CENTRAL WEST POLICE DISTRICT AWARDS CEREMONY

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to recognise the following award recipients at the Central West Police District Awards Ceremony, held on 10th May 2023. Senior Constable Emma Byrne, NSW Police Medal – 10 Years' Service, COP Unit Citation – for her involvement at the Lindt Café Siege on 15 December 2014. Senior Constable Benjamin Herden, NSW Police Medal – 10 Years' Service; Senior Constable Emma Dyball, NSW Police Medal – 10 Years' Service. Unsworn officers: Intelligence Analyst Alison Carr, NSW Police Medallion/lapel 20 Years. Wellbeing Services Coordinator Pamela Freeland, NSW Police Medallion/lapel 15 Years, 15 Year Long Service Award Certificate and Medal. General Administration Officer Melissa Atkins, NSW Police Medallion/lapel 10 Years. Roster Officer Kim Morgan, NSW Police Medallion/lapel 10 Years. Former Roster Officer Haylee Wakefield, NSW Police Medallion/lapel 10 Years. NSW Police Force - Certificate of Service, former officers: Colin Clunes, NSW Police Force - Certificate of Service; Sean Beckett, NSW Police Force - Certificate of Service. Congratulations to you all. Well done.

CENTRAL WEST POLICE DISTRICT AWARDS CEREMONY

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to recognise the following award recipients at the Central West Police District Awards Ceremony, held on 10th May 2023. Sergeant Christopher Bayad, National Police Service Medal [NPSM], National Medal, National Emergency Medal, NSW Police Medal - 1st Clasp - 15 Years' Service, Warrant of Appointment (Sergeant); Sergeant David Giblett, Warrant of Appointment (Sergeant); Leading Senior Constable Christopher Tomlinson, NSW Police Medal - 2nd Clasp - 20 Years' Service; Leading Senior Constable Robert Ellis, National Police Medal [NPSM], National Medal, NSW Police Medal - 1st Clasp - 15 Years' Service; Senior Constable Geraldine Bunting, NSW Police Medal - 2nd Clasp - 20 Years' Service; Detective Senior Constable Sarah Thomsen, National Police Service Medal [NPSM], National Medal, NSW Police Medal - 1st Clasp - 15 Years' Service; Senior Constable Sandra Barton, National Police Service Medal [NPSM], National Medal, NSW Police Medal - 1st Clasp - 15 Years' Service; Senior Constable Anthony Lunney, National Police Service Medal [NPSM], National Medal, NSW Police Medal - 1st Clasp - 15 Years' Service; Detective Senior Constable Lucas Payne, NSW Police Medal – 10 Years' Service. Congratulations to you all. Well done.

ADDI ROAD X SIDE STREET MEDICS LAUNCH

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—Addison Road Community Centre will now be partnering weekly with Street Side Medics, which is a GP led mobile clinic providing medical care for

acutely disadvantaged people. This service will be the first of its kind operating in the Inner West, and provides a vital point of call for those in our local community who are unable to access primary health care for a number of different reasons. The partnership will launch on Wednesday 31st May, and accompanies the expansion of the Addi Road Food Pantry's opening hours on Wednesdays from 4pm to 7pm. The launch will be catered by the fantastic Turbans 4 Australia, and include entertainment and engaging speakers. I want to recognise the work already done by Addison Road Community Centre, as I have spoken about many times in this House, and further recognise the critical importance of their upcoming partnership with Side Street Medics. Providing food and healthcare to the most vulnerable in our community is incredibly important work, and I thank Addi Road and Side Street Medics for their commitment to our local community.

NEWTOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE CAR BOOT SLEEP OUT

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—The wonderful work of Newtown Neighbourhood Centre continues with their Car Boot Sleep Out - which aims to fundraise and highlight the experience of women over 55 in the Inner West who are sleeping rough in their cars. This is a critically important issue to draw attention to, as members of this Parliament would no doubt be aware that women over 55 are the fastest growing homeless population in Australia. The event will be held on the 27th of June on the roof of the Marrickville Metro Carpark, and will be joined by over 150 participants who will spend the night in their cars to highlight the experiences of those sleeping rough. The experience is intentionally confronting to highlight the pressing issue of local homelessness and educate members of the community on what they can do to help. I would encourage those in our local community and beyond to get involved, any way you can, to support this initiative and raise awareness of this critical issue.

NORTHERN SUBURBS TENNIS ASSOCIATION CENTENARY ANNIVERSARY DINNER AND FINALS

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—I would like to warmly congratulate the Northern Suburbs Tennis Association [NSTA] on its centenary. To celebrate this great milestone, the Association held its anniversary dinner 'under the stars' on Talus Street, Naremburn, at which I was privileged to be a guest. It was a fantastic night of great food, fun and festivity, and no better way for the Association to celebrate its centenary. The NSTA has a long and distinguished history serving generations of our community – a history of which all involved can be rightfully proud. The following day, I had the pleasure of attending the NSTA's 2023 Championships at its home courts on Talus Street. I was impressed with both the quality of tennis and sportsmanship on display. I congratulate the finalists and winners for the 2023 NSTA Championships and indeed all players who gave their best. They have done their club and their families proud. I again congratulate the Northern Suburbs Tennis Association on reaching its centenary – a remarkable achievement.

ST PETERS CREMORNE ANZAC SERVICE

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—On Sunday 23 April, I was delighted to return to St Peter's Anglican Church in Cremorne for their annual Anzac Sunday Service. Attended by representatives of the Australian Defence Forces, the service honoured the contribution of Australia's Anzacs, both past and present. In a tribute to the original Anzacs, the church displayed the flags of Australia, New Zealand and our old adversary, Turkey. In a traditional Anglican service replete with the liturgy of a sung eucharist, the Rector of St Peter's, the Rev Tim St Quintin, led the service so well. The Service featured old favourite hymns typically sung for Anzac Day including O God our Help in Ages Past and God is our Strength and Refuge. I felt nourished and inspired by this uplifting and reverent service in honour of those who gave their lives for our country. I commend the Rev Tim St Quintin and the parish of St Peter's Anglican Church for this beautiful tribute to our Anzacs.

2MBS OPEN DAY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—Radio provides such an important service to our community and on 15 April I had the joy to join 2MBS Fine Music Sydney for their open day in Crows Nest. 2MBS focuses on the broadcast of quality music across Sydney on 102.5 FM. The station's stated mission is "to be Sydney's preferred fine music broadcaster, broadcasting classical, jazz and other fine music genres for the enjoyment and encouragement of music". Dedicated to a high standard of broadcasting, 2MBS FM promotes Australian musicians and composers, with a particular focus on fostering young musical talent. I was delighted to visit 2MBS in person to chat with the team and to contribute to live radio. I express my thanks to the 2MBS Chair Bob Gilchrist and GM Mona Omar and everyone involved for the work they do to bring this valuable cultural service to our community. I wish 2MBS well and look forward to many more future visits to their local studios.

BAILEY GOODWIN

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I am thrilled to recognise the incredible accomplishments of Bailey, a talented sprint car driver who has been making waves in the Wingless Sprint Season. His determination,

skill, and passion for racing have propelled him to great success. His recent victories are a testament to his hard work and dedication. Bailey's impressive performance on the track has not gone unnoticed, and his success has brought great pride and joy to the community. His achievements serve as an inspiration to young aspiring drivers and his commitment to excellence is a shining example of what can be achieved with hard work and dedication. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Bailey and his team for their outstanding performance in the Wingless Sprint Season. Thank you for your dedication to the sport and for bringing so much excitement and joy to the community. Your achievements are truly impressive, and I wish you continued success in all your future endeavours.

GLENMORE PARK CRICKET CLUB

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—Today, I rise to applaud the remarkable achievements of the Glenmore Park Cricket Club in the 2022/23 season. With 12 junior and 5 senior teams, the club has showcased their strength and dedication. During the season, 17 players achieved impressive milestones by scoring 50 runs or more on 37 occasions. Notably, Riley Killeen from the Under 15 Reds marked his first century—an extraordinary accomplishment for a young player. Additionally, three players displayed exceptional skills by taking 5-wicket hauls. A special mention goes to the Under 16 Red team for their outstanding performance, securing the premiership against formidable opponents. Their victory exemplifies the club's spirit of teamwork and resilience. The Glenmore Park Cricket Club is not only a source of athletic excellence but also promotes the importance of active lifestyles for our youth. Their commitment to nurturing talent and encouraging healthy habits is commendable and positively impacts our community. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Glenmore Park Cricket Club, their skilled players, dedicated coaches and devoted volunteers. Their achievements bring pride to our community.

ALICIA MCILWHAN

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I rise today to recognise the opening of Forge Café, a new business in Mulgoa Rise, and to extend my congratulations to its owner, Alicia Mcilwhan. Opening a new café takes courage, creativity, and a strong entrepreneurial spirit, and Alicia has demonstrated all of these qualities in bringing Forge Café to our community. Her commitment to providing high-quality food and beverages, as well as a welcoming environment, is truly commendable. The opening of Forge Café is a testament to the potential of our region, and it is exciting to see the growth and prosperity that this new business will bring. On behalf of the community, I would like to congratulate Alicia on the opening of Forge Café and wish her every success in her new venture. Her presence will undoubtedly contribute to the richness and diversity of our community, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact of her business on our local economy and beyond.

SARAH WEEKES

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—A Bathurst mum has been selling roses to raise money and awareness for cystic fibrosis. Last Friday marked 65 Roses Day and Sarah Weeks used the occasion to do her bit for this great cause. But it's more than just a good cause for Sarah. It's something that's close to her heart as her daughter Izzy is one of the 3500 people in Australia living with cystic fibrosis. They don't get any government funding for the disease, so the money they raise for Cystic Fibrosis Community Care goes back to the families that are impacted by his rare affliction. This allows families such as Izzy's to be reimbursed for nebulisers or nebuliser parts, which form part of the treatment that she needs twice a day. Cystic Fibrosis causes an abnormal build-up of thick mucus in the lungs, airways and digestive system, and there is currently no cure for it. Sarah's efforts in selling 500 roses as part of 65 Roses Day should be applauded because it's her family's devotion to helping Izzy's quality of life that is really special and shows that love has no bounds.

CUSHLA RUE

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—Hard work and determination has paid off for Bathurst sporting prodigy Cushla Rue. She's now reaping the benefits of the countless hours spent working on her football skills and has made the big time after being signed by the Western Sydney Wanderers A-League Women's side. Even better still, Bathurst locals have the chance to see the rising star in person when the Wanderers play an official A-League competition fixture at Carrington Park later this year. The teenager played her junior soccer in Bathurst and represented Western NSW. She's since gone on to play in the A-League for firstly Wellington Phoenix and now Western Sydney Wanderers, while also lining up for the Young Matildas national side. The prospect of once again playing in Bathurst and showcasing the top level of domestic women's football is clearly something Cushla is excited about. She hasn't played in Bathurst since she was a 14-year-old with the Western Mariners, so it will be a homecoming that's been well worth the wait to strut her stuff in front of family and friends. The match is expected to be played in late October or early November.

KERRIE BASHA

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—While Kerrie Basha is the first to admit that dancing is not her strong point, the principal at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Blayney was determined to put her best foot forward in the name of charity. Earlier this year Kerrie signed up as an entrant in this year's Stars of Orange Dance for Cancer competition which was held on May 27. She teamed up with dance instructor Emma Nixon from the Em Dance Studio in Blayney to learn some moves ahead of the event and raised much-needed funds for the Cancer Council. Like many of the contestants in the event, Kerrie's motivation to participate in the Dance for Cancer fundraiser came from her personal experiences. Her father died some three decades ago from melanoma and was only 48-years-old at the time. And soon after signing up for Dance for Cancer in March, received news that her 21-year-old daughter Olivia had been diagnosed with lymphoma. Kerrie's story and journey to be dancing on stage in front of hundreds of people certainly is a moving one. I congratulate her for her fundraising efforts and wish her and her family all the best for the future.

LUGARNO PUBLIC SCHOOL ANZAC DAY ASSEMBLY

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—I recently got the chance to attend Lugarno Public School's ANZAC Day Assembly, which offered students the opportunity to honour the legacies of Australian servicemen and women. It was fantastic to sit alongside retired servicemen and women during the ceremony whilst the SRC team led the proceedings. I'd like to acknowledge all the students at Lugarno Public, who demonstrated absolute respect and integrity during the assembly. ANZAC Day is a time to commemorate those who fought and died at Gallipoli in Turkey during World War One, but also an opportunity to recognise the efforts of Australian Servicemen and women in our communities across the State. Many Australian men and women have sacrificed their lives in wars, operations, and conflicts across the globe. Today, we celebrate the ANZAC Spirit – the ideals of mateship, courage and endurance that are alive in our communities today. I'd like to thank the Principal of Lugarno Public School, Justine Williams, for all the effort she put in to ensure that the day ran smoothly, and I look forward to attending next year's ANZAC Ceremony at Lugarno Public School.

IRT PEAKHURST MOTHER'S DAY FETE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—I rise to thank IRT at Peakhurst for inviting me out to come and visit their annual Mother's Day Fete recently. I always enjoy visiting IRT at Peakhurst – there is never a shortage of friendly and familiar faces. Held in the Community Hall in Peakhurst, there were several stalls selling everything from gifts, to food, to flowers. All sales went directly to supporting the IRT Peakhurst Friends and Residents Association. Of course, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to pick up a small gift for my wife, Adla. IRT retirement village is such a wonderful place for elderly residents within our community. For over 50 years, the IRT organisation has worked incredibly hard to create a safe and inviting environment, allowing residents to enjoy both an active social life and some much-needed rest and relaxation. I'd like to thank Lyndon Mitchell for inviting me along, as well as everyone else who is a part of the IRT Peakhurst Friends and Residents Association. I look forward to attending next year!

LEBANESE MUSLIM ASSOCIATION 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—I would like to congratulate the Lebanese Muslim Association for hosting a successful 60th Anniversary celebration recently. As former Minister for Multiculturalism, I developed a very strong relationship with the LMA over the years. I am privileged enough to be able to continue my working relationship with them today as Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism. They oversee several Mosques in Sydney, including the Lakemba Mosque, with a growing congregation of thousands of people each week. It was great to visit the Lakemba Mosque with my Parliamentary Colleagues, the leader of the opposition, Mark Speakman, as well as the member for Holsworthy, Tina Ayyad. We enjoyed incredible food, learning more about the local Muslim community in Lakemba and throughout New South Wales. I'm looking forward to continuing to work alongside the LMA in the future. I understand they have several exciting projects on the way, including upgrades to Lakemba Mosque. I'd like to thank the President Hafez Alameddine, Secretary Gamel Kheir and Treasurer Abdul Rahman Shamsi, for the amazing work they continue to do for Lebanese Muslims in New South Wales. I wish them all the best over the next few years.

GRAHAME WILSON

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I'd like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution Lake Macquarie artist Grahame Wilson has made to promote and celebrate visual arts across the Hunter Valley. Grahame is a well-known Lake Macquarie artist who, along with his wife and fellow artist Rebecca Murray, own and operate the Flying Spanners Gallery at Teralba. Recently, Grahame invested his entire life savings of \$50,000 into organising and hosting the inaugural Sculptures at Scratchley exhibition. The exhibition took place over two weeks in May 2023 and was a huge success. A total of 34 artists from across the country and overseas came

together to display an impressive 48 sculptures in the historic Fort Scratchley precinct, with around 20,000 people coming to view the exhibition. Grahame said the idea for Sculptures at Scratchley was born from a moment of madness five months ago when he had a vision to organise an exhibition along Newcastle's coastline. This is the first time an exhibition of this kind has been held in the area. I'd like to thank Grahame for his efforts and congratulate him on the exhibition's success.

LEONIE CUTTS AND CRAIG BROWNE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I'd like to recognise the amazing efforts of Leonie Cutts and Craig Browne from Martinsville who have quite literally brought the spirit of Christmas to those in need for more than 20 years. When Leonie and Craig first moved to Lake Macquarie in 2000, they decided they wanted to support their new community in some way and approached Burnside Homes, now called Uniting, offering to help however they could. Burnside Homes said they needed four Christmas hampers for some local families who had fallen on hard times, so Leonie and Craig took on the task. Since then, their Christmas hamper effort has grown exponentially and over the recent Christmas period, Leonie and Craig put together 101 hampers for Uniting along with \$740 in shopping vouchers. Assembling the hampers has become such an undertaking that Leonie and Craig have enlisted the help of friends and family, hosting an annual 'Spirit of Christmas' event where hundreds of people visit their property to drop off donations and pack hampers. I thank Leonie and Craig for the years of effort and expense they've dedicated to spreading Christmas cheer in the Lake Macquarie community.

EMMA-SUE GREENTREE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—I want to acknowledge the extraordinary achievements of 24-year-old Emma-Sue Greentree from Bonnells Bay who has become an international light-heavyweight boxing champion, just seven years after she first picked up her gloves. In March Emma-Sue took out the bronze medal in her category when she competed at the International Boxing Association's Women's World Championships held in India.

Just a few weeks prior she brought home two gold medals from international boxing events held in Hungary and Bulgaria as part of the Australian team. She is also the current Australian amateur under-81kg boxing champion after competing at the National Amateur Boxing Competition in South Australia late last year. What makes Emma-Sue's achievements even more remarkable is that she was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in 2008 at age nine, and despite having to manage four daily injections she never stopped being enthusiastic about sport.

Emma-Sue has become an Ambassador for the Type 1 Diabetes Foundation and has mentored teenagers at camps to encourage them to continue with exercise and not to let their diagnosis stop them from achieving everything they want. I acknowledge and congratulate Emma-Sue on her achievements.

ISLAMIC WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA EID AND EASTER EVENT 2023

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—This year, the special occasion of the Eid Islamic Festival and Easter served as a reminder of the shared values that underpin the different faiths and cultures in our community. Australia is one of the most successful multicultural societies and this year we had the opportunity to share and combine these celebrations and commemorations of our faiths. I had the honour to attend a special event hosted by the Islamic Women's Association Australia [IWAA] to mark these significant religious events which were held on 17th May 2023 at the City View Reception Centre in Lakemba. Many community leaders, clients, carers, and IWAA staff attended the event. The Islamic Women's Association Australia Chief Executive Officer, Galila Abdelsalam OAM and Management Committee President, Mona Obeid, travelled from QLD to attend the event, which was hosted by Sue Hamdoush, the NSW Manager. Also in attendance were the Hon. Steve Kamper MP, Mayor Bilal Hayek, and representatives from the office of Jodie Harrison MP. The featured performances included Eastern and Western influences, as well as Aboriginal dance and song in recognition of the contributions of the First Nations people of Australia.

EID AL-FITR CELEBRATION 2023

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—Eid al-Fitr is traditionally held in the early morning dawn and celebrated at the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan. It is traditionally known as the feast of fast breaking and can last up to three days in some countries. For Muslims, it is one of the holiest months of the Muslim calendar. It is very important because it follows Ramadan - the month of fasting from dawn until sunset. My family and I attended the Eid al-Fitr celebration on 21 April 2023 at Lakemba Mosque. There were over 40,000 worshippers and a large contingent of Members of Parliament from the three tiers of government, religious, business, and other community leaders as official guests. The guests included the NSW Premier, the Hon. Chris Minns MP, and federal and local ministers who have been regular attendees of Eid celebrations at Lakemba for

many years. The Hon. Minister Tony Burke represented Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The Lebanese Muslim Association Board provided breakfast prior to Eid Prayers in the Grand Hall. At Eid time family and friends gather to wish each other "Eid Mubarak," exchange greetings, meals and engage in charitable acts.

CREATING LINKS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Creating Links on 50 wonderful years of serving the Canterbury-Bankstown community. Their recent 50th-anniversary celebration was a great opportunity to bring the local community together to celebrate and recognise their employees, and the many families that they have supported over this time and across multiple services. Creating Links was established by a small group of community members in the Canterbury Bankstown area in 1972. This group of people shared the same passion and belief that children, young people, and families are entitled to live and grow up in a safe, productive, resilient, and inclusive community. They provide a range of services, including community education, counselling, disability support, children and family information and advocacy, and foster care. Community organisations, like Creating Links, play a vital role in creating a sense of belonging, purpose, and pride in communities. The fact that they have done this for 50 years is a remarkable achievement. It serves as a powerful reminder of the incredible impact that they have on the lives of people and the continued health and vitality of communities. A hearty congratulations to Creating Links on this remarkable milestone!

GLEN PACKWOOD

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I wish to acknowledge and celebrate Kogarah resident, Mr Glen Packwood, for his commitment and dedication to the St George Community Transport organisation. For almost 20 years, Mr Packwood has been a volunteer driver with St George Community Transport, providing invaluable support to St George's older community members. Every Monday, Glen offers individual transport services, ensuring our community members reach their medical appointments, participate in activity programs and visit the local shops. Beyond being a transport service, Glen goes the extra mile to support clients with mobility issues. He assists them from their front door and engages in friendly conversations and is often the first person they've spoken to all week. Mr Packwood's commitment to volunteering is an inspiration to us all. His compassion, reliability, and willingness to go above and beyond exemplifies the true spirit of Volunteer Week. I want to express my deepest appreciation to Mr Packwood and all the other volunteers at the St George Community Transport for dedicating their time and energy to making a positive impact in our community.

DEB LITTLE

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I wish to acknowledge and celebrate the work of life-long volunteer Ms Deb Little. The Wolli Creek Preservation Society is an organisation entirely made up of community volunteers dedicated to maintaining and improving the beautiful Wolli Valley. The society organises activities such as bushland restoration, interpretive bush walks and numerous festivals and public events. Ms Little has been on the committee of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society since 1989, serving as Secretary, Vice-President and President. Deb has led initiatives aimed at protecting and enhancing the bushland of the Wolli Creek Valley and educating the public about its history and natural values. For many years, Deb did this while working full-time elsewhere. As President of the society, Ms Little has initiated bush restoration work, organised major community events and campaigned for decades against damage to the Wolli bushland by destructive developments. I would like to express my deepest appreciation towards Ms Little for her dedication and commitment to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of the St George community.

ANGELA NDAIRA

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I wish to acknowledge and celebrate the work of lifelong volunteer Angela Ndaira. Ms Ndaira has been a volunteer at Kingsgrove Colts Rugby League Club for over 15 years. Angela is currently the Club's secretary which is a daunting job that requires serious time and effort. Most nights, Ms Ndaira stays until 9pm helping families, who often have limited access to technology with their registrations. Beyond this, Angela is always in the canteen making delicious food for the Club's children. Most importantly, Angela was fundamental in setting up the Club and district's first woman's team. Since then, Angela has overseen the formation of 5 other girl teams which she nurtures and manages throughout the season. Without Angela the Club could not be where it is today and the girls in the area would not have had an opportunity to play the sport they love. I would like to thank Ms Ndaira and express my deepest appreciation for the wonderful work she does for our local community ensuring everyone enjoys the experience of playing sport.

LIFE MEMBERS FOR TEMORA BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I would like to give a special congratulations to two ladies from the Temora Basketball Association. Wendy McCrone and Jenny McRae are the latest members of the Temora

Basketball Association to be awarded life memberships for their tireless contributions and efforts to the sport over many years. Wendy and Jenny give up countless hours of their time to both the junior and senior basketball teams within the Temora Basketball Association. Both ladies grew up with the beloved sport of basketball and continue to be valuable supporters and mentors. Team sports are a great way to meet new people and foster a sense of pride, social connectivity, and inclusion. There is no doubt that both Wendy and Jenny have made many made lifelong friends throughout their journey with the Temora Basketball Association. The Temora Basketball Committee of 2023, players, sponsors, and parents alike are all extremely proud of Wendy and Jenny for their achievements. Their contributions to the sport locally and the Temora Basketball Association will be remembered forever. Congratulations once again Wendy and Jenny for receiving life membership, this isn't an easy accomplishment, but it is very well deserved.

BOOROWA GYMNASTICS CLUB

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I would like to recognise the outstanding achievements by Boorowa Gymnastics Club members, Harper Mayne, Maya Hewitt, Ruby Walsh, Ivy Taylor and Pippa Sherwood. On 5 April, the five girls participated in Orange at the Central West Gymsports Invitational Competition. In total, there were four apparatus to compete in, the Beam, Vault, Floor and Bars. Maya and Harper competed at level one, with Maya scoring silver on the Beam and Harper scoring silver on the Beam, Vault, and Floor. Ruby competed at level two and amazingly scored three golds on Bars, Floor, and Beam respectively. Pippa and Ivy competed at level three, with Pippa scoring gold on Bars and Ivy scoring silver on both Bars and Vault. These achievements are a credit to the girls, the gymnastics club of Boorowa and all their supporters. Competitions like this take lots of patience, perseverance, practice, and commitment and I know these girls have been working hard behind the scenes. Congratulations again to Maya, Harper, Ruby, Pippa and Ivy.

JUNEE TAEKWONDO CELEBRATIONS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—I recently had the pleasure of joining Australian Self Defence and Taekwondo Instructor John Leak and students of Junee Taekwondo to celebrate their sixth birthday and their achievement of a significant sports award. In February 2023, Junee Taekwondo were crowned the 2022 Good Sports Community Club of the Year. The award recognised Junee Taekwondo for their strong efforts in making a positive impact on the wider community outside of members and families and by going above and beyond the core requirements of a sporting club. The event hosted was by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation at Parliament House in Canberra. This is a fantastic accomplishment by Junee Taekwondo, especially since this award saw over five-hundred and fifty entrants nationally. Junee Taekwondo are also an Active Kids provider and Pink Belt Project supporter club. This project helps empower women on their recovery journey by connecting them with martial arts for healing, health, wellbeing, and growth with a focus on violence prevention. Thank you to John, his students and South-East Australian Taekwondo instructors Miss Amber and Mr Clint for a wonderful evening. Congratulations and thank you for sharing your outstanding achievement with me.

OSBORN HOUSE AT BUNDANOON

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise Osborn House at Bundanoon. Located between Morton National Park and Bundanoon village, first built by settlers George and Dinah Osborn in 1892, the stunning residence was enchanted by surrounding panoramic views. Over the years the residence changed owners, operating as a guest house and health retreat. Opening in March 2022, as Osborn House, named after the original owners, it now boasts twenty-two exquisite suites, also offering delectable dining experiences in the George and Dinah dining rooms and the delicious weekly South American Fire Feast, pool, and spa. Osborn House has now been recognised and named by American Travel and Leisure magazine as one of the world's best one hundred hotels in the world. This is a wonderful achievement and highlights the beautiful and extraordinary village of Bundanoon and the broader region of the Southern Highlands. I sincerely congratulate the team at Osborn House and all who have been involved in the restoration of this historic residence - paying homage to its original owners and the encompassing tranquillity - yet with many offerings of the local region to provide guests with a truly exquisite getaway.

LAGGAN ELECTRICAL AND LIGHTING

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise Laggan Electrical and Lighting from Crookwell. Laggan Electrical and Lighting is owned by Crookwell resident Dave Dunn. Mr Dunn has a long career in the lighting industry, spanning over twenty-five years. Mr Dunn's experience, skills and abilities in this industry has certainly been recognised and he has been engaged to undertake work on major projects, such as Groovin The Moo and Summernats in Canberra, New Year's Eve in Sydney. Mr Dunn has also provided resources for well-known singers Bruno Mars and the Red-Hot Chilli Peppers for their performances at Allianz Stadium. Elatedly, Mr Dunn has now been engaged to assist in the fundamental, yet key features of Vivid Sydney Festival and Lightscape. Laggan Electrical and Lighting will be responsible for providing temporary power, cable

distribution, site lighting and technical coverage for these events. This requires very intricate and precise planning and coordination to ensure that power always remains connected and uninterrupted. I congratulate and appreciate the level of experience, skills and expertise of Mr Dunn that has been recognised through earlier engagements and now for the Sydney Vivid Festival. I wish Laggan Electrical and Lighting all the very best.

DR DOUG MACCULLOCH

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise the long-life service of Dr Reginald Douglas Dryden MacCulloch, known as "Doug". Dr MacCulloch was born in Manly Hospital on the 5th November 1924. He attended Penrith High, where he was awarded a scholarship and went on to attend the Fort Street High School. Dr MacCulloch's stepfather was keen to encourage him to follow a life on the land, however Doug had other ideas and dreams, being the second youngest student to enrol in the dentistry course at Sydney University. Whilst being too young to practice he went on to find work at a dental hospital. Dr MacCulloch completed his surgical qualifications at Chicago's North West University, experiencing firsthand and operating on those injured by the Japanese bombings and holocaust. Returning to Australia, he and Bet settled in Goulburn, initiating a dental practice firstly in Montague Street and then later in Bourke Street. Dr MacCulloch's practice developed quickly into a very highly regarded practice in the Goulburn community over the years. I rise to pay tribute and commend the aptitude, integrity and character of Dr MacCulloch for his service to the Goulburn community.

ENGADINE MUSICAL SOCIETY

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)—For almost 50 years the Engadine Musical Society have been lighting up the stage and entertaining large crowds with their various productions. Recently I attended the society's latest production, Shrek, with my good friend and the Member for Camden, Sally Quinnell.

It was a wonderful night and incredible show. The society has certainly come a long way since its first production of Mikado, in 1976. It now performs two productions every year, which is a big win for musical theatre fans in the Sutherland Shire. Since 1976, the society has put on a number of other shows including: The White Horse Inn; Oklahoma!; Anything Goes; The Merry Widow; The Sound of Music; The King and I; Cinderella; Oliver!; and Grease – to name a few. In the last few years productions have included: Freaky Friday; Wicked; Mamma Mia!; and fan favourite, Jersey Boys. The talent and commitment from all those involved in the production of Shrek was evident for everyone in the audience to see. I can't wait to see what other productions Engadine Musical Society will put on in the future. Well done again to everyone who has been involved with the society for the past five decades.

JESSICA WARDROBE

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)—The Heathcote electorate is brimming with sporting stars. From surfers and soccer players to netballers and cricketers.

There really is no shortage of talented sports people throughout the electorate. One of the youngest stars to take the sporting world by storm is Jessica Wardrobe. The Engadine resident recently represented Australia in the mixed team at the Asia Pacific Youth Touch Cup in Brisbane. It was an incredible achievement for Jessica and reward for years of hard work. The cherry on top was the fact that Jessica and her teammates won gold, with an impressive 18-4 victory over the Philippines in the final. Jessica also collected three tries during the tournament – with two of those in the final match. Jessica is also a member of the Sutherland Athletics Club, which explains her blistering speed when playing touch football. In fact, in 2022, Jessica collected gold medals in the NSW All Schools championships in the 100 metres and 200 metres events. The future for 19-year-old Jessica certainly looks incredibly bright. Congratulations again Jessica on a great result in the Asia Pacific Youth Touch Cup.

CENTRAL COAST ACADEMY OF SPORT

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism)—I rise to acknowledge all the local Central Coast Academy of Sport athletes that competed at the recent 2023 Your Local Club Academy Games, hosted by Southern Sport Academy at Wagga Wagga. The event saw local athletes represent the Coast in basketball, golf, hockey, netball, and triathlon. The girls' basketball team finished in sixth place with their last game going into extra time against North Coast. The boys had a fantastic weekend taking out the bronze medal. In the hockey the girls were involved in some tight games finishing fifth and the boys fell just short in a very close final to Hunter 2-1. The Coast fielded both a Division one and Division two team in the netball with some great games over the weekend. Congratulations to Jayda Garnt and Lara Sgaravizzi for taking out the MVP awards in their respective divisions. The region was also represented by Georgie Clune in the golf and a great group of triathlon athletes. Congratulations to all the athletes that competed, the Central Coast community is very proud of your performances.

KEN KEMP

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism)—I rise to acknowledge local legend Ken Kemp who sadly passed away recently. Ken was a much-loved resident of Valhalla Lifestyle Village.

Over the 16 years that he was a resident for, Ken established many friendships and constantly went above and beyond to assist his neighbours when in need. Ken was the first ever president of Valhalla Men's Shed. I am a proud patron of the Men's Shed and it was always a pleasure to interact with Ken in this space. Ken held this role for four years and was a great mate to all the local men involved. In addition to this, he was the village bus driver for a decade. There is no doubt that Ken was a popular man who was highly regarded by all who knew him. He will be missed dearly, but I know his wife Shirley will ensure his legacy lives on. Vale Ken Kemp.

CENTRAL COAST YOUTH WEEK AWARDS 2023

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism)—I rise to acknowledge the amazing young people from the Central Coast who were recognised for their outstanding achievements and contributions to the local community at the Central Coast Youth Week Award honours on 20 April. Coinciding with NSW Youth Week, the Awards are a Central Coast Council initiative to recognise and highlight the accomplishments of young Coasties. Award categories range from Arts and Entertainments to Leadership and Social Impact. In addition, Siddhartha Bezwada was recognised for his achievements and resilience, and was presented the Central Coast Council Inspirational Award. Our young people are our future and are valuable assets to our community. It is important that we acknowledge their efforts and contributions to society. Congratulations to all those recognised at the Central Coast Youth Week Award honours. I know they will achieve great things and I wish them all the best for the future.

MICK CRONIN

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)—Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges local Gerringong publican Mick Cronin who has added another accolade to his list of achievements after being inducted into the NSW Rugby League Hall of Fame. Mr Cronin was inducted at a special gala at The Star in Sydney alongside former NSW Blues captain Danny Buderus and rugby league immortals Dally Messenger, Frank Burge and Dave Brown. Mick was also involved in several Premiership winning sides at the Parramatta Eels the last of which was in 1986. A popular local figure, he continues to coach the Gerringong Lions and still owns and operates Cronin's Gerringong Hotel. The NSW Rugby League Hall of Fame entrants are determined by a panel of former players, experts and journalists. Players must have played at least ten games for NSW or captained the team, as well as having played for Australia and been retired for at least five years. Congratulations and well done to Mick Cronin on receiving this outstanding and prestigious recognition.

LYNDSIE STORER

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I would like to acknowledge Lyndsie Storer a singer/songwriter, author and mindfulness practitioner from Buronga. During Covid lockdown, Lyndsie made it her mission to ensure there was love and connection with her daughter and wrote a children's book titled 'What Does It Mean to Be Grateful?', which highlights the many wonderful things we already have and people around us, which went to #2 as a best seller on Amazon and #1 as Hot New Release. Lyndsie sprinkled positivity and wrote and released a children's song called "I Found Happiness Today", which has had over 355000 streams on Spotify, and then "I Love You". Both songs reached #1 on the iTunes charts under the children's songs category. Lyndsie's passion for helping children build resilience, understand emotions and decrease anxiety led her to building her own business Mindfulness for Kidz, with classes now running at Preschools, soon to be expanding to schools. I congratulate Lyndsie on her achievements to date, knowing there is more to come from this talented lady.

JAMIE PARSONS

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I recognise Jamie Parsons, a young man who is a tireless advocate for men's mental health and sporting inclusivity for men and women in his local community of Rankin's Springs. Jamie along with Geoff Hale from Goolgowi was the inspiration behind the development of the concept of the Proten Cup reintroducing Rugby League to small communities which once were part of the Group 17 competition. This competition is all about sport and social activities connecting rural men who feel isolated from each other. Jamie is also the driving force behind the first women's Rugby League tackle competition in the Proten Cup. Critical to this are the funds via jersey auctions for many charities. Jamie is personally a generous contributor to RUOK and Beyond Blue. Jamie has now turned his attention to the town's 100th birthday with a program, fundraising and a Centenary Book in the works – well done Jamie.

MOAMA MARINE RESCUE

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I would like to acknowledge the services of Moama Marine Rescue who were instrumental in supporting the community during a significant flood event. For seven weeks last October, 112 volunteers and 9 staff from 28 units dug deep to give practical support to flood affected communities including Moama, Barham, Balranald and Deniliquin. This help meant dealing with a number of unfamiliar situations too – transporting livestock, ferrying isolated residents, getting supplies to properties cut off from their community, filling and laying sandbag.

The conditions were challenging too - long travel distances, unfamiliar SES vessels to drive, submerged fences, unpredictable wildlife like snakes and copious amounts of rain and mud. These volunteers were instrumental in helping the community overcome the trauma of these floods. Thanks to a NSW state government grant, Moama Marine Rescue were able to purchase a 4WD vehicle capable of towing the Marine Rescue boat and accessing difficult terrain. We are very fortunate to have this service operating out of Moama and I thank this organisation and their team of important volunteers.

MACARTHUR SINGERS

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—I recognise the local Macarthur Singers group for their outstanding recent performance raising much needed funds for the McGrath foundation. Founded over 35 years ago the Macarthur singers is community choir that has been serving the Camden region ever since. Comprising fifty members, the choir performs a wide variety of music including classics such as Mozart and more modern, popular music. This passing Mother's Day the Macarthur Singers decided to perform a spectacular exhibition of songs. Showcasing some famous hits from popular movies and musicals in recent times. The show and raffle raised funds for the McGrath foundation, supporting the fantastic work that they do to fight Breast Cancer. The foundation aims to provide a breast care nurse to all patients who have been diagnosed and are suffering with breast cancer, providing comfort to patients as they go through a difficult period in their lives. I once again thank the Macarthur Singers Group who truly went above and beyond with their fantastic performance, supporting a truly brilliant and noteworthy cause.

ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL FETE

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—How amazing are our local school fetes? On the 20th of May I was lucky enough to attend St Paul's Catholic Primary School in Camden for their annual fete. There were plenty of rides, face paintings, and even a petting zoo! Once again, St Paul's has displayed to the entire Camden community their passion for education and dedication to the region. School community events like St Paul's are only possible because of the amazing volunteers and parents, who drag themselves out of bed every year to set up stalls, tables, cash tins, and raffles. It's because of the brilliant teachers who give up their time on the weekend to help, that get these events over the line. I want to shout out Mr Michael Reardon, Principal at St Paul's – for his dedication to the Camden community, everyone who donated gifts and prizes, and of course the amazing students. I had the amazing privilege to watch you all perform, and I think you would've all fit right in at the Opera House! St Paul's, thank you for all you do for Camden, and congratulations on an amazing 2023 school fete.

SUSAN AND THOMAS GERSBACH 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—It's an incredible accomplishment to make it to 50 years of marriage, especially happily! On the 12th of May, Mr and Mrs Gersbach celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary – an achievement that can only be attributed to their dedication to each other. Mr and Mrs Gersbach were married at St Joseph's Church in Orange in 1973. Since then, they've been inseparable. Mr and Mrs Gersbach are retired nurses, who practiced all across country NSW and the South Coast. They have two lovely children – Melanie and James, who are proud to call Camden home, as well as 4 grandchildren, which certainly keeps them busy. To make it to 50 years of marriage is something from a fairy tale. Many of us can only dream that we're able to spend that many years with our special someone, and Susan and Thomas have certainly had that privilege. Susan and Thomas, congratulations on your amazing achievement, and thank you for letting me embarrass you!

UMINA BEACH PUBLIC SCHOOL TREE PROJECT

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—In 2020 parents from Umina Beach Public School organised ten mature Banksia trees to be planted on Melbourne Avenue, Umina Beach to provide shade and shelter to the classrooms and for parents during pick up times. The group of parents, with help from Club Umina coordinated watering and maintenance of the trees throughout the school holidays to ensure the plants survived. Community group, Grow Urban Shade Trees [GUST] provided oversight and information to the parents on caring for the trees. The local Men's Shed provided tree guards to prevent destruction of the trees. This community project is a fantastic opportunity for kids to be educated on the importance of planting trees and how to care for our environment. From

start to finish this project demonstrates what a community can achieve when they get together. It is a fantastic initiative started by the school and everyone involved should be proud of what they have achieved.

CENTRAL COAST COMICON

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—Last Saturday, Gosford's own Entertainment Grounds held the one of a kind - Comicon. Drawing in thousands of Comic and Cosplay enthusiasts, the community centre was brought to life with medieval re-enactments, cosplay performances and chances to engage with likeminded community members. The convention returned for its fourth celebration since their debut in 2016. After two years of disheartening cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was incredible to see so many community members back to engaging with our great region – including Minister Harris! Not only were these diehard fans, friends and families engaging with and supporting each other, but proceeds from the entry fee went directly to the Regional Youth Support Services. With many thousands of patrons, these funds are projected to go to supporting the RYSS' Youth Homelessness Campaign. The holding of Comicon, right in the heart of Gosford, symbolises the strength and importance of our community. I congratulate RYSS for another successful year in organising this event and cannot wait to see it in my electorate again next year!

MANGROVE MOUNTAIN AND MOUNTAIN DISTRICTS

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—The Mangrove Mountain and Mountain Districts community is a strong, united community who will continue to fight to protect the beauty and integrity of their beautiful part of the Central Coast. Last weekend I joined over 30 people at Mangrove Mountain Hall to hear the community's concerns regarding a proposed feedlot development in the region and to discuss the process and the details of making a personal submission to the Central Coast Council. Congratulations to Alex, who gave an excellent detailed presentation with suggestions and ideas for submission. Thank you also to John, who answered a myriad of questions, and provided an excellent 'coffee table' example of a submission. The Mangrove Mountain Community Club also opened to support community members make submissions online, whilst the CWA supplied scones and tea. Submissions to Council close June 6, and I encourage all community members to take the time to make a submission to Central Coast Council with their ideas on the proposed feedlot development.

SNOWY VALLEYS SCULPTURE TRAIL

Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—The Snowy Valleys Sculpture Trail was expanded this year with the addition of four new sculptures to the trail, which now includes 35 sculptures across the 150km trail. These sculptures are not just spectacular works of art. Each sculpture, in a unique way, represents the recovery happening across the Snowy Valleys area and the strength of the local community. The Dunns Road Bushfire of 2019/20 had a devastating impact on the Snowy Valleys. Snowy Valleys communities suffered immeasurable losses and the path to rebuild and recover has not been easy. Nevertheless, Snowy Valleys residents have demonstrated remarkable strength following the bushfires and the success of the Snowy Valleys Sculpture Trail is testament to these communities' strong desire to not only survive but thrive. It was a privilege to attend the unveiling of 'Tidal Body' in Talbingo by artist April Pine. I was also honoured to attend the unveiling of Jina Lee's sculpture 'And Spring Again' and Sasha Reid's sculpture 'Composition 17' in Batlow, along with Kaoru Matsumoto's 'Cycle 90 Lingering Memory VII' sculpture in Adelong. Congratulations to Sculpture by the Sea, in particular CEO David Handley, and all involved in this wonderful initiative.

MINMI FC GENEROSITY TO MINMI PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Last Tuesday, Minmi Public School teachers and staff realised they had been the victim of theft. Someone had broken into their grounds and stolen the net from their soccer goal posts. This brazen act was devastating to the kids who play soccer everyday and to the P&C who no doubt would have to fundraise to replace the net. Thankfully, following a couple of Facebook posts, many parties came to support Minmi Public School. Minmi FC volunteers Tracey Medley and Scott Henderson quickly came to the rescue offering one of their goal nets to the school, proving how wonderfully generous this tight community really is. Further to that, my office received offers from Mr Pete Haynes, CEO of Northern NSW Football and from Adamstown Rosebuds FC to also replace the net. This demonstrates the wonderful community of football clubs we have here in the region. The wonderful Principal of Minmi Public School Ms Alison Fittler expressed her sincere thanks to all parties who had offered to help.

NICHOLAS SANDERSON

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—The Hunter Culinary Association, in conjunction with TAFE NSW, hosted an energy filled cook off between the three finalists for the Brett Graham Scholarship for 2022, earlier this month. New Lambton local and Jimmy Joans apprentice, Nicholas Sanderson, was named runner up after a tough decision by the judges. For the finalists, the apprentices had to use ingredients as designated by Brett Graham. The winner received a sponsored position in Brett Grahams highly acclaimed London restaurant – The

Ledbury. While Nicholas wasn't quite able to win, being bested by Ashleigh Handsaker, a third-year apprentice from Fratelli Roma in Maitland, his runner up status will no doubt be turning heads in the restaurant scene of the Hunter. I look forward to following Nicholas' career and seeing what his next steps are. Meanwhile, if you wish to taste Nicholas' amazing offerings, you can try them at Jimmy Joans restaurant in Lovedale.

AUSTRALIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS WINNER SAM FRICKER

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Novocastrian Sam Fricker has been diving since he was 11 years old, beginning his career at Lambton Pool. He originally signed up to get to know a girl he liked better, but instead fell in love with the sport. Diving has taken Sam on an incredible journey, giving him the opportunity to not only work towards his dreams whilst seeing the world, but to develop the work ethic and values required to get him there. Sam and his national teammate Shixin Li claimed the title for the men's synchronised three metre springboard event at the Australian Championships in Perth last week. The team finished with a massive score of 763.89, 150 points ahead of second place. Congratulations on your achievements both in and out of the pool, Sam, and good luck to you and Shixin at the World Championships in Japan in July.

KELLYVILLE LIONS CLUB YOUTH OF THE YEAR

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville)—I recently had the pleasure of attending the Kellyville Lions Club Youth of the Year Awards, held at The Fiddler, within my Electorate of Kellyville. The winners this year were Taylah Chebaia of William Clarke College and Kayleigh O'Leary from Hills Adventist College who were both recognised for their outstanding work both at school and in the community. I also thank this great Lions club for all they do in supporting the community and raising money for floods, bushfires and droughts, notably committee members Paul Campbell, Bruno Guarna, Les Strong, John Love, Roz Giles, Noel Casey and Wayne Kedward.

THE 31ST ANNUAL LISMORE GEMFEST

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—It gives me great pleasure to applaud the incredible work of the organisers and volunteers who made the Lismore Gemfest a huge success. The Annual Lismore Gemfest was started in 1990 by the Lismore Gem & Lapidary Club Inc. This is Australia's largest Annual Gem and Mineral show, with 11 000 attending over two massive days and 150 stall holders selling and displaying minerals, gems, fossils, jewellery, and associated equipment from across the world. Congratulations to the voluntary committee executive, President Rod Knight, Vice President Jenny Vryenhoek, Secretary Marcus Bebb, and Treasurer Bruce Copper, and to all the twenty volunteers who put their shoulders to the wheel with an enormous effort to create and deliver what was a brilliant weekend for our community. I would also like to acknowledge the many sponsors, the Lismore City Council and the Lismore Showgrounds management, for their support of this terrific event. The festival promotes the unique beauty and significance of gemstones, supports local businesses, and creates a sense of community pride. The dedication and passion of all those involved truly shone through. I look forward to their continued success for many years to come.

BONALBO COMMUNITY MEN'S SHED

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Men's Sheds provide vital services in regional and rural areas, and none more so than the Bonalbo Community Men's Shed to their small and vibrant population. Bonalbo's Community Men's Shed is a formidable, passionate group. The committee members, President John Tart, Secretary Debbie Johnston, Treasurer Sue Smith and distinguished members Bob Glendenning and Ron Perry, put their heart and soul into providing a welcoming place for the community to come together. They work on practical projects like the native bee hotels, which received a great buzz from across the region and afar. All made with care and pride. The members have been hard at work building a community garden for fresh produce to be distributed through the local food pantry. Blokes gather for Blokes Morning every Thursday, and the community days are hosted on Saturdays, where everyone is invited to have a sneak peek at all that has been happening in the shed and a glimpse at what's to come next. Bonalbo Community Men's Shed provides a place for a cuppa and a chat, where knowledge and skills are shared and honed and a place to create superb craftworks. I applaud the committee members and volunteers.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LISMORE RAINFOREST BOTANIC GARDENS

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—The 10th anniversary of the Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens is a momentous occasion and one that I want to take a moment to recognise the incredible impact this beautiful space has had on our community. Over the past decade, the gardens have become a beloved destination for locals and tourists alike, offering a peaceful retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life. When Laurie Chelsworth hatched the idea, he had a vision of what the Gardens could become. They are known to be a haven for biodiversity, housing a diverse array of plant and animal species that contribute to the health and well-being of our ecosystem. They are also a hub of education, community engagement, workshops and activities. While many have contributed the current committee members are Tracy Whitby, Hazel Bridgett, Florence Treverrow, Peter Gould, Jenny

Wilson, Ros Little. Other notable members include Geoff Walker, Rose Hand, Pat Offord, Mary Harris and the late Jan De Nardi. I congratulate all current and past members of the Friends of Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens and everyone who has contributed to making the Rainforest Botanic Gardens the special place it is today.

NARRABEEN SURF LIFESAVING CLUB

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I congratulate the Narrabeen Surf Lifesaving Club on a wonderful season. Founded in July 1964, the Club is iconic in the Narrabeen area. Pittwater's hallmark is its natural beauty, and together with the Narrabeen Lagoon, the Narrabeen Surf Lifesaving Club and Beach bound a wonderful pocket of Pittwater. Not only this, your Club House, fastidiously cared for by your volunteers, provides wonderful amenity for the broader Narrabeen, Pittwater and Sydney community. Congratulations to President, Greg Gillespie, on your stellar leadership of the Club. I also pay tribute to and congratulate: Club Member of the Year, Kristy Andrews; Life Member Nominee, Rob Cook; Gloria Cook Memorial Trophy Winner, Rebecca Menzies; and all other award winners. A special shout out to Jodie Murphy, serving a whopping 151 patrol hours this past season. I am pleased that these words of thanks will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country, as a small recognition of the wonderful work by so many. Thank you all for your selfless service.

GARIGAL GORILLAS

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I pay tribute to the Garigal Gorillas MTB. The Garigal Gorillas MTB club was formed in 2017 to support the growing mountain bike community around the Northern Beaches. The club focuses on developing and maintaining sustainable mountain biking trails and bringing together the large mountain bike community. They now support scores of riders across our area. The Garigal Gorillas are the ultimate environmentalists and care deeply for our bushland. Their activities are the perfect example of how nature and human activity can complement one another. The Garigal Gorillas are facing some challenges in accessing public land and I have been grateful to work with them and the wonderful Karl Brown in helping navigate these issues. I will continue to advocate for mountain bikers and its members to have fair access to public space and I look forward to seeing some existing trails formalised as soon as possible. Well done to the Chair, Mathieu Taris and all your committee on your hard work. I am pleased that these words of thanks will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country, as a small recognition of the wonderful work by so many.

AVALON QUILTERS

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I pay tribute to the Avalon Quilters. The Quilters meet every week in Avalon's Uniting Church. Over many years, this group of dedicated Quilters have made hundreds, if not thousands of quilts for those most in need. Recently, the quilters have been helping victims of Australia's recent spate of Natural disasters. The reach of their generosity extends well beyond Pittwater. Thank you to chief organiser, Anne Perry, for all your hard work. I am pleased that these words of thanks will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country, as a small recognition of the wonderful work by so many. Thank you all for your selfless service and contribution.

CARINGBAH ROTARY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I recognise the leadership role of Caringbah Rotary, and especially Cathy Mason, in Rotary District 9675's Rotary Adopt-a-Tree program. Adopt-a-Tree was launched on Australia Day 2022. It aims to plant one million trees in three years to help restore environmentally impacted areas of New South Wales, such as those ravaged by bushfire, and help establish a koala corridor from Victoria to Queensland. Nine thousand trees have been sold and planted by Rotarians working with community groups and individuals. Caringbah Rotary members Richard Mason, Emil Weber, Jeff Eager, Scott Findlay, Nick Xouris and Cathy Mason have volunteered at more than 10 tree planting days held so far. Caringbah Rotary marked its 50th anniversary in 2022 and I thank the club for its hard work over the years and wish its dedicated Rotarians well as they continue to serve the community.

JIM LILLEY

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Jim Lilley was awarded life membership of the Nyngan Show Society to recognise 51 years he has worked as a steward. Jim lost all 277 specially bred fowl in the 1990 Nyngan floods after years of showing success. However, Jim decided not to start again, instead he dedicated his time volunteering to help others in the poultry industry. The Nyngan Show is a great community event and attracts visitors from all over. The poultry section is particularly popular. Jim continues to pass on his passion for poultry by helping entrants in the local show. I congratulate Jim on receiving Life Membership thank him for the years of valuable time given to the show society.

MARG HALLETT

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)—Marg Hallett was named the winner of Narrabri Shire's Volunteer of the Year. Marg has volunteered her valuable time in her local community for the last 45 years, including canteen duties, P&C groups at fundraisers and the local radio station 2Max FM for the last 20 years. I congratulate Marg on receiving Narrabri Shire's Volunteer of the year and thank her for the years of commitment to her community.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE SES

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the volunteers with Sutherland Shire SES, who generously give their time to help our community during flood and storm emergencies. Sutherland Shire SES is one of the largest SES groups in NSW and responded to approximately 1,400 requests last year. In 2022, Shire SES delivered essential assistance to flooded areas in the Sutherland, Sydney Metropolitan, and Illawarra districts as well as western NSW. Shire SES is regularly called upon as a lead agency or as a support to other emergency response services due to its dedicated team. The Shire SES volunteers bring a wealth of experience from their full-time roles, including as paramedics, police officers, fire and rescue, and tradies. On 17 May, I joined Sutherland SES at its Heathcote base to recognise Wear Orange Wednesday [WOW]. WOW Day encourages people to wear orange to show their appreciation for the volunteers of the SES. I thank Shire SES Local Controller John Gonzalez and his team for their invaluable service and dedication to our community.

REGIONAL YOUTH TASKFORCE AND MS HAILEY CRUZ

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)—I wish to congratulate Ms Hailey Cruz who will be representing the Riverina/Murray Region on the Regional Youth Taskforce. Ms Cruz was chosen from 140 applicants to be the voice for many thousands of young people in our region advising the Minister for Regional Youth the Hon. Ben Franklin MLC about issues that directly impact them. Ms Cruz has announced that she would like to raise a number of issues including road safety, training and support for young and learning drivers and also youth mental health issues. I was fortunate to meet with Hailey and a group of her colleagues at Kildare Catholic College where they explored the opportunities for, and support needed by, young people in the early years of high school who wish to pursue paid employment. Hailey led the discussion in a positive and skilful way. Having young leaders such as Ms Cruz providing grassroots advice to the Government will help our policymakers explore and enact informed policies, regulations and laws that will make our roads safer. I wish Hailey all the best for her role.

ANZAC DAY 2023

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)—On ANZAC Day this year I was honoured to attend the morning services held at the war memorials at the Brighton Le Sands and Ramsgate RSL clubs. Every year our RSL Sub-Branched and Clubs ensure our citizens are able to attend ANZAC Day memorial services held with dignity and quiet reflection. This takes a considerable amount of work and, while they would never draw attention to themselves, I wish to place on the record of the Parliament my community's thanks and gratitude for their ongoing efforts. I also wish to thank the cadets, school groups, sports clubs and many other community groups who played their part in the services in the Rockdale electorate with dignity and decency. The exceptional young men and women who represented their units, schools and clubs at the services I attended were credits to themselves and their organisations. Thank you to the Brighton Le Sands and Ramsgate RSL Sub-Branched and RSL Clubs for your efforts this year and every year. Lest we forget.

CONNECTING CULTURES COMMUNITY NIGHT

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—On Saturday night I had the pleasure of attending the Connecting Community Services – "Connecting Cultures" evening in Dubbo.

The event, funded through the former Liberal/National Governments Stronger Together Festival and Events grant program, was a resounding success with hundreds of people in attendance. The evening showcased traditional performances from Indian, Nepalese, and South Pacific Islander dance groups, allowing the attendees to experience the richness and diversity of these cultures. The variety of food options from Lebanese, Chinese, and Japanese cuisines, among others, provided a culinary journey through diverse cultural flavours. Khaled Taleb, a Migrant Support Officer and Marketing Communications Specialist for Connecting Community Services, and a migrant himself from Lebanon, deserves congratulations for organising such a successful event. It is inspiring to see someone with personal experience and dedication contributing to the celebration and recognition of multiculturalism in Dubbo. The achievement of Khaled, Connecting Community Services, and all those involved in supporting the event have not only brought the community together but have also highlighted the importance of embracing cultural diversity and finding common ground.

DUBBO BASKETBALL

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to extend my congratulations to Millie Sutcliffe and Kiara McKeown from the Dubbo Basketball Association for their selection into Basketball NSW's State Performance Program. This program plays a crucial role in identifying, developing and preparing talented athletes in the Under 16 and Under 18 age groups to represent New South Wales at the Australian Junior Championships. As part of the program, selected athletes are required to attend weekly sessions during terms one and two. Additionally, they will participate in several camps throughout the cycle to further enhance their skills and abilities. Being chosen for the Under 16 Country Girls program is a remarkable achievement for Millie and Kiara, and I am confident that they will excel in their training and make significant contributions to the team. I have no doubt that we will hear more about the basketball achievements of these two young ladies in the future. I wish Millie and Kiara every success with the program and their ongoing development. They are undoubtedly talented individuals who have a bright future ahead of them in the world of basketball.

WELLINGTON CHRISTIAN 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to congratulate Wellington Christian School on their 40th Anniversary. Started by a small group of parents in 1982, Wellington Christian School had 24 students and began at the Anglican Church Hall. In 1984 the school moved into the first of its new buildings on the present site in Montefiores and continued to grow to be a K-10 school. In 2014 Dubbo Christian School took over management of the school and a wonderful relationship and partnership was established and continues to be strengthened. On Friday the 19th May, I attended part of the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of Wellington Christian School which began with a special reunion high tea and open day. The celebrations continued Saturday and Sunday with a free family day on the Saturday for the Wellington community to enjoy activities for kids, including a jumping castle, pony rides, a BBQ, and fireworks in the evening and on the Sunday a thanksgiving celebration. To Principal Jo Blatch, the dedicated staff, Board, and the entire school community, may this milestone be a testament to the remarkable achievements of the past and serve as a foundation for an even brighter future.

SABRINA BARUTHA

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I wish to recognise the accomplishments of my local constituent, Sabrina Barutha. From the age of 12, Sabrina first stepped in a Dragon Boat and has been in the sport for 12 years, training three times a week on the Parramatta River. She is passionate and dedicated to her sport and has no intention of stopping anytime soon. After representing NSW at the AusDBF Australian Dragon Boat Championships six times all over Australia including Melbourne, Sunshine Coast, Perth and Adelaide, Sabrina was announced as the 2022 Sports Citizen of the Year for City of Canada Bay Council. Another testament to her commitment to the sport of Dragon Boating. This year Sabrina has been selected to be part of the Australian (Auroras Team) Representative (24U Youth Category), due to race at the 2023 IDBF 16th World Championship in Pattaya Thailand on 8-13th August 2023. I sincerely congratulate Sabrina Barutha for an outstanding achievement, and for all her hard work and dedication. I wish her all the very best and wish the team well for the World Championship later in August. The community is very proud of Sabrina's efforts.

DRUMMOYNE SAILING CLUB JUNIORS

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—Earlier this month I had the pleasure of attending the Annual Awards Presentation Evening of the Drummoyne Sailing Club Juniors. Acknowledging the hard work of club members and their terrific achievements throughout the season, from budding athletes as young as 10 up to experienced sailors at age 70. This club has been a longstanding institution in my community, and it was so great to see much enthusiasm for the sport. A new tradition was started this year, the Drummoyne Electorate Community Award, which was deservingly awarded to Blake Russell for displaying qualities of community and sportsmanship throughout the season. Blake is to be commended on his support of the club through volunteering. I extend my congratulations to all of those who attended the night and look forward to seeing the progress and future accomplishments all of Drummoyne Sailing Club Juniors members.

ROTARY CLUB OF BREAKFAST POINT ART EXHIBITION

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—On 26th May I attended an Art Exhibition held by the Rotary Club of Breakfast Point, to raise money for 'The Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause'. The Rotary Club of Breakfast Point held their last major function and used this opportunity to showcase the creative talents of our local community and to donate money to The Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause to support the Haematology Clinical Research Unit of Concord Hospital. The exhibition at the Breakfast Point Community Hall was a great event to see the amazing art that my local constituents have spent hours of hard work creating, and I'd like to thank everyone for their contribution to making the event so. It was a pleasure to attend and support the event.

LOCAL RESIDENT BETTY CELEBRATES 106TH BIRTHDAY

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—As has been said age is simply the number of years the world has been enjoying you, and the world has truly been enjoying Mosman local Betty Gemmell who has reached the incredible milestone of her 106th birthday. Betty is believed to be the oldest woman living in New South Wales, having lived through many major historical events including both world wars, the great depression, the moon landing, and has seen 27 Prime Ministers come and go. She is the eldest of seven children and still lives independently in Mosman, and was swimming daily at Balmoral up until the age of 98. Betty had a successful career at the Bank of Australasia and was the banks first women's club secretary. She settled in the lower north shore in 1954, living in Cremorne for ten years before moving to Mosman where she has lived ever since. Betty's secret to long life is small meals, a regular whisky, and being happy and cheerful. Congratulations on this incredible milestone Betty, and I wish you and your family all the very best for the future.

2MBS FINE MUSIC SYDNEY

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—In the quiet back streets of St Leonards sits the studio of 2MBS Fine Music Sydney that has been broadcasting for almost fifty years to over four-hundred thousand listeners. The local station is listener-supported and relies on donations and subscriptions to continue playing classical and jazz music pieces for its audiences. The station also invests in future musicians by offering two 12-month residencies to help Sydney based musicians build their professional profiles. To build a closer bond with their supporters and welcome new listeners, 2MBS recently held an open day where visitors enjoyed behind the scenes tours and watched live broadcasts. They were also joined by the patron of 2MBS Fine Music Sydney, Her Excellency the Governor of New South Wales, who is said to be a mad jazz fan. Her Excellency was interviewed on air by 2MBS director and local Kirribilli resident Simon Moore who has interviewed many interesting musicians and composers during his tenure. 2MBS is already planning their 50th anniversary celebrations next year and are hoping to engage the Prime Minister to visit and perhaps have a composer to write a piece of music for the studio.

KYM STANFORD AWARDED AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDAL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of Mungindi Rural Fire Service Captain Kym Stanford who has been awarded an Australian Fire Service medal after 28 years of service to the community. I congratulate Ms Stanford on the many roles she has undertaken in her years of service. Kym joined the Mungindi Rural Fire Brigade in 1995, was elected Senior Deputy Captain in 1999 and appointed captain two years later, a role she has held since then. In addition to her long-term operational commitment, she has been Brigade President since 2013, is a permit officer, a trainer and assessor. I commend Ms Stanford and her fellow Mungindi Brigade members, who were awarded a RFS Commissioner's Unit Citation, for their response to the Main Street fire in September 2020. The fire destroyed many integral businesses, including the Supermarket, Butcher, and a Homewares store. Kym's commitment to the community is demonstrated through her effort, professionalism, leadership, and selfless commitment to the values of the Fire Service.

KINGSTOWN AUTHOR JIM SWALES

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the great achievement of Kingstown local, Jim Swales who has recently published a book called The Story of Kingstown, The Land & Its People 1830 – 2010. The book gives a wonderful and detailed historical account of this Northern Tablelands settlement, the European settlers who became land holders, their families and community development. I congratulate Mr Swales on this historical record of a pastoral region in my electorate, which he refers to as rambling, but is far from it and is entertaining to a fault. It is well researched, collated and provides any reader with an excellent narrative of early European settlement from early 19th century, at which time most settlers were British, Irish, and Scottish and were adventurous, lived under primitive conditions, and were not afraid of hard physical labour. I commend Mr Swales on the effort and years he committed to the preparation of this book. The details within the book rely on places he is most familiar with, local families and their historical records and photographs, as well as the Uralla Shire Council records, to create this impressive historical account of the settlement and development of the Kingstown community.

AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION DELEGATE STUART O'NEIL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the achievements of the Deepwater Commercial Hotel operator Stuart O'Neil, who was recently appointed as a delegate to the Australian Hotels Association NSW Council. Mr O'Neil, along with seven other NSW hoteliers and industry representatives, was elected uncontested at the AHA NSW Council meeting held in Sydney in April. I congratulate Mr O'Neil for putting his hand up to be a spokesperson for Hoteliers in the New England. This has allowed him to use his decades of hospitality experience and expertise, to ensure the needs of the local area are well represented to

industry leaders, both in Sydney and across the State. I commend Mr O'Neil on his future advocacy on behalf of local Hoteliers, for helping to create a deeper level of respect for small town pubs and providing a valuable insight into issues faced by all Hotel operators across the region.

EMERGENCY MEDICINE DAY

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)—I take this time to acknowledge World Emergency Medicine Day. Each day our frontline emergency medicine staff work tirelessly to make sure families in Western Sydney are provided high quality, patient centred care. Emergency staff are highly educated and talented – they see a wide variety of sickness and injury across their careers and are prepared for every eventuality. Our local doctors, nurses, ambulance officers, admin staff, and supporting staff work around the clock in our local hospitals triaging injury and illness. The Electorate of Winston Hills is incredibly lucky to have access to world-class emergency medicine at our local hospitals. In recently years Blacktown and Westmead Hospitals both received major upgrades to their emergency departments to accommodate the growth of Western Sydney and their surrounding localities. I extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to our hardworking and sacrificial emergency medicine staff who are on the frontlines of our hospitals every day.

FEMALE FOOTBALL WEEK

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)—I take this opportunity to recognise Female Football Week which runs from 19 May to 28 May this year. This week provides an opportunity to recognise and celebrate all women that contribute to football at a grassroots level. Female Football Week is an annual initiative aimed at elevating women and girls and their contribution to football across all aspects of the game. The theme for this week is #LoveOurGame, which symbolises a celebration of Australian women's football and encourages participants to embrace their love for the world game and its positive impact. With the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 just around the corner, there is no better time to recognise the community champions and trailblazers across the game of football. The Winston Hills electorate are fortunate to have the France World Cup team training at Valentine Sports Park in Glenwood for this year's World Cup. I also recognise the Winston Hills Bears who are taking this week as an opportunity to thank all the female referees that officiate their games every weekend.

BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL MEDIEVAL FAYRE

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)—The Blacktown City Council Medieval Fayre is an annual celebration of ancient traditions and culture held in the heart of Western Sydney. Each year tens of thousands of people flock to Nurragingy Reserve from Saturday 20 May to Sunday 21 May to take part in various activities hosted by Blacktown City Council. The festival attracts individuals from across New South Wales and Australia to partake in the age of knights, castles, warriors and Vikings. The fayre has something for the whole family – from the full tilt jousting tournament, birds of prey show, to the enactment of ancient warfare at the battle grounds. It is fantastic to see families appreciating the wide variety of events, scenery and activities that Western Sydney has to offer. Festivalgoers thoroughly enjoy themselves while contributing to our local economy. I extend my congratulations to the organisation team and Blacktown City Council for their efforts in hosting this spectacular event for the people of Western Sydney.

2023 MAITLAND PORTRAIT PRIZE ORGANISED BY THE MAITLAND REGION SOCIETY OF ARTISTS INC.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—For the past six years the Maitland Region Society of Artists have awarded an annual Maitland Portrait Prize. The prize sees entrants paint a prominent local Maitland individual and this year the subject of the entries was former Tocal College Principal Dr Cameron Archer AM. Judged by Newcastle artist Pablo Tapia and exhibited at the Maitland Regional Art Gallery the works celebrate Cameron and his contribution to the local community and Tocal College. Congratulations to Josiecar Guterres, of Gillieston Heights who was announced as the winner for her work 'Wonder'. Second Prize was awarded to Rene Brager, for 'Cameron Archer: Looking Forward, Looking Back', and highly commended was awarded to Priya Joy. This year's prize also introduced a student's section which showcases exceptional youth artistic talent, the artistic future of Maitland is in good hands. Eadan Cook take out first prize, Jocelyn Mainey second and a high commendation for Carl Doroja. Congratulations to the Maitland Region Society of Artists and all the entrants.

LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR NOMINEE LESLEY MACHIN

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Lesley Machin on being nominated for the Local Woman of the Year Awards for Maitland. When Lesley moved to Lorn three years ago, she knew nobody locally. An avid reader she did a letterbox drop to see if any local women would be interested in forming a book club. To her surprise – it was like turning on a tap, a dozen Lorn residents quickly signed up. Following the first meeting, which, like all book clubs, ended up a much more

social occasion than one analysing a book, COVID hit. The group however thrived and developed into a very strong community friendship group, many of the neighbouring members barely having known each other previously. With the help of the local library, the Lorn Ladies Book club continues to thrive. The book club spun off a walking and coffee group, a social gatherings with partners and neighbours, as well as organised trips away and to theatres and the occasional restaurant. Lesley's initiative has made a significant impact to the Lorn community in getting people connected and involved. She is worthy of recognition as a valued and valuable member of the Maitland Community.

LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR NOMINEE VICTORIA LEWIS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Victoria Lewis, a recent nominee in the Local Woman of the Year Awards for Maitland. Victoria has spent the past 2 years volunteering and tirelessly establishing the Newcastle Hub of RizeUp Australia in support of women and families escaping domestic violence in Newcastle, Maitland and the Hunter Valley. She manages an engaged group of volunteers who donate their time, and collect donations to assist in setting up the new homes of domestic and family violence survivors. Victoria coordinates furniture, goods and supplies donations as well as being hands on with home set-ups, and she also runs the local Christmas appeal. She is an absolute asset to the local community. She deserves all the praise and recognition for the time and enormous effort she puts into giving back the community. Victoria's commitment to volunteering and altruism inspires those around her to do the same and encourages local businesses and members of the community to get behind some of the most vulnerable and resilient families in our region.
