



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday 31 May 2023**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 31 May 2023

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

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

[*Notices of motions given.*]

## *Announcements*

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

**The SPEAKER:** I advise members that a photographer from the Department of the Legislative Assembly and an NCA NewsWire photographer will be present in the Chamber today to capture images during question time.

## *Bills*

### ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (HOUSING AND PRODUCTIVITY CONTRIBUTIONS) BILL 2023

#### Second Reading Debate

**Debate resumed from 23 May 2023.**

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (10:17):** I lead for the Coalition in debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. The Coalition agrees that we need to grow the supply of housing in New South Wales to address market pressures, but the new tax on housing proposed by the Minns Government is going to act as a disincentive on building and will not deliver the homes that the people of this State need. In consultation with stakeholders, we are very concerned about the fragmented approach that the new Labor Government is taking to contributions reform.

The Government has stated its commitment to reaching the housing target of 314,000 within the next five years and it is adamant about increasing the housing supply in New South Wales to meet the housing target. It is true that it has been difficult to meet housing targets in recent years. The best way to help first homebuyers enter the property market and to ease pressure in the rental market is to make it easier to build more homes. The bill does not do that. The message is clear: Measures that threaten housing investment have no place in trying to boost the total supply available to the market to address the pressures on renters and first homebuyers. A new tax is the last answer to boosting supply.

I turn to the detail of the bill in its current form, as introduced by the new Government. Schedule 1 [8] substitutes division 7.1, subdivisions 4 and 5, which contain the special infrastructure contributions and special contributions areas infrastructure fund, in order to establish a new housing and productivity contributions scheme. Schedule 1 [1] to [7] and [9] make consequential amendments. The changes allow for the creation of a housing and productivity contribution. Under the amendments, a ministerial planning order made by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces may require a housing and productivity contribution from developers to provide for regional infrastructure. The Government outlined in the second reading speech, and in the *Housing and Productivity Contribution* material issued by the Department of Planning and Environment, that this contribution will apply a broad-based charge to the entirety of the local government areas located within the Greater Sydney, Illawarra-Shoalhaven, lower Hunter and Central Coast regions.

Regional infrastructure is defined under new section 7.22 to include public amenities or public services, affordable housing, transport infrastructure, regional or State roads and measures to conserve or enhance the natural environment. However, the aforementioned *Housing and Productivity Contribution* document issued by the Department of Planning and Environment states:

The Housing and Productivity Contribution can contribute towards the following growth-enabling types of infrastructure:

- Active transport
- Transport
- Education
- Health

- Emergency
- Justice
- Open Space and conservation

Funds will also be provided to support councils in delivering infrastructure that supports housing and productivity.

In his second reading speech the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces indicated that as part of this policy the Government would make \$1 billion available in grant funding to local government over 10 years. New section 7.24 outlines that the purpose of the housing and productivity contribution is to facilitate the provision of regional infrastructure that supports and promotes housing and economic activity. It specifies how regional infrastructure may be provided. The contributions imposed on development in a region must be used to provide regional infrastructure that benefits the region under new section 7.24 (5), except for where it is to conserve or enhance the natural environment. In such circumstances the contribution can be used in another region and even another State. Under new section 7.29 there is no connection required between the development subject to the contribution and the regional infrastructure required, except for a transport project component or a strategic biodiversity component.

I now turn to the ministerial planning orders. New section 7.26 outlines the requirements of ministerial planning orders, which must specify the level and nature of the regional infrastructure contribution; the components of the contribution, including transport project components or strategic biodiversity components; and other matters covered by the section. New section 7.27 requires that before making the order, the planning Minister must obtain the concurrence of the Treasurer. The Government has indicated that the new fund will be jointly administered by the Department of Planning and Environment and Treasury. New section 7.28 provides that if a ministerial planning order requires a housing and productivity contribution in relation to development, a consent authority or certifier must impose a condition on a development consent or a complying development certificate respectively for the development to require the contribution.

In Greater Sydney, the charge applied to new build houses will be \$12,000 each and apartments will have a charge of \$10,000 each. In the three regions outside of Sydney, the housing and productivity contribution will be \$10,000 and \$6,000 respectively. The funds can be spent on regional infrastructure, which includes public amenities, public services, affordable housing, transport infrastructure and measures to help the natural environment. The Coalition is concerned that this regime will act as a disincentive on building and will not deliver the homes that the people of New South Wales so desperately need. Even if developments proceed, these taxes will end up being passed on to the sale price of a new home, making the housing affordability pressures in the market even worse. At a time when Labor has abolished assistance for first home buyers through the First Home Buyer Choice legislation, a minimum \$10,000 tax in the Sydney metropolitan area, and a minimum \$6,000 tax, will only keep prospective first home buyers in rentals for longer, increasing existing pressures on the rental market because they will make homes cost more.

I now turn to the spending of funds in the regions created in the legislation. Two funds are proposed to be established for housing and productivity contributions in the Special Deposits Account. New section 7.31 establishes the Strategic Biodiversity Contributions [SBC] Fund, which is administered by the planning secretary and intended for conservation activities. The SBC fund takes payments relating to biodiversity components, money appropriated for that fund from Parliament, proceeds of investments into the fund and any other money that the bill or any other legislation directs to be paid into the fund. The bill allows the planning secretary to make payments from the SBC fund with only the approval of the planning Minister and Treasurer.

New subdivision 5 of the bill establishes the Housing and Productivity [HAP] Fund, which is to be administered by the Secretary of the Treasury. The purpose of the fund is to support housing and promote economic activity in each region for which a housing and productivity contribution is required. In order for money to be paid out of the fund under new section 7.31D, it must be identified in a strategic plan, identified in a State infrastructure strategy or infrastructure plan, or recommended by the Minister. The ministerial discretion in this part of the bill is very broad, requiring the Minister only to "consider the infrastructure assists in achieving the purpose of the fund".

Schedule 1 [11] inserts savings and transitional provisions in relation to the continuation of special infrastructure contributions under the substituted provisions of the Act. The Government has indicated that the Bayside West, St Leonards and Crows Nest, Gosford City, Wyong Employment Zone, Warnervale Town Centre, Illawarra-Shoalhaven, and Frenchs Forest special infrastructure contributions will be transitioned on 1 October 2023. The Western Sydney Growth Area and Western Sydney Aerotropolis special infrastructure contributions will transition by 1 July 2026. Schedule 1 [1] to [7] and [9] make consequential amendments. Schedule 1 [10] enables contributions, including housing and productivity contributions, to be recovered as a debt.

Concerns have been expressed about the broad definition of "region" in the bill. Under the current system, special infrastructure contributions are matched to special contributions areas, which are often defined areas of infrastructure need. Under the bill, funding from a 20-unit townhouse development in Penrith could be used to build a bike path in Petersham. While funding is contained within the region in which the development is occurring, Greater Sydney is a very large region with diverse needs. There is a widely held community expectation that contributions from developments will be spent in the broad geographic region of that development. We note the concept of having the flexibility to invest funds in infrastructure in the areas that need them most, but we have severe reservations with the notion that areas in Western Sydney will be taxed at least \$10,000 for each dwelling, and these charges, instead of being used in Minchinbury, could be used to support infrastructure funding in Marrickville.

That encompasses why the Coalition opposes the bill at this stage and has supported referral to an upper House committee for further investigation into the proposal. It is vital that we build infrastructure in the areas that have seen the fastest growth, and that money raised in developer contributions is more stringently tied to growth areas and the areas in which the charges are raised. The Coalition is not satisfied by the provisions in the bill for ensuring the sustainable spending of the funds in the HAP fund in the areas in which the money has been raised. When communities cannot be assured that the funds raised from those contributions will be spent in their communities, it proves that the proposal needs further development in the Committee stage in the upper House.

I now turn to the timing of the payment. In consultation with industry, a theme emerged around the timing of making the payment of the housing and productivity contribution. One of the key recommendations of the NSW Productivity Commission review into infrastructure fees and charges was that payments should be permanently deferred so that payment was made prior to the issuance of an occupation certificate rather than prior to the issuance of a construction certificate. A key argument of the Productivity Commission in 2020 in regard to section 7.11 charges was that the deferral of payment to the occupation certificate stage can provide a significant benefit and allow more development projects to commence.

During the early stages of the COVID pandemic, the former Coalition Government made the change on a temporary basis to have developer contributions made at the issuance of the occupation certificate. It was welcomed by the sector as a great success and should be the case moving forward. The legislation does not include those changes, and instead the contribution must be made prior to the issue of a construction certificate. The result of the payment being made prior to the issue of the construction certificate will lead to a reduction in cashflow at the earliest and most expensive stages of a project and could add pressure to builders who are already under immense cashflow pressures.

No developer would hesitate to make the payments in a timely manner when it will trigger the issuance of an occupational certificate and thus the realisation of what is typically 90 per cent of the cashflow for a project upon occupation and settlement. Typically, when the occupational certificate stage is triggered it also triggers the settlement of outstanding payments on a new home. The simple measure of moving the payment of the charge to a later date serves to cut red tape by reducing administrative workload and allowing the focus to be on delivering new supply as quickly as possible. The Coalition looks forward to hearing more from the sector on this point through the Legislative Council inquiry. I foreshadow possible amendments in the Legislative Council in regard to moving the payment of the housing and productivity contribution to the issuance of the occupation certificate.

I move to the current conditions within the industry. Industry is crying out that this bill could be the straw that breaks the camel's back as it faces mounting pressures from rising interest rates, escalating material costs and other contribution charges that are required for new development. When similar measures were first proposed during the productivity review in 2020, interest rates were near zero. As we speak today, the cash rate sits at 3.85 per cent with the potential for further rises. Building material costs have increased astronomically, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics production price index increasing more than 12 points over time. Due to supply chain shortages making materials more expensive and harder to find in the first place, adding charges on top of the build of new homes is only going to make the entry of new supply into the market slower and more expensive.

In conclusion, industry is calling for comprehensive reform to deliver more homes across our communities. It is cautioning that piecemeal measures such as this may jeopardise new supply, and we urge the Government to rethink this singular measure. This tax does not address the necessity to build new homes faster and more efficiently or tackle the cumulative impact of contribution charges that the industry faces at present. Labor's new property tax will only act as a disincentive to building the housing our State needs. By slowing down investment in construction the only impact will be fewer homes being constructed and more buyers and renters searching for properties that simply will not exist. The Coalition will oppose the bill in this House due to its concerns about the impact that the contribution will have on supply. The core focus of the Government must be on building new homes to increase housing supply, not on passing new taxes.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (10:31):** I start with a quote from the former Treasurer on this matter. He said, "This is government policy and what we've done is ensure that we implement the recommendations of the Productivity Commission." He goes on to say, "The Productivity Commission said this is the right policy for New South Wales. We're not going to apologise for investing in the infrastructure that will bring on new housing supply, because we want to support first-time buyers being able to get their foot in the door." Former Treasurer Matt Kean said that in February this year when he was strenuously supporting this type of legislation and proposing it to the people of New South Wales. I was not here at the time, but I gather he also strongly advocated for legislation in a committee inquiry that looked into it.

It is really interesting that the former Treasurer is not in the Chamber talking about the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. It was he who reinvigorated the Productivity Commission. I understand the member for Lane Cove was also a strong advocate for this legislation in his ministerial capacity. It is amazing to see this backflip from Opposition members, who are making a habit of forgetting the people of New South Wales and instead trying to work out the most politically opportune position to take on any legislation.

We have Opposition members talking about legislation that they had advocated for because it was recommended by the Productivity Commission review. It will enable a simplification of the developer contribution project and the targeting of projects that meet strategic planning priorities. It will also eliminate some old problems in areas that need larger infrastructure projects but cannot put the contributions together to achieve them. These are all very sensible things that the Liberal Party and The Nationals supported when they were in government, but in opposition they have flip-flopped and decided they are not for them.

**Mr Paul Scully:** Maybe.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I acknowledge the Minister's interjection. There was a vague little thing about what might happen in the upper House. Does that not characterise the way the Opposition is going at the moment? It is a sort of maybe-Opposition where differences of opinion are emerging within it and in its public positions. We are seeing a leadership vacuum. Yesterday Opposition members spoke in favour of protecting Sydney Water, but then some of them spoke in favour of privatisation in the same debate. They then split on the vote, with The Nationals voting against the legislation and the Liberal Party voting for it. That is the first time I can remember seeing that happen. They took a magic pudding approach on stamp duty. They wanted to have everything. They wanted us to spend an extra \$700 million, but they were so confused about how to do it that they breached section 46 of the Constitution Act with their amendments. We have an Opposition that is in absolute chaos.

Last week they told us there was no Cabinet submission on Active Kids. Yesterday they told us there was. What we know is that there was not even a Parliamentary Budget Office submission on it to put the money in the forward estimates. That is just another bit of dishonesty, as we see constantly from Opposition members. They say that they were going to fund things but they did not include them in the forward estimates because they wanted them to look better. Before the election they had a strong, principled position on the Voice. After the election they said, "Oh well, maybe we'll just wait and see what's politically opportune for us." It is becoming a habit of this Opposition to roll in here and adopt a new position a day. They have no leadership, no direction and no principled position on any of the legislation coming forward. They are just the "no-alition" like we see in Canberra as well.

**Mr Paul Scully:** The "maybe-alition".

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Or the maybe-alition, as the Minister correctly interjects, because who knows? Members opposite might change their minds. They might split on this vote as well. They might come in and say, "But hang on, before the election I strenuously advocated for this reform and said it was a good idea." Before the election they were apparently concerned to make sure that New South Wales got revenue from developers to enable us to build important infrastructure to service growing communities. What do we hear so often from growing communities right around New South Wales? I know members would hear it in Western Sydney as I do in areas like Googong in Queanbeyan. They want infrastructure rolled out at the same time as residences. It is part of what attracts people to build in areas and live there. This important legislation will do that.

The bill will assist us to fund some important infrastructure. It will put in place important protections to ensure that we do not have the sort of dodgy stuff that we saw when those opposite were in government and their favourite area, or an area held by them rather than Labor, got the money. To quote the Minister, the bill makes it clear that the fund "will target projects that meet strategic planning priorities, including local housing targets; can be delivered in a reasonable time; and are aligned to agency asset management plans to ensure delivery agencies are geared towards growth infrastructure."

**Mr Paul Scully:** An excellent quote.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I thought it was very good. This is really important legislation. It provides the people of New South Wales with some certainty that developer contributions will help them get the infrastructure they need. It does not take money away from local councils because they will still have their infrastructure contributions. That is an important point. It blows me away that Opposition members are completely backflipping on the public position they took for a year from the moment the Productivity Commission report came down and in the lead-up to the election. Instead they see some political advantage in banging on in a partisan way and being the no-alition. We have been here less than three weeks and we are coming to expect this from the rudderless mob opposite. They have no policy positions and no principles. They just bang on about whatever they think will get them a line in a paper or a little bit of cheap political benefit. They are doing it again today. They did it on Active Kids, on the Voice and on the Sydney Water bill. In fact, we saw this amazing bit of chaos from the Opposition yesterday with their amendments to that bill, which The Nationals were strongly supporting.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** This won't get you in Cabinet, you know.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The member for Wahroonga should listen to this.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The member for Wahroonga will come to order.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** On my reading that would have actually made it illegal for Griffith to get its water supply out of a privately owned channel.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The member for Wahroonga will cease interjecting.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** It was just a bizarre set of ill-thought-through amendments from an Opposition that is all over the place. It really is a sample of the chaos and lack of leadership from the Opposition in this place. The people of New South Wales observing it will see right through it for exactly what it is. I strongly endorse the legislation.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (10:40):** I also support the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023, which will deal with a key bottleneck in infrastructure with a simple and modest charge levied across a broader base. It will support the provision of the roads, railways, parks, schools and hospitals that large housing developments need to function. The reality is that, over the past decade, members on the other side of the Chamber have dropped the ball in regard to the infrastructure that needs to go with those large housing developments. Every member of Parliament that comes from a growth area will come into this Chamber and talk about the schools, the schools, and the schools that those opposite failed to provide.

Carter Street Precinct, which was in my electorate before the election, is half a square kilometre and double the density of Woolloomooloo and Potts Point. I think there are about 8,000 dwellings. Members on the other side of the Chamber put Carter Street public school in the master plan over a decade ago for all those dwellings. Not one space was available in any public school in that peninsula. Not one, and they whacked 15,000 more people there. Had they put one cent towards building Carter Street public school? The answer is no. I heard the member for Manly in the Chamber saying, "Well, we don't know if the money is going to Minchinbury or Marrickville." The legislation makes clear that it goes to the regions where the growth is happening. But we know that it would not go to Minchinbury or Western Sydney under members on the other side of the House, because our schools have been left behind time and again.

In Wellington Road in Chester Hill they handed seven large quarter-acre blocks over to developers to build developments on. They took two housing department blocks and put 37 apartments in. In that street alone there are another 200 dwellings. A lift for Chester Hill station was fourth priority a decade ago, but it has not been done. Their priorities under the Transport Access Program were Darling Point, Mosman, North Sydney and Taronga Zoo. Not one red cent has gone to Chester Hill and Western Sydney, where the workers come from and where the growth in housing is actually happening. The three electorates where the most housing is going are Parramatta, Granville and Auburn. Members opposite have spent absolutely nothing in those areas. The bill is giving us a capacity to do what they should have done. A good example is the metro. What does their Metro West do? Did members opposite put a metro stop at Silverwater, the biggest employment precinct in that part of Western Sydney? No, but they have put stops at the racecourse and the stadium.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Order! Opposition members will come to order.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ:** That is where they have put the stops, not where the workers are. I understand why the members on the other side, given their poor performance in question time yesterday and their poor performance during debate on legislation yesterday—they have lost all their staff so they have no-one to tell them how a legislative amendment works—want to arc up and cover up for their own failings. The bill has important conservation offsets. I bet the member for Wollondilly has a long list of local residents in her area concerned

about koala habitats that have absolutely been carved out. The previous Government said, "Well, we'll leave a few trees around the edges," as if that is the way koala habitats work. Those opposite put the housing in with none of those offsets and considerations. The roads are a disaster. Hill Top is in the member for Wollondilly's electorate. Members should ask the residents of Hill Top how good their roads are there.

It is an absolute disgrace that members opposite come into this Chamber and start talking about this legislation, which they previously supported, after what they have done to the budget in New South Wales. I thought there was a Fiscal Responsibility Act in New South Wales. I thought that Act prohibited the Government from using borrowings to pay for recurrent revenue, including wages. But what did members on the other side of the Chamber do? They ran up billions and billions of dollars of debt outside what the Act allows, using it on recurrent revenue and to pay wages. In the meantime, they did not build the schools. They did not build Carter Street public school. They had to be forced to build Wentworth Point high school. They cut the funding for Birrong Boys and Birrong Girls in half. They cut the funding in half for some of the most important schools in Western Sydney. They did not cut the funding in half when it came to Mosman High School or Ku-ring-gai High School. They cut the funding in half when it came to western suburbs high schools. It is a disgrace.

The bill is an important piece of legislation that will allow the Government to deliver, where housing growth is happening, the services that mean growth can happen quickly and in a meaningful way. It replaces a complex system of contributions by developers with a simple, straightforward one-off payment. Everyone has recommended it, including members on the other side of the Chamber. The legislation is very supportable. It should be supported. It is a disgrace that members opposite have come into the Chamber disrupting debate and yelling at members who are just trying to get what any person would think are the best education outcomes for our children, who they seem to have absolutely no regard for.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (10:46):** The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill is nothing more than a property tax. In Campbelltown it is the Greg Warren property tax. In Auburn it is the Lynda Voltz property tax. In Blacktown it is the Stephen Bali property tax. This is nothing but a new big, bad tax—another tax under this Government. We on this side will oppose it today. We will continue to oppose it all the way to the ballot box. Labor's new property tax is going to act as a handbrake on the delivery of more homes across Sydney and across New South Wales, potentially adding millions of dollars to new developments.

Labor's new tax will be a cost passed on to working families and consumers. All they want to do is buy their dream home. All they want to do is buy their first property. In the electorates of Blacktown, Campbelltown, Heathcote, South Coast and Wollongong, Labor's new property tax will only act as a disincentive on building the housing our State needs. The impact of slowing down investment in construction will be fewer homes being constructed and more buyers and renters searching for properties that simply do not exist. We need to take the handbrake off new development. We need to provide incentives, not new taxes and not more pain. We need to make it easier for working families across New South Wales.

**Mr Greg Warren:** I'm going to enjoy this.

**Mr MARK COURE:** I am glad the member for Campbelltown is. In Greater Sydney the charge applied to new-built houses will be \$12,000. Young working families are going to be charged \$12,000 more for the purchase of a new home. Those purchasing apartments will be charged \$10,000 each. This is nothing but a big bad Labor tax, and Opposition members will continue this campaign in my electorate and the electorates of members opposite. We will make sure that every person in New South Wales understands, before they get to the ballot box in four years, that Labor has put another big bad tax on working families. That is why we are opposing this legislation. The Coalition is concerned that this regime will act as a disincentive to building and will not deliver the new homes that the people of New South Wales urgently need. Even if developments do proceed, the taxes will just end up being passed on in the sale prices of new homes and apartments, making housing affordability pressures in the market even worse. Opposition members oppose the legislation today and will oppose it in the future.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (10:50):** I am delighted to make a very short contribution of around 15 minutes to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Why isn't he in Cabinet? Why isn't he a Minister?

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I will get to you soon, son. I refer to the member for Oatley. Strewth, hasn't he learnt not to say anything? Crikey. Every time he speaks he ends up in trouble, and he has just done it again. But don't worry; we have four years to slow roast you, mate. I am your caterer; don't worry about that. I speak on two points, and I will come to the legislation later in my contribution. I commend my friend and colleague the Minister

for putting a lot of work into the bill. Ultimately the motivation for the bill is the fundamental Labor principle of ensuring that investment goes where it is needed. Government members want to see investment going to developing communities so that they can enjoy the good lifestyle that existing residents have enjoyed.

New developments in green space or redevelopments in brown space mean new residents moving into an area or moving from one area to another, but we must ensure that future residents enjoy the good lifestyle that existing residents enjoy. That sounds very basic, but ensuring that a government provides resources, facilities and infrastructure by investing in communities is a basic fundamental. That will happen only through legislation like this, which only a Labor government understands because it understands the needs of the people in west and south-west Sydney and the developing areas. Whether it is in Cootamundra, Campbelltown, Ballina, Byron Bay or the South Coast, Labor members want to see investment going into communities so that they get—

**Mr Paul Scully:** Those students up in the gallery would love it.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I bet they do. G'day, students. Welcome to the Parliament. I am not sure where they are from, but I am sure they will let us know.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Don't scare them off with this big bad tax!

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Order!

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I apologise in advance for those opposite; what the students will see will be remarkable and startling. But that is the New South Wales Liberal Party over there, otherwise known—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The only remarkable thing here is how big the tax is. All they want is a home; all they want is somewhere to live.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Order! Members will come to order. They will set a good example for the students in the public gallery.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I do not actually know who that member is. But Opposition members are otherwise known as the lightweights of New South Wales politics—the irrelevant, unforgivable individuals who simply have no idea what they are talking about. But I go back to the bill, and I apologise for drifting off there.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It happens a lot. Just keep drifting, just like your Government's policy agenda.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** At the end of the day, investing in developing communities is so important. Members opposite can heckle and carry on all they like because we know that they do not care about communities. Campbelltown, Leppington, Wollondilly and Heathcote show how much they do not care. We know that because they had 12 years to show us and they put profits before people. We have \$187 billion of debt, and the interest alone is \$7 billion a year, every year. The police budget is around \$6 billion a year, but because of the inadequacy and mismanagement by those opposite, the people of New South Wales will be paying \$7 billion every year.

There is an \$11 billion deficit. Each and every member, particularly the new members in this place, should think very carefully about what a government could do with that money. Look at the schools, the hospitals and the staff—or even narrowing it down to environmental protections, footpaths and public transport. It is an absolute outrage; it is unforgivable. The highest debt and the most mismanaged budget in this great State's history are the legacy of the Liberal Party and The Nationals of New South Wales. What an incompetent bunch—an absolute disgrace to this economy.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Which part of the \$50 billion that we spent on COVID would you not have done?

**Mr GREG WARREN:** How many billions did they waste? The mob opposite could not run a bloody chook raffle. Seriously, I would not trust those opposite to run my bath.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Point of order: I am not sure what the standing order is, but I remind the member not to use unparliamentary language in front of the young students in the gallery. I welcome them today. I am sure they are here to listen to a little bit of worthwhile debate, although unfortunately they are not getting any at the moment. They do not deserve the profanities that are included in the debate.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I thank the member for Kellyville. I uphold the point of order and remind the member for Campbelltown to use parliamentary language, particularly in the presence of students in the public gallery.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** I always do, Mr Assistant Speaker. Being lectured by the member for Kellyville on ethics is like being lectured on human rights by some foreign dictator. The reality is this bill is long overdue. It could only be done by a Labor government and a Minister with the courage and the will to do what we all know needs to happen. I note that those opposite are opposing the bill, and that comes as absolutely no surprise. I refer

to my previous comments about their mismanagement of the budget and the debt that they have left us. Do they expect us to do nothing? We will certainly not do what they did, which is sell everything off, mismanage every project in New South Wales and leave the highest debt in this great State's history. That is the legacy of the New South Wales Liberal Party. The Opposition stands for profits before people, while the Government will put people first.

Government members understand that we do not own the money. We might control it but it is not ours; it belongs to the people of New South Wales. That is what Opposition members do not get. They also do not get the enormous amount of debt that they have left on the shoulders of the people of New South Wales, which they have to pay for. Why should the people of New South Wales pay for the failures and the mismanagement of the New South Wales Liberal Party? What a pack of turkeys. I would refer to them as galahs, but I would not want to offend our native Australian parrots. As usual, the member for Oatley makes no sense. He probably should not speak because he ends up in trouble every time he does.

**Mr Paul Scully:** Interjections are not his thing.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Yes, I know. But the reality is we are seeing investment back in the communities where it needs to go, for the right reasons, in the right way. That is what this piece of legislation does. Again I note those opposite are not supporting the bill: no surprises there. But I say to those opposite, do you know what? Do not support it. That is a matter for you. But what you are saying to the people of New South Wales is that you continue not to care. You do not acknowledge your failures and your mismanagement. Let me give you a news flash. I will do you a favour. I will remind them for the next four years and I will cater for them. Do not worry: We will slow roast this and serve you up, and display you for everything that you have done and everything that you do. By objecting to this bill, it is yet another indication of how out of touch you are and how you are in your rightful place on the Opposition benches.

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

#### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge and extend a very warm welcome to guests of the member for Prospect: Mr Kadaveru Surendra Mohan, Secretary to the Hon. Governor of Telangana, India; Mrs Kadaveru Kavitha; Mr Kadaveru Likhith; Mr Prashanth Kumar Kadaparthi; Goverdhan Reddy Muddam, President and General Secretary of the Australian Telangana Forum; a delegation from the Chaldean League, in particular, Father The Reverend Atkin Fahad Al Mlmourad, Parish priest of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Istanbul; Samir Yousif, President of the Chaldean League of NSW and Vice-President Global; and Ayman Pola, President of the Chaldean Youth Committee. As part of the delegation, I acknowledge and welcome guests of the member for Shellharbour, Dr Balu, from the Illawarra, and Soorya Balu.

I acknowledge guests of the member for Riverstone, Yogesh Kattah and Dr Neeraj Duggal. I also welcome to the Chamber a guest of the member for Cronulla and Leader of the Opposition, Mr Krish Nair, who is the 2023 NSW Youth Member for Castle Hill. I also welcome guests of the member for Lake Macquarie, students from St Paul's. I make special mention of the teacher who accompanies the group today, Anna Hennessy, who is a constituent of the member for Swansea—and the member for Swansea was very keen to acknowledge her. I also welcome to the Parliament student leaders from high schools in New South Wales who are attending the Secondary Schools Leadership Program conducted by the Parliamentary Education Unit. I welcome everybody in the upper gallery to the New South Wales Parliament and to question time.

#### *Question Time*

#### **PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:06):** My question is directed to the Premier. Union leader Gerard Hayes says the Premier is making a wages offer to health workers that is inferior to the Coalition Government's offer. Was the Premier elected on a lie to health workers?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:06):** Not even the Leader of the Opposition believes that. For God's sake, when the Coalition Government came to power, for 12 years they governed, deliberately with the wages cap in place. We have been in power for eight weeks and the argument from the Opposition seems to be, "Why haven't you fixed our mess already? We've been waiting." At the end of the day, it will take a bit of time to unravel a deliberate strategy to suppress wages, smash public sector workers, initiate a retention crisis and make it almost impossible for people to join the New South Wales public sector. But we are making progress.



I inform the House that it is interesting to note some of the commentary from the Opposition in relation to wages and conditions. There was a press conference on 23 May 2022 when a shadow Minister from the other House said, "We're seeing investment in mates rates and union wages going up. The priority has been to pay the unions. The priority has been to scrap the wages cap." That is a quote from Ms Ward in the upper House, who seems to be implying, "It is too generous. Don't pay them anything. Keep the wages cap." But then we have the shadow Treasurer, who was asked on 23 May, "Are you okay with 4 per cent?" He replies, "I don't begrudge anyone a pay rise."

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** On the one hand Ward says, "Don't give them a cent," and on the other hand Tudehope seems to be saying, "Give them as much as you want." I will tell you what: We will be responsible with public money. We will deliver on our pledge to get rid of the wages cap. The big question for the Opposition is: Will they support Labor's plan to remove the wages cap in New South Wales? We want to know the answer. There is another piece of information that has to do with the shadow Minister for Health. Two weeks before the election good old Matt Kean attended a business conference. He asked, "What is the point of the wages cap in New South Wales?" He said, "What it will mean for each and every one of you"—the businesses—"is that now you won't be competing for labour against people in the public service who are paid huge wage increases." So that was the plan, was it? The plan was to suppress wages so that there would be no competition with the private sector. What a disgraceful political and economic strategy delivered by the member for Hornsby: holding down wages, smashing public sector workers and causing a retention crisis in New South Wales.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hornsby rises on a point of order, but it is a moot point. The answer has been completed. Before we move on, I address the behaviour of members during the first question. I have allowed members to have some fun and let off a bit of steam. The Premier easily baited some Opposition frontbench members. That was an easy gain, but it will not continue. That behaviour will not be repeated throughout question time. Members will be directed to depart the Chamber if such behaviour continues. Student leaders are in the gallery and this Chamber will set a better example for our guests. I issue all members with a general warning.

### GREGORY HILLS PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (11:10):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the New South Wales Government is keeping its promise to deliver a new school for the Gregory Hills community?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:10):** That is a tough but fair question. The member for Camden, a former schoolteacher and a newly elected member of this House, represents one of the fastest growing communities in Australia—not just in New South Wales, but across the entire country. In that part of the State, under the previous Government's population growth targets, the Camden local government area was due to grow by an additional 83 per cent over the next 20 years. Campbelltown is due to grow by an additional 31 per cent from 174,000 to 229,000. The Liverpool local government area is due to grow by an additional 35 per cent. In 2011, during the term of the previous Government, the suburb of Gregory Hills had a population of 38 people. That population grew to 4,900 in 2016 and grew again to 14,300 this year.

The suburb consists mainly of new housing, which means a lot of young families and a lot of schoolkids. You would think that if you were going to allow 14,000 families to move into a community, you would build a school, right? Wrong. Previous Government members said, "We're not going to build that school." At the end of the day, we had to go to the families.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

Members opposite protest. Hanna Braga said Gregory Hills Public School had been pushed back to 2027 under the previous Government. Half the school would be completed in 2027 and the other half would open in 2030. Hanna Valenzuela is a mum from Gregory Hills. Do you know Hanna?

**Mrs Sally Quinnell:** I do know Hanna.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** On 14 June she said, "We moved here in 2013 and it was promised that it would be here in a couple of years. We're still waiting." At the end of the day, under enormous pressure from the local community, the former Premier of New South Wales had to do something. The previous Government went to Gregory Hills and made a solemn promise that the school would be built by term 1, day one, 2023. We are now in term 2. Is the school built? No, the school was not built, despite the solemn promise entered into by the previous Government. Infrastructure for one of the fastest growing communities in all of New South Wales was not

delivered by the previous Government. I can reveal to the House that the Government has begun construction on the school and will complete it. This Government will deliver what the previous Government simply could not. I will say this much about the previous Government when it comes to infrastructure in Western Sydney, because this is important— [*Extension of time*]

We discovered that the former Government underspent on school infrastructure by \$1.2 billion in a single budget. Families and growing communities are desperate for new schools and kids are being educated in demountables, yet the former Government underspent the school infrastructure budget by \$1.2 billion in a single year. That is disgraceful, but it will not end there. The Government is under new management. Labor will build the schools that New South Wales needs. I can inform the House that this morning the Minister for Education and Early Learning announced a new high school for Marsden Park.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It was promised by Labor and delivered by Labor. We will build a new high school in Gledswood Hills, and new schools in Googong, Medowie, Leppington, and the Carter Street Precinct at Sydney Olympic Park, which the member for Auburn is very pleased about. The bottom line is that the Government needs to build the infrastructure for a growing city. That is exactly what Labor will do. We will learn from the chronic mistakes of the previous Government. When parents need schools, the Government will deliver them.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Has the Premier completed his answer?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I have wrapped up.

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

#### **PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (11:15):** My question is directed to the Premier. On 23 June in reply to the Budget Speech he said, "We will deliver a better and fairer wages deal for our essential workers." Is a pay rise of half a per cent for health workers a much better and fairer wages deal?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:15):** I do not understand. Does the member support the wages deal? What does he think about it? I cannot make head or tail of it. One minute members opposite say that the Government is being way too generous—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Hornsby will come to order. The member for Dubbo will come to order. The Manager of Opposition Business will come to order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Two seconds later they say that it is nowhere near enough. Can you explain to us what you think in relation to this, Mr Speaker?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the House rises on a point of order. The member for Canterbury will come to order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** The House is far too disorderly. I cannot hear a word the Premier is saying. It is now time to—

**The SPEAKER:** Does the Leader of the House agree with my earlier warning to members?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** I do, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** I gave members very wise counsel but they are not abiding by it. I will call members to order if this disorderly behaviour continues. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The bottom line is that of course the Government will bust the wages cap in New South Wales. We have to do it. We made that clear in our election commitments. We have made that clear since we were elected. We are conducting negotiations with frontline public sector unions. Over the entire eight-week period when negotiations were taking place, the Opposition did nothing but cheer for failure. Members opposite hope that it will all go wrong. Why? So that it will add credibility to their discredited economic plan of privatisation and low wages.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Manager of Opposition Business to order for the first time.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There was nothing more shameful than hearing—in technicolour—the former Treasurer explaining that low wages for public sector workers was a deliberate strategy to benefit the private sector.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Imagine—well, you said it.

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

**Mr Matt Kean:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129 on relevance. When will the Premier apologise for lying to health workers in New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** The member knows that that is not a valid way to take a point of order. Although it hurts me to do so, I call the member for Hornsby to order for the first time. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It is curious to hear from the Opposition on this important issue because, in a single press conference, the shadow Treasurer said to the people of New South Wales, "I don't begrudge anyone a pay rise." In exactly the same press conference, shadow Minister Ward said, "Well, all they're doing is looking after their union mates." This was at exactly the same press conference. Which is it? At the end of the day, the Government will present a plan to the people of New South Wales that involves retaining essential workers. The rabble on the other side of the House simply has no policy at all.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. The member for Hornsby will come to order. I call the member for South Coast. She will be heard in silence.

#### WATER ASSET PRIVATISATION

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (11:19):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, representing the Minister for Water. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is delivering on its promise to protect Sydney Water and Hunter Water from privatisation?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:19):** I thank the member for South Coast for her question. Her inaugural speech was fantastic. It recognised the challenges that her community is facing as it emerges from the disastrous Currowan fire. It also focused on housing, which I know is very important to the member and her community. The New South Wales Labor Government promised the people of New South Wales that it would protect Sydney Water and Hunter Water from privatisation by enshrining public ownership in the Constitution Act. Guess what? The Government has honoured that commitment. This is a government that is now cleaning up after 12 years of a government that focused purely on privatisation.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** There was nothing that those opposite were not prepared to flog off. They were the real estate agents of Macquarie Street. They flogged off our electricity assets, our ports and our toll roads. Those of us who have been here for a long time would remember they even flogged off our land titles office. Remember that one? Parliament House was at risk at one stage. I take members back a few months to February, when we were all on the campaign trail, attending community forums and informing the communities that we were seeking to represent what our plans were. The member for Goulburn attended a candidates' forum. Most members have done these things; I do not want to explain it. But for the students—

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

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will remain silent. I am sure they wish to hear the point of order as much as I do.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It is under Standing Order 129. As fascinating as it may be, the activities—

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** What number?

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Can't you listen? I said 129. Can you listen to what is going on? Can you concentrate on what is going on?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wahroonga will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I am responding to an interjection.

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Wahroonga will get to his point of order quickly. The member for Prospect will not assist from the backbench. I have control of the House.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I refer to Standing Order 129. As fascinating as the various activities during an election campaign may be, they are not relevant to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister has the call.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** That is a very good decision. At that forum, they handed out "yes" or "no" placards. Those opposite were asked about their position on selling Sydney Water. I will take members through it. There is a "yes" card and a "no" card. It is pretty simple. [*Extension of time*]

They were handed "yes" or "no" placards, and the member for Goulburn selected "yes". It gets even worse. I take members back less than 24 hours to last night. When speaking about privatisation, the Hon. Chris Rath, who is a very senior, experienced member of the Parliament—I think those opposite call him a senior member of the Liberal Party—said, "I think it has been a very good thing." Then there was the Leader of The Nationals, last night. Wasn't last night good? I have been here for 12 years, and I have not seen a split in the Coalition like that. What happened? There was the Barilaro faction, there was the Toole faction and there was the "anyone but The Nationals" faction.

The member for Coffs Harbour said during the debate that there is no need for urgency in the matter of protecting our water assets from privatisation. The Premier has clearly said that there is urgency needed because we want to keep these assets in public hands. Members on this side of the House know the importance of ensuring that our water utilities are in the hands of the communities they serve. That is the sole focus of the bill. Last night we saw an opposition divided. It is an opposition that has not learnt its lesson from the election, where the community loudly and clearly said, "No more privatisation".

#### CITY OF SYDNEY ELECTIONS

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (11:25):** Mr Speaker, you continue to excel in your role.

[*Members interjected.*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! He only said what you were thinking, member for Maroubra. The member for Sydney has the call.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. Given the undemocratic nature of City of Sydney elections, which can give businesses at least twice the number of votes as residents, how will the Minister restore fairness to City of Sydney elections?

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (11:26):** On 5 September 2014 Antony Green tweeted, "Will somebody not rid me of this troublesome Lord Mayor," when referring to the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014, which imposed an undemocratic voting system on the residents of the City of Sydney. That bill was known as the "Get Clover Bill Mark II". It created a voting system that is different to any other council's voting system and gave non-resident business owners at least two votes—sometimes more—compared with a resident's one vote. It also made non-resident voters compulsory. It was designed to get rid of the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore. That was not the first attempt by the Coalition to get rid of Clover Moore. In 2012 it amended the Local Government Act to prevent people from holding the office of mayor and being a member of this House at the same time, with the anticipation that the Lord Mayor would resign from her position in the council and retain her membership representing the electorate of Sydney.

To the absolute surprise of the Coalition Government, the Lord Mayor resigned as the member of Sydney and decided to remain Lord Mayor. To the utter disappointment of the Coalition, it lost the by-election for Sydney, and we now have the privilege of the current member for Sydney being a member of this House. Even with that undemocratic voting system, of which North Korea would be proud, the Lord Mayor of Sydney was still able to receive more than 57 per cent of the first-preference vote in 2016. She was again easily re-elected in 2021. The Coalition has never forgiven Councillor Moore for unseating Michael Yabsley in the electorate of Bligh, nor has it forgiven her—whether you agree or not—for causing Premier Greiner to be removed from office. Labor bitterly opposed the bill at the time and still believes in the concept of one vote, one value that is enshrined in its DNA. The City of Sydney is a global city, and the Lord Mayor of Sydney has ceremonial, diplomatic functions. I cannot see any reason why there should be any difference between the city's voting system and the voting system of the State's other 127 councils, but I am prepared to— [*Extension of time*]

As I said, Sydney is a global city and the Lord Mayor of Sydney does have ceremonial and diplomatic functions to a greater extent than lord mayors or mayors of other cities, and the City of Sydney is an important economic powerhouse in this State. However, the fact of the matter remains that it is still a local council authority that governs a huge section of Sydney's population, including residents of my electorate. Its voting system, in my view, should be the same. I have not changed my views from the views I expressed to this House in 2014. I remember the debate in 2014, when the Coalition asserted no taxation without representation. If that were the

policy enshrined in democratic voting systems, Clive Palmer would have more of the vote than my residents in Waterloo. That is not the way in which democracies operate in this State.

The member for Sydney has written to me and has proposed a modification of the voting system, but my view is that the bill that was enacted in 2014 should be repealed and that the council's voting system should be like any other. However, I think it is important that I engage in a consultative process with stakeholders, Local Government NSW and the registered political parties, even those in the Coalition, to ensure that any bill I introduce into this House truly reflects the need for the City of Sydney to be democratically elected rather than having an election system that is probably one of the most undemocratic in Australia.

#### STATE DEBT

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (11:31):** My question is addressed to the fantastic Attorney General, representing the Minister for Finance. Will the Attorney General update the House on the budget challenges inherited by the Government?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (11:31):** I thank the member for Blue Mountains for her question. One of the things that I greatly enjoy in my capacity as a local member—I am certainly not on my own in this House—is going into schools and talking to young student leaders about their roles and responsibilities. I know that the member for Coogee joins me from time to time in schools like the great Marcellin College at Randwick. The message that we impart to the year 11 students as they embark upon, arguably, their most important years is that they have a responsibility to make sure that the role they inherit is better off when they leave it than when they inherited it—the concept of reliance. That goes for people who get jobs in business. It goes for all of us in our public life. It applies to governments particularly because citizens rely on governments. When you look at—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** What about in 2011?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Do not let me start on you because you will come off second best, my friend.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** When you look at that concept of reliance, the role of the Treasurer is particularly pivotal in all of this because all programs rely on the budget.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Ministers rely on the Treasurer and the budget in order to get their programs done. Backbenchers rely on the Cabinet, which relies on the Treasurer to make sure it can deliver on things it wants to do in the local area.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** And a new government relies on the competence or the supposed competence of the Government before it. When a new government takes over after an election and seeks to implement the mandate that has been given to it by the people of the State, it is entitled to believe what it sees in the budget papers and to proceed on that basis. Let me say very simply, to the House and to the people of New South Wales, that the budget we have inherited, the set of numbers we are now faced with, is blistering in terms of its failures. It is record breaking in terms of its numbers. It is an unprecedentedly bad set of numbers. I spoke the other day about the gross debt.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I spoke about 1,100 unfunded nurses. I spoke about the \$700 million of extra charges that those opposite continue to want to foist upon us when it comes to first home buyers, about holes in Cyber Security NSW, about the cruelty of not funding Active Kids vouchers. [*Extension of time*]

We have spoken about the \$1 billion of consultancy fees that they have gifted upon their mates in the Big Four. We have spoken about the failures in the Transport Asset Holding Entity, the debacle in icare, the inability to manage contracts, the inability to build projects on time and on budget. The failures go on and on. They could not manage contracts. They could not manage spending. There was waste and mismanagement and profligacy and—worse—cover-ups and hidden budget results. That is not the behaviour of a responsible government. The member for Blue Mountains asks me on behalf of the Minister for Finance to give a budget update on behalf of this Government. The biggest update is this: It is a change in mentality. The member for Hornsby can laugh and should laugh because that is all he has left—this facade of not caring. If he were so good and so tough, why is he not sitting down there? Why did he not stick his hand up for the leadership?

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** The biggest update I have is this: The adults are now in charge of the budget. We have a steely resolve to get this right. There is a comprehensive spending review underway now. We know that the numbers are bad and we are not going to hide from the people of this State that stern decisions will need to be made.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** The Premier has made it absolutely clear that we intend to make them, to get the books back in order to deliver for the people of New South Wales. Let me conclude on this point. I was asked for an update. This is the biggest update: We will not govern like those opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Hornsby, I welcome the second group of student leaders in the gallery today. At the beginning of the Attorney General's answer he referred to members visiting schools and talking to students about leadership. I welcome all the students in the gallery who are attending the Secondary Schools Leadership Program being conducted by the Parliamentary Education Office. I hope your day gets better.

### HEALTH SERVICES UNION

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (11:37):** My question is directed to the Premier. Why has the Premier not spoken to Gerard Hayes or the Health Services Union [HSU] for the past 10 days?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:37):** I have had many conversations with the HSU and union leaders over the past eight weeks, since we have been elected. My door is always open when it comes to negotiation. I encourage any union leader or any representative of the workers in New South Wales to approach the New South Wales Government. We want an outcome. We want to make sure we get an agreement. We do not care whether those opposite are cheering for failure in relation to this. We believe that the retention crisis in New South Wales is acute and severe and requires a change in policy. Talking about a change in policy, it was curious to hear, in all the of the hubbub about the wages cap being lifted and the circumstances relating to it, the position of the Leader of the Opposition. I think that is germane to this. This is, after all, a minority Parliament. He was asked about it. He said—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. It is a very simple question. Why has he not spoken to Gerard Hayes or the HSU in the past 10 days? It is a very confined question.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Wairoa. The Premier is being germane to the question.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I have to say he was asked about it: "But you're not opposed to the 4 per cent." He said, "It should have productivity attached to it. After all, we're in a tight fiscal circumstance." Whose fault is that? Whose fault is that? There is \$180 billion worth of debt.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I cannot hear the Leader of the Opposition. The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** The standing orders were changed specifically so that Ministers have to provide answers that are directly relevant, not tangential. It is a simple question: Why hasn't the Premier picked up the phone to Gerard Hayes?

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition has raised the same point of order taken by the Manager of Opposition Business. I ruled then that the Premier's answer was germane to the question, and the first part of it was clearly directly relevant. According to the conventions of the House, when the Minister has answered the question some latitude is then extended to them. Members know that the "directly relevant" test is extremely hard to apply absolutely. In my view, the Premier was directly relevant to the question when he commenced his answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** An important ruling, Mr Speaker, and one for the history books. I just have to say this: The question was from the shadow Minister for Health who, during this question time, seems to be parading around like the new Che Guevara or Norma Rae or something—all of a sudden desperately on the side of the workers—but he has had just a single intervention in relation to his new portfolio in the past couple of weeks. He was asked about health in New South Wales—

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Come on, Norma Rae.

**The SPEAKER:** I need to hear the member for Hornsby. The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mr Matt Kean:** It is 129, relevance. The standing orders are very clear: direct relevance. Che Guevara has nothing to do with why the Premier has not spoken to Gerard Hayes for the past 10 days.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Hornsby. There is no point of order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The shadow Minister's one intervention in the Health portfolio was this: "Clearly the false claims around the health crisis he made as Opposition leader were not true." The health crisis is not true. So he starts from that premise: There is no crisis to solve. "Why are you putting investment into the health system in New South Wales?" The retention crisis, the emergency departments being smashed, the elective surgery waiting list—it is an absolute mess presided over by the previous Government. We will fix their mess. The idea that they come into this House and demand an explanation after 12 years of failure shows how cynical they are. *[Time expired.]*

### PORT KEMBLA STEELWORKS

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:42):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is guaranteeing the supply of Illawarra steel for new homes, schools, hospitals and transport infrastructure in New South Wales?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:42):** I thank the member for Shellharbour for her question. She has stood shoulder to shoulder with steelworkers during the toughest times for Port Kembla steelworks. She also stood shoulder to shoulder with me, the Minister for Health, and the Premier recently when he visited Port Kembla steelworks. Interestingly enough, he is the first Premier since Barry O'Farrell to actually visit Port Kembla steelworks. That is a fun fact. None of those who followed O'Farrell could be bothered driving down to check out a steelworks that makes a \$10.3 billion contribution to the New South Wales economy. That contribution is set to continue because last Friday I was able to announce a planning approval had been granted.

I acknowledge the member for Lane Cove, who granted this particular project the status of critical State significant infrastructure. He understands the importance of producing local steel. This planning approval triggers a \$182 million upgrade of Berths 111, 112 and 113 at Port Kembla. As metallurgical coal coming out of the local coalfields in the Illawarra reduces, the upgrade will allow that coal to come through, allow more scrap steel to come through and be integrated into the steelmaking supply, and allow more limestone, more iron ore and the prospect of steel exports into the future. This approach will support the Government's efforts to rebuild domestic manufacturing.

BlueScope's Australian chief executive, Tania Archibald, said that this was a great vote of confidence in the future of New South Wales. She also said, "This infrastructure upgrade represents a significant investment to secure the asset for the long term whilst supporting future technology options for low-emissions steelmaking." Why do we need that? Seventy per cent of the steel that is produced at Port Kembla goes towards homes, transport infrastructure, schools infrastructure and hospital infrastructure. It can go towards rebuilding and improving domestic manufacturing, which is part and parcel of what Government members have a steely resolve to deliver. We do not want to see train production exported overseas and jobs exported overseas. We do not want to see ferries built overseas and imported here. We do not want to see new B-line buses, and buses in the future, built overseas. We want to see more domestic manufacturing here. Why? *[Extension of time]*

We want to revive domestic manufacturing because it means jobs. It means good jobs for skilled workers in the Hunter, in the Illawarra, in Western Sydney, in western New South Wales, making sure there will be strong, vibrant communities in the future. That is why we are targeting 50 per cent minimum local content on future transport rolling stock contracts. We are increasing tender weightings for local content, jobs creation, small business and ethical supply chains to 30 per cent. We are working with industry to make sure the State Government's demand pipeline is as easy as possible for local suppliers. We are establishing three TAFE centres of excellence in domestic manufacturing, including one in the Illawarra—I thank the Minister for that—to make sure that we have a skilled workforce in the future. Steel supply certainty is vital to the home building effort as we work to fast-track housing supply into the future to make sure that there are not only good jobs but also good homes for people across New South Wales. The students in the gallery will welcome that as they look to their first home. It is about jobs.

It is said that teamwork makes the dream work. I congratulate the project team, led by Mark Dobbins, who put this project together. Nineteen submissions were submitted during this process, all of them in support. They had done their homework. It shows what teamwork can do. Members opposite would do well to have a look at what teamwork can do because we saw yesterday how confused, mixed up and chaotic they can become. In fact, they have lost their way so much, I reckon tonight they will be supporting Queensland instead of New South

Wales in the State of Origin. There are not many blue ties on the Opposition side. Tamworth already was, but only a few of them will back the Blues tonight. Back New South Wales, back local steel, back domestic jobs!

### HEALTH SERVICES UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (11:47):** My question is directed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Does the Minister support the industrial action undertaken by Health Services Union members today—yes or no?

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (11:48):** The audacity of those opposite! They are asking us questions about industrial relations when for 12 years they capped wages. They asphyxiated wages growth for public sector workers for 12 years.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Gerard said we were better on IR. He says he prefers us.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** You laughed. We won an election.

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** We have a mandate to remove the wages cap. We are sitting down and we are negotiating with the unions, with the essential workers, with the teachers, with the nurses, with the paramedics, with the cleaners, with the security staff—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. It is a yes or no answer. Does the Minister support the industrial action by the HSU? Yes or no?

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I call the member for Dubbo to order for the second time. I call the member for Dubbo to order for the third time. Members will come to order. I uphold the point of order. The Minister is not close to being directly relevant to the question. She will be directly relevant to the question and then she may elaborate.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** Do those opposite support the action? Do they support the cleaners, the paramedics and the security guards? No, they do not.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** My point of order is under Standing Order 130. I did not ask for a debate. I asked for a simple yes or no answer. Does the Minister support the industrial action undertaken by the HSU members today? Yes or no?

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his point of order. The point of order is not upheld. I have just ruled on direct relevance under Standing Order 129. The Minister will return to the question.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** Australia is a fair democracy. Every worker has the right to take industrial action—cleaners, security guards, paramedics. Those opposite ruined people's livelihoods. People moved interstate because those opposite asphyxiated wages. They are a joke.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order—

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I have nothing further to add.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has completed her answer.

### NORTH-WEST SYDNEY SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (11:51):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Minister update the House on what immediate action the Government is taking to ensure that families in the north-west have the schools needed to keep up with the population growth?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:51):** I thank the member for Riverstone for that very good question. I welcome the school students in the gallery to Parliament. I assure them that, after the election, on this side of the House they have a government that wants to protect their teachers at work and make sure that we open more high schools in areas like the north-west of Sydney. The member for Riverstone and I have a lot in common. Both of our communities were completely short-changed by the previous Government when it came to new schools in growth areas. After 12 years in government and hundreds of thousands of new people moving into areas like Schofields and Marsden Park, you would think the previous Government would say, "You know what? People



having babies actually means that children are going to need to go to school." Surprise, surprise. The promises came thick and fast, and yet those opposite failed to deliver. All we got were empty promises.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This Government was elected on a commitment to do something about that. We cannot let this continue. As an urgent stopgap measure for the communities that we represent, we are opening three new schools early, as temporary schools, in Marsden Park, Nirimba Fields and Tallawong. That will mean 1,000 students can attend schools in their local community, after those opposite refused to deliver. Let me give an education to some of those opposite. This is so welcome in the community that this morning in Marsden Park people were actually coming out of their houses, in their pyjamas, to see what we were doing because the Opposition failed them time and time again.

If we want to take a real look at what the former Government felt about the growing areas of Sydney and their need for schools, we need look no further than the community of Gregory Hills. It was promised a school time and time again, but we heard crickets. In his answer earlier today the Premier said that we are delivering for the communities of the north-west and the south-west. Isn't that the reason we have the great Labor member for Camden? Unlike the previous member for Camden, she worked with parents who need this school. We should not be shocked— [*Extension of time*]

As I was saying, the great new Labor member for Camden worked with the community of Gregory Hills when the former Minister and previous member refused to even acknowledge that they needed a school. Time and time again, we spoke to mums who had to push their old Government, and now they have a new government that will deliver the school. In fact, in that context we should not be surprised by the swing that led to the election of the member for Camden. At the risk of bringing up health Ministers past, what was the swing? Was it 2 per cent?

**Government members:** No!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Was it 4 per cent?

**Government members:** No!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Was it 8 per cent?

**Government members:** No!

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It was 10 per cent! The swing to Labor in Camden was 10 per cent. In all seriousness, I hope the former Liberal member for Camden is going well. I see on LinkedIn that he has been spending some time attending motivational workshops—that is good for him. The other week he posted, "The first thing I do in the morning is prioritise my to-do list action items so that the big decisions and important tasks get done first." That will be news to the people of Gregory Hills. Last Friday when we turned the sod on that long-awaited school, what did the shameful ex-Minister for education say? She went on Zoom—that is how she does interviews— and onto 7NEWS and said she is concerned that, only a few months into government, Labor is short-changing the community when it comes to school infrastructure. She cannot be serious. The former Government promised a school time and time again, and it failed to deliver. It has taken a change of government to get these new schools in north-west and south-west Sydney.

#### HEALTH SERVICES UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (11:57):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Does the Minister accept responsibility for the industrial action that is compromising the operation of hospitals across New South Wales and, if not, then who in the Government is responsible?

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:58):** This is probably a lesson for all new members. Every now and again, the boss might give you a note saying, "You've got to do this one today." And every now and again you just have to say, "Give it to someone else; give it to another newbie." I want the people in the gallery to listen and understand that the Coalition—if it is still the Coalition after last night; whatever faction it is—had 12 years in government. We have had the enormous period of eight weeks. They suppressed wages—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Deliberately.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** —deliberately in an attempt to make sure that essential workers did not get a fair go. They have now come into the Chamber after 12 years of economic mismanagement and driving down frontline workers' wages, and after 12 years of making sure that New South Wales has the lowest number of paramedics per head and the highest elective surgery waiting times.

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

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

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I take a point of order under direct relevance. The question is about industrial action that is happening today under the Labor Government, not what happened over the past 12 years.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. I say to those in the gallery that even though the Minister appeared to be addressing his answer to you, he was actually speaking through the Chair. He will continue to direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** No-one on this side of the Chamber will be lectured by anyone on the other side about getting a fair deal for frontline workers. Not now, not ever.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** During the 12 years that I sat on the Opposition side of the Chamber members opposite brought in legislation, policies and initiatives to drive down workers' conditions and pay.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Point of order—

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I will tell members opposite who to blame. They are to blame. Every single one of them.

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure that the Minister understands the standing orders. He is just excited. The Clerk will stop the clock. Members will come to order and listen to the point of order from the member for Hawkesbury.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** I take a point of order under Standing Order 250. I find the Minister's comments disrespectful to women. He needs to retract them.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Mr Speaker, I request additional information.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** We were asked very clearly who is to blame after 12 years of wage suppression, destroying conditions for frontline workers—

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

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

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I am trying to assist the Minister. He seems to have misunderstood the question. The question clearly was: Does he or anyone else in the Government accept responsibility? It has nothing to do with the former Government; it is about this Government.

**The SPEAKER:** I would be surprised if the Minister does not understand the question. He has not been completely directly relevant to it. I would appreciate it if he could return to the leave of the question.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Let us assure the community of this: The Chris Minns Labor Government has a team of people who will focus on the human capital of this State—the men and women who keep our health services functioning every single day.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Upper Hunter will come to order.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Whether they are our paramedics in our ambulances, our nurses, our midwives, our cleaners, or whether they work in hospitality or security within the hospital, I assure the House that we have their back.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Unlike the member for Vacluse, over the past 12 years I have watched what has occurred in terms of legislation—the atrocious wages cap and the destruction of positions.

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

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

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The Minister is flouting your earlier ruling under Standing Order 129. The Minister is referring to the previous Government when the question is clearly directed towards the responsibility of the current New South Wales Labor Government and the strikes happening today that are compromising the delivery of health services in our State.

**The SPEAKER:** A number of members have been clearly flouting my rulings today. Several are on three calls to order. The Minister will conclude his answer.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Members opposite asked who is responsible? I answered: They are.

### CHILD PROTECTION

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (12:05):** My question is addressed to the fantastic Minister for Families and Communities. Will the Minister update the House on the financial pressures facing the child protection system in New South Wales and what impact that is having on vulnerable children and families?

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (12:05):** I thank the irrepressible member for Gosford, now Parliamentary Secretary. I look forward to working with her to protect vulnerable families and children and to support people with disabilities in New South Wales. All members will agree that, as a society and particularly as parliamentarians, we have a fundamental obligation to ensure that all children thrive. It is an uncomfortable issue to talk about, but right now in New South Wales thousands of children and young people are cared for by the State—children who were found to be unsafe in their own homes. When I was sworn in as Minister, I gained parental responsibility for more than 13,000 children.

For those children, the Government is charged with delivering every child's right to a stable home, support and steady and caring relationships. That cohort of vulnerable children were hardly ever spoken about by the former Government. As the new Minister, the least I can do in this place is acknowledge their existence at the outset. Every year more than 100,000 children are reported to the Department of Communities and Justice as being at risk of significant harm. Right now, more than 15,000 kids are in care because they cannot be safe at home. Those children and young people are from all the communities we represent. They are from across the entire State. Each and every one of them has a right to be safe and supported. Their situation is something I have never sought to politicise, not as a shadow Minister and not now as Minister. But facts are important, and the fact is that members opposite have handed us a child protection system that is broken and failing children.

The fact is the out-of-home-care system alone has an \$800 million budget shortfall over the next four years, which means that essential services needed to keep kids safe in this State were not fully funded by the former Government to the tune of \$217 million this year alone. It is part of the \$7 billion budget black hole left by the former Government, leading to the \$180 billion worth of debt we have inherited. The former Government knew the child protection system was broken. But instead of doing anything to fix it they have left it, like everything else, for us to fix. My very first meeting with the department as a Minister was about the financial mess left by the Liberals and The Nationals. If the current system continues to operate as is, it will need three-quarters of a billion dollars—just to keep going backwards. Members opposite have not left a budget black hole; they have left a budget abyss. [*Extension of time*]

The worst thing about the economic irresponsibility and recklessness of those opposite is that it is the vulnerable children who are paying the price. Our child protection system and frontline staff—our incredible caseworkers—are struggling to keep kids safe. Right now, we simply do not have enough foster carers to ensure that those children and young people have a safe place to call home. The number of foster carers plummeted under the previous Government. I am advised that over the past eight years the number of foster care households fell from 4,300 to 3,500. That is 800 fewer places for vulnerable children to go to tonight. Where do those kids in desperate need of care end up? They end up in hotels, motels and serviced apartments with staff rostered 24/7. Over the past decade, those so-called emergency arrangements became permanent arrangements for too many kids. A child in need of protection should not be holed up in a hotel or motel for 470 days, and yet that is the shocking reality of the system that we have inherited, with one-year-olds in motels with staff rostered 24/7 instead of in homes with foster carers.

Members of the former Government could hardly bring themselves to talk about those kids in the eight years I have been in this place, let alone fix the problems, but members of the new Government have a new attitude and will talk about those kids. We will be open, honest and transparent about the challenges we face and the challenges they face. We will work hard to improve the system so those kids and families have a chance to get ahead. It will not be fixed overnight; it will take a long time to undo the damage caused by those opposite. But this Government is determined to fix the financial mess those opposite left us with. After years of indifference, we will make a difference to the lives of vulnerable children and young people in New South Wales.

### FEROS VILLAGE BYRON BAY

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:10):** My question is directed to the Minister for Lands and Property. On what basis does Feros Care retain the right to be Crown land managers in Byron Bay, given that it has evicted long-term residents and undertaken no consultation with the community?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:11):** I thank the member for Ballina for her question, and I also acknowledge the fantastic work that she does within her electorate. It is a shining example of how to operate as a member of Parliament and as a community representative. I recommend that members opposite take some advice from or consult the member for Ballina to help them through this difficult period. She is very popular in her community and saw her margin grow at the election, which members opposite did not experience.

I have been in discussions with the member for Ballina regarding Feros Care. I acknowledge that she is fighting for the residents of Feros Care, and the situation at the Feros aged-care facility is distressing for both the residents and their loved ones. I appreciate that, and Crown Lands is currently reviewing information provided by Feros Care regarding its plans for the facility. I have asked the department to consider the ongoing management of the site. It is important to appreciate that Feros Care can only undertake redevelopment of the site with the consent of Crown Lands as the landowner, and the site must continue to provide aged-care capabilities under the plan of management.

Feros Care has advised that the site failed to meet the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission requirements regarding contemporary aged-care quality and safety standards. As the commission is the responsibility of the Federal Government, I will allow it to provide a response regarding ongoing remediation of those issues. I understand that the facility was built 33 years ago as a low-care hostel and was not designed or built to the standards or requirements of a modern residential aged-care site. I appreciate that there is strong resident and community concern about the planned closure. Crown Lands has been engaging with Feros Care to discuss the announced closure and potential plans to redevelop the site.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Where is the North Coast, Kamps?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** At least I go for the Blues, mate. On Friday 26 May 2023 Feros Care provided a detailed submission in response to a request by Crown Lands regarding the site and its intentions. In the meantime, I am advised that Feros Care has committed to supporting every resident to find alternative accommodation and is sustaining support services as they transition to new homes. [*Extension of time*]

I appreciate that the member for Ballina will be fighting hard for every single one of those residents, and to ensure that the community has the aged-care facilities it requires. I understand that 26 residents have been supported by Feros Care to relocate to another facility in the region since the announcement of the closure on 28 February 2023. Feros Care has stated it will continue to negotiate and support the remaining 10 residents. Let me be clear: Feros Care still has a duty of care for those residents. That means that it must continue to provide the remaining residents with wellbeing support services, including a GP and counselling services.

Feros Care also has a duty of care for its staff members. I understand that Feros Care has stated that all staff at the facility have been offered alternate positions in the region at Feros Care's other facilities and in the organisation's community care services. That situation is not ideal for anyone involved—the residents, the staff or the families. Government members need to address the matter with the seriousness it deserves, and we will provide the member for Ballina with updates on our actions to ensure that the community's concerns are addressed.

#### *Petitions*

#### **PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

#### **South Eveleigh Precinct Development**

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to ensure that current zoning of the site at 44-78 Rosehill Street, Redfern, remains unchanged, received from **Ms Jenny Leong**.

#### *Bills*

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (HOUSING AND PRODUCTIVITY CONTRIBUTIONS) BILL 2023**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (12:18):** I speak in favour of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. I foreshadow an amendment regarding the existing contribution schemes that were approved by former Ministers. I will seek the support of the

House for the Minister and the Government to recognise the longstanding work of communities across the State, especially that of my good friend the member for Wakehurst and my own community in the growth area of Wilton. Those areas had existing contribution schemes approved and partially planned. My amendment seeks to have the Minister consider those so as to not duplicate work already completed. For too long governments have let houses come first with the promise of some infrastructure later. As an Independent, I do not control the pen of the Minister; however, I can fight for things in my area. The bill will go a long way to providing the infrastructure that we desperately need.

Splitting the State into the regions identified in the bill will go a way to recognising the regional focus of infrastructure and how it can affect a wide area—take the long-promised Picton bypass in Wollondilly, for example, which all members will be sick of hearing about. The bypass first came up as an alternative route 35 years ago because coal trucks that rolled through Picton and would cover the schools on the main roads in dust and soot. Since then endless councillors and members have promised to deliver that bypass. I know the studies are taking place at present and I look forward to an update on the plans that are due this coming week from the roads Minister, the Hon. John Graham. All of the case studies for the bypass have highlighted the need for this sort of infrastructure.

Picton is a beautiful town, which unfortunately has been flooded. It has been cut in half and floodwaters inundated all the businesses in town. But they prove their resilience every single day. Wollondilly is also at risk of bushfires every season, and has been affected badly by every major fire in the past three decades. People from this township, as well as those who live in Tahmoor and Thirlmere and who travel further from Buxton, Bargo and Pheasants Nest—even travellers from the northern part of my shire in The Oaks and Oakdale—must travel through Picton to go to Campbelltown or Wollongong, which is the electorate of the Minister. Similarly, people moving into the areas of Wilton, Douglas Park, Appin and Menangle must travel through Picton to go to Penrith or to the south as an alternative to the freeway, if it is ever blocked.

Picton has a small two-lane underpass of the rail line—we call it the hole in the wall—and a single-lane wooden bridge that has little use, apart from perhaps a candlelit dinner or something, if it was ever closed. Honestly, the wooden ancient thing is always closed. The bypass would solve all those issues. I understand there are a number of options. As a councillor and candidate, previously I have advocated for whichever will be the cheapest and most effective for the State. The bypass would provide not only a safer way for residents to go through Picton but also economic certainty for the businesses in town, allowing us to promote it as a tourist destination. This type of project has a demonstrated regional need.

I look forward to hearing in the Minister's reply how the Picton bypass will be delivered and that it is eligible for exactly this sort of fund. More broadly, as a former mayor and councillor who has had to fight for infrastructure for my area—often at the cost of larger and more influential councils at the regional level—I am looking forward to the depoliticisation of infrastructure expenditure by putting infrastructure where the development is. Over 40,000 homes are due to come into the Wollondilly electorate alone. Take that and the larger development in the surrounding regions, and it is shameful that there has been no guarantee for the infrastructure we need from members who sat here previously.

The base of schools and neighbourhood centres is one thing, but the number of people moving to the Macarthur region—the original second city of New South Wales—is astounding. We need infrastructure rolled out as fast as possible. As someone who is new in this place, I am so excited to unlock that potential for Wollondilly. In listening to the debate so far, I am surprised by members of the Coalition who now claim to be against the infrastructure contributions. The infrastructure contribution in Wilton that they left open for someone else to deal with had sums of over \$50,000 per block, but the bill was never sent to home owners. The Coalition delivered homes for my area but absolutely no infrastructure. The bill seeks to have those needs met by sharing the load and reducing the cost of contributions in Wollondilly.

It is a bit rich to come to this place and speak about the homes in my area and the costs that the new owners will pay while claiming it will be affordable for them. I seriously ask members how they can seriously consider the affordability of a home without considering the infrastructure needed? We have new homes but no infrastructure, no jobs and no space for buses to even get down the street. How can anyone afford that type of life? If members oppose the bill they are damning my electorate and those in Western Sydney that carry the brunt of development with no infrastructure.

I recognise the contribution of my friend the member for Campbelltown, which is a wonderful city, but the residents have been treated in a terrible way. Services on the train line in my electorate are poorly delivered. Where is the extra parking for cars at stations that residents were promised? That is just one more promise in a long list that has been paid for in the imaginations of some former members with Monopoly money or even pretend cheques. There have been no plans for the infrastructure that should be rolled out with development: no plans, no

funding and no reason. I cannot tell members of the crossbench what to do, but I can tell the House that we need the infrastructure in Wollondilly now.

The Opposition should realise that opposing the bill is not in the best interest of our State. As a former mayor who led the discussion on infrastructure, I have seen us miss out. Moneys have gone elsewhere. The bill references the regions and how the funding will be split, which is much better than the current situation. Wilton is a great new town that was planned and built with the *Growth Management Strategy* of the Wollondilly Shire Council. The previous Government might recall it from running it through the shredders. The infrastructure for the place never came. The agreement was supposed to be one block for a home and one job. It split council in 2012. Now we have the new-new Wilton plan. Do members know what it is being marketed as? Is it better than the old Wilton town, or as bad as the old Wilton plan? It is a disgrace. Members opposite claim it will stop housing in the State—come on! I care about my community, not developers. Developers are seeking to get off any contribution they can. I am sorry to say that if the developers cannot do it correctly, they should not do it at all.

Now we have the Coalition trying to scuttle this funding without even simple research. In question time the member for Oatley promised to campaign in my electorate on this. Good—let us get on and do it. My community in Wilton looks forward to a paid advertisement from the Liberal Party on how I saved them over \$30,000 per block and how we finally have an agreement to have the load covered by the region for the regional investment that is needed. I look forward to an email showing how I—thanks to my staff and team—have already achieved more and openly consulted more with both sides of politics, negotiating a good solid amendment recognising the existing needs in our State. Do members know that Wollondilly residents spend more than 17 per cent of their income on travel? How about some funding for public transport? How much have we had over the past few decades? It is nothing. It is time to put money back into the areas where the housing is going.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (12:27):** I am delighted to contribute to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. The bill proposes to implement a broad-based development system to replace the existing special infrastructure contributions [SIC] system from 1 October 2023. This will fund growth-enabling infrastructure in high population growth areas of Greater Sydney, Illawarra-Shoalhaven, Central Coast and Lower Hunter, supporting housing delivery and economic growth. Being in government after 12 years under the Liberal-Nationals Coalition is a bit like returning home after your teenager has thrown a house party the night before. It is chaotic and there is a never-ending pile of mess to clean up. However, the bill is a great starting point.

This bill certainly assists in addressing the housing crisis that was allowed to fester and grow under the former Government, now Opposition. There are plenty of reasons Liberal-Nationals MPs now find themselves on that side of the House. The housing crisis is just one of those reasons. As the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces pointed out, through briefings the Government discovered that New South Wales needs to build 314,000 new dwellings, or 62,800 per year, over five years. However, only 180,000 are expected to be completed in that time. That shortfall of 134,000 dwellings is the result of the mess created by members opposite that this Government now has to clean up. Adding to the housing woes is the fact that housing approvals are continuing to trend down, with annual approvals down 18 per cent in March. That is why the bill is so important. It is both sensible and practical—an approach members opposite are clearly not familiar with. If the housing crisis is to be addressed, positive change and political will is needed, and this Government is focused on those areas.

My electorate of Heathcote is unique. The northern section takes in residents from the Sutherland shire whilst the southern part, from Helensburgh down, takes in the Illawarra region. Both areas have many different needs, as well as many common interests and concerns. Housing is one of those. As a mother of two children now in their twenties, I am deeply concerned about how they will get their foot in the property market. Rising rents, house prices and interest rates have made the great Australian dream of owning your own home more difficult than ever, particularly for young people. Younger generations wonder not only how they will afford their own home but also where they will live and what their communities will look like in the future. Will they have access to basic infrastructure like health, education, roads and community facilities? That, again, is why the bill is so important.

Currently, our State has an ad hoc system for special infrastructure contributions. The bill will ensure that those funds are used in an appropriate manner to benefit existing and future residents in those areas by spending them on State and regional roads, health infrastructure, public transport, pedestrian and cycle paths, emergency services and public open spaces. State and regional roads worsened under the former Government. Members opposite can deny it all they want but the proof is in the pudding—or, should I say, in the potholes. Given how much emergency department waiting times in hospitals have blown out since 2011, health infrastructure was nothing but an afterthought under the former Government. Again, members opposite can deny it all they want but the facts are undeniable.

The rate of decline of the public transport system under the former Government borders on criminal. Public transport is one of the biggest issues raised with me by constituents from all corners of my electorate. I am a regular commuter, so I understand their anger and frustration with the former Government's many failures in this space. Provisions for pedestrian and cycle paths are essential for ensuring that residents throughout our great State can keep active and healthy. Access to public open spaces is also vital for physical and mental health, which is why they cannot, and should not, be ignored or dismissed. The more people who move into an area, the more resources like emergency services become stretched. That is why having a new broad-based housing and productivity contributions scheme in the four high-growth areas, including Greater Sydney and the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions, is vital.

The Government is not focused on building housing estates; it is focused on building liveable communities. To achieve that, it is vital that an effective and efficient scheme is in place to ensure basic, yet vital, infrastructure is funded appropriately. I commend the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for his incredible work in this space. I know how passionate he is about ensuring that everyone has access to basic and vital infrastructure. I have had countless conversations with the Minister on this topic. It is important to note that the bill is the result of extensive consultation and has been developed by engaging with key stakeholders, such as State agencies, and local government and industry bodies, to discuss what they want and need. The Government has listened to what they had to say and this bill is the result. The former Government ruled with an iron first; this Government will not follow suit. Again, I commend the Minister for his wonderful work in this space. I know the bill will make an enormous difference for generations to come. I thank the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (12:34):** It gives me great pleasure to contribute to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. The Opposition opposes the bill on the basis that a further condition imposed on housing and the development of residential buildings will ultimately have an inflationary impact. The Government has introduced the bill to assist with providing infrastructure, which is hard to argue against because, as every member will attest to, new roads, footpaths, public transport, hospitals and schools are always needed, especially in growing areas. As someone who has represented the North West Growth Area, which has seen the fastest growing rates of housing and development, for 16 years, I know only too well the importance of infrastructure.

The failure of a previous Labor Government to invest heavily in infrastructure brought me to Parliament in 2007. As the member for Blacktown will remember clearly, I shouted and screamed, together with a small community group, to successfully have a significant part of Windsor Road upgraded. Ultimately, over five or six years, the Carr Government committed to upgrading that road. The initial announcement was made all the way back 22 years ago, but the upgrade to Garfield Road in Riverstone was proposed only this year. That is how bad the infrastructure backlog has got. The North West Growth Area is proposed to be home to around 250,000 people. That is like putting a population the size of Canberra into an area about one-tenth the size.

Unfortunately, the government of the day did not provide the necessary infrastructure. Infrastructure will always be difficult from a local perspective. Sadly, as anybody in local government knows, section 94 contributions do not go all the way in providing the necessary infrastructure in growing release areas. They provide for local roads and parks, perhaps even local community buildings or pools. If I remember correctly, the Stanhope Gardens aquatic centre may have received some contributions. Necessary local infrastructure should be based on a nexus between growing development areas. Ultimately, a contribution in a newly defined area cannot be used some miles away for another area. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, which has stood the test of time, stipulates exactly where contributions can be attributed to.

In the Minister's second reading speech—I acknowledge that he is in the Chamber—he specifically noted that the administration of funds collected under these new housing and productivity contributions, which are a follow-on from the previous special infrastructure contributions, will be distributed at the Minister's discretion. I have a bit of an issue with that. The regions that we are talking about here are very large regions. If members consider that nexus argument enshrined in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, where there has to be a direct nexus between a development and a development contribution to provide for that local area, I have a problem with the transparency of where those funds may be attributed and where those funds may go within that particular region when the Minister has discretion over such a broad region. That is a personal issue that I have with the bill at this point in time.

As I said before, the Opposition is very concerned that if you are placing an additional \$10,000 contribution on any new dwelling for the purpose of infrastructure—over and above the contributions that are already being paid right now—that has to have an inflationary impact on the cost of that dwelling. It cannot be absorbed anymore. I will not cry poor mouth in this place on behalf of developers, but the facts are there are huge developers—and we only have to look at our neighbouring state of Victoria—that are going the wall at this point

in time. They are foreclosing and going into administration because of the lack of available tradesmen and the lack of the available goods and products that are necessary to build.

Obviously there is a supply issue in relation to the products that are necessary for equipping and fitting out these new developments. There is a large range of developers whose margins are so tight at this point in time that any further impacts will ultimately drive them to the wall. It is an extraordinary time. We sit in a position where, ultimately, demand is outstripping supply, which members would think would result in a perfect storm. However, in this particular area we have got a shortage of tradies, who are moving around the country. It is very difficult to maintain the number of tradies we need. If you add that to the supply issues I have mentioned, we virtually have this imperfect storm, if you like, where we are not producing enough development on behalf of the people who need a home, which is ultimately further impacting on rent increases. It is a very difficult situation.

The Opposition's position is this: If you are going to put \$10,000 on top of a current price of a home, what impact is that going to have? Ultimately it is going to be borne by the home owner, if they can buy the property. There are people out every weekend—every day—chasing homes. There is a lack of supply. Ultimately, these people will be seeking to get more funds. That places more pressure on the family budget at a time when interest rates are high. It is an absolute struggle at the moment and there are no easy answers. I wish the Minister the absolute best.

One thing we never want to see fail in this State is the continual rollout of homes. The more homes we produce, the more it helps with affordability. We saw that for a short amount of time in around 2018 and 2019 under the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. We got to a point where supply was just starting to impact on demand. Prices started to level out. In some cases, they were starting to come down. Of course, not long after that we went into the dreadful situation of COVID, which has ultimately given us the supply issues and the shortage of tradies et cetera. It is having an impact. It is a very difficult issue.

The Opposition has chosen to oppose this bill, and I support that on the grounds of the inflationary pressure. However, I reiterate that contributions need to be invested in the areas where they are sought when the Minister has that discretion. I am sure he is an honourable person and I have great faith in him. I am certain he will ensure that those contributions are delivered to where they are necessary. But I feel that when the regions are so broad, the lack of transparency about where those contributions may be distributed is an issue that could be discussed further in this House in the future. I support the Opposition's position in opposing the current bill.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (12:45):** I support the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. The bill was introduced in this House by the member for Wollongong, Minister Paul Scully. I think he is one of the best planning Ministers we have ever had—after only a month.

**Mr Paul Scully:** Thanks, mate.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** That is coming from his Parliamentary Secretary. Before I go into the bill in detail and some of the issues surrounding it, it is important to address some of the concerns that have been raised by members, especially the reasons given by Opposition members for opposing it. Members for the electorates of Oatley, Manly and Kellyville have presented an idea that this is an additional tax on what is currently in place. Nothing could be further from the truth. The bill actually streamlines the system and makes it fairer and more equitable. At the moment, the special infrastructure contributions [SIC] funding is of an ad hoc nature and only applies to fairly large areas, predominantly across Western Sydney. I think Forestville may be another element.

**Mr Paul Scully:** Yes, Frenchs Forest.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** Generally the SIC funding is \$233,583 per hectare. The Government proposes replacing a general broad-base per hectare rate. That rate does not apply to most of the North Shore or many areas where there is new development happening, but in Western Sydney we are subject to it and we are getting it. In her contribution the member for Wollondilly mentioned—and I have heard the numbers—\$50,000 per block or per dwelling, but roughly between \$10,000 to \$50,000 of SIC funding is already there. This is now to be replaced by the new dwelling fee of approximately \$12,000. It is a broad base for every house across the board in the Sydney Basin, and obviously areas out to Wollongong and other areas will have a similar fee.

I do not know what Opposition members are actually trying to say. Do they want to remove SIC funding altogether—because it is already there—penalising mainly Western Sydney? Do they want to remove SIC funding altogether because it is a cost impost? If that is the case, how the hell are you going to build anything in Western Sydney or any area? It could be on the North Shore. Nowadays we are talking about building higher and putting more people in, hopefully making it a bit more equitable across the Sydney Basin; therefore, we need to put more resources in. We need to support those new dwellings. As the Minister stated in his second reading speech:



New South Wales needs to build 314,000 new dwellings—62,800 a year over five years—but is expected to complete only 180,000 dwellings.

That is about 60 per cent of that target. How do we improve from 180,000 dwellings to the benchmark of 314,000 additional dwellings across New South Wales? This bill is one of a suite of proposals coming before the House to address supply and bottleneck issues. As the Minister himself stated in his second reading speech:

This measure stems from the NSW Productivity Commission's 2020 review of the infrastructure contributions system and will replace a complex system of contribution charges with a simple and modest charge levied across a broader base. It will support the provision of the roads, railways, parks, schools, and hospitals that we need to function and often take for granted. It will create a new system for funding and planning for infrastructure, replacing the ad hoc, piecemeal, stop/start system of the past. Opposition members need to clearly articulate their policy. Their arguments have been mostly clichés, rather than addressing the objectives of the bill.

The bill will provide a funding source that will generate a consistent, reliable, dedicated and fair revenue stream to support the developments needed for optimally liveable communities. The funding from the housing and productivity contribution will go towards State and regional roads, schools, health infrastructure et cetera. The bill will promote a more integrated approach to growth development by Treasury and the Department of Planning and Environment. The new scheme is expected to raise \$700 million each year, dedicated to regional infrastructure. Those funds will be identified separately to ensure that they can be spent only in the region from which they are collected, to address the question raised by the member for Kellyville.

The funds will be committed to projects that genuinely support housing and growth. The funds will be jointly administered by Planning and Treasury, ensuring better alignment with the budget process. They will be made to leverage the whole infrastructure budget more closely towards the State's growth needs. Importantly, local councils will be able to access an additional \$1 billion in grants funding over the next 10 years to help councils deliver larger and better local infrastructure, such as regional parks and sporting infrastructure. That scheme will not affect the local infrastructure contributions currently paid to councils, which are referred to as section 7.11 contributions.

The bill incorporates the Productivity Commissioner's recommendations for the State contributions and addresses key stakeholder feedback. That has been ongoing for a number of years. It started under the previous Government and included major organisations like the Urban Development Institute of Australia, developers, consumers and councils. That process identified three key aspects to be addressed by the bill: stronger governance arrangements to ensure contributions will be spent on infrastructure that supports housing and economic activity; a clearer pathway for councils to seek funding for the delivery of infrastructure; and the need for contributions to be spent only in the region that they are collected from, consistent with the purpose of the fund. However, biodiversity offsets will go statewide.

For the money to be paid out of the fund, it must be either a State strategic plan or a State Infrastructure Strategy prepared by Infrastructure NSW. Funds can be paid out to councils to deliver much-needed projects. Many councils do a fairly good job through SIC funding. I give a special shout-out to Blacktown City Council, which has successfully applied for SIC funding to deliver projects such as the Hambleton Road upgrade. In the current financial year Blacktown City Council has secured three major projects as a result of SIC funding. I bring to the Minister's attention that two of those projects are being delayed. The Quakers Road and Aerodrome Drive extension is delayed because it is on TAFE land. The council is trying to talk to the right people in TAFE so the land can pass to the council before the new road can be built. The Railway Terrace, Schofields Road and Riverstone Road project is delayed because of Sydney Water and the need for access.

If the State bureaucracies cannot sort themselves out to build roads, the industry and the public have no chance. I know the Minister will help to bring it all together. The bill will provide governance oversight from the Cabinet Infrastructure Committee. New financial reporting requirements will require financial reports to be prepared, published and audited. I firmly believe there ought to be better transparency of current balances in the various accounts, and accountability in how those funds are being expended. Bandon Road in Riverstone, an essential link road, was to have been completed when the target population reached 25 per cent of its capacity. It is now at 33 per cent. The previous State Government would not disclose where the funding was located or where planning was up to. I note that the member for Wollondilly spoke about the Camden bypass.

All of that money was being raised and stored somewhere in the government budget. It was supposed to be completed but it was never delivered. Conversely, councils must also be held more accountable as they accumulate section 7.11 funds. There is little transparency between the council and the public to understand how and when those funds will be spent. For instance, Blacktown City Council's 2019-22 annual reports show an average of \$222 million in developer contributions and voluntary planning agreements sitting in the council's bank account. It would be great if the people of Blacktown were informed of the plan for how and when the \$222 million will be spent. They want to see their parks and reserves delivered. [*Extension of time*]

I thank the House for its indulgence. All members in this Chamber are very parochial and proud of their areas. No member says that their electorate has the smallest growth; all members say that their electorate has the largest growth. Today in question time the Premier spoke about percentages. Sometimes percentages present an interesting perspective. For example, Blacktown City Council covers seven State electorates. I encourage members to consider that point. One in 13 politicians in this Chamber have some association with Blacktown. No other local government area can say that. In 1954 Blacktown shire consisted of 31,000 people. That was 69 years ago. Today it consists of 410,000 people. The population has grown by a factor of 12 over the past 70 years. By comparison, in 1954 there were 1.86 million people living in Greater Sydney. Today that population is three times more at 5.1 million people.

One in eight people living in Sydney, either by birth or immigration, ends up in the City of Blacktown. There are 35 local government areas in the Sydney Basin. On average, each should accommodate three in every 100 people, but Blacktown accommodates 12 in every 100 people. The planning department, the Greater Cities Commission, other departments and authorities, and the business chambers seem to be hell-bent on splitting up the local government area of Blacktown into other districts. Mount Druitt seems to be part of the greater Penrith area. The northern suburbs of Blacktown, the Riverstone area, seem to end up in The Hills. The eastern suburbs where I live, in Doonside, somehow end up in Parramatta in all the planning documents. By 2036 the population of the City of Blacktown will be larger than the population of Tasmania. Before raising money and investing into the area, we must ensure that the investments taking place are supporting schools.

Over the past five years, Blacktown grew by 12,000 people per year according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. That has not happened in any other area. Within three to four years Blacktown has grown by the equivalent of entire electorates. Yet in the past five to six years the previous Coalition Government sold off four school sites. Why would it sell off school sites when the population is growing by 12,000 per year? That is 60,000 people over five years. In one term of government the population grew by 48,000. It is important to get the balance right. The legislation ensures fairness so that money raised across the Sydney Basin and in rural areas will be spent on building communities in those areas. I welcome the Minister's enthusiasm and fresh approach in dealing with the population growth. The Minister's focus is on providing infrastructures and services where they are needed, as well as upscaling population growth where the jobs and infrastructure are already located.

I am proud to serve with Minister Scully as part of the Minns Labor team. The Government is focused on providing the services needed by local communities. It is a hard road, but we cannot allow the Opposition to stand in this Chamber and say this is simply an added tax. This tax replaces the current tax. It is of an ad hoc nature that predominantly applies in Western Sydney. The rest of the Sydney Basin is missing out. Why do we not have a fairer tax that applies to all areas? After all, why should the money that is raised in Western Sydney, the taxes and the GST revenue, suddenly end up everywhere else across Sydney? Then, in Western Sydney, school sites are sold off, roads are not built, and infrastructure is not supported. I commend the bill to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** It being 1.00 p.m., pursuant to the resolution of the House of 23 May 2023, debate is interrupted for an inaugural speech. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Members*

### INAUGURAL SPEECHES

**The SPEAKER:** Before calling the member for Castle Hill, I welcome a number of guests to the gallery. I welcome Mayor Peter Gangemi of The Hills Shire Council along with Councillor Jessica Brazier; Dr Barbara Burton; Councillor Frank de Masi, Councillor Reena Jethi; and Councillor Tony Hay. I also welcome the former Mayor of The Hills Shire, Dr Michelle Byrne; the former member for The Hills electorate, Michael Richardson; and former MLC David Clarke. I welcome the other worthy members in attendance.

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (13:02):** Thank you for the opportunity to give my inaugural speech in this House. I acknowledge that we meet on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend this respect to the Bidjigal people of the Dharuk clan, who occupied the land in western and north-western parts of Sydney. I extend this respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. I stand here as the newly elected member for the electorate of Castle Hill. I am proud and honoured by the faith, trust and responsibility bestowed on me by the people of Castle Hill. Throughout my career I have appeared in many courts and tribunals as a prosecutor and as a lawyer; however, nothing can prepare a person for the unique experience of standing at this table in this historic Chamber.

The seat in this House I now occupy is owned by my community, so it is important that I give some commitments to the community. I pledge to the people of Castle Hill that I will act and make decisions with the utmost integrity, honesty, and skill; I will represent my community without fear or favour; I will consult with my community so that the decisions I make in the discharge of my duties reflect the values and the views of the

members of my community; and I will use the knowledge, skills, and values which I have learned during my life without fear in discharging the role of elected representative of the community.

I also pay respect to the former members who have served the community I now represent. The electorate I represent includes part of the former electorates of Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill and Hawkesbury. I follow in the service of members who have served the community I now represent. Those members include Wayne Merton, David Elliott, Michael Richardson, Dominic Perrottet, Ray Williams and Robyn Preston. Each member I mention served the community with respect, honesty and integrity, and I will do so as well. I express my gratitude to the member for Epping, Dominic Perrottet, who served as the forty-sixth Premier of this State. Dominic served with integrity and honesty. He was a very great Premier.

The electorate I represent is situated in Sydney's north-west and is one of Sydney's fastest growing regions, teeming with families, schools, sporting groups and community groups. It is a place to bring up a family. It has schools. It is a place where there are many sporting groups and community groups. Castle Hill is a place of opportunity because of the work of the last Coalition Government, which built the Sydney Metro Northwest—a link that has transformed the region and transformed Western Sydney. Castle Hill is an electorate with a rich history. The Bidjigal people have lived throughout the region for thousands of years. Four years after British settlement, David Burton, a surveyor, botanist and gardener, examined the countryside around Parramatta. He visited Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill and areas to the north, and wisely reported in his journals:

Where the four settlers at the northern farms are, and for the several miles to the northward and to the eastward, the ground is very excellent. It is fine clammy light loam from fifteen inches to two feet in depth.

A few years later, in 1801, Governor King, when selecting a location for the government farm at Castle Hill, said:

I fixed on a situation that Governor Phillip intended as a stock farm for Government, the soil being of the best and most productive kind.

The electorate now includes vibrant retail and restaurant precincts at the Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill and Dural town centres. We have a wonderful and diverse multicultural community. Residents have come from different parts of the world and have different cultures, values and religious beliefs. Some 39.6 per cent of the community were born overseas. The different cultures and values of the community come together in a way that enriches and strengthens the bonds of our entire society. As I stand here today, I reflect on the values which have guided me in life, and which will now guide me in the service of my community. The first and most important value I discovered when I was young is the importance of the family unit, family values and hard work. My father, Charles, and my mother, Janet, were both born in 1936. They are retired and living on the mid North Coast. They are not here today due to the distance, but I know they are watching. I love you very much, Mum and Dad.

We celebrate their long life together, but at some stages they had difficulties. In 1989, after battling illness, my dad had a kidney transplant. I remember it very well. Dad was at work when the hospital called to tell him to attend St Vincent's Hospital. He had the kidney transplant, but a few years later the transplanted kidney failed. Dad was on dialysis three times per week again for a number of years. That was tough. After a few years, which seemed like a lifetime, it appeared that a kidney donor would not be forthcoming. A new medical procedure became available and a donor was found. That donor was my mother. A transplant is a serious operation at the best of times, but at 70 years of age we knew there were risks. The transplant went well, and my parents remain living at Tuncurry in the north of the State. In a way that seems so appropriate, Mum not only contributed to the very existence of her children—me and my brother and sister—but her husband as well. The courage, love, and dedication to each other shown by my parents to go through a transplant operation at 70 years of age is something extraordinary. Our entire family is extremely proud and grateful.

Almost 16 years has passed since the transplant, and I express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr Paul Trevillion and the entire staff at John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle who performed the operation. Organ donors save lives. Registering matters, and I encourage everyone to register to be an organ donor. My parents were a shining example of service, duty and sacrifice to me, my older brother, Allan, and my younger sister, Julie. We learnt from our parents at an early stage the value of service to the community. My mother was a nurse and my father was a police officer. For the greater part of his working life, Dad was a detective working at the Gosford Police Station.

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** Hear, hear! Go, Gosford! Good on you, Dad.

**Mr MARK HODGES:** I acknowledge the comments of the member for Gosford. I also completed high school at Gosford High School. When I completed my schooling, I wanted to learn a bit about business and ended up being accepted into a retail management certificate at the Grace Bros store at Broadway. I travelled on the train from Gosford to Broadway every day. It was about two hours each way. Having experienced public transport—although it was a bit different back then—I am certain the people of New South Wales will expect this Government to continue to work to assist our community by completing the previous Government's infrastructure plans with respect to the metro.

The best part about travelling to Sydney was that I met my wife, Raylee, while I was travelling on the train. We will celebrate our fortieth wedding anniversary later this year. Raylee and I have two children, Natalie and Matthew, and one son-in-law, Michael. We have one grandson, Charles, who is 19 months old today. I love you all. I would not be standing in this historic Chamber if it was not for the support of my wonderful family. I thank you. After working for Grace Bros for about 12 months, I realised that a retail or management career was not my calling. I decided to join the NSW Police Force. I graduated as a probationary constable about 42 years ago, and I was stationed at Eastwood Police Station. It honestly feels like yesterday that I was graduating at the Redfern police academy as a probationary constable.

As a police officer working in Eastwood, I attended domestic violence disputes, assaults, traffic matters and sometimes even worked on school traffic crossings. I have a high respect for the men and women of our police force, and I will fight to support our police officers in my decisions and actions. The second set of values that has guided me during my adult life, and that will guide me in this House, are values that I learnt while serving as a member of the police force. Those values include upholding the law, preserving the rights and freedoms of others, the efficient use of public resources and understanding that authority must always be exercised responsibly and reasonably. They are core values that I will uphold.

After working as a general duty police officer for about two years, I made the decision to follow in my father's footsteps and become a detective. I applied for the criminal investigation branch. The prosecuting branch of the NSW Police Force had other ideas about my future, and I was transferred to the prosecuting branch. I decided to remain in the prosecuting branch, and I was appointed as a prosecutor in late 1985. I acknowledge that some former police prosecutors are in the gallery. Mr Peter Proctor and Mr Greg Heathcote have joined me here today. I acknowledge other former police prosecutors who are members of this House, including the member for Winston Hills, Mark Taylor, and the member for Orange, Philip Donato. I congratulate both members on their recent re-election.

I completed a law degree whilst working as a prosecutor. For six years I worked as a prosecutor during the daytime and attended university in the evening. I very much want to acknowledge my wife's patience, love and support when I was completing the Bachelor of Laws. I thank her for that. When I completed the Bachelor of Laws, I applied for a senior sergeant role in the NSW Police Force. I was successful, and I was promoted to the rank of senior sergeant. At the time I was the youngest senior sergeant in the history of the NSW Police Force. It was about this time that I was offered a position to work in a solicitor's firm in Sydney. The decision I made to resign from the Police Force and take up a position in private practice was a difficult decision. Muhammad Ali once said, "He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life." I took what seemed to me at the time to be a risk and resigned from the Police Force in June 1990 to take up a role with a firm of solicitors.

In 1994 I subsequently commenced my own firm and worked as a sole practitioner. I worked as a sole practitioner for the past 29 years, which has enabled me to understand the difficulties facing small businesses in New South Wales. It has enabled me to understand that governments must do more to help those who take risks to commence and conduct small businesses. One of the policies that the Liberal Party took to the election recently was to remove red tape to help small businesses and reduce the cost of doing business in our State. I trust that the incoming Government will take action to remove red tape to help small businesses. Governments should not micromanage our lives and our businesses. I believe that those who take the risk of starting a business should not be unreasonably impeded by a government's restrictive controls. Now more than ever we need to remember that we need to help businesses to restart and continue the recovery process of the financial losses from the pandemic.

Working as both a lawyer and a police officer has given me a deep sense of justice, fairness and equality. They make up the third set of values that will guide me. This Parliament can only operate effectively by maintaining the trust, respect and confidence of the people it represents. To maintain such confidence, we must ensure that laws are made and administered by government departments in an open, honest and transparent manner. All people, regardless of their status, culture, religious beliefs, gender or any other attribute, should be governed by laws that apply equally to all members of society. As a solicitor for the past several years, part of my practice has been in debt recovery, insolvency, crime and family law. I acknowledge Effie Nesti from Audit Debt Collections, who is in the gallery today, and Paul Hack from Legal Force. They are two people whom I have worked with in debt recovery. I have worked with many small businesses that sustained financial losses during the recent pandemic.

As a police officer, solicitor and councillor, I have met with and heard the experiences of many women and children who have faced family and domestic violence. As a lawyer, I have acted for women who have suffered domestic violence. We must continue to fight to eradicate the scourge of domestic violence and personal violence from society. As the member for Castle Hill, I pledge to do whatever I can to support women and children who have been impacted by domestic violence. I will advocate for the provision of services to help them get back

on their feet, and I will do what I can to end the domestic violence blight on our society. I pay tribute to the work of Mark Speakman and Natalie Ward in the previous Government. Mark and Natalie worked hard to assist victims and make New South Wales a safer place to live. I give my commitment to work with all people of goodwill to do what I can to continue the work to make New South Wales an even safer place.

I believe in the core values of the Liberal Party. It is because of my belief in those values that I joined the Liberal Party about nine years ago. Those core values include that all members of our society should be entitled to receive a fair income for their labour; that all members of our society should have equal opportunity, including an equal and fair opportunity to rent or purchase a home; and that the preservation of the family unit and family values is paramount to our society. A fair, equal and real opportunity means that all members of society should be able to seek employment or otherwise set up their own business with little intrusion from government. The role of government is to assist members of society and not impede them.

Approximately two years ago I was asked whether I would put my name forward as a candidate for the 2021 The Hills Shire Council elections. I was successful in those elections, and I was elected as a councillor. At my first meeting I was elected by my colleagues to serve as deputy mayor. To be elected as deputy mayor at my first meeting was humbling, and I felt extremely honoured. Though my term as deputy mayor has expired, I remain a councillor serving on The Hills Shire Council. I acknowledge the new deputy mayor, Mitchell Blue, who is in the gallery today. In the Fifty-Eighth Parliament, there are no fewer than 50 members who have served or remain serving their communities as councillors. I note that you, Mr Speaker, were a councillor on the Lake Macquarie City Council. Three members who have served as councillors on The Hills Shire Council remain serving in this House. The member for Kellyville, the member for Winston Hills and the member for Hawkesbury have all served as councillors.

The Castle Hill community I represent is also fortunate that many of those who served former terms as councillors remain very active in and supportive of the community. I know that the community is thankful for their continued service in various committees and groups. As I continue to serve as a councillor, having regard to the importance of the civic service given by councillors to the community we represent, I make special mention of the current council. The Mayor of The Hills Shire Council, with whom I serve, is Dr Peter Gangemi. I acknowledge him and express my sincere appreciation for Peter's attendance here today.

I know that Peter works very hard in service to our community and that his diary is always full. I look forward to continuing to work with Peter and the other councillors in my role as the member for Castle Hill. Working with all political parties and with all current serving councillors in a collaborative way benefits our community. I have invited serving councillors—whether they be Labor, Liberal or The Greens councillors—as a mark of respect to all councillors who serve on The Hills Shire Council. I know that some of them could not attend today. I thank all the councillors with whom I served for their friendship and support. It means a lot to me.

As the deputy mayor of the council, I was fortunate to meet many wonderful and hardworking members of the community that I now serve as the member for Castle Hill. The community I represent is much more than the geography, the landscape, the gardens and the rural locations. The fabric of the community is the people who make up the area that we as members are fortunate to serve. I intend to make mention and acknowledge some of our community volunteers, as they make up the fabric of our society. I will continue working with all community groups for the benefit of the people of my electorate. I mention groups in my electorate such as the Rotary clubs. We have five of them: Kenthurst, Hills Kellyville, Castle Hill, Norwest Sunrise and West Pennant Hills. I think that Dural is just out of the area, but that is another one.

We are fortunate to have the group called Positive Vibes Foundation. Positive Vibes has several programs, including the Women's Shed and Paw Visits. It works generally in mental health. I thank the chair of Positive Vibes, Michelle Byrne, who is the former mayor of the council, as well as Mercedes Durante, Jeannette Farrell and Mario Rodrigues and others involved in Positive Vibes for the work they do in my community. We are thankful also for the ongoing support of the Community Migrant Resource Centre. I will work with it, and I thank Melissa Monteiro, who is the chief executive officer. We also are very fortunate to have within The Hills the Community Foundation of North Western Sydney. I know that the foundation works also in Blacktown. Rajiv Chaudhri is the president of the foundation and a respected member of the community with whom I work.

In The Hills we have a high percentage of residents who have Indian ancestry. The census shows that 9.1 per cent of residents of The Hills area have Indian ancestry—twice the percentage in Greater Sydney. One of our important groups is our India Club. It serves our community quite well. The India Club was founded by Shubha Kumar and Aksheya Kumar. I acknowledge that Shubha and Aksheya are here today. I thank you for your attendance. We also have a large group of volunteers who help with Relay for Life. I acknowledge Lisa Carruthers, Bev Jordan and others for their work on Relay For Life. I believe this year Relay For Life will rank first in raising funds for our society.

I thank my electoral staff, Helen Russell, Leanne Simmons and Molly MacDonald, for the knowledge and assistance they have given me over the past few weeks in my new role. I, lastly, thank several important persons who have been influential in life and who contributed significantly at the recent elections. To Tim Abrams, I thank you for your longstanding friendship and support. I will, as you know, continue to seek your wise guidance, mentorship and views during my service as a member of Parliament. Colonel Michael Abrahams and his wife, Julia, are not here. Colonel Abrahams is working today. I thank you for friendship and assistance during the 2021 council election and the 2023 State elections. To David and Wendy Faulkner-Dick, I thank you for your friendship and advice over the years and for your assistance during the campaign. To Geoff Clarke, Helen Pearson, and Les and Jill Dyball, I thank you so very much for the significant time working on pre-poll and on election day. Thank you very much.

To Councillor Jessica Brazier, I do not know what I would have done without your work as the social media manager on my election campaign and your efforts on election day. I thank you very much. To Deputy Mayor Mitchell Blue, I thank you for your friendship and for your work given to my campaign. I know that you worked on the campaign of the member for Hawkesbury, but you also provided invaluable assistance to me, and I thank you. To David Rossi, I thank you very much for your work as my campaign manager. David took on the role of campaign manager under the guidance of Tim Abrams at a late point in time. I thank you, David, for the assistance. There are many members who helped me during the campaign, and I thank each person immensely. It is not my intention to mention every person in my inaugural speech. I will thank those people individually and in another forum.

In closing, I am very optimistic about my service to my community. Like every member, I have goals that I wish to achieve during however long I am honoured to serve my community. The foremost goals include ensuring additions or improvements to the existing schools within my electorate to meet the growing population, improvements in our education system, improvements to the road infrastructure to assist my community, and further work on the metro train network to serve the needs of not only my electorate but also all of Western Sydney. My final goals during however long I serve are to ensure that the quality of life of those who live and work in my electorate is improved; to ensure that the social cohesion, which like glue binds members of our community, is not just maintained but improved during my term; and, lastly, to ensure that the trust and respect that society has in our democracy and in this Parliament is not only preserved but also enhanced. Thank you.

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

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the inaugural speech of the member for Castle Hill and thank him for his delivery. I wish all the member's guests the best of times when they join him later today.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** By leave: In accordance with Standing Order 108 (3), the House will now proceed with private members' statements for a period of up to 50 minutes.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **ASSET PRIVATISATION**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:28):** I have spent most of my career fighting against the privatisation of government assets. It gives me no pleasure to go into it, but I was stood down as Parliamentary Secretary in 2009 for opposing my own party's stance on privatisation. Privatisation or asset recycling—as those opposite called it this week—does not work. Can anyone recall a single instance of privatisation that has led to greater outcomes for our communities? I cannot. I am proud to have campaigned on ending privatisation in New South Wales for good. I am also proud to be part of a government that has given a commitment to no more privatisation of New South Wales assets, and no more privatisation of assets in Wallsend.

Few citizens of this State believe that the 2015 selling-off of the poles and wires that those opposite fought so hard for was a good idea. With electricity bills at sky-high rates, I doubt anyone makes the claim that privatising electricity assets leads to better outcomes and lower costs for consumers, because it does not. There are many recent examples of privatisation failures. The stand-off between privatised garbage service Cleanaway and the Transport Workers' Union earlier this year within the City of Newcastle Council highlights the failure of a council outsourcing its garbage collection services. In my community, concerns are high over the privatisation of council-owned swimming pools. The City of Newcastle Council owns five inland pools and four of them are currently under the operation of a private operator called BlueFit.

To give a bit of background, I have been swimming at council pools for well over 20 years, so I am very familiar with Wallsend pool, Lambton pool, and Beresfield pool. They are all wonderful pools. Many in my community have approached me about the shocking state of privatised pools. The facilities are dirty, the water quality is poor and there is a lack of staff so they cannot even open the pools on certain days. The private provider does not offer learn-to-swim classes at either Wallsend or Mayfield, there are no aqua fitness classes, there is no

disability entry, no major services and the pool is closed for almost six months. Canteen facilities do not exist under the private provider. Those issues are not just an annoyance. Many in my community swim not just for recreation but for rehabilitation and their personal health.

Hearing rumours of giardia being present in tested water from Wallsend or Lambton pools raises serious questions about the quality of the privatisation and the limited work that is done by the private provider, which was chosen by City of Newcastle councillors. In contrast, the only pool still under council control—Beresfield pool—has very high standards due to the work of the well-paid council staff who genuinely do care and give attention in detail to this asset. You seldom hear complaints—in fact, I have never heard complaints—about the quality of the Beresfield pool and, as an avid swimmer, as I have mentioned, I can certainly attest to the fact that the Beresfield pool has the highest quality pool water, and the cleanest toilets and assets.

Just last week, the Newcastle Lord Mayor and six of her councillors sought to avoid a vote on the management of the pools in their council meeting, presumably to continue their privatised model. Just a few weeks ago, the council relocated to a leased building and sold its former administration building in a move that cost council over \$17 million. We have to stop privatisation; it is bad. Privatisation of local pools in Newcastle or their operation by a privatised group does not work.

### THORNLEIGH ZIG ZAG RAILWAY

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (13:33):** We are all familiar with the famous Zig Zag Railway in Lithgow, but an often-forgotten hidden gem is being brought to the public's consciousness in our community in Thornleigh. It is one of Sydney's little-known mysteries. Details are now emerging about the Thornleigh Zig Zag Railway, which ran from the Thornleigh railway station to a nearby quarry in the late nineteenth century. Nestled deep in the bush of Sydney's north, the line operated from 1883 to 1892 and was described as an engineering marvel by the former railway chief, Howard Collins, OBE. While a short-lived line, the railway played a crucial role in building the historic Great Northern Railway in New South Wales, linking Sydney and my birthplace of Newcastle, and eventually the north shoreline.

The Great Northern Railway ultimately led to the establishment of Hornsby, which is a local government area that covers a little under half of the Wahroonga electorate that I represent. The railway played a vital role in the social, technological and industrial progress of the nation by connecting two of the most populated cities in New South Wales: Newcastle and Sydney. It began when the contractors who started to build the Meadowbank to Hornsby section of the railway line needed to source ballast to form the bed of the railway sleepers. Large deposits of sandstone were discovered in the new suburb of Thornleigh and the clever engineering solution was found in the planned Thornleigh Zig Zag Railway, with this being considered the best way to reach the quarry safely and effectively.

After completion, the Zig Zag stretched 1.2 kilometres long and was the only one in the Sydney metropolitan area. The railway wound from the northern end of Thornleigh station by today's platform 3, through to the top end of what is now a commuter car park and to a lever-frame for signals controlled at the junction of what is now Eddy Street and The Esplanade. The Zig Zag passed a narrow reserve, crossing what is now Lovett, Wells, Eddy, Tillock and Pritchard streets, and Janet Avenue, across two timber bridges crossing the creek and down to the quarry.

After the Zig Zag closed, a sandstone cobbled road was installed to provide better access to the quarry, which was valuable during World War II when it became a firing range. By the 1950s, use of the site and most of the Zig Zag route was built over by new land and gradual recognition of the history began only in the 1960s. However, it was not until the 1990s when the Zig Zag would emerge in public consciousness again, being added to the Hornsby Shire Council's heritage listing in 1994 as an archaeological site. The creek near the quarry was then renamed Zig Zag Creek in 1994 and, at the turn of the millennium, a detailed historical and archaeological study was commissioned.

Currently only three pieces of this rail are in existence, one of which was handed to the Hornsby Historical Society, located in Normanhurst in the Wahroonga electorate, and two others discovered near existing bushwalks along Zig Zag Creek and the quarry. As part of the Thornleigh station upgrade, which was undertaken by the former New South Wales Liberal Government, the Hornsby Historical Society wrote a submission to Transport for NSW calling for greater recognition of the history and proposing that new physical markers be installed to mark the local area's history. I am pleased that Transport for NSW said it was excited to incorporate Thornleigh station's heritage into the station upgrade and has celebrated the railway within The Esplanade space through sandstone blocks and a zig-zag walkway approach to the station. This marked a major victory for local history in our area. The society also worked to develop a new plaque so that future generations would know the big story behind this little railway.

Recently I was introduced to this fascinating piece of local history when author and local resident, Tim Sowden, a member of the Hornsby Historical Society, generously sent me a copy of his new book entitled *Zig Zag Away: Thornleigh's Little Railway with a Big Story*, published by the society. I thank Tim and the society for their dedication to raising awareness of our important local history. Our area has had a major impact on New South Wales and it is wonderful that Tim has ensured that this important story is not forgotten. I was able to see the history of the Thornleigh Zig Zag Railway incorporated in the upgrade of the station while I was campaigning for the March 2023 election. The station upgrade is absolutely outstanding. It is part of six railway upgrades that have occurred in my electorate and is a wonderful augmentation to public transport.

### BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE VOLUNTEERS

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (13:38):** Volunteers are the backbone of our communities. They show up and lend a hand for free, making selfless contributions and donating their time, energy and expertise all in the name of a greater cause. There is no doubt that the service of volunteers is instrumental in shaping community spirit, and their support is crucial not only during times of crisis but also every day. The benefits of volunteers to an organisation are profound and far-reaching, but those benefits also extend inwards to enhance the lives of those who give so generously of their time. Living with purpose and meaning influences one's satisfaction in life and, when we are doing good for others, we feel good about ourselves. Studies have shown that the act of volunteering contributes to happier, healthier lives, elevating mood and impacting positively on physical and emotional wellbeing.

Volunteering is also a wonderful way to instil a sense of belonging, something that becomes increasingly essential as we descend further into this era of disconnect. As our lives and interactions continue to shift to online platforms, I sometimes fear that one day we will lose touch altogether. Artificial intelligence will never be a replacement for human connection, and I strongly believe the act of volunteering could well provide a fighting chance for the future of our ability to care for and relate to one another. It is also important to acknowledge the challenges that can accompany volunteering, particularly when that service is provided at a time of great sadness, trauma or loss. Those who put themselves forward to help others who are struggling can be impacted too. The link between volunteering and empathy is undeniable, and I take this moment to remind us all of the need to support those who support us.

Of course, I cannot speak about the incredible volunteers who walk amongst us without paying tribute to those who exist in my Blue Mountains community. I would need hours to list them all individually and the many and varied acts of kindness they share with us every day. So in lieu of being afforded that time, I say a heartfelt thank you to them all. Let me highlight a few of the organisations that bring so much to our local region through their unwavering displays of caring for our community. Mountains Youth Services Team, or MYST, have a simple statement on the homepage of their website that sums up their vision: "Our purpose is that all young people that contact MYST get the help they need." The core team at MYST, supported by their incredible volunteers, offer adventurous and fun therapeutic programs for youth, encouraging teamwork and resilience. The work of an organisation such as that is enhanced exponentially by the input of its many volunteers.

Belong Blue Mountains is another organisation in my community that relies on the generosity of a whole network of volunteers, who work together with a focus on building strength, wellbeing, resilience and cohesion in our local community. Its work is another example of the far-reaching, positive impacts made by the volunteers in our lives. I cannot speak of the merits or value of volunteering without mentioning the NSW Rural Fire Service, particularly in an area such as the Blue Mountains where we live with the risk of bushfires every year. The New South Wales RFS is the world's largest volunteer fire service, with thousands of members serving to protect the community and the environment. The selflessness and sense of duty shown by these men and women who risk their lives to keep us safe is to be highly commended, and many in my community would join me in expressing the deepest of gratitude towards this incredible army of volunteers.

I finish by mentioning some very special volunteers whom I simply could not do my job without. Kate, Lydia, Olivia, Coralie and Edward devote their time to assist me and my team in my electorate office, and I want to say on the record that they are all very much valued and appreciated. I thank them for showing up, with each of them bringing something unique to the team. Lydia and Olivia are two homeschooled girls. Their positive dispositions and willingness to jump in and do whatever is asked are wonderful. Edward's enthusiasm is infectious, and I have every faith that he will succeed in whatever he puts his mind to. Coralie's energy and vibrancy light up the room. And I thank Kate for keeping us in line for all these years—we really would be lost without her. I thank all the volunteers out there in whatever capacity they give of their time and benevolence. We recently celebrated service during National Volunteer Week, but we need to acknowledge the incredible things volunteers do each and every day.



### COFFS COAST SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (13:43):** The Coffs Coast is renowned for producing sports stars of all ages and across all fields of endeavour. Each of them deserves recognition for the many hours they dedicate to doing their very best in their chosen sport. Today I celebrate some recent achievements by Coffs Coast residents. The Special Olympics North Coast swimming team deserve particular acknowledgment for winning the freestyle relay at the regional swimming championships. Their coach, Kim Roach, describes them as a team of four dynamite swimmers. The Coffs Harbour-Sawtell competitors were Hannah Legge, Josh Ives, Aiden van Houts and Zac Tumminello. Kim said that they should be extremely proud of their participation and sportsmanship. To top things off, the team came away with some personal best times, with first, second and third place finishes in many of their events across their age groups. They are to be commended for their attitude to training each week, and they have shown that they are dedicated and willing to learn. They enjoy wonderful support from their parents and carers.

Elsewhere in the pool, Coffs Harbour Masters swimmers were sizzling at their national championships, bringing home a bucketload of medals. The Coffs Coast was represented by Richard Goddard in the 30 to 34 years age group, Paul Edwards in the 55 to 60 years, Anthea Barnfield in the 65 to 69 years and Hilary Young in the 70 to 74 years. Anthea secured her first nationals medal with a silver in the 100 metres breaststroke, while Hilary achieved a bronze, also in the 100 metres breaststroke. Richard won six individual medals with some superb backup racing, and Paul put in his best performance to date with nine individual medals, winning the 400 metres freestyle along with four silver and four bronze.

Meanwhile, Hockey Coffs Coast is toasting the success of three of its members who shone in New Zealand. Keith Jervis and sisters Nardie Gream and Tania Pollock won the international series while playing for their respective Australian teams at the Oceania Trans-Tasman Masters Hockey Challenge. Nardie was with the successful over-35s women's team, Tania was a member of the winning over-40s women's team and Keith struck gold with the over-70s men's team. The trio were members of their Australian teams that won their best of three series against the New Zealand representative teams. The Hockey Coffs Coast players were selected following outstanding performances for New South Wales at the Hockey Australia Masters Championships in Queensland.

Coffs Harbour Netball Association will have five players represent the North Coast at the Netball NSW Regional State Cup in October. Diaz Voglsinger, Marene Greyvenstein, Yasmine Hains, Mia Blackett and Maya Loader were selected on the North Coast team after standout performances at the two-day regional tournament in April. A team of 10 players and two shadow players was selected from eligible players—from Woolgoolga in the north to Great Lakes in the south—to represent the North Coast at the State Cup. The future of netball on the Coffs Coast is certainly looking bright.

Congratulations also to Orara High School's volleyball team, who are on their way to the State championships after a sensational 3-2 win over Wauchope High School. Orara Thunder's next match is the North Coast grand final on 9 June at Sportz Central in Coffs Harbour, where they face Evans River Community School. The Orara Thunder boys' volleyball team typifies the school's ethos of inclusivity, respect and safety. Still at Orara High School, a number of students have been recognised for their recent sporting successes representing the mid North Coast and the North Coast. They are Kylie Russell for mid North Coast rugby league; Lara McMillan for mid North Coast touch football and basketball; James Buist for mid North Coast touch football; Maddison Johnson for North Coast netball; Robert Masapa for mid North Coast touch football; Dylan Wigley for mid North Coast squash and North Coast squash; Shae Moppett for mid North Coast touch football; and Zoe Edgecock for mid North Coast basketball and North Coast basketball.

Coffs Harbour's Andrew Campbell has secured his playing card for the ISPS Handa PGA Tour Australasia season. The professional golfer achieved this commendable feat at the recent Australasian Qualifying School's final stage. Andrew, aged 33, can now play in the 21 events on offer on the Australasian tour, which is currently underway. I am extremely proud of each of these outstanding sports men and women, who are representing the Coffs Coast with distinction.

### NSW POLICE FORCE STATE CRIME COMMAND EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (13:49):** On Tuesday 16 May, in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Counter-terrorism, I had the honour of representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism at the seventeenth annual NSW Police Force State Crime Command excellence in policing awards, which were hosted by the Rotary Club of Holroyd and supported by the Macquarie Group. Present at the evening's official proceedings were several distinguished guests—namely, the President of the Rotary Club of Holroyd, Julie Apps; Deputy Commissioner David Hudson, APM; and Assistant Commissioner Michael Fitzgerald, APM. Also in attendance were the member for Prospect, the deputy mayor of Cumberland, chief

operating officer of the Macquarie Group Nicole Sorbara, District Governor 9675 Dr Janice Hall, and Acting Inspector Craig Partridge representing Police Legacy.

The New South Wales police excellence awards are a testament to the unwavering dedication of our officers in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the communities they serve. It gave me great pleasure to join in celebrating their achievements. It was a proud moment for me to honour those officers from the various squads within the State Crime Command for all the work that they have done and continue to do. The citations read for each officer receiving an award is a testament to their outstanding work. They have all displayed incredible passion for policing and protecting the people of New South Wales. Their diligence, skill and strong commitment to their work have earned them the respect of their peers, who nominated them for the awards. They should be extremely proud of that.

I am delighted to have represented the Minister at the awards to demonstrate the New South Wales Government's support not only to the nominated officers but also to everyone in the NSW Police Force who goes above and beyond every day in the service of the community. I thank the Rotary Club of Holroyd for having hosted such an important event for the seventeenth year in a row. I also acknowledge the generous sponsorship of Macquarie Group, which has supported the event since its inception. The nominees and winners of the awards have set a remarkable standard for policing excellence. Their commitment to the pursuit of justice, the safety of our communities and the values of integrity and professionalism is an inspiration to us all.

Their exceptional contributions to policing in New South Wales deserve our deepest admiration and gratitude. May their achievements continue to inspire and may their commitment to excellence serve as a shining example for all those who follow in their footsteps. I wish them further success as they continue to faithfully serve the community of this great State and deliver safety and security to all of us. I thank and congratulate all the recipients who were acknowledged on the night on their outstanding contribution to the NSW Police Force State Crime Command.

## PLASTIC POLLUTION

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (13:51):** I speak on an issue that is of global significance, although it is particularly pressing in this country and particularly relevant to my community, with our long coastline, major river networks and importance as a food-producing region. The issue is, sadly, the high levels of plastic waste entering and polluting our environment. It is absurd. I have counted. This is about the sixth speech I have made in this place about plastics. I give a shout-out to The Greens plastic spokesperson for New South Wales, Kobi Shetty, the new member for Balmain. It is absurd and tragic that we are still talking about it.

It is no secret that I was born in the United States of America. I have a lot of family there and I visit regularly. If someone visits the blue States on the west coast, they will honestly not see a plastic bag their entire trip. They will not see plastic straws. They cannot even buy one. They cannot even bribe someone to get a plastic bag. Those States have completely eliminated plastics, not just single-use plastics but any kind of plastics, in the retail trade. Certainly in all of the Whole Foods stores and all of the big stores where people go to buy their food, there is no plastic anywhere. But in this country we are still having the same conversations over and over about the logic of phasing out. I put on record today that my community wants to see an end to plastics—at least an end to the plastics in the food and retail industries.

The coastline of my electorate includes iconic beaches. We are a global and national destination and our beaches and waterways at first glance look pristine and teeming with wildlife. Certainly at the moment it is absolutely a wonder to behold the incredible humpback whales migrating north, as they do during winter. But unfortunately a closer examination tells a different story, which is borne out by incredible community organisations like Positive Change for Marine Life, Take 3 for the Sea Byron Bay, Australian Seabird and Turtle Rescue in Ballina, and Mullum Cares—and also individuals like Plastic Free Boy, who is very famous. They report collecting hundreds of thousands of plastic items each year just on our beaches: straws, bottles, cutlery, stretch wrap, coffee cup lids, toothbrushes and tiny pieces of photodegraded items. Balloons are particularly pernicious.

A typical Sunday clean-up along 300 metres of Byron's Clarkes Beach collects 10 to 20 kilograms of plastic waste. Twenty kilograms of plastic is a lot. It is a haul that is incredibly disheartening to the volunteers. They know from experience, and we all know, that those plastics are often consumed by marine animals such as turtles and seabirds, often fatally. I have visited the Australian Seabird and Turtle Rescue in Ballina; unfortunately you cannot unsee the horror that is the ingestion of plastics by our turtles and seabirds. The CSIRO predicts that plastics ingestion in seabirds may reach 95 per cent of all species by 2050. And that is before we even talk about how much plastic is inside of us. It is concerning that plastic production rates are intensifying. I, for one, am not going to sit in the Chamber for another four years and let us relegate it to the periphery. It is a fundamental issue.

We cannot survive without clean waterways. I will talk a lot about the Richmond River this term. The amount of plastic that went into that already highly stressed river after the floods has been catastrophic. Only 13 per cent of the \$800 million waste levy in this State goes towards reducing waste. The rest goes into Government coffers. The Government needs to commit that funding towards solving the waste crisis and get rid of plastics. An intervention in the soft plastics crisis was a good start after the disaster of the major supermarkets, but this failure needs to be addressed. I look forward to working with the new Minister for Environment, other members and the wider community to end plastic waste. Ending plastic waste means stopping the production of plastic in the first place and making those who generate plastic waste take responsibility for its full life cycle. Honestly, if the Americans can do it, we can do it.

### MAY DAY

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (13:56):** As the member for Shellharbour I am a very proud trade unionist, and I was honoured to be able to attend this year's May Day march and the May Day Toast. I acknowledge my parliamentary colleague the Minister for Health, who is in the Chamber, who also attended the toast along with the member for Wollongong. I am proud to say that I have been attending May Day marches since I was born. I have never missed a May Day march since I was a baby. This year's march was held on 6 May in Port Kembla, the industrial heart of the Illawarra and an important location for the struggle for workers' rights over the past century.

The march drew a fantastic crowd of workers and was attended by numerous residents from the Shellharbour electorate. The region's unions were well represented at the march and it was great to see so many red Labor T-shirts as well. As a part of the May Day celebrations, I was also honoured to attend the May Day Toast, as I have said, on the eve of the march. That was a great success. It was held at the Dapto Leagues Club in the heart of the electorate of Shellharbour. It was a fantastic event that recognised the dedication of the region's unions to improving pay and conditions for workers across the Illawarra and beyond.

May Day is extremely important to me and my fellow trade unionists. Also known as Labour Day or Eight Hours Day, on this day every year we remember the ongoing fight to enhance workers' rights dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. In Australia the fight for the eight-hour working day and other workers' rights grew in momentum in April 1856 when stonemasons in Melbourne went on strike over unhealthy hours and poor working conditions. The stonemasons won the right to work an eight-hour day and celebrated their victory with a procession in early May that year. The struggle for fair working hours for all workers across New South Wales continued throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, with workers from the Illawarra instrumental in the fight. The focus on workers' rights in the late 1800s also brought about the birth of the mighty Labor Party in 1891.

In 1908 the Illawarra Colliery Employees' Association hosted nearly 3,000 workers in Wollongong for their eight-hour gala day. Those in attendance included representatives from the Sydney Trades Hall and the Newcastle Colliery Employees' Association. Whilst some of the miners enjoyed an eight-hour day by 1908, many shift men were still working 10-hour days. Workers across the Illawarra continued their campaign over the coming years, and in 1914 the Illawarra Labour Council was formed after a meeting at O'Brien's Hotel in Thirroul between union representatives who represented various trades across the Illawarra. Finally, in 1916 the Eight-Hours Act was passed in New South Wales, granting fair working hours to all workers.

Whilst the New South Wales Labor Day holiday is now celebrated in early October each year, May Day is a fantastic opportunity for all workers to honour the contributions of the workers who fought so hard to ensure the rights that we have today. May Day is also an important time to reflect on the important role that unions play in protecting those rights today and into the future. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the unionists who came before me over the past 167 years. The Illawarra would not exist as the vibrant and thriving community it is today without the unions and workers who have sacrificed so much over the past century. I thank Arthur Rorris from the South Coast Labour Council for inviting me and my colleagues to that most important event and congratulate every person who marched for workers' rights.

### COOPERNOOK FOREST HEADQUARTERS COTTAGE

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (14:00):** I recognise the official reopening of the forest headquarters cottage at the Coopernook State Forest, which I recently had the pleasure of attending. The Coopernook and Lansdowne Forest [CALF] History Group recently celebrated the restoration of the forest headquarters cottage, a treasured piece of history that reflects the logging industry that once helped to formally establish the communities we call Coopernook and Lansdowne. Back then the forestry headquarters was seen as significant infrastructure for those communities and was a major employer, with a medium-sized workforce of 240 employees all settling in the area and raising their families.

President and secretary Bob Smith, BM, acknowledged the New South Wales State Government for its Community Building Partnership grant of \$15,000, which helped to kickstart the restorations of the 1935 forest foreman's cottage after the Forestry Corporation in 2011 intended to demolish the then rundown and unused premises. It was a pleasure to attend the opening celebrations along with the member for Lyne, David Gillespie, MP, and Leah Moncrief representing the Forestry Corporation to explore the historical significance of the cottage and headquarters precinct. Today the foreman's cottage has been transformed into a museum, showcasing artefacts from the timber industry as well as original antique furniture and memorabilia from a bygone era. CALF History Group have made every effort to retain some of the original features of the cottage, which will be open for visitors as a drawcard to enhance local tourism.

Bruce Dun was invited by CALF History Group to speak on the history of the foreman's cottage. He is the son of Albert James Dun, who was the forest foreman from 1949 until 1960 at the Coopernook and Lansdowne forest headquarters. His duties during that time included managing a workforce of 10 to 15 men whose roles were timber harvesting; forest regeneration, called timber stand improvement; hazard reduction, which he said was a flash name for burning off the undergrowth; fire detection and control; and road maintenance. Other duties included selecting timber for harvesting; measuring, stamping and recording the millable logs; and travelling to rail yards to pass poles and sleepers for transport.

Bruce spoke with joy and enthusiasm as he recalled the 11 years his family lived at the cottage. The Holstein family were the original occupants and coordinated operations before Albert and his family moved into the headquarters. At the time there was no electricity, so the family relied on a "Silent Knight" kerosene refrigerator, a small wood stove, a Metters chip heater over the bath and a water tank with the occasional mosquito larva in the water. They were primitive conditions, but the Dun family adjusted and were thankful for what they had.

Over the years the cottage housed many visitors and even anticipated a visit from Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in early 1956, while she was in Australia to open the Melbourne Olympics. Bruce remembers the preparations and excitement that transpired over a possible royal visit to the cottage, including a new colour scheme of white with yellow-and-black trim, the installation of louvres to enclose the front veranda, new silver roofs and a new front door. Unfortunately, Her Late Majesty's trip was cancelled, but the cottage had already been transformed from the original cream painted walls and green roof that were standard Forestry Commission colours back then. It looked immaculate. Among the renovations, Bruce was even treated to a new room.

I thank Bruce Dun for sharing his personal memories of time spent at the foreman's cottage. It emphasised the meaning of the headquarters to the local community in days gone by—how it was the centre of town and controlled the then booming timber industry. I congratulate the members of CALF History Group—president and secretary Bob Smith, treasurer Di Elger and husband Paul Elger, Ray and Gaye Taggart, Ron Warner and Jenni Hemsworth—on their dedication and commitment to restoring a piece of valuable history for the Coopernook and Lansdowne community. I also thank former secretary Geoff Leonard for his significant contribution in bringing the dream of CALF History Group to fruition. It is a perfect example of what can be achieved by a passionate and determined community group. I congratulate them all.

#### **SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES SHOALHAVEN ILLAWARRA**

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (14:04):** I recognise the work of Supported Accommodation and Homelessness Services Shoalhaven Illawarra [SAHSSI], an amazing local organisation that provides homelessness and domestic violence services to my community and to communities across the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. SAHSSI has been advocating tirelessly for women and families in our region for over three decades and provides accommodation and support for those who need it most when they need it most. To me, SAHSSI sets the benchmark for what good community organisations should look like. From governance to service delivery, it continues to set and then raise the bar for women's and domestic violence services in our community. Last year alone SAHSSI provided over 54,000 cumulative nights of accommodation for those in crisis, in addition to providing over \$60,000 in direct financial assistance. That amounted to over 1,000 women and children being provided with safe crisis accommodation when they needed it most.

No-one exemplifies the dedication and calibre of SAHSSI better than outgoing CEO Kathy Colyer. Kathy has worked tirelessly for SAHSSI for 17 years, including nine as the CEO. During that time Kathy grew the organisation from a small outfit into the impressive and vital organisation it is today, helping some of the most vulnerable people in our community—particularly women fleeing domestic violence and dangerous situations. Kathy has steered the organisation through incredibly challenging times. Through lockdowns and ever-changing restrictions, she was able to keep her doors open and provide those in crisis with help when they needed it.

While I wish it was not the case, organisations like SAHSSI have become increasingly important over recent years, with more people presenting for assistance each year. While I am very sad to see Kathy stepping away from the CEO role, I know that the new interim CEO, Diane Manns, will continue her legacy of making our community a safer place. I have had the opportunity to work with the organisation in a number of different ways, but our annual toy drive is probably the most well known. We have collected thousands of dollars' worth of toys for the women and families in the region with whom SAHSSI and other organisations have a connection. I thank Kathy on behalf of my team and on behalf of everyone in our community whose lives she has touched through her hard work over many years. We offer our very best wishes for her retirement and hope she gets the well-earned rest she deserves.

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

#### *Documents*

### **AUDITOR-GENERAL**

#### **Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with Standing Order 265, I table the Financial Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Universities 2022*, dated 31 May 2023. I order that the report be printed.

#### *Members*

### **INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the earlier resolution, the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for Pittwater will now proceed. I warmly welcome all the guests in the gallery—a huge crowd—who have come to hear the inaugural speech by the member for Pittwater. For those who are new to the House, I welcome you to Australia's first Parliament. I particularly acknowledge a number of special guests: the parents of the member for Pittwater, Guy and Alexe Amon; Lucinda Amon, the member's sister; Mr Michael Morrison, brother-in-law; Olive Morrison, niece; and Eden Morrison, also niece. It is wonderful to see the Hon. Rob Stokes, the former member for Pittwater, whom I met outside the Chamber earlier. I also welcome former member for Pittwater Alex McTaggart and the Hon. Andrew Constance, the former member for Bega, who have also joined us today. I welcome Jean Hay, AM; David Hay, former member for Manly; and Jim Longley, former member for Pittwater. I welcome everybody on this very important occasion. I call the member for Pittwater.

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (14:36):** Mr Speaker, the journeys of the more than the 1,600 servants who have sat in this place are varied. Here I purposely do not use the term "member". We are elected to serve—and, through our service, we hope to inspire our communities to trust us to lead. What remains unremarkable of almost all past and present members of this place is their deep-seated desire to leave their worlds better than they found them. More than this, as servants of this State and our communities, we have a unique opportunity to improve the lives of those whose orbit we enter or who enter our own. I am ever mindful that each of us is a speck in eternity and, over our journeys, memories of our deeds and words will fade; but what will never be forgotten is how we made someone feel, hopefully for the better.

Mr Speaker, as members of this place, we meet the gamut of individuals. Across my lifetime, and having served in elected office since 2017, I have learned that there are some truly horrible people out there—utterly horrendous. Fortunately, my experience to date has been that those people are the exception. I believe most people are good and decent. While the truly horrible are uncommon, the truly wonderful often come to us when they find themselves in the most horrible of circumstances. They feel maligned, unfairly treated or without a voice—and often we are their last resort. In that moment, we are privileged with the power to give that person a voice—to be their advocate, their champion—and, when we do, they will rarely forget that we made them feel heard. We were on their side, sometimes when no-one else was. Though very few members of this place will ever serve in the highest offices, each of us still has a heavy responsibility; to leave a positive mark on the life of anyone who comes to us in their time of need—to make their life better, whether clearing a minor inconvenience, transforming their life significantly, or anything in between. I feel the weight of the responsibility we all share in this place.

Politics is about community. That is what brings us all here. But what community brings me here? Mr Speaker, my family story is typical of many in our community: immigrant grandparents who worked hard and made Australia home. Like so many born and raised Aussies, I stand on the shoulders of the sacrifices of my grandparents and parents, be it Dusan Djordjevic—anglicised to George Dusan—who fled Serbia at 16 during World War II to fight in the resistance in Italy, or Klari Wiener of Slovakia, who served as a translator in London for the Allies during World War II. Sadly, my grandparents have all passed.

I have no doubt that my mother's father would have been tickled pink to be here today. Unknown to me during childhood, George was a staunch Liberal, having experienced the tyranny of fascism and communism. That said, I think I may have been ripped off in the early 1990s when George paid 1¢ per pinecone that we grandkids collected from his and grandma's backyard in St Ives. Perhaps a Pinecone Collector's Union might have helped us generate better wages. Pinecone politics aside, my mum and dad, Guy and Alexe, worked hard to give me and my five siblings a good life. No doubt there would have been tough times, especially when Dad started his own business; but growing up I could see I had a good life, thanks to the sacrifices of my grandparents and parents.

Mum and Dad led by example, showing us it was our responsibility to give back. Never was this more clear than when I was a teenager and we welcomed a refugee family into our home, with Mum and Dad supporting them through school and into employment for many years. Having grown up in a family dedicated to service, it may not be a surprise that I chose to practise family law, advocate for my local community on council or volunteer as a firefighter with the Davidson RFS. My time in the RFS has left an indelible mark upon my commitment to public service, and solidified my deep respect for frontline emergency service workers.

One chapter of my journey to this place started in the 2019-20 Black Summer fires. Walls of flame swept through the South Coast of our State. Home after home burned to the ground. The imperfect combination of drought, roaring winds, soaring temperatures and underprepared bushland left those most at risk destitute and broken. For thousands of volunteer firefighters like myself, this meant scores of deployments to the South Coast. With the Davidson RFS, we barrelled from suburb to suburb throughout the City of Shoalhaven and Eurobodalla for weeks, doing our best to save homes and businesses from ruin. We saved some but lost many more. Every single loss hurt. No number of saves could take away that pain. Over this time, the men and women of all emergency services were pushed to the limit, mentally and physically, each day ending with utter exhaustion. Although those times involved great loss of sweat, blood and tears, from the shadows, ashes and ruins the generosity and hope of the human spirit shone a slither of brightness, piercing the darkness of those difficult times.

On one occasion we were deployed to a fire in Sunset Strip, Manyana, a cliff-side street. A sudden and strong change in wind caught residents off guard, with fires spotting up the cliff side and threatening homes and lives. As the cliff-side home at No. 15 set alight, one of our crew charged to the side of the house, hose in hand, followed closely by a fellow crew member. A sudden shift in wind saw smoke and fire change direction, overwhelming him. Not provided with any adequate mask whatsoever, he collapsed into the thick, black smoke—the most toxic of smokes. Barely visible, and with no certainty of the danger, firefighter Geoff sprinted straight for firefighter Dave, dragged him out of danger and administered first aid. Dave was okay. We saved No. 15 and the risk it posed to the street. Geoff and Dave are heroes. This is but one of many stories of courage from that difficult time—a story that might never have been told. I am proud to be able to share it today, to make sure it is enshrined on the public record here in the oldest Parliament in Australia. I am proud to have my fellow firefighter Geoff Boulton here today. Geoff, would you stand? Thank you, Geoff.

Why would anyone voluntarily subject themselves to such danger? I can only speak to my own experience of these courageous men and women. Over a decade in the Rural Fire Service, I have witnessed a mishmash group, united by shared values: They have a compassion for people; they love their community, and they want to see it left safer and better than how they found it. The deeds and words of these volunteers, if ever they were known, will often be lost to history, or otherwise quickly forgotten; but their impact carries far greater significance to the lives of the individuals they helped. Those most in need were made to feel safe, cared for, and that they mattered. I pay tribute to all volunteer firefighters and emergency service volunteers for their commitment to these values.

In so many ways, what drives these volunteers are the very things that drive most of us: the shared values of compassion and community. Mr Speaker, I stand here today as the Liberal member for Pittwater. I endeavour to live the values at the core of the Liberal Party because of my firm belief that Liberal principles, properly adopted, will see our society at its best, maximising the freedom of the individual, consistent with the freedoms of others, and minimising government to allow individuals to flourish. These will see a society with every person at their best, forming a collective stronger than the sum of its parts. That collective is Australia.

But to be a good member in this place is not just about what you believe but how you behave. The basis of social cohesion is the tenet that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This is an obligation on each individual, not something that can or should be deferred to the State. We cannot outsource our fundamental obligations of charity or service over self to government. Rather, I believe every individual has an obligation to do what they can. For us in this place, that responsibility is all the greater.

In these times, where everyone is a de facto news outlet, it is increasingly important to focus on how we apply compassion in our society and in politics. For too long, public discourse has been infected by ideological absolutes: You are entirely right or entirely wrong; you are wholly virtuous or utterly evil. Many adopt a cynical worldview that pits people against one another, entrenching differences, and avoiding common ground at all costs.

Of course, there will be times where differences are irreconcilable. However, where those differences are explored with compassion, we will achieve greater harmony. We need a more compassionate polity; a dialogue seeking to unite, not divide.

The term "cancel culture" is an intellectually underwhelming phrase, but the notion that we should silence or denigrate others who espouse different views from us lacks compassion. Parties to any matter of public interest should approach issues openly. That is not to say one should abandon convictions or stand for nothing, but, as Atticus Finch would say, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." Having done so, you still may not agree with the other's view, but you have taken the important step of seeking to understand.

Of course, there are times when people are clumsy or lazy in expressing their views. Compassion allows room for those people to put things right, rather than to pillory. Other times, there are individuals who are insincere in their contributions, determined to be offensive or hateful. Compassion allows us to see those individuals, and their contributions, for who and what they are. When approaching issues of public discourse, I adopt the view of Bertrand Russell, who summed up the Liberal outlook as:

... lying not in what opinions are, but in how they are held: instead of being held dogmatically, they are held tentatively, and with a consciousness that new evidence may at any moment lead to their abandonment.

Mr Speaker, I am a classical Liberal. I believe we are well served by the traditions which have seen New South Wales and Australia become the best places on earth to live. These traditions should not be abandoned lightly—but, in the face of new evidence, I believe they can be transformed. Notwithstanding, conversations regarding policy or traditions need to be done better. Individuals should be free to speak their minds with sincerity so that all viewpoints may be given a fair and proper hearing. Politics must be done differently.

Mr Speaker, I enter this place following 12 years of incredible infrastructure investment and delivery from a Liberal-Nationals Government that transformed this State. It fundamentally changed the way New South Wales looks and moves around—whether it be new and upgraded hospitals, schools and ambulance stations; major transport infrastructure like Sydney Metro; or regional road projects like the Pacific Highway upgrade. The former New South Wales Government proved that delivering projects propels our State forward.

Infrastructure is more than just bricks and mortar: it is about the jobs it creates, the people it trains, the industries it supports, the opportunities it brings and the quality of life it improves. Infrastructure is our legacy. The projects delivered over the last decade and those underway today will be enjoyed by generations to come. I will fight to ensure that infrastructure remains a top priority for New South Wales—not just because it is vitally important for our economy, but also because of what it means for our communities. That means funding and completing the broader Sydney Metro network; fully completing the Western Harbour Tunnel, the Warringah Freeway upgrade and Beaches Link; and preparing our State with the infrastructure we will need for the future of automated vehicles.

The Pittwater community faces significant infrastructure challenges. We need to finish widening Mona Vale Road, we need to upgrade Narrabeen North Public School and Narrabeen Sports High School, and we need to undertake flood mitigation works on Wakehurst Parkway. We need to stop inappropriate development, and we need to upgrade the Newport and North Narrabeen surf clubs. Mr Speaker, it is an unparalleled privilege to serve Pittwater as its parliamentary representative—one of only eight to do so since 1950. I have heard every member in this place pay tribute to their community as the greatest, the most beautiful or the most unique. It would be with great trepidation that some of my first words in this place would be to label those members as liars—so I won't.

Let those words about Pittwater speak for themselves. From the most populous island in New South Wales, Scotland Island, and our unique offshore community; to the heritage of Barrenjoey Headland and the sheer wonder of its outlook; from the hidden gem of the Palm Beach Bible Garden to the 12 surf lifesaving clubs with their thousands of volunteers; from our golden beaches to West Head, and to Narrabeen Lagoon, Pittwater is Sydney's playground. Its beauty is almost mythical, so much so that one of our country's most successful TV exports is filmed locally at Palm Beach—or Summer Bay, as many know it. Representing an area as beautiful as Pittwater, I am especially conscious of the responsibility to preserve the natural beauty of our State. As a member of this Parliament, I will advocate for quicker action to protect and enhance our environment, locally and across New South Wales. It is too precious to lose.

I pay tribute to my recent predecessors and good friends, some of whom are here. Jim Longley served 10 years, seven in government—a decent ratio. John Brogden served nine years, all in opposition—an unfortunate ratio, but he would have made a fine Premier. And, of course, Rob Stokes, who actually gave his own inaugural speech in this place on this exact date 16 years ago. Pittwater owes Rob a great debt. His service was dignified, respectful, humble and characterised by the utmost integrity. Thank you, Rob.

Lastly, I pay tribute to Alex McTaggart. Alex is a man of firsts. He served as the first Independent—and, hopefully, the last—to be elected as the member for Pittwater. He was also generous enough to endorse my candidacy at the recent election, and I am reliably informed by scholars with many leatherbound books that never, in all eternity, has a former member elected as an Independent endorsed a major party candidate. Alex, thank you. I thank the Hon. Barrie Unsworth, a notable mention. At 89 years young he is our oldest living former Premier, and a resident of Pittwater. Barrie remains involved in every local Labor campaign. When the recent campaign turned nasty against me from some, I could always count on Barrie and the local Labor volunteers to be kind and unyielding in their demands for politics in our area to be fought fairly and honestly. Barrie and I may not be from the same side, and although he definitely did not vote for me—because he told me so, quite proudly, as he walked out of pre-poll; he only voted one, so that was okay—he is a decent and honourable man. He represents the very best of the Labor tradition. Barrie, thank you.

Mr Speaker, colleagues and friends, I will always remember that I have been elected by the people of Pittwater. The Pittwater community inspires and motivates me. It is a community worth fighting for. About 18 months ago I met a wonderful woman named Averill Mclean. In 2016 her only son, Adam, was killed in a car crash. I cannot imagine the pain that Averill feels over this tragedy. In honour of Adam, the council installed a memorial table overlooking Mona Vale Beach. Naturally, Averill regularly seeks solace there. There is also another memorial there: a bench for 18-year-old Stuart Kelly, who died nearby. Stuart's mother does not live locally, so Averill promised that she would take care of the bench, laying flowers there for anniversaries.

The council, in all its wisdom, installed garbage bins that obscured the view of the water from Stuart's bench and impaired the view from Adam's table. For obvious reasons, this was distressing. At first, Averill's concerns were lost in local council bureaucracy, but very quickly after Averill and I were put in touch, we had the bins moved. This was a little thing to most people, but it meant a lot to a very special person. Every day in our communities we have the honour and privilege of standing up for special people in our communities like Averill. She is a nurse who works hard on the front line. Her only drawback is that she is a citizen of New Zealand, not Australia. Hopefully, we can turn her in time.

Earlier this year, Averill said to a friend of mine, "I hope Rory does not forget about people like me if he gets elected." I want Averill to know that I will not ever forget about people like her. I will always stand up for the vulnerable, the downtrodden and the abandoned in our community. I am elected to advocate for every person, and that is exactly what I intend to do. I am proud to have Averill here today. Averill, would you please stand? You are an inspiration and servant to so many.

Mr Speaker, I stand in awe before you in this place, bounded by hundreds of years of Westminster tradition. To my parents, Guy and Alexe, and my grandparents—all of whom have shaped me—I thank you. To my siblings: Chris; Lucinda; Dom; my twin, Mel—or my "womb-mate", as she has come to self-style—and Cam, thank you for enduring me over the years. To the next generation—my nieces, Olive and Eden, and nephew, Beau—I promise that the decisions I make in this place will always have your future at heart. To my many friends and extended family, your support is invaluable. To the Liberal Party members in Pittwater and across the party who showed unshakeable faith in me under challenging circumstances, I am forever grateful. To Kristina, Natarsha Terreiro, Alex Dore, Sarah Halnan, Albert, Stu Cameron, Sandra Cimino, Phil Richardson, Wendy Starkie, John Farrow, Susie Bower, Jenny Zeng and too many others to name, I owe you more than you will ever know.

Finally, I thank the people of Pittwater for placing their trust in me. This is the honour of my life, and I will work every day to vindicate your decision. Mr Speaker, this speech is but a marker in time. It sets standards I will not always meet. But I will always endeavour to act with compassion and put my community first. I will make sure those I serve feel listened to and know they always have someone in their corner. Above all, when my days in this place are done, it is my hope, and fervent prayer, that I might be farewelled with the creed, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** We have heard another wonderful inaugural speech, this time by the new member for Pittwater. I thank the entire electorate of Pittwater for being here for the speech. It is good to see all 30,000 of you. I thank the member for Pittwater for his inaugural speech.



*Bills***ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (HOUSING AND PRODUCTIVITY CONTRIBUTIONS) BILL 2023****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:09):** I contribute to the debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. I thank the good member for Wollongong for his leadership and the necessary changes we need in this place, given the housing crisis we are now living in across New South Wales. This is about not just delivering houses but also delivering communities the infrastructure we need. So many people have spoken in this place today about houses being delivered with zip for the communities around them. I thank the good Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for his insight and for changing the shape of the contribution so as to deliver infrastructure as housing develops across communities.

The member for Blacktown spoke about his electorate's growth. The member for Campbelltown said his electorate has grown by 34 per cent. The member for Liverpool said hers has grown by 35 per cent. The member for Wollondilly spoke about outrageous growth without any infrastructure in her community. Macquarie Fields is hurting. The member for Lidcombe said that infrastructure has not kept up with the housing development. She cannot even get out of her own suburb to get to work. And we heard, in this debate but also in question time, the member for Camden talk about the previous Government having delivered house after house after house but no schools in her community. I went to Camden during the member's election campaign. There are two primary schools, with 20 kindergarten classes, and no high school planned for the future. So it is fantastic to hear that the Labor Government has actually turned the first sod for the much-needed schools in that community.

The bill will not change the local contributions collected by councils for local infrastructure. But, importantly, in high-growth areas, including the Central Coast, it will require developers to chip in for the cost of providing much-needed State infrastructure. On the Central Coast, in Greater Sydney, and in the lower Hunter and Illawarra-Shoalhaven regions, where land use is intensified, this new contribution will replace the current complex and uncertain approach of special infrastructure contributions and allow sensible planning of much-needed infrastructure that our communities are calling out for.

The governance of these funds will be robust and transparent and for the people of New South Wales, not for private organisations like so many of the public investments that the previous Government made. This will be spent only on projects that support housing and jobs and the infrastructure our community needs. The bill will provide increased opportunity for grants to local governments—the Central Coast Council will be very happy about that—for infrastructure projects that serve larger catchments, such as the development of regional sporting facilities. Imagine a Tuggerah indoor sports complex for netball, basketball, volleyball, pickleball and floorball, for all people on the Central Coast to share and to have the ability to host large regional events.

The member for Wollongong spoke about the incredible failure of the previous Government to plan for the number of dwellings we need. We learned in briefs to the incoming Government that New South Wales needs to build 314,000 new dwellings—that is 62,800 a year over five years—but is expected to complete only 180,000 dwellings. It is tragic when the head of the Reserve Bank says people will have to move into shared housing or share with family because there will just not be enough houses. It is a failure of Federal and State planning to actually deliver the houses our community needs. New South Wales is short 134,000 dwellings. As the number of housing approvals trends down, with a decline of 18 per cent in the past year, we are now falling 40,000 houses below what we need to deliver. This is at the same time as our population growth is increasing, as we step up migration to support our rapidly aging population, our tight market conditions and our chronic skills shortage in key areas such as personal care and construction.

I met with Regional NSW last week, and I was a little disappointed because none of the glossy brochures had a focus on housing on the Central Coast. We are supporting this great new business growth, which is fantastic, but what we are hearing very clearly from our health services, from our schools and from businesses is that they cannot bring people into our communities because we do not have enough housing. Mr Temporary Speaker, you yourself know. For a while you said to me, "Every second person I meet at my barbecues is from the Central Coast." Then you said to me that Cessnock is full as well. That is regional New South Wales. So we cannot understate the importance of a housing plan, and the bill will support our housing plan with infrastructure.

The bill will not solve all aspects of the housing crisis, but it is one of the few proposals to come before this Chamber that will address the supply. The 2020 Productivity Commission's review of the infrastructure contribution system suggested that this change take place to replace the cost of the previous complex system, which was not fair and equitable. This will be a much better support for the provision of the railways, schools,

parks and hospitals we need to function in our communities. Those opposite said that this is a new tax on development. This is not a tax on development; it is a way in which we can better use developer contributions to deliver fairly for those communities who actually need them. On the beautiful Central Coast we have seen contributions to our communities, from the former Government, that do not support the growth. Brisbane Water Drive was upgraded. An upgrade of Blackwell Road is coming. But, realistically, these roads are nice, glossy, new tar and in no way will support the growth in population of our community and other communities. It is symbolic of what other communities are enduring.

The bill will create a fairer system for regions such as the Central Coast, recognising the community impact of development by applying development contributions to consents that intensify development. High-growth areas such as the Central Coast have seen the impact of increased development on our infrastructure, with parks and community buildings increasingly showing the cracks created by continued development. This is not a charge for our local landowners. The bill continues to allow locals to rebuild their homes and build backyard granny flats for their families. Instead, the bill recognises the impact of development consents that intensify development and expects developers to chip in for the cost of the infrastructure that makes their projects viable.

Importantly, this bill restricts the funding of infrastructure under this program to the region where the funds were raised. Under the previous Government, too often we saw the Central Coast and other regions miss out on infrastructure funding in favour of our larger city neighbours. Consultation on the bill was clear. Infrastructure funding raised through this bill should remain in the region from where the contribution came. I close by backing up what the member for Heathcote said. I am really proud to be part of a Labor Government that is actually building this State for the future of our communities, not just building shells of homes but actually building the communities that the people of New South Wales expect to live in. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (15:17):** I contribute to the debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. As a former mayor of one of the State's biggest councils for 15 years, I am acutely aware that the regional infrastructure contribution system needs to be reformed and that this bill comes after many years of work by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, the Productivity Commission, and various Ministers and MPs on both sides of the House, as well as engagement from impacted stakeholders. We need a system to raise revenue for regional infrastructure to support growth. To date, we have not seen the infrastructure matched to where growth is. The member for Wollondilly, also known as the member for the Picton bypass, who spoke so passionately this morning, knows this all too well. Indeed, MPs on both sides today have complained about the lack of infrastructure in their electorates and that it has not been keeping up with growth.

I acknowledge that this bill is an improvement on the previous Government's Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Infrastructure Contributions) Bill 2021, which had a similar purpose. But being better than the previous iteration should not be the benchmark. We must also consider the bill on its merits. I have concerns with the bill. I encourage the Opposition, who supported such a contribution when in government, to work with the crossbench and the Government to make the bill better, rather than lazily opposing it. The current and previous systems mentioned are all failures and did not work effectively. That was acknowledged by the former Government and the current Government. In July 2021 the then Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, my friend Rob Stokes, said this at the Legislative Council's inquiry into the infrastructure contributions bill:

The system, in summary, was broken and is broken. So we thought that the best way to solve this, knowing how difficult it was, was to set out a process where we used the new New South Wales Productivity Commissioner as an honest broker in the process, to go out and talk to people, to come up with a more certain and efficient system, to talk to all the stakeholders, to come up with a program of reform, a suite of things, if you like, that all holds together to have a much more principles-based system and much more certain and efficient system.

They reported those findings back in November last year. The Government responded in March this year. A big part of the 29 recommendations hinged on some legislative reforms. Rob Stokes also said:

This is not in any sense designed as any partisan initiative. Frankly, I am just trying to develop an architecture for collecting developer contributions that is fair and certain for whoever is in government at the time it is implemented.

He went on to say:

It is an important point for me to raise here that this is not a tax.

Rob Stokes, the former member for Pittwater, and former planning Minister, clearly said that it was an important point for him to raise that this was not a tax. I continue the quote:

As a point of law, this is not a taxation statute, the planning Act, so it has to be directed toward paying for the infrastructure required to support an upzoning.

In his final comments at the inquiry, he said:

This is where, frankly, the current settings do not allow us to raise the right money at the right time using the right mechanisms to pay for the infrastructure we need to unlock opportunities for development in the right areas.

I am concerned about the implications of this bill for existing approved 7.23 determinations, known as special infrastructure contributions [SICs]. I am also concerned about the status of those SICs that have been proposed but not signed off. A lot of time and resources have gone into developing those plans and they should be preserved.

I am particularly concerned about the Frenchs Forest SIC in my electorate. It was signed off on 7 December 2021 after being worked on collaboratively between the Northern Beaches Council and the department. It was developed to support the planned growth in Frenchs Forest, with 6,000 new homes planned and equivalent commercial and retail uplifts. In schedule 2 to the Frenchs Forest SIC determination there is a list of infrastructure priorities and funding amounts for the special infrastructure contributions raised to be put towards—approximately \$37 million. Those priorities include additional primary and secondary school facilities, the Forest Way additional right turn lane from the southern Forest Way leg into Naree Road—the land and the works—and the signalised intersection at Frenchs Forest Road West and Sylvia Place. In public transport there was supporting infrastructure for rapid bus services via Warringah Road between Dee Why and Chatswood. In active transport there was the southern gateway new stairway access to the pedestrian bridge over Warringah Road, west of Hilmer Street, the Manly Dam regional connection and the Warringah Road Green Bridge investigation.

I support the amendment of the member for Wollondilly, which creates a duty for the Minister to consider existing SICs in prioritising the spending of housing and productivity [HAP] funds. I thank the member for Wollondilly and her staff for their work on this. I appreciate the Government working with crossbench members to develop this amendment, which will recognise those legacy SICs—including the Frenchs Forest SIC. I am looking for a commitment from the Minister today to honour the existing SIC determinations, in particular those for Frenchs Forest. This should be an absolute baseline for the growth associated with the redevelopment of Frenchs Forest. In reality, our regional infrastructure needs go far beyond the infrastructure listed in the Frenchs Forest SIC, and I acknowledge that this bill, in particular, is attempting to take us there and make up for mistakes of the past.

I draw the Minister's attention to three regional infrastructure priorities that would improve the lives of people, not just of Wakehurst and the northern beaches but of surrounding districts, by meeting current needs as well as supporting planned growth: the grade separation of the intersection of Warringah Road and Pittwater Roads, one of the five most congested roads in Sydney and a genuine barrier to affordable housing growth locally; the relocation and rebuilding of Frenchs Forest High School to allow the Frenchs Forest town centre to progress and, I agree, more housing in terms of affordable housing; and the development of regionally significant sporting facilities on and around the Balgowlah golf course—a component of the proposed Northern Beaches Tunnel project, but which should proceed regardless of the tunnel given the current and future critical needs of our community and our neighbours.

Women's sport is a huge and continues to grow at huge rates, and its positive growth and the positive impact of that particular project serves a number of districts locally. I would love to see that addressed and picked up. This bill is designed to pick up infrastructure for this and other regions within Sydney. I note that this bill will be subject to an inquiry in the other place. I welcome the additional scrutiny of the bill. A matter of continuing concern is the relationship between where funds are raised and where they are spent. There should be consideration of how the HAP funds are prioritised and allocated. At the very least there should be transparency around the geographic distribution of funds relative to the areas where the funds are raised. I will follow the outcome of the inquiry with interest.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (15:24):** On behalf of The Greens, I speak to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023 and indicate that The Greens do not oppose this bill. This bill proposes to implement a broad-based development charge to replace the existing special infrastructure contribution from October to fund growth-enabling infrastructure in areas of high population growth. It will apply throughout areas of Greater Sydney, the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Central Coast and the lower Hunter and is said to support housing delivery and economic growth.

The Greens are happy to support legislation that requires profit-driven property developers to pay their fair share towards local schools, hospitals, active transport links and other facilities our communities so desperately need. Our plan for a developer windfall levy, based on the Australian Capital Territory's betterment tax that we took to the election in March, could raise billions of dollars each year if implemented properly. The mechanism in this bill will raise an estimated \$700 million per year when fully operational, which is not small change, but it does pale in comparison to what could be achieved with a policy that has a little more ambition.

The Greens have some concerns about the distribution of these funds. We understand the argument that contributions need to accrue across several broad regions in order to accumulate the funds required to cover

infrastructure costs in high-growth areas, but we are concerned that the mechanisms being put in place will see areas of lower or less intense growth passed over for funding, even though the impact of that growth will be just as keenly felt within those communities. Similarly, the impacts of growth in one area will be felt in others—as anyone who has tried to get on a peak hour bus to the city at the last stop before the Anzac Bridge will tell you.

The bill will also require developers to make contributions to a Strategic Biodiversity Contributions Fund to pay for biodiversity offsets that will be required to build the housing and infrastructure funded by the Housing and Productivity Fund. The bill will allow the Government to use those funds for strategic biodiversity certification, a process that identifies areas that can be developed after they are certified, and measures are in place to offset the impacts of the development. Where land is certified, development may proceed without the usual requirement for site-by-site assessment.

The Greens have significant concerns with the inclusion of biodiversity offsets in this scheme. We have concerns that this bill creates a new fund to be administered by the planning Minister, with concurrence of the Treasurer but with no concurrence required of the environment Minister. We have concerns with biodiversity offsets in general—and we are not the only ones. A quick review of recent news headlines on this issue suggests that the current scheme lacks transparency, fails to protect the New South Wales environment and trades away threatened species for cash.

We note the existing Biodiversity Offsets Scheme is currently under review and, as such, our colleagues in the other place will be looking very closely at this aspect of the bill. The review is due to be reported in August—just under three months from now. Understandably, the Government wants to get this new contribution scheme going in July to get its budget repair work underway, but we are concerned that the biodiversity contributions element is not an essential part of that. We should take a cautious approach to this legislation, noting that more dramatic changes will likely be necessary to make biodiversity offsets and funds accountable and effective, and this work is already underway. We know that developer lobby groups are likely to oppose the necessary changes to biodiversity offsets because any failings in these schemes absolutely suit their interest. I say to the Government: Do not let them.

We heard this morning from the Opposition that their primary concern is the cost to the developer, not the provision of necessary infrastructure or the protection of or investment in biodiversity. The people of New South Wales are tired, after 12 years of the former Coalition Government, about the lack of critical infrastructure, like schools and public transport, being provided to go along with development, something we are feeling in the city and in the regions. We cannot have development that does not account for the cost to biodiversity. We look forward to the result of the review of the biodiversity offsets so that they can be made transparent and actually protect the environment, which we hope would be the point; not a system where environmental destruction and species loss can just be paid off. Under the previous Government, property developers were a protected species. It is time we stood up to them to protect endangered wildlife and our natural environment instead.

**Business interrupted.**

*Senate*

#### **SENATE VACANCY**

At 15:30 the House proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to attend a joint sitting to choose a senator in the place of the Hon. Andrew James "Jim" Molan, AO, DSC.

At 15:44 the House reassembled.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I report that at a joint sitting this day the Hon. Maria Kovacic was chosen as senator in the place of the Hon. Andrew James "Jim" Molan, AO, DSC. I order that the minutes be printed.

*Bills*

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (HOUSING AND PRODUCTIVITY CONTRIBUTIONS) BILL 2023**

##### **Second Reading Debate**

**Business resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (15:45):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023. I appreciate the laughter that came from my colleagues behind me when I used the word "brief", but I really mean it this time. I applaud the bill's very sensible change to legislation. We have heard from a number of members that State

infrastructure contribution schemes already exist in a number of places and do much the same thing without as much guidance, direction and specificity. We also heard an excellent contribution from the member for Wakehurst, who quoted at length one of the most excellent servants of this House, the former member for Pittwater Mr Rob Stokes, when he was talking about exactly what the bill does. It is not a tax because a planning Act cannot impose a tax. It is a levy, contribution or fee—call it what you want. It is fundamentally a contribution towards funding the obvious and necessary infrastructure that comes as we develop. Sometimes that development is an expansion into greenfield, sometimes it is infill and we go up in the air. In any case, if we put more people in a single place, we need to provide extra infrastructure.

I have listened carefully to the contributions of some Opposition members. I am mindful that the Opposition is going to oppose the bill, but I have still not landed on why or on what grounds. The logical argument is that if infrastructure is going to be needed—I do not think that a single member who has made a contribution has said it will not be needed—how is it going to be funded? The recently deposed Government maxed out the credit card, so we will threaten the triple-A credit rating every time we try to borrow. It sold assets of value and spent the money. In selling those assets it cut the income and revenue of the State. It has made regular tax cuts.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Triple-A credit rating.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Wahrenoonga. He cannot get his foot out of his mouth at the moment. There are two double-A credit ratings, and there is a single triple-A credit rating left. The budget papers tell us that we are on our way to losing that last triple-A credit rating because our unfunded liabilities are soon going to exceed 120 per cent of our revenue. That is a fact. It is written in the budgets that have recently come from the Government. It is pretty straightforward. I will get back to how we are going to fund the infrastructure. We do not have the tax incomes we used to have, we do not have revenue coming from the profit-making assets we used to have, we do not own a whole bunch of assets that we used to own and we do not have any ability to borrow money. So where is the money for infrastructure going to come from? Some of the money will come from the process of developers developing land and bringing it to market, and people investing in that market and becoming new occupants of particular neighbourhoods. This is a sensible change to the contributions process and policy for developers.

Having spoken with the Minister about the bill, I am really excited about having more certainty that some of the money collected from certain locations will be invested back into those places. My electorate of Cessnock has a number of greenfield developments going ahead at the moment. Those will obviously require further infrastructure. If contributions are collected from those developments, it is only right that some of that money is spent on infrastructure needed by those communities. How wonderful and sensible all that is, and how incredible, unbelievable and unfathomable that the Opposition will oppose it. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (15:51):** In reply: I thank the member for Manly, the member for Monaro, the member for Auburn, the member for Oatley, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Heathcote, the member for Kellyville, the member for Blacktown—who is also the Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Public Spaces—the member for Gosford, the member for Wakehurst, the member for Balmain and the member for Cessnock for their contributions to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Housing and Productivity Contributions) Bill 2023.

As I said in my second reading speech, the legislation is a genuine attempt to address housing supply by easing the infrastructure bottleneck plaguing the system and frustrating communities. Members opposite have decided to take the "oppose" part of "Opposition" and run with it. I cannot believe that they are intending to vote against the bill. In politics we sometimes see great examples of hypocrisy, but this is right up there. Members opposite brought a proposal before the previous Parliament that was based on the same recommendations of the Productivity Commission, the same rates and the same regions that this bill is based on. In fact, as the member for Monaro has already noted, then Treasurer Matt Kean said:

The Productivity Commission said this is the right policy for NSW.

...

We're not going to apologise for investing in the infrastructure that will bring on new housing supply, because we want to support first-time buyers being able to get their foot in the door.

As the member for Wakehurst rightly said, the former Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Rob Stokes, who was in the gallery earlier today, has correctly pointed out that the bill does not introduce a tax because a planning law cannot establish a tax. It is not a money bill; it is a planning instrument dedicated to making sure there is a funding stream that connects housing growth with jobs-related infrastructure, and that supports communities and supports growth. This funding stream made a \$1 billion line item in the forward estimates in the previous Government's *2022-23 Half-Yearly Review*, which doubled as its pre-election economic statement. It doubled as

the then Government's policy position, which it took to the election, campaigned on and sought a mandate for. So it strikes me as incredible hypocrisy that members opposite do not support the bill.

As I said, former Treasurer Matt Kean had indicated that he supported such a policy. He was right then. If he has any principles, he will break ranks and vote for the bill today. It contains the same level of contributions from developers as the previous Government's proposal. But this bill is an improved version, with a focus on housing supply and with critical transparency measures baked in. The Government is more than happy to stand by our conviction that this is a much better way of connecting housing, jobs and infrastructure in a more transparent, auditable and clear way.

In that vein, I thank the member for Wollondilly for her contribution to debate and her amendment. Over the past couple of weeks, we have had the opportunity to have several discussions. As the member for Wollongong, I am all too familiar with the pressures facing all of south-west Sydney—not just Wollondilly, Campbelltown and Leppington. While I touch on Leppington, I extend to the House the disappointment that the member for Leppington has expressed to me. He cannot yet make a contribution to this debate because his inaugural speech is still a couple of hours away. However, because he is silenced by convention, he wanted me to convey to the House that he absolutely supports the bill.

As I said, I acknowledge the very real infrastructure needs that the member for Wollondilly has identified, in particular the Picton bypass. I know it. I have been delayed on it. I hope that we are able to work together to improve it over time, along with Picton Road, which I have talked about for years. Those are exactly the types of important infrastructure priorities that will be funded through the housing and productivity contributions scheme. All members who contributed to debate, particularly those from the Government and crossbench, have demonstrated the need for the bill and the substantial funds for infrastructure spending that it will make available.

We will not fix the infrastructure problems that the former Government has let languish by funding single projects on a one-off basis. We need a fund to help us all. We need connected places. Improvements in one area benefit the rest, whether members opposite like it or not. A new or better road means lives saved and less congestion. A new school or hospital means less travel, more local jobs and better service provision. That in turn eases the burden on another part of Sydney. This fund will serve the many, not just the few. It is about productivity improvements and lifestyle improvements.

The member for Wakehurst also spoke about the needs of the growing community in Frenchs Forest, in particular the current arrangements and infrastructure needs identified in the Frenchs Forest special infrastructure contribution. I assure the member that I will be keeping existing infrastructure commitments front of mind when making the funding recommendations to the Treasurer, which he and I will take to Cabinet. I will do that not only at a personal level but also—with the success, hopefully, of the member for Wollondilly's amendment, which the Government supports—as a requirement of law. The process to be followed to arrive at some of those funding recommendations is helpfully set out in a document produced by the department and available online. Infrastructure prioritisation will be done through the Infrastructure Opportunities Plan. It states:

The Infrastructure Opportunities Plan provides the 'long list' of infrastructure needs for each Housing and Productivity Contribution area.

...

The Urban Development Program will provide forums for stakeholders to discuss the growth challenges for the regions where the Housing and Productivity Contribution will apply. Using construction data, dwelling forecasts and inputs from stakeholders, a set of infrastructure priorities will be recommended for each region.

The recommendations of each of the regions will feed into an Urban Development Program Oversight Committee. This forum will include representatives of LGNSW, peak industry groups and key government agencies. They will consider and balance the competing needs of each region to review and refine the infrastructure priority list.

A Government Coordination Group will review the growth challenges, agency capital programs and infrastructure priority recommendations from the Urban Development Program Oversight Committee to refine a list of priority infrastructure projects to inform government funding allocation decisions.

I also acknowledge the comments and contributions from, and discussions with, Local Government NSW. In a recent statement the president of Local Government NSW, Councillor Darriea Turley, said:

In good news, the Bill also provides for up to \$1 billion in grant funding over 10 years for councils to deliver local infrastructure, such as regional parks and sporting facilities.

Local Government NSW members are behind it. They understand that the bill does not undermine local government contributions but adds to them, to the benefit of communities overall. The bill and the debate today have had a long run-up, and I acknowledge the tireless work of the people in the Department of Planning and Environment, who have worked literally for years on the bill and the detail that sits underneath it. I particularly

acknowledge Jonathon Schipp and his team—Kate Speare, Katrine O'Flaherty and Hannah Brettschneider—Michael Gadiel as well as Madeleine Thomas for the drafting of the bill.

Since the NSW Productivity Commission's recommendations in 2020, there has been a clear need to do better than the existing infrastructure contributions system. The bill will create a new system for funding and planning for infrastructure, replacing the ad hoc, piecemeal and stop-start system of the past. It will raise up to \$700 million per year when fully operational. We need to get moving to deliver the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time to support our growing communities and to tackle the looming challenges of the housing crisis. I commend the bill to the House.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....52  
Noes .....34  
Majority.....18

#### AYES

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  
Finn, J  
Greenwich, A  
Hagarty, N

Hannan, J  
Harris, D  
Harrison, J  
Haylen, J  
Hoenig, R  
Holland, M  
Hornery, S  
Kaliyanda, C  
Kamper, S  
Kirby, W  
Leong, J  
McDermott, H  
McGirr, J  
McKeown, K  
Mehan, D  
O'Neill, M  
Park, R

Piper, G  
Quinnell, S  
Regan, M  
Saffin, J (teller)  
Saliba, D  
Scully, P  
Shetty, K  
Smith, T  
Stuart, M  
Tesch, L  
Vo, T  
Voltz, L  
Warren, G  
Washington, K  
Watson, A  
Whan, S (teller)  
Wilkinson, K

#### NOES

Amon, R  
Anderson, K  
Ayyad, T  
Clancy, J  
Cooke, S  
Coure, M  
Cross, M  
Crouch, A (teller)  
Davies, T  
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  
Minns, C

Provest, G  
Thompson, T  
Di Pasqua, S

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mrs Judy Hannan.**

### Consideration in Detail

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in one group of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (16:09):** I move my amendment No. 1 on sheet c2023-035:

No. 1      **Infrastructure previously identified**

Page 10, Schedule 1[11], proposed clause 1. Insert after line 37—

- (4A) In making a recommendation under section 7.31D(2)(c), the Minister must consider infrastructure identified in—
- (a) a 7.23 determination, or
  - (b) a proposal publicly exhibited under former section 7.23(4)(b) in relation to which a 7.23 determination was not made.

The reason for my amendment is to stop any loss of work already underway by the public service or councils and to stop any potential waste or duplication of studies already undertaken. The amendment also seeks to create more transparency for where the money ends up going—unlike money from WestInvest and the bushfire recovery fund that my electorate missed out on. The amendment seeks to change the bill as presented to insert clauses where the Minister will consider not only existing approved special infrastructure contributions but also those that are in assessment, thereby not duplicating the work of the public service that already has been partially done to deliver projects. We should never put a change of Government or an election in the way of delivering sound projects that communities deserve and that have often enjoyed bipartisan support.

As I said in my inaugural speech, money should not be devoted to an area based on an election campaign. It should be based on what is needed. I believe the amendment strengthens the Government's bill in that way. The people of Wollondilly would be glad to not have any development rather than development without infrastructure. We have had enough. The bill draws a line. Contributions have sat on the table for too long, just because the former Government refused to act. We understand the need for housing, but the system should not be set up that allows developers to take all of the benefits and leave nothing for communities that live there. That is the difference between affordability to buy in an area versus affordability to live in an area.

The amendment and the bill go a long way to share the load of building infrastructure. Coalition members have claimed the bill will end housing in New South Wales. I am not sure how a drop in contributions made from infrastructure—from \$50,000 per block to \$12,000 per block—and shared across the State will cause the sky to fall in. It may seem as though I am cynical but I have seen money drop out of Western Sydney deals and, other than the liveability fund, Wollondilly has got basically nothing. We are as big as the entire Western Sydney region but we lack resources, including adequate transport. We have limited hospitals and limited high schools. My electorate ought to be known as the area for best infrastructure, not for the biggest potholes. The infrastructure backlog can start to be tackled by the larger regional projects being funded at the outset, not in the catch-up, which has been the case for a long time.

The amendment is in keeping with the Minister's comments to date and the bill enables funds to be gathered from the Greater Sydney region to be spent on infrastructure projects like the Picton bypass, and I look forward to turning the dirt with the Minister and the Premier. I thank the Minister and his staff for their time on this matter over the past week or two. Moving this amendment gives me great hope for what we can collaboratively achieve in this place. I ask members to consider voting for the amendment to ensure that the contribution schemes already identified will be considered in infrastructure expenditure that we so desperately need in every electorate in the State, not just Wollondilly.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (16:13):** I thank the member for Wollondilly for the sensible amendment, and for her efforts and some other members of the crossbench to arrive at this point. I indicate the Government's support for the amendment and it supports the intention that underpins the amendment. It is a sensible improvement to the bill.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that amendment No.1 on sheet c2023-035 of the member for Wollondilly be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 as amended agreed to.**



### Third Reading

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

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

#### Second Reading Speech

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (16:16):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is introducing the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023 because we made an election commitment to prohibit political donations from clubs that have poker machines, and today we are delivering on that commitment. Members know that clubs are at the heart of community life and provide many social and economic benefits. Every week local clubs across New South Wales host thousands of school formals, wedding receptions, birthdays, anniversaries and wakes. Tonight and every other night, groups of like-minded people will gather around tables or in rooms at the local bowlo, RSL, leagues or workers club to connect with each other, socialise and be with friends. There would not be many people in New South Wales who do not have significant memories associated with a celebration or commiseration at a registered club.

Crucially, some money from those clubs flows back into the community. More than \$100 million a year is distributed to many different causes through the ClubGRANTS program. I know in my electorate, those grants are a lifeline to many organisations and underpin important work supporting the most vulnerable. Clubs might be the only venue that can put on an event of any size, especially in regional and rural areas. We saw that during the former Government's Great Southern Nights program, which we have committed to continuing. Many of those events were held in clubs in venues outside Greater Sydney such as the Broken Hill Musicians Club. From Gunnedah, Glen Innes, through to Paddington, Cronulla and Marrickville and clubs in my electorate, they brought music back to their communities under this program with COVID-safe gigs.

In bringing the bill to the House, I place on record the Government's support—and, I have no doubt, indeed the Chamber's support—for the important role registered clubs play in our community. However, we should acknowledge that there are concerns about the influence donations have on the political system. This reform will close gaps in the existing law that have allowed clubs with substantial interests in poker machines to donate to politics in New South Wales, even though other liquor and gambling industry entities were banned from doing so. One such gap is the need to capture an entity engaged in a business undertaking "for the ultimate purpose of making a profit". Closing those gaps is consistent with the existing policy taken in this House of prohibiting liquor or gambling industry business entities from making political donations.

In the view of the Government, the distinction was not justified by any strong policy rationale. Currently the Electoral Funding Act 2018 provides for three categories of prohibited donors who cannot make political donations. These are property developers, tobacco industry business entities, and liquor or gambling industry business entities. The bill will amend the definition of the last category to close those gaps. In putting that position, I recognise that New South Wales does have leading regulation in this area of donations and electoral expenditure, something I think all sides of politics should be proud of as part of our political tradition in this State.

The final report of the panel of experts chaired by Dr Kerry Schott, *Political Donations*, dated December 2014, recommended that the ban on political donations from the prohibited donors that I referred to be retained subject to the, at the time, pending High Court decision in *McCloy v New South Wales* [2015] HCA 34, and the introduction of caps on political donations for local government. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into the final report of the expert panel, *Political Donations*, and the Government's response, dated June 2016, recommended that the New South Wales Government review the effectiveness of the prohibited donor provisions in the context of the comprehensive review of the now repealed Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 and introduce caps on political donations and expenditure for local government. That did occur. The then Government's response to the committee report accepted that recommendation and noted:

The Government will consider whether the policy objectives of the prohibited donor provisions are still valid in light of these developments, consistent with Recommendation 3 of the Committee and Recommendation 7 of the Panel.

Recommendations of the expert panel and the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters were implemented by the introduction of the Electoral Funding Act in 2018, which retained the three categories of prohibited donor. The Government has considered the policy objectives of the prohibited donor provisions and considers that they remain valid and will be more effectively advanced by the amendments that the bill will make to the

Electoral Funding Act. Premier Nathan Rees' prohibition on donations from property developers was challenged in the High Court and upheld as valid in the case of *McCloy v New South Wales* [2015] HCA 34. Tobacco, liquor and gambling industry business entities were added in around 2013.

The Government accepts that the bill will burden the implied freedom of political communication under the Commonwealth Constitution because it restricts the funds available to political parties and candidates to meet the costs of political communication. However, the Government considers that the bill is reasonably appropriate and adapted to serve a legitimate end in a manner that is compatible with the system of representative and responsible government established by the Constitution, for exactly the same reasons that saw the prohibition on property developer donations upheld by the High Court in the *McCloy* case. The ABC has reported that organisations and individuals linked to the gambling industry have given at least \$18 million in political donations into the States and Territories in recent years. The Commonwealth Senate Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations report *Political Influence of Donations*, dated 2018, noted:

... strong indications of undue influence are provided by patterns between political donations over time and their proximity to key policy decisions.

The report referenced a submission arguing that:

... [t]he Australian gambling industry has utilised political donations as a mechanism to exert considerable influence over relevant public policy ...

It is clear that there is a perception amongst the community that these donations have an influence on government decision-making. I do not think anyone in the Chamber would dispute that community fear. The liquor and gambling industry is, properly, highly regulated. Its financial position is dependent on Government policy and decision-making. That is one of the reasons why we need to pay close attention to that community perception. The ABC has reported that in New South Wales gambling-related organisations have donated more than a million dollars in the decade since donations became banned, with many of those donations coming from registered clubs. However, the effectiveness of the ban in New South Wales, despite those gaps, was reflected favourably in the fact that in Queensland gambling-related groups donated more than twice as much in half the time.

The Government intends to build on the success of the existing policy by introducing the bill to ensure that registered clubs are brought within the scope of the prohibition and cannot be perceived to exercise influence through political donations because of gaps in the law. This will ensure that the provisions of the Act are achieving their object of helping prevent corruption and undue influence, or the perception of corruption or undue influence, in the government of the State or in local government. The Electoral Funding Act already contains a power for regulations to be made to exempt certain persons or acts, matters or things from all or any of the provisions of the Act.

The bill includes an amendment to the Electoral Funding Regulation to create one such exemption for an existing practice that is considered worthy of preservation and compatible with the policy aim of the bill. The Government will also be supporting amendments to the exemption provision proposed by the member for Sydney to simplify and clarify it. Currently some registered clubs provide venues for political participants to carry out activities such as holding meetings or meeting with community members. This is of particular benefit to communities in areas with limited facilities; that is sometimes in the bush or in many of the suburbs of Sydney. To the extent that the bill would prohibit registered clubs from continuing to provide this service, the bill will exempt it from the definition of "political donation" for the purpose of the prohibition and allow it to continue to occur.

The provision of premises by a registered club will still be subject to the rest of the Electoral Funding Act. That includes the rules around the disclosure of reportable political donations and relevant caps. In effect this means that, should a meeting occur that would qualify as an in-kind donation, it is subject to the rules around reportable donations and caps. That is an important exemption that ensures that clubs can remain places where the community can gather, including the political community, and including allowing interaction between the political community and the rest of the community. These measures, taken together, are an important step in maintaining public trust in the political system in New South Wales. That is why the Government moved the bill as one of the first bills in its legislative program. There is nothing as important as maintaining public trust in the political system. We accept that this measure is required; that is why it was committed to in the election campaign.

In this State we have a highly regulated political donations system. It is something which we should be proud of. We would not be here without the decisions taken over decades by people on all sides of politics to deal with ensuring that money is not influencing politics and that that perception is not a part of politics in New South Wales. We should be realistic; these laws are unlikely to deter all bad actors in New South Wales from seeking to improperly influence public officials and distort our democratic system. But there is no question that laws like this and the system we have evolved to provide a barrier to that action. There is no doubt that laws like this go

a long way to restoring trust in the political system in New South Wales. We build on that legacy today with this bill.

I turn to the provisions of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill amends section 53 (4) (b) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018. This is the definition of "liquor or gambling industry business entity", which is one of the categories of prohibited donor under section 51 of the Act. It adds to this definition two paragraphs. New paragraph (c) provides that the definition will include a registered club within the meaning of the Registered Clubs Act 1976 if the business undertaken by the registered club includes wagering, betting or other gambling. New paragraph (d) provides that the definition will also include a person who is, for a registered club that is captured by new paragraph (c), either the secretary of the registered club, a member of the governing body of the registered club, or the spouse of the secretary or a member of the governing body.

We understand that the member for Sydney will move an amendment to slightly expand this to include other "close associates" and that will be supported by the Government. It is noted that under section 51 of the Act, an industry representative organisation is also a prohibited donor if the majority of its members are prohibited donors. Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Electoral Funding Regulation 2018. It inserts new clause 36A, relying on the power under section 156 (3) (f) of the Act for the regulations to create exemptions.

New clause 36A will provide that permitting the use of part of the premises of a registered club is not a political donation for the purposes of part 3, division 7 of the Act—which is the division that bans donations from prohibited donors—if the use is by or on behalf of an elected member, a candidate for election, a party or a group and is associated with either an election or an elected member's duties as an elected member. As I mentioned earlier, the Government will be supporting the amendments proposed by the member for Sydney to simplify and clarify that provision.

I acknowledge the concerns raised by the member for Balmain during the development of the bill about the making of political donations by construction management companies and former property developers. As members are aware, property developers are currently banned from making political donations in New South Wales due to the proximity of such donations to key planning and development decisions at the State and local government levels. The concerns of the member for Balmain follow media reports this week that the former Coalition Government accepted political donations from construction management companies and retired property developers to support its 2023 election campaign.

The question is whether those entities, while not technically caught by the current ban on donations from developers, should be banned from making political donations in New South Wales. The Government is keen to ensure that any actual or perceived loopholes in the current prohibition on property developers are thoroughly tested and considered by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters during its usual review of the 2023 State election. Given the constitutional risks associated with broadening the scope of any law that burdens the implied freedom of political communication, we must proceed with care, caution and a full understanding of the evidence, risks and policy rationale. The bill will commence on 1 July 2023. I am pleased to introduce the bill before the House, and I commend it to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (16:31):** I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023. This bill is the only legislation offered on poker machine reform by NSW Labor in this Parliament. Yesterday Labor put forward a bill to amend the Constitution to make it more difficult to privatise water assets. That was never going to happen. It left out of that bill two-thirds of water assets in New South Wales, including Warragamba Dam. Labor has no legislation to deal with problem gambling or money laundering by organised crime as recommended by the New South Wales Crime Commission. The bill is simply a straw man compared with the comprehensive poker machine reform package that the member for Epping took to the State election on behalf of the NSW Liberals in March. The bill contains a minor change to the Electoral Funding Act 2018 rather than more substantial reform. It is another example of NSW Labor being all politics and no policy of any substance.

We need to consider the recent history of poker machines and donations from poker machine owners in New South Wales. Prior to the former Labor Government that was in office from 1995 to 2011, there were no poker machines in hotels in New South Wales. Poker machines were limited to registered clubs and limited in their reach. During the tenure of the Labor Government of 1995-2011, there was an explosion in the number of poker machines in New South Wales. On the back of massive donations to NSW Labor by hoteliers, poker machines were for the first time allowed in new hotels, damaging our registered clubs. Even more political donations by hoteliers to NSW Labor followed. When it became obvious that Labor would lose government in New South Wales in 2011, it passed legislation to make illegal political donations by gambling interests, hotel and liquor interests, and property developers that had funded the previous New South Wales Labor Government.

It did so by throwing a bone to the registered clubs, including the many Labor and workers clubs that donated to the ALP. It exempted registered clubs that used poker machines under provisions that were continued in the current section 53 (4) (a) of the Electoral Funding Act. The section did not make it express that it applied to registered clubs. Like section 53 (4) (a) of the Electoral Funding Act, it defined a liquor or gambling industry business as one "only if it is for the ultimate purpose of making a profit". As registered clubs are not-for-profit clubs, they were exempt from the prohibition on electoral donations, which means that they were allowed to continue making electoral donations even though the legislation did not expressly refer to registered clubs.

The impact of the exemption was that most registered clubs made relatively small political donations, but Labor clubs and workers clubs made much larger political donations to the ALP under the provision. According to the ABC, between 2011 and 2021 NSW Labor received over \$480,000 in donations from registered clubs; the Liberal Party received under \$180,000 in donations from registered clubs; and the National Party received just under \$33,500. Also, according to the ABC, over 40 organisations with links to gambling donated a combined amount of over \$1 million to New South Wales political groups since the ban came into effect in 2011. Seventy-five per cent of those donations were made to the ALP; just 18 per cent were made to the New South Wales Liberal Party; and just over 3 per cent were made to the NSW Nationals. It should be of no surprise, then, to learn that the Opposition supports a closure of the provisions that have effectively been rorted by Labor to receive donations from poker machine revenues via Labor clubs and workers clubs in New South Wales.

Under schedule 1 to the bill, a prohibited donor is now proposed to include registered clubs that have wagering, betting or other gambling facilities. Those clubs would be prohibited under the bill from making political donations. The Opposition agrees with that amendment. It also agrees with the proposed amendments of the member for Sydney, which, as I understand it, Labor has agreed to. The amendments add close associates of registered clubs to the list of prohibited donors. That will consistently apply the legislation to close associates defined under section 53 (5) to all prohibited donors. There are legitimate concerns as to the reach of schedule 2 to the bill. I point out that, even with the schedule coming into force, there would never have been any prohibition on clubs in regional or any other areas hosting political meetings. All that would have been required is the political party or political meeting holder would pay a fair commercial rate for the use of the facilities so that it was not a political donation but an arms-length transaction.

Schedule 2, contrary to the second reading speech in the other place, was in fact not necessary to facilitate political meetings in areas where the facilities may have been limited, particularly in regional areas. That is not so. Schedule 2 now facilitates the free provision—that is, donations in kind—being made by registered clubs. The member for Sydney has again proposed amendments that reflect a sensible clarification of what the use of premises entails. In particular, his proposed amendments make it clear that registered clubs cannot donate premises for electoral fundraising purposes or electoral campaign offices, or the provision of food and beverages, the use of staff or contractors within the registered club, or the use of information technology or audiovisual facilities—things that we know take place with regard to in-kind donations by Labor clubs and workers clubs to the Labor Party. The amendment of the member for Sydney—with the greatest of respect to the member for Sydney, I did not realise he was in the Chamber—will prevent the provision of those things, unless they were paid on a commercial basis, which is a sensible proposal.

The Opposition supports the bill with the amendments foreshadowed by the member for Sydney. Having regard to the High Court's decisions in *Unions NSW v NSW [No 1]* and *[No 2]* and, of course, the line of authority that started with *Australian Capital Television Pty Ltd v Commonwealth* and the *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* decisions, this area is full of constitutional complexities in relation to the implied protection of the freedom of political speech under the Commonwealth Constitution. But the Opposition believes the amendments are proportionate and will not infringe those constitutional protections. Accordingly, we will support the legislation as proposed to be amended by the member for Sydney.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:40):** I am pleased to speak to another piece of legislation brought before this House in the first few weeks of the Minns Labor Government—legislation that is reforming this State and that delivers on our election commitments. We will continue to deliver the legislation that we have promised to the New South Wales electorate. Certainly, despite the Coalition's attempts to stymie debate and to delay this legislation and reforms, we will continue to push through and do whatever must be done to make sure we deliver on our election promises.

I gladly support the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023. The bill amends the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and Electoral Funding Regulation 2018. It will prohibit political donations from registered clubs involved in gambling. Currently, in New South Wales there are three categories of prohibited donors under the Electoral Funding Act 2018. It is unlawful for a prohibited donor to make a political donation and for a person to accept a political donation made by a prohibited donor. These three categories are property developers, tobacco industry business entities, and liquor or gambling industry business entities. Stopping these

donations has been key to the reforms made over the past 20 years or so to try to break the hold of not only organised crime but also significant peddlers of influence in politics in New South Wales.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Lurk merchants.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** "Lurk merchants" is a fantastic term, passed on by the Manager of the Opposition Business, for criminals, lobbyists and others who constantly try to circumvent the democratic process in New South Wales. Lobbyists such as Photios and others in the Liberal Party have continued to wield influence in that party. Labor broke the influence of such people many years ago, thanks to the reforms we put in place. Registered clubs, which may have gambling machines or are otherwise involved in gambling, such as through wagering, betting or other gambling activities, may not be captured by the existing legislation and definitions—specifically, the definition of "liquor or gambling industry business entity". Due to the language used in the Act, which includes the need for these entities to have a profit-making purpose, some clubs have been able to lawfully make political donations despite other gambling institutions being banned from doing so. I turn now to the details of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill will amend the Electoral Funding Act 2018, inserting after section 53 (4) (b):

- (c) a registered club within the meaning of the Registered Clubs Act 1976, if the business undertaken by the registered club includes wagering, betting or other gambling,
- (d) a person who, for a registered club referred to in paragraph (c), is—
  - (i) the secretary of the registered club, or
  - (ii) a member of the governing body of the registered club, or
  - (iii) the spouse of the secretary or member of the governing body.

These reforms will close a political loophole in existing laws that allow clubs with interests in poker machines to continue meddling in New South Wales politics through political donations. Registered clubs, which may have gambling machines or are otherwise involved in gambling such as through wagering, betting or other gambling activities, will be banned from making political donations. However, it is not intended that the amendment will include occasional raffles or small fundraisers held by clubs. If other gambling entities are banned from making political donations, this standard should apply to clubs in New South Wales. There is a significant need for this proposed amendment, which is long overdue. The communities we serve have made it clear that the gambling industry should not be able to exercise, or be perceived to exercise, influence through political donations.

From 18 January 2023, NSW Labor decided not to accept donations from clubs with gambling machines. The bill will ensure that this standard applies to every political party in the State. That is a good point. NSW Labor made very clear on 18 January 2023 that we would not accept money from clubs for the campaign in the State election. The same commitment was not given by any other political party. The Liberals and The Nationals continue to take money from clubs and other gambling entities. It is one thing to talk, as they did last year and earlier this year, about how they would take on the gaming industry, stop money laundering and other criminal activity, and help problem gamblers. But did they continue to take political donations? Of course they did. Every cent went into the coffers of their political mates so they could try to beat the Labor Opposition into government. They failed.

We need to reassure the people we represent throughout New South Wales that corruption and undue influence in local and State government through political donations are unacceptable. That is why the Minns Labor Government made an election commitment to ban political parties from taking money from gambling—a promise that we are now delivering on for the people of New South Wales. In the decade since donations from the liquor and gambling industry were banned, more than \$1 million has been donated by gambling-related organisations. Many of these are registered clubs. The money has come into the coffers of all political parties in New South Wales.

This is not to criticise registered clubs or to take away from their benefit to our community. They serve an important purpose in community life throughout New South Wales, especially in Western Sydney. However, there is no place for politicians and political parties receiving what are often very significant political donations. I look at the clubs involved in my community in Western Sydney: Blacktown Workers Club, Wenty Leagues, Smithfield RSL, Seven Hills RSL, Fox Hills Golf Club and Cumberland Country Golf Club. They are key centres of our community that employ many people and give a lot of grants to help sporting activities and clubs. I know that if a young sports star who comes from a poor background or a refugee family needs a few thousand dollars to travel to a zone competition or to Queensland to compete, I can ask one of those clubs and it will donate the money to pay for it in a snap, because clubs care about our community.

One problem we have is the amount of gambling in our communities. Many years ago we introduced gambling regulations to stop organised crime. But, unfortunately, it has spread to other places and is having a detrimental effect on our communities. We need to do something about it. This bill is at least a first step to deal

with political donations that we can take whilst we are reviewing problem gambling in New South Wales and money laundering in clubs.

Continuing with the detail of the bill, schedule 2 amends the Electoral Funding Regulation 2018. Schedule 2 provides that the prohibition does not prevent a registered club from permitting the following to use part of the premises of the registered club: a member of Parliament, a local council councillor, or a candidate for election to Parliament or local council. That exemption will ensure that clubs are not prevented from allowing their premises to be used by elected members, candidates, a party or group to carry out activities associated with an election or an elected member's duties. That might include a community meeting or forum, or a thank you dinner.

Those activities currently provide community benefit, particularly in areas with limited facilities and access to facilities, so the bill will allow those activities to continue while banning clubs from making financial donations. The amendments will be regulated by the Electoral Commission, which will be available for clubs to ask for determinations and advice as to whether they are caught by the prohibition. The Electoral Commission will have the authority to judge individual clubs on a case-by-case basis—[*Extension of time*]

The Electoral Commission will have the authority to judge individual clubs on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that they have an avenue to seek individual advice about the regulation. Closing this loophole reinforces the original purpose of prohibiting specified categories of donors from making political donations under the Electoral Funding Act 2018. Financial donations from clubs, property developers, the tobacco industry, business entities, and liquor or gaming business industries can exert too much influence on the outcome of an election by providing funding towards preferred candidates or parties during an election campaign. Those prohibited donors should not be involved in a democratic election process. It is a decision that should be made by our communities—our residents, families and individuals. The bill will ensure that their right to democratically elect a representative to Parliament is protected, and lies with them and only them. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (16:51):** The Opposition does not oppose the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023. Currently, the Electoral Funding Act 2018 prohibits property developers, the tobacco industry and the liquor and gaming industry from making donations. The bill will add definitions such as "registered club" within the meaning of the Registered Clubs Act 1976, which includes wagering, betting or other gambling. The member for Sydney has foreshadowed sound and sensible amendments to the bill. The Opposition will not oppose those amendments. They include banning donations from close associates as well as banning the donation of premises and hospitality within a club for electoral funding purposes or for use as an electoral campaign office. Those particular organisations can use them but must pay the market rate.

My learned colleague the member for Wahroonga has already gone through the finer details of the bill. Registered clubs play an important part in our communities. They are big employers and boost our local economies through goods and services. New South Wales has more than 1,300 registered clubs that together are home to more than 5.7 million members. Clubs are one of the State's largest employers, providing more than 54,000 jobs statewide and contributing more than \$3.7 billion a year to the State economy. More than half of those clubs sit in regional New South Wales, where they are very much the lifeblood of communities, providing 23,000 crucial local regional jobs and essential social benefits.

Evidence shows that when regional clubs can respond to changing operating environments, they remain financially viable and well placed to invest in local infrastructure and services that meet the needs of their communities. Through thick and thin, they provide gathering places for people to celebrate, whether it is a special occasion or a casual get-together, and they provide cultural, sporting and recreational facilities. They also provide shelter in times of crisis or disaster, particularly in our regional areas that have suffered so much through drought, bushfires and floods. In closing, registered clubs give enormous support to their communities.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:54):** The object of the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023 is to prohibit political donations from registered clubs involved in gambling. Before the March State election, the now Labor Government promised to prohibit political donations from clubs that have poker machines and gaming machines. The bill delivers on that promise. The Electoral Funding Act, in its current form, provides for three categories of prohibited donors who cannot make political donations: property developers, tobacco industry business entities, and liquor or gambling industry businesses, where the entities are engaged in a business undertaking for the ultimate purpose of making a profit. As members of the House know, the unique thing about the clubs industry in Australia—and it is one of its strengths—is that it is a not-for-profit undertaking. All profits generated by clubs must be reinvested into the purpose of the club. It is uniquely Australian and a strength of the industry in this country.

The bill makes two changes to the Electoral Funding Act. Firstly, it adds a prohibited owner, defined as a registered club that is engaged in gambling activities, including persons who, for a registered club referred to in the Act, are the secretary of the club, a member of the governing body or spouse of the secretary or member of the governing body. To further support the changes proposed, Labor is proposing through the bill to change the regulations under the Electoral Funding Regulation 2018 to make it clear that where a club allows the use of its premises for political parties to hold meetings on the premises—as is common—that will not be a donation under the terms of the Electoral Funding Act.

This bill delivers on one of a whole suite of measures that Labor proposed during the election campaign in March to address problem gambling and money laundering in the gaming industry. We heard from those opposite about their proposal during the election campaign. They referred to it as comprehensive. It was a silver bullet proposal to introduce cashless gaming—against the opposition of the club and hotel industry—as the way to address money laundering and problem gambling across this State. Labor's approach to address problem gambling and money laundering across the State is a more comprehensive. Partly, we made a commitment to extend mandatory cashless gaming by increasing the trial of cashless gaming cards across the State. We also made a commitment to ban donations from clubs, which the bill delivers on. We have made a commitment to reduce the cash feed-in limit for new poker machines. Currently you can load up a poker machine with \$5,000, and those opposite were going to allow that to continue.

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Not us, the other people that usually sit on this side of the Chamber during question time.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** No, not you, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition. From 1 July, Labor will limit the feed-in limit to \$500 per machine for new machines. We gave a commitment to ban external gaming-related signage. We have already done that. We committed to reduce the amount of poker machines in New South Wales through a ratio whereby each new poker machine brought in by venues results in two existing poker machines being eliminated from the total stock of poker machines in the State. We made a commitment to invest \$100 million in harm minimisation. We made a commitment to introduce responsible gaming officers in all venues. Importantly for many people in my electorate who have spoken to me about this issue, we made a commitment to introduce third-party exclusion and mandatory facial recognition in clubs and hotels. We made a commitment to a whole bunch of things that we say will address money laundering and problem gambling. The bill is part of our commitment to the community, and I commend it to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** 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.

## GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (GRANTS) BILL 2023

### REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

#### Assent

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of messages from the Governor notifying Her Excellency's assent to the bills.

#### *Public Interest Debate*

#### SYDNEY WORLDPRIDE

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge guests of the member for Granville—Zaki Haidari from Amnesty International, Nasima Haidari, Abdul Hadi Haidari, Zainab Haidari, Frozan Haidari, Ali Sajad Haidari and Ali Hamid Haidari. They are welcome. I acknowledge guests of the member for Sydney, including members of Sydney WorldPride and the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:01):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Commends Sydney WorldPride CEO Kate Wickett, chair Damien Hodgkinson, staff, volunteers, board, partners, sponsors, and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras for delivering a landmark event that welcomed the world back to Sydney.
- (2) Acknowledges the positive impact of Sydney WorldPride on improving LGBTQIA+ rights in New South Wales, Australia, and the Asia-Pacific region, particularly through the Human Rights Conference and work of Equality Australia.
- (3) Congratulates Sydney WorldPride on delivering a program of events that were inclusive and diverse, and that promoted and celebrated First Nations voices.
- (4) In the spirit of Sydney WorldPride's theme of "Gather, Dream, Amplify", calls on the New South Wales Parliament to continue to legislate reforms that deliver fairness and equality for LGBTQIA+ people.

WorldPride was a gift to Sydney and to our LGBTQI+ community, one whose legacy will continue to strengthen our values of fairness and equality. Today our Parliament says thank you. At the outset, I flag that we are graced by the presence of some key people who delivered the festival—the incomparable CEO, Kate Wickett; Gabriel Pinkstone, COO; Alex Daoust; Regina San Juan; Sophie Curtis; Natasha Smale; Matt Akersten; Ebony Williams; Charmaine Belfanti; Jesse Matheson; Adrian Phoon; Sue Pinckham; Shane Sturgiss; Jaine Moralee; Kate Foy; Giovanni Campolo-Arcidiaco; Steph Sands; 78er Robyn Kennedy; and Anna Brown, who through Equality Australia and the Human Rights Conference played a key role in strengthening LGBTQI+ rights. I believe Albert Kruger will also be joining us. I pay tribute to his leadership of Mardi Gras through the challenging times of the pandemic. We know that he is now moving on to hopefully less stressful opportunities. There are so many more people to thank in that amazing team, including the chair, Damien Hodgkinson, and festival directors Daniel Clark and Ben Graetz.

The team at WorldPride did not like the event being called the Gay or LGBTQI+ Olympics. Indeed, a major sporting festival was only part of the programming. But the impact of Sydney WorldPride was comparable to the Olympics, as it put our city back on the map and on top of the list, with a big rainbow highlight across it. There were so many diverse and inclusive events. I was honoured to attend many of them and felt a pride that I had never felt before in Sydney. Hearing the Ukrainian Ambassador to Australia talk about LGBTQI+ soldiers fighting the war against the Russian invasion at the pride flag raising at the Sydney Town Hall set the scene for the international focus of the festival. Blak and Deadly, the First Nations gala concert at the Sydney Opera House, saw the inspiring and emotional performance of queer First Nations artists at Tubaowgule, the land where the Opera House now stands.

My favourite party of the entire festival was Ultra Violet, the awesome lesbian party. I had been around too many gay men during the festival, so an event for LGBTQI+ women who took over the Sydney Town Hall was absolutely amazing. Crossing the Sydney Harbour Bridge for LGBTQI+ equality with my husband, the Lord Mayor and so many others in the Parliament was a powerful moment that motivates me daily in this place to remove all discrimination that targets our community. The Pride Villages brought everyone to Oxford Street to support and celebrate local businesses, and the parade and afterparty were the best they have ever been.

It was not just the big events that were impactful. Smaller ones like the Sydney Boys High School WorldPride assembly, where I spoke about coming out, or the WorldPride barbecue hosted by inner-city social housing residents showed that the spirit of the festival flowed right through the city, and formal and informal events. To quote Kate Wickett, "It was a party with purpose—real purpose." Thanks to the leadership of Equality Australia, the Human Rights Conference at the International Convention Centre delivered real outcomes for New South Wales, Australia and our region. They included Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong committing \$3.5 million for the first dedicated Australian fund to support LGBTQI+ civil society organisations and human rights defenders in the Asia-Pacific, and a new LGBTQI+ national health action plan, along with \$26 million in funding dedicated to health and research. We also saw important commitments from both major parties in New South Wales to end harmful conversion practices. The good news is that I have my bill ready. I have been to a lot of LGBTQI+ conferences, but I have never seen so much achieved.

Of course, there is more work to do. Just as WorldPride provided a powerful platform and promoted and celebrated First Nations voices, our community must do the same to support the referendum on a First Nations Voice to Parliament. We know how hard and how important a public vote can be. There can be none more important than one that finally recognises First Nations people in our Constitution. We know that the LGBTQI+ community is experiencing an increase in hate crimes. I know that firsthand. Today a man is facing court for death threats made to me during WorldPride. Every day, trans and gender diverse people are bullied in schools, parks and the media. We need to make sure that right across Australia we have hate crimes legislation that protects our community. We need to make sure that organisations that support our community continue to get recurrent funding, and I welcome the commitments from the New South Wales Government and the Treasurer to work on that. With the energy and inspiration of WorldPride, I am more confident than ever before that Sydney, New South Wales and Australia will be better and safer for LGBTQI+ people. I commend the motion to the House.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (17:08):** I start by thanking the member for Sydney for bringing the motion to the House. I also thank him for all the work he has done not only in helping to get WorldPride to Sydney but also in the advancement and advocacy of LGBTI rights, even in the face of horrific things from people who operate within this building. I thank him for that. I do not know how Kate organised WorldPride. Every time I bumped into her, she looked fresh and happy, walking out of another party with a purpose. I thank her for bringing WorldPride to our city. I also thank Sophie. Sophie was fundamental to the Pride Amplified events across Sydney. She worked really closely with my electorate's chambers of commerce to make sure that all of Sydney, including the suburbs outside of the CBD, was painted with a rainbow and that we could show pride for our LGBTI communities.



As a result, pubs and clubs that had never engaged with the LGBTI community did LGBTI training because they wanted to learn how better to interact with people and to learn about pronouns. They were actively doing that. I have to say that it made Coogee a much more fun place. I reiterate what the member for Sydney said. WorldPride has given me a huge amount of pride in my own area and in Sydney. We have a lot to really be proud of. Personally, Fair Day is my favourite part. It has been and will always be my favourite part. There are some nods in the gallery. It kicks it off. I also have to say that walking across the bridge was remarkable. The human rights conference and the opportunity to meet with those speakers at Government House was probably one of the most transformative experiences throughout that period for me. I was able to hear from people who are making fundamental changes across the globe, not just in Sydney, and learn about the role that we can all play in advancing LGBTI rights around the world.

I also acknowledge what the member for Sydney said about fairness and continued support. I take the opportunity to say that NSW Labor is excited about Mardi Gras next year. We are committed to making sure that there is no shortfall in funding for Mardi Gras next year and that it is all properly funded. I also acknowledge our support for Qtopia. We have committed \$3.85 million to supporting it. It is important because it is both a symbolic and a literal crossroads for us moving forward. Acknowledging that space and acknowledging that part of our history and culture is really important.

Banning gay conversion therapy is one of those fundamental pieces of law that need to happen. It will put our State in line with other States. It is really disappointing. A State the size of New South Wales should be leading on that kind of legislation and the fact that we lag is a huge disappointment. I thank the member for Sydney for pushing for that legislation. I look forward to working with him and passing it through Parliament. The Opposition supports that legislation, so I look forward to it being moved and considered in Parliament slowly and with very respectful debate.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:13):** I support the public interest debate motion moved by the member for Sydney. I thank him for doing so. As members all know, WorldPride is a major event for the LGBTIQI community around the entire world. We were so fortunate to have welcomed the world to celebrate all things Pride in our beautiful harbour city of Sydney. During WorldPride we, of course, had our annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade and Fair Day. For the first year since COVID, the parade was returned home to Oxford Street. I am not sure about other members but, like the member for Coogee, I found that the city felt electric during WorldPride, particularly Fair Day. It was buzzing. It was very hot. That was the downside for me. But it was filled with people and stalls. It was a scorching summer's day but the atmosphere was profound and powerful. An incredibly diverse group of people attended on the day as well.

Once again this year I joined NSW Liberal Pride for the Mardi Gras parade along Oxford Street with hundreds of floats and thousands of marchers, as well as a staggering crowd lining the parade route. We are getting a more positive reception each year, so we are going to keep trying. We need to earn that more positive reception, so we will keep working on it and trying, because we respect and value that community. Many of our members are also part of that community and we respect and value them. What is so special about this event is the outpouring of fun and love that accompanies it. Everyone is there not only to have a good time but also to celebrate Pride. Where there has been a history of struggle, there is now a sense of embracing what we have all achieved and can enjoy together. Whether you are an ally like me or part of the community, there is something to bring everybody a great sense of pride. I also thank our NSW Liberal Pride committee for organising and supporting our LGBTIQI MPs and party members with a range of different events—a bit of a sideshow alongside WorldPride.

One of the most amazing moments for me during WorldPride was the world coming together on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. I saw a number of those in the gallery there. I was proud to march alongside a number of fellow MPs, obviously the member for Sydney and his husband, as well as the member for Hornsby, Lord Mayor Clover Moore and Councillor Emelda Davis. It was such an unforgettable experience walking the Warringah Freeway onto the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the dead dark of early morning—I think it was the earliest start the member for Sydney has had for some time—and feeling the atmosphere and the diversity of people who were represented in the march. There were a number of families, different generations, different multicultural individuals and people from across the globe. There was such a power and spirit of celebration and joy. It was profound to be part of that. If you could bottle the feeling, it would sustain you every day with joy. I really appreciated being part of it and that so many people were a part of it. That is what WorldPride did for all of us and the community, so I thank the organisers.

I put on record some of the commitments and achievements that the Liberal Party has delivered in previous years, just to restate our commitment to the LGBTIQI community. Obviously, in 2014 we amended the law to allow for historic gay and lesbian offences to be extinguished from the records. We abolished the gay panic defence and delivered the first official government apology to the 78ers. It was great to see so many of them in the march. In 2017 we, as a nation, achieved a momentous change in legalising same-sex marriage. I was

immensely proud to be part of the "Yes" campaign—a very tiny part compared to other members in the Chamber and, of course, the member for Sydney. In 2019 we approved HIV self-testing kits for use and listed PrEP on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The Liberal Party also has a number of firsts in LGBTIQI representation, not just in this Parliament but also the Federal Parliament. Bruce Notley-Smith, the predecessor of the member for Coogee, became the first openly gay member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. In 2015 Liberal Trent Zimmerman became the first openly gay member of the Federal House of Representatives. Liberal Don Harwin was appointed as the first openly gay Cabinet Minister in New South Wales history. In 2019 Liberal Angie Bell became the first openly lesbian member of the Federal House of Representatives. I also acknowledge two of my colleagues in the other place who are part of the community, the Hon. Chris Rath and the Hon. Jacqui Munro.

Last year we established a world-first Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQI hate crimes and we committed to opening the first LGBTIQI health centre with ACON. I commit our ongoing support to a ban on gay conversion therapy. It is the right thing to do. I am looking forward to supporting the bill of the member for Sydney. We also announced as a party that Qtopia would have a permanent home in the former Darlinghurst Police Station. I thank the member for Sydney and all of those involved in WorldPride. There is a lot more work to be done and I commit to standing shoulder to shoulder with the community as we aim to do that work.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:18):** It is with great pride that I support the enthusiastic commendation in the motion from the member for Sydney for the outstanding work of Kate Wickett. I congratulate and thank Kate and her extraordinary team. What a mighty team effort to pull off such an incredible event. The city was just so alive—as someone who grew up running wild on Oxford Street in my youth, it was wilder than we ever knew it. This was the first time WorldPride has been held in the Southern Hemisphere, and it continues to be the world's largest LGBTQIA+ celebration—17 days and over 300 events. What a mammoth effort and, as the member for Coogee said, Kate looked immaculate the whole time. Give us some of that power!

Kate's work in service of the event and the State of New South Wales did not stop when WorldPride came to a close. Yesterday Kate was in Manly speaking on a panel on tourism in this State organised by Local Government NSW, and how important it is to spread the message of absolute inclusion. We have a disability inclusion action plan, but we have a responsibility to go much further towards inclusion. Kate shared the success stories of interactions and activations between Sydney WorldPride and local government across the regions, including the events at the Central Coast community's beautiful Naughty Noodle. Tonight I might rush home from Parliament and rush into ThursGAY, which is an activation where one little pub in Gosford goes off for one night a month. It is the best function that Gosford has, and my challenge is to improve that.

What Kate and the organisers gave the people of New South Wales during Sydney WorldPride was outstanding. They delivered an LGBTQIA+ human rights conference, the WorldPride march, a First Nations hub in Redfern, a gala concert, a Bondi Beach party, sporting events, a regional event in Newcastle and the opening and closing ceremonies, and our fantastic Mardi Gras was integrated into that. How proud we are, and so many members have marched on various occasions. It was fantastic to see the Prime Minister marching, as he has since the eighties, making a very clear statement that the Federal Government is supportive and inclusive. I have a fabulous memory of one of my early marches. We were next to Rainbow Labor and I was marching with Daniel Kowalski's #OneTeam, with the Olympians and Paralympians together. I ran into the bathroom to get ready and there were Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek fixing their hair. It is like I was meant to be on this side of the Parliament.

WorldPride showcased Sydney to a forecast 500,000 attendees, with 78,000 expected to be unique visitors travelling from out of Sydney. That has to be the best goal kicked by Destination NSW during the previous Government, so congratulations on that amazing work. Whilst WorldPride was a once-in-a-generation activation, it was more than a one-off effort. It was so successful because it amplified what Sydney already is and represents, and to me that is inclusion. I get emotional because, while it may be about inclusion for the LGBTQIA+, it is also inclusion for all of us. It creates a space that says that it is okay to be different and okay to be me.

It was fabulous to hear the member for Sydney speaking about "yes" and about including our Indigenous brothers and sisters, and I think I will see Nana Miss Koori at the Naughty Noodle NAIDOC Nylon event on the Central Coast before too long. We send a lot of love for the work that Nana has done around the world showcasing our Indigenous brothers and sisters and the work that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have done in that space. Sydney is a safe city for all. At the moment Gosford has its Safer Cities: Her Way survey, but making that space and protecting members of the community is so important. My heart goes out that it is even a conversation, but members on both sides of this Parliament stand beside the member for Sydney in making it a fairer place that protects all people, no matter what our value systems are.

We love the member for Sydney. Rainbow Labor is an amazing, exciting thing. Qtopia is now here to stay, and the pride of my 78ers is a part of our history that will stay with us forever. I also acknowledge the important role the member for Sydney played in marriage equality in the State and around Australia, showing leadership despite political opposition and the ridiculous thing that that turned out to be. I congratulate the member for Sydney. I accidentally ran into him at one of the art exhibitions and then stepped out into the wild city summer night. We will always remember what a wonderful time it was, and I congratulate all involved.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:23):** On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to this public interest debate and thank the member for Sydney for bringing it to this House. We were trying to remember when the first motion congratulating Sydney WorldPride on its success came to this Chamber. It was won and delivered to our shores, and it is wonderful to celebrate its success. I acknowledge the incredible team from Sydney WorldPride, who are in the gallery. It is so wonderful to have them here with us to celebrate.

I was thinking about how we even start talking about the mammoth, massive thing that occurred, and to me the moment when Danni joined Kylie on stage at the opening concert at The Domain captures the absolute heart and feeling of Sydney. The level of emotion was so huge because there was a feeling of absolute recognition, a sense of history—of what it meant and how far the LGBTIQ+ community had come—and a collective sigh of relief within the crowd. There was something wonderfully mainstream, hilariously eighties-historical, current, global and all connected. There was a feeling in that moment that captured what Sydney WorldPride brought to this city but also the mammoth significance of the challenge ahead to deliver on that promise for the next generation, whatever that looks like.

I acknowledge my Greens colleagues the member for Ballina, who is in the Chamber; and the member for Balmain, who had to leave the Chamber for a minute. It was wonderful to join in a Greens gang and walk the streets across the Harbour Bridge. The Greens love walking or marching on the street; we love it when a road closes for people to take to the streets. We were in our absolute element with the bridge closed and everybody marching across with their rainbow flags flying, so we were very pleased about that.

The member for Coogee mentioned the wonderful reception at Government House, which brought together speakers from the human rights conference and representatives and key leaders from across the community. I am keen to capture on the record the special moment when I was joined by one of the wonderful Greens 78ers, Ray Goodlass, who has been a representative for a long time and lives in Wagga. He and Peter de Waal were standing there talking to the Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, and international guests were also introducing themselves. That is the respect that elders from the LGBTIQ+ community should be given. Seeing them being given pride of place at that reception to listen to the speech, being celebrated and acknowledged and connecting regional Wagga to the world captured something really significant.

There are so many people we could thank. Other members have listed the names, so I will not do it, but I know that it was a hard slog. Doing that kind of thing is not easy, and I am sure everybody needs lots of time to regroup, to process and to navigate all of this. It was a massive success not just as an LGBTI event but also as a huge event for Sydney, for New South Wales and for Australia. I thank the member for Sydney for acknowledging the contribution that WorldPride made to the region and for respecting First Nations justice and First Nations voices in his motion.

Finally, I challenge all of us. The member for Sydney knows all too well that the ongoing discrimination against, hate for and vilification of the LGBTI community continues. I spoke at the flag raising about the impact that WorldPride will have on young people in our community. The member for Sydney, all of Sydney WorldPride and all of us have the power to fly the rainbow flag with pride so that young trans, gender-diverse, gender-questioning and queer young people in our communities who may not be supported know that we are here for them and are fighting in the struggle for them. I give our commitment in this Chamber to never accept the kind of discrimination and hurt that we have seen. I congratulate all of the Sydney WorldPride team for a massive gig.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (17:29):** This is my first public interest debate [PID]. I wish they could all be rainbows and group hugs. It is such a joy to participate in this particular PID, as we call it. I add my voice and my reflections as the member for Vaucluse, although at the time of WorldPride, in March, I was a political candidate. I was a member of the community and one who was so excited by the energy and the vibrancy I saw, particularly across my community in the eastern suburbs. Today I offer some reflections from my community and also as a Liberal supporting LGBTIQ+ rights. It was an extraordinary event and brought so much excitement to my electorate and the neighbouring suburbs in the east. It brought so much joy, and not just to me. There were big smiles right across our community and a phenomenal feeling of inclusion. It was also of great benefit to our local businesses.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government was the first major partner of WorldPride, demonstrating our commitment to the event, to the festival, to the people and also to the community. The estimated

injection of funding to the community was \$112 million to the visitor economy. There were huge benefits and it was a huge event for Destination NSW. Locally I was absolutely thrilled to see the rainbow of events and visitors from all parts of the world converging on our vibrant city. From Waverley Council's wayfinding journey through Bondi's history, with bright rainbow-coloured stickers guiding people to the beach—so cute!—to the rainbow city mural installations at the Bondi Beach Sea Wall, to the rainbow-coloured parklets along Bondi Road and Campbell Parade supporting local businesses and the community, the Vaucluse community celebrated WorldPride to the absolute fullest extent. I was so pleased to attend Fair Day along with my colleagues. I had a very impressive pair of rainbow wings—if I do say so myself—that made it incredibly difficult to navigate the packed Victoria Park on that very hot day. But what a joy it was, what a thrill, to be there and to stand there.

**Ms Felicity Wilson:** You would have looked good.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE:** I did look good, and I would like that to be recorded in *Hansard*. I stood there with my Liberal colleagues and all the other political colleagues from various persuasions. We stood there together, politics aside, because we were there to gather, dream and amplify, which was such a fabulous slogan for the festival. The Mardi Gras parade returned to the streets of Darlinghurst for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began, with the parade previously having taken place at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Over 12,000 people marched. I was meant to join them but I had a broken foot, which was very inconvenient. I had a moon boot. I looked into motor scooters and all sorts of things, but I ended up watching, along with the tens of thousands who saw it in person, the hundreds of thousands who saw it online and the millions globally. What an awe-inspiring event! I note that the Mardi Gras route along Oxford Street, Flinders Street and Anzac Parade was heritage-listed by the former Liberal-Nationals Government, and I acknowledge the work of the member for Manly in that space.

The WorldPride event also touched on other matters. The WorldPride Human Rights Conference took place, which was so important. Other key events included the Pride march over the Sydney Harbour Bridge. I have to reflect on this: WorldPride is a time to celebrate things that are very important to me and that I reflected on last week in my inaugural speech: diversity, equality and love. It is a time to raise awareness of the struggles that have been, and continue to be, there for your community; to celebrate progress; and importantly, to send a message of hope to our community that we can, we have a right to, we have a role to deliver in this place: to deliver hope and to deliver an inclusive society that respects diversity and champions those who sometimes do not have a voice or feel they cannot have a voice. They need to have a voice. They should have a voice. We can be their voice and we can encourage that in future. Congratulations to you all. I look forward to hopefully, during my time in this place, standing shoulder to shoulder with your community.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Vaucluse. I wish to make sure Hansard has recorded that she had wonderful rainbow angel wings.

**Ms Felicity Wilson:** And she looked good.

**The SPEAKER:** Fantastic—sartorially splendiferous! I call the member for Wakehurst to hear about what he was doing on the night.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (17:34):** I speak in proud support of Wakehurst's LGBTQI+ community and express my sincere congratulations to all involved in Sydney WorldPride 2023. As Sydneysiders, we were incredibly lucky to have had this opportunity to showcase the love, the kindness and the celebration of our diversity on the world stage. Without doubt, Sydney WorldPride was one of the most successful major events this city has ever held. Much like my electorate of Wakehurst, Sydney is a diverse and multicultural place and it is essential that we celebrate and embrace the diversity by providing a safe and inclusive environment for everybody. As we all know, organising a WorldPride event is no easy task, and it requires intense planning, coordination, and effort. It was incredible to see Sydney come alive because of all who rose to the challenge and worked together to create an unforgettable experience for everyone who attended.

This event meant so much to so many. Behind the lights, the rainbows, the concerts and the parties, we know that much was achieved, and what was achieved was far deeper. With fearless, unbridled celebration of our rainbow communities and a focus on human rights, this was for every person who has been excluded. This was for everyone who has been hurt. This was for everyone we have lost to hatred. This was a powerful display of who we are as a society, and, importantly, who we are going to be moving forward. Kindness, compassion, inclusion, visibility—this was Sydney at its best.

I take this time to acknowledge and sincerely thank the organisers of Sydney WorldPride. Specifically, I thank and congratulate Kate Wickett and her incredible team. I knew of her but only met her for the first time today, although I did know of what she has been up to. What she achieved is nothing short of remarkable. I also thank the member for Sydney for his tireless work advocating for our rainbow communities. As the member for

Sydney knows all too well, hatred and discrimination against LGBTQI+ communities and individuals persists. Whilst there is much to celebrate, we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that there is still much work to do.

In the months following Sydney WorldPride, it has been distressing to see high-profile anti-trans personalities on tour, and targeted violence against queer people spike in the CBD. I want to be very clear with the people of Wakehurst on the northern beaches: As your representative, I will continue to champion equality and inclusion, and I will represent voices which, historically, have been left behind. In my first speech in this very Chamber, I spoke about my own uncle. When I was young, my uncle almost lost his life following a horrific and targeted beating because he was gay. It is that firsthand experience of witnessing someone I loved being the victim of such a violent attack that propels me to firmly stand up against hatred and discrimination in our society.

I look forward to working with the member for Sydney on his upcoming legislation to ban harmful conversion therapy practices. It is astounding that today, in 2023, New South Wales has not yet taken the steps to protect queer and gender-diverse people from those practices. I am so proud of the work of local groups and organisations that operate within Wakehurst and across the northern beaches area to provide LGBTQI+ support and advocacy. Groups like Fusion Pride, GLAM and Girls On Fire have taken up the challenge of supporting queer and gender-diverse people, making sure that they are visible and included in our wider local community. The "insular peninsula" was very proud to play its part in WorldPride. As mayor of the Northern Beaches Council—the "insular peninsula"—I was proud and humbled to preside over a unanimous council vote to actively and visibly support local WorldPride activities.

That included a very special grants program that allowed local groups the funds to put on events to celebrate WorldPride in their own backyard. We, as a parliament, are gifted with the opportunity to make life safer for LGBTQI+ people. It is our responsibility to ensure everyone feels valued and respected. By securing LGBTQI+ rights and protections, we can help to achieve this important goal. To all who organised, supported and participated in Sydney WorldPride, I am proud to stand here and recognise your incredible achievements. As the member for Wakehurst, I look forward to working with local groups to pave the way to a kinder, safer and more inclusive community. Finally, to every LGBTQI+ person in Wakehurst and beyond, I see you. You are so valued, and I am proud to represent your interests in this Parliament. To the member for Sydney, I love your work.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:39):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate. I thank the member for Coogee, who, like me, survived a few parties and an election campaign at the same time. I thank the member for North Shore—it was great to see her beaming face as we were all crossing the bridge. I thank the member for Gosford. It was a highlight of the festival for me to bump into her at the National Art School and have a good chat. I also thank the member for Newtown. I thank The Greens in general for always standing with our community and for their ongoing support. I thank the member for Vaucluse. She looked great at Fair Day. Pride always looks good on her—particularly pride for the LGBTQI+ community. I thank the member for Wakehurst for a really generous and personal contribution.

I also acknowledge and thank former Premier Gladys Berejiklian for leading the charge within government for Sydney to host WorldPride, along with Lord Mayor of Sydney Clover Moore. That support continued with Premier Perrottet. During the festival there was no-one at more events than the former arts Minister, Ben Franklin, who was a tireless supporter of Sydney WorldPride. It was significant to see Premier Minns march in the Mardi Gras Parade with the Prime Minister—the first time a Premier and a Prime Minister had marched together. I thank and acknowledge the Hon. Penny Sharpe, Leader of the Government in the upper House, who is present in the Speaker's gallery. She has been a tireless champion, advocate and fighter for the LGBTQI+ community. I acknowledge the work of Rainbow Labor in striving towards good reforms in this place.

As members know, moving motions in support of the LGBTQI+ community has not always been easy in this place. Today we can assure the people in the gallery—and those original 78ers who marched for equality but were met with violence—that they have more friends than ever before in the New South Wales Parliament. That is the message we are sending today. With the unanimous passing of this motion, we are sending a clear message that we thank Sydney WorldPride for the immense impact it has had on Sydney, on our society and on our laws. We know there is more work to do. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER:** I congratulate the member for Sydney. I hope that everyone enjoyed the public interest debate. That is how business will be conducted in this Chamber from now on.

*Bills***ELECTORAL FUNDING AMENDMENT (REGISTERED CLUBS) BILL 2023****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (17:44):** On behalf of The Greens, I contribute to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023 and indicate that we support it. The bill amends the Electoral Funding Act 2018 and the Electoral Funding Regulation 2018 to prohibit political donations from registered clubs involved in gambling. The intent is to close a loophole where some registered clubs that have gaming machines or are otherwise involved in gambling may not be captured by the existing provision of the Act that defines a liquor or gambling business entity as a prohibited donor. For instance, some registered clubs with gaming lounges have been able to make political donations lawfully due to their not-for-profit status. It is incredibly important that we close this loophole.

We must do all we can to stop the corrupting influence of the gambling industry on our democracy. One of the ways we must do this is by making it crystal clear that people who want to come to this place or campaign to represent their local community at any level of government may not do so on the back of donations from the gambling industry. We know that the harm caused by gambling impacts the community in many ways. Just this month new data released by Liquor and Gaming NSW on poker machines highlighted the explosion of poker machine losses in New South Wales. The data reflects the first full year of results unaffected by COVID-19 closures and shows that losses have soared \$1.5 billion higher than pre-pandemic levels.

It is an embarrassing title to have the highest amount of gambling losses per capita in the world. It is no wonder that the gambling lobby is unrelenting in its objective to stymie meaningful gambling reform in this State. Wesley Mission CEO Stuart Cameron was quoted by the ABC as saying that people struggling financially were drawn into gambling in the hope of winning so they could afford groceries and pay the rent. He said:

The predatory pokies industry is positioned in every town and suburb to take advantage of people who may be vulnerable.

Poker machines are designed to addict and the harm they cause must be stopped. Closing the loophole that allows registered clubs with gaming machines or clubs that are otherwise involved with gambling to make political donations is a small but important step in minimising this harm.

I note that in October last year my colleague in the other place Cate Faehrmann, MLC, sought to amend the Electoral Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 to prohibit registered clubs from making political donations. That amendment was not passed. Labor voted against it at the time, but it is good to see that Labor has come around. I counter something the member for Prospect said earlier, perhaps to try to minimise his feelings of guilt about the Labor Party accepting gambling donations to date. He said that all political parties in this State take donations from clubs. I can proudly clarify that The Greens do not, and never have. It is no wonder that during the 2019 election campaign the gambling lobby made a concerted effort to sway voters in the Balmain electorate to move away from The Greens.

The bill needs to go further to close all the loopholes that allow prohibited donors to go against the spirit of the law, flout the rules and wield undue influence in this place. I am aware of the considerable work that crossbench members have done—in particular, the member for Sydney—in raising concerns about the wording of the bill, which suggests the potential for registered clubs to offer political parties more discreet in-kind donations such as the use of services and facilities in lieu of cash. I thank the member for Sydney for his sensible amendments, which The Greens will support.

Another loophole that needs to be closed quickly concerns the definition of property developers. Property developers have rightly been included in the list of prohibited donors because of the potential corruption risk associated with windfalls arising from favourable planning decisions. Similar to the loopholes flouted in clubs that the Government is seeking to close, a recent report in *The Sydney Morning Herald* suggested that it remains all too easy for a property developer to make a political donation. Published just last week, the report suggested that in January this year the New South Wales Liberal Party took a \$1,500 donation from a company that describes itself as "Sydney's leading developer". When questioned, the company stated that it was in fact only the builder. Another three donations worth \$7,000 each were apparently made from a retired developer and channelled through three different business interests.

In each of those cases, the prohibited donor rules did not seem to apply. This bill could have provided an ideal opportunity for the Government to close that additional loophole. I thank members of the crossbench and the Government for their discussions with me this week on this issue. I am pleased to hear that the Government is looking into it and taking the issue seriously. I will certainly be pressing for more loopholes to be closed on

electoral funding laws so that decisions are made in the best interests of the people of this State, and not for lobbyists.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:49):** I contribute to the debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023. Schedule 1 to the bill states that it prohibits political donations from a registered club if the business of the registered club includes wagering, betting or other gambling. It concerns me that the legislation before the House is the only approach that the Government is taking that bears any resemblance to reforming gambling and poker machines in this State. The Government seems happy to ensure that registered clubs that undertake wagering, betting or other gambling cannot make political donations based on their profits from gambling. It seems to understand that there may be problems with profits from problem gambling.

It seems to understand that there may be problems with dirty money being laundered through clubs and pubs. So why will this Government not also bring forward legislation that effectively tackles the scourge of problem gambling and the scourge of dirty money being laundered through some, potentially many, of our clubs and pubs? There are more than 86,000 poker machines in New South Wales, which is 30 per cent more than in Victoria and Queensland combined. We know that areas with some of the highest losses to poker machines are home to some of the lowest-paid workers, further entrenching disadvantage while wrecking families, lives and futures. There were revelations by the New South Wales Crime Commission that more than \$95 billion was turned over through poker machines in pubs and clubs in New South Wales over the course of 2020-21.

That is a truly staggering figure. The New South Wales Crime Commission also estimates that billions of those dollars are the direct proceeds of crime. That is before the additional evidence that we will receive in this House through the member for Sydney's order for papers last week. While this bill points out that there are issues with political parties accepting donations from clubs that profit off gambling, Labor does not seem to have a plan to legislate solutions to problem gambling like introducing a cashless gaming card. It is offensive that this Labor Government is turning its back on local communities and enabling crime syndicates and other entities to continue the practice of laundering money through clubs and pubs. I reiterate that I am astonished that this is the only conversation and policy that Labor wants to bring to the House on poker machines in New South Wales. The people of this State deserve better.

In my own community, there was enthusiastic support for the former Government's plan to introduce a cashless gaming card and overhaul the way that we view and utilise poker machines in New South Wales—to tackle the harm and abject misery that individuals face and the impact of organised crime. I acknowledge then Premier Dominic Perrottet for his leadership on that. I am disappointed that this Government has not yet set out a clearly laid-out plan to reduce problem gambling. I am hopeful that in the future it will see the light and do so. We need to root out the menace of dirty money being laundered through clubs across New South Wales and make sure that we are supporting the people of New South Wales who are harmed by problem gambling.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (17:52):** I speak in support of the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023 but put on the record my view that the Government's gambling reform policy does not go far enough. One really positive part of the 2023 election campaign was the massive shift in the political discourse around the urgent need for gambling law reform to reduce the shameful social harm caused by poker machines across the State. I know this all too well from my own community in Wakehurst, where in 2018 Gary Van Duinen tragically died by suicide after an all-night gambling binge at the Dee Why RSL—my local club. This occurred after family members begged the club to help curb his gambling. That is just one particularly tragic example, but there are many more. That one was particularly public, given what happened and the club involved.

I use this opportunity to add my voice to the many calling on the Government to implement the recommendations of the New South Wales Crime Commission's report, including a full rollout of a mandatory cashless gaming card. This measure will reduce problem gambling and stop criminals washing money in poker machines. We know it can and should be implemented. The clubs know it, and the CEOs will tell you they can do it. We should be doing it. While I welcome adding registered clubs with poker machines to the prohibited donor list, I also know the donation caps already significantly limit donations, so we cannot assume this massively diminishes the undue political influence in the gaming industry, which goes far beyond political donations. Again, I speak on behalf of the people of Wakehurst. I hope we can go a lot further with this reform.

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (17:54):** I contribute to the debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023. I support the bill but, like the member for Wakehurst, I call on the Government to go much further on this issue. I am supportive of measures to reduce the influence of venues with poker machines and, by extension, the influence of the gambling lobby. Gambling addiction has a terrible impact on our State and in our communities. In 2022, between 1 July and 30 September, Wagga Wagga locals lost \$73.9 million to poker machines. That results in the life savings of families being hoovered up into a neon vacuum. That financial strain causes mental health issues, the breakdown of relationships and, in a number of cases, domestic violence. Wesley Mission found that the average poker machine claims almost \$100,000 annually.

Between 900,000 and 1.7 million people in this State are harmed by problem gambling. It is an appalling and severe tragedy, and one that many in my electorate spoke to me about during the recent election campaign.

I was touched by how people came up to me and shared their stories of family members whose lives had been so badly affected by gambling and poker machines. These people are victims of an illness: addiction. They are people who need our help, not our exploitation. There is also a vested criminal interest in the continuation of cash-based poker machines. As the New South Wales Crime Commission reported in the multi-agency report produced by Project Islington, criminals are laundering billions of dollars through poker machines in clubs. That report perhaps underestimated the extent of the issue, if documents that may come to light as a result of the member for Sydney's recent order for papers show a further extent of criminal money laundering.

Sadly, both sides of politics have allowed this situation to go essentially unaddressed for decades. Clubs and pubs have donated significant sums to both sides of politics. There is a community perception that clubs and pubs are powerful interests that can influence the Parliament and the Government. It is appropriate that steps are taken to ensure that there is no such influence. This bill takes significant steps in that regard. On those points, I think it is extremely fair that venues with poker machines and their overarching peak bodies be considered prohibited donors.

Labor made this legislation an election commitment as part of its greater package on gambling reform, which also included the removal of visible signage and having trained gambling harm minimisation officers on site in large venues. I wholeheartedly welcome Labor's efforts in this regard. They are positive moves. But we must not lose momentum on a complete transition to a cashless gaming system. In particular, the proposed trial of cashless gaming needs to be implemented as soon as possible and expanded with additional machines. It should have a comprehensive assessment within a year and a clear plan developed to implement a cashless gaming system throughout New South Wales.

Finally, I make the point that clubs are important to regional communities, particularly my community. The transition to cashless gaming, as I have said before, must be done in a way that is sustainable and preserves the important contributions of those organisations to the community. In particular, clubs provide an important facility for communities in the regions. Quite often there is a lack of suitable venues and facilities outside of clubs. That is why I am supportive of the commonsense amendments of the member for Sydney, which recognise the functional purpose that clubs serve when booking space for functions and clarify that. I also support the member for Sydney and his amendment that expands the definition of a prohibited donor to a body or close associate of a registered club. In summary, this legislation is an important and positive step. But it is just that: a first step on a long road that we need to take to transition to a cashless gaming system in this State.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:59):** I speak in debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023. Decades of lax regulation around electronic gaming machines in pubs and clubs have resulted in mini casinos covering the city and State, where every single day people's lives are destroyed and criminals wash their proceeds of crime. We have long known from the Productivity Commission report that problem gamblers and those at risk of problem gambling are the major contributors of spending on electronic gaming machines. We know that gambling leads to family and relationship problems. It also leads to distress, depression, suicide, violence, financial ruin, lost productivity, sackings and crime to support habits. We have long known that the use of cash and the lack of traceability in gaming machines makes them a lucrative tool for criminals to launder money, with the recent Crime Commission report estimating that contribution to be in the billions. Last week the House passed my motion to summons documents held by the regulator that I have been informed will demonstrate that the extent and type of money laundering in clubs goes well beyond what was identified in the Crime Commission report.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** It being 6.00 p.m., pursuant to the resolution of the House of 23 May 2023, debate is interrupted for inaugural speeches. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Members*

#### **INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Before calling the member for Leppington, I warmly welcome everyone in the gallery. It is nice to see some faces again. There are lots of supporters, which is wonderful. I especially welcome the member's wife, Christy; daughter, Nia; and son, Evan. I welcome Paul Lynch, whom we know very well. Welcome back. I also welcome Daryl Melham—welcome back, Daryl—and Liverpool City Councillor Betty Green. I welcome all of you.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:01):** I start by acknowledging that we today meet on the land of the Gadigal people. I acknowledge that this land was never ceded and we remain the only Commonwealth



nation to have never signed a treaty with our First Nations people. While my electorate of Leppington is new, I acknowledge that the land itself has been occupied for tens of thousands of years by the Dharug and Dharawal people. I was born at the former King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies in Camperdown, a public hospital. I grew up in public housing estates and went to public schools. I spent my formative teenage years in 1990s Bonnyrigg, when the area was plagued by the heroin epidemic. Drug dealing was open and omnipresent. Overdoses, stabbings and robberies were an everyday fact of life. I saw best friends, classmates and neighbours succumb to drugs and crime. Some of the brightest, funniest and most talented kids I knew growing up are now dead or have fought lifelong battles with addiction and the justice system.

When governments get it wrong, through either intention or apathy, they can fail entire generations. When governments work well, they ensure that, with a bit of opportunity and some hard work, you are able to fulfil your potential—regardless of your background, circumstances or structural barriers. I believe that governments can and should be a force for good. They should provide an opportunity for our best and brightest to get ahead. I count myself amongst those that have benefited from that ideal. That said, it did take a while for me to get going. I was far from a model student throughout most of high school. By the end of year 10, following a couple of suspensions and prolonged bouts of afternoon detention, the deputy principal invited my parents to school for a chat. He asked whether I was intending to do my HSC. I said yes and he responded with, "Not at this school." I am happy to report that I did in fact finish my HSC at Bonnyrigg High School. He left about a term later, to go to another school. So 1-nil.

I knuckled down in those final two years and was rewarded with not just a university offer but the coveted Funniest Person Award at the year 12 formal. I was the first person in my family to go to university—then known as the University of Western, Macarthur, now known as Western Sydney University. After graduating with a Bachelor of International Studies, the plan was to teach English in China for a semester or two and perhaps land a job at the immigration department or in foreign affairs. Unfortunately, the SARS outbreak put pause to all that. To supplement my time and income, I took up a two-week gig temping in the mailroom at Colonial First State located at Level 21, 52 Martin Place—an address that this House would recognise as the new home of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

That fortnight ended up turning into a decade in the financial services industry, including eight years at Link Group. I learnt the ins and outs of the managed funds and superannuation industry in a series of roles across operations, product management and IT. Following one too many Friday nights sleeping under my desk to ensure a regulatory update hit its unmovable deadline, I decided a change of industry might be in order. That took me back to my alma mater, Western Sydney University, working in IT strategy and partnerships. It was there that I found what I had been missing in the private sector: work with a greater social purpose. I was working to ensure an academic's potentially world-changing research was not sitting exclusively on a dusty old PC under their desk, working with the data nerds to increase retention rates for disadvantaged students, and experimenting with cutting-edge gadgets to improve learning and research outcomes.

I have since had the privilege to work in industries, sit on boards and be elected to roles with a strong social purpose. It is richly rewarding and fulfilling work, as everyone in this Chamber well knows. Some particular standouts have been my time as a director of the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre and at Settlement Services International, where I helped members of our community from migrant and refugee backgrounds. While we rightly pat ourselves on the back for being the most successful multicultural nation on earth, we have too often sold ourselves short on the benefits of migration. My community is full of doctors, engineers and other professionals whose qualifications are not recognised in this country. Instead, they find themselves on the fringes of the gig economy, in dangerous, insecure and often non-unionised work just to make ends meet. If we pride ourselves on being a multicultural community—as we should—that means providing the same support and opportunities to people who have chosen to make Australia their home as those who were lucky enough to be born here.

That belief has only been strengthened in my six years as a councillor on Liverpool City Council—one of the most multicultural in the country. As the cliché goes, local government is the closest level of government to the people. What that means in practice is that there is a greater ability to pull the various pieces of the puzzle together to get results. While not as often on as grand a scale as the other two levels of government, the change you effect is no less important to the people impacted—little wins, little connections and little stories. The little wins include the thanks from a local butcher for resolving the interruption caused by traffic works from nearby subdivisions. The little connections include the Saturday morning phone call from opposing sides trying to settle a clash in a cricket booking. The little stories include discouraging a local resident from filling the illegally parked ute blocking her driveway with alpaca droppings. Each of these true stories shares a common thread: The swift encroachment of a sprawling Sydney on what were once the semi-rural fringes. That has arisen from poor planning and inadequate services and infrastructure that fail to keep up with rapid population growth.

All too often councils are expected to clean up the resulting mess. It is a sector which is increasingly unable to do so due to flawed reforms, cost shifting and having its powers progressively stripped away. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on Liverpool City Council and as treasurer of Local Government NSW. I have learnt a lot, achieved some things that I am immensely proud of and made some great connections along the way. Several of those connections were with colleagues who I am very pleased to see have joined me here among the class of 2023. As a councillor, former chair of a local not-for-profit and now a member of Parliament, you get a unique insight into the challenges your community faces.

The immense impact of COVID-19 is still being acutely felt by my community, despite the testing centres and vaccination clinics now moving on. The community still feels the impact of the lockdowns, the presence of the military, the poor treatment by sections of the media and political class and, of course, the illness and death. While COVID pushed our health system to breaking point, the system was already struggling to cope before the first positive case was ever recorded. A parliamentary inquiry into health services in the south-west Sydney growth region, established before the pandemic in early 2020, described things this way:

... more must be done, and without delay to address the historical under-funding of health services in South-West Sydney.

Some three years later, the statistics from the last available quarter are damning: South-western Sydney has the largest elective surgery waiting list in the State and the second highest number of people leaving the emergency department before receiving or completing treatment. I am proud to be part of a government that will address that crisis by adding 600 new beds across south-western and Western Sydney, investing \$115 million into Fairfield Hospital and implementing safe staffing levels—critical investment that will take the pressure off Campbelltown and Liverpool hospitals. We will also act on one of the recommendations from that 2020 inquiry by starting the process to build a new public hospital at the aerotropolis.

Airports are once-in-a-century pieces of transformative infrastructure, and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis provides a unique chance to fix many of the issues that affect Leppington and the greater west. It can act as a catalyst to ensure that our region finally gets its fair share. But good-quality links into the airport need to be there on day one. One of those links, Fifteenth Avenue, the major east-west arterial road through Austral, is still a two-lane council road that is in terrible condition, with no kerb or gutter. William Freame, a visitor to the area, described the road as absolutely the worst in the country in 1904. Sadly, not much has changed. The road is a carpark during each morning and afternoon peak. Thanks to the election of the Minns Labor Government, Fifteenth Avenue will finally relinquish the title Mr Freame awarded it some 119 years ago. We have committed \$50 million to upgrade the road as well as \$305 million for a rapid bus service to Western Sydney airport, which will travel, in part, along Fifteenth Avenue.

Local high schools, TAFEs and universities need to be in place if we are to provide effective employment and educational pathways to the airport. Future generations from Leppington must have access to the jobs of tomorrow in industries such as aeronautics, advanced manufacturing and logistics. Unfortunately, those pathways are currently out of reach. Despite booming populations in the suburbs of Austral, Leppington and Denham Court, the area does not have a single public high school. Worse still, land parcels earmarked for future public schools were sold off under the previous Government.

Many local public schools in my electorate are overcrowded and in desperate need of upgrading, and students regularly go whole terms without a permanent teacher. We have a skills crisis because a once-proud TAFE system has been gutted. This Government will build a new public high school in Leppington in its first term. We will undertake upgrades at local schools, including spending \$4 million on Eagle Vale High School, converting it into a much-needed specialist sports school. We will establish domestic manufacturing centres of excellence to rebuild the TAFE system and our State's domestic manufacturing capability. For too long, Leppington has been taken for granted, another neglected corner of someone else's electorate. Fringe no longer, we now have our own electorate and member of Parliament. I intend to not waste that opportunity.

My life is marked by a series of people who saw more in me than I did in myself: former teachers, professors, bosses, board directors, mates, colleagues and family members. Thank you for the chats, words of encouragement and for occasionally pulling me aside, telling me to pull my head in and not to waste my potential—especially you, Mum and Dad. In contrast to my education, my mum and dad both dropped out of school early, mum in year 9 and dad in year 8, to become what he likes to call a floor-covering installation mechanic—a carpet layer. Dad would later leave the world of floor-covering installation in his late 20s to become a NSW Police Force officer and go on to serve the force for close to 30 years.

On reflection, dad's desire to serve the people of New South Wales had an early impact on me, as did his love for the mighty South Sydney Rabbitohs. While dad and I support the Bunnies, mum and my brother, John, are St George fans. Attendance at the Charity Shield was, for a long time, an annual family tradition going right

back to when games were played at the hallowed ground of Redfern Oval. Given what is happening tonight, go the Blues.

Mum, aptly named "Gayle", is fiercely opinionated and prone to sudden outbursts of frank, passionate and occasionally constructive feedback. She is also the kindest and most loving and generous person I have ever known. Despite not having much when we were growing up, she was always the first to lend a hand to a neighbour, friend or family member doing it tougher than we were. While I certainly know Mum's passion has rubbed off on me, I hope some of that selflessness and altruism has too. They are not able to make it tonight due to dad's dementia, but I know they are immensely proud of their boy, often embarrassingly so. Now a father of two amazing children, I get it—sort of. At the heart of it was a want for their son to do better than they had. And I am glad because through their hard work and sacrifice they got to see me make history as the first ever member for Leppington.

A person is, of course, as much a product of environment as of genetics. In the mid-1980s, our family moved to the Bonnyrigg public housing estate. I attended Tarlington and Bonnyrigg primary schools and then Bonnyrigg High School. My core group of friends from my teens are still my mates to this day, several of them helping out on the campaign. Thank you, Team Bonno—2177 represent. Are gang signs unparliamentary behaviour? Thankfully, they have little interest in politics and keep me grounded by providing a welcome respite from the circus.

One of those friends is now my wife, Christy. As she likes to remind people, primarily because of how cheesy I find it, yes, we are high school sweethearts. Our friendship started because she was into R'n'B and I was a hip-hop head. We would swap magazines and albums and share our opinions on what we liked and what we were listening to. I was a Nas and Wu-Tang kind of guy; she was more of a Mary J. Blige and Boyz II Men type. My parents were born here and are from primarily Anglo-Celtic backgrounds; her parents came here as refugees from Vietnam in the late 1970s. I am loud and opinionated; she is much more measured in her feedback—usually "the look" will do it. There is also a noticeable height difference, and I am right-handed while she is a lefty. That said, we have the important things in common: our values and our love of food.

We have made it work for 26 years, 18 of those in marriage. Along the way we have had two beautiful children, Nia and Evan. Thankfully, they have inherited the best of both of us: They are smart, mature and have their heads screwed on straight. There have been no trips to the deputy principal's office as yet. As everyone in this Chamber knows, politics takes an immense toll on our families. Christy, Nia and Evan, thank you for supporting my crazy foray into politics and being there through all the ups and downs.

To the former member for Liverpool, Paul Lynch: From your initial chat when I first joined the party, to your support in the preselection and to our more recent chats to help me find my feet in this place, thank you for your instrumental support. Paul's impact on our area is such that I like to tell people that he needed two members of Parliament to replace him: me and the new member for Liverpool.

I thank Anne Stanley, the member for Werriwa, especially for the opportunity to serve as your chief of staff for four years, including two during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you, Wendy Waller, who as mayor in my first term on Liverpool City Council was an ever-reliable source of advice, support and mentorship. I thank my fellow Labor colleagues from Liverpool Council: Ali Karnib, Geoff Shelton, Betty Green and, of course, one half of the terrible two—Charishma Kaliyanda.

Charishma and I were elected at the same time, then to Liverpool City Council and now to State Parliament. Elected office is a unique and—let us be honest—very odd experience. It makes the wild ride that much easier when someone on that learning curve shares with you many of the same values, experiences and aspirations for the community. Thank you to the rank-and-file branch members of the Australian Labor Party who supported me on my journey. A special mention goes to Slobodan Lazovic, who was the first person to get in my ear about a potential run for council. Huge thanks go to the Leppington campaign team—girl boss Shannen Potter and Liam Thorne—ably assisted by my wife, Christy, and Rayan Calimlim. You should all be immensely proud of what we have achieved over the past six months or so.

Thank you to James Callow and the team at the head office for all of your support. Mark Buttigieg, to whom I award the title "MVP Duty MLC", put in countless hours on the campaign trail, both behind the scenes and on the doors to help get me elected. Thank you. The same goes for his colleagues from the other place, Cameron Murphy and Anthony D'Adam. Lynda Voltz, the member for Auburn, thank you for your assistance in accompanying me along the many streets of Leppington and the sometimes dark and opaque alleyways of the NSW ALP. To my neighbouring MPs, Greg Warren in Campbelltown, Anoulack Chanthivong in Macquarie Fields and the Federal member for Macarthur, Dr Mike Freeland, thank you for the support you provided and sent my way.

Thank you, Chris Minns, Prue Car and the entire frontbench team, for the many visits to Leppington and your constant support. I am also forever grateful to the army of volunteers whose names may not be as recognisable but no less gave up their time to stand on train stations and in shopping centres, knock on doors, make phone calls and help out on election day. Among them are Mohan, Priscilla, Syed, Tchai, Nick, Sharon, Sandie, Lachlan, Matt, Vinod, Adisen, Chris, Alia, Caro, Deb, Noel, Shafique, Jayesh, Cian, Jobbo, Laith and Jimmy. Thank you to Dr Amad Mtasher, Dr Ali Sarfraz and Hany Gayed for your wise counsel and the many important introductions. To that formidable army in red T-shirts and flannelettes, Young Labor Left: Thank you.

I also thank the union movement for their incredible support, in particular the CFMEU, Unions NSW and the Essential Workers Deserve Better campaign team. I give a special shout-out to the Fire Brigade Employees Union and NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, whose members gave up their precious time to speak with voters in Leppington and tell their personal stories of what it meant to be an essential worker under the previous Government. You stood up, you made your voices heard, and you made a difference. Last but not least, thank you, Leppington—the people, businesses, associations and organisations, the sporting clubs, the churches, mosques, temples and gurudwaras. You have entrusted me with an immense privilege: to work with you as your representative and advocate as we build the amazing community of Leppington together.

When this House first met on 22 May 1856 it was said to mark the beginning of representative democracy in New South Wales. It was, however, far from a truly representative body. Only men over 21 who met a property or income qualification could vote. To stand for election, you first had to qualify as a voter, but public servants, active military officers and ministers of religion were among those excluded. The American judge William H. Hastie is quoted as saying:

Democracy is a process, not a static condition. It is becoming, rather than being.

In the spirit of that quote, this State and this Parliament, both the eldest in the country, have made huge strides in becoming more genuinely democratic, meritocratic and representative. There is still more work to do to make sure that our parliaments, our boardrooms and our corridors of power look, sound and think like my family, my neighbours and my mates. However, the fact that a working-class kid with a story like mine can stand here today shows we are making progress. And it is not by accident. I am standing here today as an example of what effective public policy can do. For many, however, especially in my part of the world, that opportunity has slipped further and further out of reach.

After decades of policies that put profit over people, individualism over community and a decade or so of conservative Federal and State governments, we are working harder and longer, but we are falling further behind. Corporations are reaping record profits, but the wealth has not trickled down to the people of Leppington. I want to do my bit while in this place to even the ledger and to ensure that good government and access to opportunity is not just restored, but considerably furthered—for the people of Leppington and all of New South Wales.

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

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Before I call the member for Liverpool, a very sincere and warm welcome to everyone in the gallery. I pay special tribute to the former member for Liverpool, Paul Lynch. Welcome, Paul. I welcome also Deb Ferguson, Robert Megaritty, Betty Green and all of the family and friends of the member for Liverpool, who looks absolutely wonderful—though I am not allowed to say that.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:32):** It is a pleasure to follow the inaugural speech of the member for Leppington. We often say that we started out on Wall Street and now we are here on Macquarie Street. I want to start my time in this place, with your indulgence, in asking that we wind back the clock some 30-plus years to June 1992. It was a big moment for Australia. Eddie Mabo and his friends had just won recognition of Native Title, which sparked a pivotal point in our journey towards reconciliation with First Australians. It is a journey I look forward to seeing continue with the successful passage of the Voice to Parliament in the referendum later this year. I acknowledge that today I stand on ground held and never ceded by the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. I honour their Elders past, present and emerging. June 1992 was a special date for another reason, though not of such national significance. It was when my parents boarded a plane in the city of Bengaluru with two young kids in tow—and the start of my own journey in Australia.

My parents were excited but a bit anxious. What could they expect? What would this mean for the future of their young children? What challenges would stand in their way? Luckily for them, there was a big-hearted community at the other end of that journey willing to embrace them in their new home of Liverpool. It is a unique honour to stand in this place as the representative of the place where I grew up, went to school and continue to live. On the flip side, mid-1992 was also the peak of the recession of the early nineties. Like many, my parents struggled to find their feet in a difficult labour market, weighed down by a system with limited recognition of their overseas qualifications.

I was so pleased that it was a Federal Labor Government that signed the first ever Mechanism for the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications between Australia and India earlier this year. This will make an enormous difference in making sure Australia attracts the best and brightest in the coming years. How far we have come. In spite of challenges and setbacks, my parents displayed that trademark westie grit of our adopted home. They found jobs at the working class end of the economic ladder. Dad was a fitter at an axle manufacturing factory and Mum was an aged-care worker.

Several weeks ago I stood here as a proud Australian and took my oath on the *Bhagavad Gita*. I was the first to have the honour of doing so in this House. As our Parliament continues to better reflect the diversity that thrives within our community, I have no doubt that I will not be the last. This can only happen, however, if we step back for a second and understand the disconnect between the people we see leading our political, corporate and media institutions and the people we see in our daily lives. It is a privilege to hold public office as it affords you an opportunity like no other—to be welcomed into people's lives, learn their aspirations, their hopes and their fears. But, more importantly, it affords a platform to convert these conversations into meaningful change.

During the recent election campaign I spoke with many Liverpool residents who understood why our local public services were straining under the pressure of growth. South-west Sydney just had not been a priority for the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. But delivering for south-west Sydney is in the Labor DNA. Just as Whitlam and Wran Labor governments brought indoor plumbing to our suburbs, I am proud to be part of a Minns Labor Government that will follow in this tradition and give attention to the needs of those in my community.

I was in my first year of university when I realised that being from Liverpool was considered exotic—and not really in a good way. When I introduced myself and shared where I was from, responses ranged from the common, "Where's that?" to the more unconventional, "Can I borrow some pepper spray?" Unfortunately, TikTok videos and stories shared on social media show that these stereotypes of people from western and south-western Sydney still persist. But Liverpool was a fantastic place to grow up—like no other. Liverpool is an important part of the great Australian story. It is the fourth oldest colonial settlement in Australia, after Sydney, Parramatta and Hobart, and the first of the Macquarie Towns, founded by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1810.

However, for over 40,000 years the lands and waters of Liverpool were cared for by the Cabrogal clan of the Dharug Nation. Their connection to this land remains unbroken. Today's Liverpool is keen to fulfil its potential. We have one of the youngest populations under 25. We have what will be the largest standalone public hospital in the Southern Hemisphere when it is completed, and a rapidly evolving health and academic precinct that will provide opportunity to people in our community who are ready to seize it.

Like most of Australia, the British and Irish were the first migrants to Liverpool. They were followed by Italians, Greeks, Vietnamese, Lebanese, Fijians, Indians, Timorese, Serbians, Macedonians and Bosnians. Over the past decade we have been joined by migrants from Iraq, Syria and many other places. We often boast about the strength of our diaspora communities. We have the largest Mandeian diaspora in the world. And when the Prime Ministers of Fiji and Samoa are in the country, visiting Liverpool is a vital part of their itinerary. The common thread that connects all is the aspiration for a better future. The people of Liverpool are proud and hardworking. We also have a strong sense of community and backing each other in. We know that there are challenges in front of us, but we want a fair shot at fulfilling our dreams.

Some of the challenges are pretty big. Unemployment tracks at rates much higher than the State average, we have a large number of people who have no post-school qualifications, and we have a dwindling number of public housing dwellings and what appears to be a seemingly endless waiting list. But there is a sense of community care and support not found in many other places. The most difficult of times has highlighted that generosity of spirit. Liverpool was one of the areas hardest hit during the COVID pandemic and restrictions of 2021. It exposed the shortcomings of not only our health and economic systems, but also the very assumptions and mindsets that underlie our key public institutions and services, be they health, education, policing, transport or infrastructure.

That is the consequence of policies that are designed without understanding the communities that have to live them; policies that do not account for the strong links between family groups, kinship networks and extended family; policies that frame working in aged care, manufacturing, retail, logistics as outside the norm; and policies that diminish the importance of communicating to understand with all people. Language is important to account for. Nelson Mandela said, "Speak to someone in a language they understand and it will go to their head. Speak to them in their language and it will go to their heart."

Over 60 per cent of people in Liverpool speak a language other than English at home. I am proud of our Labor Government's commitment to increase funding for community language schools. The vital skills those schools help develop will bridge the gaps that are created by one-size-fits-all policies and help us seize the opportunities to come in the future. Almost 12 months ago I attended the tenth sitting of the 2168 Children's

Parliament. The groundbreaking initiative aims to build children's capacity to actively engage in civic life by increasing their knowledge of their rights and responsibilities.

Israa, representing Miller Public School, articulated the challenges that she faces as a nine-year-old having to translate for her parents at school, the doctors, the shops and other places. "It makes me feel sad and tired that I always have to translate for my parents. It is hard for me because I don't know all the words," she said. Having a voice is powerful; it is a privilege. So many people do not have a voice when they should. Some of them are young people who are experiencing mental ill health and have no access to appropriate services, or the services they need are struggling to keep up with demand.

I am so pleased that my friend Emmanuel is in the gallery. Emmanuel and I started our headspace journeys together, he as a youth reference group member and I as a youth mental health worker. In the years since, I have been inspired by Emmanuel who has used his experiences with mental ill health to become a powerful advocate and speaker on maintaining mental health and wellbeing and reaching out for support. I was so proud when, after recently becoming an Australian citizen, he voted for the first time ever.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** I hope he voted for you.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** I hope so. Emmanuel? Advocates like Emmanuel, and others like Chloe, Ivana, Lakshmi, Harshita, Isaac and Jess, and the many clinicians whom I have worked with over the years have helped me understand that we have a mental health system that is held together by incredible people. But they must be better supported by a system that is easier to access, less fragmented and not weighed down in inequality in order for mental health outcomes to improve in our community.

Emmanuel has also helped me better understand how creative and performing arts bring our very diverse community together. They provide a different medium for us to share and explore ideas, communicate with fewer barriers and truly be understood. I am acutely aware that like so many other people within the electorate of Liverpool, I straddle multiple cultures, traditions and values. I was better able to understand where I come from and where my family comes from by learning a form of Indian classical dance, bharatanatyam. My dance teacher is in the gallery. Twice a week I would attend classes at Liverpool Library, and I would perform all over Sydney on weekends.

However, it is a shame that there is not a single arts or cultural facility in the Liverpool electorate. Some have argued that expenditure on arts and cultural infrastructure, especially within communities that experience social disadvantage, is a waste of money. I argue that it is a necessity. People deserve to have access to arts and cultural facilities regardless of their means or the postcode they come from. I am proud of the Children's Parliament for giving children in my community a platform to use their voice, and I commit to listening to them.

I hear Rihal from Sadleir Public School and Holly from Busby Public School, who spoke on that winter morning last year about parks and access to sport. We would all agree that sport has the power to bring people together in a way that few other things can. With cricket in the summer and soccer in the winter, my family spent most of our weekends on the sidelines of various sporting fields, first in Liverpool and then beyond. It is fitting that this weekend we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Fairfield-Liverpool Cricket Association, where my brother started his now defunct cricketing career. Sorry, Thimmaiah.

Open, green and recreational spaces with high-quality facilities are so important for a young, growing community, which Liverpool is. Over the past 12 years, as the population of Liverpool has grown and more people share a geographically smaller space, we saw less investment by the State Government in such facilities in our region. I hope to see that change. Liverpool has, in many ways, long been at the forefront of innovative public policy. The Green Valley public housing estate, built in the early 1960s, was the first and largest undertaking of the Housing Commission of New South Wales. It is a wonderful coincidence that the first representative of Liverpool was Jim McGirr. Although he was a Premier of this great State, his lasting legacy is the establishment of the Housing Commission of New South Wales to deal with a housing shortage, and which many people in my community have continued to rely on in the decades since.

The electorate of Liverpool was created in 1950, and Labor has a long and proud tradition of local representation in Liverpool over the past 73 years. I particularly thank the former member for Liverpool, Paul Lynch, who is in the gallery. During the election campaign, I met many individuals and community groups who had a Paul story of how he had impacted their lives in a meaningful way. Paul is not one for fanfare and has an in-your-face honesty that keeps people on their toes. But I suspect that Paul would not have it any other way. Paul served his constituency without fear or favour and undoubtedly made the electorate of Liverpool a better place to live. He leaves big shoes to fill.

On that note, I reflect on the power of mentorship and a support network to change the trajectory of a person's story. It can be the catalyst for self-belief and an essential ingredient in addressing the visible disconnect

in our representation. Research conducted by EMILY's List some years ago showed that women and those from non-traditional backgrounds need to be asked on average seven times before making the decision to run for office. I am grateful to branch members, local representatives and family for encouraging me to run for office—multiple times. Their belief and support were invaluable when I had no reference point for what to do. I have often reflected on the protective factors that have helped to insulate my life experience and enabled me to stand in this place today.

The primary factor I should mention is my mother. Those who know her know that Amma has a sunny smile that can light up whichever room she walks into, but do not let that fool you. Her smile overlays a backbone of titanium and makes her probably the toughest person I know. Amma taught me the importance of building community, regardless of where you are. She also taught me that supporting others, without expectations, is the most powerful thing you can do. The community she has built around us is an incredible testament to her. Often when we go to places together, she is not referred to as Chari's mum; I am Bhanu's daughter, and it is quickly apparent to most that she is the more talented politician in the family. I acknowledge many of our lifelong family friends, whom I call aunty or uncle not because we are related by blood but because we are related in the most important way: by experience. Some are in the gallery tonight and many others will be watching along. Amma tells me that when she was young, her idea of success was dressing up in a nice sari and going to work in an office every day. So today, I wear my Amma's sari in this place.

People join a political party because they believe in its values and want to be a part of something that is the sum of many parts. They give up their time and support their community, and candidate to make things better. My deepest thanks go to my core campaign team: Ama, Vinod, Yashasvi and my brother Thimmaiah. I am in awe of their tireless efforts, week in and week out, and grateful for their support and friendship. On this journey I have had exceptional support. I acknowledge the many people who handed out flyers, even on election day, stood at pre-poll booths and street stalls, and so much more: Mira, Francis, Upendra, Merryn, David, Hayden, Stephen, Zaheeda, Ateeq, Stella, Sam, Aleks, Joel, James, Sam, Gitanjali, Melissa, Viji, Beena, Ragina, Gil, Meena, Sandiya, Fahad, Sunny, Paul, Mustafa, Maria, Sanketh, Nikesh, Chengappa, Shruthi, Ayman, Hany, Dr Amad, Jimmy, Blake, Manju, Mangala, Shridhar and Sujata. There are many more who were part of the campaign and I appreciate all that they have done. I also cannot forget the support that Young Labor Left has provided over many years.

I also thank several people who have provided guidance and friendship over many years: the Federal member for Werriwa, Anne Stanley; and the former member for Werriwa, Laurie Ferguson. I also thank the current and former members for Macquarie Fields, Anoulack Chanthivong and Dr Andrew McDonald; and my former boss, the member for Auburn, Lynda Voltz. I am indebted to my Labor colleagues on Liverpool City Council: former mayor Wendy Waller, for allowing me to vent and understand the byzantine and opaque alleyways of the Labor Party; Ali Karnib; Geoff Shelton; the member for Leppington, Nathan Hagarty; and Dr Betty Green; as well as many community organisations, EMILY's List Australia and the mighty trade union movement. They have all been a key part of why I stand here today.

Many years ago I first met the irrepressible Alison Megarrity, the former member for Menai. Alison wanted everyone who came to see her to feel heard. She certainly heard me. I thank her husband, Robert, for being here. I am fortunate to have had Nikhil Mishra and his partner, Varsha, Caroline Staples and Martyn Byrne in my corner for many years. I thank them for believing in me. It is on all their shoulders that I have made it here, and I will never forget that. I think every day of my parents stepping onto that Singapore Airlines flight in July 1992. It is with an enormous sense of civic duty and humility that I stand in this place before my peers and community, my family and friends, and pledge my whole heart to the role of being a member of the oldest Parliament in Australia. I thank the House.

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

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

*Bills*

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

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (19:00):** I will continue from where I left off. We have given clubs extraordinary tax exemptions under which they pay no tax on gambling profits under \$1 million and can forgo paying tax on profits above that amount when they use the money to fund community projects of their choice

through the ClubGRANTS scheme. We have long known that the ClubGRANTS scheme lacks transparency, accountability and value for money, with numerous reviews, a performance audit by the Audit Office of New South Wales and a recent report by the NSW Council of Social Services [NCOSS] exposing it as a rort. NCOSS found clubs using grants to support their business aims and give themselves a financial or other advantage, at the expense of improving the living standards of low-income and disadvantaged people, many of whom suffer at the hands of the industry.

What other industry would be able to continue to profit so massively and so obviously from the proceeds of crime and community misery, while escaping taxation obligations? Not only have both sides of politics let clubs continue this base business model, but they have bent over backwards to oblige clubs' demands. In the past decade both sides of politics have signed clubs' pre-election memoranda of understanding committed to maintaining the status quo. Clubs have held a tight grip on decision-making in this House, allowing the gravy train of profit from organised crime and community misery to continue unabated. And those profits are both huge and growing. Last year electronic gaming machines brought in record revenue, reaching \$4.6 billion for clubs and \$3.5 billion for pubs. A previous Parliament identified the potential for undue influence when donations are accepted from gambling industries, and it introduced a ban. Failure to include registered clubs in that ban when they essentially operate as casinos has enabled the gaming industry to retain a tight stranglehold on decision-making in this House.

I welcome the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023, which will finally impose a ban on political donations from registered clubs and those on their governing bodies. This is a much-needed move, but I believe the provisions in the bill can be strengthened to break the influence clubs exert on decision-makers. The exemption to allow clubs to offer their space in kind to members and candidates is not appropriate. I understand that in some regions there is limited space to meet the community, but there is no need to continue the provision of such space free of charge, particularly for candidates during an election period. Members and candidates have access to sufficient public funding to cover those costs and there is no need to provide a club with the opportunity to have leverage over a candidate or MP in that situation.

The bill also fails to clarify that donation prohibitions cover all close associates from donating. As drafted, close associates would only be banned from the existing definition of a liquor or gaming industry business entity, not the new definition that extends to registered clubs. I foreshadow that I will move amendments to address these loopholes at a later stage. Unfortunately, donations are not the only way in which clubs exert influence and power over the political process. Cashed-up clubs have the resources to run a very targeted and damaging campaign against anyone seeking to challenge the basis of their cashflow through their industry representative, ClubsNSW.

The 13 March Four Corners exposé of ClubsNSW likened its political influence and lobbying techniques to those of the National Rifle Association in the United States. During the last election campaign, we saw concerted campaigns by ClubsNSW targeting the member for Murray, who is in the Chamber, and the former Premier because of their support for reform. Similarly, we saw unrelenting campaigns against former Prime Minister Gillard when she tried to cap poker machine losses over a decade ago. We also saw, last term, a very competent Minister lose the gaming portfolio following complaints from ClubsNSW.

The Electoral Funding Act 2018 allows ClubsNSW and the Australian Hotels Association to run third-party campaigns during elections. It is not appropriate for the representatives of high-risk industries that are associated with significant community harm from crime and problem gambling, and that stand to gain huge windfalls from government decisions and regulations, to be able to engage in election campaigns in this nature. Further work needs to be done in this field. Both Houses of Parliament have a responsibility to finally break the nexus between electronic gaming, and organised crime and problem gambling.

The community has voted for a majority of members who support reform, and I believe we have the capacity and the will to achieve what is needed. I welcome the Government's commitment to a trial of cashless gaming technology that includes harm minimisation and law enforcement representatives, with oversight by a task force. The aim must be to go cashless with built-in harm minimisation. There is a lot of work to do, and I look forward to working with all members, the Government and the Minister to finally progress real reform in the operation of electronic gaming machines in this State.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:05):** I make a small contribution to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023, which I certainly welcome. No-one likes a bully, and during the election campaign ClubsNSW unashamedly targeted me, placing a life-size cut-out of me in every participating club in the electorate of Murray, in an effort to intimidate and bully me. At the time, I was the only Independent female member of the New South Wales Parliament who was against gambling, and I think that they thought I would be weak and just go back to Murray and forget about it. That was not the case. They picked on the wrong girl. The attack was relentless. Even after the election, they still had life-size pin-up photos of me. I had the overwhelming support of the people in the electorate of Murray, and they are looking for reform. I have



survived. I was warned by a Federal politician this would happen to me and I thought, "No, it won't." But I was wrong.

I am not against gambling, but I sure am against a con job. This is one of the biggest con jobs, and it needs reform. I support the Perrottet reforms that have been put in place, including the cashless gaming card, reduced trading hours, the reduction of poker machines and help for people who are addicted to gambling. I would like Labor to go hard on this. ClubsNSW is afraid of reform because \$95 billion is poured into poker machines across the State every year. It is incredible. Recent figures show that almost \$22 million a day is lost on poker machines in New South Wales—an average of about \$900,000 an hour.

We know that gambling targets the vulnerable and the disenfranchised—those individuals who have the least to lose. Broken homes, hungry kids and financial ruin await those who face poker machine addictions, and I know plenty of people with them. The Murray River area has one gaming machine for every 13 people. In the Murray electorate this year, those machines have generated more than \$185 million. Of that massive spend, barely 2 per cent is returned to the local community, and often that is just to the clubs. Those figures are simply frightening. They are the reason I am calling for gambling reform.

This is the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to really shine a light on this. I would like Labor to go hard. As I said, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to push poker machine reform, put ClubsNSW on notice and address gambling addiction. I support the end to gambling money being given to anyone involved in politics in New South Wales. At the heart of falling hands is the chase for money at all costs. That is what it has been. When politics takes money from the gambling industry, we become part of the problem. I do not trust clubs to do the right thing; they need to be reined in. I certainly do not trust ClubsNSW. No-one should. No politician should take money or in-kind donations from clubs or Clubs NSW.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (19:10):** I support the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023 and the very considered amendments of my friend and colleague the member for Sydney. I thank the Government for introducing the bill, although I make a couple of observations. Firstly, I join other members of the crossbench and the Opposition side of the House in relation to gambling reform. I am very proud of the clubs in my electorate. They do a wonderful service to our community. I am sure that many regional members know the importance of clubs. I am a member of many of those local clubs and appreciate not only the work they do but also the employment they offer to many people across regional communities.

I understand that there is a need to get the balance right. But during the time I was the family and community services Minister, I saw examples of families destroyed because of problem gambling. Tonight there are people in my electorate eating cornflakes for dinner because of problem gambling. Every decent member in this House, I am sure, would understand that, yes, we can strike the right balance but we also need to have the courage to stand up to what are often very powerful organisations. Whilst I understand the reasons for the introduction of the bill, the Government needs to look a bit deeper because it does not go far enough.

Why does it not go far enough? I did some research and looked at some of the donations that have been made from clubs. During the disclosure period for 2021-22, the Revesby Workers' Club donated \$34,400 to NSW Labor. The Sutherland tradies club donated \$45,000 over that period to NSW Labor. Another club of a similar affiliation is the West Tradies club in Mount Druitt. Formally known as the Building Workers Club, the West Tradies donated \$1,100 to NSW Labor in November 2022. Overall I identified that seven registered clubs made reportable donations to NSW Labor from July 2022 to date.

**Ms Anna Watson:** How much to the Liberal Party?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** They included rugby clubs in Canterbury, south Sydney and the Western Suburbs, the Western Suburbs Leagues Club in Campbelltown, the Liverpool Olympic Sports and Social Club, the Building Workers Club—which is also the West Tradies—in Mount Druitt and the Revesby Workers' Club. The Revesby Workers' Club was the biggest registered club donor to NSW Labor for the 2023-23 period. It donated \$7,000 to the NSW Labor Party and \$3,300 to the Australian Labor Party East Hills branch in November 2022. One can understand why many members on this side of the House are asking, with some scepticism, why this is all we are getting from the Government.

If Labor members are genuine about gambling reform and about the bill, they should hand back the money that they got from clubs so that they can say with a clear conscience that they are not taking funds from clubs across the State. But they will not hand the money back, because the bill is window-dressing covering up for a government that does not genuinely want to take on real gambling reform. I am not the only one saying it; the Crime Commission is too. Operation Islington made 15 findings and eight recommendations. Those are not hard to implement. The first of those recommendations was the introduction of cashless gaming. One of the things that may surprise many members of this House is the fact that we have the highest load limit when it comes to poker

machines of any State. New South Wales has almost as many poker machines as the State of Nevada. That makes no sense.

**Mr Warren Kirby:** Isn't that your legacy?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Members opposite can interject as much as they like but those are just the facts. The reality is that Labor is now trying to make it look as if it is addressing the broader issue, but the bill is a very minor solution to the issue of problem gambling, which has been avoided at every step. It is just simply another avoidance measure. I know that some contributors on this side of the House have been very polite but we need to be frank. I ask the Government, perhaps the Minister in her reply speech, to indicate when there will be a serious debate around gambling reform, so that we can all make a contribution.

Many good members of the Labor Party who I have spoken to since Parliament resumed have said to me that they want to see gambling reform. I hope that they stand up in their caucus meeting and genuinely articulate those views and concerns, because I know they hold them. Regional members like me acknowledge that there is a balance to be struck. I am sure that those regional members of the Labor Party will argue that case. I sincerely hope they do. It does not matter whether it is the donations that I have outlined. And, yes, I acknowledge the earlier interjection by the member for Shellharbour. There were donations to the Liberals and The Nationals as well and they should be acknowledged in the context of this debate.

I acknowledge that members from the Liberals and The Nationals are advancing discussion around real reform. I hope that there is some genuineness. I hope that the donations that have been taken are acknowledged, perhaps even handed back. I do not know whether the members opposite will do that or not. Sure, I acknowledge the role that clubs play, but let us also take this opportunity to not let this debate slip by. I have seen too many families impacted by gambling. I know that certain former members of this place made the ridiculous argument that you can gamble away your fortune on your phone.

Sure, those particular former Ministers, who I will not name, may make that argument, but I think that people know that the machines in clubs and pubs prey on people. They are designed to do that. We should be very honest about that and about the reforms required to ensure that we have a safe State, that we care for our vulnerable and that we address the real issues. I am happy to support the bill but members should not be fooled into thinking it is real reform. It is just window-dressing from a government that is trying to run away from a real debate about gambling reform.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (19:16):** In reply: I thank the member for Wahroonga, the member for Prospect, the member for Tamworth, the member for The Entrance, the member for Balmain, the member for North Shore, the member for Wakehurst, the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Sydney, the member for Murray and the member for Kiama for their contributions to debate on the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023. As members would be aware, the bill proposes amendments to the Electoral Funding Act and the Electoral Funding Regulation to deliver on an election commitment and ensure that registered clubs involved in gambling are banned from making political donations like the rest of the gambling industry in New South Wales.

During the election the Government committed to banning political parties from accepting political donations from clubs with poker machines. The bill will ensure that registered clubs are not able to exercise, or be perceived to exercise, any influence over decision-makers through donations. In conclusion, the passage of this bill will ensure that gaps in the existing law are closed and that registered clubs involved in gambling are banned from making political donations. It will ensure that the provisions of the Act are achieving their objective by helping to prevent corruption and undue influence in government of the State of New South Wales or, indeed, local government. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Alex Greenwich.**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in one group of clauses and schedules. The question is that the clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 and 2 be agreed to.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (19:18):** By leave: I move my amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2023-034A in globo:

No. 1      **Close associates**

Page 3, Schedule 1, line 11. Omit "body.". Insert instead—

body, or

- (iv) a close associate of the registered club.

No. 2 **Provision of space by registered club**

Page 4, Schedule 2, proposed clause 36A, lines 7–18. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

- (1) Permitting the use of part of the premises of a registered club is not a political donation for the purposes of the Act, Part 3, Division 7.
- (2) Subclause (1) does not apply—
  - (a) if the use is for—
    - (i) electoral fundraising purposes, or
    - (ii) an electoral campaign office, or
  - (b) to goods or services provided in association with the use of the part of the premises, including the following—
    - (i) food or beverages,
    - (ii) the use of staff or contractors,
    - (iii) the use of information technology or audio visual facilities. The Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill seeks to reduce the influence that clubs have over the political process and decision-makers. In my contribution to the second reading debate, I outlined the way that clubs have influenced public policy around gaming laws, which has allowed money laundering and problem gambling to continue unabated, and continued loopholes for tax avoidance. The bill will prohibit donations from registered clubs. That includes members of the governing body, including the secretary, and their spouses. But it does not ban donations from directors and executives in clubs.

While we have often heard from clubs that they are not for profit, many are managed like corporations, with highly paid directors and executives who receive significant bonuses linked to gaming revenue. They stand to gain from lax regulation of gambling activities and should also be prohibited donors. The Act already bans donations from directors and executives—and their spouses—of tobacco companies, property development companies, and other liquor and gambling industry companies, but it fails to do the same for registered clubs. My amendments will close that loophole by extending the definition of prohibited donors to close associates of registered clubs, covering directors and executive officers.

Our laws also recognise that donations do not always come in the form of money. As a result, they subject in-kind donations to the same caps as money donations. In-kind donations include office and function space and services like printing. They can give a donor leverage over a candidate or elected member in the same way that money can. Political donations have influence because they can be used for expenses like office space and printing. I am concerned that the bill as drafted broadly carves out donations from registered clubs for the use of premises to members, candidates, parties and groups. I understand that sometimes a club can be the only space in a community that a member or candidate can use, but I do not accept that a prohibited donor who we know profits from highly lucrative gaming activities associated with money laundering and problem gambling should be allowed to provide that space for free.

Candidates and members have access to substantial public funding that can be used to purchase space and for associated costs. That public funding is provided for the very purpose of reducing the influence that vested interests can have on the political process. Following negotiations with Government, Opposition and crossbench members, my amendments will seek to tighten the carve-out to exclude the in-kind donations of space that present the biggest risks in terms of influence. Those risks include providing space for a fundraising event or for use as a campaign office. Event and office space are some of the biggest expenses in an election campaign, and prohibited donors should not be providing such space for free or at a discount. Other significant risks are in the provision of amenities and services like food and beverage, staff, information technology like phone and internet, and audiovisual facilities. Those donations are particularly problematic because they can fall under a club's general expenses, making them difficult to quantify by creating a murky, grey area that can see donations elude caps.

My amendments will limit the proposed exemptions that allow registered clubs to provide in-kind donations in the form of space so that they do not include electoral fundraisers, campaign office space, food and beverage, staff and contractors, information technology and audiovisual facilities. If members agree that registered clubs should be prohibited donors due to their revenue stream from high-risk gaming activities, we should be very careful in giving them opportunities to influence decision-makers. I thank Minister Graham and his office for working with me to get the amendments to a place that the Government will support. I commend them to the House.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (19:22):** The Government supports the amendments moved by the member for Sydney on sheet c2023-034A. Amendment No. 1 would ensure that

directors and officers of a registered club are prohibited donors. The Government's bill already extends the prohibition to the secretary of a registered club, a member of the governing body or the spouse of a secretary or member. That amendment will ensure that there are no gaps in the prohibition and that persons who are not the secretary or a member of the governing body but otherwise meet the definition of "close associate" are captured. That will see close associates of registered clubs that are prohibited treated the same as close associates of the other types of prohibited donor.

Amendment No. 2 simplifies and clarifies the exemption that the bill creates to the otherwise total prohibition on political donations by registered clubs involved in gambling, while establishing some important controls and limitations. Previously, a registered club involved in gambling could allow political participants to use club premises for certain purposes, such as meeting with the community. The Government recognises that that provides a community benefit, particularly in areas with limited facilities. If the premises are supplied at no cost or less than market cost, that would constitute a political donation. Since such clubs will be banned by the Government's bill from making political donations, that activity would need to cease without the amendment. The purpose of the exemption in the bill is to allow that activity to continue in a limited and controlled manner. It will remain regulated by the other provisions of the Electoral Funding Act, such as those imposing caps on donations and requiring disclosure.

The exemption as drafted in the bill would clearly allow registered parties, groups, candidates and elected members to use club premises at no cost, provided that such use is associated with an election or the elected members' duties and otherwise complies with the law. That raises questions about whether the free use of club premises would be equally available to new and emerging parties, prospective candidates and the volunteers who support them, and whether such use would be permissible outside of the period leading up to an election. We do not want to prevent club premises being used for regular party branch meetings, meetings of members of new and emerging political parties, or meetings of supporters of prospective candidates. Those activities are central to the quality and vibrancy of our democracy and club facilities can play an important role in supporting them, particularly in regional communities.

Subclause (1) of amendment No. 2 simplifies the exemption and makes it easier to comply with by removing some of the technicality in proposed clause 36A of the regulation, which covers the purpose of the use of premises and the categories of person who may benefit from that use. It will ensure that any use of part of the premises of a registered club that would otherwise constitute a political donation is not banned entirely. But subclause (2) will specifically prevent clubs from providing premises for no cost for electoral fundraising purposes or as electoral campaign offices. It is likely that the use of club premises as electoral campaign offices is already prohibited under the Act, but the amendment will make that clear.

Finally, amendment No. 2 will make it absolutely clear that the exemption only allows prohibited clubs to permit the use of part of their premises and not to offer associated goods and services such as food or beverages, the use of staff or contractors, or the use of information technology or audiovisual facilities at no cost or below market cost. Clubs can continue to provide those goods and services for a market rate. That means that the exemption cannot be relied on by clubs to throw lavish fundraisers or other events for the benefit of parties, groups, candidates or elected members. In any event, such events would likely exceed the relevant caps on political donations. The provision of the use of premises by a registered club in circumstances that constitute a political donation will also remain subject to strict disclosure requirements and caps, which will ensure that the exemption does not create an unintended loophole for registered clubs.

Given that registered clubs will be otherwise prohibited from making political donations, the amendments to clarify and simplify the "use of premises" exemption are appropriate and will make it easier for clubs and political participants to understand what is permitted and what is not. The amendments will not impact the basic operation of the exemption, which will facilitate clubs continuing to provide that beneficial service. I thank the member for Sydney for moving the reasonable and well-considered amendments to improve the bill. The Government commends the amendments to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that amendments Nos 1 and 2 on sheet c2023-034A of the member for Sydney be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 and 2 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 and 2 as amended agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **CHESTER HILL HORNETS**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:28):** I congratulate the Chester Hill Hornets Junior Rugby League Football Club on its great community gala day at the Terry Lamb Complex in Chester Hill on Saturday. The club has developed multiple future first-grade players, including Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs legend and former Wests Magpie Terry Lamb, premierships winner Geoff Robinson and New South Wales Origin player Terry Matterson. It is currently home to over 350 junior players in the Canterbury-Bankstown Junior Rugby League, including a burgeoning group of girls across the teams. I was delighted to attend the gala day, which featured many of the club's great young players, and to be joined by the aforementioned Terry Lamb, Councillor Rachelle Harika, Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs chair John Khoury and Bill Lovelee, former alderman and member for Bass Hill. I congratulate Moe, Noa, Kylie and the whole team at the Hornets for a fantastic community gala day. Good luck to all of their teams for the 2023 season.

#### **BETTY GEMMELL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:29):** 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 and the moon landing. She has seen 27 Prime Ministers come and go. She is the eldest of seven children and still lives independently in Mosman. She was swimming daily at Balmoral until the age of 98. Betty had a successful career at the Bank of Australasia and was the bank's first women's club secretary. She settled on the lower North Shore in 1954, first living in Cremorne—where I call my home—for 10 years before moving to Mosman, where she has lived ever since. Betty's secret to long life, she said to me, is small meals, a regular whisky, and being happy and cheerful. Congratulations on this incredible milestone, and I wish Betty and her family all the best.

#### **SUMMAH HARRISON**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:30):** Today I acknowledge one of the fastest athletes that Port Stephens has ever produced, Ms Summah Harrison. Throughout the years, Summah has represented Port Stephens Athletics Club and Tomaree High School at local, State and national levels—smashing records in style along the way. Most recently, in April Summah attended the 2023 Australian Track and Field Championships in Brisbane where she placed fourth in the women's under-18 100 metres sprint final. Qualifying for the Australian Junior Track and Field Championships is quite a feat, but Summah did not stop there, achieving a personal best of 11.8 seconds and qualifying for the Youth Commonwealth Games. But wait, there's more! Summah was selected to represent New South Wales as part of the women's under-18 4 x 100 metres relay team, who had a stunning victory. Summah's hard work and dedication does not go unnoticed. She makes her whole community proud and gives the people of Port Stephens cause for celebration. Congratulations to Summah on her amazing results. We cannot wait to see what she will next. Port Stephens is cheering her on.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DR MARK HENSCHKE, OAM**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:31):** The Coffs Coast lost a community champion late last year with the death of Dr Mark Henschke, OAM, following a cycling accident. He was 73. Dr Henschke was an outstanding Australian, a dear and respected medical colleague, a friend to many and a family man. Dr Henschke made a tremendous contribution to rural and regional Australia as a general practitioner in both Armidale and Coffs Harbour. It was, in fact, his tireless service to his community that saw him awarded his Medal of the Order of Australia. He was highly respected by his peers and his many, many patients. Significantly, after more than 25 years as a GP-obstetrician, Dr Henschke became a mentor to a new generation of doctors as a senior lecturer at the University of New South Wales Rural Clinical Campus in Coffs Harbour. He was the heart and soul of the campus, where his work will always be remembered and honoured, and where his focus was always on the students, whom he encouraged and mentored. I offer my sincere condolences to Dr Henschke's family and friends as we remember a remarkable man.

**IAN FORREST**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (19:32):** I extend my appreciation and congratulations to Deputy Fire Captain Ian Forrest, who for more than 25 years dedicated his service as a firefighter with Fire and Rescue NSW. Ian's commitment to his community, where he also serves as a Greater Hume councillor, and his selflessness in protecting and serving the people of Culcairn and the surrounding areas, is a true testament to his character and commitment. His leadership and expertise as a deputy captain have been invaluable to Fire and Rescue NSW Station 272 Culcairn. Mr Forrest's retirement is a reminder that our community is made stronger by the contributions of each individual, and I thank him for his many years as a key emergency services officer. I wish Ian happiness and health as he embarks on his retirement.

**BANKSTOWN DISTRICT AMATEUR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (19:33):** I acknowledge and celebrate the remarkable efforts of the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association [BDAFA] in supporting our community through its exceptional sporting initiatives, particularly those dedicated to youth and women. BDAFA supports over 7,000 participants through 20 sporting clubs across the East Hills electorate. BDAFA has demonstrated consistently its commitment to fostering a sense of belonging, unity and personal growth among our young athletes throughout my electorate of East Hills. BDAFA has recognised the importance of empowering women in sport and has 95 teams for women and girls involving over 1,300 female players. Through its dedication to Women's Week, it has created a welcoming and inclusive environment for female athletes to showcase their talents, inspire others and break down barriers. The initiatives provide people with opportunities for personal growth, encourage a healthy lifestyle and encourage valuable life lessons that extend far beyond the realm of sport. Let us express our heartfelt gratitude to BDAFA for their unwavering dedication to our youth and women.

**VESAK DAY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (19:34):** I had the great honour and privilege of representing the Premier at the Vesak Day celebrations at Freedom Plaza in Cabramatta on Saturday 6 May 2023. This significant occasion commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, and is immensely important to my electorate. The event was attended by numerous residents, community leaders and various parliamentary colleagues. I thank them all for visiting my electorate and taking part in the celebrations. I commend Mr James Chan, OAM, Chairman of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society; Mr Vincent Kong, OAM, President of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society; Mr Leong Tho, President of the Prajna Monastery Australia; and organising committee and the dedicated volunteers for their contributions, which ensured this year's Vesak Day celebrations in our community were a great success.

**LILIYA TATARINOFF AND MAYA DILLON**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:35):** I recognise two Kincumber High School champions, Liliya Tatarinoff and Maya Dillon, who represented New South Wales at the National Track Cycling Championships in Brisbane, as well as the Central Coast at the Oceania Track Cycling Championships also held in Brisbane. Liliya and Maya both raced as first-year riders in the new age category, J19W. They achieved amazing results, with both recording personal best times in their races. Liliya achieved the status of national champion for the sprint, time trial and time trial sprint, while Maya achieved national champion as part of the team sprint, silver for the time trial and bronze for the sprint. On top of this, Liliya was recently selected for the Australian team at the Junior Track World Championships to be held in Cali, Colombia. I offer my utmost congratulations to both these truly outstanding students from Kincumber High School, who have made not only their school but also the entire Central Coast proud. Thank you and congratulations to Liliya and Maya. Keep up the great work.

**NEPEAN VALLEY ZONTA CLUB BIRTHING KITS**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:36):** Zonta Club of Nepean Valley held its Birthing Kits Assembly Day last Sunday. A group of local volunteers assembled 1,000 kits at a cost of \$5,000—money that was raised by Zonta. We came together in Emu Plains for a very worthy cause—and, of course, for the home-baked afternoon tea. This is the nineteenth year that our local club has supported this wonderful project, bringing our tally of kits produced to 20,000 at a total cost of over \$46,000. Every hour 33 women die of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. An estimated 385,000 women die annually in childbirth, many from preventable infections. The kits are sent overseas to developing countries. To date, 2.6 million kits have been distributed to women in need. Kits are given to mothers through community outreach, supplied to health facilities for use by doctors, midwives and nurses or distributed to traditional birthing attendants. They are designed to support hygienic practices and environments during childbirth in under-resourced settings.

### GRENFELL LIONS YOUTH OF THE YEAR

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (19:37):** I congratulate several young people from the Weddin Shire who took part in the Grenfell Lions Youth of the Year quest earlier this year. Well done to Sophia Bridge-Huxtable, Dale Ryan, Brodie Loader, Alana O'Loughlin and Annie Armstrong. I commend each of them for putting themselves forward for what is a very rewarding opportunity to develop and grow as leaders of the future. As part of the quest, each participant was interviewed by a judging panel, delivered a five-minute prepared speech and was asked two impromptu questions. By all accounts, they all represented themselves with great pride. I thank coordinator Sarah Higgs and the Lions Club for their support. I also note Dianne Franks, Peter Moffitt and Pamela Livingstone for supporting the initiative as the judging panel. Congratulations to all involved in this fantastic initiative to nurture and encourage our younger generation to strive and do their best.

### CAROL BLACK

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:39):** I take this opportunity to recognise Carol Black, who has been volunteering with the Shoalhaven Community Transport service for the past eight years. Carol is local to the Culburra Beach area and has lived and worked in Shoalhaven for most of her life. When Carol retired from working, she wanted to give back to the community she loved. She started volunteering as a driver with the Shoalhaven Community Transport Service in 2015. Carol has been a vital part of the Community Transport volunteer base, driving many clients to medical and hospital appointments and social activities, enabling them to remain independent in their own homes for longer. Carol regularly drives the long-distance trips to Wollongong and Sydney, providing clients with a stress-free, safe and secure trip to their medical appointments. Carol always goes that bit further, ensuring that all clients are relaxed with friendly chats. I congratulate Carol. The South Coast electorate is lucky to have her.

### GOULBURN SHOW SOCIETY TEAM

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:40):** I recognise the Goulburn Show Society team. Katie Beresford, Cooper Mooney, Chloe Sawell and Claire Liversidge joined together as a team to work collaboratively to compete at the Sydney Royal Agricultural Society Young Farmers Challenge. They were well equipped and well versed to take on the challenge following their success at the Goulburn Show in March, where they seized victory over 10 other teams. Each team member has a background in agriculture, equipping each with a variety of skills and knowledge that combined well to form the powerhouse team. They were required to undertake a range of activities and to complete each task successfully before moving on to the next activity. The team was also required to complete a 20-question general and agricultural knowledge test. Following all their hard work, they were declared winners of the Sydney Royal Agricultural Society Young Farmers Challenge and will now progress to the national final at the 2024 Melbourne Royal Show. The Goulburn Agricultural, Pastoral and Horticultural Society and the wider Goulburn community are immensely proud of the team. I congratulate them on this wonderful achievement.

### WOY WOY BOWLING CLUB

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:41):** It is the end of an era and a momentous occasion that is worth celebrating for the members of the Woy Woy Bowling Club, who recently played their last game in the State Pennant Competition. The Woy Woy Bowling Club was founded in 1932 and was first affiliated with the Royal New South Wales Bowling Association in 1933—that is 90 years ago! Over the course of this almost-century, the club won more than 20 Zone Pennants. In 2017, it became the first of the four Peninsula Bowls clubs to win a State Pennant flag. It has been 90 years of sportsmanship, friendship and good times shared. I have been told there was a tight group of around 30 bowlers who maintained the bowling affiliations in order to reach the 90-year milestone. I thank each of the players and the many others who were part of the history of the club. I congratulate the Woy Woy Bowling Club, and vale.

### GLEBE YOUTH SERVICE

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (19:42):** I bring to the attention of the House the work of an outstanding local not-for-profit charity, Glebe Youth Service. For 30 years, Glebe Youth Service has provided a safe and joyous space for young people to work towards achieving their goals. I recently visited their vibrant centre and community BBQ, and was moved by the sense of community and dedication to care and creativity. It was wonderful to see their music studio in action, and to discuss their unique and award-winning programs. One such program is After Dark, a safe, teen-only event where local youth can eat a healthy meal and enjoy activities on weekends. It was clear that everyone who works at the centre is passionate about helping young people to have the best start possible to their adult life. I thank acting CEO Rachel Tanny and Amy O'Neill for their leadership and commitment to our local young people. I thank the youth workers and helpers for their invaluable support.

I also recognise the wonderful young people who show up and make Glebe Youth Service the thriving place that it is.

#### THE TEDESCO INN

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (19:43):** There is no better place for footy than Camden, and there is no better captain on that pitch tonight than Teddy. The Plough & Harrow in Camden has changed its name to the Tedesco Inn in honour of James Tedesco, the great Blues captain. The Plough & Harrow will keep the name the Tedesco Inn from today until the final whistle of Game III of the State of Origin. The Tedesco Inn will be featuring the "Teddy Parmigiana" and 50 cents from every Toohey's schooner sold will go towards supporting the local junior football club, the Camden Rams. The Plough & Harrow, a historic pub built in 1841 by Samuel Arnold, has supported the night-life and community of Camden for centuries. Although the furnishings may have changed, its mission—to provide a good feed and a great drink to an amazing community—has not. James Tedesco is a Camden local, having attended St Paul's in Camden and St Gregory's College in Campbelltown, playing junior football with the Camden Rams. He is well loved in the area and can often be seen leading young footballers on training and mentoring days. Go the Blues!

#### KU-RING-GAI EMERGENCY SERVICES

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (19:44):** There is a saying that not all heroes wear capes. I can confirm that this remains true, as I attended a special 10-year anniversary event for the facility that is home to the Ku-ring-gai State Emergency Service [SES] and Ku-ring-gai Rural Fire Service [RFS] on Saturday 27 May. In my remarks I was proud to quote the lyrics of Mariah Carey's famous song *Hero*. Whether it is for fires, floods, search and rescue or other disaster-related events, those heroes go above and beyond to serve their community. I particularly recognise Ku-ring-gai SES Unit Commander Inspector Alex Mackay and Ku-ring-gai RFS Brigade Captain Nic Lyons for leading their respective emergency services through times of uncertainty and crisis. The unwavering commitment and selfless actions of groups like the SES and RFS make a profound difference in the lives of those they serve. This is especially true for Deputy Captain John Corry, the former Ku-ring-gai RFS Brigade President, who recently passed away after 52 years of service. I commit to supporting our emergency services, and I will fight to make sure that they have everything they need in light of their exceptional efforts.

#### MR ROBERT SHORE

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (19:45):** I congratulate Mr Robert Shore of Surfside on his achievement in winning the Volunteer Impact Award 2023 at the fifth ShelterBox Volunteer Awards. ShelterBox is an international disaster relief charity established in 2000 that provides emergency shelter and life-saving aid to communities affected by disaster or conflict. Its vision is a world where no family is without shelter after disaster. ShelterBox Australia is an official partner of Rotary International. Mr Shore recently joined Batemans Bay Rotary after moving to the Bega electorate. His association with Rotary International extends back to 1997. He has served with Parkes Rotary, slept out in Forbes to raise funds, and organised a YouTube channel for awareness of disaster and The \$5 Page on Facebook, which publicises worthy causes each fortnight. I congratulate Mr Shore on his contribution to local and international charity.

#### HILLS DISTRICT LITTLE ATHLETICS CLUB

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (19:46):** I recently had the opportunity and honour to attend the annual Presentation Day for the Hills District Little Athletics Club, Baulkham Hills. The Presentation Day was held on 28 May 2023. The club commenced its first track and field season in 1972 and has since grown into the fourth largest club in New South Wales. The club is operated on a not-for-profit basis and is reliant on a hardworking and dedicated committee. During the awards ceremony, four persons were inducted as life members. To be inducted as a life member is a tremendous achievement. Life membership may be awarded to a person who has shown distinguished service for the advancement of the club over a 10-year period and has also served as a committee member for five years. The current president of the club is Nathan Scott-Rogers. The persons inducted as life members were Brooke Collins, OAM, Jenny Glover, Lisa Harrison and Johnathan Eagleton. I congratulate each of them on their contribution to the club over an extended period.

#### CAROL EVERARD

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (19:47):** I congratulate Carol Everard on being awarded as 2023 Mount Druitt Local Woman of the Year. Carol is the principal of Blacktown Youth College [BYC], which caters to students who have struggled in mainstream settings. Since her appointment in 2014, Carol has developed BYC's campuses from basic learning centres into two registered secondary campuses for years 7 to 12. Growing up in the Blacktown and Mt Druitt area has given Carol a deep insight and fundamental understanding of the issues faced by local youths. Carol's commitment to her community is outstanding. She has implemented many



community programs to enhance youth welfare. I congratulate Carol on this much-deserved award and thank her for her dedication to the community.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JOHN WARD, OAM**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (19:48):** I pay tribute to the late John Desmond Ward, OAM. Born on 14 February 1939, John died on 22 May 2023. John leaves behind his beloved wife, Pam. By the time John retired in 1999, he had served in 13 appointments as a teacher, his last being eight years as principal at Barrenjoey High School. Over those years, John imparted his wisdom and example of selfless service to thousands of young people. Over the decades, John and Pam have selflessly served the community from Scouts to world peace, supporting Indigenous children, Learn to Swim classes and more. John and Pam are lifelong Labor Party members. They represent the very best tradition of the Labor Party. The impact of John's deeds on those he served will ripple through eternity. Our world was richer for John's life, and we are now poorer for his death. I thank John, and thank Pam for sharing him with us.

#### **THE CUTTING ROOM AT RIVERSTONE**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (19:49):** The Cutting Room at Riverstone has again been crowned best hair salon at the Blacktown City Local Business Awards. For perspective, Blacktown has over 250 hairdressers, and The Cutting Room at Riverstone has taken out the prize four times now. Salon owners Penny and Cass Hooper Whitmore have once again proven that they are masters of their trade and skilled business operators. Their clientele is almost cult-like in its commitment to the team and will follow them to the ends of the earth—or at least to the ends of the Riverstone electorate. These talented trailblazers gave up their lease in Riverstone Village in the centre of town and took the risk of relocating to the new housing estate of Grantham Farm—a move that proved to be successful. The Cutting Room has also proven that its salon is a place where everyone belongs and that its dedication to the community it serves is strong. The Cutting Room and its clients were generous donors to the North West Community Services flood and Christmas appeals. I congratulate The Cutting Room on both its award success and community spirit.

#### **EVA CHIARAMONTE**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (19:50):** I acknowledge young Bathurst athlete Eva Chiaramonte, who is aiming for the stars again this year as she pursues the opportunity to represent New South Wales for a second consecutive year at a national level. I have already acknowledged Eva's sporting endeavours in 2022 with a NSW Government State Representative Award for under-10s cross country after attending the national titles in Adelaide. I look forward to again following her progress this year. The 10-year-old from Bathurst South Public School loves middle- and long-distance running and has already won her school cross country title. She is now set to hopefully progress through district, western region and State ranks. It takes a special type of commitment to make it to national level, and it is clear that Eva has what it takes to pursue her dreams. I wish Eva the best of luck. Remember to take it one race at a time and to keep on working hard. Her school, family, friends and community are right behind her.

#### **PENRITH DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL, HORTICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:51):** On Saturday 27 May the Penrith District Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society hosted the Penrith Show Young Woman 2023. The event was held at the historical Penrith Showground, or "the paceway" as we affectionately call it. We had a welcome to country by Duane Brown, and Laura Elkins was emcee for the event. I commend Lucinda Harvey, who was Penrith Show Young Woman 2022. Lucinda has embraced her role travelling throughout New South Wales, focusing on rural women while promoting local food production and farming. Lucinda is passionate about raising awareness and assisting those in the community who are struggling with mental health issues. She founded Saving True Blues, which raises money for that worthy cause. Three fabulous young local women were nominated: Mackenzie Murphy, an earthwork operator who also works on her family's farm running Angus cattle; Paige Peters, a local entertainer and singing teacher; and Jessica Bazika, who is currently studying a Bachelor of Law and was named Penrith Show Young Woman of the Year 2023. I congratulate them all. They are all outstanding ambassadors for Penrith.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JOYCE MCMULLEN**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (19:52):** At the ripe age of 101, Joyce McMullen of Gongolgon station sadly passed away this month. One of the oldest people in Barwon, Joyce was a valued member of the Brewarrina community, dedicating her time to various community groups. In 1942 Joyce married Jack McMullen and moved to the station, where she went on to have three children: Greg, Mark and Kathy. Joyce remained on the station until her passing. She was involved in the group that helped to get the Gongolgon public school built in 1964 and was on the P&C until the school's closure. Joyce was also a dedicated Country Women's Association member and

president of the Gongolgon and Brewarrina branches for many years. When her children joined Pony Club, Joyce used her equestrian skills to become an instructor, and in 1997 she was named Brewarrina's Citizen of the Year. Joyce's dedication to the Brewarrina community has not gone unnoticed. She will be missed by those who have crossed paths with her. Vale, Joyce McMullen.

#### THE SHED CAFE

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (19:53):** I congratulate The Shed Cafe in Schofields on winning the award for best cafe at the 2023 Blacktown City Local Business Awards. The Shed Cafe is a family-run business with a focus on fresh quality produce and creative dishes, with home-style cooking matched with its own signature blend of coffee. It is one of the most popular places in my electorate, with many families making it a regular meeting place. I congratulate John and Vicky McGrath, along with their son, Chevy, and his wife, Michaela, on their hard work, hospitality and humbleness. John, also known as "Hollywood", worked as a ministerial driver for 30 years before joining forces to open the cafe with Chevy, who has over 20 years' experience as a chef. Upon receiving the award, John acknowledged that this accolade solidifies how their approach to customers—treating them as part of the family—and their focus on community is indeed a recipe for success. For John, it is about building relationships, not just the business. I wish The Shed Cafe at Schofields many more years of success.

#### NAT TOBIN

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (19:54):** Berowra local Nat Tobin has captained the Sydney FC A-League Women team for the past two seasons as part of her inspiring football story. Growing up in Berowra, Nat played junior football with the Berowra Football Club until her extraordinary talent was identified. She was selected for the under-12s rep team at the Northern Tigers, worked through the system to the NSW Institute of Sport and then went on to represent the Australian schoolgirls at just 15 years of age. As a substitute, Nat made her A-League debut at 16 for Sydney FC in the 2013 grand final. On that day, her team was crowned champions with a 3-1 win. Fast-forward a decade and Nat Tobin has just won her third championship with Sydney FC, leading her team to a dominant 4-0 victory over Western United. Nat celebrated her 100th game in that match with a memorable goal. In Nat Tobin's two years as captain, Sydney FC has won three major trophies and smashed the league's clean-sheet record, which Nat was instrumental in while playing centre back. I congratulate Nat Tobin. She is an inspiration to female footballers of all ages. She also puts up with my mate Will Fiedler, and she needs a medal for that alone.

#### PAYNE HAAS AND HUDSON YOUNG

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:55):** State of Origin Game 1 will be held in Adelaide tonight, and two of our local stars will be front and centre of the action. New South Wales will be keen to reverse its fortunes from 2022, and what better way to make it happen than to have two Maitland boys featuring prominently as part of the New South Wales Blues' line-up. Prop Payne Haas played junior football for the mighty Woodberry Warriors. I have no doubt that all the juniors of the Woodberry Warriors and everyone in Maitland will be cheering him on. Payne was first selected for State of Origin in 2019, when he was the Dally M Rookie of the Year and Prop of the Year. He has tasted State of Origin series success with the Blues in both 2019 and 2021—and we hope in 2023. Second-rower Hudson Young was born in Maitland and makes his State of Origin debut tonight. Hudson played junior football for the Greta Braxton Colts, which has unofficially renamed its home ground Hudson Young Oval to commemorate tonight's appearance. I wish Payne, Hudson and the whole New South Wales Blues team well. Go the Mighty Blues!

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### NORTHERN TABLELANDS ELECTORATE

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (19:56):** I have said many times in this House, and it is widely acknowledged, that the Northern Tablelands is the economic powerhouse of New South Wales. In a literal sense, the Northern Tablelands and the broader New England will also soon be the energy powerhouse of this State. I speak of the New England Renewable Energy Zone, which the previous Government established as part of the State's transition from an old style of energy generation to a diverse range of energy generation technologies and sources. The New England Renewable Energy Zone is slated to generate around eight gigawatts of dispatchable electricity. With the change of government, I have sought to constructively engage with the new Minister for Energy. I put on record my thanks to the Hon. Penny Sharpe for her willingness to engage with me and my local councils and community members through the coalition of renewable energy mayors.

Unlike with the Federal Parliament, the issue of the transition to renewables and a more diverse way of generating electricity has been marked by bipartisanship at a State level. It is very different to what we have seen at the Commonwealth level. I acknowledge the fact that the new Minister has carried that through, because the only way that transition will be successful is if we keep partisan politics out of it and take the community with us. The renewable energy zones can only work if there is a substantial amount of community support and willingness.

We are no strangers to renewable energy in our region. I have said many times in this House and in public that I am a strong advocate for the renewable energy industry. But that should not be taken as me saying that our region is a welcome mat to be walked over by any particular proponent.

Unfortunately, like any industry, particularly any emerging industry, there are good proponents and there are cowboys who would seek to foist poor projects on our region in the wrong spot, at the wrong scale, without thinking through the consequences for housing, the workforce and transport routes. But we are working through that as a region. We have many examples of exceptional projects. The New England Solar Farm will have a capacity of 700-odd megawatts and is the largest under construction in Australia. We have the two largest wind farms in New South Wales, between Glen Innes and Inverell, and a few other projects are in the wings. A few others, unfortunately for the proponents, will never see the light of day through the back end of the planning system because they have failed to bring the community with them and engage appropriately.

The New England Renewable Energy Zone offers the ability to be strategic and knock these projects out and likewise accept good projects before they enter the planning system through the powers in that legislation to deny access to the new transmission infrastructure. Speaking of the new transmission infrastructure, I note the member for Wagga Wagga is sitting in the Chamber. It is a topic he is well familiar with, as are the member for Upper Hunter, who is in the chair, the member for Bathurst and others. We are about to commence the difficult task of working out where the transmission infrastructure—the 550-kilovolt lines, the new 330-kilovolt lines and the respective hubs—of the renewable energy zone in New England will go. I will repeat on the record, as I have said to the Minister, to our chiefs of staff, to James Hay from Energy Co, that the first preference for our region at all times is that this infrastructure be placed on public land and, where public land is not available, to then look at private land.

Given that this infrastructure is intergenerational—it will be there not just for 10 or 20 years, but likely for 60 to 100 years—and there is the ability to amortise the cost of the infrastructure over multiple generations, we must seriously look at undergrounding some of the large transmission lines where possible to avoid land use conflict and also to avoid the inevitable argy-bargy that happens. There is enough argy-bargy with some of these poorly thought-out projects. I make quite clear that I have always been and continue to be a strong supporter of the renewable energy zone and good-quality renewable energy projects. We have many of them in our region, but we will not accept poor projects, poor planning and poor outcomes for our community. The renewable energy zone energisation for New England has been pushed back to 2029, which is good. It gives us time and breathing space to get this right. I look forward to working with the Minister, the Government and the community to make sure that happens.

#### MAITLAND ELECTORATE

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (20:02):** I thank the Maitland local community for re-electing me at the recent State election and also for the honour of forming government. I am so excited to get to work on the commitments Labor made in my electorate of Maitland and right across the State. I am passionate about Labor's \$19 million commitment for urgent road upgrades and repairs, including emergency road repairs, across Maitland after 12 years of neglect by the Coalition, compounded by flood and a systemic failure to invest in our regional road maintenance.

Labor's \$17.5 million road upgrade package for Maitland will include \$15 million towards planning and early works for duplication of Thornton Rail Bridge and \$2.5 million to replace the Melville Ford timber bridge, which will help in your electorate of Upper Hunter, Mr Temporary Speaker. Another \$1.8 million will be provided from the new emergency road repairs fund to address the road maintenance backlog for the Maitland electorate. This is in addition to the funding included in the former Government's Fixing Local Roads Pothole Repair Round from earlier this year, which saw regional councils getting only \$1 for every \$5 for pot hole repair in Sydney.

We are acting immediately to get Maitland and the regions moving again. I am proud to say that, over the past eight years, the Maitland community has secured nearly \$3 million in funding for vital projects through the Community Building Partnership program. In addition, sporting groups shared in funding through the Local Sport Grant Program to the tune of more than \$400,000. Providing financial support to community organisations and modern and functional sport and recreation facilities enhances the health and wellbeing of everyone in our community.

Keeping Maitland Hospital firmly in public hands has been one of the greatest and proudest achievements of my time as member for Maitland over the past eight years. We petitioned hard, with over 30,000 signatures, against the Coalition's planned privatisation of the new hospital, forcing it to scrap its plans and ensure Maitland Hospital remained in public hands. In addition to winning this very hard-fought privatisation debate, we fought for and won additional infrastructure for the hospital, including multiple solar panels, a rooftop helipad, a catheterisation lab for cardiac patients, short-stay ward for the emergency department, an MRI machine,

negative-pressure rooms for COVID patients, six individual birthing suites with their own ensuites and birthing baths, an intensive care unit and chemotherapy chairs. It is a state-of-the-art facility, with the final bed capacity increasing from 188 to 339.

Even before it was completed, the new hospital started to attract new specialists and health facilities to Maitland. The proximity of the new hospital to the private hospital has helped attract specialists who work across both the public and the private systems. We are already seeing new cancer services, including radiotherapy. I have already been a strong advocate for safe staffing levels and more regional paramedics, to help our struggling health workers. I am so pleased to deliver them under Labor. I have invited the health Minister to Maitland again to check on our progress, because I know that our staff across the hospital system is struggling.

I am so pleased because the redevelopment of Gillieston Public School is finally progressing and will become a reality. I have been working side by side with members of the school community since before I was elected to Parliament to pressure the then Government to invest and bring the school up to a twenty-first-century standard. We are a long way from when the floor in the boys' toilets was dirt, in 2015. This is in addition to upgrades to Rutherford Public School, Bolwarra Public School, Ashtonfield Public School, Rutherford Technology High School and Francis Greenway High School, plus a new high school at Huntlee in your electorate of Upper Hunter, Mr Temporary Speaker, which will take the pressure off Rutherford Technology High School. We have already converted over 1,000 permanent teaching positions across the State to full-time work, and we are working on our goal of having 10,000 teachers and 6,000 learning support staff members.

Other major achievements and milestones during the past few years include the building of the brand-new Maitland Regional Athletics Centre and important work on the nationally significant Morpeth Bridge, which is a renowned example of a timber trestle bridge with Allan trusses and is rightly listed on the State Heritage Register. We welcomed the announcement of a new ambulance module for Maitland, based at the new Rutherford Ambulance Station, consisting of an additional transport vehicle and 12 paramedics, which is a development I have been advocating strongly for since we won the fight for a fully public hospital in Maitland. Other achievements include an upgrade worth more than \$2 million to Maitland Police Station and a new fire station at Rutherford. Additional staffing for our fires and police is also on my radar.

Another milestone achievement was addressing the Rutherford stink, which had plagued residents surrounding the Rutherford industrial estate for years. I campaigned strongly on this issue, resulting in Hunter Water finally closing the former Truegain site at Rutherford in 2016, when the Environment Protection Authority failed to act. It took another four or five years, but we finally got a change in legislation to hold those polluters to account and also succeeded in getting a historic commitment to clean up the site. There is way more to do. I am up for the challenge. I thank the electorate for letting me have another crack.

### GOBBAGOMBALIN BRIDGE

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:07):** I speak tonight on the duplication of Gobbagombalin Bridge in Wagga Wagga, a two-lane bridge that stretches from Travers Street in Wagga Wagga across the Murrumbidgee River and the Gobbagombalin Lagoon to the Old Narrandera Road intersection. The Gobba, as it is known, was opened in July 1997 to connect the northern parts of Wagga Wagga with the rest of the city and allow the future development of this area as part of the growth of the city. If housing development is the measure of success, the Gobba bridge has worked. In fact, you could say it is now the victim of its own success. In 2015 a Roads and Maritime Services study calculated that 20,000 cars and trucks cross the bridge every day but estimated that by 2030 that number would increase to over 50,000. In 2020 Transport for NSW found that traffic across the Gobba was increasing at a rate of 11 per cent per year and that acceptable operation would be reached by 2026.

In 2022 the Wagga Wagga Transport Plan stated that there will be an additional 23,350 residents north of the bridge by 2041. That growth is an important part of the strategy for Wagga Wagga to reach a population of 100,000 by 2038, as mentioned in the report *A 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW*. But you cannot have growth without infrastructure, including roads. It is becoming clear that the two-lane Gobba bridge, on its own, will not be enough for our northern growth. To make the situation more urgent, in November last year, when the Murrumbidgee peaked at 9.72 metres and flooded, the Gobba became the only crossing of the Murrumbidgee for hundreds of kilometres. It became a nightmare to cross the river. Traffic backed up and barely moved for hours.

It was like living in Sydney, except that there was also the stress of the threatened flooding, and that was— all jokes aside—a very serious issue. It also showed the impact on the transportation of goods, which was badly affected. Agriculture is critical to our region, and to New South Wales. Agriculture needs its goods to be delivered and that requires strategic road infrastructure. What does the community think? A recent online survey conducted by the Committee 4 Wagga gathered over 1,600 responses, with 95 per cent of those surveyed agreeing that the duplication of the bridge is needed. Basically, the current two-lane bridge is inadequate for the future of the city and does not really support current road activity. Any local resident on either side of that bridge will tell you that

the time is approaching for duplication or a second river crossing, and it is clear that we need to start the planning now and map out a solution for Wagga Wagga.

The situation recently became more complicated, with discussion about proposed works on a bridge and another intersection in Wagga Wagga: the Marshalls Creek Bridge. In August 2018 there was the announcement of a \$30 million investment to fund two projects, road and intersection upgrades on the Olympic Highway at the Gobba bridge and widening of the Sturt Highway to four lanes over Marshalls Creek in Wagga Wagga. Planning has taken almost five years, with repeated calls from the community to reconsider the designs proposed for the Gobba bridge intersections. Now it has become clear that there may not be sufficient funds to do the Gobba bridge intersection upgrades and the Marshalls Creek Bridge.

The community is still not supportive of the work on the Gobba bridge intersections and the survey results from the Committee 4 Wagga showed that more than half the residents were opposed to this work or had other suggestions. We should be doing the Marshalls Creek Bridge as a priority, and at the same time undertake a full costing and feasibility study of the duplication of the Gobba bridge and second river crossing options to be completed within the next two years instead of the intersection upgrades, or ahead of those upgrades. That would be consistent with the initiatives I made sure were included in the *Wagga Wagga Integrated Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan 2040*. It is a view supported by the Committee 4 Wagga and the Wagga ratepayers association and, I believe, the Wagga Wagga council and the community at large.

John Bradfield was ridiculed for designing and building the Sydney Harbour Bridge with eight lanes. But who is laughing now? He was right. The cross-river planning needs to happen in the next two years so that we can plan a road map forward to manage growth, ease traffic congestion and improve safety on our roads. We must act to keep our community safe and supported in a great place to live. I acknowledge that the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads is in the Chamber listening to this statement. We have met and the Minister has been very receptive to the case that I have put forward in relation to this issue. I acknowledge her hard work in taking up and understanding this issue. I look forward to getting a priority change and some work completed so that we can do this essential planning for my community.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (20:12):** I say a big thank you to the member for Wagga Wagga. We have met a number of times, including when I went to his electorate last year, I think, for a round table. I know that the member for Wagga Wagga and Councillor Dan Hayes have been really strong advocates for the project and have taken the time to make their case. We are definitely changing priorities. We are prioritising Wagga Wagga—that is the first point—and we are listening to the community. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for the important work he has been doing, briefing me, briefing the department and getting community groups like the Committee 4 Wagga together. This is an important issue. We had a lot of broken promises under the former Government and a lot of delays—projects proceeded at a glacial pace—which led to cost overruns. We will have to make tough decisions, but we want to make them in alignment with the community's wishes. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his advocacy.

#### **GOSFORD ELECTORATE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:13):** Tonight I give a shout-out to all the surf lifesaving volunteers who play a vital role in ensuring that the beaches of New South Wales, and particularly the Gosford electorate, are safe. Both Ocean Beach Surf Life Saving Club and Umina Surf Life Saving Club are exceptional surf lifesaving clubs that provide a wonderful service to our community members, diligently patrolling our beaches and keeping our swimmers and ocean users safe each summer. I am privileged to represent an electorate that has some of the best beaches in Australia—I am biased and feel sorry for the member for Maitland, who has no beaches in her electorate—and some of the best surf lifesavers to match.

Every summer, volunteers from across the Central Coast come together to ensure that community members and tourists can enjoy our beautiful beaches, safe in the knowledge that they and their families are protected from the dangers that our wild coastline may present. Every day our surf lifesavers put themselves at risk to ensure the safety of our community. I am proud to be part of a New South Wales government that ensures surf lifesavers have the world-class resources that reflect their world-class work environment. We had a fantastic display of drones at Parliament House today, and it was amazing to see technology from around the world that is at the forefront in this field. There were drones from the Netherlands, China and Australia. They will all be involved in some sort of drone challenge at Evans Head later this year, which will be very exciting for those who are interested in drones. I thank everybody who came to the Parliament to share their expertise with us today.

Tragically, in 2021-22, New South Wales recorded 55 drowning deaths, highlighting the urgent need for better resourcing for the heroic work of our surf lifesaving volunteers. This has a tragic impact on the families left behind and is traumatic for the surf lifesavers. The Minns Labor Government recognises the critical importance of surf lifesaving clubs across New South Wales and has committed an extra \$23 million over four years to

Surf Life Saving NSW, an increase of \$5.75 million per annum. This vital funding will provide additional equipment and allow for communications upgrades across the State to allow Surf Life Saving to continue its critical work and support lifesavers in keeping beachgoers safe and well in the future.

Adequate funding of Surf Life Saving is essential to ensure that our clubs have the resources to continue to do the amazing work they do on the Central Coast and beyond. Our clubs do so much and enjoy absolute community support. Last weekend I had the pleasure of attending the Umina Surf Life Saving Club presentation awards at the fantastic Diggers at Ettalong. There is no way to single out any of the excellent awardees on the evening. I think every person in the room was an amazing contributor, and many people who were not present also made incredible contributions. I thank all those involved, particularly Steve and Tom for helping with Duke of Edinburgh's Award recipients. Umina surf club had 41 bronze medallion recipients and 10 silver medallion recipients, which is a great outcome.

When I first moved to the Central Coast, in an effort to be involved in my community at Wamberal, I took great delight in being supported by Wamberal surf club to do my bronze medallion. It is great for community building, but an important part of community safety resourcing. Thanks to all the education officers who oversee skills development because it is a huge project to assist so many people in gaining their medallions. I also thank the wonderful patrol teams. Thanks to Molly, who coordinates patrols. I do not know whether I am biased, but Molly's Patrol 3 won Patrol of the Year—and it is almost an all-girls team. It is fantastic to see the women out there on the beach. It was a great evening spent in great company.

I also say thanks to our surf clubs for their perseverance in applying for grants through the Community Building Partnership fund. I know it is a big project, but in the time that I have been a member of Parliament I have taken great delight in providing over \$106,000 to renew parts of buildings; fix a rusted balcony; paint internal areas; refurbish the honour boards commemorating 100 years of the Umina Beach club; purchase a new, custom-made patrol trailer; fix three faulty roller doors; purchase a tractor to make sure that lifesavers can get all their equipment to the shoreline; replace corroded and dangerous glass windows and doors; and purchase a new inflatable rescue boat and a new rescue watercraft for our surf clubs across the coast—important equipment that we need to keep our community safe.

I say a massive thank you to everyone involved in our surf lifesaving clubs. It is a multigenerational example of the best possible support of our community members. From the Silver Salties who walk the beach to the nippers whom they do their best to look after, it is an amazing community resource. We thank them for keeping our community safe.

### **BATHURST MILLION PAWS WALK**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (20:18):** It gives me great pleasure to speak in this House about the Bathurst community Million Paws Walk. This is a great family- and dog-friendly day that has become one of those events on the calendar each year that is enjoyed by many in the community. The RSPCA Million Paws Walk has become something of an institution on the Bathurst calendar of community events. An event held at many locations around the nation, the Million Paws Walk raises funds to help fight animal cruelty and fund veterinary care and desexing programs. One of the big drivers of the event is well-known local resident Margie Gaal, whose work for Bathurst Regional Council has been well documented. Margie does an amazing job and has worked for the council for over 40 years. She gives of her time in volunteering to ensure that the event is a success each year.

This year's Million Paws Walk was held last weekend. It was held at its traditional venue of the Bicentennial Peace Park, where a walking path winds its way around the river for about two kilometres. There is always a great turnout because every step of the way participants are joined by their pampered pooches, helping the rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming of dogs in need. While the event is mainly targeted at dog owners, other animals are allowed to join in the fun, so long as they are on a lead or in a cage. In the past there have been ferrets, horses, birds and chooks. Last weekend a number of owners carried cards of their pet cats. Some people do not own a dog but simply join in for the camaraderie because it is such a good cause.

Funds raised from the event go to the Bathurst branch of the RSPCA, which also includes the townships of Cowra, Lithgow and Oberon. This was the first time in years the event has been held without having to enforce strict COVID restrictions, and it comes at a time when Bathurst's new Animal Rehoming Centre at Kelso is nearing completion. It is great that the former New South Wales Government was able to help fund that project with an investment of over \$3.2 million. The Bathurst Animal Rehoming Centre signals the start of a new era for the management of companion animals in the Bathurst region. It is expected to open towards the end of this year, and I look forward to being a part of those celebrations. It will provide a modern, large facility centre with a welcoming customer environment, and it exceeds expectations for animal welfare outcomes.

The small local animal pound has had a very successful rehoming program in recent years, and the new facility will only boost this vital program. BARC, as it is known, will feature an adoption pavilion and companion animal education facility, which will be a first of its kind in regional New South Wales incorporating a purpose-built facility aimed at maximising opportunities for animals to find their forever home. Rehoming of stray dogs and cats is becoming a more and more popular option for people looking for a pet, and in years to come I am sure many companion animals will find their forever homes at the new rehoming centre. BARC will also include an area designed to host educational and pets-as-therapy workshops with members of the community, which is a great opportunity for the community. Bathurst-based business Regional West Constructions is completing the project. BARC is a wonderful facility. Watching its construction has certainly been worthwhile, and I look forward to being a part of it in the future.

### BLACKTOWN ELECTORATE

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:22):** I must express my outrage at the previous private member's statement in which the member for Bathurst referred to the new facility called BARC, when we all know that BARC is actually in Blacktown. It is the Blacktown Animal Rehoming Centre. I think the same consultants have been used. They made twice as much money. So we now have a sister facility. My wonderful electorate of Blacktown represents a broad cross-section of the community ranging from low to high socio-economic status. A variety of cultures adds to the vibrancy of the area, and includes those who are athletically, culturally or educationally gifted to those that find those pursuits challenging.

My electorate is one of seven associated within the Blacktown City local government area. To put it in a different way, one in 13 electorates in this House has an association with Blacktown City. With 188 different cultures and many Indigenous cultures, 405,000 people call Blacktown home. Whilst every other council and every other MP in this place like to claim that they represent the fastest growing area—and I note that the member for Riverstone is in the Chamber—we know that our area is the fastest growing in raw numbers.

To prove my case, looking at the past 70 years going back to 1954, the population of Blacktown Shire Council was 31,748 people. Today it is 405,000 people. The population has grown 12-fold. In comparison, Australia's population has only tripled, from nine million to 26 million. So Blacktown City Council's population increased 12-fold to Australia's three. That means that one in 46 people who were either born in or came to Australia through immigration ended up in Blacktown. Considering the Greater Sydney population over the past 70 years, one in eight people who were part of that population growth ended up in Blacktown. There are about 35 councils, so we have taken our fair share of resources. I know in the next 30 years Riverstone will probably be the leading electorate as far as population growth is concerned.

Population growth requires physical infrastructure such as schools, roads, parks, hospitals and drainage, as well as the soft infrastructure relating to mental health challenges and programs to support people whose primary language is not English. The past 12 years of Coalition Government has been horrendous for the people of Blacktown. Talk is cheap. Too often Coalition MPs would talk about how health is important, how education sets people up for life and the benefits of infrastructure, yet hardly any of that was delivered to Blacktown. Blacktown was left behind on any measure. In the past 12 years not one Coalition budget spent a single additional cent to upgrade any school in the Blacktown electorate. In 2011 the Liberal Government decided to cancel the Doonside lifts. We needed 11,000 petitioners, a debate in this House and eight to 10 years of campaigning to get the lifts reinstated.

If a patient is triaged as a T2 emergency patient at Blacktown hospital, they must be seen within 10 minutes. In the March quarter of 2011 when Labor was last in power, 85 per cent of patients were seen on time. In the last quarter of the previous Government that is now down to 13 per cent. Yet in any of the hospitals in northern suburbs, 80 per cent of people are seen on time. Blacktown hospital might have received 14 architectural awards, but we would like to get some health awards. The privatisation agenda of the previous Government involved selling \$80 billion worth of assets, leaving this Government with \$180 billion of debt and a current deficit approaching \$11 billion, with \$7 billion unfunded. It also applied extreme lockdown measures to my electorate. Thankfully, we have a fresh start for Blacktown, Western Sydney and New South Wales with the election of the Minns Government. We look forward to the additional graduating nurses who are joining Blacktown hospital. Much is expected and much is needed, but the Minns Labor Government is focused on delivering services to meet the growing population's needs.

### LIFELINE

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (20:27):** I speak on an issue that impacts a significant number of people in my electorate of Vaucluse and beyond—that is, challenges around mental health and wellbeing. Almost half of Australians aged between 16 and 85 are estimated to have experienced a mental illness or disorder at some time in their life, and around one in five will experience a mental disorder within any 12-month period, according

to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Lifeline has revealed it is seeing record activity through its website for help and support, and data from the organisation's search engine shows that there were over 26,000 searches for assistance and support in January 2023 across Australia. That is the highest on record. In addition, referral searches by Lifeline's helpline counsellors specifically relating to financial issues and homelessness went up 49 per cent between August 2022 and January 2023.

Mental health issues impact all of our communities—remote, regional and inner city. As I highlighted in my inaugural speech in this Chamber last week, they have a significant impact on young people, especially young men. Suicide is the leading cause of death in young people between the ages of 15 and 24. People in the eastern suburbs made around 11,000 calls to Lifeline last year. While it is important that people are reaching out and that they know who they can turn to, the numbers are deeply concerning. The challenge for Lifeline not just in our community but across the State is keeping up with the demand for its services. Lifeline relies on volunteers, who make up about 70 per cent of its workers. Thirty per cent are paid staff, mostly on the overnight shift. But volunteering is on the decline in Australia and Lifeline is not immune. Volunteer shortages have left the national Lifeline service under significant pressure. The 2021 census reported a 19 per cent decline in the number of Australians volunteering since 2016.

Volunteers are a critical component of crisis resilience in New South Wales, supporting communities affected by floods and fires. They contribute to the fabric of communities like ours through food shelters, through surf lifesaving and through supporting the homeless. The community in the eastern suburbs has generously supported our own local Lifeline Direct centre at Bondi. Lifeline Bondi was only opened in August last year but already has 50 people working or training as crisis support volunteers. I acknowledge the great work done by the CEO of Lifeline Direct, Robert Sams; the general manager, Michael Were; and the founder of Lifeline Bondi, Daisy Turnbull, who I caught up with recently on a visit to its Bondi Junction offices.

Daisy and the team have great ambitions for the centre and are mindful of the challenges they face to support more calls. Lifeline needs two things: more volunteers and more money. So I have decided to do more than just speak about it; I am fundraising for our local Lifeline by joining the June push-up challenge, which started today. I have a few more to do before we hit midnight. I have committed to doing 3,144 push-ups in the month of June. I know it is impressive. I have to do about 100 a day. But the reason for that very specific number is a sombre one. That is how many people lose their lives to suicide every year. It is based on the figure in 2021.

I want to promote this important challenge to raise funds, raise awareness and reduce the stigma around mental health, and also as a personal physical challenge. I will admit that I currently struggle to do even 10 push-ups, so I am looking forward to improving my own physical strength while supporting the mental strength of those in our community. I hope others will join me and take up the challenge as an individual, a team or a community. Lifeline provides short-term help for people who are feeling overwhelmed or are having difficulty coping. Someone will listen to them without judgement, will provide them a safe space to discuss their needs, worries or concerns, and will work with them to explore options for support. Its number is 13 11 14.

### WATER OWNERSHIP

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (20:33):** Today I commend the Minns Labor Government for enshrining the protection of Sydney Water and Hunter Water within our Constitution. The citizens of New South Wales have always relied upon its public assets and organisations to provide for them, and water is without a doubt our most critical asset. Water is one of the world's most valuable and abundant resources. Yet water scarcity exists in many countries and is becoming a growing threat to millions of people around the world. Water scarcity arises when the demand for clean and safe water outweighs the supply. As global populations steadily increase, so too does the need for more water.

People in the electorate of Riverstone, a growth area of New South Wales, understand the impacts of under-resourcing population growth. Water is fundamental to all aspects of life. Water resources underpin economic growth, environmental sustainability and prosperity. Sydney Water and Hunter Water are irreplaceable public assets and must be protected and preserved. Privatisation would be reckless and irresponsible. The Constitution Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023 will help to protect our water security from any future government that may confuse short-term financial gain with long-term public need. We need only look to the United Kingdom, which sold off its public water assets. The result was higher water prices, poor delivery of critical water services and a lack of accountability due to the loss of public control. Higher costs but a lower standard of service—is that what the people of New South Wales deserve?

Currently Sydney Water services 5.3 million customers across Greater Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra. Our population is rapidly growing. During this time we should be consolidating our infrastructure and public assets. People living in the Riverstone electorate know the importance of strong water infrastructure. Every week hundreds of new homes are being built, each requiring water and sewer connections, each dependent



on affordable and reliable supply. The sale of our public assets will put further strain on the pockets of my constituents. When the cost-of-living crisis was affecting everyone, the previous Liberal Government misled the people of New South Wales, backflipping and backtracking. Despite claims to the contrary, documents were found that proved it had scoped out the sale of Sydney Water and that, indeed, the process had already begun.

This Government, however, does not backflip. We do not mislead and we do not backtrack. Our promise going into the election was clear: We would protect our public assets. And we have done just that. I am proud to say that enshrining Sydney Water and Hunter Water in the Constitution is a promise we are delivering. Privatisation of assets is synonymous with Liberal governments. The people of my electorate know that well. From toll roads to buses, the previous Government's obsession with "asset recycling" undermined critical infrastructure. Instead of adding value to the State's bottom line, asset recycling has in fact let the people of New South Wales down. Our Government has inherited the worst financial situation in the history of this State: \$180 billion in debt, a \$7 billion black hole, and an \$11 billion budget deficit. That is the legacy of using asset recycling as the cornerstone of economic management. Members of the former Liberal Government have now carried that dismal legacy into opposition.

The Opposition's proposed amendments to the bill are dangerous and reckless. When a matter as important as enshrining the sanctity of fresh drinking water in our Constitution is at stake, they are clearly a stunt and a reckless game of politics. However, the Labor Government will not continue with asset recycling. We will not play politics with crucial public assets and we will go back to putting people first. We know the challenges faced by families and we know that protecting our public assets will ensure the best interests of the people. Enshrining Sydney Water and Hunter Water in the Constitution is only the first step. But it is a step that sets the tone for this Government. We will return to the people of New South Wales a government that works for them, not for private companies. We are a government that puts people above profits, margins and corporate revenue. We are a government that puts people first.

#### BARWON ELECTORATE

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (20:37):** It is my privilege and honour to be representing the people of Barwon in the Fifty-Eighth New South Wales Parliament. It is an honour I do not take lightly. As the newly re-elected member, I vow to continue working hard for the electorate, building on the achievements of the last four years, bringing to fruition some of the things my team and I started in my first term, and working on some other issues that have since become a major priority for Barwon and for regional New South Wales more generally. When I was first elected the biggest issue was drought, but some good seasons of rain, while they brought flooding, seemed to put the issue of drought preparedness, relief and drought recovery to the back of peoples' minds.

However, it remains one of my policy priorities to see that the Government implements a structured approach to drought, identifying the different stages of drought according to accepted definitions, knowing what can be done for producers going into drought, knowing when assistance should kick in and helping with the recovery coming out of drought. Given the predictions of dry weather this summer, we can no longer ignore it. Perhaps we have been distracted by other issues. In early 2019, when the State was still in drought, we would never have dreamed that roads would be one of the biggest challenges facing regional New South Wales. But the rains came down, breaking the drought, bringing flooding and giving our road network a merciless pounding.

Councils in Barwon were under stress, because many that were already struggling financially from the long years of drought were hit hard, paying out millions from their already stretched budget to look after the roads. It became necessary to lobby the State and Federal governments for funding, but funding is only part of the problem. There is a need to find machinery, materials and workers. While councils have done some amazing work repairing roads, the next step will be helping them rebuild those roads so that they are more flood resistant and so that they do not leave communities cut off by water in the future.

The damage to roads and the knock-on effects for rural economies highlights the disparities between regional and metropolitan areas, but one major area where the disparity is most apparent is regional health. From the beginning of my first term, I have worked to improve the quality of and access to health services in Barwon. Last year an inquiry into regional health showed the problems caused by years of neglect. The report contained 44 reasonable recommendations that would go a long way toward fixing what is wrong with the regional health system, but the then Government seemed reluctant to act on all of them. Now this Government has established a committee to see those recommendations through. I will work with the committee to be sure that the recommendations are implemented.

One of the major failings of the health system and of government services more broadly is the lack of accountability. There needs to be a change in approach so that the New South Wales Government sets service delivery standards and acknowledges the gaps between intentions and outcomes, instead of merely apologising or

making excuses for failing regional services. We need to have a government where failure is owned and the resourcing gaps are identified, reported on and addressed. For a decade, neglect and under-resourcing have been allowed to go on unacknowledged and unchanged, but it will be possible to bring about real change in regional New South Wales with greater accountability.

It is time for accountability and time to build clear directions and defined targets into programs. The lack of metrics in service plans has resulted in problems across the State and is also a major reason for the disparity in regional areas of New South Wales. There should be metrics built into every service plan and a legislated requirement for Ministers to explain in Parliament if service targets are not being met. Genuine consultation with real people has not been reflected in planning and outcomes. The story is there for all to see: Organisations have provided the research, the expertise and even the frameworks to combat the issues they are facing, but the Government has not listened. The widening gap in outcomes in health and education and the unstructured, poorly planned approach to many of the key issues facing the bush result in what we see today.

Over three million residents in New South Wales call regional areas home. The strategy we bring to the next four years is hardline accountability and transparency. That means metrics and a legislated requirement to explain if targets are not being met. Regional New South Wales is sick of decisions being made by those who do not understand the distance, the climate, the disadvantage, the access, the communities and the culture. The focus on regional, rural and remote New South Wales needs to change so that we have the resources, support and tools to continue to grow across industry and be recognised as the powerhouse that we are. When all the services are working as they should and when the Government backs the bush, the people will be healthier, happier and more prosperous. Prosperous regions mean a stronger New South Wales.

### REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (20:42):** I acknowledge the hard work that was undertaken by our community organisations doing crucial frontline work for some of our most vulnerable people in the Auburn electorate and across our region of Western Sydney. During the COVID pandemic in particular, people seeking refugee protection had no access to income support and housing assistance. Temporary visa holders and people seeking refugee protection are not eligible for Commonwealth financial support via Centrelink, which created a huge problem during COVID when people were unable to leave our region to go to work or to access any means of support. That has been compounded over the years because of significant cuts by the then Federal Coalition Government that saw funding reduced by 95 per cent since 2015 and the eligibility criteria becoming so narrow that it is almost impossible for anyone to access support.

There are currently only 1,500 people on the Federal Status Resolution Support Services program nationwide, whereas the organisations that offer support to those people within our electorates service about four times that number. Those organisations include the Australian Red Cross, the Chinese Australian Services Society, the fantastic House of Welcome in Granville, the Jesuit Refugee Service, Muslim Women Australia, Settlement Services International and organisations such as the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors. Over 4,500 people have received special casework and emergency relief from the Jesuit Refugee Service, the House of Welcome and the Asylum Seekers Centre. That is in comparison with the 1,500 who are being supported by the Federal Government, following the significant cuts that saw the numbers fall from 23,000.

In financial year 2022 those organisations have also provided over \$900,000 in rent and crisis accommodation. They have provided \$50,000 for medication, including treatments for cancer and diabetes. Those people would not be able to access those medications without that support, and those organisations can provide it because the former Coalition State Government recognised how disastrous the cuts by the Federal Coalition Government had been and put in a significant amount of money during COVID so those organisations could provide that support. Support services have also spent \$500,000 providing food parcels to 3,000 individuals. Some 40 per cent of the people helped by those services are children, and a lot of those people have disabilities.

There was a six-month extension of the funding, but unfortunately it runs out on 30 June. There will be a crisis because a lot of people are currently coming out of community detention. They get a short period of housing and income support, which cuts out very quickly. Some of those people are on pathways back to New Zealand and will be leaving in three or four months. They have no support, and there are significant numbers—thousands of them—being supported by those services. Once 30 June hits, those services will no longer be there.

It is a Federal Government responsibility, but there is a requirement that State Ministers at least take it up at ministerial council to ensure that some of that huge 95 per cent cut is restored. But in the meantime, we need to look at the problem that will arise in four weeks if there is no funding for those services. What happens to the 4,500 people who are already being serviced by them, not to mention the people trying to get onto the waitlist?

There are so many people that it takes up to five weeks to even get a phone call back, and that is for an emergency service. I am hopeful that the Federal and State governments can come together and find a reasonable solution, and that the Federal Government restores the funding. I hope that in the short term we can look at some solutions to assist those organisations working so hard for our most vulnerable people.

### **NEDAL "SKINNY" HUSSEIN**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (20:47):** Nedal "Skinny" Hussein was a professional boxer who competed at the top echelons for a decade between 1997 and 2007. He is a former Australian bantamweight and super bantamweight champion. Skinny had a formidable record of 43 wins from a total of 48 fights, including 27 wins by knockout. Skinny was destined to be Australia's next big thing in the boxing world. Twenty-three years ago, in the year 2000, aged 22, Skinny went up against his biggest opponent yet, a man by the name of Manny Pacquiao. Fighting for the World Boxing Council [WBC] international super bantamweight title, Skinny was on the cusp of victory in the fourth round. He dropped Pacquiao with a stiff jab. He was out for the count for 18 seconds—eight seconds longer than the standard time for a knockout. After 18 seconds, Pacquiao found his feet and went on to win the contest by technical knockout in the tenth round. The rest, as they say, is history.

Whilst Skinny continued to fight, winning 24 of 28 match-ups after his famous loss, Manny Pacquiao reached great heights. Throughout his career he went on to win 12 world titles and over \$220 million in prize money. Significant concerns were raised with the integrity of the match after the contest, given that Skinny should have been declared the victor by knockout in the fourth round. It was and still is one of Australia's biggest sporting hard luck stories. Having been duded out of a title and significant prize money, Skinny has gone on record to say he experienced years of disillusionment because of the loss, to the point that it made him hate boxing. Whilst indignant, Skinny remains humble, saying in an interview that, "I would never claim to have got to where Manny got to. I would never claim that I could beat the guys that Manny beat, but I know my next fight would have been a title shot and it was a very winnable title shot."

Whilst Skinny has since made a life of running a small boxing gym in Prestons, which is part of my electorate, and living in Lurnea with his wife, Rana, and their three children, he continues to wonder what could have been. Over 20 years later, Skinny finally received consolation, if you can even call it that—an acknowledgement of the questionable integrity of the contest. During an interview with the WBC in October last year, referee Carlos Padilla admitted to prolonging the count that helped Manny Pacquiao recover. In the explosive interview, Carlos Padilla also admitted to assisting Manny Pacquiao by ruling a headbutt as a punch, which ultimately caused the technical knockout.

Was it vindication for Skinny? Perhaps, but Skinny cannot be fully vindicated unless justice is restored. The only way that could occur would be awarding the contest, and victory, to Skinny. If the WBC were to overturn the decision made on that fateful evening, both civil and criminal proceedings could be launched against match officials and sporting bodies—all as a result of the sheer betrayal of the sport's integrity by Carlos Padilla. It would establish an interesting precedent, but as a professional occupation, all rules, regulations and laws must be adhered to. If they are not, it is referred to an external umpire. The same standard should hold whether it is in an office, a worksite, or in the boxing ring. In Skinny's case, and in the boxing arena, there seems to be a double standard.

### **PORT STEPHENS-HUNTER POLICE DISTRICT AWARDS**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (20:50):** Recently I had the privilege of honouring local police officers at the Port Stephens-Hunter Police District medals and awards ceremony. It was a special day made even more so by the presence of the new Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, Yasmin Catley, who was attending her very first police awards ceremony since becoming the Minister. I recognise the host officer of the ceremony, local area command Superintendent Wayne Humphrey, and thank him for his strong leadership of the local command.

Hearing the brave acts of our local police officers once again impressed on me the incredibly important and challenging job they have. Whilst they go about their work every day, every corner they turn and every person they stop can present a threat to their life or someone else's. Tonight I pay tribute to those who received awards and commendations for going above and beyond in their service to our community. The recipients of the National Police Service Medal for 15 years of diligent and ethical service were retired Detective Senior Constable Cara Portese, Detective Senior Constable Todd Mitchell and Sergeant Ian Allwood. Sergeant Ian Allwood also received the third clasp to the NSW Police Medal for diligent and ethical service. I also recognise Sergeant Allwood, also known as "Ducky", for his longstanding involvement with the Police Association of New South Wales and his advocacy for his fellow members.

Receiving their second clasp to the NSW Police Medal for diligent and ethical service were Sergeant Julianne Randall and Senior Constable Philip Campbell. I was delighted to see local legend Senior Constable

Trent Moffat receiving recognition for his impressive response in an extraordinary situation. Constable Moffat was awarded the Commissioner's Commendation for Courage for outstanding courage and dedication to duty for his efforts in the early hours of Tuesday 21 April 2015. The conditions he faced were cited as follows:

The township of Stroud experienced cyclonic weather conditions including wind gusts of over 100kph and more than 300mm of rain in a three-hour period. This caused the Karuah River to burst its banks, inundating the town and causing major flooding. Along with other police and members of the public, Constable Moffat was recalled to duty and asked to bring his personal boat to rescue a couple from rising floodwaters at the Stroud Showground.

Two dinghies were used to access the showground, with police risking their own lives by entering the water to free the boat of underwater debris.

Constable Moffat then went on to complete several rescues of people trapped by dangerous rising floodwaters, some of these completed in the dark of night. If it were not for Constable Moffat's resourcefulness and determination, numerous lives could have been lost on the day of the flood.

Another recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Courage was retired Constable Hayden Edwards. In 2019 Constable Edwards was on duty at Central railway station when he was stabbed in the back with a 30-centimetre knife. Despite his injuries, Constable Edwards worked with other police officers to safely disarm and arrest the man. Detective Senior Constable Mitchell Harvey, retired Detective Senior Constable Cara Portese and retired Leading Senior Constable Mark Hulbert received the Certificate of Service recognising the valued contribution they have made to the community in the NSW Police Force.

For apprehending someone who took people hostage and threatened the lives of others at the Ampol service station in Heatherbrae, Sergeant Stephen Anderson, Senior Constable Peter Boys, Senior Constable Freddy Neculman, Senior Constable Jake Poole, Constable Mellissa Bartlett and Constable Kayla Wilson received a Northern Region Commander's Commendation. Senior Constable Chantelle Kleinig received a Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command Commendation. Special mention was given to Sergeant Russell Lloyd. Sergeant Lloyd received a District Commander's Commendation in recognition of his valuable contribution during the renovation of Maitland's police station. I wish Sergeant Russell Lloyd well in his forthcoming retirement after decades of service to the NSW Police Force. Senior Constable Naomi Davis, Detective Senior Constable Jarrod Rudd, Detective Senior Constable Matthew Sutton, Senior Constable Amanda Maslen and Senior Constable Wayne Brown also received a District Commander's Commendation in recognition of their dedication to duty and teamwork within Strike Force Beryllium when investigating the ongoing supply of prohibited drugs.

Senior Constable Adam Martin and Senior Constable Philip Campbell were commended by the NSW Police Force for attending and intervening in incidents of attempted self-harm. The stories supporting their citations were truly extraordinary. When I listen to citations I am reminded of the incredible job that police officers do, day in and day out. Constable Jacob Spence was commended by the NSW Police Force for his professionalism and commitment to duty after assisting NSW Ambulance officers treating a 21-year-old man with stab wounds. Most people going about their day-to-day life acknowledge that our police make sacrifices to protect our community, but by attending the awards ceremony and listening to the stories one gets a deep understanding of what this daily sacrifice looks like—compassion, courage and resilience, and not knowing when you will be called to face a life-or-death challenge, and then getting up and doing it all again. I thank those police officers for their courage, sense of duty and service to our community. I also pay tribute to their families, who support them every day.

### COST OF LIVING

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:56):** In recent years the price of basic necessities has steadily increased, placing a heavy burden on families, individuals and the economy as a whole. From housing to health care, and from education to groceries, we all find ourselves grappling with escalating prices that diminish our purchasing power and limit our ability to thrive. Many hardworking individuals and families find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, so tonight I want to emphasise the importance of cost-of-living measures, which play a critical role. In particular, I want to shed light on two initiatives that have been instrumental in easing the financial burden on households—the Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card and the Active Kids vouchers. Those initiatives not only recognise the challenges faced by families and individuals but also provide tangible support to help them thrive.

The Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card is a budget-boosting initiative to help ease the cost-of-living pressures in the bush, where often young people and mature age trainees face long distances when getting to and from work or training. Since the card was launched earlier this year, more than 5,000 regional apprentices have signed up and received the card, helping them to manage the cost of travel associated with their studies or apprenticeships. Luke Prentice is a mature age apprentice. He was one of the first involved as part of the pilot we launched in Dubbo in January. He was using the card to pay for fuel for his vehicle, which he uses to get to work and training as an apprentice electrician. He said with fuel prices being high, among the other costs

of living, the card was a welcome boost to his family's budget. This program is all about levelling the playing field.

Students and apprentices in regional areas often face different challenges and limited resources, making it even more difficult to pursue education and training opportunities. This program also has broader implications for regional development. By supporting the education and training of young people in regional areas, we foster a skilled workforce that can contribute to the growth and prosperity of our communities. We know the difference this card is already making, and will continue to make, right across regional New South Wales. There are thousands of people in regional New South Wales just like Luke who will suffer if the cards do not continue. I call on the Minns Labor Government to back this program, which already has funding for two years and is worth \$98 million.

Then there is the Active Kids voucher program, which has been extremely successful right across every electorate of the State after being implemented by the previous Coalition Government. As most people would know, this program gives children who may otherwise miss out an opportunity to play sport, which helps with their physical and mental health. The vouchers have significantly increased participation in sport across the Dubbo electorate, with more than 60,000 vouchers used in the region since 2018. I have heard from many sporting clubs and teams across the region which have seen increases in participation thanks to these vouchers.

According to the Dubbo Saints Netball Club, 80 per cent of its registrations used Active Kids. The Dubbo Athletics Club recently wrote to me about its concern and disappointment regarding the possible end of the Active Kids vouchers. Over the past three years the club has grown from a pre-COVID number of 194 members. It now provides coaching, guidance and mentorship to over 350 young athletes, thanks in part to the support from the vouchers. The St Johns Junior Rugby League Club has also expressed its concerns regarding the vouchers. The club provides sport and recreation for 572 registered young boys and girls—75 per cent of whom used an Active Kids voucher to register this year.

By encouraging children to participate in sport and recreational activities, we promote social cohesion, teamwork and community engagement. Sporting clubs and organisations play a crucial role in providing a sense of belonging and instilling valuable life skills in our youth. Cancelling the program would not only impact financial support for families but also hinder growth and unity within our communities. We know Active Kids is more than just a financial assistance program—it is an investment in the wellbeing and future of our children. Both of the measures I have talked about demonstrate the commitment of the former Liberal-Nationals Government to supporting families and individuals. They have helped to reduce the financial burden on families and have also contributed to a more inclusive and equitable society.

These initiatives do not operate in isolation. They form part of a broader strategy to address the cost-of-living concerns that impact us all. The Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card and the Active Kids vouchers are essential cost-of-living measures. They help to address the real and pressing challenges of affordability and accessibility that our constituents face every day. Let us not turn our backs on those who need our support the most. I urge the Labor Government to keep supporting these programs as it looks to the budget.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (21:01):** Like many communities in Sydney and New South Wales, the inner west faces a housing affordability crisis. For young people, and vulnerable people in particular, the availability of housing that is affordable, safe and well maintained is frighteningly low. I regularly hear from locals that they cannot afford to buy a home in our suburbs. Even renters are being priced out of the inner west, with vacancies low and prices sky-high. The waiting list for public and community housing continues to blow out, with people waiting an average of 10 years from the time they first apply for housing. Across the State, we know that more than 58,000 people are on the social housing waiting list. The most vulnerable in our community—those in insecure housing and those experiencing homelessness—are under increasing pressure, as more people who have traditionally been able to secure housing are forced into crisis housing or onto the street.

After 12 long years of a Liberal-Nationals Government in New South Wales, housing affordability is at an all-time low. There can be no question that housing affordability was a key issue at the State election and that Labor's bold policies to address the issue were a key driver in electing a new Labor Government. We will not waste time in getting on with these important reforms. We have already acted—it was one of our first orders of business—to assist first home buyers across New South Wales, including in the inner west.

The Government has introduced the First Home Buyer Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which will increase the first home buyer stamp duty exemption from \$650,000 to \$800,000 and the concession threshold from \$800,000 to \$1 million. While the former Government prioritised people buying a home over \$1 million, our Government is committed to assisting people who would otherwise not be able to get a foot in the housing

market. Under our plan, five out of six first home buyers will receive a boost to help them compete with investors and established home owners. People who buy their first home for up to \$800,000 will not have to pay stamp duty, saving them \$31,000. People buying their first home of up to \$1 million will pay a reduced rate of stamp duty. It will make a huge difference for those looking to enter the housing market, including in the Summer Hill electorate.

We have already acted on rental reforms to assist the nearly 40 per cent of people who rent their homes across the inner west community. We are working to enact our groundbreaking policies. We are going to end secret rent bidding and enable portable bonds, so that renters are not left on the hook for thousands of dollars after leaving one rental property and moving to another. We will make it easier for renters to own a pet. We will work to end no-grounds evictions, which will help to rebalance the rental market by ensuring that tenants can no longer be evicted for no reason at all. We will appoint a Rental Commissioner, who will ensure that the rights of tenants are respected and protected. And we will give renters a powerful voice as we work across government to address the lack of housing affordability. Importantly, the commissioner will be supported in their work by a government that respects and understands the challenges faced by renters.

We are also acting urgently to support people living in public and social housing. We know the former Government sold off \$3.5 billion in public housing, and what did we get for it? We got a reduction in the available housing for people who need it most. The Minister for Housing, the Hon. Rose Jackson, has acted immediately to freeze the sale of public housing. It is a simple proposition: As more people need housing support, we need more affordable housing, not less. On this measure, the Premier has acted decisively, tasking Ministers to identify State-owned land that can be used for housing, with a minimum ratio of 30 per cent for affordable and social housing. We will not be able to unpick the mess left by the former Government overnight, but we are committed to supporting people across New South Wales to access affordable, safe and secure housing.

Combating the issues around housing affordability requires more than just talk. Like many in the inner west community, I was disappointed with the former Government's lack of action. I was also frustrated to learn that The Greens political party joined forces with the Liberal-Nationals Coalition in the Senate to block the Albanese Federal Government's \$10 billion housing policy. That bill will establish a \$10 billion fund and it will fund an additional 30,000 affordable and social homes to be built across the next five years. Of those homes, 20,000 would be built as social housing, with 4,000 for women and children escaping domestic violence. Those homes would be a lifeline for the people and families currently struggling to literally put a roof over their heads. Despite others making all the right noises, it is clear that only Labor, both here in Macquarie Street and in Canberra, is committed to fixing the housing affordability crisis in New South Wales and across our country.

#### **MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (21:06):** There are three sure things in life: death, taxes and drought. Our rural communities have shown that we can endure droughts, but what we cannot endure is a Federal Government that is willing to destroy rural New South Wales for political reasons. The Feds are pushing their plan to rip 450 gegalitres of water from irrigation communities, supposedly to help the environment. Removing another 450 gegalitres from irrigation communities is akin to saying to Sydneysiders, "We want to take all the water from Sydney Harbour." But unlike Sydneysiders, we do not just look at our water and sail on it occasionally. We use our water in the regions to feed the nation and keep our communities alive. When water is taken away, farms shut down and towns die. It is as simple as that. Government bureaucrats then cut funding for schools and hospitals. The footy and netball clubs collapse and the last bank leaves town. Take a look at Wakool in the south of my electorate, where buybacks put a wrecking ball through the community. New South Wales needs to act immediately.

That is why I am calling on the Premier and the water Minister to declare a moratorium on buybacks in New South Wales right now. The Government must agree that not a single drop of water is sold to the Feds as part of this 450 gegalitre planned buyback scandal. Recently the Victorian water Minister put her foot down and said no to buybacks in her State. Why has the New South Wales Government not done the same? We must send the Federal water Minister, Tanya Plibersek, a clear message that enough is enough. The Federal water Minister needs to understand that 540,000 gegalitres of rain falls in the Murray-Darling Basin each year on average. Of that, 2 per cent is captured in government dams. Around 90 per cent already falls on the landscape and yet the environment is still showing decline. The current Murray-Darling Basin Plan has failed, as anyone who knows anything about water will tell you. It is the definition of madness to keep making the same mistakes but expecting a different outcome.

Just adding water will not fix things. There are so many other things the Feds could be doing. But these things take effort, and it must seem easier for the Feds to just steal water from the regions. That is not okay and we must not let it happen. Why does the Federal Government not find other environmental solutions? Why does it not do something about carp control, fish ladders or cold water pollution? Does the Federal Government not

realise that two-thirds of the world's food is produced under irrigation? If we want food in the cities, we need to take better care of the regions.

Ten years ago there were 60 operational dairies in my electorate; now we are left with fewer than 20. Why are we importing milk from New Zealand and the United States? Let us not forget how river communities help the rest of the regions in times of drought, when hungry stock can be fed affordably with their grain and fodder. The Commonwealth will devastate rural communities if it tries to deliver 80,000 megalitres a day across the South Australia border.

It just cannot be delivered. Getting that amount of water to South Australia safely is incredibly hard to guarantee. The travel time from the Hume Dam, the Burrinjuck Dam and the Goulburn River to the South Australia border can be one or two months, making the safe timing of water releases virtually impossible. Ultimately, the Water Act makes buybacks that hurt New South Wales regional communities unlawful. The Federal Government cannot legally do what it says it wants to do. That is why the New South Wales Government must announce a moratorium on water buybacks right now. If the Federal Government will not abandon its 450 gigalitre buyback plan, New South Wales must make sure that the buybacks simply cannot happen.

### CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE YOUTH EXPO

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (21:11):** It was my pleasure to attend the inaugural Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce Youth Expo on Saturday 27 May. This initiative was jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the New South Wales governments, and aimed to provide youth in the local Canterbury-Bankstown community with networking opportunities, allowing them to access employers across a broad range of industries and gain insights into potential career paths. I was glad to be joined by my colleagues and friends, including the Federal member for Blaxland, the Hon. Jason Clare; the member for East Hills, Kylie Wilkinson; the mayor of Canterbury Bankstown, Bilal El-Hayek; and Councillor Rachelle Harika.

Youth Expo 2023 aimed to provide participants with a range of incredible opportunities, including part-time job opportunities, volunteering opportunities, educational orientations, and a tour of the new Western Sydney University campus in Bankstown. The Youth Expo brought together businesses, local community groups and educational institutions to offer young people career guidance and advice. Participants also met the Bulldogs women's and junior teams and enjoyed a broad range of events, including live music, table tennis, video games and guided tours.

Youth unemployment in Canterbury-Bankstown is 12.7 per cent, which is 2.9 points above the statewide benchmark. It is incumbent on all of us in this place to do whatever we can to address those structural aberrations. It is an issue close to my heart. It is no secret that a great portion of my life was dedicated to ensuring that schoolchildren were assured the same opportunities as their peers across the State while I served as the principal of Punchbowl Boys High School. When we note youth unemployment figures, it is not just about the numbers. I know that firsthand. Behind every figure is a young person who has their whole life ahead of them, with so much potential, who could either succumb to the societal white noise associated with being from a community like Bankstown or who could be told that they are so much more.

We have a responsibility to ensure that any young person, no matter their background, is guaranteed an equal opportunity in life and can aspire to be anything they want to be. Youth Expo 2023 did exactly that by allowing young people to envisage a range of career prospects and encouraging them to take the first step to a more prosperous and successful future. I am also delighted to note that the event was held at the new Western Sydney University campus in Bankstown—and how very fitting. My Federal colleague and friend Minister Jason Clare noted the significance of a young person waking up in Bankstown and seeing the beautiful red, white and orange colours of the Western Sydney University building in the skyline. It is something we never imagined could happen in our lifetime because of the misconceptions that were propagated in the mainstream media and in political and private institutions about Sydney's south-west in past decades.

A young person in Bankstown waking up to a university next door means they can aspire to be anyone they want to be. It is also indicative of how far we have progressed as a State and as a country. But more work needs to be done. I also acknowledge the fantastic people from TAFE NSW who participated in the expo. TAFE is a pillar of the economy through its educational initiatives for young people, and is a key supporter of workers and businesses in the Bankstown electorate. As a member of a Labor government, I believe in the strong, well-funded public institution that is TAFE. I have seen firsthand the role that TAFE plays in upskilling young people and bridging opportunity gaps in my electorate and across many other State and regional communities in New South Wales.

It was also great to see the Bulldogs women's and junior teams at the expo. Unfortunately, I am a Dragons supporter. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the presence of the Bulldogs in the community and their participation in everything. I thank the team members for their leadership. Not only are they members of a sporting team, but they are great ambassadors who uplift the local community. I take this opportunity to thank Wally Mehanna, CEO of the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce, for his tireless work in establishing the youth expo. He and his team do extraordinary things and establish an element of belief in the community.

The benefits of initiatives like the expo are that they build community by offering young people career options, opportunities for networking with professionals and access to resources and support services such as mental health and financial advice. I look forward to the youth expo providing continued services to young people in my electorate and beyond. In these tough economic times, young people deserve a hand up when it comes to confidence building, career opportunities and guidance to pave the way towards a successful future. I encourage businesses, NGOs and support services to join initiatives that benefit our young people. It is my hope that the youth expo will grow from the one level it filled on Saturday to booking out every space in the Bankstown campus of Western Sydney University. If Wally is listening, make sure there are jumping castles next time in Paul Keating Park for big kids like me.

### ACTIVE KIDS PROGRAM

#### PREVENTATIVE HEALTH

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (21:15):** In my inaugural speech I spoke passionately about the importance of prioritising preventative health. As the member for Davidson, I am proud to support the Active Kids voucher program. It was established by the former Coalition Government and has been a highly popular and successful measure in the community. It gives kids an opportunity to participate in sport, helping them with their physical health as well as their mental health. It supports families with the cost of living. In Davidson, 93,346 vouchers have been created since 2018. But Active Kids is now at risk. I tell the people of Davidson that I will fight tooth and nail to keep the Active Kids voucher program. Today I am pleased to launch a petition to save the Active Kids vouchers. Please visit [www.saveactivekids.com.au](http://www.saveactivekids.com.au) and sign the petition.

The Active Kids voucher program is a priority for the people of Davidson. I will share some public policy facts. First, Active Kids was established by the Liberal-Nationals Government in 2018. Second, in the 2022-23 budget the Liberal-Nationals Government funded Active Kids. Third, the next budget for 2023-24 is set for September 2023. I passionately advocate for the new Labor Government to keep Active Kids to support children and families in Davidson. At the start of 2023, more than 4.85 million Active Kids vouchers had been redeemed. That equates to a \$481 million saving for families across New South Wales. In Davidson, there has been an uptake rate of 78 per cent amongst people who are eligible for Active Kids. Just under half of the vouchers—47 per cent—have been used by girls.

Active Kids vouchers have helped thousands of children in Davidson get involved in a number of sports: all types of footy from rugby union and rugby league to AFL and soccer, cricket, tennis, croquet, hockey, softball, baseball, cycling, athletics, golf, swimming, dance, basketball, netball, martial arts and more. Tonight in particular I say, "Go the New South Wales Blues!" Davidson has too many vibrant sporting organisations to mention in this short statement. It is an amazing community. In my inaugural speech I spoke about the economic challenge over the next 40 years to 2060 in relation to health. This was outlined in the Commonwealth *2021 Intergenerational Report: Australia over the next 40 years*, which identified that health spending will be more than double in real per person terms—an increase from 19 per cent of today's total government spending to 26 per cent in 2061. In 2017 the Productivity Commission estimated that Australia's GDP could be increased by \$4 billion per year if the health of people with fair to poor health was improved. I believe that all governments from all sides should get behind that. It is important because preventing chronic conditions leads to a more sustainable healthcare system, with fewer hospitalisations, less disease and increased productivity in the workforce. It is important to have strong mental health in all of our communities.

I digress slightly and speak about mental health. I was proud to join the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Ryde in undertaking the push-up challenge. It was great to start our campaign to create greater awareness for suicide prevention by doing push-ups. I look forward to doing that from 1 June to 23 June. I encourage people to donate and support Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury. It is a wonderful organisation that services the Davidson electorate. Given the increase in chronic conditions that will add even greater pressure to the health budget in the coming years, preventative health needs to be a priority for the New South Wales Government. Active Kids ties into the preventative health programs that are required by government. I call on the Labor Government to invest in preventative health, in kids and the Active Kids program in Davidson.



## HEATHCOTE ROAD

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (21:20):** The notorious Heathcote Road has been talked about in this place many times before. Unfortunately, that talk has been followed by little action. Heathcote Road serves as a major arterial road connecting the Sutherland, Liverpool, Bankstown and Holsworthy communities. As many residents in the northern end of the Heathcote electorate know, traversing Heathcote Road is fraught with danger, particularly east of New Illawarra Road and over the Woronora River. The data is irrefutable. Centre for Road Safety statistics show that between 2017 and 2021 there were several serious crashes between the Heathcote Road and Princes Highway intersection, and the Heathcote Road and New Illawarra Road highway intersection. One incident alone in 2021 resulted in five serious injuries. Almost a dozen other motorists were involved in accidents, some with moderate injuries, as well as many other less serious incidents.

A number of fatalities have occurred on Heathcote Road as well. The latest fatality was in October 2019 when a head-on collision between two cars resulted in the death of one of the occupants. That fatality occurred four years after off-duty firefighter Drew Cullen died when his vehicle was hit by a truck. The truck driver who collided with Mr Cullen's vehicle was eventually found guilty of dangerous driving occasioning death and driving in a dangerous manner. Whilst the actions of individual drivers are an aspect of motorist behaviour that we will never be able to fully control, we can ensure that roads are safe and fit for purpose. It is for that reason that I am incredibly proud of NSW Labor's commitment to invest \$180 million on top of the existing funding for upgrades to Heathcote Road.

That funding will make a real difference and, importantly, will improve safety for the many motorists who use the road. In 2021 it was noted that 36,000 motorists used the road every day. It would be safe to assume that that number has only increased since then. I have lived in Engadine for 52 years, so I can say with certainty that voters in the Heathcote electorate have long memories. When they are promised something, they expect it to be delivered. The former Government's promise to duplicate the bridge over the Woronora River prior to the 2019 New South Wales election was nothing short of a blatant attempt to secure votes. The history books show that the duplication of the bridge never occurred. Instead, a one-way bridge, which is still under construction, is what eventuated. Anyone who uses Heathcote Road on a regular basis knows that half-baked solutions will not suffice, nor will the former Government's excuses.

Blaming bureaucrats for misleading voters regarding its commitment to building a dual carriageway over the Woronora Bridge was appalling. Members opposite were always happy to pose in front of cameras for photo opportunities but, when hard work was required, they vanished like David Copperfield. My heart skips a beat every time I hear an emergency siren heading in the vicinity of Heathcote Road. The former Government made a lot of promises about Heathcote Road over the past 12 years; however, we only saw cosmetic works and half-baked promises. There was never any real action or political will from those opposite—now the Opposition—to address the serious safety concerns on Heathcote Road.

I cannot recall exactly how many hours I have spent traversing the hills in the Heathcote electorate, knocking on peoples' doors and asking them what issues they would like to raise. I vividly recall and have noted the many residents who were frustrated and angry with the lack of work and progress on Heathcote Road since 2011. I vowed that a Minns Labor Government would not do likewise, and I am proud that a Minns Labor Government will not do likewise. I met a woman during pre-poll who told me that her husband was one of the many fatalities on Heathcote Road. I promised her that, if elected, we would do this together. A safe and upgraded Heathcote Road will benefit not just residents in my electorate but also thousands of other motorists who use the road on a regular basis. Importantly, it will result in fewer accidents and fewer fatalities. It is the right thing to do.

## SHOALHAVEN DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (21:25):** Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital is my local hospital. I am incredibly proud of the hardworking staff who service our community, and I pay tribute to each and every one of them. Indeed, the sooner this Government honours its election commitment and gives them a pay rise, the better. Not only do I support it, but I will be voting for it in this place. The hospital was established following the closure of two private hospitals that had previously supported the town of Nowra in the early 1950s. Prior to its establishment the nearest public hospital was the David Berry Hospital, 20 kilometres away in Berry. The Shoalhaven hospital initially opened with 20 beds but, soon after opening, took over the privately operated Edman maternity hospital and continues to operate the 16-bed annexe.

By the late 1980s the hospital had grown to 125 beds, including an intensive care unit and paediatric ward. Over the years, I have enjoyed taking up the fight for better services at our hospital—from upgrading hospital parking and the delivery of the subacute mental health unit to upgrading paediatrics, geriatrics and the emergency department [ED], to name but a few. One of the upgrades closest to my heart is the delivery of the cancer care centre at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. My mum has had breast cancer on three occasions. When she

was first diagnosed, there was no cancer centre in the Shoalhaven. During her treatment, I got a real insight into the challenges faced by her and so many other locals who had to travel between the Shoalhaven and Wollongong to receive cancer treatment.

One of my election promises was to deliver the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre. As a community, we fought, we fundraised and, as promised, we delivered. But in spite of all these upgrades, a growing region needs much more. I have many friends who work at the Shoalhaven hospital. Whilst I had heard so many stories of their passion to serve our community, they needed the facilities to deliver the world-class care our community deserves. Having met with the hospital executive, I decided to convene a roundtable meeting that was attended by doctors, nurses and specialists. The meeting was also attended by former health Minister Brad Hazzard.

Working with the Minister, the former member for South Coast and the community, we convinced the New South Wales Government to commit \$438 million to upgrade Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. That commitment did not come easily. It took many years of lobbying, meetings, petitions and hard work. I will never forget the day when Premier Gladys Berejiklian came to our region to make the announcement. The Premier announced that the upgrade would deliver state-of-the-art medical care for residents, including a new emergency department, medical wards, a dedicated mental health ward, cardiology wards and twice the number of surgical services and operating theatres.

A new building for acute care services will be directly connected to the existing hospital, which will undergo its own refurbishment. The new and expanded services will mean more capacity for emergency and elective surgery, as well as access to more specialised staff, equipment and technology. Residents will have access to more services locally so that they do not have to leave the region for treatment. The new and expanded hospital will help to address the current high occupancy rates in bed capacity, as well as for non-admitted services, including clinic spaces. It will support care closer to home and address increases in acute activity and the demand for aged care, medical, surgical and cancer services.

Specifically, the new hospital will provide a new ED and emergency short-stay unit to improve patient flow and reduce wait times; a new state-of-the-art intensive care unit; theatres and endoscopy procedure rooms, which will double in number; a dedicated cardiology inpatient unit [IPU]; a coronary care unit; a catheterisation lab; a new vascular surgery service; expanded orthopaedic, general surgery and urology services; overnight surgical IPUs; a dedicated day surgery unit; and new medical IPUs for specialties including gastroenterology, respiratory, oncology, endocrinology and general medicine.

The hospital will also include a new acute mental health IPU; a psychiatric emergency care centre for emergency and crisis response adjacent to the ED; an expanded acute stroke unit co-located with a dedicated rehabilitation service to improve health outcomes and minimise functional loss; a new nuclear medicine department to support expanded clinical services, including cancer, cardiology and respiratory care; a new MRI service to provide improved diagnostic capacity; expanded medical imaging, including CT, X-ray, ultrasound and mammography to support clinical services; a significant increase in aged-care capacity in a dedicated aged-care ward; a subacute geriatric evaluation and management service; and a dedicated palliative care facility.

A new paediatric assessment unit will provide additional capacity for day presentations and a short-stay admission. A specialised rehabilitation unit will be for a range of conditions, including stroke, orthopaedic conditions, brain and spine injuries, and the expanded outpatients' department will be for follow-up and management of admitted and non-admitted services. We will get a new helipad, which I am very proud of. I know these services will make a big difference. But nothing stopped the Minister, who must be the best health Minister in the history of the world, from coming down, turning a sod, taking a photograph and taking credit for it. Our community knows who delivered it. I am looking forward to seeing the new facility open.

### WINDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL ARTWORK

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (21:30):** As community members come through the gates at Windale Public School, they will now be greeted by an enormous artwork that pays tribute to the school's connections to the mountains and the water, to its community and to nature and, so importantly, to First Nations culture. When I say that this is an enormous work, it is not an overstatement. It is 16.8 metres long and 1.2 metres high. It is the work of artists Nicole Harrison and Belinda Schueppenhauer, who is better known as Auntie Boo.

Nicole and Auntie Boo are members of staff at Windale Public School. Their passion for their school and the role it plays at the centre of the Windale community, as well as for traditional First Nations storytelling, is clear in the design of this stunning work of art. The work is called *Connections* and, very appropriately, was unveiled in front of the community during Sorry Day commemorations on 26 May. The artists shared insights

into how they put together the design for this epic project, which took more than 250 hours to complete. I would like to share a description with you. It is truly inspiring.

Every single dot and line is meaningful and has been meticulously planned. The artwork's centrepiece is an eagle, the Windale Public School's emblem, which is carried throughout the design of the Windale staff members' shirts, the Awabakal signage in the school's front garden and on its cultural pride award board. Woven through the design are more native animals—the kookaburra, magpie, blue-tongue lizard, possum, plover and tawny frogmouth—which can all be spotted on the grounds of Windale Public School. It pays tribute to the way the school's students care for their environment.

The mountains are a striking part of the design, just as they are a striking part of Windale's natural landscape on multiple sides. Nicole and Auntie Boo said that the mountains "are an ongoing life force that strengthens the ancestral link of Aboriginal people" and that Windale Public School has "a living spiritual connection with the mountains" that surround it. The connections to water—Redhead Beach on one side and Lake Macquarie on the other—are depicted as waterholes, celebrating the irregular shapes of the area's bays, beaches, headlands, rocky outcrops and iconic shark tower.

One of the joys of the unveiling was watching visiting children from KU Windale Preschool press their hands against the handprints scattered across the artwork. The handprints represent the school's positive engagement with the Windale community. The school is a hub for social connection and cultural celebration. The tiny footprints that accompany the hands are for the future generations who will make their educational journey at Windale Public School, some of whom will come through the onsite Nubalin Preschool.

The Waiyaring Community of Schools is beautifully represented by a combination of colours—yellow, green and white—denoting the close ties between Windale Public School and Hunter Sports High School. Large orange dots represent Windale's director of educational leadership, Principal Craig Atkins, the school leaders and the members of the community who have trodden the journey ahead of the current students. Smaller white dots represent those following in the school leaders' footsteps. Circles linked together symbolise the importance of interagency collaboration and Windale Public School's place in the Schools as Community Centres program, which aims to ensure that all children have the opportunity to live and learn in a supportive family and community environment. Mob symbols show staff members sitting and working together side by side and supporting each other to deliver educational outcomes that ensure all students are provided with the opportunities they need. Coming from the mob symbols, white dots signify the sharing of knowledge between staff members.

Across the entire work is crosshatching—16 metres from left to right—showing the twists and turns of the educational learning journey, which is different for every student and inherently tied to their environment, their school and their country. In the words of the artists, this is a journey for everyone. I thank Nicole and Auntie Boo for their vision, and I thank Windale Public School for facilitating such a visionary centrepiece for families and the local community. It will be a lasting tribute to the connections between the school, its community and its environment—that is something that, particularly during this Reconciliation Week, is very much worth celebrating. Well done, Windale Public School.

### GILEAD KOALA HABITAT

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (21:35):** I speak of the destruction of large areas of land and the risk to the only chlamydia-free koala habitat in New South Wales. The immediate risk is just north of my electorate, in Gilead. I add that it is "just north" following a redistribution that took place after I decisively won the Appin booth in the 2019 State election. Gilead is a beautiful and idyllic area and has been home to koalas that populate the Dharawal lands in my electorate. Unfortunately these koalas have chosen some trees that are in the way of some profits—at least that is how the developers view them. Lendlease Group, listed on the ASX as LLC, has developed land in my electorate and the broader Macarthur region for decades. Some of these developments look nice. Some of them even deliver some things for our new residents moving in. However, the aggressive stance of Lendlease, which is intent on pushing a home into every inch of my electorate, is destroying any hope of preserving these koalas.

This aggressive nature and pushing the boundaries is natural for the company, which has reported no tax payments for years, with massive claims. It is not right that a multinational company like Lendlease makes profits off our area, destroys koala habitats and does not give even its fair share. That the external tax adviser hired by Lendlease, Tony Watson, was sacked in 2022 for raising the issue of tax avoidance, which was reported in the *Australian Financial Review*, speaks volumes. I agree with former Senator Rex Patrick, who called on the Federal Government to look at its contracting with Lendlease for a sum of over half a billion dollars, on the basis of the company's intention to avoid tax. For the Government members listening, I would expect us to do the same, not only for matters of tax avoidance but also avoidance of moral and environmental duties.

Sadly, it may be too late for large areas near Wilton, but it is not too late for the areas to the north of Wollondilly, in Appin and Gilead. This brings me back to Lendlease. The planning development has been criticised for the proposal to "relocate" koalas. I think everybody here would know you cannot relocate koalas. I am sorry but you cannot do that to a species that requires large areas to travel through. The consistent independent advice for the requirement of a 450-metre-wide corridor for koalas should be respected. But that does not mean doing what has been done in areas such as the south of Wilton, where developers have declared the corridors are on only the lands owned by private individuals, some of whom have lived in Wollondilly for generations. It is amazing that koalas just mystically do not want to live on developer-owned land. It is the right of Lendlease to ask for the area to be concreted for its profits, but it is also our right to fight back against this and say enough is enough.

Stage two of the Gilead development should cease, and there needs to be a review of stage one. It is not only the residents of Wollondilly and I who have recognised this as a major issue. I am adding my voice to the New South Wales Government's Environment and Heritage Group, which stated that the Gilead proposal is inconsistent with the advice of the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer. The area is recognised as vital to the survival of the koala colony. Further, I recognise and thank the Australian Ethical Super Fund for its decision to divest any funds in the Lendlease Group and encourage anyone else who is able to do the same and switch funds to another, more environmentally friendly Australian company. I also thank Ethical Superannuation for sending out advice to its members, along with the suggestion to contact the environment Minister about this important issue.

I recognise that koalas are coming up a lot in this term of Parliament. The risk to koalas in the north due to logging of swathes of land is heartbreaking. This is years after I submitted a petition to this place that was debated for little more than the time I have spoken for today. Members on both sides of the House need to recognise that the risk to habitat does not only come from the obvious destruction caused by logging or even mining and industrial plans. What is affecting koala colonies in my area is homes built on land swallowed up by a developer that appears intent on taking as much as it can from us. To Lendlease and other developers like it, I say enough is enough.

## AUTISM

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (21:40):** I speak in support of local advocates who have long wanted New South Wales to have a holistic approach to autism, preferably with a strategy. Before the March election I signed a pledge to advocate for this because I understand the significant challenges faced by autistic people in our community, particularly in regional areas, and the need for government action and support. In my electorate, the Northern Rivers Autism Association has recently been established with the aim of actively advocating for better opportunities for people with autism. Two years ago I hosted a roundtable discussion on autism in my office and, from that, the seeds were sown for this advocacy group. I particularly commend the group's president, Michael Lynch, who has autism, for his persistent efforts in setting up the group.

I raise this issue because the timing is right, as there is a lot happening at the national level and in South Australia in particular. Last year a Senate Select Committee on Autism held an inquiry into services, support and life outcomes for autistic Australians. The committee's report painted a disturbing picture of the challenges faced by autistic people and their families and highlighted an urgent need for reform at State and Federal level. As the report stated, the statistics are stark. Autistic people have a life expectancy more than 20 years shorter than the general population, with more than twice the mortality rate. That is really chilling. The unemployment rate of autistic people is 31.6 per cent nationally—almost eight times that of people without disability, and more than three times the rate of people with disability.

The inquiry found that the inclusion of autistic people in the community is poor, with many experiencing loneliness, isolation, exclusion and discrimination. The committee's report made 81 recommendations and identified key areas for action: building understanding of autism within key professions and across the community; improving access to early diagnosis and intervention; improving education, employment and health services for autistic people; improving integration and coordination of services; supporting parents and carers; and establishing a national autism research agenda.

Last December, in response to the select committee's report, the Australian Government announced that it would develop a national autism strategy within 12 months. This strategy, to be co-designed with the autistic community, will drive nationally coordinated action to improve services and support for autistic Australians. Looking at the Senate committee's recommendations, it is clear that reform is needed in the States as well in key policy areas of education, health, housing and justice. I recommend that, before a New South Wales autism strategy is developed, we engage with the Australian Government as it develops a national autism strategy, we consider carefully the Senate committee report recommendations, and we learn directly from the South Australian

model, motivations and experience to date, given it is relatively new—that is, South Australia has developed a strategy and they have an Assistant Minister for Autism.

The committee found that the poor understanding of autism within the community and among service providers presents significant barriers to the social and economic inclusion of autistic people and their families. The experiences of autistic children and their families within the education system were deeply troubling, with a lack of appropriate adjustments and high rates of bullying. The committee found there were conflicting views about whether mainstream or autism-specific schools were best and said that parents and carers need more information about options and support. The committee also made recommendations in this area.

The committee recommended a national road map for improving health services for autistic people and an associated mental health plan. I believe we need a wholesale change in the way we respond to and care for mental health first, as we individualise it and do not treat it as a public health issue anywhere in any jurisdiction I know of in Australia. New South Wales does need an autism strategy and, working with the Australian Government, that can happen in the key policy areas of education, health, housing and the justice system. In my electorate, the Northern Rivers Autism Association is well informed and keen to be part of any public consultation. I have quite a bit more to say about this matter, which I will return to in another private member's statement.

### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (21:45):** This week is National Reconciliation Week. It is time for all of us to learn about our shared histories, our cultures and our achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia. In 2023 the theme of Reconciliation Week is "Be a Voice for Generations". It is an opportunity for all of us to be a voice for reconciliation in tangible ways in our everyday lives. Later this year, all Australians will have their say in a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution. Whether you cast your vote at a local primary school, a community centre or a local church, every vote is equal. Every vote is powerful. In the flick of every pen lies the destiny of our people.

Many have asked how I will vote later this year. The answer is simple. I will vote yes, and I will encourage every person that I meet to do the same. This referendum provides all of us with an opportunity to recognise our nation's past while also creating a pathway to a more reconciled Australia. In establishing a Voice for First Nations peoples in our Constitution, we will be providing a mechanism by which their voices can be heard on the laws and policies that affect some of our most vulnerable Indigenous Australians. I do not support the Voice in spite of being a Liberal; I support it because I am a Liberal. The Uluru Statement from the Heart says:

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish.

Our Liberal values direct us to do that which empowers individuals and families the most, and to do that which equips them with the resources to determine their future and write their own story. For too long, top-down government policies and backroom bureaucrats have failed to get the positive outcomes we all want for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our First Nations people still face significant gaps in life expectancy and educational attainment. They are still proportionally the most incarcerated people on the planet. Despite our best efforts, we are not seeing the outcomes we all desperately want.

As it stands, the gap between First Nations people and non-Indigenous Australians will not close in our lifetime. The Voice is an invitation from First Nations people for us to set a new way forward. We know that when Indigenous communities are involved in decision-making, we get better outcomes. When people's voices are heard, we get better outcomes. To those who say the Voice is a radical reform that will change the way our country works for the worse, I disagree. As Edmund Burke famously said:

A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.

The change proposed is a modest and practical measure to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution. The Voice will not have a veto. It will not be a third Chamber. It will not divide Australians. It will exist to provide advice to the Executive and the Parliament. It is a change that will improve Australia. Since 1901 our Constitution has had within it a gap of silence—a silence that we now have the opportunity to fill with the voices of those belonging to the world's oldest continuing living culture, and a silence that can now be filled with the voices of young and old, stories of sadness, joy and hope, and the destiny of a people.

As we all come to consider the referendum, I know that there will be people who do not share my position. I know that many people will come to their ultimate decision for a variety of different reasons. I believe that every Australian should consider the facts and avoid being persuaded by those who only wish to mislead. Every Australian should have an open mind to what is being proposed and engage with one another in the spirit of generosity. We must listen and be empathetic to differences of view. We must try to see the other person and

understand the invitation that has been provided to all Australians. In closing, I borrow from the words of Father Antonios Kaldas, whom I have met many times. He writes in *Statements from the Soul*:

What do we lose as an Australian society by granting Indigenous peoples a First Nations Voice? Who is harmed by this? The benefits are many, the drawbacks minuscule. Our better angels whisper to us that living in a just society that respects its elders, values true wisdom and makes kindness a priority is far better than submitting our souls to self-interest and close-mindedness.

### EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (21:50):** Last month the State Government abolished an ongoing subsidy to New South Wales councils for the emergency services levy. That subsidy, in place since 2019, helps cover the emergency services budget for the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and Fire and Rescue NSW. If abolished, the four councils in the Oxley electorate will be asked to fork out substantial amounts—for Kempsey Shire Council an increase of \$369,000; for Bellingen Shire Council an increase just shy of \$203,000; and for Nambucca Valley Council an increase of \$218,000. New South Wales councils are required under the Emergency Services Levy Act 2017 to fund 11.7 per cent of the annual costs of the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and Fire and Rescue NSW.

Each council pays a different contribution, determined by Revenue NSW, depending on the extent of those emergency services in its local government area. That means that a smaller, more compact council, with a larger rate-paying base—like in the cities—may pay less, despite having a higher income, than a spread out, multiplied service delivery area, due to the tyranny of distance for rural councils with less income. The New South Wales Government contributes 14.6 per cent, with the remaining 73.7 per cent funded by the insurance industry via property insurance premiums. There is no mechanism by which councils can fund their contributions other than through general rates income.

Since 2018-19 the New South Wales Government has subsidised council contributions to the emergency services levy by covering their annual increases. In late April 2023 local government authorities across New South Wales were advised that the new New South Wales Government would not be subsidising the increase to their emergency services levy contributions in 2023-24. It is understood that the decision means an increase in the total contribution payable by councils for the 2023-24 financial year amounting to around \$76 million, taking it from \$143 million in the current financial year to \$219 million next year. That represents a 53 per cent increase, completely overshadowing the baseline rate peg of 3.7 per cent for 2023-24 set by the New South Wales Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]. Many councils will go broke at that rate. They will have to cut services or become insolvent.

Whilst councils and their communities appreciate how critical well-funded emergency services are, the decision to scrap the subsidy for levy payments will undoubtedly lead to far-reaching, detrimental impacts for council expenditure on other essential community services and infrastructure. The timing of the decision is especially disappointing and challenging given that council resources and operations are already stretched dealing with natural disaster recovery efforts, high inflation and the lingering effects of the pandemic. In addition, it comes late in the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework's budgeting cycle and well after the IPART rate peg determination for 2023-24. Councils are already reporting that services will need to be reduced in order to cover the unexpected cost burden of their increased levy contributions for 2023-24.

In light of these developments, I call on the New South Wales Government to restore the emergency services levy subsidy for increases to council contributions as a priority. Councils need to be given the means to recover the cost of their emergency services levy contributions outside of the rate peg. In addition, a fairer, more transparent and financially sustainable method of funding critically important emergency services needs to be developed for councils and the community. With less than eight weeks' notice, the unexpected costs to councils will occur without community input or consultation. The sudden change is unacceptable and puts an unfair burden on our councils and community. It will mean a cut to infrastructure projects or services for the communities we live in. I underscore the previous Government's position, and that of the Liberals and The Nationals, which have been consistent throughout: Government has to cover the councils' increases. We also stand with the councils' peak body, Local Government NSW, and with all regional and rural communities who will be disproportionately and unfairly impacted by this change.

### PLASTICS RECYCLING PLANT

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (21:55):** I speak in opposition to the Plasrefine recycling proposal at Moss Vale in my electorate of Goulburn. The proposal, which seeks to construct and operate a waste plastics recycling facility at Beaconsfield Road in Moss Vale, would have the capacity to receive up to 150,000 tonnes per year of mixed plastics and wastes containing plastics, and a plastics recycling capacity of 120,000 tonnes per year. However, the facility itself is not the source of discontent for me and those I represent. The location of the proposal is within approximately 250 metres of homes and residential dwellings on

Beaconsfield Road, and the updated proposed haulage route now includes Innes Road, Waite Street and Lackey Road, proposing to haul the 120,000 tonnes of waste past three schools and two day care centres.

Each day, 45 semitrailers will be bringing mixed plastics to the proposal site, and 15 semitrailers will be exporting plastic products from the proposal site. The proponent advises this will be approximately 100 heavy vehicle movements per day. Receiving of plastic waste would occur from 6.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. daily, impacting on primary school drop-off times between 8.30 a.m. and 9.30 a.m., and pick-up times between 2.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. On top of the exorbitant truck movements on this unsuitable road network, GHD Group also projects that daily light traffic movements will be approximately 280 once construction is complete. The significance of this impact should not be overlooked.

In its response to submissions, GHD Group, in *Appendix H, Traffic and transport*, "3.3 Sight distance checks", admits that sight and distance checks at key intersections were "undertaken based on a desktop assessment only, using Google Maps, SIX Maps and Google Street view". That confirms what most residents suspect—that a physical site inspection by the proponent has not been conducted. If it had, GHD Group may have an appreciation for the concerns of the community. In its conclusion, GHD Group reports that the facility would have a negligible impact on surrounding road networks. This is an incorrigible and arrogant conclusion reached by a proponent that has not even visited the site to make an assessment. The Moss Vale community already suffers from heavy traffic. Combined with very narrow streets, this proposal presents not only an enormous impact but also a significant risk to residents, parents and children getting in and out of cars, walking across roads to their homes, and attending and leaving school and day care.

I also note that the Department of Planning and Environment [DPE], in its review of the proponent's response to submissions, cites several issues in public submissions that have not been addressed. That is yet another blatant disregard for the community and its valid concerns. The community of Moss Vale has endured three years of anxious uncertainty regarding this proposal. The Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements for Plasrefine was issued in 2020, with the environmental impact statement [EIS] on public exhibition for 28 days from February to March 2022.

The community requested an extension to the submission period given the sheer enormity of the proposal and the 117-page document provided to them. The extension was denied by DPE. However, the proponent was afforded an exorbitant amount of time to respond to the community's abundant and legitimate concerns and comprehensive submissions. In fact, DPE was supposed to have been provided with the response report on 24 June 2022, but it was not received until 10 March 2023. For nine months the Moss Vale community and impacted residents suffered anxiously through this drawn-out process. One of my constituents eloquently said:

It appears there's an artificial deadline with no repercussions for the proponent. Yet, the community was denied an extension when one was requested in the initial 28-day exhibition of the EIS.

The local Wingecarribee Shire Council has also opposed the recycling facility, making a submission to DPE and citing inconsistency with the Moss Vale Enterprise Corridor Development Control Plan, and water and wastewater infrastructure gaps, as well as transport infrastructure gaps and health and amenity issues. I reiterate that the issue is not a case of "not in my backyard" because it is not a backyard project; it is a serious industrial operation that has been proposed for a residential area. The New South Wales Government has a duty of care to its constituency. In the pursuit of a circular economy, we must not lose sight of the holistic wellbeing of our communities and society. We have a responsibility to ensure that companies and investors are held to the highest standards set out in the legislation.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (22:01):** I will respond to this issue because I have spoken very passionately about the topic of energy from waste in Parliament on several occasions. The member for Goulburn said in her speech—if I heard her correctly—that she is not opposed to energy from waste. But at the same time she cannot send mixed messages. She is either for it or against it. The previous Coalition Government identified four key zones. One zone was identified in her electorate. At that stage no-one in the previous Government really opposed it.

**Mrs Wendy Tuckerman:** I am not talking about the incinerator.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** This is about energy from waste, isn't it?

**Mrs Wendy Tuckerman:** This is not the incinerator. It is a plastics recycling project.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI:** Okay, those are two separate issues. I withdraw my comments and will have further discussions with the member for Goulburn, wearing my other hat as the Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Public Spaces.

### ALBURY TRY A TRADE DAY

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (22:02):** Students in my electorate were keen to take advantage of the inaugural Albury Try a Trade Day recently this month. It was estimated that more than 140 students attended from 12 schools across the region. Representatives from border TAFEs and officers from Training Services NSW were there to help demystify the world of TAFE and further education, with a panel session at the start of the day comprised of current and former apprentices outlining the opportunities that had opened up to them as a result of their training and skills development. I am passionate about bringing expert training facilities and options to the regions to help reverse the flow to the capital cities and assist young people to make a fulfilling life and career that is truly their own. One lesson from TAFE and employers at Albury's Try a Trade Day was the strong connection to local projects. A representative of Training Services NSW put a finger right on target when she said to the media:

It's also an opportunity to tell the students about all the major projects in this region and the need for more to go into trades, be it residential, the Defence redevelopment, future works on the hospital and manufacturing.

It is about enabling, in Albury and the surrounding region, vocational pathways for young people so they may envision their way forward. Local training and working near home, not just for a wage but on projects that they will see as they drive down the streets of their town—facilities and infrastructure they might themselves use, such as a major hospital, affordable housing, a new convention centre, military infrastructure, parks and recreation facilities, or the new public school planned and budgeted for in Thurgoona—can and should be a part of living a rich life. It is about wellbeing. Finbar Bready, a student at The Scots School Albury, is putting his own picture together. He said to *The Border Mail*:

I'll probably finish school and then look at getting an apprenticeship and maybe do a business degree as well.

He said:

It would be good to have the experience, but also know how to manage it ... There's a lot of help for apprentices, be it financial or for mental wellbeing. It's pretty big going from school straight into the workforce and managing your own money.

I have been a regular visitor to the TAFE campuses in my electorate, as well as to other training organisations and employers. It was also important to me to participate in a forum held in Deniliquin last December that worked towards the development of a Country Universities Centre model for four campuses across the Southern Riverina. Following reforms initiated between States, Territories and the Commonwealth under Prime Minister Gillard, the VET sector, including TAFE, has seen significant change, and this has presented its own challenges. It would be a mistake, however, in 2023 to focus on making comparisons with the past as though TAFE is isolated from the economy and from social change. From the crucible of reform and looking ahead, I appreciate and acknowledge all the good planning work and widespread consultation that went into developing the *TAFE NSW Strategic Plan 2022-25* released last year. That document sets out a road map for the State's leading public training provider. Prominently, the strategic plan notes that TAFE exists for a range of stakeholders. It states that the plan:

... ensures we remain focused on meeting the needs of our customers, industry and learners.

Through its strategy, TAFE NSW aims to:

... deliver a more agile response to the growing needs of industry and learners, and achieve our vision of being the leading provider of lifelong learning, meeting the evolving needs of industry and learners in communities across New South Wales.

New South Wales also has the blueprint that is the 2021 Gonski-Shergold review of the New South Wales vocational education and training sector—a landmark report that clearly identifies the need to focus on students in secondary schools and on industry, and to look innovatively at new ways of delivering such as the Institutes of Applied Technology piloted by the Perrottet Government. Our State needs to continue to support and positively promote the value of our training institutions, building upon the good work behind TAFE's strategic plan, making the most of the reform that has proceeded and maintaining support for adopting all five recommendations from the 2021 Gonski-Shergold review, which identifies exciting proposals to strengthen the New South Wales economy through ensuring we have the skills we need to grow and prosper. The strategic plan and Gonski-Shergold report pave the way forward, where VET is not treated in isolation and where all stakeholders align, looking for ways to collaborate and looking to a strong future for TAFE and the VET sector in New South Wales.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 22:08 until  
Thursday 1 June 2023 at 10:00.**



*Written Community Recognition Statements***KEMPSEY HIGH SCHOOL AGRICULTURAL SUCCESS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Kempsey High School attended and exhibited at Wingham Beef Week recently and found outstanding success. The event saw more than 400 students compete across the week, as well as almost 200 head of cattle exhibited. Kempsey High entered with a team of 20 students and eight steers – the students performed well, scoring reserve champion team in the beef appreciation event and reserve champion team in the intercollegiate meat judging event. In addition, there were many individual honours awarded to the students. The team, whose animals were at a remarkably high standard, also won the champion middleweight carcass class. Most importantly the students learnt many skills and gained valuable insight into the beef industry. To add to the event's success, former Kempsey High student Freya Weismantel was the associate judge of the led steer classes. Freya was champion entrant in 2022 and this year was praised for her knowledge and application in showing beef cattle. My heartfelt congratulations to all those who attended, the teachers involved and Kempsey High School – as well as to Freya. Agricultural shows are the heart of our communities and it's a great event to also showcase our incredible local youth.

**LOGGERHEADS MALIBU CLUB**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Each year the Nambucca Valley based LoggerHeads Malibu Club conducts a charity raffle aligned with the Annual Loggerheads Malibu Classic, to raise funds for organisations in the area that do important work for the community. At the Club's Monthly Point Score Competition this month, the Loggerheads took the opportunity to personally pass on the proceeds of last year's raffle to representatives from the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service and the Nambucca Valley Cancer Support Group. Jennifer Dowd from the Westpac Helicopter Rescue Service was there to receive \$500 on behalf of the organisation. The Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service is 70 percent funded by NSW Health and NSW Ambulance which leaves a shortfall of twelve million dollars to be raised through community funding – and in our region the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service flies approximately 1500 missions annually. Also benefiting from the LoggerHeads Charity Raffle is the Nambucca Valley Cancer Support Group. On hand to receive the \$500 was president of the Nambucca Valley Cancer Support Group, Irene Rowsell. The Nambucca Valley Cancer have been receiving a donation from the LoggerHeads Malibu Club every year now for many years and their support to the organisation is exceptional.

**BELLINGEN MEMORIAL HALL COMMITTEE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—After five hard years of being the 'meat in the sandwich' between the community and the council, the Memorial Hall's 355 Committee is stepping down and handing the responsibility for the upgraded venue to a professional manager, paid for by Bellingen Shire Council. Committee chair Mark Oliver said transferring the management across to the council was a necessary transition that ended a long era of volunteer effort. Mr Oliver, along with his committee colleagues Stephanie Ring, Linda Cochrane, and Luke Rhodes, approached the "once-in-a-generation regeneration opportunity" with a view to fulfilling the needs of as many user groups as possible. Aside from the committee having to deal with two years of rolling Covid lockdowns and the redevelopment (plus resulting delays in refurbishing) the Hall, the remit was a large task because there are so many groups to schedule and cater for; everything from dance and drama, the Bellingen Youth Orchestra, to musicians and festival. I'd like to thank the committee and recognise it is beyond the scope of the committee of volunteers to administer. As such, I welcome this transition to a more professional management structure with a full-time venue manager.

**LITTLE INDIA AUSTRALIA HARMONY WALK**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I would like to recognise the Community Harmony Walk initiative organised by The Indian Community Forum and Little India Australia on the 21st May 2023. This harmony walk was organised in response to the Vandalism on BAPS temple in Rosehill, Sydney. The Community Harmony Walk (paad yatra) started from Rozella park in Harris Park- Little India to the Gandhi statue in Jubilee Park Parramatta. The Program included Symbolic Fasting (pratik Upvass), Floral Tribute to Gandhi and favourite prayer chanting. I was devastated when the BAPS temple in Rosehill was vandalised, as it rocked our well-established sense of community here in Australia. However, the organisation of this walk in response, inviting groups from all communities and faiths to come down and show their support and sense of multiculturalism in Australia, was an excellent way to show that our sense of community and togetherness will not be swayed by an irresponsible and selfish act of a small group. Special thanks to Parag Shah and the Indian community Forum for the invitation to this highly beneficial community event promoting peace, love and community togetherness. Well done.

### TALES OF A HOMELAND

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to attend Tales of a Homeland at Bryan Brown Theatre in Bankstown on 7 May 2023. Tales of a Homeland started as a simple idea by a passionate Palestinian Australians during the peak of the pandemic, longing for ways to connect to their homeland. Two years later, they had grown to a team of 30 passionate individuals, all coming from different regions in Palestine, from different generations, connected by the captivating untold stories of our ancestors and the land which we are devoted to. The show, Tales of a Homeland – was a journey throughout the heart of history and tradition, to a trip that ignites souls near and far, following two love stories that are distanced by time and space, yet connected in the most extraordinary of ways. Narrated with song and dance and filled with love, heartache and resilience, Tales of a Homeland is a theatrical production of Palestinian heritage, which includes a wedding celebration, a display of traditional clothing and music and much more. My thanks go to Assala Sayara and Sumaia El Kadomi for their kind invitation to attend. Shukran.

### OZ ARAB MEDIA GALA DINNER

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I joined the staff and supporters of OZ Arab Media at Doltone House, Western Sydney in Bossley Park on 19 May 2023 for their 1st annual anniversary celebrations. OZ Arab Media aims to support the diverse Arab communities in Australia with news, articles, and opinions about the Arab diaspora in Australia and in their home countries. They source news articles from a variety of local and international sources and authors to provide a wider understanding of causes that affect the community onshore and abroad. The Australian International Multicultural Association [AIM] is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting cultural diversity and intercultural understanding in Australia and worldwide. Their mission is to support and empower, recognise, and advocate for the rights and interests of multicultural communities. The evening included the announcement of the AIM Business Awards (Australian International Multicultural Business Awards), and part of the proceeds were donated to a charity which will be announced soon. I congratulate the winners including Saj House in the Business category; Nathan Taleb in the Entrepreneur category; and the Melkite Charitable Foundation in the NGO category or being an exemplar of philanthropy and social impact.

### 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. Western Region Certificates: Leading Senior Constable Christopher Tomlinson: Western Region Commanders Commendation, In recognition of being a member of an operational unit and collectively for a common purpose and performed outstanding service which involved bravery, during an arrest of offenders at Elong Elong on 27 October 2015. Detective Senior Constable Steven Underwood: Western Region Commanders Commendation, In recognition of initiative and dedication to duty shown during a protracted and complex investigation into property offences. Senior Constable Emma Dyball: Western Region Certificate of Merit, In recognition of professional actions conducting CPR compressions on a male at Lake Cargelligo on 20 April 2019. Senior Constable Michael Copas: Western Region Certificate of Merit, In recognition of assistance provided to ambulance officers in the successful resuscitation of a male at Forbes on 30 September 2018, Western Region Certificate of Merit, in recognition of professional actions during an attempt to resuscitate a male at Orange on 10 May 2021. 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. Western Region Certificates: Sergeant Ben Munro: Western Region Certificate of Merit, In recognition of professional actions during the resuscitation of a male at Lake Cargelligo on 5 November 2019. Constable Kathleen Chattaway: Western Region Certificate of Merit, In recognition of professional actions during an attempt to resuscitate a female at Orange on 6 October 2020. Constable Huw Moore: Western Region Certificate of Merit, In recognition of professional actions during the resuscitation of a male at Forbes on 11 January 2021. Western Region Certificate of Merit, In recognition of professional actions during an attempt to resuscitate a male at Wirrinya on 19 June 2021. 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. Western Region civilian certificates: Amanda Eassie: Central West Police District Commander Certificate of Appreciation, In recognition and appreciation of the valuable assistance you provided during the rescue of a male in water at Lake Canobolas on 23 December 2021. Shaun Whiting: Central West Police District Commander Certificate of Appreciation, In recognition of the valuable assistance you provided during the rescue of a male in the water at Lake Canobolas on 23 December

2021. Jaymi Perry: Central West Police District Commander Certificate of Appreciation, In recognition of your actions performing CPR on a collapsed person at Orange on 18 January 2021. Nathan Riley: Central West Police District Commander Certificate of Appreciation, In recognition of your actions performing CPR on a collapsed person at Orange on 18 January 2021. Alison Gransden: Central West Police District Commander Certificate of Merit, In recognition of your actions during an attempt to resuscitate a male at Eugowra on 11 June 2019. Congratulations to you all. Well done.

#### **MADELINE EASTON**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—I would like to congratulate Ms Madeline Easton on her participation in the Coronation of King Charles the Third which took place earlier this month. It was fantastic to see Lane Cove local display her incredible talent to the tens of millions of people that tuned in around the world to watch the Coronation. I am looking forward to seeing what else Madeline's career has installed for her as she continues to represent Australia and Lane Cove with great pride.

#### **100TH COMBINED ANZAC DAY SERVICE IN HUNTERS HILL**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Last month the Municipality of Hunters Hill marked its centenary of Anzac Day services conducted by the Council and Hunters Hill RSL Sub-Branch. It was humbling to have Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC and the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK AC (Mil) CVO MC (Retd) join with hundreds of Hunters Hill residents to mark such an important landmark over the 2 days of activities. A special thanks to the Hunters Hill Mayor Zac Miles, Hunters Hill Council Staff and the Hunters Hill RSL Sub Branch Leadership for all their hard work in making the Centenary so memorable.

#### **HUNTERS HILL HIGH SCHOOL PUSH UP CHALLENGE**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—I would like to take this opportunity to commend the students of Hunters Hill High School for their participation in the 'Push Up Challenge' to help shine a spotlight on the numbers of lives lost every year to suicide and to raise awareness for Mental Health. Too often Suicide and Mental Health challenges are swept under the rug, I am proud to see so many students from the Lane Cove Electorate helping to change that.

#### **KURNELL CATAMARAN CLUB**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I acknowledge the work of the Kurnell Catamaran Club, which has been giving sailors of all ages and skill the opportunity to be part of racing and social sailing since 1972. The club sails off beautiful Silver Beach into Botany Bay, typically between September and April. It recently held its sailing presentation for 2022-23 where members celebrated another successful season. I congratulate all award winners on their success, in particular Trevor Lowder and Richie Brewin, who were crowned Club Champions, and Junior Club Champion Molly Gargett, who won the title for the second year in a row. Local sporting organisations rely on the hard work of their volunteers, and I commend the efforts of everyone who gives their time to make the club's weekend sailing days enjoyable for members. I recognise the dedication of the 2023-24 executive committee, President Antony Edwards, Vice President Grant Maver, Secretary Andrew Smith, Treasurer Ross Newman, Race Secretary Brian Chapman and Junior President Andrew Petterson. I wish all members of Kurnell Catamaran Club an enjoyable and successful season ahead in 2023-24.

#### **VALE IVOR LEWIS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I pay tribute to Ivor Lewis, late of Cronulla, who was a minister across NSW for almost 60 years and the much-loved pastoral care pastor at Caringbah Baptist Church for 12 years until his sudden passing in April. Ivor was regarded as a selfless man who loved people and enthusiastically helped others. Locally, he went quietly about visiting people in their homes or hospitals to offer support and help meet their practical and spiritual needs. Many have fond memories of Ivor's love and care, his friendly phone calls to check in and of him leaving home made biscuits and encouraging messages outside their homes during COVID lockdown. His colleague, pastor Ken Clendinning, said "Ivor has made a significant impact on many people's lives, both inside and outside of faith communities. He lived his life with purpose. He would check on the ill, the aged and broken-hearted, and often guided us through difficult times. Ivor was a mentor for many, someone we looked to for guidance and wisdom as he carried out his call to ministry." I extend my sympathy to Ivor's family and friends, in particular his wife Liz and his children Matthew, Cindy and Tim.

#### **ARMENIAN GENOCIDE COMMEMORATION**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On Monday 24 April I was honoured join with my local Armenian community of Willoughby to commemorate the 108th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. This is a very sombre day of remembrance for our Armenian community as they pause to remember the 1.5 million of their own people killed by Ottoman forces in 1915. After attending a church service at the Armenian Apostolic Church of

the Holy Resurrection in Chatswood, I joined the procession of congregants and community leaders to Beauchamp Park. Assembled around the Khachkar memorial monument, I was honoured to join community leaders to speak on the significance of the anniversary. In my speech, I acknowledged the pain suffered by the Armenian people, yet also spoke with pride about the role our original Anzacs played to protect Armenians fleeing from the Ottoman assault of April 1915. As always, I was proud to stand with the Armenian community in Willoughby and beyond as they continue their quest for justice and due historical recognition of this atrocity.

#### **NSNA MOTHERS DAY LUNCH**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I acknowledge and thank the Northern Suburbs Netball Association for hosting its recent Mother's Day luncheon to raise money for the Breast Cancer Network of Australia. Attracting many community members, including my own mum, the luncheon was held in the picturesque surrounds of Northbridge Golf Club. The guest speakers at the luncheon included Professor Fran Boyle, an oncologist of the Mater Hospital, and Louise King, the CEO of the Hunted - a local fashion and lifestyle business. Leaders of the Netball community were also present, including Sallianne Faulkner, the President of Netball NSW, and Claire Tynan, a Board Member of Netball NSW. I would especially like to acknowledge the President of NSNA, Glenys Paranihi, for her and her team's hard work behind the staging of this excellent fundraising event. I thank all those who generously sponsored the luncheon, attended the luncheon, and bought raffle tickets. It was a fantastic occasion for a great cause in our fight against breast cancer.

#### **FIRE AND RESCUE NSW OPEN DAY – WILLOUGHBY AND LANE COVE FIRE STATIONS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—To meet again with the wonderful team of firefighters in my community, I had the pleasure of attending the NSW Fire and Rescue Open Day at Willoughby Fire Station on Saturday 13 May. The Open Day once again proved very popular with families and children with opportunities to climb aboard a fire truck, find out about fire safety, meet the firefighters who make it happen and enjoy a barbecue. The day is both entertaining and educational, with visitors able to check out the fire-station resources, as well as opportunities to speak to firefighters about fire safety in the home. Visitors learnt important skills to keep us safe such as how to install and maintain smoke alarms and how to develop a home escape plan in the event of a fire. I thank our local firefighters for not only staging a fantastic open day, but for the tireless work they do around the year to keep us and our communities safe.

#### **CLUB MARCONI – ITALIAN REPUBLIC DAY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was fantastic to attend the 2023 Italian Republic Day celebrations held at Club Marconi on Sunday 28th May. Italian Republic Day, or Festa della Repubblica, began in 1946 when Italian citizens overwhelmingly voted to become a Republic rather than remain as a Monarchy. The celebrations began with a Commemorative Mass, followed by a day full of fun festivities for all the attendees. There were carnival rides, fireworks showcase, and an impressive display of Italian vintage cars and motorbikes. There was also an amazing showcase of Italian food, culture, entertainment, wine and traditions. Club Marconi is located in the heart of Western Sydney where generations of our Australian-Italian community have chosen to live, work, and build their lives with their families. The Club was founded in 1956 by 106 members of the Italian community - since then it has become the heart of diversity in Western Sydney providing entertainment, leisure and sport, and a space to gather with friends and family. Thank you to Matthew Biviano, CEO, Morris Licata, President, the Board of Directors, and staff at Club Marconi for organising a wonderful Italian Republic Day celebration, and for your efforts to serve our community.

#### **PHUOC HUE BUDDHIST TEMPLE – BIRTH OF THE LORD SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was an honour to attend the 2023 Vesak Celebration at Phuoc Hue Buddhist Temple at Wetherill Park on Sunday, 28th May with members of our Buddhist community. Vesak is a celebration for the birth of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. Together, we commemorated his birth, enlightenment and passing, and reflected on his teachings and legacy. This is an important and special day for Buddhists all over the world – a day where they reaffirm their faith to Buddha and their commitment to lead a noble life. Phuoc Hue Buddhist Temple is an important centre for our local Buddhist community in Western Sydney. Every year, thousands of members and supporters of our Buddhist community come together to reflect on Buddha's teachings. The temple is a sacred place of worship for our community and inspires inner and outer peace. Thank you to Senior Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan OAM and the Executive Committee of Phuoc Hue Buddhist Temple for inviting me to share this important occasion with you and members of our Buddhist community and reflect on Buddha's teachings. May the happiness of Vesak bring you peace, joy, and prosperity.

#### **BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL – 2023 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was an honour to attend the Blacktown City Council 2023 International Women's Day celebrations on Wednesday, 8th March to celebrate the achievements and

contributions of women in our Blacktown community and around the world. The theme for 2023 International Women's Day is #EmbraceEquality – where we recognise the importance of striving towards a world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination for women. Blacktown City Council hosted a wonderful breakfast for International Women's Day with members of our Blacktown community. It was great to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of amazing women in our Blacktown community which have contributed towards improving our society. The guest speaker was Captain Mona Shindy CSC, who is a retired naval officer with over 30 years of military service and advocate for inclusion in the workplace. I would also like to congratulate the 2023 Blacktown City Council Woman of the Year, Emie Roy, who founded "The Stories Untold" platform that brings to light the unique stories of vulnerable or migrant communities, particularly women. Thank you to Tony Bleasdale OAM, Mayor, Cllr Julie Griffiths, Deputy Mayor, and staff at Blacktown City Council, for organising this fantastic International Women's Day celebration.

### **JACK TALBOT**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Jack Talbot, a rising sports star from the Shellharbour Electorate. Jack is an exceptional athlete who excels in multiple sports, including Rugby League, Oztag, and AFL. Recently, he has had the privilege of representing various teams, such as the under 16's Australian Tagaroos Oztag team, the New South Wales Country under 16's Rugby League team, the Illawarra Steelers 2023 summer team, and the under 19's New South Wales Country Oztag team. Additionally, Jack's remarkable achievements have earned him a position on News Corp's prestigious Indigenous Sports Month best young athletes list. As an integral part of the Illawarra South Coast Dragons, Jack recently led his team to a remarkable 30-18 victory, providing three try assists and kicking three conversions. Signing his first official NRL contract with the St. George Illawarra Dragons is a testament to Jack's extraordinary talent and promising future. I wish Jack all the very best in his future endeavours, confident that he will continue to make significant strides in his sporting career.

### **RECONCILIATION SCHOOL FLAG WALK**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Shellharbour City Council for the organisation of the Reconciliation Flag Walk that took place on Monday 29 May 2023. I was happy to attend and be involved in this fantastic event. Hundreds of local students from 32 schools, along with Aboriginal Elders and civic leaders, each played a part in the special flag exchange. A civic ceremony was held after the walk where students were encouraged to have a yarn with an Elder over a barbecue lunch. This year's theme was 'be a voice for generations' and called on all Australians to honour the work of generations past who fought for justice and to work together today to tackle the unfinished business of reconciliation for the generations to come. Thank you to everyone involved in the organisation of the flag walk and all the attendees for making the event a wonderful success.

### **MURAL FESTIVAL - SHELLHARBOUR**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Shellharbour City Council for engaging four street artists to brighten up parts of the Shellharbour Local Government area with large-scale murals. The artworks were completed during the More Things Like This Mural Fest in Shellharbour which was held on Saturday 27 May 2023. The four high-profile Australian artists were engaged to mentor local emerging street artists to collaboratively create artworks in Shellharbour's graffiti hotspots. The artists chosen delivered a valuable professional development experience for the emerging artists. The project was an expansion of Shellharbour's Urban Art Program, which has successfully reduced the incidence of graffiti in hotspot locations, increased community ownership and built a stronger sense of pride in neighbourhoods.

This is the third occasion the festival has been run, with seven sites already featuring murals, including the Oak Flats Interchange, Shellharbour City Stadium and Albion Park Rail Skate Park.

### **ANZAC DAY 2023**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Anzac Day continues to grow in importance as a day of remembrance for the people of NSW and that was evident in the turnout at the Charlestown events in 2023. At services held at Adamstown, Cardiff, Charlestown and Dudley on 25 April, I was struck by the large crowds which are continuing to grow year on year, and the increasing involvement of young people. Thank you to the RSL sub-branches and community groups involved in organising Charlestown's Anzac Day events for 2023, including Merewether Hamilton Adamstown RSL sub-branch, Cardiff RSL, Charlestown Lions Club and the Dudley War Memorial community group for helping to maintain Anzac Day and its important legacy. It is wonderful to see students from our local primary and high schools taking part, many of them wearing their school uniforms with pride at the events and laying wreaths to honour the fallen. The students from Dudley Public School,

who were represented at their local dawn service, have a daily reminder of their community's wartime service, with the faces of their two Victoria Cross winners Clarence Jeffries and William Currey painted onto the school hall's façade. Lest We Forget.

### STEM SCIENCE CHALLENGE

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—There is nothing like a bit of friendly competition to encourage students to find joy in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths [STEM]. I very much enjoyed the opportunity to speak to students taking part in the annual University of Newcastle Science and Engineering Challenge on 6 March this year and watch them take part in a number of activities that extended their skills. Charlestown schools represented included Kotara High School, Whitebridge High School, Warners Bay High School, Hunter Sports High School, Cardiff High School, St Pius X High School Adamstown, and St Mary's Catholic College Gateshead. The annual event is a day of lively competition for school students working on practical STEM challenges, which culminates in a bridge building and testing competition. I would like to acknowledge the work of the University of Newcastle in continuing to host this event for high school students across the Charlestown electorate and continue to foster a love of the sciences. I am sure that activities like these are instrumental in encouraging Charlestown's next generation to study science and technology based fields in the future.

### THE PLACE, CHARLESTOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Seniors are always finding something new and exciting to do at The Place, Charlestown's Community Centre. The Place's Tuesday Club is a senior ladies friendship group which meets weekly as a social outlet, also holding digital literary and art and craft activities to keep people of all ages connected. The Place acts as a hub for Seniors to access information and referral support, and stay up to date with community events. I was delighted to be invited to take part in The Place's 2023 NSW Seniors Festival activities. The program of free events for Seniors included a drum circle and drawing workshops. I joined in the drum circle for an afternoon of fun and there was much laughter and shared enjoyment of music throughout the time we shared together. Charlestown is very fortunate to have The Place, which features a range of programs and services that aim to support our very diverse community. It is responsive to the emerging needs of the community, by enabling and supporting participant-led community activities. I look forward to next year's Seniors Festival already!

### MAX D'ARGENIO

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate Kogarah resident, Max D'Argenio for his outstanding volunteer service to the Kogarah Waratah Football Club. Kogarah Waratah Football Club is a foundation club of the Football St George Association and has been operating in the local community since 1924. Over the past 10 years, Mr D'Argenio has been graciously volunteering his time and energy to help the Club. Max is involved in every part of running the club, starting from organising player registrations, allocating players to their teams and even coaching his son's Under 18's team. During the season, Max can be seen at Scarborough Park Central every Sunday without fail, running and operating the Club canteen and staying back at the end of the day to ensure the park is clean and the gear is packed away. Max is the Club's silent achiever, quietly doing whatever it takes to keep the club running smoothly. I want to thank Mr D'Argenio for his dedication and commitment to helping the Kogarah Waratah Football Club and ensuring our children have a safe and fun place to play sport.

### MANDY NGUYEN

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—As part of National Volunteer Week, I would like to recognise the dedication of St George Girls High School parent, Mandy Nguyen. Although Mandy is compensated weekly for the hours she spends at the school's Uniform Shop, which is managed by the Mother's Committee, Mandy volunteers for the additional hours she spends managing the shop, ensuring that stock levels are in check, making orders, liaising with the treasurers of the Mothers' Committee to ensure that payments are made. Also her efforts and organisational skills are acknowledged as she assisted the Mothers' Committee in supporting the school during the process of implementing a new uniform change and transition. The Mothers' Committee donates any profits made from the shop to the school to support with providing quality teaching and learning equipment and resources for the school, or to undertake facility enhancements for the students. Mandy also donates a significant amount of her time to support the annual Mother-Daughter Dinner event organised by the Mothers' Committee and the Prefect Body. Mandy helped with organising the generation of the ticketing for this event, including raffle tickets, and the mapping of the seats and tables. All profits are donated back to the school. I would like to thank Mandy for the many extra unpaid hours she spends supporting St George Girls High School.

**PATRICIA TRAN**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the work of Kogarah resident, Ms Patricia Tran, for her commitment and dedication to the Regina Coeli Primary School in Beverly Hills. Ms Tran is a parent volunteer at the school and willingly gives up her time and energy to help the school community. Every Tuesday for the last three years, Patricia has voluntarily operated the school's second-hand uniform shop and has been instrumental in getting parents to donate old uniforms. The uniform shop prevents good quality clothing items from becoming landfill and has been of enormous benefit to those families on a tighter budget who are looking for a more affordable option. In addition to this, Ms Tran is always helping out with other school events and excursions and always puts her hand up to help in whatever way she can. I want to express my deepest appreciation to Ms Tran for her dedication, commitment and ongoing support to our local community for which we are all extremely grateful.

**JESSIE ALLEN-BERRY – LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR NOMINEE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Jessie Allen-Berry has made a significant contribution to improving the quality of life and health outcomes for seniors in the Maitland area. Jessie runs a senior's exercise class at Tenambit Community Hall every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, where about 40 seniors attend her classes. Many of the seniors pay tribute to Jessie's classes saying they have had medical professionals surprised at how active they are and how they have avoided surgery, (hip, knee, shoulder) because her exercises keep them moving. One person has even said she would be in a wheelchair if not for Jessie's classes. Jessie will send a caring text or phone seniors in her class if they miss, to check they are ok. Regularly, through the lockdowns, she would send workouts by text messages encouraging her students to send her photos of them doing the exercises, to ensure they kept in contact and to check they were ok. Because of Jessie's classes many close friendships have formed and senior people who would be otherwise isolated have a social contact. Congratulations Jessie, you are a truly deserving nominee for the Local Woman of the Year award.

**BOWLS NSW STATE INTER-ZONE CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I was grateful to meet Dilys Kindlesides, Chair of Bowls NSW and Henry Meskauskas Chair of Club Maitland City last weekend at the Bowls NSW State Inter-Zone Championships, and I was honoured to be asked to open the event and welcome participants at Club Maitland City. The final was a history-making event, coming down to an extra-end shootout for the first time ever. In the shoot-out, it was Zone 1 (Far North Coast) who edged out Zone 13 (Sydney South and Central) to win their first-ever Inter-Zone Championships title. Peter Taylor against Ray Pearse produced some of the best bowls ever seen. You could sense the tension out on the greens, but it didn't seem to impact the players who produced some of their best shots in those moments. After 63 ends, both sides were inseparable at 55-55. Extra rinks saw a pinpoint drive that resulted in an umpire measuring second shots and saw a 58-57 victory in some of the most bizarre circumstances seen on a bowling green. The extra-ends was a perfect way to finish an incredible final. Thank you to host clubs Club Maitland City and Lorn Park for hosting the event.

**MAITLAND REGION SOCIETY OF ARTISTS CELEBRATES ANOTHER AMAZING ANNUAL EXHIBITION**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I recently attended the Maitland Region Society of Artists' annual exhibition at St James Anglican Church Hall Morpeth, an incredible offering of creative works from local artists. This year's opening was a vibrant and lively occasion, with an excellent and wide variety of paintings and sculptures, ensuring the exhibition was a huge success as usual. This year's Best in Show was awarded to Gaye Shield for 'Shadows'; with prizes awarded in various sections thereafter. The June Campbell Encouragement Award went to Wenny Chia for her work on 'Birches and a Broken Branch'. Marie Forbes was awarded the Maitland Arts Council Award for her 'Patchwork of Colour'; Sponsor's Award winner was Joanne Conder with 'Kookaburra Threesome', and the People's Choice Award went to Joanne Conder for 'Kookaburra Threesome'. Congratulations to all winning artists, and those who submitted entries that created an impressive display. I was honoured to be invited to such an inspirational and creative evening and wish to congratulate you all on the huge success of another year for the Maitland Region Society of Artists.

**ARSHDEEP KAUR**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—It's great to be able to welcome a new face to the Lithgow community. Arshdeep Kaur has started work in an assistant nursing position at Lithgow Hospital after graduating from the Western Sydney University. She arrived in Australia in 2020 as an international student with an interest in Western medicine. One of her placements at Uni was at Lithgow Hospital and that was when she fell in love working in a rural setting. As she says: "I got to see everything from community to general ward, to emergency to theatres, to mental health, you name it ... we've got it right here in Lithgow. I saw the team serve patients so well with all

their hearts and the hard work they've put in through the COVID times. It's something that greatly inspired me and then I got a job offer as an Assistant in Nursing last year". It's the dedication and commitment of nursing staff such as Arshdeep that helps make our health system so special. Patient care is paramount, and compassion of staff comes to the fore. Thank you, Arshdeep, for all you are doing for the Lithgow community.

#### **LEE-ANN HURST**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—This year the Western NSW Local Health District introduced two new awards, including establishing an Aboriginal Nurse/Midwife of the Year and Nursing/Midwifery Leader of the Year, to ensure recognition of the commitment and dedication of our nurses and midwives at every level of the workforce. The Aboriginal Nurse/Midwife of the Year Award was presented to Bathurst Hospital's Lee-Ann Hurst, a clinical nurse specialist in Ambulatory care. Congratulations Lee-Ann, your award comes as a result of being an outstanding Aboriginal nurse who demonstrates exceptional commitment to providing quality, safe, compassionate and culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal people and communities and is committed to improving care and advocating for better delivery of services to Aboriginal people and communities. Lee-Ann is a person who does not seek accolades for what she does, but she thoroughly deserves this recognition. Nurses like Lee-Ann are the frontline of our health system and they, along with all our midwives, continue to do an incredible job providing first-class care to our communities through what have been challenging times for everyone. Well done Lee-Ann.

#### **LACHLAN HOOPER**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—It looks like Bathurst has another rugby union star in the making with the selection of former local junior Lachlan Hopper in the Junior Wallabies squad that will take on the New Zealand under 20s in an upcoming two match series. Lachlan grew up in Bathurst and now the 19-year-old flanker is set to wear the green and gold of Australia for the very first time. He was a Bathurst Bulldogs junior, and as an under 7 player played in a curtain raiser to an Australia versus New Zealand Test match. He went onto play for St Stanislaus' College, then Barker College, was captain of the NSW Waratahs Academy under 18s and is now a member of the ACT Brumbies set up. It was only last November that Lachlan, as well as former Bathurst Bulldogs junior Henry Palmer, were named in the 48-play Junior Wallabies train-on squad. With only 31 spots on offer for the tour of New Zealand, Lachlan received a phone call on Mother's Day informing him he had made the cut and would be going on the tour. Let's hope Lachlan's career keeps going from strength to strength.

#### **TAREE PCYC GYMAROOS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise to recognise the Taree PCYC Gymaroos. The Taree PCYC Gymaroos are heading to the World Gymnastrada, to be held in Amsterdam in July/August this year. The World Gymnastrada is the world's largest gymnastics event and is held every four years. It allows the teams to showcase their gymnastic skills and talents amongst 20,000 other gymnasts from all over the world. The PCYC Gymaroos have been selected to perform in the FIG Gala Event which is a prestigious show of gymnastics teams from all continents and demonstrates the best Team Gymnastics globally. The FIG Gala will be watched by thousands at the event with the main show broadcast on European TV. 33 gymnasts of the PCYC Gymaroos team will leave for Amsterdam on the 27th July to not only represent Gymnastics Australia, but also our local community. The team members have been training hard and I am confident they will be excellent ambassadors for our region.

#### **TAREE VRA RESCUE**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise to recognise Deputy Captain Adam Webster and Rescue Operator Jackson Fechny who attended the State Road Crash Rescue Challenge held in Coffs Harbour in May. This is an annual event held at different locations around the state and Adam and Jackson had been selected to form part of a VRA Rescue NSW state team. Due to their outstanding abilities and dedication they have been selected to be members of a team which will now attend and compete in the Australasian Road Crash Organisation competition which will be held in Adelaide from 29 June to 2 July this year. They will be joined by rescue operator Daniel Ney from Taree as a support member. The selection of these volunteers from Taree VRA Rescue Squad is a testament to the level of skill, their dedication to training and their ability to work as a team in their service to our local community. I commend them on this achievement and to their service to the community and wish them well in Adelaide.

#### **ROSEMARY SCHRADER AND KEELY HOLDEN**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise to recognise two Myall Lakes residents, Rosemary Schrader and Keely Holden. Rosemary and Keely have been added to the 2021-22 Hidden Treasures Honour Roll which pays tribute to the women across regional, rural and remote NSW who have given their time and energy to helping others in their community. The awards were presented at the recent 2023 Myall Lakes Seniors Concerts



in Forster and Taree where both recipients were congratulated for being included in the Hidden Treasures Honour Roll. Rosemary and Keely join more than 1,000 women across rural and regional NSW who have been enshrined on the honour roll since 2010, each of them nominated by a member of their local community. Women like Rosemary and Keely play important roles in community development and making rural NSW a great place to live. It is so important we honour their contributions to ensure that voluntary work is valued and respected. They do this freely, without fanfare, but they are the backbone of our communities, our society simply wouldn't function effectively without them, so it's incredibly important to take the opportunity to sing their praises and celebrate their significant contributions.

#### **JAMIE THOMPSON - CATHERINE HAMLIN FISTULA FOUNDATION WALK**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Jamie Thomson of Eastwood has completed a 60km barefoot walk in Shropshire UK to raise funds for the Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation. Catherine Hamlin was an inspirational Australian gynaecologist and obstetrician who, with her husband Reg, devoted her life to Ethiopian women suffering from the childbirth injury, obstetric fistula. Her vision was to eradicate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. The Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation works with Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia to achieve Catherine's vision. To date, the lives of more than 60,000 women have been restored, a testament to Catherine's lifetime commitment to help women with obstetric fistula. Catherine Hamlin grew up at The Hermitage, a large house in Denistone which still stands in my electorate today. Jamie has been successful in raising over \$6500 for this wonderful organisation. He has walked 60km barefoot, just as Mary Jones did in 1800, aged just 15. Our community is proud of Jamie, both for completing the walk, and raising funds for an organisation that helps improve the lives of many. His determination, perseverance and commitment are truly commendable. Congratulations Jamie!

#### **MAYOR PANDEY AND COUNCIL DIVERSITY**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—On behalf of the Ryde community, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Councillor Sameer Pandey on his election as Lord Mayor of Parramatta. Mayor Pandey is the first Mayor of Parramatta of Indian descent, which covers a small section of my electorate between Eastwood and Carlingford. In our modern multicultural Ryde community, it is encouraging to see more and more elected leaders who reflect our local community. It builds upon a similarly groundbreaking achievement in the City of Ryde Council, with the election of Councillor Shweta Deshpande as Ryde's first ever Deputy Mayor of South Asian descent. Both Councils can be characterised by their enhanced diversity, which cuts across a number of important metrics. In my former life, I was the youngest ever Mayor in Ryde's history, leading a team with greater gender, age, cultural and professional diversity than ever before. It is appropriate that in two of the most diverse constituencies in NSW, that their respective local governments are equally as diverse. Congratulations once again to the new Mayor of Parramatta. I look forward to working with you, and wish you every success for your tenure.

#### **MULTICULTURAL FUN DAY**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I attended Ryde's Multicultural Family Fun Day over the weekend, and would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who played a part in making this day a success, particularly principal of Ryde PS, Thanh Ta for making his school available for the spectacle. Congratulations to Melissa Monteiro, CEO of Community Migrant Resource Centre, and Elisabeth Shaw, CEO of Relationships Australia NSW for partnering to organise this wonderful event. I want to acknowledge and thank all the amazing stall holders and performers who contributed their talents to create an engaging and enjoyable atmosphere for everyone in attendance. Their presence added vibrancy and excitement to the event. Lastly, I extend my gratitude to Mayor Sarkis Yedelian and Ryde Council for their assistance in promoting and supporting the event. Their commitment to fostering community engagement and multiculturalism was evident. Overall, the Multicultural Family Fun Day at Ryde Public School was a memorable celebration of diversity and community spirit. I feel privileged to have been a part of this event and extend my appreciation to all those involved in making it a truly special occasion.

#### **SYDNEY SURF PRO CHALLENGER SERIES – NORTH NARRABEEN**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I congratulate the World Surf League, Surfing NSW, Northern Beaches Council, North Narrabeen Surf Lifesaving Club, all participants, local businesses, and all who came together to make the recent Sydney Surfer Pro Challenger Series at North Narrabeen a huge success. Congratulations to North Narrabeen local, Jordan Lawler on your stellar performance and proudly represent North Narrabeen locals! I also congratulate Narrabeen local, Dylan Moffat, on his Round of 32 finish. Well done Luke Madden and Surfing NSW on co-ordinating and organising a hugely successful competition. I look forward to seeing you all back in 2024 and beyond with, hopefully, North Narrabeen becoming an ongoing fixture on the annual WSL calendar. I am pleased that these words will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country, as a small recognition of this competition and these collective achievements.

### ZONTA CLUB OF THE NORTHERN BEACHES

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I congratulate the Zonta Club of Northern Beaches. I first came across Zonta about five years ago after entering public life in 2017. For those who are not familiar with Zonta, they are a global organisation, empowering women worldwide through service and advocacy. Each year, our wonderful Zonta Club raises thousands of dollars for causes which advance the position of woman, locally and across the globe. The women of Zonta are often the same ones you might see involved in Rotary, Rural Fire Service, local Resident Associations, and more. Our community is better for the selfless service of these wonderful Zontans. Congratulations to Zonta's fearless leader, Evelyn Whittaker, and all the committee for their service. 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 your contribution and service.

### BEC CAPELL – NEWPORT SURF LIFESAVING CHAMPION

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—It is with great pleasure that I congratulate Bec Capell on recently being crowned Australian Champion Lifesaver in the 40-49 years category at the Champion Lifesaver events held at Scarborough Beach, Western Australia. After competing in a 70-metre dash, a 500-metre swim, 600-metre paddle, 300-metre swim, a CPR scenario, and, of course, a 40 multiple choice exam based upon a 300 page manual, Bec was crowned the best of the best. It is only fitting that a Pittwater local is crowned the champion. After all, Pittwater is the surf lifesaving capital of Australia. I have no doubt that the Capell family, including Brendan, Sam, Harry and Abi, will feature strongly at the upcoming Newport SLSC Bernies, repping the well-known Patrol No. 2 – the Love Patrol. Bec, well done on your awesome efforts and thank you and your family for their service. I am pleased that these words will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country, as a small recognition of your wonderful achievements and your family's service.

### NARRABRI FIREFIGHTERS

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Thirteen firefighters from Narrabri's Fire and Rescue Station have been awarded the National Emergency Medal. The medal paid tribute to the efforts of Shane Bradford, Lucas Warren, Clayton Browning, Tim Korteland, Dean Browne, Luke Morgan, Less Rich, Cemeron Cronin, Brenton Ward, Jason Anderson, Ben Duncan, Jock Small and Darrell Tiemens during the 2019/2020 bushfire season. In Addition to the presentation of the National Emergency Medals, Deputy Captain Joab Rushton was a National Recipient for 15 years government service and Firefighter Clayton Browning was the recipient for the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal for 10 years' service to Fire and Rescue. For five months the firefighters were deployed as part of the state-wide strike team to battle bushfires in Northern NSW, Sothern Queensland, Southern Highlands, and the Victorian Border, experiencing some of the worst fire conditions ever recorded. I congratulate the team of Narrabri Fire and Rescue Station on receiving the National Emergency Medal and thank all Fire Fighters for their dedication and commitment to risking their own life to help save the life of others and their properties.

### BREEA WATERS

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—Breea started playing soccer at the age of four and has continued to develop her passion and depth of skills, which has led to her progression through her local club teams to representative roles. Breea's skills and performance were acknowledged and awarded with selection for the Coerver Performance Academy. Breea plays for the Gungahlin United Football Club and made her debut in first grade in Capital Football NPLW League in 2022 and undertook the role of Co-captain of the Under 17's team and voted Player's Player Award for 2022. Breea has continued her pathway of success, being selected for several trials in Young, Sydney and Goulburn for the Under 18 Country NSW side. Breea participated in the National Tournament in October 2022 at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. I am so very pleased that Breea has now been selected to represent Australia in the under 19 Australian Female Futsal Squad in Spain this year. I warmly congratulate and acknowledge Breea for continuing to embrace her passion for the game of soccer and the recognition that she has received through team selection, representative and leadership roles.

### MS BETH BAINES

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—Ms Baines a NSW RFS Foundation member has provided an unspoken amount of comfort and support to community members in her role as the Administrative Officer for the Southern Highlands Rural Fire Service. Ms Baines was born and raised in Dalton and commenced her working life with the Gunning Shire Council, which eventually over time became amalgamated with other local government areas, which saw the establishment of the Southern Tablelands Zone. Ms Baines has demonstrated her innate caring, social and community-spirited attributes not only with her work colleagues but more broadly with the whole community through some extraordinary times, including the 2019 / 2020 bushfires. Ms Baines has also demonstrated her own extraordinary capacity to undertake her professional roles, whilst attending to her own personal and familial experiences and needs. There are few words with the ability to describe and sincerely provide

the depth of gratitude that so many of her colleagues and community members would use to pay tribute to the amazing over twenty-five years of service that Ms Baines has provided prior to her retirement. I convey my sincerest congratulations and thanks to Ms Baines.

#### **ANNA LAMARRA**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise the dedication in early childhood education at SDN Lady McKell, located in the heart of Goulburn. Ms Anna Lamarra has played a significant and valuable role at the centre over the past 12 years. After completing her HSC, she was SDN's first trainee in 2007. In the subsequent years Anna completed her studies and advanced her career with SDN. She worked from all the way up from a trainee to an early childhood educator, to a Room Leader. Today Anna is the Centre Director of a spectacular facility. The wonderful sense of place - with lush gardens, and colourful classrooms - is just an element of why Lady McKell is so wonderful. The terrific programs, excursions in the community, and constant holistic educational improvements are an entire other. I believe that what makes Lady McKell so very special are the superb educators – who are caring for and educating confident and capable children. I stand here today to publicly recognise the efforts of Ms Lamarra and all Lady McKell Centre staff - and extend my thanks for the great sense of community they provide with their vital service to our future.

#### **RESOURCEFUL AUSTRALIAN INDIAN NETWORK – CBP GRANT FUNDING**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I rise to congratulate the Resourceful Australian Indian Network (or RAIN), who recently received funding under the Community Building Partnership grant program. I was pleased to announce the funding last year after working so closely with RAIN over the last few years. They are one of the hardest working community groups I know, and I am so proud of the work they have achieved over the last couple of years. The new funding will allow RAIN to out-fit a brand-new community kitchen with new cooking facilities, equipment, tables, wash-basins and many other amenities, which was certainly much-needed. There is a huge multicultural community in the Oatley Electorate, and this funding will ensure RAIN can share their love of cooking and community with even more locals. Local community groups are the heart and soul of Oatley and help to make our area a safe, vibrant and comfortable place to live for Multicultural communities. I'd like to thank the entire team at RAIN, who all continue to work incredibly hard for the local Indian community. I look forward to working closely alongside them into the future.

#### **ST GEORGE CANDLELIGHT VIGIL CEREMONY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I rise to recognise, remember and honour survivors and victims of domestic and family violence, as well as those our community has sadly lost. I recently attended the St George Candlelight Vigil Ceremony, which was a chance to highlight the scourge of domestic and family violence with those in the Oatley Electorate. Organised by Georges River Council and the St George Domestic Violence Committee, the Candlelight Vigil reinforced the significance of putting a stop to domestic and family violence. Over 40 per cent of murders in New South Wales are domestic and family violence related, statistics which are shockingly high. I was proud to stand alongside Councillors from Georges River Council, as well as Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, in support of this important cause. This is a complex issue, however it is necessary that all representatives of the New South Wales Government work to protect victims of domestic and family violence, ultimately saving lives. Both the Oatley Electorate and myself say NO to domestic and family violence. If you are experiencing or have experienced domestic, family or sexual violence, I urge you to call 1800RESPECT for confidential counselling and support.

#### **OATLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL– CBP GRANT FUNDING**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I rise to congratulate Oatley Public School on receiving funding under the Community Building Partnership grant program. This funding will allow the school to undertake site remediation works, which will continue to support them in future developments. Oatley Public School has consistently gone above and beyond to provide the very best for their students and the local community. Stage two of their North Site Development plan will see the levelling of sloped areas in the school grounds, as well as the installation of retaining walls, synthetic grass, and drainage. Of course, this is only the very beginning of their grand plan for the school. Oatley Public School continues to seek only the very best for its students and future developments to the site continue to remain a high priority. This initial remediation work ensures that they can keep pushing forward with that plan. I'd like to thank the Principal at Oatley Public School, Debbie Hunter, as well as the P&C team for being such strong advocates for this project. I look forward to working closely with Oatley Public School well into the future!

#### **AUNTY KATH WITHERS**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—All of us are capable of showing love and kindness, however, few can be described as givers of love and kindness that knows no bounds – Wagga Wagga's Aunty Kath Withers is

one of these rare individuals. Aunty Kath was just 17 years old when she became a foster carer, and throughout her life she has opened her home to and looked after more than 100 children. She has led several educational initiatives across local early learning centres teaching Wiradjuri culture, storytelling and art programs. She is also an accomplished artist in her own right.

This year I was truly honoured to present a Community Service Award to Aunty Kath Withers in recognition of the lifetime of public service that she has delivered to the community. Wagga Wagga City Council has also honoured Aunty Kath's many contributions by naming her the 40th Wagga Walk of Honour inductee, the unveiling of which took place last week. I would like to again thank Aunty Kath, for the time, energy and love she has given to so many. The contributions she has made to the lives of individuals across many generations is immeasurable.

#### **AUNTY ISABEL REID**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—It is always an honour to draw attention to the remarkable life of Aunty Isabel Reid. Wiradjuri Elder Aunty Isabel Reid has dedicated her life to raising awareness of the Stolen Generation and advocating for survivors to receive compensation. Aunty Isabel is the oldest living survivor of those who were forcibly removed under the NSW Aborigines Protection Act 1909-1969 – children who were forcibly removed from their families because they were Aboriginal. She is an admirable community leader, whose work was instrumental to the NSW Government offering a \$74 million reparation package to those forcibly removed from their families. This year, Wagga Wagga City Council named Aunty Isabel the 39th Wagga Walk of Honour inductee, the plaque for which was unveiled last week. In 2021, Aunty Isabel was the NSW State Recipient of the Senior Australian of the Year award. No number of accolades will ever be enough to recognise the bravery and passion shown by Aunty Isabel Reid in speaking out on behalf of all First Nations people. She is an inspiration to all generations and Wagga Wagga is very lucky to have her in our community.

#### **KINDRA STATE FOREST**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I extend my congratulations to both Coolamon Landcare Group and residents for their continued efforts to keep Kindra State Forest in immaculate condition. Kindra State Forest contains fifty-two hectares of spectacular bushland including bike and walking trails for visitors to enjoy. Over one hundred bird species have been sighted around Coolamon, many of which call the Forest home and can be viewed from various seating and viewing areas within the Forest. Kindra State Forest was nominated as a finalist for the Keep Australia Beautiful Awards. The Keep Australia Beautiful awards encourage, motivate, and celebrate the sustainability achievements of grassroots rural and regional communities across Australia. Elliot Stephens, Program and Partnerships Manager from Keeping Australia Beautiful recently visited Coolamon on 18 April to personally present Coolamon Landcare with the Habitat and Wildlife Conservation Award. I have been fortunate enough to spend time previously with Ian Jennings, Will Pippen and Jeannette Campbell from Coolamon Landcare and have witnessed the incredible work they do within Kindra State Forest. A massive congratulations once again to everyone involved in keeping Kindra State Forest looking beautiful.

#### **LUKE LEVETT**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to congratulate Luke Levett from Cootamundra as he played his 100th match for the Bulldogs as Co-Captain against the Bungendore Tigers in the 2023 Blumers Lawyers George Tooke Shield on Saturday 29 April. Luke made his senior debut in 2015 and has played a whopping sixty-three games in a row since 2018, playing most of the minutes each week. To celebrate his achievement, he was presented his jumper on the day by his dad, Mick who is one of the club's fiercest supporters. Footy can be tough at times and every club has its peaks and troughs and in recent years the Bulldogs have been no exception. Through the good and the bad, Luke has stuck by the boys in blue and white, his loyalty is second to none. There's nothing Luke loves more than playing with his mates and nothing he wouldn't give for the team on the field, that's what it's all about. Congratulations Luke on your milestone, be proud of your achievements and here's hoping for 100 more games for the blue and white from Fisher Park.

#### **CWA INTERNATIONAL FOOD FAIR**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—On Saturday 6 May I had the pleasure of attending Narrandera's International Food Fair, which saw a huge crowd of locals and visitors to the beautiful Marie Bashir Park. Hosted by the Narrandera CWA evening branch, I was joined by Mayor Neville Kschenka to take in food stalls representing multiple countries, from Italy to America and everywhere in between. It was wonderful to see locals taking part in the food as well, with Coolamon Cheese, CWA and Rotary all supplying baked treats, delicious cheeses, and a barbecue. The day was a huge success with international food vans, live music and performances, both international and Indigenous, market stalls and entertainment for children and adults to enjoy. Thank you for the Gillenbah Rural Fire Service for teaching the children about fire safety and keeping them entertained with

hose demonstrations. Well done to Beryl, Josie, Marie and all the volunteers that make up the Narrandera CWA evening branch. The Food Fair was a great initiative to celebrate so many different cultures. I was so pleased I could take part in the days activities and catch up with the lovely locals of Narrandera in my electorate.

### **ST CHARBEL'S HIGH ACHIEVER AWARD CEREMONY 2023**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On Friday 17 February, I had the pleasure of attending St Charbel's High Achievers Award Ceremony 2023 at the College in Punchbowl. It is an annual event attended by hundreds of family members to acknowledge the work of the hardworking students who achieved outstanding results in their High School Certificates. All students were recipients of awards which recognises their dedication to education and the importance it has in our community's future. I look forward to seeing all the students succeed in life and contribute to a better society for all. Their results also show, that no matter where you come from and what your family history is you, can achieve greatness in Australia if you put your mind to it. In a community as diverse as ours, I would like to congratulate St Charbel's College for the outstanding work they do in giving voice to and structuring a cohesive Lebanese Maronite community in Australia. I greatly value my relationship with St Charbel's College and Saint Charbel's Monastery & Parish and its leadership and thank them for extending this invitation to me. I wish them every success in their endeavours.

### **GOOD SHEPHERD ANGLICAN CHURCH GREENACRE**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Every second Wednesday from 1 pm to 1:45 pm the Good Shepherd Anglican Church in Greenacre, in collaboration with Anglicare, hosts a Mobile Community Pantry offering support to community members in need of assistance. It is always humbling to join the congregation who work so hard to contribute to our community. Through his congregation, Rev. Grant de Villiers does great work, including English language classes, food pantries, and general support. I am proud to have played a role in funding new bathrooms and the new kitchen at the Good Shepherd Anglican Church, Greenacre through the Community Building Partnership grants. It remains my firm commitment to support groups that work so hard to maintain community bonds. Good Shepherd Anglican Church has been there for our community during the toughest times, especially during the lockdowns. They worked hard to make a much-needed difference to those in need. What is wonderful is the welcoming spirit towards everyone regardless of faith, ethnicity, or social status. This is our community. Thank you, Rev. Grant de Villiers, and the congregation at Good Shepherd Anglican Church, Greenacre for contributing to a better society and leading with your heart.

### **ZAKAT HOUSE 25TH ANNUAL EDUCATION AWARDS CEREMONY 2023**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On Saturday 13 May 2023, I had the pleasure of attending the 25th Annual Education Awards Ceremony of Zakat House at the Orion Theatre in Campsie. This is an annual event attended by family members to acknowledge the work of the hardworking students who achieved outstanding results in their Higher School Certificate. All students were recipients of awards which recognised their dedication to education and the important role this plays in their future. I look forward to seeing all the students succeed in life and contribute to a better society for all. Their results show that no matter where you come from and what your family history is you, can achieve greatness in Australia if you put your mind to it. I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the principals, teachers, and parents for their unconditional support. In a community as diverse as ours, I would like to congratulate Zakat House for its outstanding work in structuring a cohesive charitable community group in Australia. I greatly value my relationship with Zakat House and its leadership and thank them for extending this invitation to me.

### **BALD BLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOL CENTENARY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the fantastic efforts of Bald Blair Public School Centenary Celebrations Committee for staging a wonderful event on Saturday, 13 May. The day, which began with the Reveal, Seal and Launch morning tea and included revealing the commemorative pavers, sealing of the 100-year time capsule box, and launching the centenary book, was attended by over 100 former students, staff, and community members. I congratulate Jane Moffatt, Bald Blair Centenary Celebration Committee Chairperson, Secretary Helen McKemey, Treasurer Gwyneth Pearson, and fellow committee members for organising an excellent event for the school community. Congratulations to the Centenary catering team and the volunteers for their efforts to ensure the celebrations ran smoothly for the school's 100-year milestone... I thank Arthur Cooper, Robyn Taker, Donna Davidson, Kristy Campion and editor, Jane Moffatt for the effort they put in collating the centenary book showcasing the history of the school and district. Thank you also to Principal Ros Edwards, teaching and auxiliary staff, the P&C and students, the school is in good hands and with support from a wonderful community, its future is looking bright.

### COOLATAI VINTAGE TRACTOR PULL

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the wonderful achievements of the Coolatai Sports Council, the Riverina Vintage Machinery Club and volunteers for staging a great day out at the Tractor Pull, attended by myself and many others from the local and surround areas from the 20-21 May. The events included not only vintage tractor pulls, but also static cars, truck and engine displays, along with various market stalls. I congratulate Chris Gooda, Ian and Shelly Durkin, Michael and Amy Grabham Steve Corbett and all those who assisted throughout the weekend on events, grounds, facilities and catering. Events such as this in regional towns, cannot function without the wonderful support and commitment that these volunteers give. I thank all those involved who supported the event, including competitors, stall holders, vintage machine and car owners and enthusiasts and everyone who went above and beyond to make sure it such a success. With such support, the event is set to remain an annual community event for the years to come.

### GUYRA CENTRAL SCHOOL PRIME LAMB COMPETITION

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I would like to recognise the achievements of the Guyra Central School for staging the Annual Northern Schools Prime Lamb Competition at the Guyra Showground on the 17-19 May. There were 11 schools invited, with approximately 260 students in attendance, along with school staff and supporters from the surrounding districts. I congratulate the Guyra Central School for winning the Champion Hoof for heavy weight Lambs, as well as coming second in Single Led Lamb and successes in the judging on the day. Many thanks also goes to Judges, Businesss Sponsors, Donators of stock, wool, meat and judging experts, Caterers, Armidale Regional Council staff and finally the organiser, Guyra Central School Agricuture Teacher Rebecca Smith. I commend Guyra Central School on their hard work and teamwork in hosting such a successful event. It is an extremely valuable opportunity for all the students and appreciated by the entire community.

### DUBBO TOUCH ASSOCIATION PLAYERS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the outstanding achievements of the Dubbo Junior Touch Associations talented youngsters.

Lachlan Murphy's participation in the Under 15's AICES representative team at the CIS Touch Carnival resulted in an undefeated record and the team being crowned Under 15 years State Champions. Olivia Carney and Scarlett London represented Polding at the NSW PSSA State Carnival, where they finished fifth. Olivia's exceptional performance led to her selection in the NSW PSSA Team, a testament to her talent and hard work. Lisi Darcy and Bella Hall represented the Western Public Schools Association at the same NSW PSSA State Carnival. Both girls displayed remarkable skills, with Lisi earning the honour of being named Players Player for the tournament. Saxon Scott and Rome Williams also represented the Western Public Schools Association at the NSW PSSA State Carnival. Their impressive performances and competitiveness in all games demonstrate their dedication and talent. Congratulations Lachlan, Olivia, Scarlett, Lisi, Bella, Saxon, and Rome, your achievements in these representative competitions are truly commendable.

### VRA SPECIALIST RESCUE VEHICLES

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to acknowledge the crucial role that the Volunteer Rescue Association plays in our local communities. I had the privilege of being a part of the recent launching event at the Dubbo Headquarters, where nine new specialist vehicles were introduced for regional, rural, and remote squads. This momentous occasion marked a significant milestone for the Volunteer Rescue Association and the communities they serve. These vehicles are equipped with state-of-the-art capabilities and equipment, enabling the volunteers to handle a wide range of rescue operations. From general land rescues to road crashes, vertical rescues, and even flood rescues, these vehicles ensure that the volunteers are well-prepared and equipped for any emergency situation that may arise. The introduction of these specialist vehicles not only increases the safety of volunteers but also enhances their performance, enabling them to carry out their duties more effectively. Most importantly, these vehicles contribute to the protection of community members, ensuring a swift and efficient response during times of crisis. I am extremely grateful for the important work done by the Volunteer Rescue Association and its volunteers, for they are the everyday heroes who make a difference in our lives and communities.

### GEURIE GOATS AND THE DUBBO ROOS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to acknowledge local Rugby Union Clubs, the Geurie Goats and the Dubbo Kangaroos, who played a memorial match last Friday night to celebrate the life of Marty Tink. The memorial match to celebrate former player Marty was a special and significant event for both clubs involved. Marty's love for rugby union and his connection to both teams made it fitting for them to come together for this match. The turnout was impressive, with a large crowd gathering to honour Marty's memory. One of the

important aspects of the match was the focus on mental health and depression. The teams wore special socks provided by the Tink family, which served as a symbol to raise awareness about these issues. It's heartening to see sporting events being used as a platform to address important topics like mental health and suicide prevention. The organisation and execution of the match, as well as the involvement of former players and the community, deserves praise for their efforts in honouring Marty Tink's memory, and raising awareness for mental health.

#### **ANDY MCKEAN - MATHOURA**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise the forty-year commitment of Mathoura's Andy McKean to the transport industry. Andy's passion for driving trucks was instigated by his great mate Kenny Pryde in 1978 when he first gained his class 3 license to cart grain for harvest in an International ACCO (butter box truck). Andy has carted everything you could imagine from potatoes to bubble wrap, crossing the country both locally and interstate. The Kenworth truck was always Andy's truck of choice. A five-year stint at Frankston saw one of his much-loved Kenworth tipper trucks receive his name on the door. Andy's time in the industry was not without danger and in 2002 he was kidnapped while driving a truck in Sydney, he was later thrown from a moving vehicle. Despite the trauma and anxiety, Andy returned to the industry a couple of years later. Today Andy is semi-retired and working part time driving a club courtesy bus while he awaits surgery. In August he will be inducted into the National Road Transport Museum Shell Rimula Wall of Fame in Alice Springs.

#### **SOUTHERN CROSS MUSEUM - BALRANALD**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise the current team of Colin Jacka, Peter Barrett, and Vic Pope of the Balranald Southern Cross Museum. Since its opening in 2015, these gentlemen operate the museum daily. Locally it is known as the Aeroplane Shed, housing the Southern Cross replica plane which was built for Channel 7 mini-series 'A Thousand Skies' a story about Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith, the original plane having landed in Balranald on 11 November 1933, and locals taken on joy flights. This team and others joined in the painstaking task of restoration of the replica which now has the Lady Southern Cross from the National Australian Air Museum beside the Southern Cross. This Museum has had a very generous benefactor who purchased the shed, to keep this wonderful collection safe in Balranald. These three gentlemen are extremely well versed in the history of aviation, the Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith story, and other 'inventions' within this 'Shed'. My congratulations to 'the volunteers team' on your dedication, shared knowledge, preserved history and well researched stories.

#### **ROY BINKS - GRIFFITH**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I recognise Mr. Roy Binks for his contribution as a coach to the cricketing community of Griffith and surrounds for the past 20 years. Anyone who has gone through the junior cricket ranks over the past two decades will be familiar with his tireless work. Whether checking in on the Senior and Junior Bradman games or junior representative cricket on Sundays, he was always present and a great guide. He was recently recognised by Cricket Australia for his volunteer work, winning the NSW, then National, Community Coach of the Year award from the organisation. Mr. Binks loves the local cricket community and values the involvement of the kids and parents as well as ex-players. He is a true role model to these children and is greatly respected by all.

#### **ROCKDALE MUSICAL SOCIETY – SOUTH PACIFIC**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—Last weekend the Rockdale Musical Society finished its successful run of the famous musical South Pacific at Rockdale Town Hall, in the heart of my electorate. Founded in 1939, the Rockdale Musical Society is one of Australia's oldest surviving musical societies. Run by volunteers, it produces two shows every year, and has entertained generations of local residents. It is an essential part of the cultural life of my community. The society has also been an important training ground for many young and not-so-young aspiring musicians, singers and dancers, a significant number of whom have gone on to careers in the artistic fields. This particular production of South Pacific featured former Opera Australia singer April Noho, giving the developing singers in the production a chance to work alongside a seasoned professional. In this way the Society helps the next generation of talented artists develop their skills and an understanding of what it takes to make it to the top. Congratulations to the Rockdale Musical Society and its volunteers on their successful run of South Pacific, and for their ongoing efforts to provide opportunities and entertainment to our community.

#### **CALVARY MATER GP ACCESS CLINIC**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—I wish to congratulate the amazing team behind the GP Access After Hours Clinic who have fought so hard to see this wonderful initiative re-open following its untimely closure 18 months ago. The brainchild of Dr Annette Carruthers, GP Access After Hours provides a means for people to

see a bulk billed service between the hours of 6pm and 10pm weekdays and 1pm to 8pm on Saturdays, filling a crucial gap in health care provision that would otherwise see the emergency rooms at John Hunter or Calvary Mater Hospitals being filled. A special thanks must go to Dr Carruthers, Dr Lee Fong from Newcastle GP Association, Keith Drinkwater from Hunter Primary Care, Mitchell Cootes from Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network and Sharon Claydon MP, Federal Member for Newcastle for their advocacy to reinstate funding and re-open this vital facility. I also must thank all of the valued health care and administration staff who will keep this facility running and caring for our community into the future.

### **FREE FOOD RECOGNITION**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On Wednesday 31 May, Foodbank NSW visited the Wallsend electorate for a fresh produce pop-up, supplying free fruit and veggies for people in need. Food insecurity is a real problem in NSW and indeed in my electorate of Wallsend, so to have Foodbank NSW attend our community and provide this essential service is a wonderful initiative. Of course, I must pay tribute to the heroes of our community who provide free meals to those doing it tough every single day. Organisations like Wallsend Baptist Care – Hope Street provide food support and low-cost groceries to people stricken by poverty, no questions asked. I also could not go without mentioning OzHarvest Newcastle, who pick food up all over the Wallsend electorate and distribute it to charities and services withing the Wallsend electorate too. Thankyou to Foodbank NSW, OzHarvest Newcastle and Wallsend BaptistCare – Hope Street for all you do to ensure people in need do not go hungry.

### **SHARE THE DIGNITY**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—In March 2015, Share the Dignity was created after the urgent need to provide vulnerable women in our community with necessary sanitary products was identified. This started the collection of sanitary items to distribute them to local shelters, to share dignity with women in need. From small beginnings in Founder and Managing Director, Rochelle Courtenay's local community, Share the Dignity has grown to a national charity. Across Australia, Share the Dignity has over 6,000 volunteers, partners with 3,000 charities, has delivered over 722,000 essential filled handbags and over 3.4 million packets of pads and tampons to Australian women, girls and those who menstruate. I truly appreciate the support my community continues to provide to Share the Dignity through donations of sanitary items to Dignity Drives, bags and essential items for the It's in the Bag campaign, financial donations, raising awareness and volunteering. We are supporting Share the Dignity's mission to bring dignity to those experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, and period poverty through the distribution of period products. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Share the Dignity team and the Wallsend Electorate for your gratitude, integrity, passion and innovation.

### **THE 31ST LISMORE ANNUAL GEMFEST SPONSORS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—The very success of the Lismore Gemfest depends as well upon the wonderfully generous sponsors, who put their own resources into ensuring this and other exceptional community events like the Lismore Gemfest continue to thrive. It is the sponsors behind the scenes that make these events possible, and I commend their altruism and community spirit. I would like to acknowledge all the sponsors of this year's event from The Lismore App, NBN News, Triple Z FM, Clarence Valley Independent, Bunyips Great Outdoors Centre, The Crystal Galley Noosa, Gemcuts, Lapidary and Jewellery Tools, The Northern Rivers Times, Lismore Gem and Lapidary Club, and lastly Summerland Credit Union. It is without doubt that it has been a challenging few years for most businesses, small and large, especially in the Northern Rivers region. Covid, bushfires and then floods have all impacted our local businesses in one way or another. Nevertheless, they have remained committed to contributing and providing support to community events like the Lismore Gemfest. It is a joy to acknowledge all the sponsors who backed in the extraordinary weekend-long event this year, which brought smiles and wonder to many faces after a difficult 2022.

### **FIRE STORIES BOOK LAUNCH ROXY GALLERY KYOGLE**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—I express my admiration for the incredible individuals who put in immense effort to create the Fire Stories book. I thank the wonderful Kyogle Roxy Gallery for hosting the launch and exhibition. Fire Stories is a compilation of personal narratives from local people who confronted the horrific bushfires. Lee Hine from Kyogle Family Support Services wanted these stories told and Kyogle Family Support Services delivered. It was funded through the Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund. Who better than local Kyogle author Jarrah Dundler and co-writer Anastasia Guise, with photographers Jimmy Malecki, Jodie Harris, Daniel Taylor and Ben Belle. Thousands of words were gathered, transcribed, and edited into short narratives. Countless hours were spent creating this historic book. Fire Stories is more than a collection of stories - it's a commemoration of those who have lived through these experiences and a tribute to all those affected by bushfires in our region. My heartfelt congratulations and thank you to every person who contributed to the book and helped make the launch such a triumph. Your efforts have made a lasting difference to the community and heightened the awareness of the importance of bushfire preparedness.



### STORY DOGS 2023

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Congratulations to Janine Sigley and Leah Sheldon for introducing Story Dogs to our region in 2009. Story Dogs is a wonderful program, a program that brings nearly six hundred volunteers and their dogs into primary schools across the country. Story Dogs makes reading fun for our children, when reading to a dog the outcomes are amazing, being such a comfortable and non-judgemental setting. Our children's focus improves, and their skills increase and confidence soars. They love it and so do the dogs we are blessed to have such a fantastic program operating in our local schools. I hope they get lots of volunteers offering up their time to help, wouldn't it be lovely to be a helping hand or should I say dog, teaching children the much-valued skill of being able to read.

### WORONORA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—We are so lucky in the Sutherland Shire and Illawarra regions to have so many wonderful dedicated and passionate volunteers. Whether they be parents and carers supervising the canteen during Saturday sport, or residents donating their time to help out those who are vulnerable, there is no shortage of people willing to stick their hand up and help. That includes the members from the Woronora Rural Fire Brigade. I have said it before and I'll say it again, I have the utmost respect and admiration for our emergency services workers. It takes incredible courage, sacrifice and selflessness to run towards an emergency, not from it. And that is exactly what members of emergency services organisations and teams, like Woronora Fire Brigade, do. The brigade was originally formed in 1954 by then Group Captain Ray Watchorn, and based out of an annex shed up river from Cathedral Rock. The members had no road access so they used their own boats to transport equipment. Almost seven decades have passed since. During that time the Woronora Rural Fire Brigade has also evolved. However, the brigade's dedication to protecting our community remains steadfast. On behalf of our community, thank you.

### BLACKTOWN CITY FESTIVAL

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)**—Each year Blacktown City Council hosts the highly anticipated Blacktown City Festival. This year the festival began on 13 May and concludes on 28 May. There is an extensive program which offers a range of events catered to all individuals interests which only grows each year. Included in the 16 days of celebration is the mesmerising "Glow at Sydney Zoo" display, the Blacktown City Medieval Fayre, historical bus tours around the city of Blacktown, many dance and theatrical performances, and a comedy night. The festival is a fantastic opportunity to attract individuals and families from across New South Wales to experience the best that Western Sydney has to offer. Local manufacturers, companies and performers have an opportunity to advertise themselves and stimulate our local Western Sydney economy. I congratulate the organisers for delivering this fantastic array of events for locals to enjoy over the 16 days and look forward to hearing the many positive reviews.

### KINGS LANGLEY LITTLE ATHLETICS ANNUAL REPORT

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)**—I use this time today to congratulate the Kings Langley Little Athletics Centre on another fantastic year of community advocacy and involvement. As a local representative I am afforded the opportunity to assist sporting groups in their endeavours to engage athletes in our community. The Kings Langley Little Athletics Centre and its executive continue to provide fantastic sporting opportunities to young participants in the suburbs of Kings Langley, Glenwood, Seven Hills, Lalor Park, Toongabbie and more. The centre caters for athletes in the under 5's "tiny tots" age group, through to the under 17's. Each age group can participate in a range of sport, including short and long-distance running, hurdles, discus and long jump. I extend my congratulations to the newly elected 2022/23 executive, including President Daniel Giffney, Vice President Doug Jack, Treasurer Mark McClintoch, Secretary Justyna Agaciak and all other members of the executive. Thank you for all the hard work you do in our community. I wish the new executive all the best for the upcoming season.

### HILLS RELAY FOR LIFE

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)**—I take this time to acknowledge, thank and congratulate organisers of the annual "Hills Relay for Life" for their fantastic event held last weekend. Each year locals gather at the Castle Hill Showground to walk the track for 24 hours in support of cancer patients and survivors across Australia. Community organisations and individuals are encouraged to form teams and raise money in their groups before and during the event. This year there were nearly 100 teams and 950 individuals participating in the relay. The fundraiser attracts members from all corners of our community united around a common goal of raising money to support cancer research and treatment. The Winston Hills Electorate had a number of local representatives supporting the cause. Notably I congratulate the team from Glenwood High School for their fantastic efforts in raising nearly \$20 000 for this cause. This year the Hills Relay for Life raised over \$288 000 towards battling cancer. Since their founding nearly 22 years ago the organisation has raised nearly \$5 million for

this amazing cause. I extend my congratulations to the Hills Relay for Life executive and the many participants of this year's event.

#### **FAULCONBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOL YARNING CIRCLE**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains)**—On Friday 12 May I was thrilled to attend the opening of Faulconbridge Public School's Yarning Circle. The Yarning Circle provides a safe place to talk, share, discuss and educate. It's a place to build respectful relationships and a space to enrich students' learning experiences.

Faulconbridge Public School has strong ties to our local Darug community and the yarning circle is reflective of those ties. It encourages students to consider the land that they are taught on, as well as respect the values the circle embodies: active listening without judgement, building on what others are saying, and mutual respect. For the students, this will become part of their teaching and learning journey. Relieving principal Chris Payne has said the circle will encourage students to build their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture with responsible, respectful and honest interactions. It was lovely as always to see Auntie Carol Cooper there and Uncle Graeme Cooper too, who provided a welcome to country and coordinated the smoking ceremony for the opening. I was proud to support this project through the Community Building Partnerships program and congratulate Faulconbridge Public School for bringing this wonderful idea to life.

#### **JAGGIS BIGG BREAKFAST – CANCER COUNCIL EVENT**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Congratulations to Vaibhavi Joshi, Harita Mehta, and Parul Mehta for the remarkable Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event at Jaggi's Function Centre. Their dedication to raising awareness and funds for the Cancer Council is truly commendable. Now in its 30th year, Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, organized by the Cancer Council, continues to grow in size and success. The involvement of diverse cultures and communities adds to its significance, and it was heartening to see the South Asian community, especially the Gujarati community, come together for this noble cause. In just two hours, they raised an impressive \$2,000, but their impact goes beyond the financial contribution. Attendees shared their personal stories, shedding light on the challenges faced by those affected by cancer and emphasizing the need for ongoing efforts. This event serves as a small yet significant step in their collective commitment to making a difference. I know they and many of the Gujarati community are driven by the values of service to humanity living by the words "In the joy of others, lies our own." I commend Vaibhavi Joshi, Harita Mehta, Parul Mehta, and all the organizers for their dedication and inspiring achievement.

#### **BLACKTOWN CITY BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—The Blacktown City Business community celebrated their night of nights on May 17 2023 with the announcement of this year's winners of the Local Business Awards. The awards are an opportunity for the community to show their support to their favourite small business and for both owners and their staff to be celebrated for the outstanding efforts in providing good and services to local consumers. The Local Business Awards seeks to honour and recognise the excellence of local businesses around Blacktown City, who have become pillars of the community through their hard work. This year businesses from the Riverstone electorate took home five awards. I'd like to specifically acknowledge 'The Shed Café' in Schofields, 'Guardian Childcare & Education' in Acacia Gardens, 'The Cutting Room' hairdresser in Riverstone, 'Costi's Seafood and Grill' in The Ponds and 'Generate Landscapes' from Quakers Hill. It's truly an incredible effort family owned and run businesses. I congratulate all of the award recipients. Often the honour of being recognised with these awards is not the award itself, but the honour of having served the community. I look forward to your continued success.

#### **MOSMAN LOCAL DESIGN AWARDS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—The Mosman Design Awards are an architectural award held every two years by Mosman Council to recognise and celebrate outstanding contributions to the built environment. Open to recently completed building projects, it provides architects, builders and owners an opportunity to exhibit their achievements within the Mosman Local Government Area. The overall winners were the contemporary New House by Dods and Zuccon Architects, and a Federation home with new rear single storey addition, House for Bees, by Downie North which featured a range of sustainability features such as rainwater harvesting. The People's Choice Award winner was Earth-Ship by Luigi Rosselli Architects, while Mosman House by Lachlan Seegers Architect and Balmoral Beach House by Queen Mab Design Studio were both highly commended. Congratulations to this year's winners and a special thank you to Mosman Council for organising these awards that recognise excellence in architectural design.

#### **MOSMAN LOCAL FINALIST IN MISS GALAXY 2023**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I recognise Mosman local Natalie Mete who recently competed in the final of Miss Galaxy Australia, and while she did not win her ambition remains to help lift

women's esteem. Since she was young, Natalie wanted to become a model and during the 2020 lockdown she discovered pageants before participating in the Miss World Australia 2022. Part of Natalie's drive is to ensure that we create a more realistic idea of people's bodies, especially on social media, where everyone can relate to each other and where everyone is respected. Natalie notes that everyone has flaws and that our uniqueness should be embraced. Natalie is currently a makeup artist and studying a Bachelor of Commerce and her biggest aspiration is to open a female-only gym, offering self-defence courses. Natalie also wants to advocate for mental health support and start programs that will offer therapy services to low socio-economic area in Sydney. Congratulations Natalie on competing as a finalist in the Miss Galaxy Australia, and I wish you the very best with your future endeavours.

#### **MOSMAN LOCAL HENRY O'DONNELL**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to congratulate Norths first grade player and Mosman local Henry O'Donnell is off to the World Rugby U20 Cup with the Junior Wallabies this month. Right from when he first laced on his first boot as a six year old for Mosman Juniors, the kid with speed has been fixated on making it in rugby. After emerging from the juniors and starting for the St Ignatius Riverview first during his school days, Henry began his club career at Sydney University, while studying there. Henry's season with Northern Suburbs Rugby Football Club will be interrupted for a very good reason when he heads to South Africa with the Junior Wallabies for this month's under 20 World Cup. Congratulations Henry and good luck, we wish you and your team all the best in South Africa.

#### **SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the Sydney Jewish Museum which I had the honour of visiting recently. The SJM is a living museum that illuminates and preserves Jewish cultural life and heritage in Sydney. It is a place that gives voice to the victims of the Holocaust, helping people from all walks of life start conversations about the ongoing scourge of antisemitism and inspire change within modern Australia. The SJM plays an important role in reminding us all of our responsibility to work for a more just and equal world and I want to thank all the museum staff, volunteers and the survivors who share their stories, SJM CEO Kevin Sumption, as well as the Jewish Board of Deputies and its CEO Darren Bark for arranging this visit.

#### **LEICHHARDT ANNANDALE BUSINESS CHAMBER**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the Leichhardt Annandale Business Chamber and their work championing local business issues in the Leichhardt and Annandale areas. The Chamber works to advocate for our wonderful local businesses and facilitate networking opportunities, as well as deepen engagement with the community. This includes producing the annual Norton Street Italian Festa that brings Norton St alive with an authentic celebration of the Italian culture which makes Leichhardt's local heritage so special. I want to thank the Chamber for all their efforts and acknowledge the contributions of all Chamber members, President Mark Chapman and the Chamber Executive: Jennifer Aaron, Jen O'Brien, Patrick O'Reilly, Andrew Rowland, Karlah van Arend, Dorney Mayes, Beck Kinleyside and Alistair Scott.

#### **KIAMA HOLDS SORRY DAY CEREMONIES**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of NSW acknowledges the residents, students, and community leaders of Kiama who took part in the local National Sorry Day ceremonies on Friday, 26th of May, 2023. Stuart Larkin, Kiama Municipal Council's first councillor of First Nations, presided over the ceremonies which included a performance by the Djaadjawan Dancers and a smoking ceremony by Aunty Gwenda Jarret and her husband Stan Jarrett. Thank you to the Kiama Pavilion for hosting, allowing the event to go ahead despite the rainy weather. It was encouraging to see so many students and members of the community involved in such an important day. Aunty Gwenda explained that National Sorry Day is a significant symbolic event for First Nations people, as a symbol of recognition of the tragedy and trauma caused by the stolen generations. While the Bringing Them Home report is 26 years old this year, some of the victims still haven't found their families today. I am very proud of our community's commitment to reconciliation and commend the excellent efforts of all involved.

#### **SORRY DAY CROWD AT THE BOMADERRY HOMES**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of NSW acknowledges the Bomaderry community for the amazing turnout to the gathering at the Bomaderry Homes to commemorate National Sorry Day. Hundreds of people walked across the Nowra Bridge to the historic site, which has been owned by the Nowra Local Aboriginal Lands Council since 1993. Uncle Sonny Simms is the son of one of the first children taken to the Bomaderry Homes as early as 1908, becoming one of hundreds of children to go through the homes over the course of its life through to the 1980s. South Coast Aboriginal Medical Service organised the event, as a part of

number of reconciliation events that they hold each year. Steve Clark from the service spoke to the healing power of Sorry Day. Nathanael Curtis was another key organiser for the event, happy to see the day be a celebration of Aboriginal people and culture. I am very proud of our community's commitment to reconciliation and commend the excellent efforts of all involved.

#### **CLEAN 4 SHORE**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to acknowledge the work of a local group called Clean4Shore. They are about educating whilst DOING the 'Clean Up and Clear Out' of pollution from Central Coast foreshores and mangroves. Graham Johnston, known to everyone as Jono, leads this organisation by teaching kids and adults to keep our waterways and foreshores clean. Jono and his team have created a winning formula for retaining taught knowledge in the community by enabling participants to receive a practical, hands-on experience taking volunteer groups on excursions removing tons of garbage via the Clean4shore green barge. These excursions target specific problem areas for the region and provide much sought after relief for our marine environment to thrive again. In February students from Terrigal High School ventured out with Clean4shore to remove litter from within the Fagan's Bay mangroves. After a full day they returned with an abandoned kayak, a washed up tinny and 320 kilos of rubbish. Thank you Jono and Clean4Shore for all that you do.

#### **TERRIGAL SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB SENIOR PRESENTATION**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I had the pleasure of attending Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club's Senior Presentation in which members were recognised for their dutiful contributions to the Club. Mister Speaker, I am proud that my electorate has one of the highest volunteer participation rates in New South Wales, and presentation events like these hosted by Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club grow in numbers each time that I attend them. I especially want to recognise Mr. Peter Wylie, recipient of the 80 years of service award, Ms. Cathy Cole, recipient of the 25 years of service award and Ms. Debi Barnes, the National Medal recipient. These individuals exemplify the constant dedication and service to community organisations that volunteers undertake each day – and for that, I thank them. I would also like to recognise the great team at the Club who made this event possible, and thank you for organising this great presentation.

#### **NOLA WILSON**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Following National Volunteer Week, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my constituent Nola Wilson, an outstanding hard-working volunteer in my community. Nola has been a long serving member of the Terrigal Evening Branch of the Country Women's Association. From wrapping Christmas presents, selling raffle tickets, helping cater functions at local age care with Christmas cakes, Nola is always there to help. As a member of the Hall Maintenance Committee, Nola has ensured the smooth running of the hall and being available to assist with trades people during a recent kitchen renovation. Nola is also a volunteer at the blood bank as well. The Central Coast has some of the highest rates of volunteering in the nation. It is the incredible generosity and selfless service of volunteers such as Nola that support so many in our community activities and causes out of kindness and a sense of community. Nola has always prioritised the community. With kindness and compassion, she has always acted selflessly. I would like to thank Nola for her community work and wish her well in her move to Queensland.

#### **ITALIAN NATIONAL BALL**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—On Saturday 27 May, I attended the Italian National Ball at the Sofitel Sydney Wentworth Hotel. The event was organised by Co.As.It under the auspices of the Italian Consulate in Sydney. The Italian National Ball marks the festivities of the Festa della Repubblica, the Italian National Day and celebrates the services that Co.As.It, the largest Italian community organisation in NSW provides to the community. All proceeds from the Italian National Ball will go towards establishing an in language helpline for Italian speakers requiring mental health support. The event was attended by many dignitaries including His Excellency Paolo Crudele, the Italian Ambassador to Australia, Mr Andrea De Felip, Consul General of Italy in, Sydney, The Hon. Francesco Giacobbe OAM, Senator of Italy, The Hon Nicola Carè, Member of the Italian Parliament, the NSW Minister for Multiculturalism, The NSW Opposition Leader and many Federal and State MPs. Congratulations to the Board and staff of Co.As.It for coordinating a lovely evening celebrating the Italian community, Italian community organisations and businesses, and supporting a worthy cause.

#### **ROTARY CLUB OF BREAKFAST POINT**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—On 30 June 2023, the Rotary Club of Breakfast Point will hand in their Charter. Whilst it is a sad time, it is important to acknowledge the legacy of this Rotary Club. The Club has been a hub for budding Rotarians of Breakfast Point comprising of volunteers who are passionate about their local area, passionate about service and about making a difference both locally and internationally. From their years of work at Cabarita Park on Clean Up Australia Day, their community events such as art shows

and barbecues to support Concord Hospital and organising toy donations to those in need at Christmas, their impact in our community will be severely missed. Just recently, the Rotary Club of Breakfast Point held their final event, their annual art show which raised \$10,000 for the Foundation for a Bloody Great Cause. I want to thank all the volunteers and those involved with the Rotary Club of Breakfast Point throughout the years, for their hard work creating a community hub and wish them all the best in the future. I would like to particularly acknowledge and thank President Wendy Schmid for her leadership and service.

#### **DRUMMOYNE ROWING CLUB**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I wish to acknowledge Drummoyne Rowing Club for the Club's continued support of local athletes. Established in 1919, Drummoyne Rowing Club offers opportunities for all ages and abilities to experience the sport of rowing. Its presence in our community and in supporting local talent has resulted in local athletes holding world records, gold medals, and countless national titles. Fostering the growth of athletes in all aspects of rowing, including indoor rowing, we have seen local constituents and members of Drummoyne Rowing Club compete at not only local and national championships, but international championships, helping to put our community on the map. The success and all hard work and dedication of this Club and its volunteers is evident with novices in recent regattas securing incredible achievements such as their first wins. I want to extend my very best wishes to all local athletes competing in the upcoming International Competitions such as the Virtus Global Games (International Competition for athletes with intellectual disabilities), as well as the State and National Championships and continue to encourage their hard work training in the coming months. Congratulations to Drummoyne Rowing Club, its volunteers, athletes and supporters.

#### **BRYCE COOK – NSW COUNTRY UNDER-19 CRICKET SQUAD**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I congratulate 18 year old Bryce Cook from the Camden Haven on his selection into the NSW Country Under 19 Cricket Squad. Described as a "real strike weapon" and a threat for hitting early stumps, Bryce Cook has literally launched himself into selection for the 24-man NSW Country squad after a series of dominant performances and representative appearances on the pitch. A valued member of the Port Macquarie Pirates, Bryce's experience and bowling talent at the crease has seen him secure previous spots in both the North Coast and Colts sides, including an appearance for Australia at Under 15 level. Competing in the Under 19 NSW Country squad means Bryce could feature as one of the final fourteen names to be selected for the National Championships in December. The National Championships has the potential to lead Bryce on a pathway for international representation in the 2024 Under 19 Cricket World Cup in Sri Lanka, and by all accounts he has the natural ability to make this A REALITY. The National Championships are seen as the cornerstone for Cricket Australia's High-Performance pathway, with many state, national and international players picked from these teams. Congratulations Bryce!

#### **CHASE THOMPSON – BODYBOARDING FINALS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise young gun Chase Thompson from Mackillop College Port Macquarie who recently won the Jeff Wilcox Memorial 2023 Cadets Division for bodyboarding at the event held in Tuncurry. Beating the best of the best in his age group and securing a well fought win, Chase dominated the crashing waves to secure the number one spot on the podium for his stella performance on the weekend of the 29-30 April 2023. Chase is no novice to competition thanks to his coastal roots and former Lord Howe Island heritage. Now a valued member of the Port Macquarie Bodyboarding Association, Chase was able to secure a sponsorship from Science Bodyboard last year which has attributed to his success on the water at the Jeff Wilcox Memorial. I highlight the Port Macquarie Bodyboarding Association [PMBA] who have been instrumental in moulding and shaping our local talent into champions like Chase, for more than thirty years. Over the past decade the PMBA have secured 23 crowns at Regional, State and National levels and four World Titles. A wonderful achievement by Chase Thompson, I congratulate him on his win last month and wish him well for the next tournament.

#### **HASTINGS FARM GATE TOUR**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I recognise the Hastings Farm Gate Tour in my electorate. On the June long weekend there will be a showcase of local produce from the Port Macquarie Hastings region and an opportunity for the community to learn more about the source of ingredients to enrich your culinary skills. The Hastings Farm Gate Tour is an opportunity for locals and tourists to see first-hand some of the regenerative producers in our region and their offerings. As a self-drive tour, people can visit local regenerative market gardens, dairy, beef, pork, chicken farms, nut and bushtucker producers and now even showcasing some urban homesteads and food forests. With twenty farms on the tour, people can buy one ticket that covers everyone you can fit in your car and use the map to create your own tour. In the beginning, the tour was 100 per cent volunteer run, but the popularity of the event meant this just wasn't sustainable and so the not for profit

organisation, Earth Logic, have partnered with locals to stage the weekend experience. I believe the Hastings Farm Gate Tour will again be a huge success and I encourage people across the electorate to support this event.

#### **SHELLHARBOUR CITY RECONCILIATION WEEK WALK AND FLAG CEREMONY**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of NSW acknowledges the Shellharbour Community and Shellharbour City Council for hosting a community walk and flag ceremony to commemorate reconciliation week. The walk was well attended by local schools and students. I acknowledge and thank Uncle Gerald Brown for his warm welcome to country and thank the Mayor Chris Homer and Deputy Mayor Kellie Marsh for their support of our local aboriginal community. I also acknowledge Councillors John Davey and Colin Gow who attended and I pay tribute to Shellharbour City Council staff who organised this outstanding event together with our local aboriginal community. It was a privilege to be a part of this ceremony and present Peterborough School with its certificate for participation in this event which gave local people and students the opportunity to think about the importance of closing the gap for first nation's people.

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