



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Tuesday 20 June 2023**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday 20 June 2023**

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

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

## *Announcements*

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

**The SPEAKER:** I advise members that photographers have been approved to cover proceedings today, including question time and this afternoon's inaugural speech.

## *Business of the House*

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: CONDOLENCE MOTION

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:02):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) The moving immediately after the routine of business following question time by the Premier of a condolence motion regarding the Hunter Valley bus tragedy.
- (2) Debate on the motion to be adjourned without motion immediately following contributions from the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition.
- (3) Resumption of the debate at this or any subsequent sitting to be called on at any time during the time allocated for Government business.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (12:02):** The Opposition agrees to the motion and will support it.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*[Notices of motions given.]*

## *Bills*

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

### FIRST HOME BUYER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

### CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (SYDNEY WATER AND HUNTER WATER) BILL 2023

## **Assent**

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

## *Governor*

### ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Lieutenant-Governor regarding the administration of the Government.

## *Members*

### MEMBER FOR WAGGA WAGGA

### MEMBER FOR HAWKESBURY

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Hawkesbury celebrated their birthdays during the break. I congratulate them.

*Announcements***IAN DELAHUNTY**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge Chamber Supervisor Ian Delahunty, whose birthday it is today. I am sure everybody extends a warm happy birthday to Mr Delahunty. It is nice of him to join us.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a very warm welcome to the guests of the member for Lake Macquarie, including somebody whose name is strikingly similar to mine—my sister Maureen Piper—and Richard Hogan, Debbie and Larry Dennis, Michael and Pam Hart, and David Fleury and Jane Shields. I welcome guests of the member for Sydney, year 9 students from Sydney Grammar School. I also welcome to the gallery guests of the member for Maitland, students from St Patrick's Primary School in Lochinvar who have travelled to Parliament to receive an acknowledgement later today for their group Harmony Day poster: Kaitlyn Babaran, Ivy Chavez and Scarlett Whybrow. They are joined by parents and teachers. I also acknowledge that the best of the Riverina Murray region is being represented in the gallery today by Robert Groat and Margie Groat, the brother and sister of the member for Murray. I welcome them.

*Question Time***PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (12:22):** My question is directed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. The Parliamentary Budget Office's costing of Labor's wages policy noted, "The policy assumes that the Government is able to identify productivity savings that offset any upside risk to the growth of remuneration." What productivity savings has the Government identified to fund its wages policy?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister for Health will come to order. I am sure that he will recalibrate for the rest of question time.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:22):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and his new-found interest in industrial relations. I am pleased to report that the Minns Government has now taken the first step towards delivering fair wage outcomes to the public sector workers on whom the people of New South Wales depend. We have put an offer of a 4.5 per cent increase on the table for the 2023-24 year. It comprises a 4 per cent increase in pay rates and a 0.5 per cent increase in superannuation, and represents the biggest pay increase the New South Wales public sector has received in over a decade. It is an investment we have to make, and it is an economically responsible one. While we cannot fix 12 years of problems overnight, this is an important first step. Too many of our essential workers are walking out the door; we know this. Members on both sides of the House know this.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I am getting to it.

**The SPEAKER:** That does not matter. I need to hear the point of order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order is under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question was not about the appropriateness or fairness of, or justification for, any wages policy. It was a specific question. What productivity offsets has the Government identified to fund the wages policy?

**The SPEAKER:** I heard the question and I understand the principle of direct relevance. The Minister has indicated that her answer will be more relevant to the question. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Government Whip will stop assisting from the sidelines.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I am really excited that the member for Wahroonga is interested in this important topic.

*[A member interjected.]*

I am getting there, because this is really important.

**The SPEAKER:** The Manager of Opposition Business will come to order.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I am happy to get straight to the crux of this. Fixing 12 years of flatlining wages for our essential workers cannot be achieved in one go. The wage offer that has been announced is supported by savings that have been identified by the comprehensive expenditure review committee. Guess what we announced? It is something that I am very proud of. We are going to do a whole-of-government return to work

policy. That is what we are doing. We will also have labour hire and out-of-home care policies. They are just three things that we have identified. I am happy to come back and talk more about this. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

### TEACHER WORKFORCE

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (12:25):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is meeting its commitment to end the casualisation of the teaching profession?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:26):** That is a great question that is important for the future of New South Wales and the education of the next generation of young Australians. I am pleased to report to the House that the Government has taken decisive action when it comes to pay and conditions for New South Wales public school teachers. Unfortunately, over the past 12 years the previous Government treated the most noble profession in the world as if it was a temporary job for a teenager at a fast-food restaurant. Under the Coalition, nearly 40 per cent of teachers were on temporary or casual contracts. That created a situation where a young teacher entering the profession was told unambiguously by the then New South Wales Government that they were not wanted for a permanent job.

Something had to give and, in a tight labour market, guess what happened? Private and non-government schools poached our best and brightest to their institutions at the expense of New South Wales kids. There was a 30 per cent decline in the number of school leavers who chose to study education under the Coalition, and last year, for the first time in the history of the Department of Education, resignations beat retirements as the leading reason teachers left the profession. So we are taking decisive action. I can announce that we will convert 16,000 teachers and support staff on temporary contracts to permanent positions.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** We will also bust the wages cap for the first time in 12 years. I am proud to announce that over the past three months since the Government was elected in March some 5,500 teachers across 982 schools have accepted permanent positions in the Department of Education. That is a game changer when it comes to public education. The report from teachers, who work tirelessly on behalf of New South Wales schoolchildren, is profound. Chandani, who teaches in Merrylands, said, "I knew really early on that I belonged at Merrylands, and permanency makes that official". In her own words, she said that before now she has had to reprioritise a lot of personal goals, but now for the first time she can apply for a loan without feeling nervous. [*Extension of time*]

That is a basic requirement for any worker in New South Wales, let alone the professionals who educate the next generation of young Australians. A teacher at Mount Colah Public School described getting a permanent contract as "a life changer". Jeff Ward, the principal at Finley High School in the electorate of Murray, said a school admin officer in her late 40s teared up and told him, "This is the first time I have had a permanent job in my whole life". The previous Government was happy for people to devote their professional energies and their professional lives to jobs that were temporary in a time of 3 per cent unemployment when there was a tight labour market. Something had to change, and it has changed under New South Wales Labor. I am pleased to report to the House that in the next two years the Government will convert 16,000 teachers and support staff to permanent positions in New South Wales public schools—a life changer for the teaching profession and the education of the next generation of young Australians.

### PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (12:31):** My question is directed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. What impact will the Government's wages policy have on targets and principles under the Fiscal Responsibility Act?

**The SPEAKER:** Government members, particularly those on the front bench, will come to order. They will allow the Minister to answer.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:31):** I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and Leader of The Nationals for his question and his newfound interest in fiscal responsibility. He has left us \$187 billion in debt.

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** The shadow Minister in the other place, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor, said, "And when they say it is a black hole, it is because of the election—you know, promises that they have made. It is all about choice." When members look at a budget—and I know that when I was in government we looked at the budget—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: The question has nothing to do with what is said in the other place. The point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question is about targets and principles under the Fiscal Responsibility Act. How does the wages policy meet them?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** To the point of order: The Fiscal Responsibility Act provides that the object of the Act is to maintain the triple-A credit rating.

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** To the point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Leader of the House will finish speaking to the point of order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** It also relates to limiting government borrowing. A question about that Act opens up the whole financial question, so everything is relevant.

**The SPEAKER:** I cannot believe the amount of legal advice that I have received from across the Chamber. Members will calm down and come to order. The Minister will complete her answer. At this stage, I believe she is heading towards being directly relevant—although it is a work in progress.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I just have one more quote with respect to what the shadow Minister stated.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wahrenoonga will resume his seat.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** She was interviewed on 2CC and the interviewer said, "Having said that, nobody would begrudge frontline emergency service workers a pay rise". Ms Taylor said, "Absolutely not, and that is absolutely a decision that needed to happen."

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: It is a very simple question. What impact will it have on wages and the Fiscal Responsibility Act? Will the Minister answer what the Fiscal Responsibility Act is and how the Government's wages policy impacts it?

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** Do you even know what fiscal responsibility is?

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** I do. Do you?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will resume his seat. This is a very poor start to question time on Parliament's first sitting day after a break. Members will reflect on their comments, which have not been particularly helpful to the questioner or to the Minister giving the answer. I warn members that I will put them on calls to order, including members on the Government front bench, who have particularly offended against order in the House today. The Minister will return to the question.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I restate that the interviewer said, "Having said that, nobody would begrudge frontline emergency service workers a pay rise". Ms Taylor said, "Absolutely not, and I think that, you know, that is absolutely a decision that needed to happen".

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Summer Hill will come to order. The Deputy Premier will come to order.

#### **PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (12:36):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the Minister update the House on the actions the New South Wales Government has been taking to provide a fair deal to essential workers?

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:37):** I thank the wonderful member for Mount Druitt for his hard work, his advocacy and his absolute support for essential workers in New South Wales and in his great electorate of Mount Druitt. I am pleased to report that the Minns Government has busted the wages cap, with an offer of a 4.5 per cent wage increase on the table for 2023-24. The offer comprises a 4 per cent pay rise plus a 0.5 per cent superannuation increase. That will be the biggest pay increase the New South Wales public sector has had in more than a decade.

**Mr Matt Kean:** The Health Services Union is walking out on you. The HSU is not buying it.

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will resume her seat. I place the member for Hornsby on two calls to order. It is unacceptable to interject across the Chamber, calling to people in the public gallery. I will not tolerate such behaviour. I will direct members on both sides to leave the Chamber if the disorderly behaviour continues. The Minister has the call.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** This will be the biggest pay increase for the New South Wales public sector in more than a decade. But that is just the first step in righting the wrongs of 12 years of the Liberal-Nationals attack on essential workers in the State. There is a lot to do, and I know that some members across the Chamber acknowledge that. We have established the Industrial Relations Taskforce, which is to be led by former deputy president of the Fair Work Commission Anna Booth and former president of the Industrial Relations Commission Roger Boland. I am sure all members will agree that we are very fortunate to have the services of those two highly distinguished experts in the field of industrial relations. The task force will bring together workers, unions, local government and government agencies to create a new, cooperative, interest-based bargaining approach oversights by the Industrial Relations Commission.

We want interest-based bargaining to be the first port of call for bargaining in the New South Wales jurisdiction. Interest-based bargaining deploys methods of dispute resolution and bargaining that seek to build trust between both industrial parties. They will come together with their common interests to identify and resolve their issues, rather than use the traditional method where each party takes a position and puts a set of demands. Of course it will take time, but we just have started. The task force will start the critical job of getting us there. It will look at ways to add a new, more consultative interest-based bargaining stream that will allow our essential workers and unions to engage with government agencies to identify savings and productivity gains in exchange for pay increases. It will ensure that the Industrial Relations Commission is independent and properly resourced with real powers to prevent or settle disputes. [*Extension of time*]

The task force will review the scope of the commission to address and resolve work health and safety issues or related workplace matters within the State jurisdiction. The task force is expected to report back in time to enable the Minns Government to modernise the State's industrial relations system before the end of the year. Supporting essential workers is an investment that we must make, and it is about time; almost three-quarters of healthcare workers and teachers are thinking about leaving New South Wales to go to another State where conditions are better. It is incredibly sad and concerning, and we need to turn it around. The statistics speak for themselves. We want the best and most qualified nurses, cleaners, researchers and scientists in our hospitals, and we want the very best teachers in our classrooms.

Rather than engage in ideological warfare against our essential workers, like we have seen from those opposite, we want to give them a good reason to stay in our State by respecting, supporting and valuing them. I am not ashamed to say that I have worked in some of the lowest paying jobs. I have that lived experience, as opposed to the ideology that those opposite bring. It is about sitting down and it is about respecting people. Those opposite have amazing teachers in their electorates and amazing support staff and workers in their hospitals—and we need to retain them. They are looking at going interstate. We need to recruit more teachers, nurses and others in our government sector. I thank the member for his question.

## ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (12:42):** My question is directed to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, representing the Minister for Energy. As part of Australia's move to renewable energy, regional New South Wales will be covered by transmission lines, such as the HumeLink proposal in my electorate, and many communities are asking why these cannot be put underground. What will the Government do to respond to these very real concerns?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (12:43):** I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his question and I am happy to answer on behalf of the Minister for Energy. Everyone in the House would agree that the member for Wagga Wagga is one of the most decent people here. He is always so respectful and willing to work across the aisle. I know the member has been a fierce advocate on this issue on behalf of his constituents. I have visited his constituency in the past on a number of occasions and on some of those occasions we discussed community concerns around transmission projects. He and others such as the Riverina Sustainable Food Alliance have raised concerns with the Government regarding the impacts of the HumeLink transmission project. He has advocated for an inquiry into undergrounding transmission lines to limit environmental, agricultural and other effects. Other MPs have also raised these issues with me and other members.

We need to be clear: Transmission infrastructure projects are critical for our clean energy future. Our electricity system is undergoing rapid transformation and we need to replace coal-fired power stations over the next decade. The most cost-effective and environmentally responsible replacement is renewable energy.

New South Wales has excellent renewable energy resources, particularly in our regions. Five renewable energy zones have been established to coordinate the development of renewable generation and storage projects with transmission infrastructure that will transport electricity to where it is needed.

**Mr Matt Kean:** You're welcome.

**Mr Paul Scully:** We approved it.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** We did. We approved it. Do you remember when you left out the Hunter and the Illawarra because you didn't know they were regions?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister was going so well until the member for Hornsby distracted him. The member for Hornsby will settle down.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** That's okay. I will let him have his moment in the sun. In addition to those zones, critical transmission projects, including HumeLink, are being delivered to reinforce electricity supply. These projects will transport low-cost renewable energy to where it is needed around the State. That is on top of significant investment by New South Wales households and businesses in distributed technologies like solar and small-scale batteries. These critical transmission projects are urgently needed, but they are also being delivered in a challenging environment, with global supply chain issues and worker shortages at home. [*Extension of time*]

Unlike the time when the member for Hornsby was Minister, I turned up to the community forum at Wagga. We acknowledge that many people are also concerned about the visual impact of transmission towers and power lines, and their potential to interfere with other land uses and to impact the environment. At the same time, households are struggling with rising bills. We intend to do everything we can to put downward pressure on electricity prices. That is why I am pleased to inform the House that the Minister for Energy has requested that the Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development inquire into and report on the feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects. The committee will have particular reference to the costs and benefits of undergrounding, existing case studies regarding similar undergrounding of transmission lines in Australia and overseas, any impact on delivery time frames of undergrounding, and any environmental impacts of undergrounding.

The inquiry will be an opportunity for everyone—regional communities, farmers, environmental advocates and industry experts—to have their say and to understand the issues that need to be weighed up when delivering this infrastructure. I encourage members of the public to participate and make submissions so the committee can properly consider the various points of view in the community. I again thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his advocacy on this issue. Along with the Minister for Energy, I look forward to the committee's findings. The committee will report by the end of August 2023.

#### TAFE NSW

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (12:48):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister advise the House on the TAFE NSW budget challenges inherited by the New South Wales Government?

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Minister for the Hunter) (12:49):** I thank the member for Heathcote for her question. The member for Heathcote has a remarkable connection to and passion for TAFE in New South Wales. I urge all members to go back and read her wonderful first speech in this place. The member for Heathcote knows that TAFE is vital for the future of this State. There is no challenge in front of this Government that cannot be addressed by good training and proper skills development for our people. Our energy transition, our housing crisis, aged care and disability care, rebuilding domestic manufacturing—all these challenges need well-trained and well-skilled workers. The previous Government may have talked a big game, but the truth is that it left TAFE in a worse condition than the St George Dragons. On coming to government, the Treasurer and I have been shocked to discover that, when it comes to TAFE funding, not only is the cupboard bare but the kitchen has been practically sold off.

Briefings to the New South Wales Government have detailed an almost \$200 million funding gap for TAFE NSW in this coming financial year—\$200 million for an organisation that is already on its knees, hollowed out by the former Government and abandoned by the former Government. Over 5,000 staff were sacked, enrolments have been smashed and apprenticeships and traineeships are down by a third. TAFE has informed the Government that without urgent and immediate action to rectify this issue, it will be forced to consider devastating impacts on the organisation just to keep the lights on. That is directly due to the budget figures locked into the forward estimates made by the previous Government. What's more, this is not even new. The previous Government has been playing a terrifying and horrifying game of budget chicken with TAFE NSW for the past four years. Advice from TAFE has confirmed that the previous Government underfunded TAFE by about \$200 million, only to top

it up at the very last minute because the Government knew that there had been a crisis for almost half a decade. It had been stringing TAFE along, not letting it plan ahead, and constantly denying it any certainty. [*Extension of time*]

How can you fix a looming skills crisis if you do not even know if you can pay people next year—and this from the geniuses of economic management opposite? You would not trust them with a milk bar. That was all while conducting a decade of cuts and over a decade of intentionally sacking staff, with still more planned under its own locked-in budget measures—a shameful, shameful record. I was very pleased to visit TAFE in Albury with the shadow Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education just two weeks ago and I had a great time. He and I toured the campus, but I could only imagine what TAFE in his electorate could be if it was not decimated by a decade of cuts and the pending fiscal cliff built into the budget by his own colleagues. I say this to the member for Albury: Mate, when it comes to TAFE, the enemies aren't opposite you; they're all around you. In fact, enemy number one, the former Minister, even has a podcast.

**Ms Kate Washington:** And he had never been to a TAFE before.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP:** He loved going to the universities, I can tell you that. The Minns Government has pledged to restore TAFE to the heart of the vocational education system, and we will. We are putting a TAFE teacher onto the TAFE board. We will give a floor of funding to TAFE, not a ceiling. We will conduct a comprehensive review of the VET sector. We will build three manufacturing centres of excellence. The Minns Labor Government has inherited a mess, but it is being honest about the challenge in front of it and it is working every day to fix it.

**The SPEAKER:** My microphone was not working but has just come back on. If it had been working during the previous answer, I would have intervened. By referring to St George so early in his answer and inflaming the Chamber, the member for Newcastle seemed to receive the response he was seeking.

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (12:54):** The Health Services Union having walked out of the gallery in response to a previous question to Minister Cotsis, my question is directed to the Minister for Transport. An opinion piece in today's edition of *The Australian Financial Review* states that "Mookhey is expected to slow the state's infrastructure pipeline". What projects will the Minister cancel because Labor cannot find budget savings or productivity savings for its wages black hole?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:55):** I thank the member for Holsworthy her question. I welcome the interest of those opposite in public transport and, indeed, in the frontline workers of this State who deliver that essential service. Today we have been speaking in this Chamber about respecting those workers. I am proud, as the Minister for Transport in the Minns Labor Government, to have 28,000 public transport workers across this State. I say up-front that I will not apologise for engaging with those workers. If we are to deliver a public transport system that people can rely on each and every day, which is the objective of members on the Government side of the House—members on the opposite side of the House might have forgotten about that, and there are a few issues I will get to later on that front—I will be engaging with those workers to ensure that we deliver the infrastructure and transport services that we need.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question is what projects the Government is going to cut. That is what the question is about. The Minister has not come near it. Talking to employees is not identifying the projects.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her answer.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I will resume my answer, thank you very much, Mr Speaker, because engaging with that workforce is critical to delivering the public transport infrastructure that we need. The member's question goes to an opinion piece in this morning's *The Australian Financial Review*. For those who do not have a subscription—I know it is an expensive one, I give all credit to those in that special estate in the press gallery—

**Mr Paul Scully:** It is well worth it.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** It is well worth the investment, of course. I want to make clear that, in fact, the member was selectively quoting. I want to make clear to the House that it says that "in the final two years its spending ran out of control in the post-COVID rebound". I will go on for clarity for the House: "Former premier Perrottet and his treasurer Kean splashed an extra \$27 billion approaching the election and left gross debt" that is set to climb "to \$187 billion". We will not be lectured to by members on the Opposition side of the House.

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



## BUILDING INDUSTRY STANDARDS

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (12:58):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Building, and Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. Will the Minister update the House on what action the Government is taking to ensure that existing homes are up to standard and to restore integrity in the construction and building industry?

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:59):** I thank the member for Parramatta for her question. She is a strong advocate for her community and the recent election results clearly show that—with a 13 per cent swing in her primary vote alone. She is a great member. I am sure that everybody in this place is familiar with the expression that a person's home—or, in this case, apartment—is their castle. Whilst we may no longer need turrets or drawbridges for our castles, we do need confidence in the sector.

The people of New South Wales need confidence that their apartment blocks are built to the highest safety and construction standards. If building defects are detected, people need confidence that there is a pathway to ensure that apartment buildings are brought up to the standard we all expect. That is why the Government has decided to extend Project Intervene. Confidence in the construction sector will attract greater investment, increase supply and put more downward pressure on property prices for renters and some homebuyers. The skyline of the Sydney metropolitan area has changed significantly over the years, with an increase in medium and higher density developments.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

In most places, not every suburb. That is why we need to ensure that people living in those apartments can be confident that their buildings are safe and built to proper standard. Under Project Intervene, owners' corporations can rely on the expertise of the NSW Building Commissioner to address building defects in common property. The commissioner and his team help owners' corporations negotiate and mediate to rectify those defects. Project Intervene uses the powers of the Residential Apartment Buildings (Compliance and Enforcement Powers) Act 2020 to compel developers and builders to remediate serious defects in common property where a negotiated outcome cannot be reached. The program prevents costly and lengthy court battles between strata committees and developers.

In short, the program offers financial savings to eligible apartment owners let down by poor quality construction work. This program is about the practical fix, not the legal fight. The Government recently announced that registrations for Project Intervene will be extended to November instead of wrapping up by the end of this month, so keen is the demand for this particular program. Since the program was launched in mid-2022, about 100 owners' corporations let down by developers have taken up the support provided under this program. Some 49 building inspections have been completed to complement the hundreds of inspections undertaken to prevent defects in new buildings. *[Extension of time]*

Project Intervene helps with repairing serious defects in common property. Some of these include waterproofing, fire safety systems, structural systems, building enclosure and building services. I am sure we all agree that these defects need strong intervention and swift and effective repair. But there is more work to be done. That is why I am proud of the Government's decision to extend Project Intervene. It means more apartment residents can be sure that their buildings are up to an acceptable standard. I encourage more owners to register for Project Intervene. Of course, the extension of Project Intervene is only one of the measures that the Government is taking to increase confidence in the construction sector.

We have also announced a reform agenda to ensure that those who purchase property in New South Wales can have greater confidence in the quality of work done. First, we are creating the State's first building commission, a single body to oversee the regulation, licensing and oversight of the industry to ensure that the New South Wales building regulator has the powers and the capabilities it needs to restore confidence in the construction sector. Second, we are creating a new building Act that will consolidate and modernise the many pieces of legislation, some of which are decades old, scattered throughout the State's statute books.

There is no doubt that New South Wales is experiencing a shortage of housing supply. A surge in construction is needed to address this short supply, but the surge in the quantity of housing should never come at the expense of quality. These are not mutually exclusive events or factors. We can have quality and quantity at the same time, and we must have both. Ensuring that existing apartment buildings are well constructed and of good quality will give residents and owners greater confidence in this critical industry. The sector is 8 per cent of the New South Wales economy, worth \$50 billion and employing more than 400,000 people. That is why the Government will ensure that confidence and trust are restored in this important sector.

### CHILDREN'S VOUCHER PROGRAMS

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (13:04):** My question is directed to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government. Last week the Government announced the slashing of the Active Kids, Creative Kids and First Lap programs. What other cost-of-living savings and rebates available through Service NSW will the Government cut?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:05):** I thank the member for her question. I say at the outset that this is actually all new spending. This is all money that is being put into the budget. As I said a little while ago—and as has been said so many times by the Premier and one person after the other—those opposite talked about the Active Kids program, but there was no funding for it. It was going to end in two weeks' time. This is new funding that the Government has put into place.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Members opposite do not like to hear the reality of things. They live with false pretences in a world where they forget all the problems that they have created.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** They do not actually acknowledge the things that this Government, the Minns Labor Government, is doing to make things better. What is interesting is that for all of the talk of Active Kids and other programs, when we had a look at it—and the Treasurer has been so clear—it was very evident that there had been all talk and no action. Do members opposite know how much money was in the forward—

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

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Swansea will come to order. The member for Wollongong will come to order. The Manager of Opposition Business rises on a point of order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. It is a very simple question: What other cost-of-living savings and rebates are going to be cut? The Minister has not come close to answering that question.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has the call.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Let me talk to members about the cost-of-living measures that we are putting in.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** What about election promises?

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Ah, the election promises.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I am going to talk about one election promise in particular. Members will remember the energy promise of \$500—\$250 from us and \$250 from the Feds. Government members live in the real world and we know that some things are really important. That is why we have made the decision to keep going with the Active Kids program, when what those opposite did—

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order—

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Don't you love it?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Coffs Harbour rises on a point of order. The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. We do not want to hear about what the Government has already cut; we want to hear about what it is going to cut further.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Coffs Harbour. We all fully understand the question. The Minister will conclude his answer.

*[Government members interjected.]*

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** We are not in government; we are in opposition. You are in government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I place the member for Coffs Harbour on two calls to order.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Coffs Harbour stood and argued across the Chamber. If a member interjects from their seat, they will be placed on one call to order. If they stand and continue to inject, they will be placed on two calls to order.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** It is pretty simple: How does one cut something that never existed?

### GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (13:08):** My question is also addressed to the wonderful Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government—he is on a roll. Will the Minister update the House on initiatives to make government service provision more inclusive and accommodating?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:08):** I thank the outstanding member for Liverpool for her question. If I knew that I was going to get so many questions, I would have asked my wife to be in the gallery today—or my mum, maybe, or somebody.

**Mr Anoulack Chanthivong:** She is watching online.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** Yes, she is watching online. The member for Liverpool has got an incredible track record and history of making sure that she does everything she can to support people. What does it say about our community and the way that we treat our most vulnerable or new arrivals? What does it say about us? What does it say when a community does not think about how it can create the most inclusive environment that it can? Everybody knows that today is World Refugee Day. It is a significant and important day to talk about what we can do as a government and as a community to support people. I had the greatest honour of becoming an Australian citizen. We came to these shores so that we could build a better life than we otherwise would have. That wish is shared by everybody.

Some people come to Australia because they choose to; other people come because they simply cannot stay in their homeland. We know about all of the challenges that are happening around the world. Australia is not only welcoming but it is also a place where people can thrive and become a part of the Australian story that we build together. Earlier today I had the great privilege of being at a graduation ceremony for 24 graduates of a Service NSW traineeship program. I was joined by the member for Willoughby and others. That traineeship program is a way of ensuring that we can assist and give people the right start in Australia through government services. There were 24 people today, and over 100 people over the past five years.

Amongst the graduates today was a lady named Zohal. I met her in Bankstown a couple of weeks ago when I was launching the Multicultural Youth Linker program with my colleague the member for East Hills. That program is designed to help and guide people who are refugees who are new to the country and not so good at speaking English. Working with government is not the easiest thing. A lot of doors are being closed and people do not know where to access services. The program is about making sure that government is made easier. We have smoothed the road wherever we can to give everybody an opportunity to get to their destination. We know that language can be an intimidator. It is really difficult to deal with government agencies in some countries. *[Extension of time]*

It is a great program that enables people to have the best start in life. It is not good enough to just say that we welcome refugees. What are we going to do to ensure that we help them make that start—to plant their roots, get to work and make a great contribution to our State? Zohal's sister is working at Service NSW as part of this program. Her sister is a gynaecologist. I met engineers, tech people and others who are involved in information services. We are getting them started and we are hoping that will ensure that they get moving along. I keep coming back to our society and what it says about us when we include people.

Two weeks ago I had the great pleasure of launching Quiet Hour in Service NSW centres with the Minister for Disability Inclusion. A trial of Quiet Hour was so successful that it has now been rolled out to 110 Service NSW centres. Quiet Hour will assist people who have got sensory issues, including people with autism who might struggle with lights, noise or buzzing. Every single Service NSW centre has worked with disability advocacy groups and their local community. It is a great way to build on things that already exist.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** It should have been done at the end of 2022.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** If the member had listened, I said that there was a trial and we have rolled it out. I come back to and want to finish on this point, because it appeals to our better angels: Every one of us—regardless of who we are, where we come from, the language we speak or the position that we hold—has an obligation to do everything we can to make sure that everyone has a successful life and feels included in this great State and great country. It is the best country in the world.

### ACTIVE KIDS PROGRAM

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (13:13):** My question is directed to the Minister for Sport. If two teachers, paramedics, nurses or police officers have two school-aged children, are they eligible next year for Active Kids vouchers under the Government's new policy?

**The SPEAKER:** Opposition members will put away their props. I draw members' attention to the clock. We are running out of time. The Minister has the call.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (13:14):** The Leader of the Opposition and the former Minister for Sport are unhappy today because the Government has rolled out a package for Active Kids. Members opposite had zero. This Government has rolled out a sustainable package. Given the economic settings that those opposite left us with, this Government has found a solution to look after the majority of households and kids in New South Wales who need support the most. Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves for gaming this thing.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** They were pretending when they went to the election and they took the community for granted. Now they have got the hide to say, "Why isn't it being funded?" They never funded it; they never wanted to fund it.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: It is a very simple question. Will those middle-income earners I have identified get Active Kids vouchers? Why won't the Minister admit they are going to get zilch?

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has the call.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** It is a real disappointment. This Government has got the job done—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: It relates to Standing Order 129. Will two teachers qualify for the Government's pretend Active Kids voucher?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** Those teachers would have qualified for zero under the Opposition's plan. That is what they would have qualified for. Members opposite are very disappointed because we have found a solution for kids in need. Members opposite are extremely disappointed. They have been on this for weeks. The fact of the matter is that they lied to the community. The Government has come up with a scheme to help kids who need it the most. I am sorry about that.

### KNIFE CRIME

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (13:18):** My question is addressed to the Attorney General.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will come to order. I need to hear the member for Campbelltown.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Will the Attorney General inform the House of what action the New South Wales Government is taking to address the risk posed to the community by individuals carrying knives in public spaces?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (13:18):** I thank the member for his question. Knife crime, which involves almost exclusively young men carrying knives, is not an issue for only Western Sydney, as often portrayed, particularly in the *Four Corners* exposé last year which concentrated on gangs of youths in Western Sydney. Knife crime is an issue for all communities across New South Wales. In fact, the police Minister and I, who have an excellent working relationship—unlike the relationship between the former Attorney General and the police in the past 12 years—were recently shown some footage by police officers of young men carrying knives and videoing themselves while they were breaking into old people's homes in regional New South Wales.

We do not intend to sit by and do nothing while this sort of behaviour happens. People should be able to go to major community events and to send their kids to school and have them feel safe. They should be able to go out at night, to stand in the queue and hop on a ride at the Easter Show and not worry about whether one of the youths among the great number of other people surrounding them is carrying a knife or whether they might break out into a knife fight at any time.

I am advised that, according to the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, between October 2018 and September 2022 there were 3,830—almost 4,000—proven court appearances for people in respect of custody of a knife in a public place for their first offence. Over the same period there were 1,742 similar proven appearances in court for a subsequent offence. The numbers are not going up, but they are not going down. That is what worries me. There is a high recidivism rate for people who think that it is okay to carry knives on their day-to-day business.

As I said, too many people, almost exclusively young men, think that it is okay to carry a knife. In the same way as we would pick up a pen and put it into our pocket when we go to work, there are young men who think it is okay to put a knife into their pocket to carry out their daily business. The worrying thing is that, if they are open to carrying it, then they are probably open to using it. When they do, someone will get hurt or worse. We do not want people to come before the courts. We want people to stop carrying knives, to leave them at home and to stop using them. That is the simple message that comes out of this legislation we will be introducing to the House later on. *[Extension of time]*

The amendment bill that will be read a second time later today will transfer the offences of having custody of a knife in a public place or school and wielding a knife in a public place or school from the Summary Offences Act to the Crimes Act. The effect will be that the maximum term of imprisonment for those offences will increase from two years to four years and the maximum fine will increase from \$2,200 to \$4,400, for mere possession. For wielding a knife—using the old legislative expression—it will be a whopping \$11,000. That is on top of the penalties that are available in the Crimes Act for people who use them on others as well. It is intended, as I said, to send a strong message about the seriousness of these offences. But it also will give magistrates, with whom I have spoken on many occasions, the option to send repeat offenders to jail for longer.

Both of those offences will be Table 1 offences, which means they will be tried summarily unless the prosecution or defendants elect otherwise. Importantly, the police have asked us to retain the option to issue penalty infringement notices for first offences. We will not change that in the legislation. This is a small but significant amendment. It comes on top of the terrific work that police officers do day to day but also when they are carrying out operations against such offences. The police Minister and I will continue to work closely to stay on top of this issue because no-one wants New South Wales to witness what has happened in other jurisdictions, particularly countries in Europe, where knife crime has got away from the Government. We do not intend to let that happen.

#### MURRUMBIDGEE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (13:23):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Given the absolute mess the previous Government left when it merged the only two high schools in Griffith, will the Minister update the House as to what her Government is doing to rectify the situation?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (13:23):** I thank the member so much for her question. I can update the member, this House and, most importantly, the member's community. I thank her for recently inviting me to her electorate to meet with the teachers and staff of Murrumbidgee Regional High School. Anyone who has ever known the member for Murray knows what an advocate for her community she is. She has been a great advocate on this issue, raising problems with this merger from the beginning. I thank her for that.

It was very heartening for the member for Murray and me to hear just how passionate about and proud of their school everyone was when we met at the Griffith and Wade campuses of Murrumbidgee Regional High School. So many committed staff members and teachers care deeply about the future of their students, but—I will be honest with the House—I do not know whether I left more angry or more heartbroken to have teachers and staff members in tears, feeling burnt-out and despondent, saying to both of us that they are considering quitting. In fact, when we were there that morning, a teacher informed us that another teacher had quit on that very morning.

This is all because of a botched decision that was forced upon them by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. The former Government had given that community two options, then turned around, ignored them and imposed a third option without any consultation. Teachers said they and their students felt like they were part of a social experiment. Imagine living and working through that experience. So we have committed to resolving what was a very bad situation. We will transition to a new model of secondary education in Murrumbidgee, away from the unworkable situation of having one school operate across two sites, one at either end of the town. Unlike the Liberals and The Nationals, we will listen to the community.

But, as I heard loudly from those teachers and as the member herself has raised, there are things we can do straightaway. Firstly, I will make clear that no teachers or staff members will lose their jobs as a result of any new model of education in Griffith. I can give that commitment today to that community. There will be no job losses. Hopefully, that commitment will allay any concerns among the community. Teachers are dealing with enough stress and workload pressures. They do not need any more anxiety. Secondly, two separate NSW Education Standards Authority numbers, one for the Wade site and one for the Griffith site, will be created. That will be in place for the 2023 year 11 cohort in time for the 2024 HSC. That will remove some of the stress and conflict created by having teachers working across two different sites. *[Extension of time]*

Finally, we will review the incentives and transfer points relating to Griffith. We have a bizarre situation where two teachers, a married couple, could be living in the same house in Griffith but one gets paid more if working at a school outside town, such as Darlington Point or Leeton. So we will be looking at those specific rules for those who live and teach in Griffith. As the member would be aware of, formal consultation finally got underway yesterday. A director of educational leadership is out in Griffith at the moment, coordinating that for the community.

This will be a hallmark of our Government. We want to ensure that there is genuine, ongoing consultation with staff members, parents, carers and students. That is my priority as Minister. I want all voices to be heard as we develop a new, restructured model for high school education for the children of Griffith. We are determined to address the problems that were created by the merger and to find the right solution that is in the best interests of the students. That means supporting teachers in what they are so committed to doing after they have gone through difficult circumstances. At the end of the day, we are trying to ensure that every child everywhere reaches their full potential.

### YOUTH CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (13:28):** My question is addressed to the athletic Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister tell the House how the NSW Police Force is positively engaging with young people through initiatives such as the PCYC, RISEUP and more?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism) (13:28):** I thank the member for Blacktown for his question. The member has already met with me with relation to policing in his community. I know how dedicated he is and I thank him very much for the question. Right across New South Wales, the Police Force is supporting our youth. There is no doubt about that. It is not just in Blacktown; it is from Blacktown to Bourke and Brewarrina and back again. That is exactly what we want our New South Wales police to do. This Labor Government supports young people, full stop. As we heard from the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, we are supporting them in TAFE.

**The SPEAKER:** It is very hard to hear the member for Swansea. I ask that she turn to the microphone.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I just wanted to respond to the member for Blacktown, but I accept that suggestion. This Government supports young people across the board. We are supporting them with more TAFE opportunities, as we heard from the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. As we heard from the education Minister, the education system is getting a much-needed boost. This support includes diverting young people away from our criminal justice system as early as possible. I know that the Minister for Youth Justice will have plenty more to say about that.

Preventing crime and intervening early to direct young people away from contact with our criminal justice system is top priority for the NSW Police Force and this Government. I have been meeting with key organisations that deal with young people and their communities to see what we can do to bring better results. Those organisations include Just Reinvest, the Advocate for Children and Young People and the PCYC, which does amazing work. Importantly, I am very pleased to report that the New South Wales police want to work with our community.

There are a number of specific initiatives that I have been getting across as the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. They are the RISEUP program; Youth Action meetings, which are incredibly successful; and, as I said, the fantastic work that the PCYC does every day right across the State of New South Wales. Police are out there doing positive work every day with young people across this State. Last month I had the fantastic opportunity to go with New South Wales police to Cabbage Tree Island Public School, where we met principal Dyonne Anderson and the local team from the NSW Police Force in the northern region. They are doing some great work, building cooperative relationships between the children in that community and the NSW Police Force. I was so pleased that the police were able to get the National Rugby League involved. [*Extension of time*]

**Mr Jihad Dib:** It wasn't the Dragons, was it?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** It wasn't the Dragons.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** It was actually skills development.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** They were training. We had a game of touch footy with Latrell Mitchell and Cody Walker.

*Documents***LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION****Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 138 of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I announce receipt of the report of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission entitled *Review of NSW Police Force responses to domestic and family violence incidents*, dated June 2023, received on 14 June 2023. I order that the report be printed.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-2023****Tabling**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 7.18 (2) of the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, I announce receipt of correspondence from the Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC, on 13 June 2023 informing the Legislative Assembly of a delay in tabling the consolidated State financial statements. I order that the correspondence be printed.

**OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS AND AUSTRALIAN TRANSPORT SAFETY BUREAU****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, I announce receipt of the report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau entitled *Derailment of freight train 4BM4, Nana Glen, New South Wales on 25 February 2021*, dated June 2023, received out of session on 6 June and authorised to be printed.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 421D of the Local Government Act 1993, I announce receipt of the following reports:

- (1) Financial Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Local Government 2022*, dated 13 June 2023, received out of session on that day and authorised to be printed.
- (2) Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Financial management and governance in MidCoast Council*, dated 16 June, received out of session on that day and authorised to be printed.

In accordance with section 52B of the Government Sector Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of the special report of the Auditor-General entitled *Special report into the financial affairs of the Catholic Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust*, dated 20 June 2023.

*Committees***STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS****Reports**

**The CLERK:** I announce receipt of report No. 1/58 of the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics entitled *Matters relating to the position of a Member suspended from the service of the House and subsequently re-elected*, dated June 2023, received out of session on 7 June and authorised to be printed.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (RENTAL FAIRNESS) BILL 2023****Reports**

**The CLERK:** I announce receipt of report No. 1/58 of the Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill entitled *Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023*, dated June 2023, received out of session on 9 June and authorised to be printed.

*Documents***INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS OFFICER****Reports**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** In accordance with clause 7 of the resolution establishing an Independent Complaints Officer agreed to by the House on 29 March 2022, I table the following reports:

- (1) Report of the Independent Complaints Officer of the NSW Parliament to the Legislative Council Privileges Committee and Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Privileges and Ethics Committee, for the period of 1 September 2022 to 30 November 2022.
- (2) Report of the Independent Complaints Officer of the NSW Parliament to the Legislative Council Privileges Committee and Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Privileges and Ethics Committee, for the period of 1 December 2022 to 28 February 2023.
- (3) Report of the Independent Complaints Officer of the NSW Parliament to the Legislative Council Privileges Committee and Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Privileges and Ethics Committee, for the period of 1 March 2023 to 31 May 2023.

I move:

That the reports be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED**

**The SPEAKER:** I announce that the following paper petition signed by more than 10,000 persons has been lodged for presentation:

**Northern Beaches Bushland Conservation**

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly repeal amendments to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 so that 227.3 hectares of land in the northern beaches is no longer subject to the development delivery plan, received from **Mr Michael Regan**.

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

**RESPONSES TO PETITIONS**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following Ministers have lodged responses to ePetitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. John Graham—Guildford Road Traffic Lights—lodged 10 May 2023 (Ms Julia Finn)

The Hon. John Graham—Motorhomes and Tolling—lodged 10 May 2023 (Dr Michael Holland)

The Hon. Ron Hoenig—Ourimbah Nissen Hut—lodged 10 May 2023 (Mr David Mehan)

The Hon. Prue Car—Kogarah Public School—lodged 10 May 2023 (Mr Chris Minns)

The Hon. Tara Moriarty—Trap, Neuter, Release and Rehome Programs—lodged 10 May 2023 (Mr Alex Greenwich)

The Hon. Penny Sharpe—Great Koala National Park—lodged 10 May 2023 (Ms Tamara Smith)

The Hon. Michael Daley—Child Sexual Offence Evidence Pilot Scheme—lodged 10 May 2023 (Mr Justin Clancy)

*Condolences***HUNTER VALLEY BUS ACCIDENT**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (13:35):** Pursuant to the earlier resolution, I move:

That this House extends the deepest sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly to the families, friends and loved ones of those killed or injured in the Hunter Valley bus tragedy on Sunday 11 June 2023.

This is a profoundly tragic event. It is also without precedent in recent decades in New South Wales. As the House would be aware, just after 11.30 p.m. on Sunday 11 June, emergency services teams were called to the scene of a bus accident in Greta in the State's Hunter region. Reports were that a bus had rolled at a roundabout on Wine Country Drive near the Hunter Expressway off-ramp. The bus was returning from a wedding at a local winery. Ten people have died, with 25 passengers transported to hospitals via helicopter and road. While some patients



have been treated and discharged, nine continue to receive care and attention from medical staff at John Hunter Hospital and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

In many ways, the community of New South Wales and, in particular, the people of the Hunter are still in shock. Nearly all of us at one time or another have got on a bus to go to or return from a destination wedding. More often than not for the people who live in New South Wales, those destination weddings are in the Hunter Valley. The fact that the young wedding organisers did everything right, organising transport to ensure that no-one was tempted to drink and drive, only adds to the community's devastation and grief. It is the unfairness of the tragedy that cannot be overstated. The Government is doing everything it can to support families and loved ones impacted by the tragedy. We have worked with Rotary Australia to establish a fund to provide benevolent care to survivors, victims and, of course, their immediate families. I am pleased to report that more than \$600,000 have been raised in less than a week, indicating the depth of generosity of the people of New South Wales. People can continue to donate via the New South Wales Government's website or Rotary Australia's website.

New South Wales police family liaison officers and chaplains, along with social workers, are also supporting affected family members. These family liaison officers are working directly with each family involved, from picking them up at airports to providing transport and accommodation. They are helping in any and every way they possibly can. I take the opportunity to publicly recognise the mayor of Singleton, Sue Moore; the mayor of Cessnock, Jay Suvaal; the member for Cessnock, Clayton Barr; and the member for Upper Hunter, Dave Layzell. All four of them have put everything to one side to work on behalf of their communities in the past week and to ensure that they were there to help and support those who are going through a devastating situation.

I particularly note Sue Moore. So many of the emergency responders and victims of this terrible tragedy are from her tight-knit community. One of the things associated with being in a tight-knit community, as is often the case with emergency service workers in regional New South Wales, is that, more often than not, they may well know someone who is in a crash or at the site of an accident. The reverse side of that is these communities can come together, because they know one another. They can lean on one another. Having said that, the psychological scars of this event are significant. The tight-knit communities of Singleton, Cessnock and the surrounding towns are hurting, even as they rally together. We acknowledge their pain and honour their resilience.

The mental health needs of those communities are a major focus for the local health district. Community-run clinics staffed by disaster response and mental health clinicians are up and running. We know that people will seek support in their own time. We will be ready to support them when they are ready and we will continue to work with authorities on the ground to see what more can be done. As the scale of the tragedy has set in, I thank each and every one of our emergency service personnel and agencies for their incredible response. To put this in perspective, young paramedics who had been in the job for less than 12 months rolled up on this scene as first responders. No consolations come from a tragedy like this, but something of note is that each and every emergency service personnel, in a time of need, did not wilt. They acted with professionalism and care. They treated complete strangers as if they were personal family members. That is the level of dedication we have in our New South Wales emergency services.

The highway patrol officers who were the first on scene as emergency responders, as the Minister for police and I know, were relative veterans, who had worked for many years in the highway patrol division of the Hunter Valley Police District. I spoke to them about their role in this accident. One of them said, "I just thank God I was the one who was on site to deal with this tragedy and not a relatively recent or new recruit in the highway patrol." To take on that load yourself and be grateful that you could do what is undeniably a difficult job is again demonstrative of the dedication that we have in the NSW Police Force.

The first Fire and Rescue NSW vehicle that came on the scene was from Branxton, and the member for Cessnock and I visited that retained station in the Hunter Valley. That fire station is not sleepy or quiet. In fact, it takes over 750 emergency calls a year. Whilst there should be over 20 staff at that retained station, they are down to just nine. About six local dads staff that fire station year-round, offering emergency care and emergency response for health emergencies and road accidents, as well as fires and bushfires. They do it because they care about their community and I take the opportunity to specifically recognise their dedication.

The traffic and highway patrol and police rescue teams from the Hunter Valley Police District, NSW Ambulance paramedics, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service and various helicopter pilots and staff, as well as patient transport, and all New South Wales hospital personnel, particularly at John Hunter Hospital, who, in the middle of the night, had to deal with a call to their emergency department that no-one wants to receive, in addition to doing the normal work that an exceptionally busy emergency department needs to do day in and day out, also care. On behalf of the House, I applaud them for their round-the-clock work and care. Words cannot begin to describe our gratitude. We will ensure that all staff have full access to the support services they need, but understandably their work continues. Many emergency service workers showed up for their next shift on the Monday after the devastation on the Sunday night.

The NSW Police Force is diligently focusing its efforts on supporting families and conducting its investigations. We intend to find out exactly what happened and what lessons can be learnt. The Government will listen to the police and take on the findings that they deliver, including any changes that could prevent a similar tragedy from happening again. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, the New South Wales Parliament and the people of New South Wales, we again extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of loved ones who have been killed or injured in this bus tragedy. There is a long way to go, but we will be with you every step of the way.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (13:43):** I thank the Premier for bringing this motion to the House. It is a very sobering moment for all of us to be in this place today, paying tribute to the victims and their families of the terrible bus crash at Greta in the very late hours of Sunday 11 June 2023. I join the Premier in offering, on behalf of the Opposition, our deepest condolences and expressing our heartfelt sympathy for the victims and their families. It has shaken our nation. We woke up on Monday morning last week, stunned by what had happened overnight. Ten innocent lives were lost and a further 25 individuals hospitalised, some with very significant traumatic injuries. It is the worst bus crash in Australia in 29 years. It is a tragedy beyond words and nothing we say here today will bring those 10 lives back or make the situation right again.

This tragedy is a stark reminder to all of us of the fragility of life and of how a completely unexpected event can change our lives in an instant. I think we are all in a state of shock, but obviously nothing like that of the survivors of the crash, the families of the victims, the attendees of the wedding, as well as our brave first responders who raced to the scene. To those first responders and to all of our first responders, our ambulance, paramedics, Fire and Rescue NSW crews, NSW Rural Fire Service personnel and police officers: You are absolute heroes. You deserve nothing but our utmost respect and admiration.

Following a highway patrol car, the first ambulance arrived within just seven minutes, in heavy fog, in the middle of the night, in an isolated location, and what awaited it was incredibly confronting. Media reports indicate there were 30 paramedics spread across the incident, 14 ambulances and ambulance rescue units, six rescue helicopters and dozens more police officers and firefighters. We are all deeply grateful for their commitment to saving lives and providing comfort in the face of tragedy.

Huge thanks also to our health staff at John Hunter Hospital, Maitland Hospital, Calvary Mater and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital who received the 25 injured survivors. It was an extraordinary, multi-agency, multi-location response. I acknowledge the disaster response, mental health clinicians and other support services, including those from the Hunter New England Local Health District, who have been facilitating a drop-in mental health support clinic in Singleton over the last week. The internal pain felt by many in the Hunter region will last for many months, indeed many years, and I urge anyone who needs professional help and advice to use the 24/7 New South Wales Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511.

No words here can compensate for the immense pain this tight-knit community in Singleton and surrounds is experiencing, but I hope it is a comfort, albeit a tiny one, to know that our entire State and nation mourns with you. To the survivors of the crash, the families of the victims and the attendees of the wedding, I once again wish to convey and offer the Opposition's deepest condolences. This tragedy will have an ongoing effect on the Hunter region for a long time yet. The road to recovery will be long and arduous, but you are not alone.

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the suspension of standing orders, I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

#### *Members*

#### **INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** In accordance with the earlier resolution, the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for Penrith will now proceed. Before I call the member for Penrith, I welcome on behalf of the Chamber all the friends, family, long-term supporters and volunteers of the member. I thank them for being here. I call the member for Penrith.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (14:32):** I begin today by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and I pay my respects to Elders past and present. I also acknowledge the Dharug people as the custodians of the lands and waters surrounding Penrith. It is an absolute honour to stand here addressing you as the member for Penrith. I am both ecstatic and humbled by this privilege that the people of Penrith have entrusted to me. Penrith, I will not let you down. I also acknowledge previous members in our area who have worked for the city, especially those Labor members who have personally provided me with friendship and support over many years: the late Ron Mulock, AO; Peter Anderson, AM; Faye Lo Po', AM; the late Jim Anderson; Diane Beamer; and, of course, Prue Car.

I am quite blown away by the crowd that have come today. Whenever I was asked about when my inaugural would be I would respond with, "I'm not that interesting." Then someone pointed out that this is my opportunity to capture my story. So far we have heard some amazing stories in this place, and I am constantly reminded that everyone has a story; you just need to be prepared to listen. I was born not five kilometres from this place on Gadigal land at the South Sydney Women's Hospital, a place I had not heard much about, and in writing this I discovered that it was a maternity hospital particularly for poor and unmarried women. It previously had the inauspicious name of the Home of Hope for Friendless and Fallen Women. How ironic.

I believe soon after my birth my parents moved from the inner city to the outback town of Darnick, which was on the Ivanhoe to Menindee road, roughly 880 kilometres from Sydney. Again, from what I ascertain, the move was for my father to work, and he landed on a sheep station, dagging or crutching sheep. So you have an inner-city boy, working on a sheep station in the middle of what he thought was nowhere, newly married with a small baby. "What could possibly go wrong?", you ask. Within a matter of months, we had returned to inner Sydney to live with my paternal grandmother. My mother left us soon after and the marriage was over. My nanna was at this time nearing 70. I understand I was around 14 months old.

My nanna was an amazingly independent woman. She lived in a rented terrace, a two-up two-down house, with an outhouse toilet. This was extremely challenging given she had very limited mobility due to a previous accident that had left her with one leg significantly shorter than the other and she wore a built-up shoe. She could not walk around without holding onto the furniture. She rarely left the house and managed to survive on a widow's pension. My father never really recovered from my mother "deserting" him—as it was then termed—with a small baby. My father had his own demons. He became an alcoholic and certainly had mental health issues. I remember him disappearing for periods of time where he would be away in Broughton House, Callan Park, for treatment. I clearly remember having to lay low at the same time so that child welfare were not notified and I would not be removed from my nan and placed into care.

While there was not much money around growing up, I lived in what could only be best termed a colourful neighbourhood. I am sure the authorities called it notorious. We had all the entertainment right there on the street where I lived. We had cricket stumps painted on the walls either side of the road, a corner shop, an SP bookie at the top of the street, a sly grog shop at the bottom of the street and weekly two-up games on Saturday afternoon in our back lane. For us local kids, this was not a bad thing as we earned our pocket money by standing lookout at the lane entrances during two-up. We were termed "cockatoos". We would then go off ice skating at Prince Alfred Park or a Newtown footy game at Henson Park or Enmore pictures or swimming pool depending on the season.

However, one of my favourite pastimes was to sit and listen to my nan's stories. I would often plead with her to tell me about the olden days. The only taboo subject was my mother, so I quickly learned not to ask. I would constantly question nan about her early life. She described her time seeing her first talking picture and rushing home to tell her ma, who thought she had gone mad. She told me about her fiancé who never made it home from the First World War and the hardships during the depression. When I asked about my grandfather, she said very little. From what I gleaned, her marriage was very violent. She explained that my grandfather had returned from the Second World War a different man, quite unrecognisable, and she had to throw him out.

Now I wish I had the foresight at the time to write her stories down. I recall the day the stories stopped. It was when I asked Nan what had John the Baptist looked like. We were a team, Nan and I. Anyone who has lived in the chaos of a family with addictions will understand. In hindsight, I came to realise that my mother leaving was a blessing in disguise. My grandmother was a formidable, independent woman with a strong sense of social justice and a wicked sense of humour. I could not have asked for a better role model, and she certainly shaped the woman and strong feminist I am today. As a child I remember when it was time to vote asking Nan what she was doing. She said, "Voting." I asked, "Who do we vote for, Nan?" I can still hear her words today. She said, "Love, we're workers. We'll always be workers, and we'll always vote Labor. Only Labor looks after the workers." I have never forgotten it. I bleed Labor.

Unfortunately, finishing high school was not an option for me. It was always my biggest regret—not that I was particularly studious. For me it was the social interaction. By the time I turned 15, I had to go out and work to contribute to the house. Again, another great life lesson came from my nan as I headed out the door. She said, "First thing you do, Karen, is join your union." I said, "Yes, Nan," and I have remained a member ever since. Due to her declining health, my nan had to go into aged care. I was then 17 and pregnant, and I was told, "You don't bring your problems home." So I was out on my own, but with the support of my lifelong friend Cher, who has now passed, I made it—amazingly—as a single mum. On the upside, for the first time I finally had an inside loo.

Fast forward a few years and a work colleague was trying to set me up on a blind date. It was then that I had the most fortunate day of my life, when I met my husband, Brendan, at the Auburn soccer club. Our first date was memorable. When I came out to meet him, the car engine was running. As he later confessed, he could

not recall what I looked like and he was prepared for a quick exit. For me, my reluctance was the fact that he drove a panel van. We went for a Chinese meal in Parramatta and to the Roxy for a movie. Seventeen months after meeting, we married, and we became an instant family. Brendan, I love you immeasurably. I know I do not tell you enough—well now it is on the public record!

Brendan had emigrated from Northern Ireland 10 years before that, and he has always joked that he had never thought about settling down until we met, as I was the first woman who had met his three criteria. For me, it was as superficial as the fact that he had long blonde hair and an Irish accent. So what were the three criteria? One, I voted Labor. Two, I was Catholic. Three, I barracked for the Western Suburbs Magpies. I have not been game enough to ask if they were ranked. Now, I need to digress here and state for the record that I am a mad Panthers supporter. For the longest time, my family would not let me support the Panthers. They said I was a jinx because every team I barracked for disappeared. I grew up supporting the Newtown Jets; they went. I then moved out to Lidcombe and was supporting the Magpies; they merged with the Tigers. Not the same—sorry, Pete! I thought I should support our local team, but my family pleaded with me, "Mum, no. Why don't you go for the Manly Sea Eagles or the Broncos?"

Brendan has always been my rock. He is my biggest supporter and cheerleader. If I ever introduced him as my partner, he would retort, "Yes, and she is my first wife"—well, first wife of almost 42 amazing years and counting. When I expressed a wish to go back and study as a mature student, it was Brendan who encouraged me. I was able to do a bridging course, thanks to TAFE, and eventually a commerce degree at Western Sydney University while working night shift in the finance industry and having four kids. I am one of those statistics of which Western Sydney University is so proud—the first in my family to go to university. Thanks, Gough!

We purchased our first home in Lidcombe, thanks to the Hawke Government; it was a two-bedroom weatherboard. We had a first mortgage, a second mortgage and a personal loan to make up the balance of the deposit. The week we settled, we had four kids and the sum total of \$20 in the bank. It has become a bit of a standing joke in our house, talking about how I packed Brendan's lunch but only had one slice of ham left, so I cut it horizontally and deftly stretched it across two sandwiches. All was good until he went to add salt and took them apart in the lunchroom with his colleagues.

However, we were on top of the world. We both had jobs, we had our health, and of course we had Labor State and Federal governments. There has never been a truer quote than "Good government can change lives". We quickly outgrew our Lidcombe house and purchased in Leonay, a suburb of Penrith. Brendan was a keen golfer and had played at the Leonay course and loved it. I said I would give it five years. Here we are, 35 years later, and I would not live anywhere else. We quickly put down deep roots in our community and even owned and operated our own local small business. When I say "we", it is the royal we as my involvement was a name on the mortgage.

While I grew up without siblings or an extended family, I have been blessed with the differing families of friends and colleagues that have come into my life along the way. Not one of us in this place could do this without the love and support of a lot of people. To all who have contributed to and supported me on this journey, I thank you. I need to acknowledge my extensive union family from the Finance Sector Union, the United Workers Union and the Public Service Association. From those first days when I was a delegate representing my colleagues in my workplace to an organiser and industrial officer, I have met and worked with the most dedicated unionists who genuinely care about workers. It always disgusts me when I hear the demonisation of unionists. Unionists are people: our mums and dads, brothers and sisters and friends. They are the strangers who risk their own lives and turn up to the accidents on our roads or in our homes. They stock our shelves, engineer our roads and bridges, educate our children, answer our calls for help, pick up our waste, keep our lights on, and transport us and our goods. We should never, ever take them for granted.

I am eternally grateful that Lynne and Geoff took that chance on me and gave me the opportunity to work in this great movement. I have made lifelong friendships. Megan and Grant, Nizza and Max, Lynne and John and Rose and Matt—to this day we still catch up regularly for our bolshie lunches. Sharon Bailey and Anna Claude, I know you are only a phone call away. What an amazing journey this has been—certainly more a marathon than a sprint. You see, it was more than 20 years ago that I stood for preselection for the Penrith electorate, but it was not meant to be. Instead, I took a detour through local government. As I am fond of saying, everything happens for a reason. I acknowledge my local government family, the dedicated councillors who strive every day to deliver for their communities. They do this with next to no recompense but the intrinsic value of service to community.

I especially salute all my fellow Labor councillors. I acknowledge the volunteer women of the Australian Local Government Women's Association, who have worked for decades to advance women's representation in local government so that we resemble those communities we represent. When I was first elected there were only 27 per cent female councillors; we are now at 40 per cent. We are not there yet, but the gap is narrowing. Lifelong friendships have been formed across the political divide. I met many friends during my first term on council:

Darriea Turley and Darryl Turley, who has travelled here today from Broken Hill. Mate, I hope you got your golf clubs in. I thank Julie Griffiths, who is now literally the other side of my brain. I thank Bev Spearpoint, Kath Presdee and Jackie Greenow. To my current colleagues, councillors John Thain, Robin Cook, Todd Carney, Ross Fowler and Tricia Hitchen, our city is in good hands. To all those past councillors, especially Pat Sheehy, Kayleen Allison, Aaron Duke, David Bradbury and Greg Davies: Thank you for your support and service.

When I was first elected to council, someone told me, "Beware, they come and take out your kitchen." My family believe that actually happened. I am now worried that Parliament may turn up to remove something, and at this point I feel like it might be my bed. When entering local government land, while it felt like coming home, it took me a good year to learn the language; they certainly all spoke in acronyms. Our Penrith council staff were immensely patient and helpful, especially Ruth Goldsmith, Louise Petchell and Jeni Pollard. Our staff are truly amazing. I have had the pleasure of establishing the Multicultural Working Party, the Resilience Committee and Sustainability Champion for Penrith. Without the support of the staff, this would never have eventuated.

We cannot underestimate the value that local government contributes not just to community but also to the political process. President of Local Government NSW Darriea Turley has reminded us recently that 50 of the 135 current New South Wales Parliamentarians have once been councillors, and this was a tribute to the community spirit of the MPs concerned and recognition of the fine political training ground local government provides. We should not forget what strong partners they can be. Indeed, I have had the good fortune to participate on many different committees and boards with many of the current sitting members.

To those who campaigned in the 2019 election but fell short—my Labor sisters Maryanne, Sally and Charishma—I was as excited by your success this time around as I was my own. Same goes for Kylie Wilkinson and Donna Davis, the member for Parramatta, who I have known for many years—all fabulous Labor women. To Nathan Hagarty, Judith Hannan and Michael Reagan, who I have had the pleasure of working with through local government, you pulled off the unthinkable. Well done. I need to especially acknowledge Helen Westwood, who I also met in my first term on council—another strongly principled, integrity-ridden Labor feminist. She was mayor of Bankstown at the time. I thank you, Helen, for your friendship, your leadership and giving me the opportunity to work with you when you were elected to the other place.

Those eight years working in the Legislative Council were invaluable. It was with immense pride that I was twice elected mayor and deputy mayor of Penrith city. My two mayoral terms were only a few short years apart but were vastly different experiences. During 2021, half our local government area was put into hard lockdown while the other half was not. It was an exceedingly difficult time for our community as anger and confusion were rife. It was impossible to explain how this was not political. I worked with many of the western and south-western Sydney mayors to fight these inequities.

To my Labor family, my Emu Plains branch members and all our local members who have supported me through five council elections and two State campaigns, a simple thankyou is not enough. To Young Labor Flying Squad and especially Western Sydney Young Labor, thank you. It is impossible to list all of our red army. Many of you are here today: my good friends Lorraine Fordham, Robin and Pete Cook, Julie and Phil Plimmer, and Michael Reeves; and the campaign dynamos of Liam Rankine, George Simon, Dom Offner, Bob Nanva, Mark Morey, Todd Pinkerton, Emma Hogan and Joel, Paul Mills, Jam Cal—I got it in there!—Sam Tiberi, Julian Gonzalez, Rob Horne, Linda Everingham, Brent Hogan, Rochelle Morwood, Sera Yilmaz, Nicole Duffy, Pauline Goymour and all those who I have not named. Many volunteers are not party members but believed in our agenda, like Jeff Zieba.

To the fabulous women of EMILY's List, I thank you. To those who hung in there after a gruelling 2019 campaign, when we came so close, and to those who immediately started pressing me to stand again—you know who you are, Tony Gannon—thank you. All those committed volunteers from the Nurses and Midwives' Association—Fiona, Chris and Georgia—and the teachers, community workers and union members from the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, the Rail Tram and Bus Union, the Australian Services Union, Professionals Australia, the Electrical Trades Union, the Public Service Association and the United Services Union who turned out in their thousands to support a fresh start, you are all awesome. That also goes for all of the many members in this place and the other place who came out in support over two State campaigns and many, many months of doorknocking, stations, street stalls and pre-poll.

I am also passionate about superannuation, so I acknowledge my super family at Active. I can almost hear an audible groan whenever I mention super. It is a source of eternal frustration for me that women retire with so much less than their male colleagues and certainly do not engage enough on the subject. I acknowledge the patience and wisdom of Craig Peate, Gordon Brock, Declan Clausen, Nathan Hagarty and Greg McLean—all so dedicated to the members.

I believe the true power of Penrith is in its people, its ideas, its innovation, its collaboration and its commitment. It has a country town heart with a vibrant city vision. While we have come far, there is still much more to be done to connect our many suburbs, covering 75 square kilometres, working with all levels of government to deliver our major projects like Western Sydney airport and the aerotropolis. It is also imperative that we deliver social infrastructure—our nurses, allied health workers and educators—and re-elevate our teaching profession to one that is attractive and respected. I believe we have already started making headway in that area. If you cannot even acknowledge there is a problem, then how do you fix it? Labor acknowledges it. We do not underestimate the huge task before us, but I am confident in the commitment that our Labor Government can deliver.

I am so proud to be elected to represent Penrith but also to a government that has such a positive agenda—to support our Premier's commitment to a treaty with our Indigenous brothers and sisters and to work with our Federal counterparts for the Voice to Parliament. It is with great pride that I stand here in a government that is so representative—members with such rich life skills and experience. I have had many a positive comment on so many women members, 50 per cent of whom are in Cabinet.

I am particularly proud of our Deputy Premier, Pru Car, who I have known for many, many years—I will not mention kinder. I do not think I could be any prouder of her unless my name was Ann or Noel Guillaume. I am under absolutely no illusion that if it was not for the unfailing support and advocacy of Pru Car, I would not be standing here today. Thank you, Pru, I have said I will always have your back and I can now say that literally, given my seat allocation in this place!

It is always toughest to talk about family. While I did not have much of a relationship with my father, especially when my kids were younger, in his later years he did get sober and we were somewhat able to reconnect. I know that he was extremely proud of the fact that I had become mayor, and he was certain that I would also become the Labor member for Penrith. My father, during his working life, worked for the Sydney Water Board in Bathurst Street, so saving Sydney Water was somewhat personal for me. Unfortunately, my father passed during the 2019 campaign, just eight weeks before election day. I am sure he and Nan would have front-row pews today, watching.

I cannot find words eloquent enough to thank my family. Our extended Irish family in Belfast and England have been a cheer squad from afar. Thank you. To our wonderful children and their partners—Meaghan, Gareth, Conor, Brett, Kaisa and Danni—who have not a political bone in their bodies but nonetheless stood on polling booths, election after election, in support. I know you have endured a lot but have stuck by me anyway. I love you all heaps. To our grandkids—Liam, Judd, Tahlia, Fionn, Tadhg, Bradan and Georgia—you all light up our life.

There is a message in my story, and here I want to speak particularly to women. It does take hard work, perseverance and determination. But if a barefoot, snotty-nosed kid from the backstreets of inner Sydney can win the prized seat of Penrith, against all the odds, to stand here in the oldest Parliament of Australia, then anything is possible.

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

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

*Bills*

## **CRIMINAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (KNIFE CRIMES) BILL 2023**

### **First Reading**

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

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (15:03):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am very pleased to be joined by the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism in the Chamber for the introduction of this bill, which is a significant amendment to the Crimes Act in New South Wales. I thank the Minister for her assistance and cooperation with all of this, and particularly thank the police that she is proud to be responsible for and for the incredible work that they do to keep our community safe. The New South Wales Government is pleased to introduce the Criminal Legislation Amendment (Knife Crimes) Bill 2023. This bill will double the penalty for the offences of possession of a knife in a public place or school and for wielding a knife in a public place or school. These provisions are currently found in section 11C and 11E respectively of the Summary Offences Act 1988.

The bill will increase the maximum term of imprisonment for these offences from two years to four years. The maximum fine for possession of a knife will increase from 20 penalty units to 40 penalty units, or \$4,400, and for wielding a knife from 50 penalty units to 100 penalty units, or a whopping \$11,000. As these offences will no longer be summary offences, they will be moved from the Summary Offences Act to the Crimes Act. The maximum penalty for comparable offences in other Australian jurisdictions ranges from six months to two years imprisonment. The proposed reforms will mean that New South Wales will have the highest maximum penalties in the country for the possession or use of a knife in a public place or school. The critical reforms in this bill provide an early response from this Government to serious knife-related incidents in New South Wales. These reforms recognise the significant risk posed by the possession and use of knives by individuals in public places and schools, the high rates of recidivism for people convicted of knife possession, and the risk of harm to the community posed by knife crime.

In 2022 the former Attorney General asked the NSW Sentencing Council to review sentencing for firearms, knives and other weapons offences, with a focus on offences involving the use or carrying of firearms, knives and other weapons, and make any recommendations for reform. We supported that reference by the former Attorney General, now the Leader of the Opposition. The NSW Sentencing Council has received preliminary submissions and is currently considering next steps. This bill does not undermine the Sentencing Council's important and independent review, or seek to influence the Sentencing Council in any way. Rather, the proposed increase in penalties is necessary to immediately respond to serious incidents involving knives to better protect the safety of the community.

These reforms will be complemented by any recommendations or findings arising out of the Sentencing Council's review. The Government would like to thank the Sentencing Council for its ongoing work in undertaking this review, and others, of course. Before moving to the substance of the bill, I would like to provide a brief overview of the offences that are the subject of this bill. Section 11C of the Summary Offences Act provides that a person must not, without reasonable excuse, have in his or her custody a knife in a public place or a school. The maximum penalty for this offence is 20 penalty units, or \$2,200, and/or imprisonment for two years. It is a matter for the defendant to prove if a reasonable excuse for possessing the knife exists.

Section 11C also provides a non-exhaustive list of circumstances that are considered a reasonable excuse to possess a knife, including that the possession of the knife is reasonably necessary in all the circumstances for the lawful pursuit of the person's occupation, education or training; the preparation or consumption of food or drink; participation in a lawful entertainment, recreation or sport; the exhibition of knives for retail or other trade purposes; an organised exhibition by knife collectors; the wearing of an official uniform; or for genuine religious purposes. Travelling to or from an activity referred to, or in circumstances prescribed by the regulations, are also considered a reasonable excuse. There are not currently any additional circumstances prescribed by the regulations. Self-defence or the defence of another person is not a reasonable excuse to possess a knife under section 11C.

Under current section 29A of the Summary Offences Act, a first offence against section 11C may be dealt with by a penalty infringement notice of \$550. Section 11E of the Summary Offences Act provides that it is an offence for a person to, without reasonable excuse, use a knife, or visibly carry a knife, in the presence of any person in a public place or a school in a manner that would be likely to cause a person of reasonable firmness present at the scene to fear for his or her personal safety. The maximum penalty for this offence is 50 penalty units, or \$5,500, and/or imprisonment for two years. As with section 11C, it is a matter for the defendant to prove if a reasonable excuse for using or visibly carrying a knife exists. Unlike section 11C, there is no list of circumstances that are considered to be a reasonable excuse.

I now turn to the substance of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill introduces new sections 93IB and 93IC into the Crimes Act. These offences largely mirror sections 11C and 11E of the Summary Offences Act, noting that some very minor consequential amendments have been made to the offences to modernise the drafting and reflect that the offences are now situated in the Crimes Act. The notable difference is that the current maximum penalties have been doubled. New section 93IA provides definitions for terms used in the new offences. For the purposes of continuity, these definitions are carried over from the Summary Offences Act. This will ensure that there are no unintended consequences in moving these offences across to the Crimes Act, including in relation to the interaction with the knife-related offences remaining in the Summary Offences Act.

New section 93IB provides that a person must not have in the person's custody a knife in a public place or a school. This offence will attract a maximum penalty of 40 penalty units, imprisonment for four years, or both. As per current section 11C of the Summary Offences Act, it will be a defence to an offence against this section if the accused person proves that the person had a reasonable excuse. A non-exhaustive list of reasonable excuses is provided. New section 93IB (3) provides that a reasonable excuse includes the person having custody of the knife:

- (a) because it is reasonably necessary for:

- (i) the lawful pursuit of the person's occupation, education or training, or
- (ii) the preparation or consumption of food, or drink, or
- (iii) participation in a lawful entertainment, recreation or sport, or
- (iv) the exhibition of knives for retail or other trade purposes, or
- (v) an organised exhibition by knife collectors, or
- (vi) the wearing of an official uniform, or
- (vii) genuine religious purposes ...

Travelling to or from an activity referred to above or in circumstances prescribed by the regulations is also considered a reasonable excuse. The Government notes currently no circumstances are prescribed by the relevant regulations. However, retaining the ability to prescribe additional circumstances ensures that the provision remains current. New section 93IB (4) provides that it is not a reasonable excuse for the person to have a knife in the person's custody:

- (a) for self-defence, or
- (b) the defence of another person.

New section 93IC reflects current section 11E of the Summary Offences Act, except that the name of the offence has been updated to modernise the language. The word "wield" has been changed to "use" or "carry". This mirrors the language used in the body of section 11E. Like section 11E, new section 93IC provides:

- (1) A person must not use a knife, or carry a knife that is visible, if the use or carrying occurs—
  - (a) in the presence of a person, and
  - (b) in a public place or school, and
  - (c) in a way that is likely to cause a reasonable person to reasonably fear for the person's safety.

This offence will attract a maximum penalty of 100 penalty units, imprisonment for four years, or both. It will be a defence to an offence against this section if the accused person proves that the person had a reasonable excuse. Schedule 2 to the bill contains the necessary consequential amendments. Schedule 2.1 to the bill amends the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to provide that the offences created by new sections 93IB and 93IC of the Crimes Act will be Table 1 offences, which means they are to be tried summarily unless the prosecutor or defendant elects otherwise. Including these offences as Table 1 offences is consistent with other indictable offences with similar maximum penalties and is intended to ensure efficiency within the criminal justice system.

Schedule 2.2 to the bill amends the Summary Offences Act to repeal sections 11C, 11E and section 29A. Repealing section 29A will mean that a penalty infringement notice for a first offence of having custody of a knife in a public place or school will no longer be able to be issued under the Summary Offences Act. However, amendments to the Criminal Procedure Regulation 2017 will be drafted for the Governor's approval to add the new Crimes Act custody of a knife offence to Schedule 4 to this regulation. This will ensure that a police officer can continue to issue a penalty infringement notice to an adult for a first offence of having custody of a knife. This is an important diversionary measure that will also promote efficiency in the broader justice system. I note that this one of the provisions that the police specifically asked the Government to keep.

As per section 2 of the bill, the bill will commence by proclamation. This will allow the amendments to the Criminal Procedure Regulation 2017 to be drafted to ensure that there is no gap in the ability to issue penalty infringement notices for a first offence of having custody of a knife. This will happen swiftly. The bill and regulation amendments will then commence at the same time. The New South Wales Government notes that the proposed reforms are not expected to impact on children and young people, as they will still remain eligible for diversion options under the Young Offenders Act 1997. These diversion options may include cautions and referrals to youth justice conferences. The Government recognises that Aboriginal people are over-represented in the criminal justice system and reforms such as this can have a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal people. The Government will therefore monitor the implementation of these reforms, with a particular focus on Aboriginal people.

The Government is acting to address understandable community concern given the very high-profile tragic events involving knives that we have seen in New South Wales over the past year. The recent incidents of knife crime have been distressing and I can only imagine how difficult it has been for the victims and their loved ones. People who are in public places or schools should not be exposed to harm of any kind. The dangers caused by the possession or use of knives is unacceptable, and the penalties must reflect the seriousness and gravity of the harm caused.



I am very pleased to introduce the bill, which strengthens the penalty framework of existing knife-related offences. It not only provides a stronger deterrent against deliberate acts of violence but will better meet community standards. The New South Wales Government is committed to improving the way our justice system protects individuals and ensuring that the penalties are appropriate. These reforms serve as another very important example of this work. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (RENTAL FAIRNESS) BILL 2023**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 10 May 2023.**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (15:17):** Before I commence with my contribution to the second reading debate, I foreshadow that I will move six amendments to the bill during the consideration in detail stage. The amendments will remove clause 22B from the bill, which would have prohibited secret rent bidding, following the select committee's consideration of that clause. This will ensure that the remaining important amendments can be considered by the Parliament very quickly. I look forward to hearing members' contributions in today's debate.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (15:28):** As the shadow Minister for Fair Trading, Work Health and Safety and Building, I am pleased to lead for the Opposition in debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. At the outset I confirm that the Opposition will support the passage of this bill, notwithstanding the Government's shambolic management and approach to rental reform to date. The Government has been shamed into backing down on a disastrous promise and approach to banning secret rent bidding. The proposal would have made rental affordability much worse. This Government has shown that it does not understand basic economics or the issues facing ordinary people in this instance. Frankly, we need a government that understands the drivers of the cost of living and the rental affordability crisis so that it can improve the situation, not—to state the obvious—make it worse.

This now stripped-down bill is disappointing in that so much of what had been promised is now missing. This bill is extraordinary in the sense that this is all Labor has to show in this important area of public policy after 12 years in Opposition. The bill would, according to the Government, ban so-called secret rent bidding. To be clear, we welcome improvements to transparency in the marketplace, but it needs to be done thoroughly, carefully and in a considered manner that does not cause unintended consequences. Once again the Government did not do its homework. It did not listen to the community or get it right. The original bill was flawed and would have made the lives of renters more difficult, hence the backflip and the position we are now in.

I thank industry groups and renter advocacy groups for engaging with the Opposition on this bill. The Opposition supports the bill's remaining provisions, which concern the expansion of the existing ban on solicited rent bidding as well as tweaks to the existing regulation-making powers already in the Act, which provide for a rental bond rollover scheme. The reforms enacted by this bill build solidly upon the foundations and policy leadership provided by the Liberals and The Nationals whilst in government, and most of the Government's rental reform agenda seeks to implement or reinforce Liberal policies and ideals thus far. It is gratifying to see a Labor Government acknowledge the leadership of the Liberals and The Nationals in charting the way forward for reform to residential tenancy laws in New South Wales. It is just worrying that, when the Government is not borrowing the Liberals' work, its own policies are not working and not able to be legislated.

The Residential Tenancies Act is a product of 12 years of careful, methodical reform to create a modern regulatory framework that strikes a fair deal between the interests of tenants, property owners and other parties, such as agents. Everyone deserves the security and dignity of having a place to call home. There is no question about whether the rental market is experiencing significant challenges currently. We know that renters are doing it tough. The current economic conditions have seen rising rents and interest rates that have placed strain upon property owners and renters. There are substantial constraints on property supply. Every participant in the rental market is essential to the goal of making housing accessible to as many people as possible, and these participants are reliant on each other. Ensuring a well-balanced regulatory approach is increasingly important for our economy and society, with 32.6 per cent of the New South Wales population now renting, a figure that is continuing to grow.

Rental stress, too, is increasing. The Government needs to be doing everything it can to ease the pressure for renters, not make the problem worse, which is why the recent circumstances around the bill are concerning and disappointing. It is easy for someone out there to seek to lay blame upon landlords in this landscape, but property owners are just as important as renters. Without their investment, the housing stock we need would not

exist. We need to strike important balances. The Coalition will always support good, sound public policy, and we welcome reforms that add certainty and security for renters and property owners and that assist people to secure housing in a fair and equitable way. The Coalition has a strong track record of reform over 12 years in government, of which we are proud. The Coalition was a reforming Government.

Responding to the current rental market challenges, the Liberal-Nationals Government sought to improve rental affordability and ease the pressure on renters in New South Wales with a comprehensive reform package, including ending no-grounds evictions by replacing them with a reasonable-grounds model; extending notice periods at the end of fixed term leases; introducing a new, optional three- to-five-year standard lease agreement to enhance assurance and certainty; commencing the introduction of a rental bond rollover scheme; strengthening privacy protection by limiting information collection and storage; and prohibiting solicited rent bidding. The Coalition consulted widely and struck the right balance between renters, owners and real estate agents after careful consideration, analysis and consultation with all stakeholders. So much of this reform agenda has been taken up by the Government. That can only be a good thing, and we welcome it. But so much of the reform promised by this new Government is missing from the bill. Obviously, it is disappointing for stakeholders and, indeed, for this Parliament. The Government needs to get on with it and provide tenants with more needed relief and certainty.

The bill broadly enacts two key changes. First, it extends the existing Coalition-implemented ban on solicited rent bidding, which prohibits agents from soliciting rents above a fixed advertised price to also include landlords and other third parties. Secondly, the bill tweaks the Act's existing regulation-making powers that allow the establishment of a portable rental bond scheme. "Rent bidding" refers to the situation where applicants for a tenancy offer above the advertised rent to secure the property. Finding a rental home is tough enough as it is without the added uncertainty of having to engage in a bidding war with many other prospective tenants, which causes the rent to surge. An advertised rent should mean something. That is why in December last year the Coalition introduced regulation to prohibit agents from soliciting rent bidding as well as to require a fixed rental price to be stated for premises advertised for rent. That focus on agents allowed the prohibition to be made urgently, by regulation instead of by legislation.

The Coalition's ban on solicited rent bidding gives all players in the market, but renters in particular, the certainty they need to find and secure a place to call home. Proposed section 22A of the bill inserts into the Act those provisions already enacted by the Coalition through regulation and extends those obligations to owners and third parties. We welcome the extension of the ban on solicited rent bidding to owners and other parties and the Government's acknowledgment of the success of the former Government's policy. It is recognised that real estate agents are not the sole actors in property transactions and that this prohibition needs to be extended to also capture the conduct of property owners and third parties such as application websites, which are playing an increasing role in tenancy transactions. Precedents on this expanded scope in bans on solicited rent bidding have been set in other States' jurisdictions. The Coalition would have legislated the change if re-elected, and so it welcomes those provisions in the bill.

I will now turn to the amendments relating to a potential portable rental bond scheme. Such schemes seek to eliminate the financial stress on tenants by allowing the transfer of bonds between tenancies, removing the need to finance and pay a new rental bond before receiving an old one back. The Opposition recognises the hardship caused to renters by the need to finance two rental bonds, often amounting to many thousands of dollars. In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis where many are struggling with basic costs and making decisions such as whether to stay warm in winter or put food on the table, this is an unacceptable impost. The Opposition does not accept this situation. We can and should meet this challenge and provide solutions, including a rental bond rollover scheme. This is a long-held Liberal and Nationals policy, and I am glad the Government is backing that policy idea to help ease the burden upon tenants. The previous Coalition Government is responsible for inserting into the Act the current regulation-making powers to establish such a portable rental bond scheme.

The Coalition went to the election promising to introduce the regulation establishing the scheme in practice if re-elected. That scheme would have been operational by the end of this year, and we call on the Government to match that commitment. The bill seeks to clarify and make minor adjustments to the existing regulation-making powers. We have no issue with that. Renters want reform here, and owners should benefit from a simpler, streamlined system. We call on the Government to release as soon as possible the detail on how its proposed scheme would work and be designed. Any scheme needs to be well designed so as not to bog down already-struggling renters in paperwork or administrative complexity, nor should it cause an undue burden to owners or the property management industry. The sooner that is done, the sooner renters have the relief they need.

The Liberals and The Nationals have a strong record of action in delivering reforms that benefit tenants and owners and improve rental affordability. We want to see the reforms we made last year bedded down and working well. At the same time, we know many people are doing it tough out there. To see that the Government is largely following the Coalition's lead is all good and well. Nonetheless, we urge the Government to do its policy

homework better, more effectively, to listen and to get right such further reforms. It is striking that much of the reform promised by the Government at the previous election is absent from the bill. Given the need for action to improve affordability and relieve pressure upon tenants as well as to provide certainty for owners and agents, I look forward to seeing further proposals and bills from the Government in this space in due course. There are also wider issues at play, as mentioned, including housing supply, which the Government must consider as part of a fully formed reform package. In conclusion, we support the scaled-down bill and urge further action that engages stakeholders and good policy across our State.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** A misunderstanding occurred after the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading was granted a pre-audience. I confirm for the House and for Hansard that the earlier contribution of the member for Willoughby will be recorded as his first contribution during the consideration in detail stage. I have directed that the *Hansard* record be amended accordingly.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:22):** I contribute to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. Labor inherited an unfair rental system from the previous Government. This bill and the amendments foreshadowed by the Minister are just a small part of Labor's comprehensive agenda to make renting fairer in this State. The object of the bill is to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, the Property and Stock Agents Regulation 2022 and the Residential Tenancies Regulation 2019. The guts of the bill as amended will provide that a landlord or landlord's agent must not advertise or otherwise offer residential premises for rent unless a fixed amount of rent for the premises is stated in the advertisement or offer. It also provides that a person must not solicit or otherwise invite an offer of an amount of rent for residential premises, whether directly or indirectly, that is higher than the advertised amount of rent for the premises.

The bill as amended removes the rent bidding provisions currently sitting within the Property and Stock Agents Regulation, puts them squarely where they belong—in the Residential Tenancies Act—and extends them beyond what the previous Government had allowed in this State, thus strengthening them and making them fairer for tenants across the State. The bill also makes changes to the Act to enable the establishment of a rental bond rollover scheme and allows for the collection of certain data from the industry, which will empower the Rental Commissioner—another key element of Labor's policy and promise to make renting fairer in this State—to collect the sort of information the commissioner will need in order to determine what is fair and what should be transparently exposed in the rental market in this State.

I commend the work of the Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023, chaired by my colleague Clayton Barr. I thank the committee for its work on the bill in a short period and note its key finding. Finding 1 says, "There is a rental crisis in New South Wales." The current Government has inherited that after 12 years of those opposite being in government and their way of handling the housing system in this State. It has delivered us, in the words of the select committee, a "rental crisis in New South Wales". The bill goes some way to making the system fairer. Contrary to the assertions of the member for Willoughby, Labor is not backing down at all from its determination to make renting fairer in this State. I look forward to seeing more of Labor's agenda rolled out in this place and via the office of the Rental Commissioner. It is my dear hope that in four years' time, at the end of this term of Parliament, we can look back and say that renting in New South Wales is fairer than it currently is and that New South Wales has the fairest rental system in Australia.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:39):** I am pleased to support the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 in the second reading debate stage. The bill will amend the current Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to improve residential tenancy laws and make the rental market fairer and more equitable for renters across New South Wales. This is the beginning of the Minns Labor Government's priority to support renters and address the cost of living and housing crisis in New South Wales.

Unfortunately, the current rental market is very challenging for renters, with rental vacancy rates reaching historic lows. The cost of living and housing crises are extremely serious issues that families are facing every single day. Families have to work extra hours and engage in secondary employment just to afford the bare minimum: to feed their families, afford medical and utility bills, and pay their rent. That is extra, precious time that families could spend together—extra, precious time that children could have with their parents and loved ones. It is unacceptable and unfair. Our communities cannot keep living under this stress and pressure. The Minns Labor Government is introducing the bill to ease that pressure and to support our local communities.

The bill will enact several amendments to the current residential tenancy laws in New South Wales. Specifically, it will establish a portable bond scheme, appoint a dedicated Rental Commissioner to be a voice for renters, explicitly legislate that rental bonds are held in trust by the New South Wales Rental Bond Board, and expand the ban on rent bidding by including further participants. The amendments specifically respond to the current challenges that exist in the housing market. People across New South Wales are struggling to buy their first homes and finding it even more difficult to find a suitable property to rent. This is due to a low supply of housing across our State, historically high rental prices and the financial pressures caused by increased interest

rates. The current state of the housing crisis is unacceptable. Everyone should have access to a safe, secure and affordable place to live.

In the electorate of Prospect, over 30 per cent of the community are renters, and more and more of those families are now becoming lifetime renters. Given the struggles they face in the current housing market, the amendments are welcome for my community. In Smithfield, a suburb in the electorate of Prospect that is situated in the most socio-economically disadvantaged local government area in New South Wales, with a Socio-Economic Index for Areas [SEIFA] index of 814, the median rental price is \$520 per week, growing 7.2 per cent in the past twelve months. In Greystanes, a suburb in the centre of the electorate of Prospect, the median rental price is \$580 per week, growing some 11.5 per cent in the past twelve months. In Pendle Hill, the median rental price is \$550 per week, growing some 19.6 per cent in the past twelve months. Both Greystanes and Pendle Hill are located in the Cumberland City Council local government area, which is the second most socio-economically disadvantaged local government area in New South Wales, with a SEIFA index of 903. More than 30 per cent of a household's weekly income goes towards paying rent. That is unacceptable.

The bill will establish a portable bond scheme in New South Wales under section 186A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. That amendment will allow tenants to directly transfer their bond from one property to another, create regulatory-making provisions to administer and manage the scheme, and guarantee the effective transfer of bond payments. Currently tenants are required to pay their bond immediately upon entering their residential tenancy agreement. That means that tenants are required to pay their new bond, an average of approximately \$2,200, calculated off the average weekly rental price of \$550, despite not yet receiving their previous bond back. Tenants already face significant out-of-pocket expenses associated with moving. It can often take weeks for a bond to be returned. During that time, tenants are left needing to find thousands of dollars to secure a new rental property and pay for the cost of their move. This scheme will prevent renters from being out of pocket and reduce their financial stress by having their bond payment automatically transferred.

The bill will also appoint a dedicated Rental Commissioner in New South Wales, who will act as a voice for tenants. The Rental Commissioner will be tasked with working closely with tenants, owners, community members and other key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive and inclusive report about the rental crisis across the State. Importantly, they will identify obstacles to the rental market and issues with housing supply, and uncover areas where there are gaps with tenants' rights. The Rental Commissioner will also provide suggestions to assist the Minns Labor Government with determining reasonable grounds to end a tenancy, which will ensure that tenants are not unfairly evicted without reason.

The information collected by the Rental Commissioner, in consultation with renters, community groups and other key stakeholders, will assist the Government by informing future rental reform agendas that allow our communities to have better access to safe, affordable and secure housing. The information will also assist the Government with the regulation of rental prices in a competitive housing market. The final amendment the bill introduces will explicitly legislate that rental bonds are held in trust by the New South Wales Rental Bond Board. Currently, rental bonds are already held in trust for renters and landlords by the New South Wales Rental Bond Board, but this is not clearly outlined in legislation. The amendment will legislate for what is already occurring in practice, where rental bonds are being held in trust on behalf of renters and later paid to them at the end of their tenancy agreement on behalf of landlords.

The Minns Labor Government has also worked constructively with stakeholders and members of the crossbench on the issue of secret rent bidding, which is addressed by new section 22B of the bill. Rent bidding occurs when rental applicants offer, or are asked to offer, more than the advertised price to secure a rental property. While solicited rent bidding is currently illegal in New South Wales, landlords and third parties, such as online rental application tools, are not banned from engaging in the practice. Sadly, due to low housing supply and a competitive rental market, secret rent bidding has also been occurring across New South Wales. It occurs when rental applicants are discreetly encouraged to outbid each other on the price of rent to secure a property. Those offers currently operate as secret offers that a landlord or agent does not need to tell the other rental applicants about, and may drive the price of a rental property up.

That legislative loophole is causing significant levels of stress for renters who already need to deal with rising cost-of-living pressures. Renters already need to balance the rising cost of groceries, fuel and travel expenses, and education and medical expenses. Renters should not have to settle for properties that are unsafe or unsuitable for their families—homes that are too small, run down or situated outside of metropolitan Sydney—just to afford a property that is within their price range. While this is a significant issue, in consultation with key stakeholders such as Shelter NSW, Homelessness NSW, Disability Advocacy NSW and the Tenants' Union of NSW, the transparency and disclosure process under new section 22B has been deferred to ensure that further consideration can be given that appropriately supports all populations. That will also ensure that the issue of secret

rent bidding is appropriately addressed without any adverse concerns in an extremely difficult rental market, while not holding up the rest of the bill, which provides necessary rental relief to renters. [*Extension of time*]

Overall, the Minns Government has a comprehensive strategy to deliver more homes for New South Wales residents, including creating Homes NSW to deliver more social and affordable housing, delivering high-density development around key transport hubs, streamlining planning approval processes, and abolishing stamp duty for first home buyers purchasing homes up to \$800,000 and offering a concessional rate for homes up to \$1 million. The amendments introduced by the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 will significantly support our community.

By establishing a portable bond scheme, appointing a dedicated Rental Commissioner and explicitly legislating that rental bonds are held in trust by the Rental Bond Board, the Minns Government will ensure that our renters have access to secure and affordable housing. Families in Western Sydney and across New South Wales are already feeling the financial pressures caused by the rising cost of living and the housing crisis. These changes to the rental system will begin to alleviate some of those pressures for our community. I look forward to working with the Minns Government and the Rental Commissioner to continue implementing policies that protect and support our renters. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:50):** The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 aims to address two issues where residential tenants are under pressure and are seeking support: the regulation of advertised rent for a property and a smoother bond rollover process. Though we can learn from approaches to tenancy regulation in Europe and North America, housing markets have grown differently in Australia. Our Federal tax system rewards home ownership and stimulates investment in property by ordinary families. This involves our own uniquely developed matrix of carrots and sticks, incentives and restrictions. Ideally, the market reaches balance or at least a stasis point over time, with housing needs being largely met and affordable, and private and public expenditure coming into play to develop new housing and to devote housing to tenancy. Our market is not in balance now, and this results in pain for many. There are historic high rents and low availability of properties for rent or for first home buyers. A significant number of homes are disappearing from the market through overnight and short-term rental schemes and homes simply being left empty.

From the 2021 census we know that there were one million unoccupied dwellings nationally on census night, with almost 300,000 of those in New South Wales. *The Guardian* reported in May that the number of properties listed as short-term rentals across New South Wales had surged by 42 per cent since 2021 to exceed 45,000. Residential tenancy has been increasing as a proportion of the nation's housing. There were 10,852,208 private dwellings counted in the 2021 census. Of those, 31 per cent were owned outright, 35 per cent were owned with a mortgage and 30.6 per cent were rented. As a nation, social policy is shifting to recalibrate demographic moves away from freestanding homes to apartments. There is the increasing need to house the vulnerable in our communities, the growth of more highly specialised housing for people living with a disability and the concept for an increasing segment that is tenancy for life.

In mid-December last year the then Minister for Fair Trading got the ball rolling on reforms to help tenants and those struggling to secure a tenancy, with regulation to ban the practice of engaging in rent bidding and advertising using terms such as rent "by negotiation". The then Minister was in Albury at about that time and was part of a roundtable meeting with local stakeholders working in this area. I am grateful for his visit and for the productive discussions that were held. The bill builds upon the good work by the former Minister, taking the regulation and turning it into an Act.

Initially, schedule 1 set out amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 in clauses 22A and 22B, with clause 22B now being removed following the select committee's report. Clause 22A focuses on prohibiting certain matters relating to advertising or soliciting amounts of rent. Rent auctions and hidden deals have long been a feature of heated markets. They are a scourge on the rental landscape but, like a number of other reforms over past years, they can prove difficult to prevent in practice in absolute terms. The approach in the bill is sensible. Clause 22A (1) states:

A landlord or landlord's agent must not advertise or otherwise offer residential premises for rent unless a fixed amount of rent for the premises is stated in the advertisement or offer.

But at clause 22A (2) and (4) we are already looking at exceptions to the new rule—to activities and conduct that should still be permissible as part of a normal method of bringing a landlord and potential tenant into agreement, with the efforts of an agent as go-between.

It is worth focusing on the now excised clause 22B. The fate of that clause was always going to be rocky. It set out to define conditions when an offer of higher rent could be discussed and when other applicants must be informed. What followed in the clause as drafted was a Monty Python-esque legislative dance with steps that depended on whether the landlord or agent did or did not hold a holding deposit, on whether the landlord or agent

had notified the acceptable applicant of the intention to enter into an agreement, on whether an open house inspection was about to happen, and on whether there was time to update the figures in advertisements. And so the bill was quickly dispatched to committee.

The Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 report recommended that the bill omit clause 22B. This was due to concerns raised by stakeholders that there were potential unintended consequences. In its submission to the committee, Disability Advocacy NSW stated:

... there are possible inadvertent consequences that may arise from amendments. Most notably inflated rental prices. The proposed changes will still enable renters to bid—albeit with more transparency—as there is a requirement for owners and agents to notify other 'acceptable applicants' of higher offers.

Ultimately, applicants with greater financial capacity are vastly privileged in this process in comparison to those with limited financial resources.

It also stated:

For people with disability on low incomes, clause 22b will create a more transparent system, but one that is still laden with disadvantage and unfairness. The changes do not address issues of affordability. In fact, it may inflate rental prices as bidding information can be used as a guide to increase rental value.

The Tenants' Union of NSW assessment is blunt. Its submission reads:

Clause 22B introduces a rent auction model for rent setting once an unsolicited higher offer is received. We do not support inclusion of the clause in the Bill.

It later reads:

... we hold serious concerns that the currently proposed approach to banning secret rent bidding may fuel increases in market rents rather than stabilise them.

One renter who responded to the Tenants' Union survey on rent bidding of May 2023 hit the nail on the head, saying this:

I can't see how the proposed changes will improve anything for tenants at all ... Requiring agents and landlords to tell other applicants will probably only enshrine this practice and make it even more common. The cost of paying rent relative to people's incomes has already increased enough. We should be finding ways to prevent excessive rent increases, not facilitate them.

Specifically, clause 22B opened up a host of problems that are worth mentioning as they are instructive as we look to assess the value of what the bill offers to the tenants and landlords of this State. The bill could formalise the escalation of multiple higher offers of rent above the advertised price. It would reduce transparency of the rent process and advertised price, not improve visibility as promised. As drafted, it failed to consider how the marketplace might adapt to the proposal contained in clause 22B by moving negotiation points outside of rent as such—for example, where a tenancy applicant offers to move into the property sooner rather than offering the highest amount of rent.

It was always a simplistic understanding of the rental property market that led to the bill's focus on higher rents as the cause of woes. Pets, solar power, shared maintenance tasks, heating and cooling, home security, offering to move in sooner, to move out later, to pay several weeks' rent in advance, the impact of references from previous agents or landlords—there can be multiple factors at play in the offer and acceptance of a contract to rent a property. Again, as was noted to the select committee, rent bidding should be seen not as the cause of rental stress but as a symptom of the shortage of supply. The Tenants' Union echoes this bedrock issue, and states:

The phenomenon of rent bidding is only a feature in markets where rents are under significant upwards pressure due to a lack of available and appropriate homes.

The second reform—for rental bonds—is dealt with by amendments to sections 185 and 186 of the Act. This provides that regulations may establish a rental bond rollover scheme. Importantly, power will be given to the tribunal to oversee failures in the process of paying out bonds in accordance with the scheme. [*Extension of time*]

As I think we all know, the overshadowing issue is housing supply and we as a State—indeed, as a nation—are not going to get out of this situation while the imbalance in housing demand and supply remains so significant. As a member representing a regional electorate, I believe we need perspective on the regional situation. Blanket statewide changes to the renting rules might not land as well for tenants or landlords in regional New South Wales as they do perhaps in capital and larger cities. Is this important? Data from the PropTrack rental report for the March quarter 2023 reveals that tenancy trends are far from uniform. This poses a challenge for any who use the tools of regulation and legislation to alter a market-driven landscape. The PropTrack report notes:

Gross rental yields in the combined capital cities in March 2023 were 3.9%, up from 3.7% a year earlier. While capital city yields increased over the year, regional yields fell from 4.9% to 4.5% in March 2023.

There is also a growing divergence on the matter of growth in rents. The report notes:

Combined capital city advertised rents were \$520 per week in March 2023, increasing by 4% over the quarter and 13% over the year. Combined regional market advertised rents were \$460 per week in March 2023, rising 2.2% over the quarter and 4.5% over the year.

There was a trend during the height of the pandemic for capital citizens to move to regional areas. There could be many reasons for this: as an escape, or with a view to improving quality of life, or even just to have space for a dog. Regional rents soared accordingly. The divergence between capital cities and regional areas is also revealed when we look at total rental listings. Total rental listings in the capital cities were 18.3 per cent lower over the year, remaining at historic lows. In regional markets, total rental listings were up 22.5 per cent year on year—the largest year-on-year increase since December 2010—to sit at their highest level since July 2020. What I am interested in is understanding where we can move, as a State, to best manage the housing and homelessness situation.

Legislation leads to processes. We have to read the market and market forces objectively and not rely on ideology if the State is to deliver housing solutions sooner rather than later. High interest rates have led to reduced borrowing capacities for home buyers and investors. In February 2023 the value of lending to investors was \$7.6 billion, down 32.6 per cent over the year. The PropTrack rental report reaches this brief conclusion:

The answer to more supply in the short-term is encouraging more housing investors into the market. Long-term, it is building more housing of all types, including market, build-to-rent, social and affordable housing.

Earlier this month, the latest building approval figures were released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They show that building approvals declined across the majority of States in the March quarter. In my electorate, there has been substantial attention given by the community to options for improving the housing shortage situation impacting renters, first home buyers and employees.

The previous Government was planning initiatives for key workers such as nurses and teachers. Instead of constructing one or two social housing dwellings in Albury each year, we were planning for 500 new builds in a salt-and-pepper mix with what would have been 740 private homes, aiming not only to provide a massive local response to housing needs but also to promote what we know to be true: that the wellbeing of communities is improved when social housing properties and their occupants are sprinkled throughout our cities and towns rather than left in some nineteenth-century concept to stand apart from their neighbourhoods. My community continues to await clarification from the new Government and, above all, action on homelessness and housing shortages in our community. I thank the Minister for bringing the bill to the House. I note the work of the previous Minister in this space. I welcome the changes and I support the bill.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:04):** I support the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. This is much-needed legislation. We have heard from members from across New South Wales about the dire situation for renters in the current rental market. The current market is incredibly challenging and rental vacancy rates are reaching historic lows throughout the State. Rent increases have been ridiculous in the past 12 months. Time and time again, we hear of people who are forced to move after being presented with a proposed rent increase that they just cannot afford. The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 amends the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to progress Labor's election commitment to establish a portable bond scheme, to close a loophole by extending the ban on soliciting rent bids to landlords and third-party apps, and to empower the NSW Rental Commissioner to gather pricing data from real estate agents. These reforms will make renting laws fairer and strengthen protections for tenants in New South Wales.

Clause 22B, which would have banned secret rent bidding and provided a notification system so that renters knew what others were offering, will be removed from the bill so that other elements can proceed. While this is an important transparency measure, stakeholders have been concerned about possible adverse effects of this measure. But, rest assured, we will continue to seek a solution to secret rent bidding because the former Government failed to act effectively. It introduced regulation to prevent agents soliciting bids above advertised prices, but it did not prevent offers being made. When queues are as deep as they have been lately—longer than they have been in decades, with sometimes 50 people in a queue at a rental inspection—of course, if word is out that if you offer above the advertised price it just might be accepted, you are not going to knock out secret rent bidding just by making sure that agents cannot seek those bids. It is a very complicated issue, and it is decades since things were as difficult as they are at the moment.

It is hard to conceptualise in the modern world—with third-party apps, with social media and with how quickly news can spread about these practices—how we can stamp out something as insidious as secret rent bidding. Data from the most recent CoreLogic rental market report from May 2023 shows that the rental vacancy rate in Sydney has fallen from 2 per cent in April 2022 to 1.2 per cent in April this year. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, about 33 per cent of households in New South Wales rent. In my electorate of Granville it is well over 40 per cent. Granville is an electorate typified by new arrivals from overseas. More than half the population was born overseas. People seeking to get their foot in the door and buy their first home save for a deposit while they are tenants. Rental prices have continued to increase.

At the moment, hardly anything is being advertised in my electorate for under \$400 a week—and if something is under \$400, it is a one-bedroom property. Imagine being a part-time worker on the minimum wage—say, a hairdresser or hospitality worker—and trying to rent a place in the Granville electorate. Imagine supporting a family when it costs \$400 a week just for a one-bedroom place. At the moment, the median rent across Sydney is \$711 per week, which is an increase of 3.9 per cent on the previous quarter. We have also seen enormous increases in rent in regional areas across New South Wales. They are really concerning. People are being locked out of housing markets time and again.

Before the election we committed to a number of rental reforms. We are appointing a Rental Commissioner to be a voice for renters. We are requiring landlords to provide a reason when they end a tenancy—and the Rental Commissioner will develop a list of approved reasons. That is incredibly important. It will end the current practice of retaliatory evictions. Time and again we tried in opposition to pursue private members' bills to deal with the issue. People are often evicted with no reason shortly after they have questioned a rent increase or made complaints about maintenance.

We are also going to make it easier for renters to have pets. Again, this is an area that the former Government sort of reformed—but not really. We are going to make sure that, unless there is a really good reason against it, people will be able to have pets. Too many animals are being surrendered to shelters and killed in this State because tenants cannot have pets in a lot of instances. Work on all those commitments is being done now and the process to appoint a Rental Commissioner is underway. We will seek input from all stakeholders and the public as it takes shape.

Making sure that the rental bond is portable is incredibly important. We are going to expand regulation-making powers to implement that scheme. It will allow renters to transfer a rental bond from their old property to a new property before the first bond is released. That is a very important cost-of-living measure. It is a cost that erodes household savings, making it even harder for people to buy their first home and leave the rental market for good. Time and again, because it is not easy to get a bond released, landlords will try to claw back some of it unreasonably. Certainly, people in my electorate who are in Australia for the first time, who do not speak English as their first language, who are not aware of all the rules and regulations, and who are not good at advocating for themselves, let alone knowing who the tenant advocates are, just accept that the landlord is going to take half or even more of their bond because they do not know that they can fight back.

We need to make sure that bonds are portable. That allows people to have one fewer cost when they move. The bill expands the existing powers in section 186A of the Act to allow for regulations relating to the secretary's powers for the scheme, flexibility in the use of systems to administer the scheme, guaranteeing bond payments and ending tenancy arrangements if there is noncompliance with the scheme's rules. The scheme will be further developed in consultation with industry, renters and the community. Input from the public will be important in developing it. We are also acting to address housing supply. That is incredibly important to making sure that those tenancy vacancy rates grow a bit so that we do not have long queues of 50 people bidding more than they can actually afford to, to find a roof over their head. We understand the best way to do that is to address supply. With 400,000 migrants arriving in Australia in the next two years, that will be a challenge.

A million homes were empty on census night. There are a number of reasons for that. Obviously, they are not all holiday houses. Some of them were undergoing renovation. A lot of them are part of land banking by developers. The annual reports for a number of the listed developers like Stockland show that about 20 per cent of the properties they own were actually vacant at that point in time. It is about balancing their debt and balancing the way they do things. With costs of construction having increased 25 per cent during the cost-of-living crisis, I can understand why developers, in many cases, are taking longer to get started. But land banking is a really big problem. We on this side of the Chamber are doing a lot as a government. In terms of how we are going to get more homes built, we need to reflect upon and consider what developers do.

We have increased the thresholds for stamp duty concessions, abolishing stamp duty for first home buyers buying properties up to \$800,000 and offering a concessional rate for those buying properties up to a million dollars. That covers most of the first home buyers in New South Wales. It means that there is no stamp duty payable for three-quarters of the properties in my electorate for a first home buyer. My electorate is very close to the centre of Sydney. It is an easy train journey of 20 kilometres. We need to do all those things to make sure that we have the supply that we need, but we also need to do everything we can to help renters in the meantime.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:15):** The Greens will actively and enthusiastically support the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill if the Government amends it as it has foreshadowed. The bill requires rental properties to have an advertised price when listed; bans real estate agents, landlords and third parties from soliciting rents higher than the advertised price; and establishes a portable bond scheme. We recognise and welcome the Government's decision to omit new section 22B so that the bill, which seeks to ban solicited rent bidding and sets up a portable bond scheme, can progress through the Parliament without having the



unintended consequences of introducing rental auctions in New South Wales. We absolutely need to begin the path to significant rental reform, and I welcome the fact that this is the first of many steps that the Government will be taking.

I acknowledge and thank the Minister, the Government and Premier Minns for being open to genuine consultation and collaboration when it came to addressing the concerns raised by stakeholders, The Greens, tenants' advocates and others in relation to new section 22B of the bill. That example shows the Government's willingness and demonstrates the power that a strong crossbench working together with a Labor Government can have to deliver outcomes in a minority Parliament. We need to recognise that laws can sometimes be made better, or bad laws can be stopped from passing, in a way that acts in the interests of the community when we listen to the diversity of voices in this Chamber.

I make brief mention of the hypocrisy of those members now sitting on the Opposition benches coming into the Chamber and taking the high moral ground by pretending to care about renters and about rental fairness, and the hypocrisy of the idea that they care about vulnerable people in our community. I have been a member of this Chamber for eight years. In that time those now in opposition were sitting on the Government benches and failed to deliver any reforms as the growing rental crisis continued to escalate and the property market continued to reach a level of heat that meant that people were living and sleeping rough and in their cars. Now all of a sudden in opposition, the Liberals and The Nationals pretend to care about vulnerable people in our community and about the concerns of people being able to access the rental market fairly.

I recall that we were in this Chamber during Homelessness Week when those folks now sitting behind me—it is a bit nerve-racking having them behind me because I cannot see their faces—and the then housing Minister and the family and community services Minister evicted homeless people from Martin Place. Their solution was new powers to move people on because it was too confronting to see their failures to deliver on the housing crisis out the front of New South Wales Parliament. Right now in New South Wales we need to see significant reforms with regard to the rental crisis. I am very pleased to see that everybody has woken up to what The Greens and others in the community have been saying for a very long time: that 30 per cent of our population in New South Wales now rent and that they are living in unacceptable and insecure housing conditions.

New section 22A prohibits real estate agents, landlords and third parties from soliciting offers of rent during the rental application process that are higher than the advertised price. Renters are experiencing unprecedented rent hikes at the moment and are under enormous financial pressure. Rent bidding is adding to the rental crisis and driving up the cost of rents, and renters' desperation to secure properties is being preyed on as they offer higher and higher prices. Day in and day out, renters have told us about the immense stress rent bidding is causing: that it feels like a colosseum fight to the death to artificially inflate the price of rentals. It pits renters against each other and only works to further socio-economic disparity and sow conflict between renters, and low-income earners and single parents will always lose out. That is what renters are telling us.

While The Greens support the bill, we believe this Parliament must go much further and completely ban rent bidding. The Minister intends to increase transparency, and the inquiry into new section 22B heard many stakeholders say that the best and most transparent approach was a provision to ensure that the advertised price is the advertised price. It is disappointing that the bill does not go that far, but it is great that we are going some way towards the idea of portable bonds. The Greens support the introduction of a portable bond scheme as a simple and practical measure to ease the financial stress renters face when moving house regularly. By allowing renters to transfer bonds from one property to another, the scheme ensures that renters will not be forced to pay double bonds when moving. Renters, who are bearing the brunt of the housing and cost-of-living crisis, will welcome that shift.

On top of unfair no-grounds evictions, the soaring cost of rent means that renters move house significantly more often than owner-occupiers, and they often have no choice in the matter. Moving house is not just hugely stressful but also hugely expensive. The Tenants' Union of NSW has estimated that every time a renter in this State moves house, it costs them an average of \$4,000. If people are moving every six to 12 months, they are having to bear that cost in addition to all of the other costs. Establishing a portable bond scheme will alleviate a significant chunk of the out-of-pocket expenses that renters face when they move and are forced to pay up-front for the bond on their new rental property before they get their previous bond back. The portable bond scheme is welcome, but we also need to take real action to ensure that renters are paying less and moving less often. That means putting an end to unfair evictions and taking action to freeze, cap and cut rents.

The bill is a welcome step, and I acknowledge that it is the first in a tranche of rental reform measures that the new Labor Government has committed to delivering. The Greens look forward to being supportive and seeing this Parliament end no-grounds evictions after so long, and we absolutely look forward to the changes that would allow people to have pets in their rental properties. We also hope to see the implementation of some of the recommendations of the inquiry that just took place.

Before I go into them, I acknowledge the contributions from the Tenants' Union of NSW, Disability Advocacy NSW, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Homelessness NSW, People with Disability Australia, the Murra Mia Tenant Advocacy Service, Community Legal Centres NSW, Ageing on the Edge, Council on the Ageing, the NSW Council of Social Service and Shelter NSW, which all participated and provided submissions. I acknowledge your work, Temporary Speaker Barr, as chair of that inquiry and recognise the incredible work done by the committee secretariat, the committee members and those who made submissions to that short, sharp inquiry—I think it was probably a record for the shortest inquiry in the New South Wales Parliament to date, but I am happy to be corrected. That work showed the significance of seeing the reforms passed while making sure that rental auctions were not introduced in New South Wales.

The recommendation from those organisations was clear: Rent bidding needs to end entirely. I hope that the Rental Commissioner, when they are appointed, will look closely at those submissions to determine how we can increase transparency, the most transparent option being that the advertised price is the advertised price. The Greens absolutely support the call to end rent bidding. Whether it is secret or out in the open, rent bidding is driving up the cost of rents and making it more stressful to be a renter. The inquiry also heard a clear recommendation for a standard rental application process, which would go a long way to provide greater protection for renters during the application process and limit the intrusive requests that can be made. Maybe the Minister's speech in reply can address what steps the Government will take to consider and act on that recommendation, which has broad support among stakeholders and across the community. [*Extension of time*]

The current process to apply for a rental property in New South Wales can be deeply invasive of renters' privacy. There is no end to the kinds of questions that are being asked of renters in the current market, and rental application forms need to be standardised to make it clear that there is no right to ask for years of bank statements, police background checks, social media profile links or—as reported in one recent case—whether the applicants have prominent tattoos. Renters should not be required to hand over huge amounts of personal information with no guarantees around how their data will be protected in order to have their application to rent property considered. The inquiry recommended that the Government consider a standard rental application form for renters, which The Greens strongly support.

The inquiry also heard from peak organisations about the profound effects that the rental crisis is having on renters who have a disability, renters from First Nations backgrounds, renters who are older, renters who are on lower incomes, renters at risk of homelessness, renters who are newly arrived migrants and renters who suffer other kinds of discrimination in society. They face ongoing issues of discrimination in the rental application process, and The Greens welcome and support the committee's recommendation, in consultation with advocacy groups and key stakeholders, that the Government act to limit and reduce discrimination against people from marginalised groups when they apply for tenancy agreements. That must include addressing the dire shortage of accessible and affordable rental properties for people with disabilities, older people and people on income support. That means we also need to act to get rents under control so that the rental market is actually affordable for people on low incomes.

I acknowledge that the soon-to-be-appointed Rental Commissioner will now be tasked with the job of working to make the rental market and application process more transparent. We look forward to them beginning that crucial work and would welcome an update from the Minister, if he has one, about where that recruitment is up to. Many people are very enthusiastic about seeing the Rental Commissioner in place, but they also hope the Rental Commissioner will be given the same level of standing, powers and authority as the Building Commissioner. As the Building Commissioner can crack down on dodgy builders and developers, the Rental Commissioner should be empowered to crack down on dodgy landlords and real estate agents who do not provide protection and support to renters.

While those oversight measures are clearly needed, so are security and affordability in our rental market. The Greens are absolutely ready to step up and get on with the job of delivering reform to renters' rights in New South Wales. Every single day, renters are being hit with rent hikes that they cannot afford or with unfair evictions, or they are living with maintenance issues that they are too scared to raise for fear of eviction. The Greens want to see renters given urgent relief from that stress and insecurity, and we want to see an end to unfair no-grounds evictions.

Let me be clear: It is not reasonable grounds for eviction when a tenant is kicked out of their home because they dared to ask a question about a rent rise, because they asked for repairs or maintenance, or because their lease has come to an end. We would not consider it to be reasonable grounds for eviction just on the basis that a lease is up. That should not be reasonable grounds in and of itself. We also want to get the skyrocketing costs of rent under control. I look forward to pushing ahead with The Greens' plans, here in New South Wales and across the country, to deliver a rent freeze for the people who are suffering the most as a result of this housing crisis. Renters

deserve to have far greater housing security and affordability protections in this State and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Finally, I flag for the Minister new section 185 and new section 186A, which will establish a portable bond scheme to allow bonds to be transferred directly to another property so tenants are not immediately out of pocket when they move. This measure has been supported by the Tenants' Union of NSW through ongoing consultation, but I ask the Minister to address one concern about new section 186A, which we request to be strengthened to ensure that the language of the regulation, when enacted, is in line with the termination provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act. It would be appreciated if the Minister could address that in his reply. It is something that I know the Tenants' Union raised previously as part of the ongoing consultation. The Greens look forward to supporting this bill.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:30):** I welcome the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. Members in this House know that Labor inherited an absolute housing crisis in New South Wales as we arrived in government. The rental system that the Government inherited is unfair and the previous Government's failure to get new houses built is driving prices higher. In Gosford, rent for a house increased by 14.3 per cent last year and in Umina Beach the increase was 8 per cent. In August last year, data released by Everybody's Home revealed that the once affordable Central Coast's median rental price is among the highest in New South Wales, at more than \$600 a week. The wages in our community do not match this increase. No wage increase looks like going near the rental price increase.

A police couple came to my electorate office in tears not long ago because there was no rental property for them. They had \$800 to spend in my community but there was just no rental property available. We are in an absolute crisis. The rental vacancy rate in Sydney has fallen from 2 per cent to 1.2 per cent over the past 12 months. According to Domain rental reports for the March quarter, Australia's rental market remains in favour of landlords, with asking rents at historic highs across cities and regions in Australia. This growing unaffordability of the housing market is occurring at the same time that the cost-of-living crisis affecting the nation is placing pressure on many in my local community. Over 33 per cent of households in New South Wales are renters. I grew up as a child of renting parents—13 houses in 15 years—until my then single mum bought her own home when she was 50: a two-bedroom old Housing Commission fibro in Blackalls Park, Lake Macquarie. It was a low-income Labor government housing home, of which my mum was so proud.

I was determined that one day I would own my own home. That happened thanks to John Brown, a former Federal tourism Minister, who set up the John Brown Foundation when he retired. He helped young people who were in sport and the arts and who fought for an income in Australia. One night John's son, Chris, came up to me at a function and said, "Liesl, you're getting \$10,000 in a scholarship." That was meant for me to spend on my Paralympic sport, but sensibly I put that into buying my first fibro glory in Wamberal. I am now a proud home owner, but I sit beside all members of Parliament who are very concerned that renters, and children of renters in this day and age, will have an initial barrier to ever entering the housing ownership market. Our Government is committed to making sustainable and equitable rules to improve the rental system. Work is already being done to make that happen, particularly the process to appoint a Rental Commissioner.

We will be seeking input from all stakeholders and the public as further changes take shape. The Rental Commissioner will work with renters, owners and the community to progress the Government's reforms, including the commitment to ban secret rent bidding. Other reforms include identifying barriers to increasing the housing supply for renters, identifying gaps and practices that erode renters' rights and gathering data on renting that will help to inform future rental reforms. Following committee discussions with stakeholders, new section 22B, which would have banned secret rent bidding and provided a notification system so that renters knew what others were offering, will be removed from the bill to progress the legislation as quickly as possible through Parliament. The bill is the first step in reforming New South Wales' unfair rental laws and will ease the cost-of-living pressures on renters across the State through the establishment of a portable bond scheme.

I do not know if this applied to the member for Cessnock—currently in the chair—when he was a young teacher, but when I worked in Western Sydney, I was in a share house of teachers. We moved from suburb to suburb across Western Sydney, so a portable bond would have been absolutely fantastic. As the member for Newtown pointed out, the cost of moving house is \$4,000. We were professionals but, even back then, scraping together the bond was really a considerable task. The portable bond scheme is a great step in the myriad changes that need to occur. Introducing a portable bond scheme will help to reduce expenses and will assist by providing greater flexibility for both renters and property owners. The portable bond scheme will allow renters to transfer a rental bond from their old rental property to a new rental property before the first bond is released. The scheme will help to reduce financial stress on renting households as it will mean households do not have to pay for two bonds at the same time.

With the cost of living at the moment, it must be incredibly stressful for families when an eviction notice comes. A lovely friend of mine, who is a 70-year-old lady living on her own on the Central Coast with her little dog, recently received an eviction notice. Her challenge, as well as having real estate agents coming in and moving her furniture around to take photos, is having regular people coming through her own personal sanctuary and safe space. She is now out on the prowl and looking at disgusting rental properties, for which her applications are rejected. Some of them are not even lined garages for the same price as she is paying at the moment. She has until September, but at 70 years of age this is only the beginning of a very stressful journey. I know Government members, including the Minister, are committed to doing all we can to make the process of renting much better. Having lived in Europe, I know that in this great nation we should be providing much more dignity for our renters in Australia.

The bill also will extend the ban on soliciting rent bids, which currently applies only to real estate agents, to owners and third parties. This will close a loophole so third parties that provide online rental application tools also will be banned from soliciting higher rent offers from renters who use those tools to apply for properties. This ban on solicited rent bidding brings New South Wales into line with rent bidding bans in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand. However, the bill's explicit ban on any third parties encouraging renters to offer more for a rental property puts New South Wales ahead of the curve, as no other State or Territory has done this.

In addition to this change, the Minns Labor Government has a comprehensive strategy to deliver more homes for New South Wales residents, including creating Homes NSW to deliver more social and affordable housing in New South Wales; delivering higher-density development around key transport hubs, such as the Sydney Metro; streamlining planning approval processes; abolishing stamp duty for first home buyers buying a home worth up to \$800,000 and offering concessional rates to first home buyers purchasing a property valued between \$800,000 and \$1 million; creating a building commission to ensure that new homes in New South Wales are high quality, safe and resilient for owners and renters; and auditing surplus public land that could be rezoned for housing. The Minns Labor Government has a deep understanding of the cost-of-living pressures facing families in New South Wales, and none more so than those who are renting. This bill is just the first tranche of creating a fairer and more just rental system, and the first step in a series of rental reforms that we promised to deliver. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (16:37):** I support the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 while, of course, noting the amendments. When it comes to renters, we need to come together in this Chamber in a bipartisan way to solve what I believe is a wicked problem when it comes to home ownership and housing affordability. As I said during my inaugural speech in this place, my wife, Gessika, and I are renters so I certainly take a very deep interest in this debate and in this public policy issue. Of course, I come at this with the great aspiration that each Australian, including each person in New South Wales, can own their own home. I am concerned from a public policy perspective about how rushed the bill was in its original form.

It was in late 2022, to a wonderful fanfare in social media, that Labor announced its policy to ban secret rent bidding. The then Leader of the Opposition, Chris Minns, referred to it as a measure that would "make a real difference to the hip pockets of renters". Clearly that was a very ill-advised comment, but I do admire the social media skills involved in announcing that policy. I give full marks for the social media content but zero marks for the public policy. It is concerning that Labor did not properly consult the experts when drafting this bill—or this policy. Labor certainly ignored warnings that banning secret rent bidding would have the opposite effect to what was intended, and that it would actually increase rents. In Parliament in May, my colleague the member for Willoughby, the crossbench members, industry experts and stakeholders could see that this policy on rent bidding was completely misguided and that it would fuel rent increases and put housing further out of reach for millions of renters in New South Wales.

The concern of most stakeholders was that forced disclosure of higher rent offers to other potential tenants would inherently invite further higher offers and a de facto rent auction, which, of course, would increase rents and worsen rental affordability. From a red-tape regulation perspective, that certainly would not be ideal. In this place, I advocate to make sure we do not put unnecessary red tape into legislation and that we are champions of more effective, efficient and leaner government. In relation to this reform, the Tenants' Union said it was extremely worried about the proposal, as did the NSW Council of Social Service, Shelter NSW and the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales. They were all concerned about the unintended consequence of creating a de facto rent auction. To my surprise—you do get surprises in politics every now and then—even Young Labor Left raised concerns, stating in its submission to the Government that the proposal "will entrench a flawed auction model".

I am glad that the bill will now be amended in relation to new section 22B. As many members know—having once been renters, and currently being renters, or having constituents who are renters—renters are doing it very tough. I have shared that I, myself, am a renter with my wife, Gessika. As I said in my inaugural speech:

Renting is a result of our life challenges and life choices. But so many do not have choices—only challenges.

In that speech I made sure, as I will continue to do in this place, that I was advocating for further incentives to ensure long-term rental leases.

As many members in this Chamber have said, over 30 per cent of people in New South Wales rent their homes. Since 2016 there has been a 17.5 per cent increase in the number of renters. It is in this environment that we are now experiencing a rental affordability crisis—a crisis affecting many. The combination of rising interest rates, rising rents and constrained availability of rental properties in the context of a broader inflation-driven cost-of-living crisis has only exacerbated the rental affordability crisis. Every individual deserves the security and dignity of having a place that they can call home.

I welcome new sections 185 and 186 regarding bonds, which will remove unnecessary red tape. I remember moving from one rental property to another and always needing double the savings to make sure that I could transfer the bond. There is a wait to get the first bond back while already having paid the new bond. For a lot of people that is a luxury they do not yet have. I think these new sections will be very warmly welcomed. A concern I share is that with rising interest rates landowners will continually push the increased costs of their mortgages onto renters. I say that as a society we need to support each other and make sure that we all take our portion of responsibility. The new Labor Government should do everything it can to ease the pressure for renters. Getting these reforms right will make sure that all of us in New South Wales are the better for it.

In government, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition did its homework and developed policies that worked. It is worth noting much of the bill builds on the former Coalition Government's reform agenda. The Coalition led the way in reforms to improve rental affordability across New South Wales by introducing and championing a comprehensive package to respond to challenges in the rental market, including ending no-grounds evictions, extending notice periods, banning solicited rent bidding and introducing portable bonds. As I said previously, the portable bond scheme seeks to eliminate the financial stress on tenants by allowing the transfer of bonds between tenancies, removing the need to finance and pay a new rental bond before receiving an old one back.

The Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government enacted regulation-making powers for a portable bond scheme in the Act in 2018 and went to the election promising to establish the scheme by 1 January 2024. I conclude by saying that I look forward to contributing further in this place to the public policy debate surrounding renters and housing affordability. We should aspire for our citizens to have home ownership. By supporting renters, we will support them in their aspirations to become home owners.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:44):** I make a brief contribution to debate in support of the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to establish a portable bond scheme, to close a loophole by extending the ban on soliciting rent bids to landlords and third-party apps, and to appoint a NSW Rental Commissioner to be a voice for renters. The objectives of the bill are to improve residential tenancy laws and make renting fairer for all involved parties. I commend the work done in this regard by the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading in delivering upon the commitments that the Labor Party took to the last election.

I quote the Premier, who said, "You used to wonder whether you could ever afford to buy a home. Now you wonder whether you can ever rent." That is why the Minns Labor Government is working to make renting fairer. The current rental market is very challenging for renters, with rental vacancy rates reaching historic lows in New South Wales. These reforms will make renting laws fairer and strengthen protections for renters. The New South Wales Government has committed to the following rental reforms: appointing a Rental Commissioner to be a voice for renters; amending landlords' ability to end tenancies without a reason; making it easier for renters to have pets; introducing new data protection requirements for real estate agents when they handle renters' personal information; and introducing a portable rental bond scheme.

It should be noted that the Government has also committed to banning secret rent bidding, but this provision is being removed from the bill so that other reforms can proceed through Parliament. Work on all these commitments is being done now. In particular, the process to appoint a Rental Commissioner is underway. The Minister will be seeking input from all stakeholders and the public as further changes take shape. Data from the most recent CoreLogic rental market report from May 2023 shows that the rental vacancy rate in Sydney has fallen from 2 per cent in April 2022 to 1.2 per cent in April this year. Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that about 33 per cent of New South Wales households rent.

Rental prices continue to increase, as highlighted in the latest reports from PropTrack and CoreLogic. Sydney's median rent rose to \$711 per week as of April this year, which shows an increase of 3.9 per cent for the quarter. These are concerning figures, and the objective of the bill is to ensure that the Government acts now to address the issues facing renters. The appointment of a dedicated Rental Commissioner will ensure that the reforms that are brought about by this bill are kept under review, delivering outcomes that are of real benefit for

all parties. The Rental Commissioner will work with renters, owners and the community to progress the Government's reforms, including identifying barriers to increase the housing supply for renters. The commissioner will also work to identify gaps and practices that erode renters' rights and gather data on renting that will help to inform future rental reforms.

A further objective of the bill is banning solicited rent bidding. The Property and Stock Agents Regulation 2022 requires real estate agents to advertise a rental property at a fixed price and bans them from asking renters to offer more rent than the property is advertised for. However, this rule currently only applies to real estate agents. The bill extends this ban to owners and third parties, which closes the loophole that meant agents were not allowed to solicit bids of higher rent but owners and others could still do so. Third parties that provide online rental application tools will also be banned from soliciting higher rent offers from renters who use those tools to apply for properties.

The ban on solicited rent bidding brings New South Wales into line with rent bidding bans in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand. The explicit ban on any third parties encouraging renters to offer more for rental properties puts New South Wales ahead of the curve, as no other State or Territory has done this before. The Government has worked constructively with stakeholders and the crossbench on secret rent bidding, which is covered in clause 22B of the bill. The Government remains committed to improving transparency in the rental market. However, given the concerns about the secret rent bidding provisions and the extremely difficult rental market we have currently, the Government has decided that it needs to provide relief to renters as soon as possible and not hold up the rest of the bill. For this reason, clause 22B of the bill has been removed.

The bill also aims to stop the eviction of tenants without reasonable grounds. This will give renters a greater level of confidence that the roof above their heads cannot be taken away from them unfairly. The bill alleviates some of the practices that exist between landlords and tenants by addressing the over-collection of tenants' personal information. Another important element of the bill is the introduction of a portable bond scheme, which eases the substantial financial burden that may be experienced by people who rent and need to move from one tenancy to another. The bill supports implementation of a portable rental bond scheme by expanding the regulation-making powers that implement the scheme. The portable bond scheme will allow renters to transfer a rental bond from their old rental property to a new rental property before the first bond is released. The scheme will help reduce the financial stress on renting households, as it will mean households do not have to pay for two bonds at the same time. This is timely given the cost-of-living pressures that are affecting people not only in our State but across the globe in a time of economic unease.

I am heartened to see such a substantial bill this early in the new parliamentary term, as it makes it abundantly clear that the Minns Labor Government has a comprehensive rental reform agenda. The Government's agenda recognises the challenges facing the current New South Wales rental market. The bill is the first step in a series of rental reforms the Government has promised to deliver. We will continue to work towards a more balanced rental system that encourages owners and renters to work together for their mutual benefit. I again commend the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading for his work in consultation with the various stakeholders who represent the interests of both tenants and landlords. The cooperation between those various entities is laudable in recognising the urgency for reform in this sector. I can confidently say that the people of New South Wales will benefit from a fairer rental market as the Government takes the necessary steps to address its present imbalances and pressures. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:53):** New South Wales is experiencing the biggest rental crisis in its history. Sydney's vacancy rate is at a record low of 1 per cent, leading rents to soar like never before and forcing renters into housing stress and dangerous living conditions. The threat of homelessness is reaching an even greater proportion of people. The dire situation is starkly evident in my electorate, which has the highest proportion of renting households in the State. Since late last year, I have been swamped with complaints from constituents who have been hit with exorbitant rent increases as high as an additional \$500 a week. The cost-of-living crisis is already taking more from people's pockets for essentials like food, power, medicine and school supplies. They are losing an extra \$200 to \$500 a week on rents that are already high, which is a huge impost for anyone on a low to medium income. As elected representatives, we have a responsibility to fix the housing affordability problem, and that must include slowing the rate of private rent rises. If we fail, we will entrench hardship, disadvantage and even homelessness in a new generation.

I strongly welcome the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 as an important first step in a promised tranche of reforms to address rental affordability, and I commend the Minister for the priority he is giving to these reforms. The bill will introduce portable bonds and extend the existing ban on real estate agents soliciting rents to property owners and third-party rental platforms. The escalating price of rents has led to astronomical bonds, which are generally set at four weeks' rent. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in my

electorate averages about \$1,000 a week, though rents typically reach \$1,400 a week. Bonds are now around the \$4,000 to \$5,000 mark. It is a huge amount to pay when tenants move and need to pay a new bond before their previous one has been returned. It can be around \$10,000. The expense comes at a time when tenants also have to pay moving costs, and those affected are mostly people who cannot afford a deposit to buy a home. The expense is phenomenal and puts housing further out of reach for many. A portable bond scheme has been desperately needed and I hope the bill will put one in place very soon.

The ban on soliciting rent bids is welcome. Agents were already prohibited from soliciting rent bids higher than the advertised price through regulation, which I acknowledge the former Government introduced in December. The bill legislates this prohibition in the Residential Tenancies Act, extending it to property owners and third-party rental platforms. Rent bidding will likely still continue as agents and owners will find a way to encourage bids without breaching laws, and applicants will feel pressure to offer higher bids in the current desperate climate. I welcome news that enforcement has been ramped up, with Fair Trading reporting that during March thousands of advertisements were assessed, undercover inspections were undertaken, and warnings and penalties were issued. Enforcement needs to be maintained.

I strongly welcome the Government's decision to refer clause 22B of the bill to the planned Rental Commissioner following referral to an inquiry. Clause 22B would have required any unsolicited bids to be disclosed to other applicants for a property, and the inquiry showed that the law risked making rental auctions the norm and driving rents up even further. I thank the Government for being consultative on this change and committing to look at other ways to improve transparency. I also acknowledge that it was the Government's and Minister's intent to create transparency in the rental market, and that is what drove those provisions. I appreciate the consultative approach the Government took with the crossbench to establish the inquiry to tease out these issues further.

Addressing rental affordability must be a priority for this House. Supply is a clear problem, but increasing housing supply will take time and urgent relief is needed. The Residential Tenancies Act 2010 currently outlaws excessive rent rises, but there is little guidance on what is excessive, with the onus on tenants to prove that a requested increase is excessive. That situation is allowing rent increases of more than \$500 a week. In the Australian Capital Territory, excessive rent rises are defined as greater than 110 per cent of the consumer price index for rent for Canberra. If an owner or agent wants to request more, they can, but the onus is on them to argue the case in the tribunal that it is not excessive. This is something the Rental Commissioner should consider. We can also modestly increase supply through better regulation and enforcement relating to short-term letting. It is not acceptable to allow the unchecked conversion of residential homes into visitor accommodation with no strategic planning whatsoever; it is even less acceptable to do so in a rental crisis.

There are estimates that better regulation of short-term letting could add over 40,000 new homes to the country's rental market. The focus of plans to increase housing supply must be on social and affordable housing. We know that those with the least means are suffering the most from the rental crisis. Even when a home is within their budget, their capacity to secure it in a competitive market is low. We know that we need to build at least 5,000 new social housing homes every year for the next 10 years just to meet the current demand. We need to start now. Housing is an essential service. Without housing, people cannot sustain relationships, employment, education, health, mental health or social inclusion. I welcome the Government's commitment to addressing the rental crisis and working closely with the crossbench to ensure that provisions were not introduced that could have had unintended consequences. I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** 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.

#### *Public Interest Debate*

#### **STATE BUDGET**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (17:01):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the former Liberal-Nationals Government delivered the biggest two deficits in our State's history.
- (2) Notes the former Liberal-Nationals Government had run up \$129 billion in debt, or \$16,000 per person—the largest debt ever handed from one government to another in New South Wales history.
- (3) Notes that debt is projected to reach \$187 billion by 2026, or \$22,000 per person.
- (4) Notes that the interest on that debt is set to be \$7 billion per year—bigger than the total budget for the NSW Police Force and TAFE NSW combined.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Anyone would think you had read Mr Mookhey's speech.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I thank the member for Dubbo for launching my speech by way of interjection, because I make reference to some profoundly insightful speeches that have been made not in the other place but in this place. I want members to cast their minds back to May 2021. Somebody stood in this Chamber and said:

The budget has a massive structural problem, which has been built into the budget since 2011 under the then Treasurer Mike Baird and has been perpetuated by every single Treasurer since ... we have a massive problem in this State because this Government is racking up intergenerational debt. It is racking up debt at a rate that is jeopardising our triple-A credit rating. It is getting rid of our income streams. At the same time, it is maxing out the credit card. There is no way out of this. We are in a death spiral to the bottom without a significant change in ideology.

That speaker went on to say:

The debt is so large now, it will not be payable by the current generation of taxpayers. It will be an anchor weighing down not only future generations who have to pay it back but also the State, which will have extremely restricted borrowings going forward; will lose its triple-A credit rating, essentially, by the time the debt reaches \$160 billion; and will be borrowing future monies at a higher rate. That means that future budgets will be extremely constrained. That is the model that you lot, who have been in government since 2011, have set up.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** Who said that? Tell us.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** The person who said that was Clayton Barr, the member for Cessnock, who had been telling this Chamber for quite some time about the structural problems with the budget. I know members are probably interested in this. If they would like to read more about what I could foresee, they can go back to my comments on the State budget on 23 June 2015 or my comments on 19 June 2018. It is rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat. The fact is that the former Government, from the time it arrived on the Treasury benches, started a process of doing a couple of things. Firstly, it sold off assets that made a profit, which brought the asset sales as income in the short term, but we had to forego those old incomes that would have been longer term.

Secondly, it started to max out the credit card immediately—back in 2011. Sometimes I hear crowing from the other side of the House about how there was COVID and other things that came along. When I spoke in this House about this issue in 2015 and 2018, there was none of that to worry about. The former Government was already maxing out the credit card. Thirdly, the former Government was essentially building new assets that, from the time they built them, started costing the State money. At the same time it was selling assets that we used to own and turning us into renters, which became a recurrent funding problem. Maintaining assets and renting buildings and facilities are recurrent budget problems that need to be faced in the future.

With the change of government, the incoming Government is declaring that there is a structural problem in the budget. It is not a new phenomenon, and it is not an unforeseen phenomenon. It is a structural phenomenon that was placed in the budget by the ideology of the former Government that recently left the Treasury benches. It is important to note that this was a ticking time bomb that had been coming for this State for quite some time. In fact, it was written in the 2021-22 budget papers that the triple-A credit rating of the State, and the budget deficit problem of the State, could only be reined in or controlled by the future sale of assets. The significance of those particular words being written into the budget is that, at the same time, there was a Treasurer and a Premier who had gone to an election promising not to sell off any more assets. But the budget papers were saying that more assets had to be sold off, otherwise we were going to go down the gurgler.

These are not unknown things. The only thing that has changed with the budget in New South Wales is that the newly elected Government and new Treasurer are openly and honestly saying to everybody, "We have a structural problem. The State budget is in trouble; it is going to take time, energy and effort to fix. We have to be clear about what we have inherited, and we have to be honest about how that will impact the decisions that we are going to be making going forward." That is what has changed. I commend the Treasurer for his openness and honesty. I commend him for his analysis of the budget. It was not an analysis that could not have been done previously, but there was a certain fiction that was being lived out over the past 10 years. The State budget is in trouble. This new Government will take steps and measures to address it and try to fix it. The problems in the State budget are not caused by the current Government; they were caused by the former Government that has just been voted out. This Government will take on that challenge and be honest and open with the people of New South Wales.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:06):** I thank the member for Cessnock. What an absolute load of bunkum that was. We witnessed the delivery of an economic update by the Treasurer, which was then torn to shreds by the shadow Treasurer, and we saw a decision made by the current Government. It is very simply a choice. The member for Cessnock talked about structural things. Structural things would have seen the State back in surplus by 2024-25, as the member would well know. We have seen an infrastructure boom in this State like never before. This is nothing short of a furphy. It is a sad attempt to blame somebody else when those opposite have the responsibility for finances. If they do not want the responsibility for finances, they are in the wrong job



in government. Labor is clearly showing it is not up to the job. It is very simply about choice. The Government owns its budget decisions.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Government members will come to order.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** It cannot point the finger and say, "What we have got here is an attempt by a former government to cause problems." We have now got Labor causing the problems. It is a desperate government that has not backed in its own election commitments. It has the wrong priorities and it has a public sector union wage deal cost blowout. It is a desperate government. It is choosing to slash vital programs that we know make a difference to the cost of living, including Active Kids, Creative Kids and First Lap vouchers. It is limiting energy relief and risking everything that comes with not doing that. Harping on election promises that have been broken, the Premier said very clearly before the election that he would roll over Active Kids like the former Government was planning on doing. We have now seen that absolutely carved up and slashed.

Before the election, Labor also said that any public sector wage increase would be paid for through productivity gains. We asked a question about productivity gains today. Apparently, the submission from Labor to the Parliamentary Budget Office showed a cost of zero dollars over forward estimates. But now we know that it is costing \$618 million in one year and \$2½ billion over the forward estimates. Slashing Active Kids and all our cost-of-living programs is now being put off as productivity savings. They are not productivity savings; they are cost-of-living measures that we had in place. We have real concerns about some of the specific regional funding that we have set up in past years. The Regional Growth Fund is not only for Nationals-held seats. Let us be honest here. Regional communities of all kinds benefit from the funding that we set up for them, including plenty of those in the electorates of members opposite. Let us be very clear about that.

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** Only once we called it out.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** No, not since then. Community Building Partnership and Stronger Country Communities are grant-based funds, funded out of the Regional Growth Fund, that go to all regional communities. Guess what? The Safe and Secure Water Program and telecommunications black spot program that the Government is helping to fund with the Feds have come from the Snowy Hydro fund, which was set up specifically by the Nats to help others in regional areas. The Government decides what to fund and how to fund it. We had a pipeline of \$19 billion for road and rail. We had another \$370 million for the Safe and Secure Water Program to help maintain regional town water supplies. We had more rounds of the Regional Tourism Activation Fund and the Regional Events Acceleration Fund. We would have already included university students, along with trainees and apprentices, in the new regional travel card. We would already be rolling out another hugely successful round of the regional seniors travel card. And, as I said, we were due to be back in surplus by 2024-25.

Let us not hear this rubbish about structural problems and that we would not have got back to surplus. Labor was well aware of those absolute budgetary measures before the election. Despite what Labor has said, that is coming off the back of two years of COVID and, last year, the worst natural disasters in living memory. Three years out of the past four were absolutely diabolical as far as what was required to get out the door and support people. But we did it, and we maintained two triple-A credit ratings.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** One.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** No. We have two. All those things are absolutely vital and absolutely correct. One thing we will not be copping on this side is a lecture on the state of our finances from stingy Minnsy and the razor gangs that are going through and cutting everything out of our regional funds.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** That's not nice.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** It may not be nice, but it is the truth. Those opposite need to do better.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:11):** I support the motion moved by the member for Cessnock in this public interest debate. After last year's budget, the then Government chose to accelerate spending and to keep its foot on the accelerator. The Government added \$33.9 billion worth of expenses over the forward estimates in the space of just 14 months. Apart from times of war or emergency, that is a record. Those spending commitments accelerated, despite all the indicators that we were already seeing. Inflation was already rising. Interest rates were already going up, and power bills were already soaring. While some programs were funded Coalition election promises, others were not.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Hornsby will come to order.

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** Funding for them was left to fall off a cliff and disappear. We are not talking about artificial or superficial programs. Treasurer Daniel Mookhey spoke in the other place earlier this afternoon and gave examples of just three of them. Cyber Security NSW will run out of money in 12 months' time, right at the

time when organised criminals are trying to hack governments on an industrial scale. The out-of-home care system—the very system that cares for children who cannot stay safely in their own homes—faces overruns of \$800 million over the next four years because it has not been funded properly. What about the more than 1,000 healthcare workers who face the axe next year? Their jobs were funded only temporarily.

Governments should have to budget properly for key programs and be clear with the public about which ones are genuinely temporary and which ones are not. Right now, the finance Minister and the Treasurer are pouring over every dollar that the Government spends. The Minns Government is determined to ensure that we are spending the public's money on public priorities. We have been clear that the comprehensive expenditure review the Government is undertaking is informed by three principles: doing our bit to fight inflation, fixing the State's essential services and funding only programs that work. The Treasurer has been clear about this. We expect conflict when we test every spending decision we have inherited, and there are tough choices ahead. That they are tough does not mean they can be avoided or ignored.

The Labor Government is committed to improving the lives of our frontline workers, ensuring that New South Wales does not lose the 75 per cent of healthcare workers and teachers who are thinking of leaving our State for better working conditions. It is tragic to be in this place knowing that my former teaching colleagues are thinking about getting out and that nursing colleagues are heading to south to Victoria or north to Queensland because of the improved financial situations there. Rather than looking after the essential workers who power our State, the former Government sought to undermine them. As nurses cried out for more government support, the Liberal-Nationals Government secretly cut 1,112 nurses from the budget, with those positions unfunded from 20 June 2024. Our nurses deserve better than this.

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

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** The Government has a responsibility to look after the most vulnerable, but the former Government allowed the out-of-home care system to face cost overruns of \$800 million over the next four years. That is just diabolical. I do not know how those opposite can sit there and look at me like that, knowing there is just not the money to pay for kids living in out-of-home care.

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

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** While racking up the largest debt in our State's history—a projected \$187.5 billion disaster—the former Government ensured that Liberal politics were always prioritised ahead of the people of New South Wales. Following the bushfires that devastated the Blue Mountains and Central Coast electorates, 96 per cent of bushfire recovery grants went to Coalition-held seats.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. I remind the member for Hornsby, the member for Dubbo and the member for Coffs Harbour that they are on two calls to order. If they continue to interject, they will be called to order for the third time and invited to step outside the Chamber. They will remain silent. The member for Gosford has the call.

**Ms LIESL TESCH:** With the bushfire rorts, as my community and those in the Blue Mountains begged for help, the Liberal-Nationals Government funded a skydiving adventure park pond ahead of essential services in our communities. The previous Government consistently made choices based on political gain and poor fiscal responsibility. It spent and cut money with absolutely no regard for our communities and future generations. I support the motion moved by the member for Cessnock.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Before I call the member for Davidson, I ask members to cease and desist from interjecting across the Chamber. The member with the call will be heard in silence.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (17:17):** I oppose the motion. I hold this 12-week-old Labor Government to account. This Labor Government clearly lacks vision and a clear agenda, takes absolutely no responsibility and is simply about blaming others. It continues a great Labor legacy of poor economic management, particularly in 2011 under former Labor Treasurer Eric Roozendaal. Remember him? He was the Labor Treasurer who flogged off the electricity assets in the dark of night—known as the gentrader transaction—and left a \$4.5 billion black hole of his own in 2011.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Government members will come to order.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** The Government was unable to fund or build any infrastructure. One of Labor's classics was to spend half a billion dollars on something called the Rozelle metro and not lay a single rail track. But do not take my word for Labor's economic mismanagement. Let us hear some wonderful quotes about what certain others think of it. I have here a book by Frank Sartor, *The Fog on the Hill: How NSW Labor Lost Its Way*. What did he say about Treasurer Roozendaal? He said:

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

The quote continues:

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

We all remember in 2008 when the then Treasurer brought down his famous mini budget, about which Frank Sartor said:

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

Members opposite all think that the world began in 2011, but it did not. Labor was in government for 16 long years, and who better to literally set the record straight than Carl Scully? What did Scully have to say about the previous—

**Mr Mark Coure:** Mine is personally signed.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** Mine is too. It is signed here.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Oatley has been in the House for only two minutes and has interjected twice. The member will come to order.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** The member for Oatley should not interrupt Scully. What did Carl Scully have to say about the last Labor Government? He said:

The Iemma/Rees/Keneally Governments should have built the North West Rail Link as well as the M4 East and the M1 to M2 but instead squandered the opportunity to do so. The current Liberal National Party State Government is now getting on with building major rail and road infrastructure across Sydney and fully exploiting the fact that the post Carr Premiers were simply asleep at the infrastructure wheel. The baton passed. It will not easily be returned.

There is an interesting article I read just a few weeks ago in *The Sydney Morning Herald* by Alexandra Smith. The article "Do black holes exist? Yes, but the political variety evaporate much sooner" makes some interesting commentary. Firstly, it says:

... the black hole that Labor says exists is more about funding gaps than a gaping hole in the state's finances.

Another interesting quote is:

NSW Labor, on the back of an election win, should have the courage to own its agenda without hiding behind the spending decisions of the previous government.

What is Labor looking at cutting in the upcoming budget? Active Kids—cut; First Lap—cut; Creative Kids—cut. What about the Community Building Partnership? What is Labor going to say to its communities when it says, "We are no longer having the Community Building Partnership"? It was actually the former Labor Government that established it. The Coalition Government continued it, and who is looking to cut it?

**Ms Liesl Tesch:** No-one.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** I note the interjection. On budget day I will be reading the budget papers very closely to see if the Community Building Partnership will continue. But mark my words, the rumour is that it is gone and those opposite will need to explain that to their communities.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Gosford will come to order.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** Labor went to an election and did not actually say what the percentage increase for public sector wages would be. They want to keep union bosses happy, but we all saw the Health Services Union walk out of question time in protest today. What about Labor's great policy agenda of banning secret bidding? That did not happen.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Government members will cease interjecting. I will call to order members who continue to interrupt.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (17:23):** Whatever your views on Liberal economic policy—and I appreciate that there are still many in the community who would judge the Liberal Party as better economic managers—after 12 years of Liberal government we have some concrete results. We also know the cost, and the cost is huge. We are \$129 billion in debt now—the largest debt ever handed from one government to another in the history of this State. Members will recall that in 2011, it was \$23 billion or \$3,100 per person.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Dubbo will come to order.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** On the current budget settings inherited by the incoming Labor Government, that debt is projected to reach \$187 billion by 2026 or \$22,000 per person. One might ask what 12 years of Liberal

economic theory has brought us. It has brought us a housing crisis, including some of the most expensive housing in the world. It has brought us a rental crisis. We had a select committee across parties hand down a report just the other week saying we have a rental crisis in this State after 12 years of those opposite. It has brought us the most expensive road tolls on the planet, a cost-of-living crisis, declining school results, and crowded ambulances and hospital emergency departments. So much for 12 years of Liberal economic theory.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The Clerk will stop the clock. I warn the member for Blacktown that I will call him to order if he continues to interject. The member for Dubbo and the member for Hornsby will come to order or they may be ejected from the Chamber. If the members interject again, I will call them to order for the third time. They will be removed from the Chamber for only a few minutes, so they will not get an early mark. Members will cease having conversations across the Chamber. All members will come to order.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** Treasury told the Government after we were elected that the sharp acceleration in spending, combined with rapidly rising debt levels, is piling pressure on the State's credit rating. There is more pressure on the State's triple-A credit rating now than there was in 2020, when Standard and Poor's downgraded us with a legacy of elevated expenses, high interest costs, an overextended capital program and ever-increasing levels of debt. New South Wales' finances are starting to fall behind those of other States. Maintaining those credit ratings is by no means the be-all and end-all of budgets. After all, life continued after Standard and Poor's downgraded us in 2021. Other States like Queensland that have lower credit ratings than us have had to pay less than we have had to in recent years to borrow. Yet the State's credit rating still matters. One of the tests that determines it concerns the level of the State's debt. The amount New South Wales owes in debt is compared with the amount the Government collects in revenue. We are already 30 per cent above certain thresholds.

We are also assessed against the size of our interest payments. Some triple-A credit-rated governments tend to spend about 5 per cent of their income servicing the debt. The previous Government's last budget will see us begin to approach that threshold in two weeks' time. It is against that background that Labor must work to implement its agenda. We also need to finish some of the muddled projects commenced by those opposite not yet completed. In my electorate, the intercity trains sit idle. They have been there for over six months, waiting to be made fit for purpose so they can run safely, with guards, on the main north line as my community has insisted on. Finishing Sydney Metro City and Southwest will cost at least \$20 billion, \$9 billion more than the original price and \$2 billion more than we were last told, and it is years behind schedule. Sydney Metro West will cost \$25 billion, \$12 billion higher than forecast. The Western Harbour Tunnel was supposed to cost \$6.7 billion.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member for Davidson will come to order.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** The price tag has risen to \$7.4 billion, and we only signed the contract in December. The cost of Parramatta Light Rail has skyrocketed as well. We understand that the interest bill on the debt that Labor has inherited is set to be \$7 billion, bigger than the total cost of running the police and TAFE. The scale of the task before the Government is huge and must be appreciated by the people of this State. We are determined to keep the promises we made to the people of New South Wales at the March election. We will make housing more affordable, we will make renting fairer and we will bust the wages cap and invest in the public services that our community has demanded. But we must do so honestly, knowing the budget position we start from. I commend the motion to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Before I call the member for Hornsby, I point out that I am sure he will be very calm and not incite other members, especially Government members, to interject. I anticipate his contribution with eagerness.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (17:28):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I think you are doing a sterling job as well. I move:

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

- (1) Notes that the *2022-2023 NSW Half-Yearly Review* forecast a return to surplus in 2024-25.
- (2) Notes the independent *2023 Pre-election Budget Update* forecast a return to surplus in 2024-25 as confirmed by the Parliamentary Budget Office.
- (3) Notes that under the Minns Labor Government, the New South Wales budget will not return to surplus in 2024-25.
- (4) Notes that under the Minns Labor Government, New South Wales will lose its triple-A credit rating.

I thought I had heard everything from Misinformation Mookhey, but I think Misleading Mehan has taken it to a new level today. That was the worst fairytale I have ever heard! Basically, we have had this little concocted, fictitious fairytale being pushed by Misinformation Mookhey to try to justify this Government breaking all its election promises.

**Mr David Mehan:** Point of order—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Hornsby will resume his seat. The member for The Entrance rises on a point of order.

**Mr David Mehan:** It is a little bit funny—I even smiled and laughed myself—but it is the member for The Entrance.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I should say Disinformation David, but anyway, that is totally different—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! There is no reason I should not place the member for Hornsby on a call to order for behaving inappropriately and for inciting other members. I have warned Government members not to be incited by the member for Hornsby. The member for Hornsby will be sensible.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I was getting to that point but I was rudely cut off by the member for The Entrance. What I want to do is get some facts on the table because the gallery is packed tonight. I am sure that they are very interested in what the facts are, so let me bring them to light. Firstly, the former Government left the Labor Party with the State's triple-A credit rating in place.

**Ms Julia Finn:** Point of order—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Hornsby will resume his seat.

**Ms Julia Finn:** The member for Hornsby should direct his comments through the Chair, not to the gallery.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Yes.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The gallery is awash with people who want to hear the facts. Firstly, the former Coalition Government left the Labor Party with the State's triple-A credit rating intact, as confirmed by Moody's and by Fitch, and Standard & Poor's maintained our double-A plus credit rating. That is a better position than the Victorian Labor Government has at the moment from all three credit rating agencies. Secondly, we had the budget on a pathway back to surplus in 2024-25. That was confirmed by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office.

Thirdly, the inconvenient truth for Misinformation Mookhey is that we were undertaking the biggest investment in public infrastructure anywhere in the nation—building roads, building schools, building rail and transforming our State. In fact, we were building twice the infrastructure that they are building in Victoria. To that point, and the fourth fact that we have on the table, is our debt to GDP ratio is half that of the Victorian Labor Government, which is building half as much, and it was faced with the same pandemic circumstances as we were here in New South Wales. At the same time the former New South Wales Coalition Government borrowed around \$50 billion, or spent \$50 billion, to get us through the worst health and economic shock that we have seen in over a century. We brought the State through that crisis and we came out stronger on the other side. If those opposite want to understand why there are borrowings, it is because we put the State first to protect us.

What is the dividend of those investments? Let me tell you what they are. We left the State with the lowest unemployment rate since records began; we ensured that we protected our health system, kept our community safe and came out the other side arguably stronger than anywhere else in the world; and, by a number of measures, we delivered the strongest economic growth in the Commonwealth. They are the facts. That is what a Coalition government looks like. Labor is only a few months into government, and what we are about to see is Deficit Daniel trashing the State's books, losing the triple-A credit rating, putting us into deeper deficits and cutting programs. They are going to cut cost-of-living relief for families, removing the Active Kids, Creative Kids and Community Building Partnership programs, at the same time as not investing in vital infrastructure. That is what we can expect from Labor. All we are seeing is excuses to break election commitments and not deliver for the people of New South Wales.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Before I call the member for Cessnock in reply to the debate, I ask all members to take a chill pill, relax and listen very carefully to him.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (17:34):** In reply: Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot tell you how relaxed I am about speaking in reply. I thank members representing the electorates of Dubbo, Gosford, Davidson, The Entrance and Hornsby for their contributions to today's public interest debate. The member for Hornsby reminded me of the Monty Python sketch with the Black Knight. His budget essentially has done to the State what was done to the Black Knight—arms chopped off, legs chopped off, but still kicking and screaming, saying, "'Tis but a scratch". No, it is not just a scratch; it is a little bit worse than that.

I really appreciated the contribution of the member for Dubbo and the suggestion that we were going to be back in surplus by 2024-25 because the former Government had set up the Debt Retirement Fund—namely, a bucket of money meant to be invested in things that make a profit so that that profit comes back to pay off some debt, which the former Government never managed to do in 12 years. The borrowings that go into the Debt Retirement Fund were going to be invested. It is like taking out a loan at the bank on the one hand and pretending

you do not have that debt on the other hand, and saying, "We have this income coming from these investments." That is terrific, but you still have the debt as well.

What we know from analysis of forward budgets, and whether or not there was going to be a surplus, is that the only way that that surplus can be realised is for further borrowings to take place. Even though we know that we are on our way to \$187 billion in debt in New South Wales, and that is going to cost \$7 billion a year in interest payments, the solution from those opposite was going to be "Let's borrow more and we will put it into the Debt Retirement Fund. What are we going to do with the Debt Retirement Fund? We are going to try to invest in things that make profit." Here are a couple of tips: What about investing in electricity assets? They would make a pretty good profit.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order: The member for Cessnock is clearly misleading the House. There was no borrowing to go into the NSW Generations Fund. That is a complete and utter lie. He knows it, Daniel Mookhey knows it, and he should withdraw it.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I cannot believe some of the furrphies I have heard in this House tonight, and the member called up one there which I honestly believe to be true. But the point is that we have been living a lie for too long. They have been racking up the debt. We cannot do it anymore. We have to be honest and open with the people, and that is what we are going to do.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....35  
Noes .....52  
Majority.....17

#### AYES

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

James, T  
Kean, M  
Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Layzell, D  
Marshall, A  
Perrottet, D  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D  
Singh, G (teller)

Sloane, K  
Speakman, M  
Taylor, M  
Thompson, T  
Toole, P  
Tuckerman, W  
Ward, G  
Williams, L  
Williams, R  
Williamson, R  
Wilson, F

#### NOES

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

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

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

## PAIRS

Amon, R  
Petinos, E

Watson, A  
Saffin, J

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....52  
Noes .....35  
Majority.....17

## AYES

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

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

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

## NOES

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

Hodges, M  
James, T  
Kean, M  
Kemp, M  
Lane, J  
Layzell, D  
Marshall, A  
Perrottet, D  
Preston, R  
Provest, G  
Roberts, A  
Saunders, D

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

## PAIRS

Saffin, J  
Watson, A

Petinos, E  
Williams, R

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***PARLIAMENTARY REMUNERATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023****First Reading**

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

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later time.

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (RENTAL FAIRNESS) BILL 2023****Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (17:53):** I contribute briefly to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. I note at the outset that during the election campaign in March 2023 and subsequently, Government members identified and proposed a wide range of changes that should be made in this space. We are acutely aware that what is happening in the residential tenancies space is not keeping pace with what is happening in our wider society and communities. We heard during many contributions to the debate that more than 36 per cent of our community are currently in residential tenancies. That means one out of every three households is living in a residential tenancy and probably will continue to do so for a very long time, if not people's entire life. That percentage is not getting smaller; it is getting bigger.

As we project forward to what the next decade might look like, or the decade after that, where will we be? Those of us with children think about where our children will be in the future: Will they be in their own home and, hopefully, paying off their mortgage, or will they be renters for their entire adult lives? That context emphasises the importance of change and, as I said at the start, the Government has committed to a number of significant changes in this space. The bill was introduced into the House in a certain form and some amendments have been foreshadowed. But, in overview, the objects of the bill are to:

- (a) prohibit advertising or otherwise offering a residential tenancy for premises unless a fixed amount is stated in the advertisement or offer as the amount of rent for the premises, and
- (b) prohibit the soliciting of amounts of rent for residential properties that are higher than the advertised amount, and
- (c) provide for additional regulation-making powers in relation to a rental bond roll-over scheme.

Those three main objects in the overview of the bill are important because there was a growing trend in a really tight housing market for some rental properties to go to market without having an actual price attached to them. It was "Offers above" or "Make an offer" or "Tell us how much you think this might be worth". That was incredibly unfair to consumers, who are constrained by a whole bunch of factors. They were essentially walking into an environment where they had no expertise in the real estate market to give them an indication about roughly what the market price would be in a particular suburb or area within a suburb. That loophole had been growing as a consequence of the previous Government's regulations and will now be closed by this Government's legislation.

Earlier versions of the legislation most certainly prevented a real estate agent from encouraging an applicant for a rental property to make higher bids and offers, but one limitation was an uncertain loophole about whether the property owner or a third party could encourage those applicants to make offers above the asking price. Government members are looking to fix that part of the scheme and eradicate that loophole. While we acknowledge that people in the rental market will make offers above the asking price—which at the moment happens in secret and is a bit of a dark art, involving some voodoo—we have fundamentally ruled out people proactively suggesting to renters that they enter an offer above the asking price.

A number of members spoke about the importance of being able to carry over a rent bond to the next lease that a renter might take on. That is incredibly and fundamentally important, because the bond is four weeks' rent tied up in one place and held in trust. If a renter is forced or chooses to move out of one property and stump up the bond for the next one, in the past they have needed to find another four weeks' rent to put into trust while they waited for the first bond to be released. That is an incredibly important element of the bill, particularly for families. As renters, by and large, they probably struggle to make ends meet—to pay the rent and the bills and to put food on the table. It would be extremely difficult for them to find a new bond while the old bond was being held somewhere else.

The member for Newtown suggested earlier in her contribution to debate that moving from one property to the next might cost on average in the vicinity of \$4,000, which is an incredible amount of money for families living on the margins to comprehend. As members of Parliament, we know that families are living on the margins because they arrive on our doorsteps. They come into our electorate offices. They ask for appointments. They turn



up in all sorts of states of despair, anxiety and sheer frustration about their housing position and the fact that it is so tenuous. Quite often we see them because they are essentially homeless or on the way to being homeless. We know how difficult their position is and how fragile the financial positions of many families are. The bill represents really excellent changes that will be made.

I was part of the select committee that considered new section 22B, which is an attempt to end secret rent bidding to which I referred earlier. Tomorrow we will have a take-note debate on that. The committee process was insightful for a number of reasons but, importantly, I must offer a personal response to what the committee heard. I acknowledge that the people who made submissions and who appeared before the committee were of the opinion that they would rather not end secret rent bidding in the manner being proposed. I found that quite shocking.

I want to be empowered with knowledge and information to make the best decisions for my position and my family. The more information I have access to and the more open and transparent a process is, the more empowered I am to make the decisions I need to make. While I again emphasise that I acknowledge the people who made submissions and who appeared before the committee were saying the opposite—that they would rather us not end secret rent bidding and they would prefer that to remain secret—I still struggle to comprehend why somebody would want to operate in an environment where they do not know what is going on behind the scenes.

We heard that when an applicant is unsuccessful in their bid for a property, by and large they get no feedback at all. If a small and simple piece of feedback to them was "Look, I know we advertised it at \$500. Somebody came along and offered \$520. You didn't. You missed out", at least then they would know that someone offered more money and they could give that some thought for the future. But we will not go down that path because I will speak more about that tomorrow in the committee take-note debate. There is a lot of work to do in this space. I commend the Minister for bringing the bill before the House. I commend the Government for its position of intent and dedication to making changes in this important space. The Minister has foreshadowed some amendments, which I will support. I look forward to future tenancy legislation that comes to the House.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (18:03):** I speak in support of the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. Residents of New South Wales are experiencing a housing emergency like no other we have seen. With over 30 per cent of households in New South Wales now renting the property that they live in, the rental market has become increasingly challenging and rental prices continue to increase. More and more households are suffering from rental stress. In my electorate of South Coast, nine out of 10 households are experiencing financial stress associated with household rents. The bill is so important because it aims to ensure renters have access to secure, safe and affordable housing.

The New South Wales Government has committed to a suite of rental reforms that include appointing a Rental Commissioner to be a voice for renters, amending landlords' ability to end tenancies without a reason, making it easier for renters to have pets, introducing a portable bond scheme and introducing new data protection requirements for the handling of renters' personal information. Alongside the Government's establishment of a Rental Commissioner, the bill will make renting fairer by establishing a portable bond scheme; by extending the ban on soliciting rent bids to landlords and third-party apps, closing a loophole; and by empowering the Rental Commissioner to gather pricing data from real estate agents. Those reforms will make renting laws fairer and will help to strengthen protections for renters in New South Wales.

The Rental Commissioner will work with renters, owners and the wider community to progress the Government's reforms, including the commitment to ban secret rent bidding. The commissioner will also be responsible for identifying barriers to increasing the housing supply for renters, for identifying gaps and practices that erode renters' rights and for helping inform future rental reforms required to protect renters in New South Wales. As mentioned, the bill supports the implementation of a portable bond scheme by expanding the regulation-making powers that allow the making of regulations to implement the scheme. The portable bond scheme will allow renters to transfer a rental bond from their old rental property to a new rental property before the first bond is released.

The bill expands the existing powers in section 186A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to allow for regulations to be made relating to the secretary's powers for the scheme and to allow for flexibility in the use of systems to administer the scheme by guaranteeing bond payments. The Government will work closely with industry, renters and the wider community to ensure that, as we design the scheme. Key stakeholders will contribute to the design of the portable bond scheme, which will help to reduce financial stress on households that rent because they will not have to pay for two bonds at the same time—something that is not achievable for many in our communities. I am sure that we are all well aware, as pointed out earlier today, that moving from rental properties can be very costly. This measure will help to reduce one of the largest costs when moving from one rental property to another.

I am proud to be a part of a government that has committed to introducing reforms to protect renters in New South Wales. Banning solicited rent bidding is a huge step in protecting renters, and brings New South Wales into line with rent bidding bans in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand. Currently, the Property and Stock Agents Regulation 2022 requires real estate agents to advertise a rental property at a fixed price and bans them from asking renters to offer more rent than the property is advertised for. However, that rule currently applies only to real estate agents. The bill will extend the ban to owners and third parties, closing the loophole that allowed owners and others to solicit bids of higher rent. The bill's explicit ban on any third parties encouraging renters to offer more for a rental property puts New South Wales ahead of the curve because no other State or Territory has done this before.

We have already heard that there was to be another part of this bill: new section 22B, which was directed at ending secret rent bidding. I was honoured to be part of the Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. That inquiry was driven by the desire to bring to Parliament as quickly as possible a legislative process to improve certain elements of rental tenancies. I take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders and members of the crossbench who have engaged constructively on the bill. The scope of the inquiry was very tightly constrained. Clause 22B of the bill spoke only to the means by which transparency of rent offers above the advertised price are being made. However, it was clear throughout the inquiry that there is currently no data available to know the level and extent of secret rent bidding. This is a direct consequence of the secrecy and the unregulated nature of the activity.

Members know that disadvantaged people in the community—including people on an aged or disability or carers pensions, unemployed people and people on low incomes—are proportionally more affected by secret rent bidding, but secret rent bidding affects everyone. My own daughter relayed a story whereby she was told by a real estate agent that there had been a higher offer on a rental property she had applied for. When she asked for evidence, it was not forthcoming. Section 22B of the bill would provide the transparency required and it is my belief that disadvantaged groups in the community would be no further disadvantaged with the inclusion of clause 22B in the bill. What is required for these disadvantaged groups are social and affordable housing options—options that the previous Government failed to adequately provide. Bringing transparency to offers of rent above the advertised price has not been enacted in any other State in Australia. The chair of the select committee, the member for Cessnock, stated:

Many of the submissions and hearing witnesses offered their own view of what 'might', 'could' or 'may' happen. In fact, there is no evidence that any of these things will occur, or will happen in the way in which it was first thought.

The Government remains committed to improving transparency in the rental market. However, given the concerns about the secret rent bidding provisions and the current extremely difficult rental market, the Government has decided that it needs to provide relief to renters as soon as possible and not hold up the rest of the bill. The issue of increasing transparency in the rental market will be referred to the incoming Rental Commissioner so that they can continue to work closely with advocates and the rest of the sector on this issue. The Minns Labor Government has a comprehensive rental reform agenda and recognises the challenging realities of the current New South Wales rental market. The agenda is focused on making sustainable rules that improve the rental market. The bill is the first step in a series of rental reforms the Government has promised to deliver. I thank the Minister for bringing the bill forward, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (18:12):** I contribute to debate in support of the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. The bill seeks to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to prohibit certain practices in relation to advertising or offering amounts of rent for residential premises, to provide for the transfer of rental bonds, and to provide that amounts credited to the Rental Bond Account are held on trust by the Rental Bond Board; to amend the Residential Tenancies Regulation 2019 to provide for certain penalty notice offences; to amend the Property and Stock Agents Regulation 2022 to make a consequential amendment; and is also for related matters. I commend the Minister and the shadow Minister for their work on the bill.

Renters deserve to participate in the rental market in a free and fair way. Like all markets, there are rules, which apply to both renters and landlords. These rules need to exist because inevitably there are dishonest actors who seek to gain an advantage through nefarious or inappropriate actions. Whilst I appreciate that the Government is seeking to introduce consumer protection measures, if we are to address rental pressures, we need to be honest about the bigger issue giving rise to higher rents. The situation faced by renters is in no small part due to successive governments at all levels acting like frustrated mechanics, tampering with the planning system that regulates development and the taxation system that often encourages all the wrong sorts of investment.

On the taxation side, uncapped negative gearing is but one example of what often encourages all the wrong sorts of investment. At a State level, the lack of planning certainty provides for the frequent refrain in the sector that a quick no is better than a long yes. But at the local government level, councils have a role to play in ensuring they have a consistent and strategic focus on development that will build communities that cater to home owners,

renters and investors. Whilst those opposite talk about supporting renters, what they often fail to acknowledge is that supply is as much a problem for home ownership as it is for renters.

Renters deserve choice. In order to have that choice, the other side of the equation involves supply. Just as we need more homes to rent, we also need more homes to own. The more we increase supply, the more we lower the price. This principle rings as true for renters as it does for home owners. This may come as a shock to Government members, but markets exist. Whilst I am fully supportive of sensible consumer regulation, the more you tamper with the market, the more you find yourself chasing your tail, as actions inevitably have consequences. Those opposite cannot pretend to care about skyrocketing rents while at the same time cutting the delivery of vital infrastructure that supports strategically planned growth.

If they want to see rents fall, they need to address a variety of policy issues. If they agree with the proposition that renters deserve a choice then I ask Government members how they reconcile their actions in this place with the actions of their representatives at local levels. In Shoalhaven City Council there is an extraordinary situation of a major subdivision at Callala being opposed by the Labor-Greens majority on the council. The subdivision included 40 affordable homes whilst simultaneously handing back 1,000 hectares of valuable land to the Jervis Bay National Park—but they voted against it. This is just one of so many examples whereby members of Labor and The Greens talk about more affordable housing but never back it in.

I would simply say to those opposite: If you are to be authentic and genuine about addressing rents, then you must also address some of the mechanical problems that exist in this place and work with the Commonwealth and local councils to address the issues on the supply side as well. I acknowledge that many renters in my electorate are facing a real and challenging struggle at present. Whilst I have heard a number of city-based members talk about the rental crisis in their electorates, the crisis is not just limited to metropolitan areas. I saw this during my time as Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, particularly on the South Coast and the North Coast.

I support the provisions of the bill that relate to transferable bonds. However, I note that the bill before Parliament does not appear to set out the details of the scheme. I would appreciate it if the Minister would elaborate on this in his contribution in reply so that I can understand exactly what the scheme is and how it will work. I understand that the provision, in theory, would allow tenants to lodge the bond for their new tenancy using a provisional certificate backed by the bond for their old tenancy. If the new bond amount is higher, the tenant would pay the difference in cash. Then, when the old tenancy ends, the bond pays out the provisional certificate. If any of it is paid to the old landlord, the tenant again has to make up the difference in cash. All of this happens in the first few months of the new tenancy, when there is unlikely to be any cause for the bond to be claimed by the new landlord.

This is an elegant solution to a cashflow problem tenants often experience between tenancies. If that is exactly what the Government is proposing then of course I support it. The bill also deals with rent bidding. There is a good and worthwhile reform at the base, but people should not expect it to cure all the problems we currently have. Rental bidding is inappropriate and wrong. I think it distorts the market. It is a good idea to require landlords and agents to advertise properties at a specific rent amount and not a range. This would address a sharp practice that has arisen from time to time, where agents and landlords advertise at a range of rents—for instance, \$500-\$550 per week—knowing they are not interested in applications at the lower end of the range, but wanting to give the appearance of a lot of interest in the property in order to spur higher bids.

In other words, it is similar to underquoting in the home-buying market. It is a deceptive practice. Requiring a specific rent amount to be advertised helps to stamp it out. Likewise, it is good to prohibit agents and landlords from soliciting offers higher than the advertised rent. This helps ensure that the advertised rent is genuine and not a deceptive underquote. What is happening at the moment is different. It does not look like there is a lot of rent-ranging or deliberate underquoting going on. The market is evidently very tight and advertised rents have increased a lot. Where applicants miss out a few times, they may start making unsolicited higher offers. The bill would create a requirement for the agent or landlord to notify all other applicants of a higher offer from an "acceptable applicant", as defined.

A process would kick in where the agent or landlord has checked the applicant's bona fides and found them acceptable, requiring written notices of the higher offer to go to everyone else who has put in an application. To me, that is a very sensible reform and I certainly support it. There has been a lot of talk about the Rental Commissioner. Whilst I appreciate members opposite have talked about the commitment, the detail of the commissioner's role has not been included in the bill. What powers the commissioner may have will be interesting to see, and I look forward to analysing further information that may come from the Government in relation to that matter.

One thing I will give the Government a big tick on is its commitment to Homes NSW. I remember during my time in the ministry there were four agencies ostensibly looking after social housing: the Land and Housing Corporation, the Department of Communities and Justice, the Aboriginal Housing Office and the Department of Planning and Environment. To me, it made no sense. If the Government is genuine about trying to get all the auspices of government to work together, having them under one roof makes a hell of a lot of sense. That will be a good reform and I look forward to seeing the machinery-of-government changes come forward to allow that to occur. That will allow for social housing investment in the right areas—should the funds flow from Canberra. I was disappointed to see those funds held up in the Senate by both the Coalition and The Greens.

They need to get out of the way and allow the Government to invest in social and affordable housing where it is needed. Of course, the investment needs to happen in all areas of the State but, as the Premier said, housing needs to be close to services, close to public transport and close to things that people need. I look forward to seeing those investments and machinery-of-government changes come forward. We need to acknowledge, as I have said, that there is a role for the market to play. So often we forget that. Unless we let the market do its job, people who are seeking to own or rent a home will face challenges as well.

This debate has been around for a long time. Those who are students of history will remember the 1949 Federal election, where this was the very issue that confronted Mr Chifley and Mr Menzies. The campaign was based on homes to rent and homes to own for returned servicemen. I suspect this debate will be ongoing. That does not mean we cannot focus on renters today. It does not mean we cannot look at sensible consumer protections. But when the Government does one thing for renters, it could also acknowledge that it can encourage greater home ownership because housing is a trajectory. Everyone deserves the right to take part in it and be a part of it. I support the bill and thank the Minister for his contribution.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (18:21):** I am proud to support this incredibly important piece of legislation. I acknowledge the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading for the work that he has been doing. I also acknowledge the Minister for Housing for her work in social housing. The fair trading Minister and I attended a town hall last week in Parramatta with the excellent public sector workers from both our agencies, SafeWork and Fair Trading. It was great to see Commissioner Chandler there. He is doing a fantastic job.

The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 represents another major step for the Minns Government towards implementing its election commitments. I know from my role in industrial relations just how important it is to have a secure job with all the rights attached to it. A secure job is fundamental to so many other parts of our lives, allowing us to put food on the table, pay our monthly bills and secure a bank loan or a mortgage. Equally fundamental is secure housing. Unless you have been living on another planet you would know that the current rental market is very challenging for renters, with rental vacancies rates reaching historic lows in New South Wales. This is an extremely stressful and often dire situation for those already locked out of home ownership by unaffordable house prices. It is a vicious cycle. Without stable, affordable accommodation it is more difficult to hold down a good, secure job. Finding a long-term solution to the rental accommodation shortage is difficult. The bill will at least make renting fairer and give renters more rights and protections.

The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023 amends the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to progress the election commitment to establish a portable bond scheme, close a loophole by extending the ban on soliciting rent bids to landlords and third-party apps, and empower the NSW Rental Commissioner to gather pricing data from real estate agents. These reforms will make renting laws fairer and will strengthen protections for renters in New South Wales. My colleagues have already mentioned that data from the most recent CoreLogic rental market report in May 2023 shows that the rental vacancy rate in Sydney fell from 2 per cent in April 2022 to 1.2 per cent in April this year. Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that about 33 per cent of households rent in New South Wales. Rental prices continue to increase, as highlighted in the latest report from PropTrack and CoreLogic. Sydney's median rent rose to \$711 per week as of April this year. This shows an increase of 3.9 per cent for the quarter.

They are concerning figures, and we must act now to address the issues facing renters. I represent the Canterbury electorate, where just over one-third of our community are renters. It is a very difficult time and we are at a crossroads. Many people who come into our office are a pay cheque away from being thrown out of their rental property. There are all sorts of reasons. But when you see a single-parent family with four kids about to be kicked out at two months' notice and they have nowhere in the area to go, it is terrible. One reason is that the former Government sold off a lot of public housing properties. That was the way they dealt with many of these issues.

I listened to the member for Kiama in acknowledging Labor's commitment to Homes NSW. We welcome his support. But he was in Cabinet when the four agencies were working in silos. This is a big mess we have been left with that we have to fix. We have public housing, social housing and key worker housing in my electorate.

We have the Sydenham to Bankstown rail line that goes into the city and into Greater Western Sydney, and people particularly need to use our train system. We have seen many people kicked out because the former Government sold billions of dollars' worth of public housing. Shame on former housing Minister Pru Goward, who was in this place. She has a lot to answer for because she started the major sell-off of public housing. If those opposite were serious about housing, they would have stemmed that and not have agreed to those sell-offs. They would have had a coordinated plan.

When I was in the other place, we established a select committee to inquire into social, public and affordable housing. We worked together with Paul Green from the Christian Democratic Party and with The Greens. We had the support of those opposite and, of course, the Labor Party. The committee made over 40 recommendations. Those opposite had the opportunity to take some of those recommendations and to make changes; fast-forward eight years later and we would have been in a different predicament. But what we saw from those opposite was just sell, sell, sell. There was no thought process—

**Mr Tim James:** And build, build, build.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** You did not build. You sold \$90 billion of public housing. The former Government chucked people out of their homes. It sold off Ivanhoe Estate. It threw people out of their homes and did not have a coordinated process. It is sometimes good to reflect and say, "You know what? We have made a mistake. We have got it wrong." I did that many times when Labor lost office in 2011. I absolutely did. Members opposite must understand what happened and why Ivanhoe Estate was sold off. Former Minister Pru Goward has a lot to answer for. She ripped the guts out of housing and Family and Community Services. Young people are suffering because of decisions that she made 10 years ago. She stood in this place and laughed it away. It was appalling. The new Opposition members and new shadow Ministers in this place must reflect on the mistakes that were made and say that they will do better.

The Government has committed to the following rental reforms: appointing a Rental Commissioner to be a voice for renters; amending landlords' ability to end tenancies without a reason; making it easier for renters to have pets; introducing new data protection requirements for real estate agents when they handle renters' personal information; and introducing a portable rental bond scheme, which is fantastic. Work on all of those commitments is now being done. In particular, the process to appoint a Rental Commissioner is underway. I acknowledge the Minister again for the comprehensive work that he is undertaking. The Government will seek input from all stakeholders and the public as further changes take shape.

The Rental Commissioner will work with renters, owners and the community to progress the Government's reforms, including the commitment to ban secret rent bidding. The portable rental bond scheme is an important measure. The bill expands the regulation-making powers to implement the scheme. The portable bond scheme will allow renters to transfer a rental bond from their old rental property to a new rental property before the first bond is released. The scheme will help reduce financial stress on renting households as it will mean households do not have to pay for two bonds at the same time. I welcome the bill.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Minister for the Hunter) (18:31):** I contribute to debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. My contribution will perhaps be brief, but it is important given that the housing issue affects many people in so many parts of New South Wales, particularly in Newcastle, where many people are struggling with the cost of living after 12 long years of the former Coalition Government. It is refreshing to come into the Chamber and have our wonderful Minister put forward such good legislative changes to try to make things better and easier for people to get housing in this State. Housing security is not a privilege, and it is not a luxury. Housing security is necessary for survival. If one drives around Newcastle on a Saturday morning, there is a good chance that they will see a long line coming down a driveway and out into the street. You sometimes think, "What could these people be queuing for?" In most cases, they are queuing for a chance at survival and to stay off the streets. It is confronting, but quite often that is the case. There can be well over 100 people queuing for one house or one unit. There will 96 or 98 other people who miss out and have to keep going around and around.

Rental vacancy is at an all-time low, and the loophole that continues to allow rental bidding is making the renting process more and more difficult for lower income households. Renters are driven to a point of such desperation that they end up paying higher rents than originally advertised or simply cannot afford the higher rents. They need the lease to survive. It is a brutal fight out there, pitting renters against renters. I appreciate the Minister's efforts on the bill and its referral to a committee to do more work on it. In the past year alone, there have been rent increases of up to 50 per cent. On the 2021 census night, over 1,000 people in the Newcastle local government area were homeless. There has been an increase since then, as well as increases in rent prices.

Another pressure that renters face is the terrible rental bond that makes it difficult for a person going from one residence to another. Newcastle has always had more renters than the State and national average. In fact,

about one-third of the electorate is renting. It is a university town with lots of students—some young, some older, some local and some who have travelled from overseas to live there. Most of those students are renters. They are not high-income earners. They are paying for their education. They work odd hours around their classes and study hours. They take weeks and months off work to go on prac—a requirement of their university courses. They live together in share houses to save money and reduce living costs. Many of them are struggling to get by. It is a far cry from the days when we went to university and perhaps did not have to struggle as much to get us through our education.

When renters have to move, the pressure of paying a bond is significant. They spend weeks leading up to a move saving money and picking up shifts to afford the bond. We should be helping renters when they are in between homes, not impairing them. It is a time when they are economically and emotionally vulnerable. The portable rental bond scheme is going to reduce the financial stress on students and other renters. With the cost of living in its current state, the amendment could not be more timely or more necessary. There were 12 long years of those opposite making things difficult for people by not providing enough housing and not supporting people on lower incomes.

I acknowledge Nicole Grgas and the Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service for their outstanding work. It is difficult work. The organisation struggles to get through all of its work, and it now faces a massive increase in work to assist people where it can. The organisation really struggles, along with many domestic violence shelters and other organisations that are overwhelmed by the amount of people knocking on their doors. This is great legislation. I acknowledge that the proposals are not going to fix every issue in the current housing crisis. The bill is the first step in a long journey to protect renters, regardless of income or employment, and ensure that they are not just surviving but living full lives, without housing stress and with the full support of the Government.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (18:37):** In reply: Firstly, I thank all members that contributed to the debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023: the members representing the electorates of Willoughby, The Entrance, Prospect, Albury, Granville, Newtown, Gosford, Davidson, Mount Druitt, Sydney, Cessnock, Canterbury, South Coast, Kiama and Newcastle. The Government understands the pressures that people are feeling in the renting and housing market at this stage. It understands the financial and emotional pressures that people are feeling in this difficult time.

The Government knows how important renting and housing is and the impact it has on people as they make other big decisions in their lives, like where they work, where they want to live and other personal family decisions. These are very difficult times. That is why this bill is so important, along with other reforms that the Government wants to do in this space. The bill delivers on the Government's election commitment to improve rental laws for the people of New South Wales. It does so by extending the ban on solicited rent bidding to landlords and third parties and supporting the implementation of a portable bond scheme. It is the Government's first step in making systemic changes to the New South Wales rental market to ensure that renters are provided with meaningful protections when looking for a home and to make it easier for them to balance financial burdens as they move from place to place. The ban on solicited rent bidding will align rental laws in New South Wales with those in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. It will ensure that landlords and third parties, in addition to real estate agents, will not be able to invite tenants to make offers of rent higher than the advertised price for a rental property.

While we have now removed the proposed ban on secret rent bidding from the bill, our Government remains committed to improving transparency. We will charge the incoming Rental Commissioner with the important task of working with stakeholders to look at ways to improve transparency in the market. I am proud that we have moved quickly to introduce the enabling provisions for the Government's portable bond scheme. I have heard firsthand from renters how expensive it is to move between rental properties. The Government wants to make it easier for renters by allowing them to transfer their existing bond to their next property without having two bonds operating concurrently. There is more work to be done to make this a seamless customer experience, and the Government will work closely with industry and community stakeholders to roll out a portable bond scheme that works for renters and owners.

Today's debate has shown the importance of fair rental laws to all members. I respond briefly to the points made. It is easy for Opposition members to criticise the Government for not supporting renters, but they had 12 years to take action and lacked any sense of urgency or focus on making the required changes. This is a very difficult situation that I fairly say is the result of 12 years of inaction. Suddenly the Opposition wants us to care about renters who were ignored for so long. Members' commitment to any reform agenda should be measured by their past actions in government, not their criticisms in opposition. I always respect any argument that can be

substantiated by analysis, research and evidence, rather than the parroting of other people's opinions. We should never be comforted by other people's opinions or be discomforted by our own thoughts. The intended postponement of clause 22B is not a broken promise. We have rescheduled our commitment to increasing transparency in the rental market.

I find it odd that the Liberal Party, which always says it believes in better-informed markets and transparency of information that empowers individual decision-making, stands against the initiatives of clause 22B. Such is its political opportunism over the policy objective. Clause 22B was and is a transparency measure, not a price-influencing mechanism. It was intended to make an opaque situation in the rental market more transparent. I trust individuals and I give them credit for making decisions that best suit their circumstances. But I acknowledge that delaying other important aspects of the bill because of hypothetical debates about the repercussions of clause 22B is not in renters' interests. Every piece of economic analysis that I have read says that rental prices are influenced by factors like location, number of bedrooms, house type, cost of financing, whether the property is close to schools and jobs, access to transport, and the fundamental factors of supply and demand. We have also noted that since COVID, household size in Australia has reduced and this has created demand for more than 100,000 dwellings over existing stock. Supply and demand is what is actually causing a lot of the price pressures in the market.

I am happy to be proven wrong on whether there is economic literature that says that a notification mechanism is more statistically significant than the factors I have outlined. I acknowledge that the economic equation does not always equal the political equation. I do not want to delay important aspects of the bill and, on top of that, go through some haggling process in the upper House. Delay does not suit renters and it does not suit the rental market. The Government will charge the Rental Commissioner with continuing this work in close consultation with advocates and the sector to make the market more transparent. I note the comments from the member for Davidson. It was encouraging to hear the Opposition's support for our other rental reform commitments, and its calls for bipartisanship. I look forward to its support when we introduce our next tranche of legislation to improve fairness in the rental market.

I recognise the calls from the member for Newtown for a complete ban on rent bidding. However, there is a risk that banning properties from being rented above the advertised price may lead to higher initial asking prices. If there is no room for owners or agents to negotiate on rental prices, then some landlords may try to price as high as possible so they can charge an inflated market price, which I think could be well over and above the normal market price. This would not be productive for renters who are already facing increasing rents. The Government wants an approach that allows parties to work together and ensures renters have the information they need to make an informed decision on a rental property that best suits their personal situation. As I have said, the incoming Rental Commissioner will consider the issue of increasing transparency in the rental market. The process for recruiting the commissioner is well underway. I look forward to them being appointed so they can get to work straightaway on the reform agenda that we are beginning to put in place tonight and will continue to action in the coming weeks and months.

We thank the stakeholders and members of the crossbench who have engaged constructively on the bill. This is merely the start of the Government's rental reform agenda. The bill is just the first step in implementing the Government's commitments to improve tenancy laws and make renting fairer. We are already working on the next lot of important reforms, which include our policy commitments to amend laws on no-grounds evictions so that tenancies will not be able to end without a reason, to make it easier for renters to have pets, and to better protect the personal information collected from renters during the application process. I thank the select committee for their constructive engagement on the bill and the recommendations they have made. Our work on the next phase of reforms includes examining options for ways we can improve the tenancy application process so that it both protects renters from unnecessary invasions of privacy and provides real estate agents and landlords with the information they need to make a decision about a rental candidate. A standardised application form will be one of the options considered. The Government will consult with stakeholders on the options to ensure it develops an effective and workable solution.

The Government is aware that there are acute difficulties faced by disadvantaged people when they try to find rental accommodation that is both affordable and appropriate for their needs. The witnesses at the select committee inquiry noted in particular the difficulties faced by people on lower incomes or receiving rental support payments, people with disabilities, older Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people displaced by natural disasters and those experiencing homelessness. The Government agrees with the committee's recommendation that further consultation is needed to consider how to address discrimination in the rental application process. This work will fall within the purview of the Rental Commissioner, who has already been tasked with examining current gaps in the law and practices that work to erode renters' rights, including those of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

We will work closely with industry, tenancy advocates and the public as the next stage of our rental reform agenda takes shape. The State's first Rental Commissioner will drive this important work. We expect to consult on our proposed reforms in the very near future. As I have said, the recruitment process for the commissioner is well underway. The Rental Commissioner will be appointed as a voice for renters and the market. They will work with renters, owners, agents and the community to address longstanding rental issues such as rent increases. The Government looks forward to the conclusion of the recruitment process and will work with the commissioner as soon as he or she is appointed.

The Government is also progressing work separately to design and develop an efficient and customer-focused portable bond scheme that will allow renters to transfer their bond between properties. We will ensure that the supporting regulations are consistent with the Residential Tenancies Act. We will consult closely with renter advocates, industry and the community to ensure the scheme is workable for all parties and as easy to use as possible. The Opposition claims it would have implemented a portable bond scheme by the end of the year. I must say that is a bit difficult to believe when such a scheme could have been implemented at any time in the past 12 years of its time in government, but it was not.

With the bill, the Government is taking the first steps of many to respond to calls for action from renters who are experiencing the difficult rental market. But we also understand that the best way to address rental affordability is to address rental supply. While placing a ceiling on rents in the short term may appear attractive, rent freezes do nothing to address a lack of housing supply and, in the long run, will worsen supply. The first goal in anything we do is to add no more pressure to what is a tight housing and rental market. We will not implement any rental reforms that will restrict rental housing supply. That is the principle that underpins all our reforms. We must be careful in applying simplified universal rules and assuming that somehow there would be no adverse impact on the rental market or any added pressure on renters. We could end up hurting the very people we are trying to help.

My view is that a rent freeze or rent cap would exacerbate supply problems by reducing the price signals that guide development and investment, right at the time when the community needs more housing to be built; fail to recognise the individual circumstances that apply to a particular property—these are micro-transactions between millions of Australians in different situations; reduce incentives for owners to enter the market and to carry out repairs, renovations and upgrades; contribute to higher up-front rents if owners seek to set initial rents as high as possible because they will be unable to increase them later; and have the potential to increase the number of mortgage defaults if mums and dads and other property owners were unable to recoup the cost of their financial commitments. We need to be careful. I believe that the reforms we want to make are responsible, measured and balanced for both property owners and renters. This is not an adversarial situation or relationship we want to have. We want to work with property owners and renters. Renters need good property owners and property owners need good renters. That is a mutually beneficial equation and a balance we want to focus on.

We will be focusing on tackling the State's rental crisis through long-term supply solutions that work. The Minns Labor Government has a comprehensive strategy to deliver more homes for residents of New South Wales, including creating Homes NSW to deliver more social and affordable housing; delivering denser development around key transport hubs such as the Sydney metro; streamlining planning approval processes; abolishing stamp duty for first home buyers buying a home worth up to \$800,000 and offering a concessional rate to first home buyers purchasing a property valued between \$800,000 and \$1 million; creating a building commission to ensure that new homes in New South Wales are high quality, safe and resilient for owners and renters; and auditing surplus public land that could be rezoned for housing, further increasing the supply and further putting downward pressure on prices. The bill demonstrates this Government's commitment to rebalancing rental laws so that they better protect renters and support both owners and renters to work constructively. The reforms take New South Wales forward, supporting renters to secure homes.

I am proud that this is the first piece of legislation that I have introduced as a Minister, because these changes matter. Creating comprehensive law reform does not just happen; it is the product of the united commitment of industry and community stakeholders working with the Government. I acknowledge the contributions of all members here today and the stakeholders who worked with the Government to finalise the bill before the House. Again, I particularly thank the select committee for its constructive engagement with and input on the bill. I thank members of NSW Fair Trading who supported the development of the bill, including by working closely with our stakeholders. I thank Diana Holy, Jasmin Chin, Cassandra Jacobs, Sabah Fahad, Julia Dabrowski, Melissa Pinto and Katerina Pavlidis for their work on the bill and the Government's work to ensure that rental laws in New South Wales are fair, well balanced and support renters and owners. 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.

**Motion agreed to.**



## Consideration in detail requested by Mr Anoulack Chanthivong.

### Consideration in Detail

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 be agreed to.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (18:55):** By leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet c2023-036A in globo:

**No. 1 Notice about higher offers of rent**

Page 3, Schedule 1[1], line 3. Omit "Sections 22A and 22B". Insert instead "Section 22A".

**No. 2 Notice about higher offers of rent**

Page 3, Schedule 1[1], proposed section 22A(2), lines 13—17. Omit all words on the lines. Insert instead—

- (2) A person does not contravene subsection (1) merely by placing a sign on or near the residential premises for rent without stating the amount of rent for the premises on the sign.

**No. 3 Notice about higher offers of rent**

Page 3, Schedule 1[1], proposed section 22A(4), lines 24 and 25. Omit all words on the lines.

**No. 4 Notice about higher offers of rent**

Page 3, Schedule 1[1], proposed section 22A(5), lines 28 and 29. Omit "and section 22B".

**No. 5 Notice about higher offers of rent**

Pages 3 and 4, Schedule 1[1], line 30 on page 3 to line 23 on page 4. Omit all words on the lines.

**No. 6 Notice about higher offers of rent**

Page 6, Schedule 3, proposed entry for "Section 22B(2)". Omit the entry.

I thank members of the House for granting leave. The amendments remove proposed section 22B of the bill and makes consequential amendments. Proposed section 22B aims to implement a ban on secret rent bidding and require real estate agents and landlords to notify rental applicants of higher offers of rent made by other acceptable applicants. Being an Australian-first reform, the Government understands why there are questions about the proposed ban on secret rent bidding. This Government has constructively engaged with renter advocates and crossbench members of Parliament and the Opposition on the issue of secret rent bidding, and it will continue to do so. We thank them for their interest in this issue and cooperative approach to the bill.

We remain committed to increasing transparency for renters in the rental application process. But, due to the difficult rental market, we want to accelerate the passage of other practical reforms to ease the pressure on renters wherever possible as fast as we can. We propose to amend the bill to remove the provisions about banning secret rent bidding at this point in time. That will allow us to move forward with other elements of the bill, which will close the existing loopholes relating to solicited rent bidding by extending the ban on such practices to landlords and third parties, support the implementation of a portable bond scheme to alleviate financial pressure on renters who are moving house, empower the incoming Rental Commissioner to gather pricing data from agents about the rent-bidding reforms so that the commissioner can advocate for renters and provide high-quality advice to the Government, and clarify that rental bonds are held on trust by the New South Wales Rental Bonds Board.

The Government will also charge the Rental Commissioner with working with renters' advocates and industry to consider how to improve transparency in the rental market. The Rental Commissioner is in the process of being recruited and will assist in implementing the next stage of our reforms. The bill is only the first step of our big rental reform agenda, and the beginning of the journey to better renting laws in New South Wales. Work is already underway on the next stage of rental reforms, including ending no-grounds evictions, making it easier for renters to have pets, and better protecting renters' personal information. I look forward to continuing to engage constructively with the Opposition, the crossbench, renters' advocates, industry and the community as we work toward fairer and more balanced rental laws for the benefit of everyone in New South Wales. I commend the amendments to the House.

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (18:58):** The Opposition supports the Government amendments. At the same time, we note that the amendments should not have been necessary. Indeed, they were avoidable. By stripping clause 22B from the bill, the Government is abandoning its attempt to ban secret rent bidding. It is an admission by the Government that it got things wrong. It represents a broken promise, and it is representative of this Government, which has failed renters to date. This is a retreat from a key component of the bill, and a retreat from a key election promise by Labor to ban secret rent bidding.

We would not be considering the amendments if the Government had not tried to rush through this ill-conceived legislation. It is clear that Labor has let down renters and the State by attempting to introduce such underprepared policy to Parliament. The Government inexplicably ignored the widespread warnings of tenants, the community and experts that its particular policy would worsen the current rental crisis. During a cost-of-living and rental affordability crisis we need a government that understands the issues facing the people of New South Wales instead of making life more difficult. If the Government had done its homework, consulted properly and listened to the community, it would not be forced into a backflip on the poorly conceived secret rent bidding idea that everyone—indeed, everyone—had said would, in fact, inflate rents.

But, in the end, it was not the community or the experts that the Government listened to. It only backed down when faced with the prospect of defeat on the floor of this Parliament. If members opposite could have passed the bill as it was, they would have persisted, despite all the warnings. It has been a failed policy process that has produced flawed policy, causing uncertainty and anxiety for millions of renters and owners across the State. Renters can only hope that future attempts at reform by the Government demonstrate that it has learnt from these mistakes.

New section 22B would have required that an unsolicited offer made by a prospective tenant that is above the fixed advertised rent be disclosed to other prospective tenants within one business day. The Opposition deliberately did not seek such a measure. Whilst on its face transparency is a positive virtue, it appears the Government made this commitment without engaging stakeholders effectively or thinking through all the likely consequences. The Opposition welcomes a focus on boosting market transparency, but it needs to be done well and done right. I thank industry groups and renter advocacy groups for engaging with the Opposition on new section 22B. This is policy that no other jurisdiction in Australia has attempted to enact, so it was important the Government consulted widely as to the potential impacts. It is clear that the Government did not do the basic policy work required.

Stakeholders across the spectrum were united in their concern about the Government's plan. During the select committee's public hearing, we heard witness after witness voice their concern that the Government's plans would create rental auctions and fuel the flames of rent increases. Nobody was asking for secret rent bidding to be banned in this way. The Tenants' Union noted it was "not aware of any groups advocating for it". All the experts and stakeholders expressed their fears about the Government's moves. The Tenants' Union said it was concerned that new section 22B would "sanction and entrench rent auctions". There was broad agreement that the status quo—the Liberals' policy legacy—was preferable to the implementation of Labor's secret rent bidding ban. During the inquiry, Ben McAlpine of the NSW Council of Social Service said:

Is this 22B introduction of transparency better than the status quo? The short answer to that, which I think is consistent with everyone here today, is no.

We heard that this proposal would have hit some of the most vulnerable people in the State the hardest. In evidence to the committee, Thomas Chailloux from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre said:

Formalising rent auctions is pouring fuel on the fire of a very hot market, and we are concerned about the impact to people who live on very low incomes who are otherwise vulnerable to homelessness and housing insecurity.

Industry was also concerned, with the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales saying that the requirement would create "a very thin line that agents will have to walk". The Property Owners Association of NSW feared that it would create a "Dutch auction" that places a "ridiculous burden" on the property management sector. How can it inform prospective tenants that a higher offer has been received without inherently inviting a higher offer? It is a delicate line. The mere communication of a higher offer will, by its nature, invite other prospective tenants to submit a higher offer to secure the property. In effect, that creates the conditions for a likely rental auction.

The Minister himself confirmed in his second reading speech that the disclosure of offers will provide other prospective tenants "with a chance to match that offer or make a higher offer themselves if they wish to". That is rent bidding by any name. It was obvious to everyone—except, it seems, to Government members. We need to ease the burden on renters. We need to improve rental affordability, not make it worse. It is extraordinary that even needs to be said. It took the Government a month to realise that it had this wrong. Precious time has been wasted. It is unfortunate that renters and property owners were ignored for so long, but it is welcome that the Parliament has forced the Government to see sense and move amendments today. The Opposition supports the amendments.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (18:58):** I speak briefly in support of the amendments moved by the Minister relating to the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rental Fairness) Bill 2023. The Greens are pleased to see that clause 22B of the bill has been removed, recognising that serious concerns were raised by many stakeholders that it would have had the consequence of introducing and formalising rental auctions in New South Wales. If we look at good ways for New South Wales to lead the way in rental reforms, I do not think being the

country's only jurisdiction that sanctioned rental auctions is the way. So we are pleased to see that that has been removed.

We also recognise another small change—other than the removal of new section 22B—that ensures that placing a sign on or near residential premises for rent without stating the amount of rent for the premises on the sign is not in contravention. We recognise and support that amendment. I acknowledge the Minister, everyone on the committee and those who made submissions to the inquiry for getting us to this point. It is a good sign that we are working collaboratively to ensure that legislation is passed, and that the Government is willing to recognise that amending and shaping laws by listening to the community's interests and concerns is a good way to pass laws in this State.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (19:00):** I echo the comments of the member for Newtown and commend the Minister and the Government for the process that has been undertaken to improve the bill. I was glad to be a member of the committee, along with a number of members in the Chamber. The process was a good opportunity for us to hear from stakeholders. It was clear from all those who made submissions that there was a respect for the Government's intention to improve transparency in the rental process and a great deal of appreciation that the Government is leading with long-overdue rental reforms, which are reflected in the bill. These are really good amendments and I welcome them. I thank the Government and the Minister for their approach.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that Government amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet c2023-036A be agreed to.

**Amendments agreed to.**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 as amended be agreed to.

**Clauses 1 and 2 and schedules 1 to 3 as amended agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICES REMUNERATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

### **First Reading**

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

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later time.

### *Condolences*

## **HUNTER VALLEY BUS ACCIDENT**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (19:03):** I have tried a couple of times to sit down and write this speech, and each time I sit down a bit of a fog comes through. So I have scratched out a few notes, but I am just going to have to tell the story, because it is a story that needs to be told and put on record in this place. I hope that nobody needs to revisit the story for many decades ahead, if ever. On Sunday 11 June at 11.30 p.m. we had a terrible, terrible accident in the Hunter Valley, on a roundabout at Greta above the Hunter Expressway. But I ask members to cast their minds back to the hours leading up to that.

Sunday was an absolutely beautiful afternoon—just gorgeous, with barely a cloud in the sky or a breath of wind. Mitchell Gaffney and Madeleine Edsell had chosen Wandin Valley function centre and accommodation to have their wedding, to make a commitment of love for the rest of their lives. They had invited friends and family, as we all do. Many of them had flown interstate, which is a testament to the quality of these people and the love that they shared between their friendship groups. For about four or five hours, they had a wonderful afternoon, drinking and laughing, dancing and singing, having a fantastic time. Undoubtedly, during the course of an event like that, the staff who work at the facility get to know the people as though they are family.

Sadly, at about 11.15 p.m., that joy, that moment and that event had to come to an end. Still with great festivity, a number of the attendees climbed onto a bus to go home. Buses are often organised at weddings to make

sure that people get home safely. Wanting people to be able to let down their hair, to have a good time and to not have to worry about the journey home—being responsible about drink driving laws—is at the core of the wedding event in 2023. For some people, the bus route and where it is going to and from suits their purpose. Other people find their own way home or stay closer. Whatever the case is, they go about getting home themselves. The groom and bride did what many grooms and brides do: They took on the responsibility for making sure that some of their attendees got home safely by organising a bus. At 11.15 p.m. everyone climbed on. I am sure there was still plenty of singing and dancing. There might have been one or two last drinks on the way home.

You do not have to travel too far to get on the Hunter Expressway from Wandin Valley function centre. It is just a little bit along Lovedale Road, down Camp Road, through the main street of Greta. It is on the New England Highway. It is a quality road. It swings around, over the top of the Hunter Expressway and onto the expressway itself. Any of us who have travelled have gone along the motorways, freeways, highways and main roads, and we have seen the large circular roundabouts sitting above as we shoot underneath. Because of the direction that the bus was coming from on this occasion, it needed to go past the first and second exit and take the third exit. It was going three-quarters of the way around so that it could head off to Singleton. It got past the first exit and got past the second exit. Between the second and third exits, it fell onto its side and skidded along the road, up onto the gutter and eventually onto the Armco that protects the side of the road and keeps people in the road corridor.

At the time, emergency services and police responded incredibly quickly because they were somewhere in the vicinity. There was an ambulance that was on its way home from the John Hunter or Maitland hospital, heading towards Muswellbrook, only a couple of minutes away. Another ambulance was on its way home from Maitland towards Cessnock, only a couple more minutes away. The call came out for the emergency services in the area, and they were on scene very quickly. During that time an ambulance inspector arrived on the scene and took charge. His name is Joel, and these are his early, harrowing words, which have been reported in the media:

Major incident declared. We have a bus rollover. Multiple patients.

The exact location is on Wine Country Drive overpass. We have police, fire brigade on scene.

At this stage we have identified seven, I repeat seven, code fours.

We have one red label patient whose injuries are severe and unfortunately we are expecting that he is also going to be a code four.

We have multiple red and orange label patients at this stage.

I need all resources allocated to continue. I am still trying to work out exactly how many patients I have here.

"I need all resources allocated"—that is at the heart of the call for help. And those emergency services turned up. They turned up aplenty, because in country and regional areas no-one is ever exactly next door but they are next door enough to get there fairly quickly. Greta and Branxton are about 20 kilometres from Singleton, Maitland and Cessnock. We had all the emergency services deployed. They all got there quickly and were allocated different tasks. To the enormous credit of many senior emergency services workers, they made sure that the juniors were protected from the worst of it. There are a lot of trainee and intern paramedics at the moment because we are boosting our ranks. The old hard heads went into the worst of the fray and the trainees and the interns were given tasks around the fringes.

Branxton Fire and Rescue is also a first-response unit. It was there quickly, getting some airbags underneath the bus to lift it. There were passengers trapped underneath the bus. One of those is a survivor, and he survives thanks to their work. Of course, we needed to deploy the injured to many surrounding medical facilities—some by helicopter and some by ambulance. In fact, after we had utilised Maitland Hospital, the Mater hospital and John Hunter Hospital, we had to send some to the Royal Prince Alfred in Sydney by helicopter. At the other end of those frantic calls were our call centre workers, who were listening to the very worst of it. They were at the epicentre, despite being 50 kilometres away. Again, one of them was a trainee who was not long on the job.

The hospital workers were told to expect the worst. Emergency departments and waiting rooms were cleared. People were told to go home unless their case was incredibly urgent or critical because there had been a terrible accident and all resources were required immediately. Council workers and traffic control were quickly on site to secure the perimeter. Police did an incredible job assisting in that regard. Those workers are often overlooked but they were some of the first responders in this case. Back at the function centre and accommodation centre, they heard the worst. Babysitters were contacted and told that mum and dad would not be coming home. It is hard to fathom how many people are affected. I extend my condolences to all the workers who had anything to do with the event, either before or after. That extends to the bus company workforce, who have been exposed to this saga and tragedy just because of where they work.

By 5.30 a.m. on Monday 12 June the news had spread fairly widely. The cameras, the microphones and the media were turning up. They had an important job to do. The State needed to know what had happened. At

that early stage of the day, no-one locally even knew who was on the bus. We did not know whether they were locals. We did not know whether they were tourists who had come to town for the wedding. We did not know whether it was a mix of people. At that very early stage we did not know whether the bus was heading back to Cessnock or down to Maitland or up to Singleton. We all held our breath. Each hour on that first day a little more information trickled into the public domain. It was pretty clear around lunchtime that, while the tragedy occurred at Greta and in the electorate of Cessnock, the tragic consequences were also going to be felt in Singleton and in the electorate of Upper Hunter.

A little later in the day, the first flowers arrived. Locals who lived close to the crash scene, who did not know anyone on the bus, did not know the bride and groom and did not know anything about the wedding or the event, vicariously turned up with the first of the flowers. We were kept from the scene, 500 metres away, but the flowers and the tears arrived on site. The following day the scene was eventually released from police, crime investigations and road inspections, and a small shelter tent was set up by the Red Cross so that everyone had somewhere to take their flowers and have their particular moment. I spent a number of afternoons and days out there and many hours sitting, watching and talking. I wonder at the wonderful work of the Red Cross volunteers and the chaplain volunteers who have stood quietly and silently at the edge of that memorial, stepping in when they needed to step in and providing space when they needed to provide space. In some respects, the presence of the cameras kept some of those who needed to go there away, and, while I appreciate and respect the work that the media needed to do, in some instances, they hindered the ability of people to grieve.

Going forward from here there is, of course, the crash investigation, and we need to give time and space for that to come to our attention at some later date. We have a bus driver who has been charged with 11 charges. There is, as the police would say, evidence that he was driving in a manner that was not suitable to the conditions. There is no other way to put that. There was no reason for the bus to tip over if the bus driver had been driving suitably for the conditions. But I say to the bus driver and his family: You did not think this was ever going to happen. The bus driver did not go to work that day and think this was going to happen, and his wife and kids never thought that their dad was going to be a part of something like this either. So I extend my thoughts, condolences, concerns and care to all of you as a family as well.

We need to be guided by the victims and the families as to what we do next. Ultimately, I believe we will have a large memorial service for everyone and erect some type of memorial at the site—if the families want that. But we will not do it until they are ready, because this is their tragedy and their life, as we go forward from this moment, that they need to reconcile. I thank everybody from emergency services. I cannot put into words your courage and bravery. I thank all of the wellwishers and my colleagues, family and friends who have reached out to empathise with me as I empathise with the community widely and at large. I thank the Premier for making a number of journeys to the Hunter.

I thank the member for Upper Hunter for being so humble, gracious and strong in his service to the community. I thank all of the Ministers and departments of this State that have made it certain and unequivocal that they are ready to step in, assist, support and help wherever, however and whenever they need to—and that includes the time going forward. Finally, I say to the families of the victims: The tragedy that none of you wanted has occurred now in our Hunter Valley, and whether you are from other parts of the State or interstate, your tragedy will be in our hearts, in our hands and in our care going forward. You are now a part of our community forever, and we extend our love and care to you.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (19:18):** I thank the member for Cessnock. For someone who just scratched some notes together, that was a very moving contribution. Tonight I make two contributions to the motion of condolence for the Hunter Valley bus crash, the first being a statement from a representative of the survivors and the second being my own contribution. I start with a statement from Alex Tigani, who sent this through to me:

To the NSW State Parliament,

On behalf of the survivors of the tragic Hunter Valley bus crash I would like to thank everyone for the love and prayers throughout this past week.

The Hunter Valley has experienced unfathomable heartache after the horrific incident on Wine Country Drive which resulted in ten casualties.

This group featured community leaders, family men and women and hard-working contributors to the Singleton community.

More importantly, they were our family.

The Upper Hunter community has not been short of conflict in recent times.

This month marks four years since the tragic Brittcliffe Close house fire which saw the loss of three young lives on June 26, 2019.

Since then, our resilient community has also endured bushfires, two COVID lockdowns and four major floods.

Once more, our first responders put their own lives at risk.

And once more, our community received the thoughts and prayers of concerned Australians around the world.

As victims we continue to ask for the privacy of our community to be respected as we collectively grieve and process the enormous loss and ask all Australians to keep spending time with their loved ones.

It is this time that matters most.

Sincerely,

Alexander Edward Tigani

He signs off as a Singleton Roosters club member and Singleton resident—and, in my opinion, a damn good bloke. The past week has been difficult for so many, and yet the reality is this ordeal may not be over tomorrow, nor in weeks, nor in months. It will take time. What began as a joyous occasion, a wedding for Mitch and Maddie in the picturesque location of the Hunter Valley, turned to tragedy as the chartered coach returned guests from the wedding reception to Singleton.

Our emergency services responded to the crash on one of the Hunter region's newest sections of road, a roundabout used by hundreds of motorists every day. I acknowledge every police officer, paramedic, doctor, firefighter, rescue helicopter pilot and crew member who took part in the recovery. The Hunter Valley Police District Facebook page provides us with an insight into the enormity of the resources required for the response on that Sunday night and Monday morning:

... officers from Hunter Valley Police District, Police Rescue, Traffic and Highway Patrol, NSW Ambulance paramedics, NSW Fire and Rescue, NSW Rural Fire Service, and various helicopters for hospital transports.

The NSW Ambulance Facebook page adds:

More than 60 paramedics and doctors attended the scene.

They treated and transferred 26 patients to hospitals in Newcastle, Maitland and Camperdown, and we thank them for their incredible work.

A huge thank you also to our call takers and dispatchers, and all those behind the scenes for coordinating the response.

Tragically, 10 guests were lost and many were injured emotionally and physically. The shockwave has flowed throughout the nation. The Singleton Roosters AFL club, the Hunter Valley coal industry, our local schools and the Hunter's medical fraternity are just some of the sectors of the local community to be touched by the tragedy. Everyone knows someone who knows someone; everyone has been affected.

I have been in Singleton and Branxton over the past week with the community and there is nothing that can prepare one for a situation like this: a community that is heartbroken; people trying to comprehend the reality that some of their best and brightest are not coming home; the disbelief that a time of joy had turned to grief. I thank our Premier, Chris Minns, for the leadership and compassion he has shown to our community and to the State. I thank the ministerial team who have been absolutely outstanding in their support of our community. I thank my neighbouring MP Clayton Barr; local mayors, Cessnock mayor Jay Suvaal and Singleton mayor Sue Moore; all the MPs; and everyone who has sent their offers of support to our region.

It truly is the greatest honour to hold a position as the local member in New South Wales Parliament. We are welcomed to some of the most amazing community organisations, and we get to see some of the most committed local people to match. We are privileged to see how those great people can create more effective organisations. That is the basis our communities are built upon. I truly found that one of the most rewarding parts of the job. But this tragedy has opened my eyes to the fact that while we are there to share the good times, we are also there to shoulder the tough times. We share those times of hope and joy, but we share those times of heartbreak. We feel their sorrow. We share the disbelief and we share those same tears.

It is important that I share some of my own personal reflections of what this incident has meant. A month ago I was at an AFL match and I clearly remember Lynan Scott joking about being at the football and having the night off while Andrew had the kids. I am not sure of the backstory but she was free for the night. I have been playing over in my head how many times I have made that joke. How many times have we all made a joke like that? The difference is that those gorgeous little kids have now lost both their parents. I know they will always be loved. They will certainly always be considered part of the Roosters family, that is for sure, because they are a strong club and a family club and they have always been so. They have welcomed people into that club from all over.

Nads McBride certainly made me feel welcome. It was the culture and an open-armed approach to create a family atmosphere. Nads was always willing to share a quick conversation and discuss her dream of the female amenities at the clubhouse. I remember Nads addressing a large group of female players after the game—not just her team. I remember seeing them all mixed in with one another. She was speaking to the whole group. She was

talking about the match they played. I remember walking past and I thought, "Now there's a leader." We have certainly lost a great community leader, and we have lost many others who will not get the chance to live their full lives.

There are too many others who have been hurt in some way by this tragedy. I report that the Singleton Roosters club may be hurt and heartbroken but it is in good hands through the leadership of Alex Tigani; club president Dylan Hickson; and the entire Singleton Roosters committee, Jackson, Mel, Sarah, Paul, Scott and others who are involved. They have all shown incredible courage throughout this time. They have stepped up as leaders of our community. I think, going forward, they will lead us through a path of healing. I think the whole town is now gathered around them. I thank them for their strength in a time of crisis.

For a region that loves sport, it is only right that people show their love and support through actions on the fields and courts throughout the Hunter Valley. Last weekend the sporting codes all responded in many ways. As the local member, I am incredibly proud of their response. They have had minutes of silence as a mark of respect, and black armbands. The No. 10 jersey has been retired from the field to represent the 10 victims. It was truly special to see the local rugby club, the Singleton Bulls, inviting their compatriots, the Singleton Roosters AFL club, into the dressing sheds after the match to sing the Roosters club song together, arm in arm. It is one of those moments that raises the hairs on the back of your neck. It was very special.

As we go forward as a community, we will get through this tragedy. It is going to hurt and it is going to take time, but it is important to know that we in this place are here to support those who have been affected, whether they come from the Hunter Valley or Victoria. Wherever they come from, our hearts go out to them. Anything we can do, we will do to help them. We will always be thankful to the men and women who work as first responders. We will do everything we can to support those who have survived and who will need our help. We will never forget those whom we have lost. May they rest in peace.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **DUBBO CYCLE CLUB**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:32):** I extend my congratulations to Isabelle Russell, Sid Pickering and Cooper Farr from the Dubbo Cycle Club on their recent success at the Canberra Junior Tour. Held over two days and four stages, the Dubbo riders braved the chilly conditions, which dipped to an eye-watering minus 5 degrees. Sid earned himself two podium finishes for two of the stages, and an impressive third place overall, while Cooper secured a first, second and third place in three of his four stages. Isabelle also captured two podium placings in two of her stages, securing herself third place overall. This saw her in very impressive company on the overall podium, where she was next to two cyclists preselected for the junior world titles. The preparation needed for events like this shows the true dedication to their sport that each of these cyclists has. Coping with those conditions made it even more special and shows how promising they are. I wish Isabelle, Sid and Cooper every success with their training and future competitions. They are undoubtedly talented individuals and I am looking forward to hearing about their next successes on the track. Well done!

#### **CAYTLYN TAN**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (19:33):** It gives me great delight to recognise Caytlyn Tan, a year 7 student at Australian Christian College in Marsden Park. Caytlyn was awarded first place in the year 7 category of the 2022 Transurban Canal to Creek Art Prize for her work titled, *First Nation*. This is a prestigious competition where students from year 7 to year 10 across Australia are invited to create their own piece of art. Caytlyn's artwork acknowledges Australia's First Nations people and reinforces the importance of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Caytlyn is a talented young woman who has inspired her community and will continue to motivate individuals through her artwork. I have her artwork in my electorate office and it is indeed very impressive. It gives me great joy to congratulate Caytlyn. I am very proud of you, Caytlyn, and the community is too.

#### **OUR BIG KITCHEN BONDI**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (19:34):** I acknowledge a place that is a constant source of inspiration for me: Our Big Kitchen [OBK] in Bondi. OBK is a community organisation where for over 15 years people have been able to come together and volunteer their time to prepare meals for those in need. They distribute around a quarter of a million meals each year and support more than 30 charities as well as thousands of individuals. It is a place where friendships are made, trust is developed and dignity is restored. It has also been an incubator for many successful businesses. I had the pleasure of visiting Our Big Kitchen alongside some of my parliamentary

colleagues, including the member for Davidson, Matt Cross, the Hon. Chris Rath and the Hon. Jacqui Munro. We all saw firsthand how companies, schools and organisations are able to not only give back to their community, but also gain value from the shared experience of volunteering. I acknowledge Rabbi Dovid Slavin and his wife, Laya, for the work they have done and continue to do in our community.

#### **HEATHER BIEMAN, OAM**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (19:35):** I pay tribute to one of Camden's local heroes, Heather Bieman. For over 50 years Heather has been teaching music to the local community. In this year's King's Birthday Honours Heather was awarded an OAM for her service to music through teaching. It is a thoroughly deserved honour and true recognition of Heather's service to the community. Heather was born in New Zealand, where she quickly fell in love with playing the piano. She soon migrated to Australia and settled in Camden, where she would go on to teach music at Camden High School. In 2004 Heather established the Amazing Grace Academy of Performing Excellence, or AGAPE, located at the Uniting Church in Camden. In case Heather has not done enough work already, she was also the coordinator of the Combined Schools Choir and organised the annual Camden community carols for 20 years. Heather's tireless work in the community teaching and promoting music for all to enjoy serves as an inspiration to the whole of Camden. Heather thoroughly deserves her honours. I congratulate and thank her for all the work she has done for my community.

#### **RON VICKRESS**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (19:36):** I recognise Ron Vickress for his lifetime of dedication and service to the community. In his early years Ron served as a lifesaver and was involved in swimming clubs in his local communities. He served in the navy during World War II and was held in very high regard by his colleagues. Recently the royal navy invited him to speak at a ceremony to mark the eightieth anniversary of the sinking of HMAS *Armidale*. Ron also served on the boards of the Armidale and Guyra RSL sub-branches. He manages the Guyra Soldiers Memorial Hall and was president from 2013 to 2018. Aside from this, Ron has been involved in literature and was part of a drama society, has published 40 books and continues to read as a volunteer at his local bookshop. I congratulate Ron on being recognised as a Citizen of the Year this year at the Australia Day awards ceremony in Armidale. Despite being in his tenth decade on this planet, he continues to be a strong advocate for the community, involving many other community organisations.

#### **HOME IN QUEANBEYAN**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (19:37):** When I came back on the political scene a few months ago, I was thrilled to see that HOME in Queanbeyan was not just surviving but thriving. HOME in Queanbeyan is an initiative driven by Father Peter Day and Anne Pratt, as well as an amazing committee of staff and volunteers. It aims to provide people who are homeless in our community not a refuge or asylum, but a home. Father Day described it as something along the lines of a retirement village where people's independence is respected. There is also a caring 24-hour presence and there are nice apartments too. HOME in Queanbeyan opened in 2010. It received government funding when it was first built, but since then has survived on community contributions without ongoing government funding. It is a fantastic initiative that should be taken up in many other places, and I hope it will. I congratulate those people who are keeping it going.

#### **ERIC AND KATH MANNS**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (19:38):** I congratulate Cobar residents Eric and Kath Manns, who celebrate their seventieth wedding anniversary today. Eric, 93, and Kath, 91, met whilst holidaying in Sydney in about 1953. After just two weeks they were engaged and six months later they were married. Eric was born and bred in Cobar, working on the railway with his father to help support his family. He finished school and went on to do various jobs. Eric encouraged his new wife to move to Cobar. Not accustomed to the small country town, Kath was hesitant but gave it a go. They bought a home in Cobar, in which they still live today. Kath soon became the homemaker and raised their six children. Eric and Kath have been blessed with 10 grandchildren and then 15 great-grandchildren. Kath has been volunteering at St Vincent De Paul for the past 40 years. After his retirement, Eric also volunteered his time. Again, I congratulate Eric and Kath on reaching such a massive marital milestone. Seventy years is a true testament to their love and devotion to one another.

#### **BLUE MOUNTAINS LOOKOUTS**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:39):** The Blue Mountains district is home to some of the most beautiful lookouts in the world, with views that stretch out across pristine, ancient lands. The lookouts provide a space for individuals to connect with nature and take in the majesty of our World Heritage landscape. Recently, Govetts Leap lookout at Blackheath was upgraded by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. It is one of the most visited lookouts in the Blue Mountains and recent works have made it a safer, more accessible place for all visitors. The transformed ironwork and sandstone upgrades have vastly improved this spectacular



lookout. The new landscaped terrace is the perfect space for visitors to picnic and enjoy the view, spend time with friends and family, and immerse themselves in the natural beauty that surrounds them. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the individuals and groups that take care of these wonderful lookouts. The truly commendable hard work of the Blue Mountains district National Parks and Wildlife team—David Crust, Soren Mortenson, Steve Nichols, Toni Clarke, Tim Lanyon and Will Batson—has transformed this world-renowned lookout into a space that is inclusive for all who visit this beautiful place.

#### **A TASTE OF DIVERSITY**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (19:40):** I recently attended an event titled "A Taste of Diversity". The event was a celebration of the wonderfully rich and diverse cultures which make up the fabric of our community. The celebration was held on 1 June 2023 at the Madison Function Centre in Dural. It showcased wonderful entertainment, including dancing, singing and food from the culturally diverse communities in my electorate. I thank Melissa Monteiro, CEO of the Community Migrant Resource Centre [CMRC], for organising the event. I acknowledge the partners and sponsors of the event, including the India Club, Indian Women Empower, Zonta Club of Sydney Hills Inc, and Hills Community Aid. I particularly acknowledge and thank Farzana from the Afghan community, Parastoo Khosronejad from the Iranian community, and Shikha Arora from the Indian community, who told of their own experiences when moving to our community. CMRC is a not-for-profit service. It assists many migrants, refugees and humanitarians to settle into our community. I thank CMRC for organising the event.

#### **KAREN LANCASTER**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (19:41):** I wish to recognise Karen Lancaster for her 40 years of service as an auxiliary and fundraising volunteer at Mount Druitt Hospital. A volunteer is somebody who is kind, compassionate and selfless. Karen has dedicated the past 40 years to demonstrating these attributes. Karen was recently presented with a certificate in recognition of her 40 years of service, dedication and contribution to those who use Mount Druitt Hospital. I thank Karen for her continued support for the Mount Druitt community and congratulate her on receiving this much-deserved award.

#### **JAN IRVINE, OAM**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (19:42):** I recognise Jan Irvine, OAM. Jan has recently been recognised for her contribution to the community in this year's King's Birthday Honours List. Jan Irvine's outstanding commitment to community service is deserving of the utmost recognition. For over four decades, she has dedicated her time and expertise to various organisations, making a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals. Jan's dedication has been demonstrated through her involvement with organisations like Quota International in Forster, Tuncurry, Taree and Port Macquarie, where she has been an active member and volunteer for 40 years. She was a founding member of Forster Probus in the late 1990s. Additionally, Jan has selflessly donated her time and efforts to Breast Friends, Forster Uniting Church, Forster schools, the TRAC program Port Macquarie and the Women are Great in '88 bicentennial event. She served as the outings officer for Golden Ponds and as an area debate adjudicator. I congratulate Jan on this well-deserved recognition for her contribution to her local community.

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

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:43):** Today marks World Refugee Day, when we celebrate the positive contributions made by displaced peoples. Leppington has provided a new home to refugees for decades. Those refugees have gone on to contribute immeasurably to our nation in fields as wide-ranging as medicine, academia, business, and sport. The Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre [MRC] has been the key organisation championing the needs and aspirations of refugees in south-west Sydney since it was established in 1979. Western Sydney MRC provides a range of services and programs based on its clients' and the community's needs and wants. As a former chair and director, I may be biased, but I commend everyone who has been involved in this amazing organisation over the past 44 years: staff, board, volunteers and stakeholders. It is often said that Australia is the most successful multicultural nation on earth. This does not come about organically. It is due, in no small part, to the effort of settlement services organisations such as Western Sydney MRC.

#### **GIRLS ON FIRE**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (19:44):** It is a pleasure to speak about the incredible work of Bronnie Mackintosh and her Girls on Fire team. The work they have been doing in Wakehurst and across the northern beaches is nothing short of inspiring. For those learning about Girls On Fire for the first time, this local group works to promote and increase numbers of women and ethnically diverse people in Australian fire agencies. I also commend and congratulate them for their inclusive rainbow community programs, which are taking place this week. The Girls on Fire team is a shining example of a community organisation focused on empowering girls

and young women in our constituency. They work tirelessly to inspire, motivate and uplift young women from all walks of life, providing them with the tools, resources and opportunities they need to succeed in their personal and professional lives. Their dedication, passion and hard work have not gone unnoticed. I proudly take this opportunity to recognise and commend their efforts.

#### **MARGARET WOOD, OAM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:45):** I congratulate Maitland's Margaret Wood, who received an OAM in the recent King's Birthday honours for her services to swimming. Margaret has taught generations of Maitland children how to swim over her 67-year tenure as a swimming instructor. She has been a member of Maitland Swimming Club since she was 12 years old and is the current vice-president of the club. She has been an accredited Learn to Swim instructor since 1956, an accredited swim coach—bronze level—since 1994 and is, of course, a life member. Through swimming she has made lots of friends, even meeting her husband, Trevor, who is also a swim teacher, at the club. In 2020 her name was placed on the Hidden Treasures Honour Roll by the Rural Women's Network. She has also previously volunteered at Fingal Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Coalfields United Amateur Swimming Club and Tenambit junior rugby league football club. After teaching hundreds—if not thousands—of children how to swim, she says the most rewarding part of volunteering as a Learn to Swim instructor is the knowledge that the skill may have saved someone's life. Congratulations, Margaret, and thank you for your help.

#### **ROTARY CLUB OF WINDSOR**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:46):** I congratulate the Rotary Club of Windsor on celebrating 67 years of continuous service to the Hawkesbury community. It was back in 1962 that the club fundraised for the refurbishment of wards and equipment in Hawkesbury Hospital. As momentum grew, the club established the local Meals on Wheels service in 1967. It then repainted and maintained buildings at New Haven Homes in Freemans Reach; assisted in building and repairing facilities at the Australiana Pioneer Village, Wilberforce; supported the Secret Garden project; and landscaped and maintained Streeton Lookout. The Rotary Club of Windsor has sponsored the youth in Hawkesbury through the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards since 1967, as well as the very successful Rotary International Youth Exchange Program. Its establishment of the Windsor Rotary Youth Foundation Trust, which provides grants to assist young people living or attending school within Hawkesbury, is to be applauded. The Rotary Club of Windsor has an indomitable blueprint through stellar acts of kindness. I congratulate the club on 67 years of giving.

#### **WOLLONGONG CENOTAPH CENTENARY**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (19:47):** On 3 June I joined the New South Wales Governor, the member for Cunningham, Alison Byrnes, the Lord Mayor of Wollongong, Gordon Bradbery, RSL NSW and local sub-branch representatives, and veterans and their families to mark the centenary of the Wollongong Cenotaph. Calls for a memorial in Wollongong to those killed in the World War I conflict began once the war ended. By 1920 a war memorial committee had been convened, and by May 1922 Wollongong Council had approved a memorial to be constructed at the entrance to the town hall. In 1984 the cenotaph was relocated to its current location in MacCabe Park, co-located with other memorials to Australians involved in conflicts. As Wollongong RSL sub-branch secretary Peter Lipscomb noted:

... families back at home couldn't go through the normal grieving process of going to a funeral and then having a grave to go to and visit to mourn their sons.

After the Great War, the Cenotaph and this place in particular ... was the place that enabled the families to come and grieve in some way.

I thank the Wollongong RSL sub-branch for coordinating the centenary commemoration event and for its efforts to organise the restoration of this important monument to those who served.

#### **TAMWORTH BASEBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (19:48):** I recognise the Tamworth Baseball Association for recently holding the fifty-fourth June long weekend baseball carnival, with over 750 players in 52 teams containing some of the best baseballers in New South Wales. I thank everyone who came to experience Tamworth and had a fantastic long weekend. I congratulate president Dave McMurray and his amazing team of volunteers, with special mention to Hayley Bullock. It is a Tamworth sporting event favourite. We look forward to welcoming everyone back again in 2024.

#### **FATHER MICHAEL HEALY**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (19:49):** Tonight I acknowledge that it has been 55 years since the inauguration of Father Michael Healy. He is a local icon and priest who has served at St John the Evangelist

in Campbelltown and St Thomas More in Ruse. Since he migrated from Ireland, he has stood up and served our community not only in his faith but also by providing support for women's support groups, youth support groups and many other people. In fact, he continues to provide everything that is needed for people who require funeral services, wedding commemorations and other things like that. He is an amazing man. Last Friday marked 55 years since his inauguration as a priest. We are so proud of him.

#### **WILL KELLY**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (19:50):** I extend my congratulations to Will Kelly from Albury, who has been short-listed as a finalist for the prestigious New South Wales Apprentice of the Year Award, with the winner to be announced later this week. Will's passion for his work as an irrigation plumber has earned him this well-deserved recognition. At 22 years of age, Will is a determined and hardworking young apprentice. He chose this trade as it aligned with his interest in turf and garden maintenance showcases. He is currently immersed in various projects in Albury that allow him to put his skills to good use in the design and installation of new systems. Additionally, Will has already completed his certificate III in horticulture. I congratulate Will for choosing an apprenticeship pathway to pursue his career and demonstrate his commitment in his chosen field. Good luck later this week.

#### **PARRAMATTA WOMEN'S GRADE CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (19:51):** I say a big congratulations to those from the Parramatta Women's Grade Cricket Club who have been selected to play for New South Wales. Claire Moore, Isabella Malgioglio and Jade Allen have been selected for the NSW Breakers; Kate Pelle, Zoe Murdock, Lucy Wilson and Alexandra Mavros have been selected for the under-19s team; Lakshmi Rajadurai, Marlie Pathirana and Aurora Mavros have been selected for the under-16s team; and Vani Bhadana, Neha Joshua, Aarna Patel and Natalie Williams have been selected for the under-15s team. Good luck and congratulations.

#### **NSW FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:52):** I acknowledge the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools, which recently hosted its inaugural community language schools spectacular. It was a thoroughly enjoyable morning, with cultural performances, songs and dances from language schools from across New South Wales. It was an amazing representation of the multicultural society that we are so proud of in New South Wales. I had the privilege of working closely with the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools during my time as the Minister for Multiculturalism. I am now proud to work alongside them as shadow Minister for Multiculturalism. I thank the thousands of volunteers who work tirelessly at the 250 schools across our great State. They help to teach over 30,000 students over 55 different languages—an outstanding achievement by any merit. I also acknowledge Lucia Johns, president of the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools, and Michael Christodoulou, AM, chief executive officer of the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools, for their wonderful efforts. I look forward to seeing language schools throughout New South Wales continue to grow and develop into the future.

#### **BIYANI HOUSE REVESBY WOMEN'S SHELTER**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (19:53):** I acknowledge Biyani House Revesby Women's Shelter, which provides short-term emergency accommodation for women and their children fleeing domestic violence. The shelter is part of the Women's Community Shelters network, and the name Biyani is the Indigenous name for a ceremony specifically for the healing of women. The shelter's board is made up of incredible women volunteering their time and skills. In its first 16 months, Biyani House has supported more than 100 women and their families to rebuild their lives. I am proud of the shelter's achievements in providing refuge and support to vulnerable women in our community. It has been inspiring to see the generosity of many local people and organisations towards the shelter—including the Revesby Workers' Club, which donated the shelter property and hosted three International Women's Day fundraising events. I recognise Biyani House and its contributions to our community. I thank the caseworkers, the board and the volunteers for their hard work and dedication to helping many women and children in need.

#### **BARGO MEN'S SHED**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (19:54):** I am extremely pleased to recognise the work and foresight of Dave Clayton of the Bargo Men's Shed, who, with Patrick Nellestein of River Road Creative Academy, made a submission for the old Dilly Wanderer bus to be retained by the community and repurposed into a mobile music lesson and community asset. The bus will stay in community hands and deliver great outcomes for a large area with so little public transport. I thank Councillor Beverley Spearpoint, whose determination made the idea of donating the bus versus selling it for little value a reality. It is an amazing win for our community for the young and old. I look forward to recording one of my upcoming podcasts on the bus once it is fitted out and finalised.

**DANNY AND PATRICIA RYAN**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (19:55):** I recognise the marriage of Danny and Patricia Ryan, two constituents of mine who recently celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary. Well known in our community, Danny and Patricia have made an immense contribution locally. Patricia worked at the Collingwood Hotel for over 20 years, and Danny at Mounties in Mount Pritchard, where they remain life members. Having moved to Cartwright from Paddington in 1968, Danny and Patricia established themselves in their current house and raised their family, starting with their two daughters, Deborah and Donna, followed by their grandchildren, Shaun, Mitchell, Shae and Jayden, and great-grandchildren, Ruby and Jude. While every married couple faces obstacles, their granddaughter Shae advises that clear communication and lots of laughter are the keys to a long-lasting marriage, as well as a close relationship with family and coastal getaways. I sincerely congratulate Danny and Patricia on their sixtieth anniversary. I hope to celebrate their relationship for years to come.

**MARIA REGINA CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (19:56):** On 9 June I was welcomed to Maria Regina Catholic Primary School, Avalon Beach, by the school captains, Sybella Boon and Patrick Drake, and vice-captains, Ariana Colley and Holly Green, to speak with their year five and year six schoolmates about my journey to the New South Wales Parliament and leadership. I started out by asking the group what they thought leadership meant. Being a good example, putting others before yourself and taking initiative were but some of a cavalcade of responses. It was very clear to me that those young legends needed few leadership lessons. I have no doubt that in years to come that group will continue to make a wonderful contribution to our community. I thank all the year five and six students for having me along. I also thank their teachers, Mrs Naomi Mico and Ms Samantha Wilcox, and their principal, Ms Kirsty Thorpe, who have played a big role in developing such wonderful students.

**MECHEL PIKOULAS**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (19:57):** I recognise Ms Mechel Pikoulas, who is the principal of Strathfield Girls High School, an excellent public school within my electorate. Mechel was recognised as part of the recent King's Birthday honours and received a Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to education. Mechel has been a high school teacher for over 30 years and a principal for the past decade. She was previously the principal of Cumberland High School, successfully leading the school through the COVID pandemic. Since starting as principal of Strathfield Girls High School in October last year, Mechel continues the great tradition of empowering the students who pass through the halls. Mechel is also a powerful role model for young people from migrant backgrounds. In an interview with *The Greek Herald*, Mechel shared a story about her high school teacher who encouraged her to pursue her teaching dream. She said:

As a migrant girl from a migrant family, I didn't have that self-belief. It was the words of my teacher that inspired me to pursue my dream.

On behalf of our electorate, I warmly thank Mechel for her continued dedication to public education and congratulate her on her well-deserved recognition.

**BLOCKADE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARTSAKH**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (19:58):** The ongoing blockade of the Republic of Artsakh is a clear indication of Azerbaijan's attempts to consolidate its control over the entire region. The frequent attacks along the border of Artsakh and Armenia further highlight the escalating hostility. Following the end of the blockade, the Azerbaijani Government has now established an illegal checkpoint within the territory of the Republic of Artsakh, officially solidifying its encroachment. That exacerbates the already dire situation for Artsakh. Regrettably, the prospects for Artsakh are grim, as the prolonged blockade forces the Republic of Armenia to make further concessions. Without prompt and resolute international intervention, the position of the Republic of Armenia will become increasingly untenable. The international community must take swift and decisive action to condemn Azerbaijan's aggression and unlawful actions in Artsakh. Diplomatic efforts should be intensified to ensure a peaceful resolution to the conflict, respecting the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination. The large Armenian community in my electorate of Ryde deserves recognition and support from the New South Wales Parliament. I thank the Armenian National Committee of Australia for its tireless advocacy.

**COUNCILLOR JULIE GRIFFITHS, AM**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (19:59):** I congratulate Councillor Julie Griffiths, AM, the deputy mayor of Blacktown City Council and a constituent of the Riverstone electorate, on being honoured with admission to the Order of Australia on the King's Birthday honours list. Julie received recognition for her outstanding contributions to local government, women's soccer and industrial relations. Councillor Griffiths is deeply committed to promoting gender equality in local government and has been a tireless advocate on the NSW Joint Ministerial Advisory Council for increased female representation. Her passion for women's soccer is evident

from her involvement as a player, coach and volunteer. Notably, she served as the chief de mission and coach for the Australian futsal under-21 women's indoor soccer team during its tour of Spain in 2004. Additionally, Julie has been the coach for the Nepean and Blacktown Spartans under-21 women's team, operating at an elite level. In her role as chairperson and member of various committees, including the Blacktown City Women's Advisory Committee, she leads significant projects and initiatives for women and girls. One of her many notable initiatives is the annual Blacktown City knit bomb, which raises awareness of domestic violence. Her dedication and contributions to the local area have truly made a difference.

### UNBOXED PRIDE

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (20:00):** I acknowledge Neutral Bay local David Cairncross, who has launched Unboxed Pride, which allows anyone in the LGBTQ+ community to have a safe space and to feel seen and heard by professionals who get the challenges faced by their community. Unboxed Pride came from his own experiences as a young man. Growing up, David has spoken about how he felt incredibly isolated as a child when he came out as gay and that it took years to find the right help, where he felt that he could say and share anything. The team at Unboxed Pride is there to walk with people on a transformational path. The team offers evidence-based therapeutic techniques and practical solutions to help healing and freedom and to provide long-lasting joy. That is the power that Unboxed Pride provides. I look forward to supporting David and Unboxed Pride in the future. I congratulate him on this important initiative.

### RICHARD PARKER

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Minister for the Hunter) (20:01):** Newcastle rugby union referee Richard Parker has reached a significant milestone in this season, blowing the whistle for his 200th game. This achievement places him among an elite group of only four referees who have accomplished this feat in the illustrious history of Newcastle rugby union. Richard honed his skills in the central west competition before moving on to the Sydney Premier rugby competition. He has since become a highly respected figure in the Newcastle rugby union community. Being a referee is often a thankless and daunting role, but Richard has turned his passion for the game into a distinguished career spanning 22 seasons, four first grade grand finals and multiple appointments to coaching panels and development programs. I thank Richard for his contribution to the game and congratulate him on reaching this amazing milestone.

### *Private Members' Statements*

### STATE ELECTION

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (20:02):** I comment on the 2023 State election in the electorate of Cessnock. I recognise from the outset that I have had the chance to make a couple of contributions in this House since that election but, due to some important recognition of people who have passed, I have not been able to go back to this issue. In March this year, the people of New South Wales across the board had indicated they were ready for a change and, while the Labor Party has formed a new Government, it is indeed a minority Government. In the electorate of Cessnock, seven people put their hands up seeking the privilege of representing that wonderful community. I speak of Andrew Fenwick from the Legalise Cannabis Party, Ash Barnham from the National Party, Graham Jones from the Sustainable Australia Party, Quintin King from Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, Victoria Davies from the Animal Justice Party, Llynda Nairn from The Greens and, of course, me.

One of the surprising results of that election was that Legalise Cannabis managed to secure 11.92 per cent of the vote, which means in essence that one out of every nine people in my community voted to legalise cannabis. There might be a variety of reasons for that. I have appreciated the many conversations I have had with Andrew Fenwick during and after the campaign, when we have spoken at length about the many uses for the cannabis plant, including in building products and the like.

We need to stop being afraid of the word "cannabis" because there are so many applications that have nothing to do with a person ingesting it and having their particular high. Cannabis also has various strengths. The low-end strength cannot get a person intoxicated, as I would describe it, because the volumes of tetrahydrocannabinol [THC] simply are not there. There is the medium range that people would normally use for recreational purposes, albeit that is illegal in New South Wales at the moment. Higher THC levels are harvested and used for medicinal purposes. There is a lot we need to learn and know about cannabis. I am happy to have started my journey in that regard. I do not profess to be an expert but I am a willing learner.

Ash Barnham from the National Party was unfortunately disendorsed after the nomination processes were finalised. That was due in part to some comments he made online in the past. One of the challenges for nominees and candidates going forward, no matter what party they come from or what their platform is, is that young people in this day and age have grown up in a time when they have been entirely exposed to social media and their

histories will follow them. I am confident that nobody in this House has managed to get to this part of their lives without doing foolish, silly stuff that they regret. Ash pulled out but still managed to receive 11 per cent of the vote. To be fair, he won the booth of Pokolbin. I feel like I do so much for the people of Pokolbin but I just cannot crack it with them. They grow grapes and produce lovely products, like spicy grape sauce. It is a wonderful product.

Graham Jones is from the Sustainable Australia Party. I do not think I ever met or saw Graham. He got 2 per cent of the vote. Good on him; he should crack on. Quintin King from Pauline Hanson's One Nation party is a gentle, quiet soul who goes about what he is doing with real reserve and pause. He has proven to be a nice person for me to get to know as somebody who lives in the community. Victoria Davies from the Animal Justice Party is an outstanding human being and we continue to do work on other fronts. Sometimes we go into these competitions essentially as competitors and enemies but at the end of it feel very much like friends. I look forward to continuing to work with Victoria on a range of things. I say the same about Llynda Nairn and The Greens movement at large. I thank the community of Cessnock for re-electing me to this place to represent them. I will treat them with respect and decency and offer them the courage and sincerity in this place that they all deserve. If I cannot do that, I should not be here for them.

### ANZAC DAY

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (20:07):** I speak about the anniversary of Anzac Day. On Anzac Day every year we come together to honour the service and sacrifice of all veterans. Anzac Day is a time for Australians to recognise the more than 1.5 million service men and women who served our country in all conflicts, wars and peacekeeping and peacemaking operations. It is also time to remember the 103,000 Australians who sacrificed their lives in our country's name. This year marks the 108th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign, which was the first major military action that Australia and New Zealand forces fought during the First World War.

During the eight months of that campaign in Gallipoli the Anzac spirit was forged in the horror and carnage that they faced. More than 8,000 Australian soldiers died in that campaign. After Gallipoli the Australian Imperial Force was reorganised and expanded from two to five infantry divisions, all of which were progressively transferred to France, beginning in March 1916. The Light Horse regiments that had served as additional infantry during the Gallipoli campaign remained in the Middle East, where they fought a mobile war against the Ottoman Empire in conditions completely different from the mud and stagnation faced on the Western Front.

Australians also served at sea and in the air. The Royal Australian Navy, under the command of the British Royal Navy, made a significant contribution early in the war when HMAS *Sydney*, whose mast now resides at Bradleys Head in Mosman as a memorial, destroyed the German raider SMS *Emden* in November 1914. For us, the First World War remains the costliest conflict in terms of deaths and casualties. From a population of fewer than five million, more than 400,000 men enlisted, of whom more than 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. Australian women volunteered for service in auxiliary roles as cooks, nurses, drivers, interpreters, munitions workers and farm workers. Our Australian nurses served in Egypt, France, Greece and India, often in trying conditions or close to the front, where they were exposed to shelling and aerial bombardment as well as significant outbreaks of disease.

Anzac has come to stand for the positive qualities that Australians have shown in war. Those qualities are generally accepted to include endurance, courage, ingenuity, good humour and mateship. The qualities became known among our allies and enemies alike, as was described in the diary of Sydney B. Young of Campsie, where he wrote:

An American who could speak German asked a German prisoner did he think they were winning the war. He replied: 'Yes, God is with us.' The American replied: 'That is nothing, the Australians are with us.'

I was fortunate enough to deliver the Anzac address at the Cremorne Synagogue Anzac service on the Saturday before Anzac Day. I thank Rabbi Chaim Koncepolski, the board of management and the entire shul for welcoming me to do this. They hold an Anzac service every year, and it was particularly significant this year because the service was held on the Shabbat. They had a wonderful turnout of people, recognising the joint history of the struggle, sacrifice and fight for freedom that the Jewish peoples and Australian people share.

I recognise all of our local RSL sub-branches that held services across our community in recognition of Anzac Day—Mosman RSL Sub-Branch, Kirribilli RSL Sub-Branch and North Sydney RSL Sub-Branch—as well as the Neutral Bay Club, which holds an 11.00 a.m. service every year on Anzac Day. This year I joined many thousands of local residents at North Sydney War Memorial for the dawn service hosted by the North Sydney RSL Sub-Branch. It was a moving service, as always, and I thank the committee members for all their work in organising it. I thank, in particular, Alex Wilson, Chris Greatrex and Trent Zimmerman from the North Sydney RSL Sub-Branch; Stuart Warren, Scout Leader 1st North Sydney Scout Group; Commander Fiona Eggins, who

is the commanding officer of HMAS *Waterhen* in Waverton; Captain Philipa Hay, who is the commander of the Australian Amphibious Task Force; maritime spiritual wellbeing officers Stephen Varney and Trent Bowen; and Major Jason Li from the Australian Army Reserve.

I thank all the schools that participated in laying a wreath or a tribute. It is so important that these younger generations are involved and turn out en masse with their teachers, staff and families. I thank and recognise Loreto Kirribilli, Anzac Park Public School, Neutral Bay Public School, North Sydney Boys High School, North Sydney Girls High School, North Sydney Demonstration School, Shore, Wenona, Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College, Cammeraygal High School and Marist Catholic College North Shore. The call to service has always been answered, and we remember and pay tribute to all those who have served in conflicts around the world. Let us never forget the sacrifices that have been made, and let us always remember the bravery and courage of those who fought for our country and fought for us. Let us not forget.

### BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:12):** Locals who dedicate their lives to serving their communities are invaluable treasures who bring immense value and positive change to the places they call home. These remarkable individuals devote their time, energy and resources selflessly to uplift those around them and create a better society for all. Last week I attended the Blue Mountains Local Citizen of the Year Awards, a night dedicated to honour and celebrate those who go above and beyond for their community. The evening was a profound reminder of the lengths those in our community go to to enrich the Blue Mountains and make it a better place.

I have witnessed firsthand how their dedication and commitment inspires others to get involved and take action. Leading by example, these locals motivate and empower their communities to join forces in a collective effort that amplifies their impact. They have created spaces and opportunities for community members to come together, share experiences and work towards a common goal. This work extends beyond the immediate Blue Mountains community. They have become advocates for social issues, driving conversations and advocating for the rights and wellbeing of those who may otherwise go unheard. Morna Colbran was awarded Citizen of the Year. Morna's career has long been dedicated to the service of others and particularly the most vulnerable members of our community. From helping those battling addiction and financial hardship to providing support to those affected by disasters, Morna has been a pillar of strength for countless individuals in our community.

Under Morna's leadership at Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre, a wide range of vital services have been offered. A few highlights include emergency relief programs like "Support with Dignity"; the Community Food Cupboard and the Fresh Food Program; the community shop, which stocks everything from books to homewares, clothes and children's toys at affordable prices; no-interest loans provided to those in the community who find themselves unable to afford essential goods and services; Work Development Orders; counselling; and Women Returning to Employment Network [WREN] workshops and art classes. Morna's holistic approach, which addresses the physical, mental and spiritual needs of individuals, has created a more caring and resilient community. Her generosity extends beyond her organisation, as she selflessly shares her expertise and resources with the people of the Blue Mountains. Many in the community who have received Morna's help will never know that it came from her. I thank her for her tireless efforts.

The Senior Citizen of the Year, among many wonderful nominees, was awarded to Ray Wiles. Since arriving in the Blue Mountains in 2002, Ray has immersed himself in our extensive network of community and charity organisations, making a remarkable difference to our community. As a proud Rotarian for over 35 years, he has held numerous offices, including president. He has organised countless fundraisers, barbecues and events, from supporting the local public school's "Breakfast Club" to working towards the global eradication of polio.

Ray's passion and generosity has enriched the lives of many. His work extends beyond the Rotary Club, with some notable examples including creating the "Presidents Walk", a series of bricks paid for by the community at the Blue Mountains Hospital; fundraising for the Greystanes Disability Services; and, amongst others, co-chairing the Upper Mountains Red Shield Appeal. Befitting of his service, in 2016 Ray was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community. Today I further honour his service and thank him for his long-term commitment to the Blue Mountains.

Lastly, I turn my attention to a remarkable organisation that has been tirelessly working to protect our precious wildlife: the Blue Mountains Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service [WIRES]. We are incredibly fortunate to call the Blue Mountains, a UNESCO World Heritage site, home. For over three decades, WIRES has been on call day and night, rescuing injured and at-risk native animals in the Blue Mountains and surrounding areas. Its vital work became even more apparent during the devastating Black Summer bushfires, when millions of animals lost their lives and countless habitats were destroyed.

After the bushfires, like so many areas in our State, the Blue Mountains was hit with destructive storms and flooding, further decimating our beautiful animals and their homes. Despite the challenges posed by fires, floods and the pandemic, WIRES volunteers persevered, undertaking rescues, caring for injured animals and working tirelessly to rehabilitate and release them back into the wild. With 31 active volunteers in the Blue Mountains, in 2022 alone WIRES took over 4,700 calls, drove half a million kilometres and cared for and released more than 2,000 native animals back into the wild. Finally, along with Morna, Ray and the wonderful volunteers of WIRES, I thank the other nominees of these awards. Having worked alongside many of them, I know that they do not do it for the recognition, but today I honour their services and contributions to our wonderful community.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY LAND USE

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (20:17):** Today I speak about the land use conflict between prime agricultural land and emerging renewable energy projects. Renewable energy is recognised as the need of the future. We need to transition in a sustainable, reliable way that does not drive up energy prices and leave families on the brink. However, with that mantra, significant challenges arise from competitive land use: renewable energy projects being set up on prime agricultural land. This is a significant problem in regional and rural New South Wales, and it is dividing small communities.

At present, hundreds of projects across regional New South Wales are under development. As it stands, those developments are causing real, significant and heartbreaking rifts in our communities. It is friend against friend, neighbour against neighbour, and in some instances it is toxic. These are cases where members of small rural communities who have been friends and neighbours for life no longer talk to each other. There are projects in my electorate that are at various stages of development or progress: the Nundle wind farm, Bendemeer wind and solar, Winton solar and Loomberah solar project, and the Somerton solar project. These projects are causing concern. Some of them are on prime agricultural land, and there is significant conflict about the use of that land.

The land is often chosen because of its proximity to high voltage electricity transmission lines, regardless of what the land is being used for. Our race to renewables is justified and it is needed, but it needs to be done better. These issues are not new, nor are they unique to renewable energy. We have seen the exact same issues throughout the mining boom; we are seeing them today on the Liverpool Plains with gas exploration, which I oppose on prime agricultural land. The reality is that policies are failing us and have led to ongoing land use conflict, and they are failing our regional communities. We need to do better.

The previous Government tasked the NSW Agriculture Commissioner to look at these issues, resulting in a report entitled *Improving the Prospects for Agriculture and Regional Australia in the NSW Planning System*. Thirteen recommendations came out of the report, all of which were supported or supported in principle. The first two recommendations are:

1. **The NSW Government should take a phased approach to adopting a statutory State Significant Agricultural Land Use Planning Policy (SSALUP Policy). Initially, a policy should be released**, following a public comment process, which is implemented through Regional Plans and which councils are directed to implement through strategic planning ...
2. **The objectives, permitted land uses and application of the RU1, RU2 and RU4 zone should be reviewed by DPIE and DPI to ensure there is a clear determination of priority for agriculture (and therefore other permitted uses) in these zones.** Following this review the NSW Government should ensure there are clear policies governing land use and consideration of development proposals consistent with these zone objectives.

I call on the Labor Government to adopt the 13 recommendations from the report to provide certainty for the agricultural industry as well as the renewable sector. It must get the balance right so that farmers in my region and the rest of regional New South Wales can get on with what they do best—producing food, fibre, crops, cattle and grain, not becoming renewable energy experts because they have to.

### CAMDEN ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (20:21):** I speak on an issue that has affected my constituents, and the people of Western Sydney more broadly, for decades: the lack of access to localised health care in my electorate of Camden. The lack of local infrastructure has been a chronic issue for my constituents, stretching back many years. Local planning has been playing catch-up for decades, and today the community feels the effects of the severe lack of planning for population growth and consideration of local infrastructure and long-term needs. Health care is no different. The lack of planning that has left the Macarthur region with a lack of infrastructure and transport has also left the area with a lack of localised healthcare services. The nearest major hospital for my constituents is Campbelltown. The staff there do amazing work in looking after community members who seek healthcare services, and we cannot thank them enough. However, the problem with access to health care in my electorate persists.

While Camden Hospital contains an emergency department, it does not have the facilities to cater for many of the emergency health needs that people face. Camden Hospital is under-utilised and could be transformed into



a hub of specialist services, which the local community sorely needs. I am confident that this can be done with the right planning and approach. Camden and Campbelltown hospitals are simply not enough to support our local community, which remains one of the fastest growing in the country. Decades of planning failures have contributed to the lack of public healthcare facilities in the Macarthur region. With its continued population growth, we need more health services to keep up with demand.

I seek to highlight not only the lack of emergency departments for my constituents but also the lack of specialist services for the residents of Camden. The lack of MRI machines and cancer treatment services is especially prevalent in the community. The Camden local government area houses a population of over 100,000 people and will continue to grow rapidly in coming years. Despite the population, Camden only has one MRI machine that is bulk billed, which results in long waiting periods and delayed diagnoses. Worse yet, patients who cannot afford to wait or pay for expensive tests out of their own pocket can be forced to undertake long travel times, heading into Sydney where MRI machines are more abundant. A recent study by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare highlights that the number of MRI scans per capita in Camden is significantly lower than the national average and the average wait time for an MRI scan is approximately six weeks, which contributes to delays in diagnoses.

Another impact of the lack of localised health services in Camden is the impact on cancer patients. As members know, cancer is a terrible disease that can upend a person's life and have terrible long-term effects on a person's health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, Camden Hospital does not contain any dedicated cancer treatment facilities, which forces residents to travel long distances—often to areas much closer to the Sydney CBD—for essential treatments. That not only adds to existing burdens on patients but also contributes to delays in accessing the vital care patients deserve. Worse still, a report by Cancer Institute NSW found that Camden has one of the highest cancer rates per capita in New South Wales, and cancer patients in my electorate are sometimes forced to travel 50-plus kilometres to access specialised cancer treatment centres.

The information I have presented tells a long story. It tells a story of neglect and a lack of planning from the previous Government, which sought to build houses on the fringes of Sydney without providing the essential services needed to support the growing population. The lack of MRI machines and cancer treatment services is only part of the problem, but I seek to highlight those issues that have a grave impact on members of the community. It is not good enough for my constituents to have extremely limited access to health care when their needs are great and only growing. I thank the Minister for Health for recognising the issues my constituents face in receiving healthcare services that are not only available but also affordable. The people of Camden are under-served by healthcare facilities, and we must work to improve access for the whole community. On this side of the House, we are committed to doing exactly that.

### **PARKES TANKER FIRE 1983**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (20:25):** I recognise acts of courage by firefighters at Parkes, which have not been fully recognised in the 40 years since the event. To bring to the attention of the House the courage and heroism of those men, I rely on a report about the emergency event, which some of the responding firefighters have contributed to. I acknowledge Christine Little of *Parkes Champion Post* for her research and media reporting of the historical event. At 9.03 a.m. on 23 May 1983, Parkes-based firefighters responded to a 000 call. A rail tanker carriage loaded with 33,000 litres of petrol, which was being decanted into fuel storage tanks at the Mobil depot at East Street in Parkes, was witnessed to have ignited. It was in close proximity to millions more litres of petrol at the Mobil storage depot, threatening not only the lives of the responding firefighters, who fought to control and extinguish the fire, but also the lives of Parkes residents.

After the 000 call, Parkes fire brigade captain Gordon Northey and nine firefighters arrived on the scene to find a tanker totally engulfed in fire, with flames leaping six to eight metres in the air. The brigade immediately set to work by applying firefighting foam to the northern side of the tanker. Avgas petroleum was stored in 205-litre drums in a shed about a metre away from the flames. Firemen immediately started cooling those drums to prevent them from exploding. A second firefighting hose was set up on the southern Medlyn Street side of the tanker to cool it down. That type of fire is called a BLEVE, or a boiling liquid evaporating vapour explosion, and is highly dangerous. Superheated by fire, enormous pressure was created inside the tanker. The end result could have been an explosion through which fuel and shrapnel would be spread over hundreds of metres. In the case of the Mobil depot, with a series of other depots and fuel storages in close proximity—one million litres within 100 metres and two million litres within 250 metres—the chain reaction would have been catastrophic.

Parkes fire brigade fought the blaze with very few resources. Water pressure was so poor that it was lucky to supply one hose, let alone three. Foam stocks were very limited, with more stock coming from the Parkes airport and the Bogan Gate army camp. Firefighting strength was at eight men, with one policeman present. The order to evacuate Parkes came early in the fire but, as the situation worsened, the evacuation area was widened. A second rail car was parked behind the tanker involved in the fire. One firefighter put himself in great peril,

braving the flames to disconnect the tanker, allowing rail staff to take it away. As the fire worsened, the situation was critical. The order was given for firefighters to evacuate but no-one left, instead choosing to give the fire their very best shot. The turning point came with the arrival of the Forbes fire brigade. Its fire engine was set to work in Clarinda Street, pumping water to the Parkes fire engine. That increased both the pressure and the volume of water to the three lines being used to attack the fire. As well, with the use of the Forbes foam branch, additional foam was applied to the southern side of the tanker.

Despite huge quantities of water being applied to keep the tanker cool and stop metal fatigue, after 3½ hours of intense heat the tanker started breaking up. Pop rivets about 20 millimetres in diameter, which held the steel in place, started popping. The situation was highly critical but firefighting efforts continued. The two brigades eventually won the battle about 12.30 p.m. Cooling operations continued for several hours to prevent reignition. Parkes fire brigade, with the help of Forbes fire brigade, had pulled off the impossible and the town was saved from certain catastrophe. Those firemen put their lives on the line. Without the total team commitment the memories of that day would be of a major disaster. It should be noted that four schools and many homes were not evacuated and all were well within the potential blast radius of the fuel source.

I commend those brave firefighters for their commitment, courage and heroism. I now recognise those brave firefighters from Parkes: captain Gordon Northey, now deceased; engine keeper Rodney Bradley, now deceased; firefighter Robert Tinker; firefighter Graham Dixon; firefighter Roger Larsen; firefighter Graham Thompson; firefighter Robert McDonald, now deceased; firefighter Don Jewell; firefighter Bruce Shanks, now deceased; and firefighter John Ashcroft, now deceased. I also wish to recognise former police officer Brian Drabsch who bravely remained in harm's way to assist the firefighters, who ultimately succeeded in preventing a catastrophe. It is regretful that the firefighters who are now deceased were not recognised during their lifetime. Although this late recognition provides them no solace perhaps it does, to an extent, for their families, fellow firefighters and the community they saved.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (20:30):** I thank and acknowledge the member for Orange for his private member's statement. Time and again our emergency services workers demonstrate their commitment, dedication and heroism in protecting our communities. That was shown by those firefighters in Parkes in 1983. I humbly commend the bravery of the firefighters who responded to that fire—a fire that could have been much more devastating to the community. As the member for Orange said, it is important to recognise the firefighters who attended the fire with courage and heroism. Those firefighters put their lives on the line and responded with very few resources.

It is important to recognise the firefighters from Parkes and I add their names here. They are the late captain Gordon Northey, the late engine keeper Rodney Bradley, firefighter Robert Tinker, firefighter Graham Dixon, firefighter Roger Larsen, firefighter Graham Thompson, the late firefighter Robert McDonald, firefighter Don Jewell, the late firefighter Bruce Shanks and the late firefighter John Ashcroft. I am glad that a dedicated plaque recognising the incident has been installed at Parkes Fire Station. I am thankful to the member for Orange for recognising the efforts of our emergency services personnel as I am to all people who bravely risk their lives for others. I am grateful for the advocacy of Mr Phil Donato, the member for Orange. He is a true champion of his community.

#### FIRST HOME BUYERS

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (20:31):** The New South Wales Government went to the last election with a clear policy to end the forever tax on the family home. We said we would create a fairer, simpler stamp duty concession scheme to ensure that 84 per cent, or five out of six, of future first home buyers would pay no tax or reduced rates starting from 1 July 2023. That will have a big impact in my electorate of Maitland, where the average cost of a house can range anywhere up to \$700,000. Labor's plan replaces the land tax that was introduced by the former Government and was comprehensively rejected by the people at the March election. It legislates our plan—the people's plan—which targets assisting those buying a home up to \$1 million and increases support for those buying above the \$650,000 threshold that was formerly in place. Under the Minns Labor Government's changes, the threshold for the stamp duty exemption for first home buyers has been lifted from \$650,000 to \$800,000 and there are stamp duty concessions from \$800,000 to \$1 million.

We want to help first home buyers on lower incomes who find it difficult to save enough while paying someone else rent. Back in the 1990s first home buyers took around six years to save a 20 per cent deposit and one year to save for stamp duty. It now takes 10 years to save a 20 per cent deposit and two years to save for stamp duty. Under Labor's plan first home buyers spending \$700,000—like many people in my electorate of Maitland—will save an additional \$10,363 in stamp duty. On a \$750,000 home they will save \$20,000 and on an \$800,000 home they will save \$31,000. In other words, the bill will wipe out stamp duty completely for first home

buyers purchasing a home under \$800,000, and the savings will continue on all homes under \$1 million. That will be a boon to our regions, which is very important.

Recently I went around the State, including to the North Coast and Coffs Harbour, where the median house prices are \$825,000. First house buyers there will save about \$27,200. House buyers in Bathurst, Orange and the Central West will save around \$23,000 on an average home of around \$636,000. In Bellingen on the North Coast, the median house price is \$762,000. First home buyers will save around \$29,000—and it goes on. According to Revenue NSW data collected over the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years, more than half of the transactions for New South Wales properties under \$1 million occurred in regional New South Wales. We know that because people are moving to the regions to purchase houses. However, more than 80 per cent of the take-up of the former Government's land tax scheme occurred in the Sydney metropolitan area.

It is clear that the policy did not work for people in regional areas. No government with a serious commitment to regional New South Wales would have accepted such a poor outcome. We understand the serious housing affordability pressures in regional New South Wales. These changes mean that families in regional New South Wales can have access to a fairer and simpler program that will save them real money when they buy their first home, instead of signing up to a forever debt. Our plan ensures that Government support goes to those first home buyers who need it most. The legislation improves the integrity and targeting of first home buyer assistance programs by increasing the requirement to live in the home from six months to 12 months. The changes to the first home buyers assistance scheme will result in a fairer and simpler system, unlike the former Government's scheme whereby first home buyers purchasing properties at the top of the range received a disproportionate share of the benefits.

The Government's stamp duty changes will help more young people and families into their first homes. The former Government claimed to offer choice, but it was a false choice. It gave most of the benefits to people buying a home for more than \$1 million. I do not begrudge people if they want to spend that much money, but they should not be subsidised by people who are paying far less because they cannot afford it. The Liberals' land tax scheme gave 50 per cent of the additional benefit to just 13 per cent of first home buyers. We will not be accepting an each-way bet. We are providing more first home buyers with affordable housing. I put that on record because it is very important. As we come up to 1 July we want to make first home buyers aware of the changes. The new measures will help five out of six of all first home buyers. We will deliver on the key election commitment of the Minns Labor Government to abolish the annual land tax—the forever tax on our homes. More first home buyers will pay no tax under Labor's scheme instead of a land tax.

### BEACHES LINK

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (20:37):** In my time as the member for Willoughby I have sought to be a vocal, fearless advocate for the community. Nine months ago I stood in this Chamber and outlined why—after having widely consulted and listened to the residents of Willoughby—I could not support the Beaches Link project as it was then proposed. Since then, the New South Wales Government has announced that the planning process for the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection will not proceed any further. This is an effective cancellation of the project. There appears to be some uncertainty as to the process by which this cancellation was effected, but I take the Government on good faith. The Beaches Link will not proceed. I note the project was neither funded nor approved by the former Government. With my advocacy, it was placed on hold to provide more time to get the project right and address the concerns of the community over its design.

I was and always will be a strong defender of Flat Rock Gully, and I am glad that it will be fully preserved for generations to come. I will continue to make clear that any infrastructure proposed in the future should not impact upon that precious gully. It is a natural gem and a special place for those living in the Willoughby area. But I have concerns over the Government's announcement. One cannot cancel a major project such as this in isolation. Whatever one's views on the details, design or otherwise of the Beaches Link, the rationale and its overall purpose remains. The problem that it was trying to solve remains unsolved. Arterial roads throughout the Willoughby electorate and others nearby remain congested. The Government must work towards and act upon a suitable alternative. The Willoughby community must be reassured that this is not just another cut to infrastructure investment for our part of Sydney.

My community needs through traffic on our local roads reduced and the problem of congestion tackled in a meaningful manner. There needs to be an adequate link connecting to the northern beaches. Currently there are only three roadways in and out of an area with a population of over 260,000 people. There is no train line, just three roads and a ferry and, yes, bus services too. Inevitably the situation has caused widespread congestion of local roads, including across Willoughby. Military Road is gridlocked even in off-peak periods. Traffic pours down the Roseville Bridge and clogs the Pacific Highway, Eastern Valley Way, Boundary Street, Penshurst Street and more local streets. The congestion has considerable economic, social and personal costs for people, families, and communities. The productivity cost of being stuck in traffic alone runs into the millions of dollars.

Clearly there is a need to connect the beaches properly to the rest of Sydney. The Government must be clear on its plans to get traffic off local roads. The Government's announcement cancelling the Beaches Link needs to be accompanied by consideration of an alternative link that is acceptable to the community. I call on the Government to conduct a business case and feasibility study for a metro rail line connecting to the existing Sydney Metro line between Roseville and North Sydney. That was an option contemplated during the planning process for the Sydney Metro City and Southwest project and the tunnels were designed to allow for a future beaches line connection. It was considered that an extension may very well be pursued in the future. It is now time to look again at that option.

I welcome the Government's commitment to proceed with the completion of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway upgrade. The bipartisan support for those projects acknowledges their importance in futureproofing the freeway and capacity under Sydney Harbour. Those projects will deliver tangible improvements to the daily lives of many thousands of people once complete. An effective CBD bypass and a detangled, more resilient Warringah Freeway will mean less time stuck in traffic and more time doing the things that matter. I know infrastructure building comes with short-term inconvenience. I continue to work, as I always have, on seeking to reduce that impact on our community. I thank the Willoughby community, in particular those residents in Cammeray, Neutral Bay, Cremorne and Naremburn for their patience during this difficult construction period.

As I have said, it is vital we get those projects right and working for us locally. I will continue to strongly put the community's concerns over the filtration of ventilation outlets and the restoration of Cammeray Park. I am determined that public consultation on those projects be improved and that the place, design and landscape plan for the future of the temporary construction site at Cammeray be put on public display as soon as possible. Construction of those projects, though, is not forever. There is a real opportunity to deliver an exciting public space for the betterment of our community. I want to make sure that that vision is realised. Indeed, I have sought to extend that vision and sought to build more green space parkland and sporting facilities over the freeway as well. I will continue to work constructively with the Government to achieve optimal outcomes from the tunnel projects for the Willoughby community.

#### RECONCILIATION WALK AND GATHERING

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (20:42):** On Saturday 3 June I had the honour of attending and participating in the annual Mount Druitt Reconciliation Walk and Gathering. This year's event marked the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Reconciliation Walk and Gathering. This year's theme was "Be a Voice for Generations". The event celebrates the meaning of reconciliation—that is, the building of mutual and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It was an opportunity to honour our Indigenous Elders. It was held on the grounds of Mount Druitt Swimming Centre, with lots of stalls and performances showcasing Indigenous artists and youths sharing their talent and stories.

The Mount Druitt Reconciliation Walk and Gathering was originally brought about through community effort and a yearning to bridge the divide that has existed over the decades between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. That yearning ultimately resulted in a community meeting at the Holy Family church in Emerton, and Father Paul Hanna, the former parish priest, and the late Coral McLean, together with the former Federal member for Chifley, the Hon. Roger Price, are all deserving of recognition for establishing what has become a major annual event in the Mount Druitt community.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the Hon. Ed Husic, MP, Federal member for Chifley, who has continued the advocacy initiated by his predecessor, for organising the annual Chifley Coral McLean Awards in honour of the late Coral McLean, known as the mother of Mount Druitt. The awards recognise the outstanding contributions made by women in the Chifley electorate. This year's annual Mount Druitt Reconciliation Walk occurred at a significant time in the history of Australia, as we fast approach the Voice referendum later this year. Mount Druitt is home to a sizeable Indigenous community—in fact, one of the largest urban populations in Australia—and is, therefore, a key focal point as conversations about the Voice occur not just in our State of New South Wales but across Australia. It is especially important to note that the New South Wales Government has given its support to the Voice, endorsing a yes vote.

Constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians and a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament are key steps in the journey towards reconciliation, and I am pleased to be able to reinforce the backing that the New South Wales Government has given to the Voice. Reconciliation is a long journey. Since the inception of the Mount Druitt Reconciliation Walk, Australia has observed advancements such as then Prime Minister the Hon. Kevin Rudd speaking in the Federal Parliament and giving the Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples on 13 February 2008. In 1992 on Gadigal land at Redfern Park—not far from here—then Prime Minister the Hon. Paul Keating acknowledged the violence and dispossession that had been inflicted upon Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people. That speech was delivered only months after the historic Mabo judgement, and it confronted profound mistruths about Australia's history.

History, when it is comprehensive and truthful, teaches us important lessons. We can look further back to the resounding success of the 1967 referendum, when 90.77 per cent of Australians voted yes to the constitutional change which counted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of the Australian population. I commend the work by the Mount Druitt and Districts Reconciliation Committee in organising the twenty-sixth annual Mount Druitt Reconciliation Walk. I thank committee secretary Bec Reidy and committee member Fiona Arakelian for extending to me the invitation to participate in the 2023 Mount Druitt reconciliation event. The walk is a small step in a long walk towards reconciliation.

### KEMPSEY DISTRICT HOSPITAL HYDROTHERAPY POOL

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (20:46):** Along with the residents of the Macleay Valley, I am concerned for the future of the hydrotherapy pool at Kempsey District Hospital, which has remained closed since March 2020 on the premise of COVID-19 restrictions. My predecessor, Melinda Pavey, raised the issue with the Mid North Coast Local Health District chief executive and was advised last year that the health district was reviewing the future viability of the pool. As of today I have not received the update that indicates the pool will open, and I implore the health district and the Minister for Regional Health to expedite this matter and invest the appropriate resources to immediately reopen the hydrotherapy pool.

Regional health facilities are one of the most important parts of our communities, yet we know that at times our communities continue to face significant barriers to accessing the health care they need. While bureaucracy discusses expenditure, it often forgets to factor in the real human cost of health facility closures for our local people—people like Ethan Harwood, a young man restricted to an electric wheelchair. Our local people like Ethan deserve the same access as those in the city. Lack of services, which can only be overcome by extensive travel, can be made worse by the distances travelled in the regions and means additional costs simply to access basic care. Kempsey District Hospital hydrotherapy pool closure means patients have had to travel over 50 kilometres to Macksville for hydrotherapy treatment in the private sector. That is prohibitive for residents who cannot drive or have medical conditions that prevent them from driving, and who cannot afford the cost of travel or rely on others to transport them.

A local public pool is not a substitute for a hydrotherapy pool. Hydrotherapy is significantly different from conventional swimming and aqua aerobics. Hydrotherapy exercises are performed within the therapeutic temperature range, which is water heated between 31 and 35 degrees, and provide opportunity for individual progression within a safe, comfortable and enjoyable environment. The exercises and movements cater to each individual client to address their discussed goals. Hydrotherapy is often less strenuous than land-based exercises, focusing on guided, controlled, pain-free movements with the ultimate goal of providing pain relief or increased function. Pools are selected to ensure there is appropriate access and the ideal depth of water can be reached for each client.

For those advocating for the reopening of the local Kempsey hydrotherapy pool, the irony was not lost that the local community first raised the funds to have the facility built. Kempsey hydrotherapy pool was installed through community fundraising in 1986. More than 30 local businesses and organisations donated to the pool project, which raised \$150,350 for the service. More than 30 years later, the pool has been valued and used by a range of residents. As members well know, I will not stop advocating for the facility. I was preselected as The Nationals candidate for the seat of Oxley while openly stating to the community that I would advocate for the hydrotherapy pool to be reopened.

Prior to politics, I rented the pool for years and provided service to clients as the director and principal physiotherapist at Keystone Health. That Macleay-based healthcare service had a large number of patients who were using the pool regularly before the closure. I know both professionally and firsthand that hydrotherapy is important to a multitude of patients. Aquatic physiotherapy is physical exercise conducted within a specially designed heated pool to target and treat a wide spectrum of conditions. They may include but are not limited to osteoarthritis, general joint pain, preoperative or postoperative rehabilitation, neurological conditions, fibromyalgia and general fitness and wellbeing.

Speaking of reasons, imagine having a neurological condition like young Ethan Harwood does and being confined to a mechanically limiting wheelchair for life, and then imagine the pain relief and the joy at being able to fully extend one's limbs while in the water. We take that for granted, but I will bet members have never seen a smile like young Ethan's. Hydrotherapy is really important for a multitude of patients. The water can take up to 70 per cent of a person's weight, which allows people to move their joints through a range of motion that is unencumbered by weight or gravitational limitations. People get such joy and freedom of movement in the pool with one-on-one treatment that it is really a shame not to be able to offer those services. Repairs quoted about

12 months ago to upgrade the hydrotherapy pool are in the vicinity of \$120,000, which is a small price tag for the wellbeing of our community. I implore the new State Government to find a way to reopen Kempsey hydrotherapy pool.

### **BOULDER BEACH DROWNING**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (20:51):** I reflect on a recent tragedy and also a story of bravery and heroism at Boulder Beach in Lennox Head. I offer my sincere condolences to the family of the 57-year-old man who tragically drowned whilst rock fishing off Boulder Beach on 21 May this year. I also recognise the selfless actions of his friends who dived in to rescue him but who then got into difficulty. I inform the House of the altruistic actions and rescue efforts of local surfer and off-duty lifesaver Michael Crisp and thank him on behalf of the Ballina electorate for his actions. I thank Luke Madden, the CEO of Surfing NSW, for facilitating my contact with Michael, and I thank Michael for allowing me to share his story. I also speak to the merits and success of Surfing NSW's Surfers Rescue 24/7 course.

On 21 May Michael went to a popular fishing and surfing spot in the Ballina electorate, Boulder Beach, which is also, sadly, a high-risk area for swimmers and beachgoers outside of flagged areas. Michael hoped he would catch a few waves before the sun went down, as he normally did. While he was paddling out, he noticed that three men were fishing off the rocks on the beach, and he did not know something was wrong until he noticed that people were rushing to that area.

When Michael paddled near the three distressed swimmers, he could ascertain that one of the men had been swept out and that the other two men were trying to assist him. Sadly, all three men were inexperienced swimmers and were unable to swim to safety without assistance. With the combined effort of the local police, local surfers, a few community members, paramedics and the SES, Michael led the team to rescue the men from the water. With the help of two other local surfers, Steve and Rupert, Michael directed the team to apply different rescue techniques. The whole rescue operation lasted more than two hours, and in the end two lives were saved. But sadly, as we know, one man's life was lost. I am not naming those members of the community, at their request.

Since the start of 2023, Michael has made 10 rescues at Boulder Beach. That statistic informs my ongoing advocacy for better education about beach safety. Michael credits his excellent rescue skills to his three-year experience as a lifeguard, his local knowledge of the beaches in our area and, above all, the free Surfers Rescue 24/7 training delivered by Surfing NSW that he undertook. Michael's story is a testament to the success of that program. According to Surfing NSW, the Surfers Rescue 24/7 course provides crucial training to assist in ocean emergencies, ultimately saving lives. The course was sparked by a need to cover the gap between patrolled beaches and remote beaches to reduce deaths from drowning in New South Wales. I am not suggesting that surfers bear the responsibility, but it is amazing how many surfers are signing up to do the course. They care about their community. The course is unique because Surfing NSW and its partners have identified rescue techniques crucial in emergency situations that are ideal for surfers, such as the leg-rope rescue technique that Michael used in his most recent rescue.

It is no surprise there are still many deaths from drowning in Australia. According to the Royal Life Saving drowning report, in the summer of 2022-23 there were 90 cases of drowning nationwide and 50 per cent of those were off coastal beaches. We know that so much more education needs to take place. Surfing is such a big part of our society, as is beach life. It makes sense to both educate and prioritise the safety of our communities as people enjoy that lifestyle. I am pleased that the New South Wales Government has supported Surfing NSW in providing the free CPR and board rescue course for all surfers in New South Wales. I encourage every member in this House to tell everyone they know about the course because it is free and absolutely saving lives. Again, I offer my sincere condolences to the family of the man who died at Boulder Beach in May. On behalf of the Ballina electorate, I thank Michael Crisp for his rescue efforts and bravery.

### **LONG JETTY HOSPITAL**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (20:56):** Long Jetty hospital has been reborn. The rebirth of Long Jetty hospital happened with the announcement on 14 June that the Minns Labor Government will establish an urgent care clinic on the grounds of the Long Jetty Health Care Facility. To put that in context and provide a bit of history, before Wyong Hospital was established, Long Jetty hospital was the main public health facility servicing the northern parts of the Central Coast. It was established in 1958 on the grounds of a former golf course. The main hospital building, which still exists, is the original golf course clubhouse. Several members of my community tell me they were born at Long Jetty hospital. It has a special place in the history and in the heart of the Central Coast and The Entrance electorate.

Under the previous Government some services had started to be removed from the Long Jetty site, leaving many in my community concerned about the future of the site, particularly as it followed the period under the

Baird Liberal-Nationals Government when health Minister Jillian Skinner privatised five hospitals in the State, including Wyong Hospital. That resulted in a huge community campaign and created quite a bit of distrust in the former Government's intentions whenever any sort of change was mooted in the health district. I have long campaigned and called for the retention of services and the expansion of public health services in my electorate, particularly at the Long Jetty site.

The last major investment in public health services at Long Jetty occurred under the Carr Labor Government when, circa 2000, the current healthcare centre—the newer building—was established on the site. By that time, Long Jetty had ceased to be part of the public hospital system. It was not a walk-in hospital but was still undertaking public health services, usually as part of outpatient services and with a recovery unit for inpatients who were discharged from the two major hospitals on the Central Coast.

During the COVID pandemic the inpatient unit was moved to Woy Woy to accommodate COVID patients and services being expanded at the Long Jetty site. Clozapine Clinic, a mental health program, was removed from the premises. Despite the Minister at the time assuring me that "the district is committed to providing health services from Long Jetty", services that had been removed from Long Jetty were not returned. A review of the Long Jetty facility was undertaken by the health district. To their credit, they agreed to my view that the community should be brought into the review. It became a public review and that was a good thing.

The community said they want a more enhanced public health service, but they wanted a public health service that they could walk into and use in the same way as they can walk into a public hospital. I support the community's call 100 per cent, and that is what they are getting. The new facility will be open seven days a week from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., including public holidays. It will be a free clinic. It will be staffed by GPs, nurses and allied health professionals. Patients will initially access the service by contacting the Healthdirect phone number, which, as everybody knows, is 1800 022 222. They will then speak to a registered nurse who will triage them and direct them either to Long Jetty or to a more appropriate health service.

The health district reckons that 20 per cent of the people who currently attend emergency departments on the Central Coast—and we have a huge number; about 150,000 a year—could be adequately and comprehensively dealt with and cared for at a clinic like the service we will be offering at Long Jetty. I note that this urgent care service is not the urgent care clinics that the Commonwealth will be providing. We have been promised two of those on the Central Coast, although they are yet to be established. I thank Minister Park for his support for the project. I thank the health district staff who have worked hard to make this thing happen. The establishment of an emergency care clinic is an exciting expansion of public health on the Central Coast. It shows Labor's commitment to public health in this State.

### **CUMBERLAND PLAIN WOODLAND DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (21:01):** I raise concerns about a development currently underway in my electorate—Development Application 1544/2010 at lot 61 Braidwood Drive, Prestons, in the Liverpool local government area. The "2010" in the application number marks the year it was lodged—some 13 years ago. Despite that, work has only just commenced in the last few months. By most reasonable definitions, this is what is known as a zombie DA, or development application. Local residents became concerned and contacted me when they saw fencing being erected around the site in mid-March this year. One long-term resident remembers opposing the DA when it was first lodged. Other residents have questioned how the development could proceed as they understood the site to be ecologically significant. Indeed, entering the address into Google Maps will show it as "Cumberland Plain Woodland". The location is home to the critically endangered Cumberland Plain land snail.

Sadly, recent work on the site has turned what was once thick native vegetation into 49 ready-to-develop residential lots. Upon making inquiries with Liverpool council, a strange series of decisions emerged. The DA was lodged in June 2010 and approved by council a year later, with correspondence stating that the DA would lapse in August 2016. Nothing much happened on the site in the intervening years. However, on 19 August 2016 a request was received by council seeking a determination that work had started on the site. That would prevent the DA from lapsing, if granted. Council reviewed the request and issued a determination confirming that development had substantially commenced just three days later, on 22 August—the exact day the consent was set to lapse.

Those familiar with the workings of local government, at Liverpool council in particular, would be no doubt impressed with the speed at which that determination was made. What is more remarkable is that the day the request was made was a Friday and council's determination was made on the following Monday. In effect, that means it took a single working day to establish substantial works had been undertaken. What were those substantial works? In council's own words they were survey work, erosion and sediment control, and geotechnical site investigation—that is, a series of small holes to do some soil testing.

One of the biggest issues in the area is traffic. The neighbourhood is congested most days due to narrow streets, poor design of the road network and a nearby prep to year 12 school. The only way in or out is via the aforementioned single lane Braidwood Drive. One resident who lives a few houses down from the subdivision told me that if she is away from her house at any time past 2.00 p.m., she does not bother returning home until after 4.00 p.m. to avoid the bumper-to-bumper gridlock. Demographics, work patterns and social behaviours have all changed since 2010. We are more aware of the impacts of the urban heat island effect and the importance of green space in urban and residential areas. In a recent article in *The Guardian* on zombie development applications, Craig Milburn, the general manager of Kempsey Shire Council, said:

Our concern is that an old development can clear a site when we know that the science and community expectations have changed ...

The response from Liverpool City Council has been less understanding. When a nearby resident made inquiries about the works, council CEO John Ajaka responded, "There is no basis to request updated reports or studies." I beg to differ. The original traffic report from the time runs at barely six pages and devotes two scant paragraphs to traffic generation, claiming that the development will generate just 42 peak-hour vehicle trips. Given that, a reasonable person might argue that the determination from 2011 is now obsolete. That is one of the reasons why section 4.53 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 outlines specific time frames by which work must have substantially commenced, otherwise an application will lapse. However, developers are clearly exploiting loopholes.

I am no nimby and commend the Government for the swift action it has taken to arrest the housing affordability crisis and fix the broken planning system. But we must get the balance right and build not just as many dwellings as possible but also thriving, cohesive and livable communities with good amenities. If we do not, we will solve one crisis but create new social and environmental ones. Sadly for the residents of Prestons, it is too late. They now face disruption, shaking to their houses during construction and further traffic chaos. They have lost a green lung in a wonderful part of my electorate.

#### WINSTON HILLS ELECTORATE

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (21:06):** Now that the first session of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament is underway, I take the opportunity to recognise the good faith that the constituents of the new electorate of Winston Hills placed in me at the recent New South Wales election. I served the local area for over eight years in my capacity as the member for Seven Hills, prior to its redistribution to become the electorate of Winston Hills. I thank the electorate for trusting me with the incredible honour of being a member of this House. I hope the next four years are a reflection of that trust as I continue to work hard for my local community.

The Winston Hills electorate encompasses many of the same suburbs as the Seven Hills electorate, including Toongabbie, Old Toongabbie, Pendle Hill, Wentworthville, Seven Hills, Lalor Park, Northmead and Winston Hills. The new electoral boundaries mean that I now represent constituents in Glenwood, all parts of Lalor Park, Seven Hills West and parts of Blacktown. I note a number of local sporting groups in the area, such as Glenwood Redbacks Soccer Club, Glenwood Netball Club, Parklea Soccer Football Club, Blacktown City Football Club, Blacktown Spartans Football Club and, of course, the now famous Lalor Park Kookas, amongst others. I look forward to representing those organisations. It is vital that our local clubs and organisations are supported, no matter which party is in government. I will continue to advocate strongly for those groups and ensure that they receive the funding and support that they not only need but also deserve.

I also look forward to continuing my advocacy for and involvement with the many sporting groups that remain in the old electorate of Seven Hills, including Kings Langley Little Athletics Centre and Winston Hills Little Athletics Centre, as well as football and cricket clubs based in Kings Langley, Winston Hills, Toongabbie and Pendle Hill. Each and every one of those clubs is driven by hardworking and committed locals who love their communities and want to give back. In my capacity as their local member, I will ensure that they continue to receive the recognition and support they deserve.

Over the campaign I met many local residents and had countless opportunities to discuss the good work of the previous Government, including upgrades to community areas, and also some things that need to be improved. It gave me the opportunity to highlight generational upgrades to Westmead and Blacktown hospitals, as well as to keep everyone updated on the new additions to the Children's Hospital at Westmead. I was proud to reference all of the upgrades to the railway stations and, importantly, the Metro Northwest, which was delivered and has positively impacted on thousands of local residents, particularly those in Glenwood.

The campaign also presented the opportunity to again highlight the many school upgrades that have been delivered in my local area, including those that have been funded or recently commenced. Included in those upgrades is the new \$14 million VET centre that is nearly completed at Seven Hills High School. That facility will allow students access to training covering supply chain management, business and financial services, human



services, construction, entertainment and hospitality. Students who have a passion for practical skills no longer need to seek out complicated avenues for education but can receive specialised training in the heart of my electorate.

I was also able to discuss the \$90 million upgrade to Glenwood High School and the \$40 million upgrade to Pendle Hill High School. The past few months have allowed me to share my plan and vision for the Winston Hills electorate in my capacity as member for the next four years. The past eight years have seen significant improvements to the community. Today, the local area is a much better place to work, travel, play and learn. It is important that we do not see the progress of the Winston Hills electorate or the Western Sydney area stall in the coming years.

Local suburbs will continue to grow rapidly, with population booming in Sydney. The western suburbs of Sydney will see a disproportionate amount of that growth. Western Sydney is home to over 191,000 small locally owned businesses, has a workforce of over 1.5 million and makes up the third largest economy in Australia. It is vital that the Government prioritises electorates like Winston Hills to cater for their growing populations. The Winston Hills electorate is one of the best places to live, work and play in New South Wales—and I look forward to keeping it that way.

### REFUGEE WEEK

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (21:11):** I speak about Refugee Week, which runs from Sunday 18 June to Saturday 24 June and is timed to coincide with today, which is World Refugee Day. The first Refugee Week events were organised in 1986, right here in Sydney, and the occasion became a national event two years later. It is now recognised as Australia's peak annual activity to raise awareness within the broader community about the issues affecting refugees, to help people understand what it is like to be a refugee, and to learn about and celebrate the positive contributions that refugees make to Australian society.

Liverpool is home to the second largest intake of refugees in New South Wales and has proudly been a Refugee Welcome Zone since 2014. This recognises that many in the community have built successful lives and contributed so much to the area after having begun their journey as refugees. It also demonstrates a commitment to upholding the rights of refugees, demonstrating compassion for their experiences and celebrating and promoting diversity in the community more broadly. Recently I attended the Sound of Terra Climate Festival held in Macquarie Mall in Liverpool. Sound of Terra is a joint initiative between the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre and the Sumer Association for Culture and Arts. It uses music to highlight the challenges faced by people who are either displaced in countries that are significantly impacted by climate change, or who are forced to leave their homelands due to climate change.

In 2022 millions of people were displaced across the world due to adverse climate events such as catastrophic floods and severe droughts. Displacement is just one impact on people. Others may experience worsened living conditions or be unable to return following a period of displacement. Often the worst impacts are felt by the most vulnerable people. The Sound of Terra festival featured various local performances by Kings Entertainment, Lurnea High School Pasifika dance group, the Denham Court Public School choir, Trung Han Qun Lion Dance and Martial Arts, and Al Jamia Arts and Science College. It brought an incredible sense of community connection to the Macquarie Mall.

Local creative arts organisation Maki al Badry shared a performance that helped to provide a compassionate and nuanced understanding of the journey made by some in our community who were displaced by war and conflict. It was a sobering reminder that often the brunt of such conflict is felt by children. These children may spend years waiting for resettlement, then face the arduous journey of adapting to life in a new country with a different language and different customs, food and ways of living. As one participant shared with me, "In my home country it is customary to go and visit someone new as soon as they move into the neighbourhood. But in Australia it is more polite to wait until they are settled in. We thought nobody wanted to connect with us, until they did." Sometimes it is the small things that stick with you.

This year's theme for Refugee Week is "Finding Freedom". This theme encourages us all to reflect on the question: What does it mean to be free? Living without the fear of war, having your basic human rights upheld, and living in equality without fear of persecution are just some of the examples of what freedom can entail. Millions of people across the world embark on dangerous journeys every day for the sole purpose of finding safety and freedom. From Australia to nations across the globe, settling into a new environment after experiencing the perils of a refugee's journey can also provide the opportunity to live, to love and to dream.

Many people in New South Wales open their hearts and welcome people from all across the world, which forms the bedrock of our beautiful multicultural society. As we particularly know in western and south-western Sydney, often those who arrived as refugees are today's small business owners, doctors, teachers, artists and

Service NSW workers. The entrepreneurship, work ethic and many other positive qualities of these constructive community members are often highlighted. Let us show compassion and celebrate the resilience that makes up parts of our wider community. Freedom should not be an ask; it should be a way of life.

### TONY WOOD, OAM

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (21:16):** Tonight I pay tribute to Queanbeyan resident Tony Wood. He is perhaps better known as Victor the Viking, the mascot of the Canberra Raiders for the past 40 years. Forty years is an amazing length of time to be doing a job like running around in the Victor the Viking suit at Raiders games. Tony is also involved in a number of very important community things that I will come back to. After the next Raiders home game there will be a celebration, at the top pub in Queanbeyan, of Tony's fortieth anniversary and ongoing tenure as Victor the Viking. Unfortunately I am likely to miss that celebration, so I wanted to honour him in this Chamber.

Tony was a Raiders fan from the earliest days of 1982. In 1983, after a discussion with some of his mates as they bussed back from one of the Sydney games, he decided that there needed to be a mascot, having seen the Wests mascot. He and his mates started talking about names and finally came up with Victor the Viking. In a recent story by Holly Winchester in *Q! News*, Tony recalled walking into the office of Les McIntyre, who was the boss of the Raiders. He said it was like Kerry Packer's office, dark and smoky. McIntyre said he could give him two tickets to the weekend's game. Tony was pretty excited about that. He had walked in there with a papier-mâché Viking hat ready to go. Incidentally, the colour of the couch in Les McIntyre's office was allegedly the inspiration for the lime green the Raiders wear.

Victor's career went on from there. He has turned out in games from 1983 right through to 2023, in all sorts of weather conditions and all sorts of locations. He has had an amazing career, being able to watch a number of the Raiders' grand final victories. He has entered the hearts of all Raiders fans around Australia, particularly those in his local community in Queanbeyan. Tony is not just Victor the Viking; he is Tony Wood, OAM. He was recognised for both his work as Victor and for his work in the community. He works in our local nursing home at BaptistCare George Forbes House, where he has worked for some time. He is also on the Respite Care for QBN committee and fundraises for the Yvonne Cuscheri House project, which looks to provide respite care for carers of people with serious illnesses. He has also been involved in the cancer support group.

Tony is deeply involved in our community, and the community welcomes him. A lot of people who see him walking around town probably do not recognise him without the Victor the Viking hat on, but he is certainly a figure that many people know around town and that Raiders fans have grown to love over the years. I recently saw Tony at Magic Round in Brisbane, where he kindly shouted me a beer. That was probably the wrong way around. I think those of us who Tony has entertained over the years with his antics as Victor the Viking and with his exhortations to make us louder at the times when the team needs us would agree that we owe Tony a number of beers. I am sure some people will have the honour of buying him a beer at the top pub in a couple of weeks' time.

As a Raiders fan who was also there in the early days in 1983—not quite as early as Victor and Tony—I have a distinct memory of the Raiders' first win, which was against Parramatta at Seiffert Oval. I join the rest of the diehard Raiders fans in thanking Tony for his 40 years of work as Victor the Viking, and I wish him many more. I look forward to seeing him on the ground, jumping around and getting us all to cheer louder at the next Raiders home game and at many after.

### HOMELESSNESS

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (21:21):** Homelessness and a lack of housing are significant and ongoing concerns in my electorate, particularly in the city of Wagga Wagga. For those without a home, it is especially tough in the bitterness of a regional inland winter, where temperatures at night in Wagga Wagga average three degrees Celsius or lower. I have spoken before of the crisis that is the lack of regional housing. A recently released report by Digital Finance Analytics found that two-thirds of young families in Wagga Wagga are experiencing mortgage stress due to rising inflation, lower buying power, and stagnant and declining wages. Rental vacancies are at just 1.2 per cent. It is in that context that I, along with a range of community services, am concerned about the number of rough sleepers and people seeking help, or even just reprieve from the elements, because they are homeless in our city.

According to census data, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Wagga Wagga doubled between 2016 and 2021. Specifically, at the time of the census in 2021, 257 people lacked secure and stable housing, while an additional 174 were residing in inadequate housing, such as overcrowded or improvised dwellings and caravans. As reported in *The Daily Advertiser*, this meant that one in every 150 people in Wagga Wagga were experiencing some form of homelessness or acute housing stress on census night. That is higher than

the national average of one in 200. I contend that the true extent of homelessness is masked by people who couch surf or are otherwise in temporary, unsatisfactory housing. That was the situation in 2021. Last winter Wagga Wagga saw a significant influx of homeless people using free camping areas in North Wagga Wagga, in Wilks Park and other areas. That caused significant community concern. Our community is well known to be charitable and helpful and, indeed, the community did respond to those in need. But that is not a long-term solution.

What can we do to address homelessness, which is continuing to grow in our communities, particularly in my electorate of Wagga Wagga? Three key elements form the basis of action we should take. First, we must raise public awareness about the root cause of homelessness. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the leading cause of homelessness is domestic violence, with 42 per cent of clients surveyed reporting that as their main issue. Further, the AIHW has estimated that 31 per cent of homeless Australians have underlying mental health issues, problems with substance addiction or gambling. Strategies to tackle homelessness must tackle those underlying causes. Raising public awareness about those issues is an important part of what we need to do. It reduces stigma and focuses on the work needed to tackle the issue.

Secondly, we must collaborate to address those root causes. Government agencies, non-profits and other organisations must work together to address homelessness. In doing so, resources and services can be effectively coordinated and comprehensive solutions can be collectively designed by experts and stakeholders with lived experience. That will help tackle poverty, unemployment, a lack of access to health care, social and economic factors and domestic violence. There is no question this is hard work. I commend the government and non-government agencies that do so much work in assertive outreach in this area in my community. I thank them and encourage them to continue their work at all levels of government. Collaboration is absolutely critical.

Thirdly, we must build houses. The Government must take a more active role in construction and providing support to local councils to get their developments approved. I have spoken in this House before about the Tolland renewal project in Wagga Wagga. It aims to renew and improve the suburb while also providing a mix of new social, affordable seniors and private housing. The program can be used as a blueprint for the future equitable redevelopment of regional towns and cities. I was pleased that the Minister for Housing, the Hon. Rose Jackson, gave her support to the project on her recent visit to Wagga Wagga. But more needs to be done.

The proposed Federal Government funding represents a clear opportunity to do more, and I encourage the Government to take advantage of that for the State and for my community. I also encourage it to free up the barriers in the planning system. By working together and implementing a multifaceted whole-of-government approach we can begin to tackle homelessness. Having a place to call home is a basic human right that is critical to a person flourishing. We must act to identify the root causes of homelessness and provide the level of housing our community needs.

### **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (21:26):** Upon my election as a member of Parliament, I knew there would be key pivotal moments to which thoughtful decisions would need to be made. I knew that those decisions would be intellectually challenging and that I would need to consider my conscience, but my values would keep me on the right path. I did not expect that such a pivotal moment would come so soon in my first 12 weeks as a member of the New South Wales Parliament. Today, I speak with conviction and humility to discuss an important issue that will be considered by all Australians in the second half of 2023—the referendum on whether to change the Australian Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

I will outline five points that will lead to how I will vote as an individual in the referendum. As I am an elected representative in my community, I believe it is important for me to be transparent with my community about my intentions. Firstly, I acknowledge the Gadigal people, the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and the Garigal and Dharug people, the traditional owners of the land in Davidson. Secondly, the 2023 referendum is an opportunity for all Australians to have their say via the ballot box. I stress that each of us has the individual power to make our own decisions about whether to vote yes or no. Democracy should always be embraced, particularly for issues that are as important as changing the Australian Constitution. I stress that I encourage the people of Davidson to vote, particularly in this referendum.

Thirdly, I acknowledge the Australian Constitution, which took effect on 1 January 1901. It was drafted through a series of conventions in the 1890s, bringing together the Australian States to be one country and one people. What followed was an Australian Constitution passed as a British Act of Parliament in 1900. I note that the United Kingdom Parliament had to agree to give Australians a voice via the Australian Constitution—a voice for our own country. Today, after 122 years, the Australian Constitution is still a remarkable document. It has led to a stable Australia and a stable system of government, particularly in times of crisis such as World War I, in 1914; World War II, in 1939; and the even the dismissal, in 1975.

Proposing change to such a remarkable document should be seriously considered by all Australians. I note that it has been changed on only eight occasions out of 44 proposals. Of the eight changes that have been made, I welcome in particular the result of the 1967 referendum. The overall results of that question saw Australian States vote yes—receiving an overall vote of 90.77 per cent. Having been born in the 1980s, I look back through the lens of history at the 1967 referendum and simply ask, "Why did it take Australia 66 years to allow its own country's Indigenous population to be counted in its own country?"

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been on the Australian continent for over 60,000 years and yet were not counted as Australian citizens until 1967. The 1967 amendment made the Constitution an even stronger document. I believe in 2023 the Australian Constitution can be an even stronger document by acknowledging Australia's traditional owners—Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. The first part of the referendum question—namely, "to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia", I support with my head and, even more importantly, with my heart. Fourthly, as a society we need to do everything we can to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It pains me to highlight concerning gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in life expectancy, infant mortality, employment, location, accommodation and suicide.

Two things stand out. The first is that gaps exist. Words cannot express my sadness at what these gaps represent and their impact on individuals, families and communities. The second is how hard it is to find statistics about the gaps. I credit Julian Leaser, MP, for compiling and sharing a lot of the statistics. Like him, I agree that the system is broken. The system is so broken that everything needs to be on the table to close this gap. As parliamentarians, leaders in our community and Australians, we need to do everything we can to close this gap. Finally, I will talk about how I will vote in this referendum, based on my Liberal values. I said in my inaugural speech:

I believe in freedom of the individual; leaner, effective and efficient government; and embracing free markets and enterprise.

I added to this in my second speech, when I spoke about democracy:

Power always comes from the grassroots up, not from the top down. It currently works this way, and it should always work that way.

I believe in the individual and in the empowerment of the individual. I believe individuals should make decisions that affect them most. Let us hear and listen to the voices of individuals. The First Peoples of Australia too deserve to have a voice that is their voice—not a politician's voice, not a public servant's voice. At the 2023 referendum, I will be voting yes. As a believer in leaner, effective and efficient government, I believe that an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice will empower our First Nations, giving them individual and grassroots power. If you believe in smaller government and you believe in empowering individuals, I recommend that you support the Yes campaign.

I end on this final note. On the day of the referendum, my wife, Gessika, and I will be campaigning for the yes vote. We will visit several polling booths within the electorate of Davidson. We will campaign on the promise of hope—hope that the Australian Constitution will recognise our First Peoples of Australia, hope that the Australian Constitution will empower individuals by establishing and giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a voice, hope that these measures will strengthen the remarkable document that is the Australian Constitution, and hope that we will finally close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** I thank the member and I thank the House for its indulgence to allow him to finish his private member's statement.

#### **TRIBUTE TO LACHLAN WARD**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (21:33):** Rugby union is the game they play in heaven. It is inclusive of all body shapes, sizes, genders and anyone is welcome. On 10 June 2017 tragedy hit the rugby community when Warringah Rats player Lachlan Ward—or Lachie as he will forever be known—was playing for the Warringah Rats in a fifth grade match against Gordon at Pittwater Rugby Park. After a regulation rugby collision, Lachie collapsed on the field in front of his mates, spectators and his parents. Medics did their best to resuscitate Lachie but were unable to. Tragically, Lachie passed away aged just 24 years. Lachie loved life, family, friends, rugby and they all loved Lachie.

Lachie left behind his parents, Jill and Murray; siblings Sam, Beth and Anna; their partners Elle, Angus and Mark; and all their kids. As club stalwart Luke Holmes said over the weekend, Lachie left an indelible mark on the Warringah Rats, making all feel included and that they could always be themselves. That season his legacy inspired the Warringah Rats first grade team to an unlikely Shute Shield premiership. On 25 August 2017 the Rats prevailed over Norths 30-25, a real-life fairytale finish. Fittingly, Lachie's brother Sam was one of the captains of the side and scored a match-defining try. But the Lachie Ward story did not end on 25 August 2017. Each year, and no doubt for many every day, the Warringah Rats rugby community remembers Lachie.

On Saturday 17 June 2023 I was proud to join the Warringah Rats and the rugby community as they paid tribute to and remembered Lachie's legacy together with the West Harbour Rugby Football Club. Sam also played that day and it was the last played try that saw the Rats victorious. Although I did not know Lachie, his legacy has impacted the community that so many feel like we knew him, myself included. The magic of Lachie's story is not in what he did or what he was; it was in who he was and whom he inspired. He was generous, loving, inclusive and made every room he entered a bit happier.

To Jill, Murray, Sam, Beth, Anna and the Rats community, Lachie's death is a tragic loss. But in his absence and from that darkness, it is my hope that his legacy might encourage all of us to cherish every moment with loved ones, knowing that at any moment we might fall to the fragility of life, and so we might all be a little bit kinder and a little bit more loving to those around us. Although Lachie may no longer be playing rugby in this life, he is cheering us from above, willing his family, mates and community to never-ending happiness. No doubt Lachie is playing rugby in heaven, the game of the angels. May we always remember Lachie.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:37 until Wednesday  
21 June 2023 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

**According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.**

**MACLEAY WATER TANKS**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I am pleased to inform the Oxley electorate local firefighters can now tap into two new 22,500-litre water tanks along the Pacific Highway. Installed at Paddys Rest and Barrys Creek rest areas, the new tanks add to an existing tank already in place at the Clybucca northbound rest area, having been installed in 2020. The additional water tanks come after bushfires devastated the Macleay Valley in 2019, when, on November 7, dry and windy conditions produced the perfect storm for the Carrai East Bushfire to pick up speed and ferocity as it moved towards the upriver communities of Bellbrook and Willawarrin. Thus, easy access to water will make a huge difference in transit time while fighting local bushfires and with forecasts already pointing to a challenging 2023/24 bushfire season, the installation of these water tanks is timely. The tanks were funded through the St Vincent de Paul Society's (NSW) Bushfire Recovery and Community Development Program, with support from the Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW and Transport for NSW. It's a great example of collaborative efforts from government and not-for-profits and I look forward to more bushfire infrastructure being delivered to our region.

**LALC PARTNERSHIP**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I'd like to congratulate and acknowledge a new partnership, which was forged between Uniting NSW, ACT and three Local Aboriginal Land Councils [LALC] recently. This partnership will see a significant boost in the support already provided for children and families in the Nambucca Valley regions. In a first for the region, Uniting's Communities team signed a formal memorandum of understanding [MOU] with Bowraville LALC, Nambucca Heads LALC and Unkya LALC. Uniting Acting Director of Communities Charlie Chubb said the formal agreement marked an important step forward in strengthening and building cultural connections. In addition, partnering with the LALCs and working collaboratively will help to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families in the Valley. The agreement will see Uniting work with these three LALCs to share knowledge, skills and advice as joint mentors and partners. It will also build on the work already being achieved in Nambucca Heads by Uniting through our Aboriginal Families Together program. Without this program, now running for three years, many Aboriginal families wouldn't have had the support and access to wrap-around services they need. The signing of this ground-breaking MOU will also allow other opportunities to deliver new services.

**FRANK PARTRIDGE VC MILITARY MUSEUM**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—One of the best-known draw cards for visitors to the Nambucca Valley is the Frank Partridge VC Military Museum at Bowraville. Their goal is to present displays, exhibitions, educational programs, and publications that broaden understanding and appreciation of the sacrifices made by our service personnel and others in times of conflict. With the high quality of exhibits, many visitors are surprised to find that the museum is fully managed and staffed by volunteers. Those who volunteer at the museum are able to perform a range of roles that include customer service, curating for valuable artefacts and, perhaps the most popular, working on some of the machinery such as former military vehicles and heavy weaponry. The museum also welcomes volunteers with disabilities and currently has two such members who have become an asset to the motivated team. I'd like to thank the men and women who volunteer at the Frank Partridge VC Military Museum.

It's a very unique and important centre for our region; not only is there a historical archive and extraordinary array of military display items, but it's a sombre reminder of war and those who sacrificed their lives for our country.

#### **DR PAMELA GOWER AM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I was thrilled to see Dr Pamela Gower appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the King's Birthday Honours, for significant service to dentistry and to forensic odontology. Pamela has held the position of senior forensic odontologist with the NSW Forensic Dental Unit since 1994, as well as being a dentist in local practice in the Shire for 40 years. Pamela has taught extensively in forensic odontology, forensic dentistry and forensic anthropology for many years. Pamela has volunteered her time and expertise with the Australian Disaster Victim Identification Unit to assist in the recovery efforts of many international and national disasters, including Victorian bushfires, 2009; Thailand tsunami, 2004; Bali Bombing, 2002 and Thredbo Landslide, 1997. Pamela's work in identifying remains of loved ones has enabled some closure for grieving families, particularly in times of disaster, crisis and crime. Her prior recognition by receipt of the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal in 2008 and the Operations Medal awarded by the Australian Federal Police in 2007 are testament to her commitment and expertise.

#### **GRAHAM BRUCE AM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Graham Bruce of Woollooware for his recent recognition in the King's Birthday Honours as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to surf lifesaving at the national, state, and local levels. Mr Bruce has been a member of Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club since 1976, joining when he was 26. Since 1978 Mr Bruce has served in a variety of roles at the club, such as patrol captain, vice-captain, IRB captain, instructor, examiner, carnival organiser and official. He has served as secretary and chairman of the Sutherland District Offshore Rescue Boat Group. Mr Bruce has worked at the state, national and international levels of surf life saving and is a life member of Surf Life Saving Australia, Surf Life Saving NSW, Surf Life Saving Sydney and Cronulla SLSC. Mr Bruce was closely involved in the development of inflatable rescue boat competitions and pool rescue competitions. I congratulate Mr Bruce on his award and acknowledge his outstanding service and work in keeping our beaches safe.

#### **THE LATE RICHARD GRILLS AM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—The late Richard Grills, formerly of Cronulla, was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the King's Birthday Honours for significant service to community eye health, and to the ophthalmic optics industry. Mr Grills began work as a dispensing and clinical optician in the 1960s and he worked until late in his life. Mr Grills worked as a provider for low vision clinics in Sydney and country areas in the 1960s and 1970s. Mr Grills was a director of the Optical Distributors and Manufacturers Association from 2001 to 2022 (including a stint as chairman for 10 years), a director of the National Ophthalmic Suppliers Association from 1999 to 2015, a director of the Macular Disease Foundation from its foundation in 2013 to 2022 and a director of the Genetic Eye Foundation from its inception in 2000 to 2022. He was closely involved in optometry and ophthalmology education throughout his working life. Mr Grills died in 2022 aged 79. I extend my best wishes to his family on this fitting posthumous honour.

#### **BLAZE AID VOLUNTEERS**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise the magnificent contribution of BlazeAid volunteers who have been working in the Molong community since the devastating floods in November, 2022. Volunteers have been staying at the showground since January this year, helping residents and business owners by cleaning out premises, restoring fencing and providing a range of community support. Day after day it has been exhausting work for the volunteers, who always do it with a smile on their face and a kind word for those who have been so adversely affected. It is the post-flood contributions of the BlazeAid volunteers, which lifted the spirits of the community at a time when many had either lost their homes and businesses, or sustained significant damage to their premises. Led by Camp Co-ordinator Col Coleman, the team of volunteers rolled up their sleeves, pulled on their gumboots and helped in any way possible working with residents to restore some semblance of normality to their lives. BlazeAid has a proud history of helping the community in the Orange electorate during drought, fire and flood. Their selflessness has greatly contributed to the recovery of communities in the Orange electorate. On behalf of our community, thank you.

#### **JOHN PIZZARO OAM**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I recognise John Pizzaro OAM. Last week I had the privilege of attending a tribute ceremony for the humble Parkes local. From near and far people attended the special event, held at Parkes Motor Museum where speakers outlined his achievements, including: A kart racing career that spanned over 30 years; 15 Australian Championship titles across several classes; Winner of the CIK Asia-Pacific Championship; Competed in five World Championships; Team mate to two of the greats of world karting – Terry

Fullerton and Ayrton Senna; Set the track record at the Japan go-kart Grand Prix; Inducted into Motorsport Hall of Fame in 2017, along with Sir Jack Brabham; Parkes Sportsman of the Year; Multiple Rotary Paul Harris Fellow; Awarded OAM in 2019; Designed, manufactured and sold 2,500 Sprinter Go Karts, used by many current racing champions early in their careers; The sport created the perpetual John Pizarro Trophy, awarded to the champion of KZ2 class; NSW Track Inspector for Karting Australia; Involved in the design and/or accreditation of kart tracks at Numurkah, Dubbo, Orange, Grenfell, Raleigh, Port Macquarie, Griffith and Wagga Wagga. John, congratulations on a remarkable career and such a significant contribution to motorsport and your local community.

### **MOLONG FIRE AND RESCUE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I recognise the team from NSW Fire and Rescue from Molong. Without a thought for their own safety, as floodwaters swept through the town, the firefighters began doorknocking residents to leave and helped the frail and aged to evacuate. As floodwaters raged through the town, firefighters waded through chest-high water rescuing residents from homes and businesses, and others stranded on roof tops waiting for helicopter rescue. The Molong firefighters rushed into action in the dark of night, assisting the SES and other agencies, door-knocking homes under threat and evacuating residents. The fire crew established an evacuation centre at the town's RSL club and set up a makeshift helicopter landing strip, with flashing guidance lights, on the oval of the Molong Central School, helping to vector in an Australian Defence Force helicopter, tasked with rescuing locals from roof tops. They also rescued two people and their dog from a flooded house in Watson Street and another couple from the top floor of the old motel. The firefighters and a police officer, from nearby Manildra, then waded through chest-high water to reach another woman, stranded in her Watson Street home. I commend these brave officers on their actions.

### **BULLDOGS IFTAR DINNER**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 14 April I had the pleasure of attending the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs Iftar Dinner at Belmore Sports Ground. I want to express my gratitude to the organisers for their kind invitation and for hosting this special event. As I arrived at the venue, the air was filled with excitement and anticipation. The event brought together fans, players, and supporters of the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs to celebrate the spirit of Ramadan and promote unity within the community. The evening commenced with a warm welcome, followed by the breaking of the fast at sunset. The aroma of delicious food filled the room, and the joyous atmosphere was contagious. It was heartwarming to witness the camaraderie and sense of belonging among everyone in attendance. The Bulldogs Iftar Dinner provided an opportunity to bridge cultural and religious gaps, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for one another. It exemplified the power of sport in bringing people together, transcending boundaries and fostering a sense of unity. I extend my sincere appreciation to the organisers for their efforts in organizing such a memorable event. The Dinner showcased the values of inclusivity, respect, and harmony, which are at the core of our diverse society.

### **INTERFAITH IFTAR DINNER 2023 HOSTED BY THE BISHOP OF PARRAMATTA**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 12 May I had the honour of attending the Interfaith Iftar Dinner hosted by the Catholic Bishop of Parramatta, Vincent Long Van Nguyen. The event, held Novotel Parramatta on 28 March, served as a platform for individuals from various religious backgrounds to come together, fostering dialogue and promoting harmony. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Bishop of Parramatta for organising this significant gathering and for their commitment to interfaith dialogue. The Interfaith Iftar Dinner showcased the power of unity and understanding in overcoming differences and embracing our shared humanity. It was an inspiring evening of reflection, compassion, and fellowship. It is through such initiatives that we can strengthen the bonds between different faith communities and work towards a more inclusive and harmonious society. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this memorable occasion.

### **GWS GIANTS IFTAR DINNER 2023**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I had the pleasure of attending the Giants Iftar Dinner on 27 March 2023, at GIANTS HQ, at Sydney Olympic Park. The event brought together a diverse range of guests, fostering a spirit of unity and togetherness during the holy month of Ramadan. The evening was filled with warmth, camaraderie, and the breaking of fast, creating a memorable experience for all in attendance. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the organisers for extending the invitation to this remarkable event. As I arrived at the venue, I was greeted by the warmth and hospitality of the organisers, Omar and Ali, who had meticulously planned the evening. The atmosphere was electric, buzzing with conversations and laughter, as attendees connected with one another over a delicious Iftar meal. Their dedication and commitment to promoting inclusivity and cultural understanding are commendable. The Giants Iftar Dinner exemplified the power of bringing people from different backgrounds together, fostering a sense of community and appreciation for one another. It is through such events that we can

build bridges of understanding and strengthen the fabric of our society. Thank you once again for including me in this meaningful celebration.

#### 08/06/2023 CITIZENSHIP

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—The great tapestry of Ryde is now brighter, bolder and stronger for the contributions of our newest citizens who officially became Australians on the 8/6/2023. To the following, I thank you for choosing Ryde: Shivangi Acharya; Ali Ahrari; Jocelyn Andry; Amarjargal Batbold; Amarjeet Singh Batra; Harleen Singh Batra; David Jean-marie Marcel Bennevault; Mrigank Bhushan; Annabelle Patinglag Cabatan; Raborn Quigas Cabatan; Susana Maria Catalina Prat; Luis Fernando Cerveira Reys; Soumya Chakraborty; Agnes Wai Leng Chan; Luis Alex Chang Penaranda; Cindrella Francis Xavier; Nathalie Renee Genevieve Comte; O'maoileoin Peter Culverwell; Robert Daniel; Phoebe Dawn Go Evangelista; Harriet Francesca Funnell; Louise Fyson; Mark Fyson; Torsten Henrik Gaebel; Nalinda Manohara Halpage Halpage; He He; Mark James Holland; Ghaffar Hosseinkhani; Josef Hovorka; Li Yan Huang; Illankoon Mudiyansele Wathsala Dushani Illankoon; Maria Fatima Inting; Vic Alfred Inting; Nima Jalali; Rujiyoot Jandeeppith; Jasmeet Kaur; Bilal Jehanzeb; Nesellie BernaRodo Julian; Roel Russell Bartolome Julian; Vinay Kumar Kancharla; Ankit Dipakkumar Kavi; Krupa Ankit Kavi; Erika Khajehpiri; Moutasem Omar Mohammad Khater; Lavanya Kondeti; Jose Mayjo Tony Kurisingal Vittony; Marcellina Jean Lam; Raj Kumar Lamba; Howe Ee Law. Congratulations and best wishes!

#### CITIZENSHIP CONGRATULATIONS

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—The great tapestry of Ryde is now brighter, bolder and stronger for the contributions of our newest citizens who officially became Australians on the 8/6/2023. To the following, I thank you for choosing Ryde: Maryam Adel Saharkhiz; Louise Hannah Aherne; Mennaallah Marwan Adel Mohamed Ahmed; Hira Ali; Meilibiya Alifu; Ghadeer Nazmi Subhi Arafah; Eswar Chandra Bade; Abhinav Bhupendra Bahadur; Hee Hwang Bang; Felipe Barboza Da Silva; Georgios Bekiaris; Vinod Bhati; Barry Bradley; Barbara Patricia Brito Rodriguez; Denice De Guzman Cabanban; Levin Caasi Camacho; Nathaniel Gabino Floresca Canilao; Maymae Carilla Carcary; Stephy Chacko; Shreya Chakkingal Raghunath; Chun Hing Chan; Ling Chou; Thi Thang Chu; Paolo Gabriel Estrada Cruz; Zhihao Ding; Vanessa El Khoury; Nina Elita; Mariam Farida; Ricardo Jose Fernandes Louro; Yeganeh Forootanmehr; Sarim Furqan; Yara Ramses Rasmy Gayed; Juan Jose Gomez Cordoba; Jesse Barquin Gumahin; Shashank Gupta; Shruti Gupta; Md Amlan Jahid Haque; Zhaoyi He; Chia-yi Ho; Fanni Hin Pun Ho; Seyyedehnahid Hosseini; Shiyu Huang; Ibrahim Jameel Ibrahim Ibrahim; Kwun Chung Ip; Keya Jahan; Vikas Jain; Rubbia Jameel; Mihana Jang; Zhuo Jia; Marjorie Sarah Juillerat; Giweon Jung; Krishna Chaitanya Kamaraju; Maryam Khalid. Congratulations and best wishes!

#### CITIZENSHIP CONGRATULATIONS

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—The great tapestry of Ryde is now brighter, bolder and stronger for the contributions of our newest citizens who officially became Australians on the 8/6/2023. To the following, I thank you for choosing Ryde: Hilary Leung; Tiffany Leung; Wai Cheung Leung; Canhui Liang; Danyang Lu; Dinh Nguyen Luong; Ellie Mansourpour; Zahra Mir Chouli; Sara Sadat Mirsadeghi; Neha Mukul Morparia; Sheila Moshrefi; Ajay Vikas Neelakantiah Shivalingaiah; Wing Kei Ng; Yue O'gorman; Mei Kuen Or; Mohammadkazem Papan; Iswaran Xian Liang Parthiban; Bum Soo Peck; VishnuvaRoadhan Reddy Rami Reddy; BaRoadia Sabzvari; Svetlana Sapegina; Aasma Karim Shaikh; Swati Sharma; Zheng Shi; Lizzelle Sitchon; Dex Earl Cuevas Sitchon; Michael Skene; Joon Poi Soh; Chin Fook Sor; Rachel Su Xuen Tan; Poniman Tju; Sarangerel Tsog; Tsog Tumurbaatar; Petro Karin Van Schalkwyk; Susantha Wijesekera; Vinitha Wijesekera; Lai Yin Wong; Mingyu Xiao; Karmel Yousef Alabed Zahran; Vivienne Yating Zhao; Lingzhi Zhao. Congratulations and best wishes!

#### BERNARD KELLY

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I would like to put on record thanks to Bernard Kelly for his leadership and shepherding of the Millers Point Community Resident Action Group. There has been massive demographic change in this precinct, with new residents in former social housing properties and major residential development at Barangaroo. The residential community has managed significant construction impacts from these as well the Walsh Bay Arts and Cultural Precinct and Fort Street Public School redevelopment. The precinct is also increasingly a focus for events like VIVID. A strong and active resident group has been vital to help minimise impacts on residential amenity and help make sure that quality of life improves as a result of the developments. Bernard and the Millers Point Community Resident Action Group have done a fabulous job representing their community, engaging with government agencies and council, and helping build a strong community voice.



### **DON'T BLOCK THE ROCKS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I congratulate community group 'Don't Block the Rocks' for their Barangaroo Central campaign being recognised by the National Trust. This well-deserved heritage award was not for an architect firm or heritage consultant, but a small local community group. The Millers Point Community Resident Action Group entered the Don't Block the Rocks campaign for the 2023 heritage awards and the campaign won the Advocacy award for their work to save historic Observatory Hill and The Rocks views. They've opposed the planned development of Central Barangaroo. I've supported this grass roots community campaign against the proposed 21-storey residential tower at Central Barangaroo and commercial buildings along Hickson Road that don't comply with the original Master Plan and would destroy early settlement heritage values. While the government is yet to finalise plans for the Barangaroo Central precinct, the new planning minister has committed to considering these concerns and has asked for revised plans. Don't Block the Rocks' success shows that community voices can still have a real say on our future and the places we live and care about.

### **ANTHONY SCHEMBRI AM**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I thank Anthony Schembri for his leadership with St Vincent's Hospital, our major health agency. As CEO, Anthony brought a new focus on working with Indigenous communities and further developing services for vulnerable people. Most recently, St Vincent's opened the first multidisciplinary Long Covid Clinic in NSW, took the lead in providing vaccines for Monkeypox and pop-up WorldPride Health Hub. Anthony played a leading role in developing the NSW Government's LGBTIQA+ Health Strategy. As with any health service, Anthony has led an ongoing program of upgrading services and facilities. He has a strong record of work at board and planning level, and involvement with training and teaching with his social work background giving him a broader perspective on health. I've met with Anthony and board members several times to discuss how we can work together to support the growth and development of St Vincent's Hospital and I valued his commitment and strategic approach to health and wellbeing. I thank Anthony for his contribution to inner city health services and wish him well in his new role as Chief Executive of Northern Sydney Local Health District.

### **SHELLHARBOUR JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I congratulate the Shellharbour Junior Football Club for being selected to provide flag bearers for the Matildas' first game against Ireland in the Women's Football World Cup on 20 July at Accor Stadium in Sydney. Shellharbour Junior Football Club was one of only a handful of NSW clubs chosen to provide flag bearers for Australia's opening World Cup fixture. It is a huge honour for the Football South Coast outfit, who have been a launching pad for the likes of experienced Matildas forward Caitlin Foord and emerging Sydney FC talents Jynaya and Indiana Dos Santos. The club won the honour after meeting high standards for women's and girl's inclusion in the club. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Shellharbour Junior Football Club for their commitment and dedication to female football in the Shellharbour community.

### **COREY TUTT**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Kamilaroi man Corey Tutt, from Dapto, after recently being awarded the 2023 Patricia Wrightson Prize for children's literature for his non-fiction book - This Book Thinks Ya Deadly! The book outlines inventions and innovations by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the many thousands of years they have taken care of this beautiful land. Corey, as the founder of Deadly Science, a not-for-profit group that provides STEM books and other resources and learning experiences to regional and remote schools, wants Indigenous youths to know there's more than one way to follow your dreams. Corey wants kids to see that yes, there is the traditional way of going in and doing a science degree, but for kids who don't have the self-belief or have grown up in low socio-economic conditions, that there are actually ways into STEM that are not the traditional routes. On behalf of the entire Illawarra community, I would like to express our warmest congratulations to Corey and we wish him well in his future endeavours.

### **AVA DRAGOVIC**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Ava Dragovic, from Shellharbour Public School, who was selected to play for the NSW PSSA Girls Cricket Team. Ava is an amazing leader and was also chosen to captain the team at the recent Cricket Championships in Darwin. The NSW PSSA Girls Cricket Team were the champions of the Girls School Sport Australia 12 years and under Cricket Championships defeating South Australia by 52 runs. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I thank Ava's amazing teachers and coaches who have volunteered their time to assist Ava to reach her sporting goals. I also express our warmest congratulations to Ava and we wish her well in her future sporting endeavours.

**AVENUE FONDLY CELEBRATED - CORONATION DRIVE CULCAIRN**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—Seventy years ago on 2 June 1953 the community of Culcairn gathered and worked to mark the historic coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, by the planting of white cedar and kurrajong trees along Coronation Drive, Culcairn. Coronation Drive symbolises the spirit and heritage of our region. Not only was this intended to be a recognition of the coronation but for generations has provided shade and beauty for the community and visitors to enjoy. To commemorate the 70th anniversary, John Ross and Kit Middleton unveiled a new storyboard and refurbished plaque. In honour of this special occasion, members of the Culcairn Garden Club gathered, some of whom were present at the original tree planting. I extend my gratitude to all the original tree planters including Lindsay Lowe, Marion Wright, Warwick Balfour, Joyce Gardiner, Richard Odewahn, John Allitt, Trevor Smith, Janice Smith and Ross Brand. I extend my appreciation to the community of Culcairn who have marked this anniversary. As a community we remember and honour the vision and efforts of those who created Coronation Drive, reflecting on our unity and commitment to preserving our history.

**DEDICATION TO SERVING REGIONAL COMMUNITIES: CHARLOTTE BENSON AND LACHLAN CARTY**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I extend my congratulations to two exceptional local students, Lachlan Carty from Albury High School and Charlotte Benson from Xavier High School, who have been awarded the 2023 Albury Council Medical Scholarship. Both students will receive \$5,000, to help support them to study and work in regional communities for the betterment of rural healthcare. It is impressive that they are keen to make a difference and provide healthcare to those in need. Charlotte has grown up knowing the challenges faced by residents of rural towns, whilst Lachlan's vision is towards becoming an orthopaedic surgeon as it aligns with his passion for sport. I wish Lachlan and Charlotte all the best as they embark on their medical journeys.

**PASSING OF A FARMING GIANT - HENTY MACHINERY FIELD DAYS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I extend my deepest condolences for the passing of Milton Taylor, the founder of Henty Field Machinery Days. Mr Taylor's passing at the age of 96 marks the end of an era for the agricultural industry, as he was one of its greatest pioneers and promoters. Mr Taylor's unwavering dedication and vision helped shape the event into the remarkable showcase it is today. Not only did Mr Taylor play a significant role in agriculture, he also engaged immensely in volunteer work, supporting various organisations. His loss will be felt far and wide, especially by those who have witnessed the growth of Henty Machinery Field Days since its inception in the early 1960's. As we mourn his departure, we also celebrate the incredible legacy he leaves behind, inspiring generations to come. My thoughts are with his wife Ruth and his four sons. Vale Milton Taylor.

**ANDI DWIPASATYA**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate Ms Andi Dwipasatya for her tireless dedication and commitment to helping the community of St George. Ms Dwipasatya is the founder of the Indonesian Arts and Culture Club and has been volunteering at the Club since 2018. The Indonesian Arts and Culture Club is a community driven intergenerational club that gathers every Sunday at Kogarah High School Hall. People from all ages come together to celebrate their Indonesian heritage and share their culture, food and traditions. Andi volunteers with the Pelangi community language school, teaching Bahasa to young Indonesian children. The fact that Andi continuously volunteers her time and effort to keeping the Indonesian language alive and strong amongst the younger generation is a testament to her kindness and dedication to the community. Andi is also an avid traveller and has worked in Indonesian consulates around the world including Kenya and Canada. I thank Ms Dwipasatya and express my deepest appreciation for the wonderful work she does for our local community.

**AUDREY MUNDINE**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I am honoured and proud to recognise the work of lifelong volunteer Ms Audrey Mundine. Ms Mundine earned her Diploma of Aboriginal primary health almost 20 years ago and has been volunteering her time and effort to helping our local community ever since. Audrey has held many roles over the years, including but not limited to, providing meals, transport, tuition, mentoring and facilitating cultural activities for Indigenous youth at Redfern Youth Connect. Audrey has also volunteered as team manager at the Kogarah Cougars junior rugby league club for the past five years. Her valuable contribution to the club has been immeasurable, as she continues to implement strategies to nurture self-esteem, self-respect and personal growth, allowing every child at the Club to reach their full potential. The community of St George is lucky to have such a selfless, dedicated, and generous member of its community that continuously gives up their time to helping others. I would like to thank Ms Mundine for her lifetime of hard work and dedication to the people of St George and her local community.

### ALLEN BROOKER

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate, Mr Allen Brooker, for his generosity and dedication to helping the St George community. Mr Brooker has been an active member of the St George Men's Shed for the past six years. The St George Men's Shed provides a home for men to share their skills and talents for the common good of their community. Allen is relaxed, quietly spoken, helpful, supportive of other members and always concerned for their wellbeing. Over the years, Allen as an experienced wood-turner has made finely crafted articles to support Shed fundraising as well as creating one-off articles for people with special needs in various community and hospital groups. Mr Brooker is also a skilled upholsterer and frequently gives up his personal time to help members of the St George community who need their furniture repaired or restored. I would like to express my deepest appreciation towards Mr Brooker for his dedication and commitment to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of the St George community.

### CATHOLIC EDUCATION AWARDS

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of members of teaching and non-teaching staff within the Armidale Catholic Diocese. The Spirit of Catholic Education Awards were held at Armidale's St Mary's Primary School on 25 May to celebrate those who have modelled Catholic values and principles underpinning our community. I congratulate Moree's Phobe McGrath (Early Teacher Career Award), Armidale's Julie Burton (School Officer Award), Armidale's Carmel Heagney (Outstanding Administration Leader Award), Armidale's Anne Finlayson (Leadership Award), Armidale's Josephine Ryan (Catholic Spirit Award), Uralla's St Joseph's School (Best Innovative Program Award). I commend all those within the Armidale Catholic Diocese for their dedication and commitment to their students. It is an extremely valuable opportunity to recognise and honour such worthy recipients for their support in shaping the young adults of tomorrow.

### KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Northern Tablelands residents honoured for their service to the community, as part of the recent King's Birthday Honours. Those receiving Order of Australia Medals include Don Murchie and Bill Heazlett from Walcha and Warialda husband and wife medical duo Dr Clem Gordon and Dr Di Coote. Moree's Roger Butler was upgraded to a Member of the Order of Australia, having received an OAM in 2003. I congratulate each of the recipients on the many roles undertaken and years of service to in our communities, whether it's through actively supporting and volunteering at clubs, sporting organisations, charities, local council, show societies, medicine and health, emergency services, or supporting indigenous or international communities through humanitarian work. I commend them for volunteering their time, expertise and dedication to such causes and for all that you have achieved locally, regionally and internationally through your selfless efforts. They give strength and resilience to our communities, and we thank each of you for your passion, drive, advocacy and many years of commitment, continually improving the lives of many.

### ARMIDALE CENTRAL ROTARY CLUB FUNDRAISING

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of the Armidale Central Rotary Club for raising \$85,000 during their annual Book Fair in May and \$1,000,000 over the past 25 years for the charity. It is the longest continuous running used book sale event in the New England and North-Western areas of New South Wales. I congratulate the President Andrew Pratt, Secretary Greta Williamson and each member of the Armidale Central Branch on this accomplishment. I thank you all for the time each one of you has taken out of your daily lives to contribute to the survival and success of your branch of Rotary. I commend the Armidale Central Rotary Club for their hard work, teamwork and long serving commitment to support local, regional, national and international communities. The many projects and programs you have supported continue to change people's lives for the better.

### WOODLAND WANDERERS

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Woodland Wanderers. As with most musical artists, the Woodland Wanderers were a group of friends, who all had an interest and passion for music and song. The origins of the group began, following individual and small group performances at the 'open mic' concert that was organised by the Gunning Focus Group. Following three years of performances in this format the Woodland Wanderers finally launched, upon a request from the Gunning Railway Station open day in 2022. Since this time, the group have entertained visitors and shoppers at the Gunning Lions Markets and at the Gunning Arts Open Day. Their enjoyment of music has certainly been contagious to audiences, with Julie on clarinet, her son George on mandolin, Sonya on guitar and Kath who trebles on guitar – ukulele and drum. Playing a range of musical pieces from modern folk to Simon and Garfunkel. It is a pleasure to see the enjoyment of the Woodland Wanderers being embodied by the community and visitors to the region. It is heart-warming to have

community-spirited individuals gift the community with their talents and harmony. I congratulate Kath, Julie, George, and Sonya on their talents.

#### **TARALGA ART SHOW**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise the Taralga Art Show. Taralga is a charismatic and tranquil village that was established in the 1860's, 44 kilometres north of Goulburn. The Taralga Art Show has proudly been exhibiting art by Taralga, local district, and other artists from across NSW and the ACT for the past twenty years. Now excitedly, celebrating the twenty-first show, following two-years of cancellation due to COVID. The village will be swarmed by tourists across the three-day long weekend in June. The show also draws interest from those who have family ties across generations to the village to come and explore. The gallery of artworks are proudly displayed in the Taralga Memorial Hall, showcasing a diverse range of paintings, constructions, ceramics, and sculptures. Previous shows have generated good sales and is a great platform for artists to present their works. I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Taralga Progress Association for their ongoing pursuit to support and host the Taralga Art Show, highlighting the magnificent country charm of the village, whilst captivating the artistic senses for artisans and the broader community.

#### **BLAZE AID**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise the Volunteers of the BlazeAid camp following the Curraweela fires in March 2023. BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation, which was established in 2009 following the Black Saturday bushfires. Providing support to families and communities following natural disasters by setting up camps around the country, recognising and building on the strengths and unification of the community whilst restoring and rebuilding vital infrastructure. A BlazeAid camp was set-up at Taralga Showground on the 16th of March following the Curraweela fire, located 20km north of Taralga, which saw 4437 hectares burnt, loss of more than 200 livestock, farming infrastructure and kilometres of fencing destroyed. The BlazeAid camp manager, was Mike Roberts, originally from New Zealand, moving to Adelaide to work for Telstra, and now semi-retired and a volunteer with BlazeAid. Other volunteers who joined the camp, were an Irish couple, backpackers, a student and a 'grey nomad'. Mr Roberts praised the work of Noelene Cosgrove, a community member who provided invaluable support coordinating the showground and facilities with Upper Lachlan Shire Council. The Council worked collaboratively with IGA Crookwell for volunteers to purchase food. I graciously acknowledge and thank all those who volunteer with BlazeAid.

#### **AQUA AEROBICS WORLD RECORD**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to recognise Sarah Ferman and Twynette Dickinson from Mingara for organising this fantastic community event. Sarah and Twynette have broken the Guinness World Record for the largest Aqua Aerobics class at Mingara Recreation Club. The previous record was two hundred and seventy people and happily through community spirit we achieved two hundred and eighty participants including myself. The event doubled as a fund raiser for Central Coast Cancer Council as Sarah and Twynette have both been affected by cancer within their families and close friends which is an important issue close to my heart. I am pleased to say that all participants were in the pool for warm up instructions prior to the attempt starting at 9.45am with the class running for 30 minutes. Mister Speaker not only did we have participants in the water we also had volunteers who were unable to get in the water, help on the day. I cannot express enough of my gratitude and thanks to Sarah and Twynette as well as Cancer Council for organising this spectacular community event!

#### **MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—MUNA, (Model United Nations Assembly), is a project organised and sponsored by Rotary Clubs to build international understanding and promote goodwill for world peace. It invites high school students to form school teams and participate in debates, along the principles at the United Nations Assembly, pertinent to world political and social issues. Each team represents a particular country. Students develop an awareness of the workings of the United Nations and by conducting their research on the resolution they select to debate, they will gain an understanding of where their country stands in world affairs. They will learn about the lobbying and diplomatic manoeuvring that takes place in the assembly. They will practice and develop their debating skills and gain confidence in public speaking. It was fantastic to be able to visit a session held in May of the Model United Nations Assemble at Hub Erina. With almost 70 students from 23 schools across the Central Coast it was a great opportunity to field students' questions regarding Parliament and my role as the Member for Terrigal and Opposition Whip. Congratulations to Rotary Club of East Gosford and to all the schools and students involved.

#### **PARKLIFE POPUP COFFEE**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to recognise one of our small businesses in the Terrigal electorate, Parklife Popup Coffee. Parklife Popup Coffee is a stellar small business that has recently been taken

over by new owners Martin and Beth, who are both extremely hard-working individuals in our community. I had the pleasure of visiting the café with my wife Jill, on our way to the Central Coast Crusader's game where we both had an excellent coffee made by Charleigh, and an awesome coconut and mango muffin. Parklife also do their part for the environment, with packaging being biodegradable and the cups being compostable. The café outsources their composting to Remondis Central Coast, with cups being collecting on weekly basis and composted, which we all know is great for our environment. Mister Speaker, I offer my utmost congratulations to Beth and the team at Parklife Popup Coffee for taking over this new business, and look forward to their success in the future.

#### **PLANTING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to thank volunteers from Boorowa Landcare and North Sydney Bushcare who collectively planted 3,600 trees on properties at Lachlan Valley Way, Hovells Creek and Hugstonia Road from May 26 to 28. The 'Building Bridges to Boorowa' partnership between the two groups was established in 2000, which operates annually and is now in its twenty-third year. There are several environmental benefits to this program including, reduction in the water table, expansion of habitat corridors for the threatened Superb Parrot and other wildlife, shelter for livestock, erosion control and absorption of carbon dioxide. Environmental restoration and long-term sustainability are crucial within mixed farming communities in regional areas, such as Boorowa. Behind the scenes there is a great degree of planning and effort to bring events such as this one to life. I am appreciative of both Hilltops and North Sydney Councils for their involvement in the event and for covering some costs for the volunteers by arranging a 'Thank you Dinner' and minibus respectively. A special shoutout to Boorowa Community Landcare members Paul and Linda Cavanagh as well as local landholders for their extraordinary contributions toward planting for the future.

#### **TEMORA GIRL GUIDES LIDS4KIDS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The community of Temora have been supporting Temora Girl Guides in their bid to reduce, reuse and recycle to help ease the amount of waste going to landfill. The girls at Temora Girl Guides have been very busy over the past 12 months collecting and sorting through thousands of plastic bottle top lids to support the Lids4Kids recycling project. Lids4Kids is a nationwide, collective group of volunteers advocating and facilitating the recycling of small plastic bottle lids into sustainable products. The lids are transformed by Envision Hands using a 3D printer into prosthetic hands and arms for disadvantaged children across the world. Temora Girl Guides reached out to the community requesting clean plastic bottle tops be dropped off to their premises, sorting into various boxes, with each box holding a specific-coloured lid. This request was warmly welcomed and greatly supported. I would like to congratulate Temora Girl Guides and the Temora community on what they have achieved to support such a fantastic cause that also helps protect our environment.

#### **HIGHLANDS CATTLE SHOW HUGE SUCCESS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—The township of Junee was bustling with visitors during the King's Birthday weekend from right across the country as the 2023 Australian Highland Cattle Society held their National Show. The recent upgrades to the Junee Showground impressed society members and competitors who were excited to showcase their event for the first time in five years. I had the pleasure of calling into the Show to see firsthand the Highland cattle on exhibition and watch the Farmers Challenge. This year's event was the biggest show the organisers have seen over the past 20 years, with 60 head of cattle and 22 exhibitors from Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales competing in over 34 classes. The event was not only a hit for the competitors it was also a boost for local businesses and the local economy, including our community support groups such as Rotary Club of Junee and Junee Can Assist. Events like these are a win, win for everyone and I thank the Australian Highland Cattle Society for selecting Junee to host their event. I look forward to seeing them back in the seat of small communities again soon.

#### **OSMEN ARTARMON GRAND OPENING**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On 23 April 2023, I attended the community opening of their new Osmen Outdoor Furniture store at Home HQ Artarmon. Osmen was founded by Davison constituents Michelle Lam-Li and Michael Li 21 years ago – starting as a small business. There are 9 stores across Sydney, including Belrose within Davidson. While a grand opening of any store is always a joyous occasion, in Michelle and Michael's case, it is even more so due to the fact donations were made to Variety – The Children's Charity. The charity's Executive Director David Small joined us in attendance. I was pleased to join my parliamentary colleagues Hon. Paul Fletcher MP and Tim James MP; councillors Barbara Ward and Brendon Zhu; and then Speaker of the NSW Parliament, Hon. Jonathan O'Dea. At this time, both Jonathan and I were colleagues, with him serving as speaker and I as the Member for Davidson. I congratulate Osmen for their charity and thank them for inviting me to their community store opening.

### 2023 SYDNEY PRAYER BREAKFAST

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Thursday 1 June 2023, I was delighted to join business leaders, state and federal parliamentary colleagues, and members of the community at the 2023 Sydney Prayer Breakfast. An annual event, that morning created a warm and inviting atmosphere that lasted the rest of the day, as people from all walks of life – including Davidson constituents – come together at the International Convention Centre [ICC] at Darling Harbour. As a fellow person of faith, I am often reminded of the power and the strength we find when people come together in fellowship and worship. I would like to recognise the efforts of the Sydney Prayer Breakfast Committee Neville Cox OAM, Anna Burke, Fred Chilton, Karl Faase, Wendy Simpson OAM and Stu Cameron for organising this wonderful event. I acknowledge and thank the special guest keynote speaker Amy Brown for sharing her story of faith. I look forward to attending many more prayer breakfasts in the future.

### DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY BISHOP'S BREAKFAST

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On 25 May 2023, I was delighted to attend the annual Bishop's Breakfast hosted by the Most Reverend Anthony Randazo DD JCL of the Broken Bay Catholic Diocese at the Epping Club. The Diocese is inclusive of 2,763 square kilometres, incorporating 26 parishes. In Davidson this includes the parishes of Frenchs Forest, Lindfield-Killara and St Ives with St Martin de Porres Church Davidson, Holy Family Church Lindfield, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church Killara and Corpus Christi Church St Ives. I acknowledge the guest speaker Steve Kinmond OAM from the NSW Children's Guardian, who delivered a passionate and detailed address emphasising the importance of building safer and more inclusive communities. He shared important insights into safeguarding leadership and addressing cultural challenges. As a Catholic myself, I was proud to join business, not-for-profit, education and community leaders, along with colleagues Hon. Susan Carter MLC, Tim James MP and Hon. Matt Kean MP. I look forward to attending this annual event and the many more events with our Catholic, Christian and faith communities into the future.

### TONY AND ROSEMARY SPINA

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—The role played across the region by the dedicated cancer care facility that is Daffodil has been well documented. It is a vital part of the community and as a public cancer care centre providing patients with chemotherapy and haematological services, receives support from many avenues, including two Bathurst residents who hold it close to their hearts. For several years now Tony Spina and his wife Rosemary have, out of their own pockets, contributed financially to the ongoing running of Daffodil Cottage. They recently met with staff to present their cheque for \$10,000, but this was not the first time they have dug deep for Daffodil Cottage and over the years have donated tens of thousands of dollars to the organisation. Tony and Rosemary know only too well the impact cancer can have on families, having lost loved ones to the disease. They understand that Daffodil Cottage can give people not only help, but hope, so they can win their battle with cancer. The Bathurst community relies on the work of places like Daffodil Cottage, but it is the support from generous individuals such as Tony and Rosemary that keep these services functioning and available.

### DAVID VENESS

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—One of the highest honours there is for service to their community comes annually when the Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia in the General Division are announced each June. I am delighted to learn that Bathurst's David Veness has been included in this year's honour roll for his services to people living with Parkinson's Disease. If ever there was a deserving recipient of the Order of Australia, it's David Veness. David himself is living with Parkinson's Disease, but that has not stopped his tireless work with Parkinson's NSW, a for-purpose organisation striving to make life better for people living with Parkinson's, their families, and carers. He was the president of Parkinson's NSW from 2018-2021, vice president in 2021, a board member from 2016-2021 and an ambassador for the organisation since 2021. Locally, David has been a member of the Bathurst Parkinson's Support Group since 2012 and represented his region as a board member on the Parkinson's NSW Trust from 2018-2021. It's the selfless commitment to help others impacted by Parkinson's Disease that makes David's recognition with his Order of Australia Medal even more special and deserving.

### KEN BARWICK

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Education is a crucial part of the process in ensuring a bright future for the young people in our community. Critical to getting a good education are our teachers and one person who has dedicated his working life to his chosen profession is the principal of the Bathurst High Campus of Denison College of Secondary Education, Ken Barwick. As a result, Ken has been awarded the Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia for services to secondary education. His track record since starting off at a teacher at Cowra High School in 1992 shows a history of serving his community. This includes stints at high schools in Cowra, Orange (Canobolas Rural Technology High School), Lithgow, Junee, Oberon and currently his much-loved hometown of Bathurst. Also included in his resume is service which shows he is willing to give back to the community. He is

an ambassador for the Police Citizens Youth Club in Bathurst; a life member of Bathurst 75 Soccer Club; a founder of the "Redtember" fundraiser for Ronald McDonald House charities since 2018; and has had a long term involvement with NSW CHS sporting teams. Great work Ken Barwick – a job well done.

#### **BUNDEENA COMMUNITY AND SERVICES CLUB**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—I may be biased but I believe some of the best culinary delights in NSW can be found in the Heathcote electorate. And flying the flag proudly for Heathcote in the Perfect Plate competition this year is Bundeena Community and Services Club. The annual Perfect Plate competition provides a platform for club venues and chefs throughout NSW to showcase their skills. Diners are given the opportunity to taste dishes at various venues and to score them out of five. Each venue has its own specialty dish that it features. Bundeena Community and Services Club's dish of choice is old English style fish and chips. A fitting dish given the venue is just a stone's throw away from the ocean. I'm confident Bundeena Community and Services Club will be able to take home the 2023 title in the southern Metropolitan category. I would encourage everyone not just in Bundeena, but throughout the entire Heathcote electorate, to get behind Bundeena Community and Services Club and its old English style fish and chips. Good luck to the entire team at Bundeena Community Service Club in this year's Perfect Plate competition.

#### **ALEXI COLLINS**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—As a mother of two, I know nothing brings more joy to the heart of a parent than to see their children smile. Whether that's because they have achieved a milestone, or simply because they are happy, there is nothing more fulfilling. That is why people like Kirrawee resident Alexi Collins – also known as The Lex Man – are so important. A former member of pop band Tigertown, Alexi – who also works as a school teacher – will launch his new kids' music artist project at Sutherland Arts Theatre this Saturday, June 24. It's an exciting achievement not only for Alexi, but also for the many children in the local area. Alexi said his journey from touring the world and supporting major acts like Panic at the Disco, to creating his alter ego The Lex Man, was a natural life progression. When his wife Jordanne, went back to full time work, Alexi became the primary carer for their two children. He started writing songs for fun for his children but realised it could be part of a larger project. Congratulations Alexi and I'm sure The Lex Man is going to be a big hit with children.

#### **MONTGROVE COLLEGE**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—In the wake of the devastating earthquakes that happened in Syria and Turkey in May, the Montgrove College community organised fundraises to support those that were impacted by the devastating event. Parents, teachers and students raised over \$6,000 to help those in need through their bake sale and other smaller scale fundraises. This epitomises the power that every individual holds to support others in times of crisis. Together, we can make a difference and create a brighter future for those in need. Congratulations to the wonderful community at Montgrove College, we are proud of your efforts and know that the funds raised will help many individuals in need.

#### **YOUNGCARE JORDAN SPRINGS**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—Youngcare has opened high-quality accessible housing for people with a disability in Jordan Springs. This is the first establishment of Youngcare's specialist accommodation in New South Wales, these homes will provide people with a disability much needed assistance while completing day-to-day tasks at home. It is great to see our area become more accessible and accommodating to the needs of people with a disability. I would like to recognise the wonderful work Youngcare undertake, in providing ease and assistance to individuals, through their specialist disability accommodation. These homes are an asset to the community and will provide fit-for-purpose and accessible homes for people with a disability. I congratulate Youngcare on their work, and significant contributions to the community of Jordan Springs.

#### **RECONCILIATION WEEK AT ST MARY'S SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—Staff and students from St Marys Senior High School took part in raising funds for 'Deadly Connections,' a community organisation that offer a variety of services to Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander individuals. The organisation aims to disrupt developing deadly futures by breaking the incarceration cycle that affects the Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander population. They participated in a range of activities throughout National Reconciliation Week to raise money and donate these funds to the 'Deadly Connections' organisation. It is inspiring to witness these adolescents contribute to an important cause and support Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander individuals within the wider community. Thank you to the wonderful staff and students

at St Marys Senior High School, who have embraced National Reconciliation Week and contributed to a worthwhile and important cause.

### **OZ ARAB MEDIA 1ST ANNUAL GALA DINNER**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—It was a pleasure to attend the Oz Arab Media 1st Annual Gala Dinner held on 19 May 2023 at Doltone House in Bossley Park and attended by 600 guests. Oz Arab Media is dedicated to fostering cultural understanding and promoting the Arab community's voices. Chief Executive Officer, Remy Wehbe and his team have achieved significant milestones since its inception. This Appreciation Dinner provided an opportunity for the organisation to express its gratitude to all those who had contributed to its growth and success over the years. Guests were given a sneak peek into the organisation's forthcoming initiatives, which aim to further amplify Arab voices, foster intercultural dialogue, and create meaningful change in society. I would like to thank Remy Wehbe, Charbel Tadros, Media Manager, and Christine Nassif, President of the Canterbury Bankstown Lions Club for inviting me. With renewed inspiration and strengthened connections, Oz Arab Media looks toward the future with great optimism and determination. As it continues to strive for positive change and to empower Arab voices, the organisation remains grateful for the ongoing support from its remarkable community. Congratulations to Oz Arab Media on this successful event.

### **CITY OF CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN'S NATIONAL SORRY DAY CEREMONY**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land, the Darug people, and pay our respects to elders both past and present. On Friday 26 May, I was honoured to attend the National Sorry Day event at Bankstown Girls' High School, my first in my capacity as the Member for Bankstown. This year marks 25 years since National Sorry Day was first announced in 1998. It took several Australian government administrations before an apology was officially offered to Indigenous Australians. I am proud to say it was first acknowledged by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. My gratitude goes to Lisa Edwards, principal of Bankstown Girls' High School, the City of Canterbury Bankstown, and the staff at Bankstown Girls' High School for organising the special event to commemorate National Sorry Day. I also want to acknowledge the local Mayor of Bankstown Bilal El Hayek, Auntie Lyn Martin, Auntie Noelene Holten, Kylie Wilkinson MP, invited guests, and students who were all in attendance. I would like to give credit to the elders and survivors who proudly shared their stories and hope that their legacy continue for many generations to come.

### **WORLD GYM CHULLORA**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge World Gym Chullora on their recent outstanding award as Australian Champions for the Best Gym in Australia at the 25th Australian Small Business Champion Awards Ceremony. The owner, Adam Kennedy, a pharmacist by profession has made it his mission to ensure that World Gym Chullora set new standards for the health and fitness industry. World Gym Chullora has a women's only workout space and an entire timetable dedicated to women's only classes. They also provide a day-care facility so that mums can keep up with fitness and health while their kids are cared for. It's hardly surprising that World Gym Chullora has achieved this prestigious award as they were the 2021 winners of the Canterbury Bankstown Local Business Awards for Outstanding Fitness Services. This year, World Gym Chullora was also the recipient of accolades at the World Gym global franchise awards for "Best Marketing" and for Best Overall Marketing, Best Overall Retail, and Best Community & Charity Club. On behalf of the Bankstown Community, I extend our congratulations to Adam and the team at World Gym Chullora for their achievements and for making our community proud.

### **JENNIFER BUCKINGHAM OAM**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Reading is an essential part of a child's development, but for some it comes as a challenge to learn. Dr Jennifer Buckingham OAM has made it her mission to bridge this gap and help these children learn the joys of reading. Dr Buckingham OAM was awarded a King's Birthday Award over the long weekend for her work in educational research and literacy. She is the director of strategy and senior research fellow at MultiLit, a leading provider of effective literacy instruction. She is also the founder of the Five from Five project, a program which gives children the five essential tools for reading in the classroom every day. In addition, she sits on boards for the Centre for Independent Studies and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Dr Buckingham's PhD was done on researching how children read effectively and learn to read, and she has applied that knowledge in educational settings. She has greatly contributed to education, and the understanding of early education. I would like to congratulate Dr Buckingham OAM on her award and thank her for all the work she has done.



**PATRICIA MCMAHON OAM**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—To receive a Medal of the Order of Australia is a high honour, and one that Patricia McMahon OAM has more than earned through her dedicated community service and tireless devotion to local community organisations. Over her life, Pat has worked with the RSL Sub-Branch Women's Auxiliary, the War Widows Association, the former RSL Club, New Lambton Chamber of Commerce, One to One, New Lambton Community Centre, Lambton Park Bowling Club and its ladies branch, and Central Newcastle Swimming Club. She has worked tirelessly with the Women's Auxiliary for 58 years, fundraising, catering for lunches, functions, and ANZAC, and organising bus trips, among many other tasks. For 30 years she has held the position of President of the Auxiliary, having also previously held the positions of Honorary Secretary and Vice President. Pat's tireless commitment to community organisations has more than earned her the award, and I am glad to see her efforts recognised as part of the King's Birthday Honours. She is a pillar of the Wallsend community. I would like to congratulate Pat on her award and thank her for all her efforts over the many years.

**VIV ALLANSON OAM**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—In this year's King's Birthday Honours, a number of people who have contributed to the Wallsend electorate were recognised for their service to their community. One such person was Viv Allanson OAM. Viv is recognised for her commitment to improving aged care services and higher standards of care for the elderly. I have had the privilege of listening to and learning from Viv on a few occasions and am always struck by her steadfast commitment to improving this at times troubled sector. In the time I have known her, Viv has fought for higher standards in the Aged Care sector and the facility that she runs, Maroba Aged Care Waratah has among the highest standards of all the aged care facilities in Newcastle and is in high demand for a reason. I can think of few people in our community more deserving of recognition than Viv Allanson and I look forward to working with her in the future on these issues.

**JOHN MATTHEWS**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to acknowledge John Matthews of Hay. John and his wife Dawn have lived happily in the town of Hay for twenty-one years. John is a jack of all trades, having worked as a grazier, station hand, dairy worker, fuel depot worker and mental health worker. The last twenty years of his working life was spent working as a contractor, ploughing, farming sheep, and making sheep yards. John has volunteered at the Hay Gaol Museum since 2007, playing an integral role in the upkeep of the historical tourist attraction. John often chats with tourists who visit the museum, educating them about the history within its grounds. "If you're lucky enough to spot a man on-site with golden square glasses and a smile ear to ear, I'd recommend saying hi" – this was a glowing review from a tourist that shows just how valued and appreciated John is by his community and visitors to the town. I thank John for his work in Hay and at the Museum and wish him the best for the future.

**DENILQUIN DISTRICT SOCCER CLUB**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise and congratulate the Denilquin District Soccer Club for their work in organising the first "Deni Primary School Soccer Cup". With all schools in the area invited to participate, and an overall 10 teams representing small schools throughout the district on the day, this tournament was the first of its kind in the Denilquin area. Now, thanks to excellent participation rates, the "Primary School Soccer Cup" will now become an annual event. I would also like to congratulate all of the Year 5/6 students that participated, and of course Deni North Primary School for winning the inaugural competition. I once again commend the Denilquin District Soccer Club on their work in organising this event and I look forward to next year's "Primary School Soccer Cup".

**KURT WOODS**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise and congratulate Kurt Woods from Hay. Kurt won the Business Champion Award at the 2023 Hay Business Excellence Awards. To say he is deserving would be an understatement. Kurt reinvented Elders Hay Rural Supplies Business, resulting in an increased turnover from \$1.7 million to \$35 million in three years. His work has created five new permanent positions for locals at Elders Hay. Kurt loves playing a part in helping clients succeed and achieve their goals no matter how hard the job. He loves the network of clients, suppliers and friends he has made in his time. Kurt believes that the success of his business is a result of his passion for his clients and the company. Kurt puts a lot of pride and commitment into his work and intends on remaining in his role for as long as possible. I commend Kurt for his caring and dedicated attitude towards his career. The creation of five new permanent local positions, as well as obtaining incredible results, is certainly something to be proud of.

### GUARDIAN ACACIA GARDENS

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—A huge congratulations to the staff at Guardian Acacia Gardens who have won the Outstanding Early Childhood Service Award at the Blacktown Business Awards this month. This award was nominated and selected by the people of Blacktown and recognises 'extraordinary contributions made by local multicultural service providers and businesses.' Lead by Centre Manager Amanda A, the team at the Acacia Gardens Centre are hard-working, dedicated, and passionate educators that always go above and beyond to build strong foundations for every child's learning experience. Staff encourage and motivate children to develop positive attitudes to learning through open ended play based learning experiences, incorporating their environment and building friendships. This award recognises their work, and the vital role they play within their local community. Connection to community is a big part of Guardians success with the team working hard to integrate the children with their local community through weekly visits to local shops and facilities. This connection even extends to a local nursing home, where the children regularly send letters as part of their pen pal program. Congratulations again on this well-earned award that recognises this incredible team.

### ELECTORAL OFFICE SMOKING CEREMONY

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Nothing could be more fitting to welcome transformation and mark a fresh start in the Riverstone constituency than a traditional smoking ceremony. I had the honour of having Indigenous Elder Uncle Danny conduct a meaningful smoking ritual to purify my office and infuse it with revitalising energy. The smoke symbolized a spiritual purification and represented a profound new phase for Riverstone. Recognising that Riverstone boasts a vibrant and active youth community, it was significant for me to involve students from local schools in the ceremony. Accompanied by their teachers, the students shared their aspirations for the future, and expressed the important issues to them. I was delighted to listen to the enthusiastic voices of our youth, who represent the promising next generation. I would also like to thank the Community Leaders Member for Blacktown, Steven Bali, Blacktown City Councillors Chris Quilkey and Moninder Singh and North West Community Services CEO Angela Van Dyke for attending the event. This is the first of many proposed community engagements with our Youth leaders. I am confident that our future collaboration will pave the way for progress and prosperity among the people of Riverstone.

### COSTI'S

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Congratulations to 'Costi's Seafood and Grill' for winning the best fast food/takeaway Award in the Blacktown City Local Business Awards. Costi's is a renowned and trusted name not only in my electorate but across Australia. The Costi's brand is synonymous with great quality, and great service. What is even greater is the history behind the name, which really drives the brand, and the business. Brothers Con and Chris, worked for 25 years in the city at their family business until the 3rd generation Costi's opened their own store over 2 years ago. The boys had grown up and gone to school locally, it was only fitting they bring the business back home. Working 80 hours a week, they're often joined by their mum Lisa whose father started one of Sydney's first fish and chips shop in the 1940's and in the 1970's her brother George established the seafood business from Paddy's Market to Pyrmont and beyond. No doubt their family would be proud of how Con and Chris have carved their own niche in the community. They, along with their hardworking team, have built this business from strength to strength. I wish them many more years of success.

### MNCLHD ANNUAL QUALITY & INNOVATION AWARDS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I am excited to inform the House today the leaders and shapers of our local healthcare system who were recently acknowledged at the Mid North Coast Local Health District's [MNCLHD] Annual Quality and Innovation Awards held on Thursday, 15th June 2023. The MNCLHD Quality and Innovation Awards celebrate the outstanding contribution displayed of our healthcare professionals and volunteers who go far beyond their area of responsibility to advance innovative projects and excellence. Recognised for his longstanding contribution to the Heart Support Group in Port Macquarie, Max Heslehurst was awarded the Volunteer of the Year accolade for partnering with the Health District in delivering upgrades and equipment for cardiac patients recovering from surgery. Presented with the Nurse/Midwife of the Year Award was Josefa Dekker from Wauchope District Memorial Hospital for delivering essential health support, care and advice to women before and during pregnancy. Jodi Shaw and Basil Byrne were the joint recipients of the Corporate/Administrative Employee of the Year for her meticulous governance on policy, procedure and office management. Congratulations to all our outstanding leaders across the health sector.

### NIAH EVANS – TALENTED REFEREE YOUTH SQUAD

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise to acknowledge sixteen year old Niah Evans from Port Macquarie for being selected to attend the Talented Referee Youth Squad [TRYs] program through NSW Touch Football. Described as the next professional referee to officiate the world of football, local girl Niah Evans

is set to be inducted into the elite TRYs program after achieving her level three referee badge at the recent Junior State Cup. Niah has a wealth of experience behind her belt in officiating local, state and national football championships. Along with her latest accomplishment in refereeing the Junior State Cup in Dubbo, Niah will officiate in September at the National Youth Championships to be held on the Sunshine Coast before traveling to Mudgee to blow the whistle at the NSW Country Championships in Mudgee. The TRYs program aims to grow and enhance the skills of talented, young referees like Niah to prepare them for the next level of officiating and a possible future career to be centre stage at venues that host premium sporting events. I congratulate Niah for her selection into the TRYs program and hope to see her soon on the big screen officiating our sporting professionals.

### **GOSHIN RYU NATIONALS SUCCESS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today, I recognise the achievements of students at Mid North Coast Karate, in the Port Macquarie electorate. Students recently competed in Kata and Kumite events at National level and for some it was their very first tournament! There were impressive results with every student who competed at the Goshin Ryu championships receiving a placement. Goshin Ryu Karate Association is one of Australia's largest and longest running Karate Associations. Today, Mid North Coast Karate is taught by Head Instructors 2nd Dan Sensei Anissa Hilton and 3rd Dan Sensei Shaun Budai who are understandably proud of their students' achievements. I extend my congratulations to the following students: Sensei Shaun Budai, Sensei Anissa Hilton, Sempai Sam Hilton, Sempai Jackson Smith, Sempai Eric Millgate, Sempai Flynn Collins, Kellie Eggins, Adam Williams, Addison Williams, Evelyn Williams, Indy Cook, Isla Wilkinson, Isaac Salmon, Olivia Morgan, Madeline Morgan and Georgia Court. I congratulate the club for their strong family-oriented approach and for catering for all levels and ages from 3 years to seniors. The sport teaches self-discipline, self-control and goal setting with instructors encouraging their students to be determined, committed and tenacious and to be better today than they were the day before.

### **MARILYN KEIRLE**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to recognise the wonderful contribution made to the Wellington community by long standing local Marilyn Keirle as she hangs up her hat as the Owner of the Cactus Café & Gallery and ventures off to new horizons. 25 years ago, Marilyn took a leap of faith to convert what was once Sacred Hearts Infants School into the iconic Cactus Café & Gallery that's been well known and loved by locals and visitors ever since. Officially opened by the Mexican Ambassador to Australia in 1998, the business has played host to more than just food, coffee and art. The Cactus has seen weddings, music events, markets, bush dances, movie clubs, family reunions and even the occasional Christmas luncheon! In her time as the owner of Cactus, Marilyn has employed an incredible mix of people. From family members, friends, juniors, school work-experience students and even international newcomers, she embraced them all and any new and fresh ideas they wanted to contribute and bring to the table. Congratulations Marilyn on such a unique and inspiring business journey. I wish you all the best with your next adventure.

### **IRENE SMITH**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—It is a great honour to recognise Dubbo Woman Irene Smith on her 100th birthday! Reaching this milestone is truly remarkable and a testament to her strength and resilience. Irene spent her younger years on her parent's farm and learned the value of hard work from an early age – a sentiment that has flowed through her long life. At 79 Irene was diagnosed with cancer and began making dammit dolls. She first saw them whilst receiving her own treatment, so decided to give it a go. She began selling the dolls around Dubbo for \$5 fundraising for the Jean Colvin Hospital and ended up raising \$35,000. Irene still keenly participates in many activities. As an avid knitter, Irene loves to donate knitted items to those that are vulnerable. She loves a good game of Bingo, cooking club & the cricket group. Irene has a love of gardening and until just recently, ran the Bracken House opportunity shop. I wish Irene a very happy 100th birthday and health and happiness for the future. Her life is an inspiration to us all, and we are grateful for the opportunity to celebrate this momentous occasion.

### **ROTARY CLUBS OF DUBBO**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to acknowledge the four Rotary clubs of Dubbo for their contribution to those in need in the community. The four Dubbo clubs recently participated in a joint initiative to deliver much needed shelter bags for those sleeping rough. Each club donated 1 bag per member of their club bringing the total donated to 150 bags, which were then delivered to Orana Support Services, a community organisation who are well placed to deliver the bags swiftly to those that need them most. The Shelterbag is a portable, sheltered bed that rolls up into a bag. It is waterproof, lightweight, easy to handle and has an extra compartment for some personal items. The bags offer warmth and shelter to those in the Dubbo community who are sleeping rough, and the timely delivery means as the winter weather sets in, extra warmth and protection is

readily available. Thank you to the Members of the Rotary clubs of Dubbo South, Dubbo West, Dubbo & Dubbo Macquarie for your continued support of the Dubbo Community.

#### **FLORENCE JIANG**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I rise to acknowledge Florence Jiang, who recently participated in the 2023 Australian Age Swimming Championships held in April. Through incredible hard work and dedication, Florence was able to make it all the way to the finals. Florence, who is the daughter of Georges River Councillor, Nancy Liu, placed very well in the 15 years 200 metre freestyle. Several other representatives achieved fantastic results, with two other members from the St George Swim Club participating in the finals. Grassroots sport is a cornerstone in our community, helping local kids to develop practical skills whilst making life-long friends. It's so important to celebrate the successes of young sportswomen like Florence. Local Swimming Clubs across New South Wales produce Australia's finest future Olympic and Paralympic athletes. Opportunities like the Australian Age Swimming Championships provide them with the tools and drive to achieve success. I would like to also extend my congratulations to the other qualifiers from the St George Swim Club, as well as five qualifiers from the Sans Souci Sea Devils. I know that you all will achieve fantastic things over the next few years.

#### **CHRIST CHURCH MORTDALE VISIT**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I recently was invited to Christ Church Mortdale to attend their night service and I enjoyed a wonderful evening of fellowship with the congregation. The Church has a long and proud history in Mortdale, focusing on community outreach programs, which engage with people from all walks of life. The Church is operated in partnership with Church at the Peak, with a combined four services between both churches. Whilst the Night Service is still relatively new, I was informed that it has seen a fantastic response over the last few months, with many new members coming to join the congregation and take part in the service. Churches like Christ Church Mortdale are important to our community. Just as Politicians are tasked with serving their communities, so too do churches throughout the State strive to make a positive impact on people's lives through serving others. I'd like to thank the Senior Pastor at Christ Church Mortdale, Stuart Maze, as well as Assistant Ministers, Dan Tooma and Alan Wood. I wish them all the very best moving forward and look forward to visiting again soon.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—I recently hosted my Biggest Morning Tea in conjunction with the Cancer Council of New South Wales. This is something I have done every year for 12 years, and it is always a pleasure to contribute to this worthy cause. With 1 in 2 Australians diagnosed with cancer before the age of 85, the Cancer Council play a vital role in both raising awareness and funds for those impacted by this horrible disease. We were fortunate enough that Maddison and Sharon from the Cancer Council were able to join us, sharing their stories and the wider vision for the Cancer Council. The Cancer Council have invested over \$51.7 million into Cancer research, making them the largest non-government funder in the country. This year was even bigger and better than the last. We raised over \$3800, which will go to directly supporting those impacted by Cancer. I would like to thank each person who donated to my Morning Tea, as well as the Cancer Council of New South Wales for the incredible work they do. I look forward to next year's Biggest Morning Tea.

#### **SONIA HENRY**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges Sonia Henry who has released a new memoir which recounts her journey from a medical intern in the city to a solo GP in the outback. Sonia grew up in Jamberoo and was the school captain at Jamberoo Public School. Her grandfather was the local vet in Kiama and started the Kiama Alpine Club. Sonia is proud to be from the South Coast. Sonia is the bestselling author of *Going Under*, her debut autobiographical novel which tells the tale of the stresses, failures and triumphs of a young doctor. *'Put Your Feet In The Dirt, Girl'*, her new memoir, explores her connection to the land, the concept of home and identity and recounts the challenges she faced in the tiny mining town in the middle of the Western Australia desert. Sonia, who is passionate about improving health equity for people who live in regional and remote parts of the country, now spends part of every year working as a GP in remote Australia. She departs again in July 2023. *'Put Your Feet In The Dirt, Girl'* is available at all major retailers.

#### **THE KIAMA BUGLE**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges Cathy and Steve Law. In 2014, The Kiama Bugle newspaper was born when a gap was identified in local news. Cathy and Steve worked tirelessly to ensure that The Bugle became a professional and trusted source of local news. Cathy was always willing to take on challenging stories and ask the tough questions. I know this all too well. Steve's work behind the scenes never went unnoticed from the sponsorship and advertisement side of this incredible local newspaper. I would personally like to acknowledge both Cathy and Steve Law for their dedication and commitment to keeping our region informed as well as their innovations such as The Bugle App which helps

deliver up-to-date news digitally. I have always respected their dedication, their independent reporting of the news and their broader commitment to our Kiama community by capturing important events, stories and information. The Bugle has done this incredibly well for nearly a decade now and I have no doubt that it will continue to produce great local news. I wish Cathy and Steve well with their future endeavours.

#### **GWEN WILSON**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges Gwen Wilson, a local Gerringong Mayflower resident, who celebrated her 103rd birthday on 7th June 2023. Gwen has called Gerringong home for over 45 years, living on Werri Beach in a house built with her late husband, David, until she was 100 years old. She has been visiting the town since 1957 when she and David, with her twin sister Jeane and her husband, built a holiday home. The four were founding members of the Gerringong Bowling Club and did volunteer work in the kitchen. Gwen and David were married for 58 years. Her tip for a long and healthy life is an unconventional one "I always say it's sunshine and salt water". Although Gabby, the cook at Mayflower, believes it's her bacon and egg breakfast she cooks her; "That's how she got to be 103." As children, Gwen and Jeane spent a lot of time on the beach, where Gwen later took up surfing on the old blow up 'Surf-o-Planes'. Gwen celebrated with her five grandchildren and nine great grandchildren together with a traditional espresso martini. Happy birthday Gwen You are the stuff legends are made of.

#### **MR ADRIAN MANGAN**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I wish to recognise the forty years of radiography service that the recently retired Mr Adrian Mangan provided to our state and in particular to Wagga Wagga and the Riverina. In 1973 Mr Mangan started his health career in the Lewisham Training hospital and then moved to the Albury Base Hospital before finally joining the staff of the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital from 1983 to 2023. During that time, in which the specialty of medical imaging has developed almost beyond imagining, Mr Mangan has provided valuable and caring service to patients of the Riverina. On a personal note, I wish to acknowledge and thank Mr Mangan for the support provided me from my time as an intern to my roles in management at the health services. Mr Mangan retires at a time when the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital has finally been completed with the opening of the multi-storey car park but as he noted to the Daily Advertiser, he never got to park his car in it! He will always be welcome to do so. I wish Mr Mangan all the best in his retirement and thank him for his service.

#### **THE HILLS RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville)**—It was my pleasure to attend The Hills Relay for Life's annual relay at the Castle Hill Showground. This tremendous community day raises money for the Cancer Council and is now in its 22nd year. The organising committee put on a wonderful day, with survivors and carers being honoured and celebrated, and those no longer with us being remembered. The 24-hour relay raises large amounts of money and has already smashed its \$250,000 target for this year, and has brought its earnings since its inception to almost \$6 million, making The Hills Relay the leading Relay for Life event in the entire country. I was joined on the day by Federal Member Alex Hawke, State Members Mark Taylor and Mark Hodges and event patron, Dr Michelle Byrne – whose role in organising the day was also noteworthy. My thanks goes out to the entire organising committee, in particular the Chairwoman Lisa Carruthers, Bev Jordan, Yvette Haines and Jaime Berglin, and Denise Daynes amongst others. Money raised from Relay for Life continues to provide vital research into improved cancer treatments which is saving lives and reducing the burden of this insidious disease.

#### **MACLEAN & DISTRICT PIPE BAND**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I offer my congratulations to members of the Maclean and District Pipe Band who recently won the Grade 4B section at the 2023 QLD Championships. The competitors were Murdo MacLeod, Alister Smith, Scott Rhodes, David Tees, Jacqui McLeod, Matt McLeod, Ross McLachlan, Connor Lothian, Sam Brailsford, Mandy Pateman, Justine Wallace, Adam Firth, Cameron Roach, Will Rhodes, Chelsea Wakefield and Nicole Rogers. This was the first competition for the Band's newest piper, 12-year-old Sam Brailsford from Yamba. The band has historically competed at local and interstate pipe band competitions, but due to dwindling numbers, this is only the second time they have competed at such a high level. It's wonderful to see them back bigger and stronger than ever, and I know they attribute this success to Cameron Roach who has been instrumental in teaching learner snares (drummers), most of which only began in August last year. The band plays a key part in the local community appearing at a number of community events including the Maclean Highland Gathering, Anzac Day, surf life saving carnivals, the Jacaranda Festival, school fetes, gatherings and graduations. The pipe band should be extremely proud of its achievements.

#### **EVAN'S COMMUNITY GARDEN AND LIBRARY**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)**—I rise today to recognise a fantastic community organisation in the heart of the Winston Hills Electorate founded by a young Glenwood resident seeking to help his local area.

Evans Community Garden and Library is a project started in 2020 by 7-year-old Evan from Glenwood to provide books, toys, food, school uniforms and other items to community members in Glenwood and the surrounding suburbs. The community garden relies on donations from local residents and promotes the availability of goods through social media. Evan's community garden extends their support to a number of other charities and organisations in the local area. This includes donations to Blacktown Carevan through the winter warmers appeal, and the Cancer Council's biggest morning tea. The project also prepares "teacher resource packages" each year once school returns to equip classrooms around Western Sydney with new literature. I extend my thanks to Evan and the Glenwood community for their generous spirit. It is organisations like this which make the Winston Hills Electorate such a fantastic place to live.

#### **WINSTON HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL PEDESTRIAN CROSSING**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)**—I take this opportunity to acknowledge the fantastic work done at Winston Heights Public school to prioritise student safety and wellbeing. Winston Heights Public School have recently advocated for a new crossing supervisor along Buckleys Road, Winston Hills. I am pleased to announce that the application was successful and would like to congratulate Ms Roberta Bell as the new crossing supervisor. Ms Bell will ensure the students of Winston Heights have a safe journey to and from school every morning and afternoon. I also acknowledge the work being done at Winston Heights Public to continually improve student and staff wellbeing. I congratulate Mr Jaron Blackie as the new student learning support officer who will provide tailored learning assistance and support to students in the school environment. I extend my thanks to Mrs Terri Bullock for her fantastic work in ensuring student wellbeing and safety. I would also like to acknowledge the P&C committee for the terrific work they do for the Winston Heights community. I look forward to catching up with staff and students again.

#### **FOOTBALL4ALL GALA-DAY**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills)**—It was fantastic to join Football NSW at Valentine Sports Park, Glenwood, for their Football4All Gala Day in partnership with Nova Employment. The event was established in 2008 and supports the furthered development of special needs and disability football programs in New South Wales. The day combines inclusive FootballNSW initiatives like AWD Futsal League, Powerchair Football and the Parraroos Development Centres. All these initiatives actively further the inclusion of differently abled individuals into sport. The event was hosted by Valentine Sports Park which was recently announced as the training camp for a major competitor in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, France. The team will use Valentine Sports Park as their base of operations over the coming months. It is great to see inclusive sporting opportunities and organisations thrive in the electorate of Winston Hills and further Western Sydney.

#### **SEAN GORDON AM**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The 2023 King's Birthday Honours List celebrated 1,192 recipients across Australia, and I would like to congratulate Mr Sean Gordon of Charlestown for being made a Member of the Order of Australia. A Wangkumara man, Mr Gordon was born into the foster system on the former Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission. He says this early experience, raised amongst First Nations young people living with the impacts of the NSW Aboriginal Protection Act, ingrained in him a lifelong need to look out for his community. Mr Gordon's great-great-grandparents and their children were caught up in the forcible relocation of 117 Wangkumara people from their homes in Tibooburra to Brewarrina in 1938. This sort of dispossession, which happened all across Australia, had profound, lingering impacts on First Nations people, and Mr Gordon has spent his professional life advocating for Aboriginal people and working to set out the long road to reconciliation. This included taking part in the First Nations Constitutional Convention as a delegate in 2017, which ultimately produced the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Mr Gordon says his proudest achievement is helping educate the next generation of First Nations Australians. Congratulations to Mr Sean Gordon AM on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **VIVIENNE ALLANSON OAM**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The 2023 King's Birthday Honours List celebrated 1,192 recipients across Australia, and I would like to congratulate Ms Vivienne Allanson of Merewether for being granted a Medal of the Order of Australia. A registered nurse by training and a carer by calling, Viv is the CEO at Maroba Aged Care in Waratah. A talented, dynamic and compassionate person, Viv led her team at Maroba through the difficult years of the COVID-19 pandemic, but her commitment to the aged care sector started long before that. Already a widely recognised expert in her field and highly regarded by others in the allied profession, Viv was a finalist in the 2020 NSW/ACT Regional Achievement & Community Awards, and was named Game Changer of the Year and Visionary CEO of the Year. Thanks to Viv's leadership and vision, Maroba is a

well-established and highly regarded feature of the aged care landscape in the Hunter Region. Over twenty-five years, Viv has helped make Maroba a positive teaching facility which lifts up and supports staff members to achieve great things in their professional lives. Congratulations to Ms Vivienne Allanson OAM on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **JOHN CONAGHAN OAM**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The 2023 King's Birthday Honours List celebrated 1,192 recipients across Australia, and I would like to congratulate Mr John Conaghan of New Lambton for being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia. Huntington's Disease is a rare progressive brain disorder caused by a defective gene. This condition, which impacts things like mood, cognition and movement, can be treated but cannot as yet be cured. It is an understandably devastating diagnosis for patients—which is where John comes in. A senior social worker based at John Hunter Hospital, John has worked with Huntington's patients and their families for nearly forty years, since his first job at a facility in Melbourne in 1985. John's career has included the 1993 discovery of the gene responsible for the disease. In his role, John serves as both ally and advocate, helping families through the decision of whether or not to test for the gene and supporting patients through the disease's progression. He links people in need with services that can help and runs support groups. Congratulations to Mr John Conaghan OAM on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **NELLEKE O'CONNELL PACIFIC PALMS YOUTH ART SHOW**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise to recognise a talented young artist in the Myall Lakes, Nelleke O'Connell. Nelleke, a 15 year old from Wingham High School has taken out the Overall Winner at this years Pacific Palms Youth Art Exhibition. There was a total of 247 entries by 168 young artists from 8 schools, Home School and two art classes in the Myall Lakes. Nelleke's entry was titled 'Self Conscious' and was entered into the Pen/Pencil/Ink Section. Her work will now be reproduced to a one square metre size and displayed in the One Square Gallery outdoor street art space for a whole year at Blueys Beach. Congratulations to Nelleke on such a wonderful achievement, I look forward to seeing more of her art in the future.

#### **RILEY BROWN**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise to recognise Riley Brown, a year 11 Taree High School student who recently won the Roma Liggins Perpetual Scholarship. The scholarship is the biggest award of the annual Taree and District Eisteddfod. It gives the recipient a cash prize of \$1500, and the winner's name inscribed in 24 carat gold leaf on the honour board at the Manning Entertainment Centre. Not only did Riley take out the big prize this year, but he also won a \$750 Smile Scholarship, was the winner of the Piano Intermediate Championship, winner of the Instrumental Senior Championship, was the Piano Age-Aggregate winner; the Aggregate overall winner, plus took out six other first places. I congratulate Riley on ticking off this incredible achievement on his bucket list and wish him all the best for his upcoming AMusA exams for both piano and clarinet.

#### **JACQUIE HYDE OAM**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise to recognise Jacqueline Hyde OAM. Jackie has recently been awarded an OAM for her service to women in this year's King's Birthday Honours list. All of that service has been through the Country Women's Association. In 1954 Jackie joined the Pilliga CWA branch and during her time with the branch she held various roles including president, secretary, treasurer and cultural officer. Jackie held office in the Barwon group where she also held various roles including group president and secretary. She was also the delegate to the State executive committee from 1969-1971. Jackie was selected to be the CWA's representative on a Rural Advisory Committee and was the only female. She fought for anything that related to rural women such as mobile breast clinics. At 93 years of age, Jackie is still involved in CWA and is currently a member of Wingham. Congratulations Jackie.

#### **BEAUTY POINT FAREWELLS MS WALSH-GAY**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Beauty Point Public School is saying farewell to its Principal Ms Walsh-Gay who is leaving the school at the end of this term to take up a new position with an educational consulting company. Marion says she is immensely proud of the achievements that the school community has undertaken in recent years, notably continuing the school tradition of Beauty Point Fireworks night by transforming it into the Beauty Point School Festival of Light, an event that has become a community favourite. Ms Walsh-Gay also lead the school through the very difficult period of Covid, assisting students, teachers, and parents navigate the new world of home learning, and managing a successful return to school. I join the Beauty Point Public School community in wishing Ms Walsh-Gay the best of luck with her future endeavours, and thank her for years at the helm of Beauty Point Public. Good luck and farewell Ms Walsh-Gay.

### NEW SCULPTURE DEDICATED TO MOSMAN VOLUNTEERS

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—A new sculpture has been unveiled to celebrate the significant contribution of two past Mosman Art Gallery volunteers, the late Stanley and Diane Wachman, with the support of the Wachman and Fairbairn families. Diane and Stanley both made outstanding contributions to the Mosman community, through their volunteer work and affiliation with local sporting clubs and organisations. Diane was a founding member of the Festival of Mosman Committee and both she and Stanley dedicated twenty-two years of their lives as volunteers at the Mosman Art Gallery following its opening in 1988. Stanley was also a highly regarded member of Middle Harbour Yacht Club, and I previously paid tribute to him in this place following his passing in 2021. The new sculpture, Nest 2023, that has been unveiled was commissioned by artist Samantha Stephenson who has a Master of Fine Art in Sculpture from the National Art School Sydney and has exhibited at Sculpture by the Sea and been a finalist in the Ravenswood Australian Women's Art Prize. Congratulations to all involved at Mosman Art Gallery for this new sculpture dedicated to two very special Mosman residents.

### BEAUTY POINT FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I acknowledge the incredible Beauty Point Public School community, for another spectacular Beauty Point Festival of Light. The Beauty Point Festival of Light, is one of the major fundraisers that the school hosts each year and each year the display gets bigger and better. The school underwent a stunning transformation, turning into a captivating fun fair that brought extreme amounts of joy and cheer to the faces of all the children, and adults too. Festival goers got to enjoy a whole range of activities at this year's event including: rides, slides, carnival games, food, & live music. The festival brings the whole school and wider community together and in particular I want to recognise the work of Shar Allen who worked so incredibly hard on the event and it's safe to say that the success of the festival is a testament to her tireless dedication. Thank you to the members of the P&C, teachers, parents, volunteers, and all participating students for bringing so much joy, energy, and excitement to this event. I look forward to joining you all next time. Congratulations once again to Beauty Point Public School for putting on this amazing event.

### EMMA PEACOCK - BIG SISTERS, BIG BROTHERS

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—It is with pleasure that today I acknowledge and congratulate Emma Peacock for her wonderful work as Mentoring Co-ordinator with Big Brothers Big Sisters in my electorate town of Tumut. This Not- For-Profit Mentoring Programme literally changes the course of the young lives of its participants. Mentees and Mentors build trusting, safe and reliable friendships, allowing participants to confidently advance in their lives under the guidance of a Mentor. Participants simply might not have that person they can go to within their social network, so Emma works to pair young people with experienced, caring and willing mentors to work one-on-one together. This is a friend, focussed on the success of the participant. The social advantages can be immense and the outcomes truly life changing for Mentors and Mentees.

Emma is always involved with her local community, particularly with youth and she is passionate about positively impacting the lives of the next generation. I applaud Emma's enthusiasm and energy for this vital programme and for her service to her community and particularly, its youth. I congratulate and thank Emma for her persistence, hard work and dedication to her community.

### ST PETER'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to St Peter's Catholic College VET Hospitality Kitchen Operations senior students Anthony, Emily, and Elizabeth for receiving first place at the 2023 'Battle of the Chefs' competition, held at the College's Trade Training Centre kitchens. The challenging competition involved a surprise mystery box of ingredients for the main course and a pear dessert dish. Each team were handed the same ingredients to create their recipes ready to be judged by Ourimbah TAFE teachers at Industry Standard. The team of students worked well together showing dedication, focus and culinary skills. Hospitality teachers Amy Taylor led the winning students to an amazing victory and Katherine Gregory organised the competition and collaborated with staff across Catholic Schools Broken Bay. Second place was awarded to Brigidine College St Ives and third place Mater Maria Catholic College. Trade Centre Kitchen assistant Deb prepares, cleaned, and facilitated the Battle of the Chefs event along with year 11 students Kaitlin, Bryson, Reagan, Monica and Zoe assisting in the kitchen. Well done to all the participating schools who battled it out in the kitchen presenting outstanding dishes.

### JOSHUA BORG

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Joshua Borg aged 19 from Noraville, competed in The Run Port Stephens Run the Bay on 3rd of June 2023,



finishing the full 42km marathon at 3 hours, 17 minutes, and 47 seconds, coming 3rd overall and 2nd in his age group under 20. This was Josh's first time running in a marathon and before this he had over come major hoops in his life. At age 16 Josh played soccer becoming interested in running and he first ran 4.5km. Not long after, Josh injured himself at soccer taking 6 months to recover but also had a battle with diabetes. This was a difficult time for Josh to find a balance that worked for his health, and he was very determined to figure it out. Josh ran his first half marathon on May 25th, 2022 and began to train for a full marathon before he turned 20. Josh fractured his tail bone and ribs from slipping down the stairs, this did not stop Josh from competing, he worked hard with the physio to be prepared for The Run Port Stephens Run the Bay. Such a great achievement for Josh, may you also enjoy your 20th birthday celebrations.

#### **WYONG FAMILY HISTORY GROUP**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Wyong Family History Group recently celebrated their 40th Birthday with past and present members at Tuggerah Community Hall on June 3, 2023. Kerrie Metcalfe joined the group in 2001 and through this time she has been president three times and currently stands in this position, who has faced challenges to keep the group going. It was wonderful to hear about the positive impact the volunteers have contributed over the past 10 years, including the weekly Newsletter, quarterly Tree of Life journal, books donated to the library, Roster Co-ordinator, Guest Speaker organiser, Raffles Organiser, Proof-Readers, Typists and Transcribers, Welfare Officer, Publicity Officer, Research Officers, Book Stall organiser, Special Interest Group leaders, reader of other Group's Journals who provide snippets from these journals. The Family History Group continue to run historical tours through Wyong, bus trips and their biggest fundraising event Bunnings BBQ's. Over the years the Family History Group have received grants for the purchase of a Map Drawer, a BBQ, produced banners, computer equipment, Smart TV, camera for Zoom meetings and Commemorative plaques. I congratulate the members and volunteers from the Wyong Family History Group on their 40th Birthday.

#### **TERREY HILLS COMMUNITY KINDY**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I thank the wonderful at Terry Hills Community Kindy for inviting me to celebrate World Oceans Day. Emma and her team, Becky, Marnie, Amanda, Nicola, Sue, Viv, Cyndee, Tracey and, no doubt, many more, do an amazing job caring for and nurturing local kids. It was a pleasure to celebrate World Oceans Day by reading the kids Seagull by Danny Snell. To then have the kids sing and perform "I Am, You Are, We Australia" was special and moving. I am pleased that these words of thanks and recognition of your educators and kids will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country. Thank you all.

#### **TERREY HILLS PUBLIC SCHOOL CAPTAINS – MADDISON P & BLAKE A**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I thank the wonderful school captains at Terrey Hills Public School, Maddison P and Blake A, for welcoming me to their school on Thursday, 15 June 2023. Maddison and Blake, your welcome to country was very special and well thought out. Thank you also for showing me the recent upgrades to some of your outdoor spaces. I wish you both well as you lead your student body and hope to see you at my Pittwater Student Leaders Parliament House visit (invite to come) later in the year. I am pleased that these words of thanks for your leadership and contribution will be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country. Thank you both!

#### **TERREY HILLS VOLUNTEER RURAL FIRE BRIGADE – MURRAY LOWE**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I rise to congratulate Murray Lowe on his election as Captain of the Terrey Hills Volunteer Rural Fire Brigade. Murray has served over 30 years in the RFS and is well equipped to lead the Brigade – well done Murray! I also pay tribute to Pete Duff on his four-year tenure as Captain. Pete, you led your Brigade through the devastating 2019/20 fires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and then terrible flood events. What a tenure – but, a tenure well served! Thank you, Murray and Pete, for your service. I am pleased that these words will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country, as a recognition of your contributions.

#### **SHAQUIRA HOBBS**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I'd like to acknowledge the talent and efforts of Shaquira Hobbs from Booragul who has not only become one of Australia's top photographers but is also using her talent to inspire and mentor young women. Shaquira owns Forbidden Fruit Photography and is renowned for producing powerful and emotive photographs of live music events. In fact, it's been said that she takes photographs you can hear. Her images have been used worldwide, from capturing Lake Macquarie identity John Paul Young to the Angels, Airbourne and Steel Panther. Her photograph of a perfectly formed cloud in the shape of a man over Booragul, titled 'Man in the Clouds' made international headlines, and has been reproduced in major newspapers around the

world. After being told she'd never make it as a live music photographer because she was a woman, Shaquira has made it her mission to help other women. Each month she shares her time and talent, mentoring young women to make their way in the music industry and donating an hour-long shoot to a local small business. Shaquira recently won the Lake Mac Artist and Creator award at the 2023 Lake Mac Awards.

#### **MEGHAN GAYFORD**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—Dragon boat racing is a fast and furious water sport which originated in China about 2500 years ago, but I'm very proud to note that Lake Macquarie is home to an Australian dragon boat racing champion. Meghan Gayford from Buttaba only started competing in the sport three years ago when she joined the Hunter River Dragons but she has already paddled her way to dominating the sport at a national level. She, alongside her crew of 20 in the NSW Senior B State dragon boat team, competed at the Australian Dragon Boat Championships held in Albury-Wodonga last month, taking home three gold medals and one silver. This achievement followed her success at the State titles held at Sydney International Regatta Centre earlier this year where she won a silver medal with her club team. Since 2021 Meghan has successfully competed in regattas all over Australia and takes part in an average of six regional regattas each year, including the Luna New Year Regatta at Darling Harbour. She also joined the Newcastle Outrigger Canoe Club to supplement her training. I congratulate Meghan on her outstanding success and wish her luck at future regattas.

#### **COMMUNITY PHARMACIES IN WILLOUGHBY**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—In caring for our health and wellbeing, the local pharmacy is one of the great pillars of our local community. Our communities rely on these small businesses for their everyday health needs, and on 15 March, I was pleased to have the honour of attending a morning tea to celebrate and discuss ways we can strengthen local pharmacies, hosted at Northbridge Pharmacy. Northbridge Pharmacy is an outstanding local example of a friendly, dependable, local pharmacist that meets the healthcare needs of the community in Northbridge and beyond. I thank Anthony Voss and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, NSW Branch for organising this insightful discussion on how we can grow and support our hard-working pharmacists and help them help us. As the dispensers of countless lifesaving and everyday treatments and a source of health advice, the local pharmacy serves as a vital intermediary between the doctor and patient. I also express my gratitude for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the invaluable work they do to represent and promote the value of the community pharmacy in the Australian health care system.

#### **NORTHBRIDGE PROGRESS ASSOCIATION – NORTHBRIDGE FIREWORKS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—In one of the Northbridge community's much-loved events, thousands of locals came together for the annual Northbridge Fireworks on Saturday 6 May. As always, it was a night of fun, festivity, family and food as locals rallied to not only enjoy themselves but support a good cause. Organised by the Rotary Club of Northbridge, the fireworks raise money for the numerous charities and projects the Club supports for those in need. In addition to the sound and light fireworks extravaganza, the night featured live music by local school bands, face painting, food stalls, rides and other entertainment. My family and I had a fantastic night. I would like to thank President Rob Coote of Northbridge Rotary along with many other organisations, food providers, local school bands and generous people for the huge effort required to make it all happen.

#### **CHATSWOOD EXECUTIVE BUSINESS LIONS CLUB – CHANGEOVER DINNER**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Every year, Chatswood Executive Business Lions Club holds its 'changeover dinner' to mark the annual leadership transition of its Club. On Tuesday 6 June 2023 I was honoured to join the Chatswood Executive Business Lions Club for their annual changeover dinner at the King Dynasty restaurant in Chatswood. I applaud Chatswood Executive Business Lions for their service, generosity and community spirit. The Club's support for youth, people with disabilities, flood affected communities and so many other worthy causes is inspiring. I was delighted to join with club members to thank the outgoing President, David To for his leadership over the past year. I welcome and congratulate the incoming President, Michelle Osmen. As she assumes the presidency of Chatswood Executive Business Lions, she also marks her 10th year anniversary as a Lion - a great milestone. I wish Michelle well and I am sure she will continue the Club's great tradition of serving the local community of Chatswood and beyond.

#### **TAHLIA TUPAEA**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the incredible talent and achievements of Tahlia Tupaea, a remarkable basketball player hailing from Glenmore Park in my electorate. At just 15 years old, Tahlia made her debut in the WNBL, demonstrating her exceptional skills and passion for the game. Most recently, Tahlia showcased her prowess in the Taihi Basketball Aotearoa, where she was named the Most Valuable Player of the Year. With impressive statistics averaging 18.5 points, 3.3 rebounds, 4.1 assists, and 2.7 steals per game, she has consistently demonstrated her talent and impact on the court. Her

shooting prowess is equally noteworthy, with a remarkable 44 per cent accuracy from the arc throughout the 2021/22 WNBL season. Tahlia's remarkable skills and unique abilities have caught the attention of coach Kirsten Veal, who has expressed great admiration for her and hopes that she will assume a leadership role within the Penrith Panthers. In a significant homecoming, Tahlia has returned to her junior club and has been instrumental in the team's success since the beginning of the season on March 11. I commend Tahlia Tupaea for her outstanding achievements and commendable contributions to the sport of basketball.

#### **JOSHUA ANDERSON**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I recognise the incredible talent and determination of Josh Anderson, a resident of Mulgoa, who is making waves in the world of Aussie Racing Cars. As a dedicated supporter of the Penrith Panthers, Josh is aiming to achieve what his favourite footy team accomplished last year – a back-to-back championship win. Having first joined Aussie Racing Cars as a high school student in 2017, Josh experienced his best season to date in 2022, where he claimed the overall honours in the Super Series. Now, he is racing to defend his crown. This is his fourth full season in Aussie Racing Cars and Josh's commitment to his craft extends beyond the racetrack. He actively participates in simulated racing throughout the year, which helps maintain his sharpness and strategic thinking. Following so far, Josh sits third on the series ladder with not many points separating him from the leader and more races in Darwin, Townsville and New Zealand to go. On behalf of the community, I extend my best wishes to Josh Anderson as he embarks on the remainder of the Aussie Racing Cars season.

#### **HOLY SPIRIT PARISH**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I commend and celebrate the significant milestone of the 40th anniversary celebrated by Holy Spirit Parish in St Clair. This cherished occasion provides an opportunity to recognise the unwavering commitment and impact of the parish within our community. For four decades, the Holy Spirit Parish has served as a spiritual haven, nurturing faith, fostering fellowship and offering support to countless individuals and families. It has been a source of comfort, guidance and inspiration during times of both joy and sorrow. The 40th anniversary of the Holy Spirit Parish is a testament to the enduring power of faith and the significant role it plays in shaping lives. The values instilled by faith extend far beyond the parish walls, permeating our homes, schools, workplaces and broader society. They guide our choices, interactions and contribute to the betterment of our community. May the Parish continue to be a beacon of light, inspiring us to embrace compassion, love and understanding in all aspects of our lives.

#### **NORTH RYDE SOCCER CLUB**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to North Ryde Soccer Club on turning 70. First established in 1953 by George Collier, the Club has gone on to become an institution of the North Ryde Community and has played at some of the highest levels in the State. With over 53 teams from under 6's to over 55's the Club continues to draw players from all over the region thanks to its stellar Culture. I cannot wait to see what the future has in store for this stellar Organisation.

#### **HEART BEATS FOR XAV**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—I would like to congratulate the charity, Heart Beats for Xav, on raising over \$750,000 to go towards research for sudden cardiac arrest in young people. The foundation was only started a couple of months ago when our community lost a young man Xavier O'Grady, to sudden cardiac arrest on the 2nd of October 2022. The loss of Xav was felt by all in the Lane Cove and Riverview communities but none more so than his family, his father Patrick and mother Alison and his two sisters Annalise and Bella. His family have been nothing short of inspirational as they have fought to create a legacy for their beloved Xav, and in raising such an extraordinary amount they have done so. I must also pay tribute to the generosity of our community, who raised north of \$70,000 at a recent fundraiser, such generosity reminds us of how lucky we are to be members of such a loving community.

#### **LANE COVE ROTARY**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—I would like to thank Lane Cove Rotary for their fundraising efforts in the light of the recent Hunter Valley Bus Tragedy. Lane Cove Rotary has already donated \$1,000 of their own funds towards those impacted by the recent tragedy and continues to help with fundraising efforts across the community. Lane Cove Rotary continues to be a fantastic community-based organisation who are constantly working towards the betterment of society, are there when people need them most. Whilst nothing will help bring back those who were lost in this horrible tragedy. I hope that these donations help will ease the burden of grief.

**ANMOL LOHIA**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House Anmol Lohia. Anmol was the Centre Director at Bambini of Lilyfield childcare centre for 16 years. Throughout her time Anmol supported local children and families with critical early education and care, including steering the centre through the very difficult COVID period. Through her hard work she set thousands of children up for their best chance of success going into primary school and beyond. Anmol ensured that the centre has had a strong focus on creativity and sustainability, teaching young children about the importance of looking after the natural world and the joy of the creative arts. Anmol also worked hard to make the centre operations more sustainable. She has been a passionate and important part of the Lilyfield community throughout her time and achieved two exceeding ratings. Thank you, Anmol, for your dedication to giving children such a special and meaningful early education experience.

**SYDNEY HERITAGE FLEET**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House the Sydney Heritage Fleet which for over 50 years has been working to present our continuing maritime history. The Sydney Heritage Fleet works to preserve, restore and operate vintage vessels with the goal of connecting the community to our shared maritime heritage. Its iconic tall ships and restored ferries are a familiar and welcome sight for many on the Balmain Peninsula and around Sydney Harbour, with its fleet comprising ten historical vessels. This includes its work boat, the restored 1955 refinery worker vessel Berrima, which my family and I were recently kindly invited to travel on. I want to thank the master of the Berrima, Ray Jenkinson, and the following Fleet personnel - President John Winning AM, Vice President Brett Smith, Treasurer Peter Lucas, Christopher Clarke, Peter Cole, Tom Harris-Brassil, Margaret Piper AM, Ramon (Ray) Rees, Chair, Board of Governors Robert Albert AO RFD RD, Fleet Operations Manager Tim Drinkwater, Fleet Commodore Richard Toone as well as all the volunteers and staff of the Fleet and its 1200 members for the wonderful opportunities they create for all of us to appreciate Sydney's significant maritime heritage.

**TREVOR TAYLOR**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Trevor Taylor who has been volunteering with Shoalhaven Community Transport for the past 2 years. Trevor is from North Nowra and has brought many skills from his past working life and volunteering with other services. Not only does Trevor do fantastic work when representing Community Transport, Trevor goes above and beyond to support both his peer volunteers and clients outside of his volunteering role when other services are unable to accommodate. Recently, Trevor supported one of his peers in his own time to Sydney for an important appointment. Trevor remained overnight in accommodation to then support the return trip home providing for a stress-free trip and recovery. Trevor will be the first to put his hand up for extra ordinary supports that would commonly be seen as out of our service scope, such as Trevor recently supported a young gentleman with a physical disability to attend his high school orientation and to his year 6 farewell outside of business operating hours.

**KEVIN HILL, JOHN DAWSON, LEWIS SMITH & ALLAN REIDY**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—I recognise a small crew of volunteers from the team at Marine Rescue Jervis Bay. I'd like to recognise, Kevin, John, Lewis and Allan who carried out the rescue of two people being carried out by strong winds from Iluka, Jervis Bay, on Friday 16 December 2022. Their timely response, professional actions in challenging conditions and outstanding interagency coordination from the radio base led to the safe return of both people to their family ashore. Marine Rescue Jervis Bay is a small unit of approximately 80 volunteers. Their mission is to save lives at sea and the pristine waters attract so many visitors and locals enjoying water based recreational activities, that this keeps the team busy. During the recent boating season Marine Rescue Jervis Bay was actively involved in over 55 rescue operations saving over 120 people, which we are so very grateful for." It is reassuring to know that the talented and experienced team at Marine Rescue Jervis Bay are looking out for those of us who live and/or visit Jervis Bay and work so hard to keep us safe when enjoying the magnificent waterways of the South Coast.

**THE LATE MR JOHN FORBES**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the late Mr John Forbes for posthumous recognition for his fourteen years of outstanding service to Ulladulla Men's Shed. When the Ulladulla Men's Shed opened at the present site at Leo Drive Narrawallee in 2009, John set about forming a garden team which constructed raised garden beds accessible for senior men, constructed an attractive garden shed, a glasshouse and a series of greenhouses for growing decorative plants and vegetables. These facilities are admired by the local community and deeply appreciated, enjoyed and tended to by our shed members. He continued to supervise the garden activities until he passed away in May this year. Over a period of several years, he trained members in building skills and supervised the construction of this building which was largely

constructed by our members, most of whom had no previous building experience. We highly commend him for the lasting legacy he left on our Men's Shed community, the broader local community and for being such a great mate to so many.

#### **PARRAMATTA CRICKET CLUB**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—I would like to recognise the recent remarkable success of the Parramatta District Cricket Club in winning New South Wales Cricket Champions in both the First and Third grades. The players made a fantastic effort throughout the entire season especially in the grand final. During that final match, team member Ryan Hackney scored a remarkable 193 runs not out, winning the NSW Benaud Medal for Player of the Match. It is so important that everyone in our community has access to quality, safe, accessible and fun sporting activities providing equal opportunities for all players. I want to thank all the parents, carers and coaches who gave their time and effort to help the team achieve such a high level of success, with particular thanks to Greg Monaghan, Deborah Pooley and Rod Cherry for their leadership and dedication.

#### **MELROSE PARK COMMUNITY CUP GOLF DAY & DINNER 2023**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—Six local community groups have been collaborating for the past six years to organise an annual Melrose Park Community Cup Golf Day and Dinner. The event raises funds to support local Parramatta and Ryde organisations - Parramatta Women's Shelter, Melrose Park Public School, St Michael's Public School, Ermington United Sports and Recreation Club and the Michael Hughes Foundation. So far this annual event has raised over \$400,000 demonstrating that the power of community can make a significant impact. I would like to thank everyone who made the 2023 event possible, especially the Melrose Park Community Cup Committee and the one and only Greg Page, the original Yellow Wiggle, for performing MC duties. This year was particularly significant for the Michael Hughes Foundation [MHF], as it is 10 years since Michael Hughes lost his life to cardiac arrest at the age of 38. This year also starts a new chapter for MHF which will merge with Heart of the Nation on 30 June 2023. Together these established charities will continue with the same commitment and drive to support individuals to be better equipped, more aware and confident to respond to medical emergencies.

#### **KATE EGAN**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I wish to recognise Kate Egan for her continuous work within the community and for her environmental activism. Winner of the City of Canada Bay's Sustainable Citizen Award in 2022 and in 2018, Kate Egan has continued to be an outstanding citizen, participating in local events and contributing to the community. Studying Environmental Science at UTS, and an old Domremy girl, Kate's passion for our living environment, conservation and sustainability are evident. Kate has a keen interest in research and the development of practical solutions, which implement the latest methods and resource management. Kate is often seen volunteering in the community, helping to educate and advocate. Kate was selected to be on the Canada Bay Council Environmental Advisory Committee in 2022 and is a core organiser and a foundational member of Canada Bay Zero Carbon Community Group. I want to sincerely congratulate Kate on her hard work in advocating for the community and want her to know it definitely does not go unnoticed. Keep it up Kate!

#### **ITALIAN REPUBLIC DAY**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—On Sunday 28 May, I attended the Italian Republic Day celebrations hosted by Club Marconi in Bossley Park. Italian Republic Day is a significant day for the Italian community as it commemorates the referendum held in 1946 in which the Italian people were called to vote on the form of government, monarchy or republic. As a proud member of the Italian community with Italian heritage, the event at Club Marconi was exemplary at showcasing our culture. From live performances, cooking demonstrations, car show from the Italian Made Social Motoring Club, carnival rides and a petting zoo for the kids, it was a day for all to celebrate. Over ten thousand people attended this inclusive event, both those with Italian heritage, and those wanting to experience and learn about the Italian culture. There were around 70 different market and food stalls, rides, displays and fireworks to end the night. I want to express my appreciation to Mr Morris Licata, President of Club Marconi, the Board of Directors, Mr Matthew Biviano, CEO of Club Marconi and the hardworking staff for hosting such an incredible event each year. Buona Festa Della Repubblica!

#### **CAMPIONE JEWELLERY**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I wish to recognise a terrific local business who received an Inner West Local Business Award, winning the Jewellery Store category - Campione Jewellery in Haberfield. Proudly creating beautiful pieces of jewellery for customers across Sydney for over 35 years, Mr Sam Campione, founder of Campione Jewellery has been recognised for his hard work, contribution to the industry and the customer service he offers his clientele. The category was competitive and many businesses were nominated. I am delighted that Campione Jewellery has been recognised in this way. I wish to sincerely congratulate Mr Sam

Campione, his family and staff on their consistent hard work and wish them continued success in the future. A well-deserved win! Congratulations!

### SHORT STORY COMPETITION

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—On the 18th of June I attended the Australian Arab Cultural Forum's creativity day, held to recognise the talents of young writers in south-west Sydney. The creative day was a fabulous opportunity to show-off short-story submissions from students in high schools across my electorate, and I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation of awards and prizes for English and Arabic works to the 56 deserving contestants. I was joined at the event by Liverpool Mayor Ned Mannoun and Nadia Bouchti from the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, who joined me in giving words of encouragement to the participants, many of which have faced challenges as members of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Groups. I would like to thank Dr Amira Issa and the Australian Arab Cultural Forum for facilitating the competition, and I wish all the contestants the very best with their future endeavours.

### WINTER FIRE SAFETY CAMPAIGN

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—On Friday the 9th of June, I was joined by the Minister for Emergency Services, Jihad Dib, for the launch the start of NSW fire and rescue's winter fire safety campaign in south-west Sydney. It was great to join fire crews from Liverpool and Busby on their door-to-door campaign to educate CALD communities on fire safety and to install free smoke alarms for people without working units. I was delighted by the reception our fire crews received when they knocked on doors and the enthusiasm everyone had for the fire safety campaign. Following the deaths of 16 people last year in structure fires, fire safety education in diverse communities is critical to ensuring that all messaging is communicated clearly to potentially vulnerable groups whose language limitations would otherwise put them at greater risk. I would like thank Liverpool and Busby Fire and Rescue for their participation and acknowledge the work of acting commissioner Megan Stiffler in this area.

### MAITLAND DISTRICT NETBALL ASSOCIATION

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to the Maitland District Netball Association who recently hosted the NSW Netball State Senior titles over 3 days on the chilly June long weekend in Maitland. The event saw 2500 talented netballers, 500 committed officials, 300 dedicated umpires, 50 represented associations, 9 deserving life members, countless generous volunteers and one very proud Maitland community join together to enjoy the sport they all love. Congratulations to the local sides who did our town proud with the 15s side improving their performance each day of the weekend finishing 12th in the state. The 17s came home strong going through the final day undefeated, to finish in 8th place! And the Opens capped off a truly stellar performance in the Championship Division, ultimately only dropping three games all weekend to finish 3rd in the state! Congratulations go to the local committee, also to the local umpires and volunteers who worked tirelessly all weekend. Congratulations Maitland District Netball Association and Netball NSW on a fabulous event and thank you to the whole Maitland community who came out to support players from across the state over the weekend.

### STARSTRUCK 2023

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Last weekend saw the culmination of months of hard work by teachers and students from across the Hunter Valley and Central Coast regions with the 31st arena spectacular Starstruck performance 'Ignite'. With over 3500 dance and drama students, a combined choir of over 500, 100 featured dancers, 100 featured musicians and over 30 VET entertainment students, the dedication, preparation, passion and professionalism from all involved is outstanding. Performances included 'Cloudy Day' and 'Neutron Dance' by Tenambit Public School, 'Iko Iko' featuring Telarah and Morpeth Public Schools and 'You're My Best Friend' by Woodberry and Thornton Public Schools. Maitland Public School starred in 'Boys From the Bush' and 'Rawhide', with Rutherford Technology High School, Telarah and Tenambit Public Schools joining forces for 'Great Southern Land'. Rutherford Technology High School also performed 'Running Up That Hill' and were joined by the wonderful students of Hunter River Community School for 'Cuban Pete', Ashtonfield Public School wowed with 'We Own the Night', and Gillieston Public school and Maitland Grossman High showed their choral talents throughout. Congratulations also to Talulah Elbourn, Tiana McWilliams, Brooklyn Cox and Abigale Middleton on their singing and signing efforts. Congratulations to all involved in this spectacular.

### MAITLAND BLOOD DONATIONS

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—On June 14 each year we celebrate World Blood Donor Day. The event serves to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank voluntary, unpaid blood donors for their life-saving gifts of blood. In Australia,

1 in 3 people will rely on blood and/or plasma donation in their lifetime for treatment of a range of conditions, such as cancer, immune conditions, support of trauma events, surgeries and neo-natal requirements. In the Maitland electorate, we currently have 1,905 active donors who have changed the life of someone they will never meet by giving blood or plasma, and for this I am incredibly grateful. Based on the percentage of the eligible population who currently donate, Maitland Donor Centre currently ranks 4 out of 23 donor centres in New South Wales. As we know a blood service that gives patients access to safe blood and blood products in sufficient quantity is a key component of an effective health system. Thank you so much to all in my community who generously donate and provide life-giving blood, plasma, transplantation, and biological products for world- leading health outcomes.

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