



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday 2 August 2023**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Wednesday 2 August 2023**

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

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

## *Announcements*

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

**The SPEAKER:** I advise members that media photographers are approved to cover question time today.

## *Bills*

### ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (DEMERIT POINT REDUCTION TRIAL) BILL 2023

#### First Reading

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

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

[Notices of motions given.]

## *Business of the House*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (10:17):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended this day to permit the consideration of Government business from 1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. in place of committee report take-note debates.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (10:18):** I confirm that the Opposition supports the suspension of standing and sessional orders.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## *Bills*

### DRUG MISUSE AND TRAFFICKING AMENDMENT (APPOINTED PERSONS) 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) (10:19):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I introduce the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Amendment (Appointed Persons) Bill 2023. The bill addresses an issue that has been identified by the NSW Police Force, the Department of Regional NSW and the Department of Communities and Justice with the validity of appointments of persons to give evidentiary certificates under section 43 of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985. Under section 43 (4) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985, the production in legal proceedings of a certificate purported to be signed by a suitably qualified person appointed under the Act is prima facie evidence of the identity and quantity or mass of cannabis plant or cannabis leaf. Section 43 (5) of the Act currently confers the function of appointing suitably qualified persons for the purpose of issuing section 43 (4) certificates upon the Secretary of the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development.

In 2017, the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development was changed to the Department of Industry. In 2019, the Administrative Arrangements (Administrative Changes—Public Service Agencies) Order 2019 abolished the Department of Industry and established the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. The same administrative arrangements order provided, subject to the order, for the transfer of staff

from the Department of Industry to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and that references to the Department of Industry were to be construed as a reference to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. The issue the bill seeks to address arises following machinery of government changes in 2020.

The Administrative Arrangements (Administrative Changes—Regional NSW and Independent Planning Commission) Order 2020, known as the 2020 administrative order, created the Department of Regional NSW and transferred certain staff from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to the Department of Regional NSW. I am advised that changes were not made to enable the outdated reference to the Secretary of the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development in section 43 (5) of the Act to be construed as the Secretary of the Department of Regional NSW. As a result, appointments of persons under section 43 (5) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 that were made by the Secretary of the Department of Regional NSW are invalid. I am advised that convictions of persons under the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 that rely on certificates of evidence about the identity and quantity or mass of cannabis plant or cannabis leaf given by persons who were invalidly appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Regional NSW may be unsafe and liable to challenge.

This situation has arisen not due to any defect in the quality of analysis of plant matter by a person purportedly appointed under section 43 (5) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 or any defect in their training, but because of a technical error following a machinery of government change. Persons trained by the National Herbarium of NSW to botanically identify cannabis plants have been appointed under section 43 (5) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 as suitable persons to give evidentiary certificates since 1988 when the provision was introduced by the Drug Misuse and Trafficking (Amendment) Act 1988. This is still the case today. A person's training accreditation from the National Herbarium of NSW is the key documentation required to make these appointments.

All persons who have purportedly been appointed since the making of the 2020 administrative order have been trained by the National Herbarium of NSW to botanically identify cannabis and were appointed on that basis. The suitability of persons purportedly appointed to issue evidentiary certificates since the 2020 machinery of government changes is therefore not in question. Accordingly, the New South Wales Government is introducing this bill to retrospectively validate the appointments of persons under section 43 (5) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985. Given the issue has arisen due to a technical error, the Government considers that, on this occasion, a retrospective amendment to address the issue is justified. In addition, the bill will take steps to reduce the risk of this issue arising again by vesting the function of appointing persons to issue evidentiary certificates under section 43 (5) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 in the Executive Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust or a person prescribed by regulation.

The Executive Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust is an office established under section 13 of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust Act 1980. The National Herbarium of NSW is part of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust. As the chief executive officer of the agency with responsibility for the training and accreditation of persons with botanical expertise, the executive director of the trust is an appropriate public officer to make such appointments. The trust is also less likely than a department of the public service to be impacted by machinery of government changes. In addition, as a further safeguard, the bill provides for a regulation-making power to enable regulations to prescribe a person as a person who may make appointments under section 43 (5) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985, to facilitate any future changes that may be necessary to ensure that an appropriate person is able to carry out this important function.

I now turn to the detail of the bill. Item 1 of schedule 1 omits section 43 (5) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 and inserts a new provision to vest the appointment function under section 43 (5) in the Executive Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust or a person prescribed by the regulations. Items 2 to 6 of schedule 1 amend the savings and transitional provisions contained in schedule 3 to the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985. Item 6 of schedule 1 inserts clause 5 into schedule 3 to the Act. The effect of this amendment will be to retrospectively validate any appointments made under section 43 (5) of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 prior to the passage of the bill.

Items 2, 3, 4 and 5 of schedule 1 are technical amendments to insert part headings into schedule 3 to the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985. They have been recommended by the Parliamentary Counsel and do not affect the substance of the Act. The bill will resolve the issue of invalid appointments made under section 43 (5) of the Drugs Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 since 2020 and reduce the likelihood of the issue arising again following future machinery of government changes. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (DEMERIT POINT REDUCTION TRIAL) BILL 2023****Second Reading Speech**

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (10:29):** On behalf of Ms Jo Haylen: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. The bill proposes amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 to allow for the implementation of the Government's election commitment of a 12-month trial for the removal of one demerit point for drivers who remain offence free during the trial period. The demerit points scheme that operates in New South Wales generally mirrors the policy principles of the nationally agreed driver licensing scheme. The scheme is a national initiative in place in all Australian States and Territories and provides for a level of consistency across jurisdictions. Under the scheme, drivers who commit an offence while driving will have demerit points added to their traffic record depending on the nature of the offence. Once a driver accumulates demerit points that cause them to reach or exceed the demerit point threshold that applies to their licence, Transport for NSW is required by law to implement a sanction against the driver's licence, such as a licence suspension.

The demerit point threshold that applies to a driver will depend on the type of licence held by that person. For an unrestricted licence holder, the Act provides that Transport for NSW must give a notice of licence suspension to the holder of an unrestricted driver licence who incurs 13 or more demerit points, or 14 or more demerit points in the case of a professional driver, within the three-year period ending on the day on which the person last committed an offence. An unrestricted licence holder who has reached or exceeded their demerit point threshold will then have the option of either sitting out the suspension period, which varies in length depending upon the amount of demerit points accrued, or electing to be on good behaviour for a 12-month period on the condition that if they accrue two or more demerit points during the good behaviour period their licence will be suspended for double the period that would have applied had no election been made.

With respect to the number of demerit points that must be recorded when an offence is committed, offences and the number of demerit points that apply are listed in the schedules to the Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Regulation 2017. To give a practical example, if an unrestricted licence holder in New South Wales commits an offence of exceeding the speed limit by more than 10 kilometres per hour but not more than 20 kilometres per hour over the speed limit, except in a school zone or during a double demerit period, then Transport for NSW must record against the driver the three demerit points listed in the schedule as applicable for the offence. While the legislation does allow for Transport for NSW to correct any mistake, error or omission in respect of a driver's demerit points, it does not permit Transport for NSW to remove or reduce demerit points applicable to an offence unless for the purposes of correcting a mistake, error or omission.

When demerit points are recorded against a driver they remain active and are only deleted when used in a sanction against the driver, such as a licence suspension. If the demerit points are not used in a sanction, they will remain active until such time as they are considered by Transport for NSW as being too old to be used in a licence sanction. Current policy is not to use demerit points for offences more than 40 months old. The current policy position to not consider demerit points for offences more than 40 months old has been in place for many years, and takes into account both the three-year period for measuring a driver's demerit point total that I referred to earlier as well as the four-month time lag that generally occurs from the date an offence is committed until it is finalised and referred for recording on the driver's record.

While penalties such as fines, coupled with the application of demerit points, play a key role in influencing driver behaviour, the proposed trial to allow for the removal of one demerit point after 12 months of offence-free driving is designed to complement the penalty regime by providing an incentive for drivers to remain offence free during the 12-month trial. Drivers who remain offence free will also continue to enjoy the other inherent rewards in that there will be no fines to pay and no risk of losing their licence through the accumulation of demerit points. Further, drivers without demerit points may also be eligible for reduced insurance premiums.

I turn to the bill before the House. Schedule 1 to the bill will amend section 31 of the Road Transport Act 2013 to provide that Transport for NSW may continue to change the New South Wales demerit points register to correct any errors or omissions but, importantly, will introduce a requirement that Transport for NSW must change the register in accordance with the new section 32A that the bill introduces. New section 32A will provide that Transport for NSW must reduce the number of demerit points recorded in the register against an eligible person by one if they do not commit a relevant offence during the trial. For the purposes of the trial, the bill includes a supporting criterion that must be met for the removal of one demerit point to be considered. It will include such conditions as the person having to hold an active unrestricted licence for the duration of the 12-month trial. That is, they must not be disqualified, suspended or otherwise unlicensed during the trial.

The bill introduces a definition of an "eligible person" which, for the purposes of the trial, will mean a person who has held an unrestricted driver licence of any class, be it a light or heavy vehicle class, which has generally remained current during the duration of the trial. There will be some exceptions to the tenure requirement, and those will include such things as the person's licence not being current at times for matters unrelated to road safety breaches. It includes such things as short-term fine default suspensions, expiry of less than six months before renewal and medical reasons. Learner and provisional licence holders will also not be included in the trial given those drivers are subject to the strict conditions of the Graduated Licensing Scheme. That includes a zero-tolerance approach to speeding, under which a minimum of four demerit applies to any speeding offence committed.

The bill also defines a "relevant offence" as being one that Transport for NSW would be required to record because it incurs demerit points, one that results in the person being disqualified from holding or obtaining a licence, an unlicensed driving offence under section 53 of the Act, and an offence that is dismissed by a court without conviction under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. That is because section 10 allows the court to find the person guilty of committing an offence but not record a conviction against the person. Offences that do not attract demerit points, such as the majority of parking offences, will not be included as they are not referred to Transport for NSW for recording against a driver's record. The bill prescribes the trial period as being a period provided by the statutory rules, or the period commencing on 17 January 2023 and ending on 16 January 2024. It is intended that the 12-month trial start from 17 January 2023 as the earlier time will demonstrate the Government's commitment to returning demerit points to drivers as soon as possible.

Subject to the bill's successful passage through Parliament, Transport for NSW will immediately commence the necessary steps that are required to be put in place for the trial to operate. That will include taking a snapshot of the demerit point register maintained by Transport for NSW to identify all unrestricted licence holders with any active demerit points recorded against them in the three-year period immediately preceding the start date of the trial period. Lastly, the bill will prescribe that new section 31 (5) (b), which is the section that provides for Transport for NSW to remove a demerit point for an eligible person, will expire on either 31 January 2025 or a date prescribed in the regulations. The time frame on the expiration of the section has been included so that Transport for NSW may take into account the time lag that exists from the date an offence is committed until the date that the offence is finalised and referred for recording on the driver's traffic history.

It is important to note that the three-year period for which demerit point penalties are measured will remain in place, as will the operation of the 12-month good behaviour period. This will ensure that those who frequently offend on our roads will continue to be properly dealt with. Transport for NSW will develop a communication package for the wider community on the trial conditions prior to the commencement date. An evaluation plan will also be developed in alignment with the trial, which will include both quantitative analysis of offences and road trauma during the trial period as well as qualitative measures such as surveys of drivers impacted by the trial and of the wider community. Upon completion of the trial, further analysis will be conducted to ascertain whether there is any need for a continuation of the measures or development of an alternative approach to further incentivise safe driving and behaviours.

The New South Wales Government acknowledges the importance of holding a driver licence to people in the community. Many motorists rely on their ability to drive for employment and education purposes, to access health and medical services, and to fulfil family and carer obligations. The amendment to implement the 12-month trial delivers on the commitment this Government made prior to the election to provide a timelier reduction in demerit points for drivers who display safe driving practices. I commend the bill to the House.

### Second Reading Debate

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (10:40):** On behalf of the Opposition, I contribute to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. The Opposition will not oppose the bill but, in stating this decision on behalf of the Opposition, I make a few points up-front. The Government brought this policy forward as an election commitment when in opposition. We acknowledge that the Government should have the opportunity to pursue its policy and legislative agenda, notwithstanding how light it may truly be. However, as the Government pursues policies like this, it is important that the appropriate accountabilities remain in place, including scrutiny of the context in which this policy decision is being made.

The New South Wales demerit point scheme is designed to encourage safe and responsible driving. Along with financial penalties, demerit points provide a strong incentive to drive within the law. The scheme plays a vital role in promoting road safety, reducing accidents and fostering a culture of responsible driving among the motoring community. It is a world-leading regulatory scheme designed to do one thing, which is to keep people safe on our roads. It should be noted that, as this was a policy decision of the Government taken while it was in opposition, the policy did not reflect or flow from direct policy advice from the Centre for Road Safety. This was a policy of the then Opposition, and the now Government is responsible for its impacts.

I note the current context of the road toll in New South Wales. The road toll is a key measure of any government's policy settings and any roads Minister's effectiveness. I hope every member of the House agrees. As of Monday this week, 202 lives have been lost on our roads this year, compared with 162 the previous year. This represents a 25 per cent increase over the past 12 months. In real terms, this means more families broken by tragedies on New South Wales roads and more loved ones being left to pick up the pieces of a broken family. While the Government is seemingly promoting the idea that the demerit reduction trial offers a carrot approach instead of a stick, I remind members that under the previous Government's road safety policy we achieved the lowest road toll in 99 years in 2021. The Opposition therefore calls on the Government to ensure it focuses on reducing fatalities, not just on how many demerit points it can return to the public.

Schedule 1 [1] to the bill amends section 31 of the Road Transport Act 2013 to provide that Transport for NSW may continue to change the New South Wales demerit points register to correct any errors or omissions. Importantly, it introduces a requirement that Transport for NSW must change the register in accordance with new section 32A, which provides that Transport for NSW must reduce the number of demerit points recorded in the register against an eligible person by one if that person does not commit a relevant offence during the trial period. For the purposes of the trial, the bill includes a supporting criterion that must be met in order to be considered for the removal of one demerit point. That will include such conditions as the person holding an active unrestricted licence for the duration of the 12-month trial period—that is, the person must not be disqualified, suspended or otherwise unlicensed during the trial period.

The bill introduces a definition of an "eligible person", which for the purposes of the trial will mean a person who has held an unrestricted driver licence of any class, be it a light or heavy vehicle class, and whose licence has generally remained current during the duration of the trial. There will be some exceptions to the tenure requirement, including the person's licence not being current for reasons unrelated to road safety breaches—for example, as a result of short-term fine default suspension, expiry less than six months before renewal and medical reasons. Learner and provisional licence holders will also not be included in the trial, which is an important exception given those drivers are subject to the strict conditions of the graduated licensing scheme. That includes a zero-tolerance approach to speeding, under which a minimum of four demerits apply to any speeding offence committed.

The bill also defines a "relevant offence" as being one that Transport for NSW would be required to record because it incurs demerit points, one that results in the person being disqualified from holding or obtaining a licence, an unlicensed driving offence under section 53 of the Act, or an offence that is dismissed by a court without conviction under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. That is because section 10 of that Act allows the court to find a person guilty of committing an offence but not record a conviction against the person. Offences that do not attract demerit points, such as the majority of parking offences, will not be included as they are not referred to Transport for NSW for recording against a driver's record.

The bill prescribes the trial period as being a period provided by the statutory rules, or the period commencing on 17 January 2023 and ending on 16 January 2024. It is intended that the 12-month trial will start from 17 January 2023, as that earlier date will demonstrate the Government's commitment to returning the demerit point to drivers as soon as possible. Members will recall that the 17 January date was given when this policy was first floated with the public. Subject to the bill's successful passage through Parliament, Transport for NSW will immediately commence taking the necessary steps required for the trial to operate. This will include taking a snapshot of the demerit point register maintained by Transport for NSW to identify all unrestricted licence holders with any active demerit points recorded against them in the three-year period immediately preceding the start date of the trial period.

Finally, the bill prescribes that new section 31 (5) (b), which is the section that provides for Transport for NSW to remove a demerit point for an eligible person, will expire on either 31 January 2025 or a date prescribed in the regulations. That time frame on the expiration of the section has been included so that Transport for NSW may take into account the time lag that exists from the date an offence is committed until the date that the offence is finalised and referred for recording on the driver's traffic history. It is important to note that the three-year period for which demerit point penalties are measured will remain in place, as will the operation of the 12-month good behaviour period. This will ensure that those who frequently offend on our roads continue to be properly dealt with. We recognise that the Government has a right to pursue the policy that it took it to the election, but the lack of detail surrounding how this trial will continue is deeply concerning, particularly in the context of a significantly higher road toll in New South Wales compared with previous years. The Minister should outline his approach to solving these details before debate concludes on the bill.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (10:46):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023 and begin by highlighting the importance that road safety plays in all of our lives. Recently National Road Safety Week took place from 14 to 21 May, an

initiative of Safer Australian Roads and Highways, or the SARA Group. It highlighted the tragic impact of road trauma and ways we can all work to reduce it. It was great to see that over 60,000 people across this country took the pledge "to drive so others survive". The Government supports this proactive approach whereby members of the community take responsibility for their own actions, making a commitment to actively protect the lives of all those on the road ahead. The bill demonstrates the Government's own proactive approach, implementing its election commitment of a 12-month trial for the removal of one demerit point for drivers who do not commit offences during the trial period.

At the commencement of the 12-month trial, a snapshot will be taken of all unrestricted licence holders who have active demerit points and will be participants in the trial. It is important to note that a decision has been made up-front to exclude some drivers from the trial. First, the trial does not include drivers on their L- or P-plates, who are some of our most inexperienced drivers. That is because the graduated licensing scheme for learner and provisional licence holders is subject to a lower demerit point threshold. Learners and P1 licence holders have a demerit limit of four points, and P2 licence holders have a demerit limit of seven points. The graduated licensing scheme for learner and provisional licence holders includes an approach to speeding under which learner and provisional drivers receive a minimum of four demerit points for any speeding offence committed; therefore, it is not considered appropriate that those licence holders be included in the trial.

Drivers with licences that have not been current for an extended period during the 12-month trial period, meaning their licence has expired or been allowed to lapse for six months or more before renewal, will also be excluded and not eligible for the trial. Another common-sense approach is being taken to exclude drivers whose licence has been suspended or disqualified from driving for serious road safety breaches for any period during the trial period. Those sanctions are more serious in nature, so that group of drivers will not be considered for the 12-month trial. It is critical that, once the trial is finished, Transport for NSW will conduct a deeper analysis of the outcomes of the trial to help determine the impact on overall driver behaviour. The bill makes the necessary legislative amendments for the trial to be undertaken and delivers on the commitment this Government made prior to the election that it would implement an approach to incentivise safe driving behaviours. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (10:50):** I speak in support of the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. I note that the bill was an election commitment by the then Opposition in the lead-up to the election in March this year. When Labor formed government on 23 March 2023 it was given a mandate to introduce this legislation. I note that the object of the bill is to amend the Road Transport Act 2013 to provide for a trial of a demerit point reduction scheme. I speak about the impacts this has on the many regional communities across our State, including areas like Orange, which I represent. The loss of demerit points has a significant impact on drivers in those areas, especially when one loses their licence. We do not have the luxury of public transport that people in larger cities and metropolitan areas have. A licence is very important to people's livelihoods for getting to work, getting to university and getting out and about.

I accept that having a licence is a privilege, not a right. But it is certainly an important tool to have if you live in regional New South Wales. With the introduction of technology, there are far more infringement notices being issued in recent years as a result of camera-operated detection devices—whether they be mobile speed cameras, fixed cameras or mobile phone cameras. They are detecting more and more people who are doing the wrong thing. People who do the wrong thing deserve to be punished, but I believe the bill provides a sensible and proportionate balance in terms of offering hope that a person does not have to wait three years to get their demerit points back. If they can maintain a clean traffic record for 12 months, they can accrue one demerit point back. Sometimes, people who are on the very thin margins of only having a few points left—and I will not name anyone—

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Don't incriminate yourself.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** I will not incriminate myself. The trial will give people hope of accruing one demerit point and an incentive to ensure that they do the right thing, stay within the speed limit and are not tempted to look at or touch their phone. Let us face it, there were vehicles with speed cameras that were detecting people driving over the speed limit by less than 10 kilometres an hour and were set at 10 per cent of the speed limit. As members of Parliament, we have all heard about it from constituents who were getting tickets for travelling 55 kilometres an hour in a 50-kilometre zone. I heard one case of a young woman who was detected doing 44 kilometres in a 40-kilometre zone. Sure, that is speeding, but no-one is infallible, and it is now quite easy to be detected.

The bill achieves a sensible and proportionate balance in offering an incentive for people to do the right thing to accumulate one demerit point per year for a clean driving record. As I have said, we do not have the luxury of public transport in the bush, so a person losing their licence has a serious effect. It can often mean losing your job, so losing your licence can be disproportionately more severe in regional New South Wales. I have heard

other speakers talk about road safety and ensuring that the road toll is kept as minimal as possible. I think the bill strikes that balance. It is a trial for 12 months. We need to think outside the square a little bit, to try things like this and to provide incentives for people to accrue demerit points. For those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (10:55):** I speak in support of the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. The bill is well designed on sound policy and combines serious safety measures while also treading lightly on people's lives. There is still the stick, but there are also incentives to promote positive change. It was an election commitment that won widespread support. The bill amends section 31 of the Road Transport Act 2013 to provide a power for Transport for NSW to change the demerit points register in accordance with new section 32A in the bill. New section 32A sets out the circumstances where a demerit point is to be removed and defines who is an eligible person for the removal of a demerit point. There is currently no power under the Act for Transport for NSW to amend the demerit points register apart from existing powers to correct errors, mistakes or omissions. Accordingly, amendments to the Act are required to allow one demerit point to be removed from a driver's record under the conditions of the 12-month trial.

The bill is a safety net, particularly for people in regional New South Wales, because people in those areas have to drive. They do not have public transport in the area I live in. Therefore they spend many more hours on the road than people in other places, which means they are more at risk. The important thing is that the bill is still about safety and encouraging positive change, which is why I back the bill. It sets out supporting criterion that must be met by a person in order to be considered for the removal of one demerit point. That will include such conditions as the person having to hold an active unrestricted licence for the duration of the 12-month trial period—that is, they must not be disqualified, suspended or otherwise unlicensed during the trial period. Some exceptions will be made for those sanctioned for medical reasons, fine default suspension or refusal, or allowing their licence to lapse for more than six months before renewal.

Learner and provisional licence holders will not be included in the trial given those drivers are subject to the strict conditions of the graduated licensing scheme. This includes a zero-tolerance approach to speeding, under which a minimum of four demerit points applies to any speeding offence committed. Subject to the successful passage of the bill through Parliament, it is proposed that the 12-month period operate from 17 January 2023 until 16 January 2024.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** One year.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** One year.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Members will remain silent. The member for Lismore is contributing to debate on important legislation.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** And the Minister is listening intently, along with the member for Clarence and everyone else. By commencing the scheme on 17 January the Government will demonstrate its commitment to returning demerit points to drivers as soon as possible. I commend the bill to the House.

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

*Members*

#### MEMBER FOR BATHURST

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure people will be pleased to hear that the member for Bathurst is having a birthday today. Happy birthday to the member for Bathurst. That is enough celebration. The member for Rockdale will stop celebrating the birthday.

*Visitors*

#### VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a warm welcome to guests in the Chamber. I welcome the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of Samoa. I am very much looking forward to meeting with you later today. I also welcome members of the Sydney Hospitaller Council, guests of the member for Oatley. I acknowledge and welcome Tim Horan, Pat Cullan and Paul Gallagher, guests of the member for Barwon. I also welcome Marienka Black, a guest of the member for Gosford. I welcome student leaders from Heritage College Lake Macquarie and Arcadia Vale Public School, my guests as the member for Lake Macquarie. It was lovely to meet you earlier, and I hope I have time to meet with you again later. I acknowledge attendees of the introduction to the Legislative Assembly public sector seminar, who have joined us for question time today. I hope the day is going well for you. I hope that question time pans out as we discussed, but we will keep that to ourselves.

*Announcements***MEMBERS' DEVELOPMENT SESSION**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise members that Cyber Security NSW will present on cybersecurity awareness at the members' development session today at 1.00 p.m. in the Macquarie Room. Attendance is advised and a light lunch will be provided.

*Members***REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**The SPEAKER:** As the Leader of the House noted yesterday, this week the Minister for Transport will answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads.

*Question Time***SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT FOR NSW**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:06):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. The Minister's ministerial diary disclosures identify Josh Murray as the second external person that she met with on 4 April. Ten days later, Mr Rod Sharp was sacked as transport department secretary. Before Mr Sharp's sacking, did Mr Murray and the Minister discuss the transport department secretary position or any other government position?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:06):** I disclosed my meeting with Josh Murray as required by the Premier's memorandum of 2015 on publication of ministerial diaries. I disclosed that meeting as I do all of my meetings that I have had with a range of people—including those with extensive government and industry experience as well as former Premiers and Ministers. To be frank, I have had to gather every piece of advice and all the expertise that I could to deal with the complete and utter mess that was left to us.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The Minister was not asked about the fantastic infrastructure legacy we left her Government. She was not asked about who else she has met with. We know she met with Mr Murray.

**Mr Steve Whan:** What's your point of order?

**Mr Mark Speakman:** The point of order is direct relevance.

**Mr Steve Whan:** There was a lot of editorialising in that though.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Mr Speaker, if I could address you without interruption?

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard enough from the Leader of the Opposition. I do not uphold the point of order.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I thank the member for his question, because it gives me the opportunity to update the House on why the transport department needs a new secretary to work with our Government to fix the public transport mess that was left to us and why Josh Murray absolutely is the right person for the job.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Has the Minister completed her answer?

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I have more to say.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has not completed her answer.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** I was not asking the Minister why she has employed a spin doctor as the transport department secretary. I was asking her whether she discussed that position with Mr Murray. If you do not require a direct answer, Mr Speaker, this makes a mockery of question time.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his guidance. He will resume his seat. I do not uphold the point of order. I call the Minister to complete her answer.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** We are not talking about some cushy job with no responsibility. We are not talking about a plum trade job in New York. We are talking about a challenging 24/7 job to address the many, many challenges we have been left with by those opposite. Josh Murray will deal with the large and complex organisation of Transport. Those opposite should be thanking people who are stepping up for public service. [*Extension of time*]

As I was saying, this is a large and complex organisation.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Hawkesbury will come to order. The member for Hornsby will come to order. The member for Canterbury will come to order.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** We need serious people with serious experience, and Josh Murray has that experience. He has led teams for global tenders from governments and from other businesses from around the world. He has been responsible for recruiting engineers, managers and senior leaders for Laing O'Rourke around the world.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** The request was not about Mr Murray's curriculum vitae. The question was whether the Minister had a discussion with Mr Murray. Did she have a discussion with Mr Murray about this position before Rod Sharp was sacked? That is the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I note the basis of the question. It is hard to say that the Minister has not been relevant, but I could ask her to be more directly relevant. The final determination is mine, and I rule that the Minister could be more relevant to the question. I ask her to complete her answer.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Josh Murray has extensive experience in senior government roles, including chief of staff to the transport Minister and the Premier. This is highly relevant experience, I would suggest. In fact, that was 15 years ago, back when we were still using BlackBerrys in political offices. In fact, he has spent more time outside of politics than in it. Those opposite over there are doing their very best, Mr Speaker, to make you think that anyone who has spent time in political offices is not eligible to serve in the public service. Do not let them make you believe that. People from all sides of politics have served their communities in public service and political offices—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. The time for the answer has expired, so the Leader of the Opposition's point of order is a moot point.

#### OPERATION TENTERFIELD

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (11:12):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the New South Wales Government's response to Operation Tenterfield?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:12):** I thank the member for South Coast for this important question. This morning thousands and thousands of families dropped their children off in childcare centres across New South Wales. Walking through the gate and leaving your child in the care of another adult is one of the biggest acts of trust a parent can undertake. And today thousands of childcare workers, teachers and educators will take the greatest care, show the greatest kindness and provide the safest environment for our children right across New South Wales. The childcare workforce is made up of dedicated, caring professionals. We owe them a great debt for their professionalism and their focus on their professional life in educating and caring for the next generation of young Australians.

It makes the shocking reports of horrific allegations arising from Operation Tenterfield, which we heard yesterday, so much more painful for the community to bear. Of course, more importantly, the pain is unfathomable for the alleged victims of these alleged horrendous crimes and their families. My Government stands with these victims and their families and offers our full support in what is every parent's worst nightmare. Reports like this force us as a community to reflect hard on how these things can happen and how we must take every step to prevent them from happening in the future.

It is vital that this matter be allowed to proceed through the justice system without interference or prejudice. But we as a government cannot sit back and do nothing. We know that our system in New South Wales is strong but I want to reassure the community that we are taking steps to look at any gaps in our systems and our regulations to strengthen child protections in this State. The Minister for Families and Communities is already in discussions with colleagues in State and national jurisdictions about ensuring safe and transparent data sharing across borders and across agencies.

The Minister will also call for an immediate meeting of Federal and State Ministers to demand progress urgently on better information sharing between jurisdictions. I want New South Wales to lead in this important area of national reform. The education Minister will be reviewing whether oversights could be strengthened and streamlined so that any red flags in any sector are visible to other agencies, other jurisdictions and other States. We will apply this to the early childhood sector and, of course, the school sector. We will talk to colleagues in the independent and Catholic sectors to ensure that there is no way for offenders to jump between the public and non-government sectors. [*Extension of time*]

I extend the gratitude of members of this House to the Australian Federal Police, the NSW Police Force and the Queensland Police Service for their forensic work and dedication involved in investigating these alleged crimes. To go through this investigation would be an unimaginable job. Their vigilance, dedication, caring and empathy for victims drives them to this public service that is so important for law enforcement and the protection of children. We owe those who conduct that work in New South Wales a huge debt of gratitude. We thank them for their service. While incredibly difficult, the work that these officers have done has no doubt saved countless other children from these horrors. Just as we will support victims and their families, we stand ready to support any member of the NSW Police Force who worked on the case. Indeed, this Government recognises and thanks police for the work they do. They put themselves on the front line every day, uncovering unimaginable crimes, to keep us safe.

### SYDNEY METRO SYDENHAM TO BANKSTOWN PROJECT

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (11:17):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. The Minister lives near Marrickville station. In 2017, she said that she was a resident impacted by the Sydenham to Bankstown metro project. Has she recused herself from decision-making on the Sydenham to Bankstown metro conversion and related planning decisions, and will she do so in the future?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the House rises on a point of order.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** The protection racket.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Standing Order 128, which is not a protection racket at all, states that questions should not contain inference and imputation. There is a direct imputation arising from the specific question asked by the member for Wahroonga. If he wishes to ask a question in relation to that subject matter, he should remove the words that constitute an imputation.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** To the point of order: There is no imputation. There are two statements of fact and then a question: whether the Minister has recused herself from decision-making and whether she will do so in the future. There is no imputation. It is a basic question with two factual positions that are not in dispute.

**The SPEAKER:** Facts can be placed in a certain order to make an imputation. I have been around long enough to see how questions are cleverly crafted. There is a clear imputation in the construction of the question, but I will allow the Minister to answer it. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:19):** I very much welcome this question because it is an illustration of the complete and utter desperation of members opposite. This is the definition of scraping the bottom of the barrel because it is not news. I live in Marrickville; I am the member for Summer Hill. In fact, the electorate used to be called Marrickville. Most members in this House, although not all, live in their electorates. Our equivalent House in our nation's capital is called the House of Representatives and, by definition, we live in communities. I am very proud to represent my community, as are the members of the Minns Labor Government, and we will continue to do the job that we were elected to do.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: The question acknowledged that the Minister lives in her electorate and that she described herself as an impacted resident. The question is has she recused herself from decision-making or will she in the future.

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

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

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** If the question contains an imputation it opens up the credibility of the Minister, who is then entitled to give a wideranging reply. Direct relevance includes giving the Minister the wideranging ability to defend herself. It is not a valid point of order. It is an interfering, obstructive point of order.

**The SPEAKER:** Opposition members will come to order. I appreciate the expertise of both the member for Wahroonga and the member for Heffron. I did not need additional guidance from the member for Heffron, but I concur with his view that the question gives the Minister broad latitude in responding. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** If we wanted to get broad, we could talk about my house. The garden needs some maintenance; I have been a bit busy recently. We could talk about what happens in my house. We watch a lot of cricket. There have been some challenges lately with what to watch on the television—cricket or soccer. It is all up for grabs in my house. But let us end the facade here. I remind Opposition members that I have declared ownership of that primary place of residence and an investment property in Marrickville. I have made those declarations since I have been a member of this place and I will continue to do so, as per my obligations. I remind

Opposition members that, as Minister for Transport, I do not have jurisdiction over planning instruments. I want to be absolutely clear: If any potential conflict of interest arises, I will manage it in accordance with the ministerial code of conduct.

### SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (11:22):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how this Government is delivering new schools across communities, including Edmondson Park and Medowie, which were ignored by the previous Government for 12 years?

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

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will come to order so that I can hear the point of order from the member for Wahroonga.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** The point of order is taken under Standing Order 128 (2) (b) and (g). The question is clearly argumentative and asks for an expression of opinion. It is defective in both those respects and it should be rejected under the standing orders.

**Mr Greg Warren:** To the point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Opposition members will come to order. The member for Hornsby will come to order. The member for Hawkesbury will come to order. The member for Goulburn will come to order. I call the member for Campbelltown on the point of order.

**Mr Greg Warren:** It was a very clear and direct question to the Deputy Premier about what schools the Government is delivering, as well as a reference to the history of schools that were not delivered by members opposite. It is a fair and eligible question. Clearly the Manager of Opposition Business is utilising the standing orders to exploit the agenda of the Opposition rather than allowing the Minister to answer a clear and direct question.

**The SPEAKER:** It is not unusual for one side or the other to exploit the standing orders to benefit their party. We see that through the history of question time. Thus it would be extraordinary to uphold the point of order from the member for Wahroonga. I do not uphold the point of order. I call the Deputy Premier.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:25):** In the middle of Education Week, I am more than happy to answer a question from my very hardworking Parliamentary Secretary for Education. As the member for Campbelltown suggested in his question, we came to government with school communities right across New South Wales having been promised schools that were not delivered. Those communities were promised schools by the former Government time and again. Yet, five years down the track nothing had been delivered. The problem was many of those schools were in our fastest growing areas, where the demand was absolutely exploding.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Let us look at one of those examples in Edmondson Park, as the member for Campbelltown referenced. The high school was announced in 2018 and yet, despite petitions and community campaigns, the Liberal-Nationals delivered zip, nothing, nada, zero. I promise that community that they finally have a government in New South Wales that is delivering the high school for Edmondson Park. Importantly, that high school will be a traditional school with an oval. The previous Government wanted to build a high-rise school. I make special mention of the member for Leppington, who tried to move a motion in Liverpool council condemning it, and the Liberals voted it down. They were more interested in building a high-rise school than a traditional school, but Government members will deliver that school. We have listened to that community. The Premier and I have already been to Edmondson Park to announce the new high school.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Oatley will resume his seat. Members will come to order. The Deputy Premier will be heard in silence.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Another school that I was very happy to announce recently, which we have finally kicked off the process for, is the much-awaited high school that this Government is building in Medowie. In the past 12 years, members opposite should have done that time and again. I do not think I have been to a community thus far that has been so ecstatic to receive the news of a new high school. Young primary school students were running up to Kate Washington saying, "It's Kate Washington, in the flesh, in our school—the lady that is going to deliver Medowie high school!" [*Extension of time*]

I am very well aware—

**Ms Jenny Leong:** Point of order: Members cannot hear the Deputy Premier because Opposition members are engaging in really problematic tactics.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. Members will come to order, and that includes the member for Hornsby and the member for Dubbo. If they wish to have a private conversation, they will do so outside the Chamber. The Deputy Premier has the call.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I acknowledge the member for Newtown and thank her for calling out a tactic by the Opposition to silence Government Ministers. But they will not silence me, particularly when I am talking about the good work that we are doing to build schools that those opposite ignored for more than a decade. The Medowie community has been waiting two decades for this. The Government will be delivering the high school that they and children in New South Wales have a right to receive. That is why this Government won the election. We came to government committed to conduct an enrolment growth audit to ensure that in new and growing areas where—surprise, surprise—young families move to, the Government fulfils its part of the bargain and builds public schools.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We do that to make sure every child in New South Wales has a chance to exercise their right to go to their local public high school.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

Do not lecture me on anything to do with schools, because we have inherited schools that were not built and a chronic teacher shortage. Every person in every Opposition electorate knows it, and those opposite are hearing it every day.

**The SPEAKER:** I offer a friendly reminder, particularly to those on the Opposition benches but also to many on the Government benches, that I expect better behaviour from members. General conversation and interjections will cease. I call the member for Balmain.

#### TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (11:30):** My question is directed to the Premier. There is an undeniable need to shift cities away from car dependence and increase the provision of accessible, reliable and emissions-reducing public transport. Given that budgetary concerns are creating doubt over the future of the transformative Sydney Metro West project, will the Government also be reviewing the case for progressing the Western Harbour Tunnel?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:31):** I thank the member for Balmain for her question; it is an important one for New South Wales. She is right: There are budget overruns across the New South Wales budget. Just to name a few, the CBD and South East Light Rail, originally budgeted at \$1.6 billion, ended up coming in at \$3.3 billion; and the Sydney Metro City & Southwest, originally budgeted at \$12 billion—our friends from Samoa will not believe these numbers—came in at \$21.5 billion. Massive numbers! Imagine what we could have done with \$9 billion. That is just the overrun. I take the question at face value. If we look at the second crossing of the harbour, the original cost for that project was coming in at \$5.3 billion. I ask members: Was that estimate right—bang on? Did it come in below that number or was it another blowout?

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** I reckon blowout.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Who is for blowout? It was a blowout. Can you believe it—another blowout for the Western Harbour Tunnel, coming in today at \$6.7 billion and goodness knows what the final figure will be. I have to say it is important because the western bypass will take pressure off the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Sydney Harbour Tunnel and the Anzac Bridge—which will be of interest to the member for Balmain—and the Western Distributor corridors will improve capacity in and around Sydney Harbour. That is something we need to do because at the moment North Shore, Central Coast and northern beaches traffic is funnelled through the bridge and the tunnel. As populations grow, we need more avenues into the city. We need to provide opportunities for people to skirt around the outside of the city and not necessarily come through the middle.

It is also interesting to note that there is disagreement among members of Parliament about other projects to pursue, not just in relation to the Western Harbour Tunnel but also major infrastructure projects on Sydney's North Shore. I note that the member for Willoughby, Tim James, came out and said that he proudly opposes the Northern Beaches Tunnel. He says, "I don't want it." He fought for it and claimed credit for it.

**Mr Tim James:** Point of order: That is not an accurate quote. The opposition was to the design, not the whole project. Do not misquote me.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Willoughby will resume his seat. The member has mechanisms for redress in relation to the veracity of the quote. Members will come to order.

**Ms Kobi Shetty:** Mr Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Balmain is seeking the call.

**Mr Tim James:** I want an accurate quote. That is all.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Willoughby will settle down. He can redress that issue later. I call the member for Balmain.

**Ms Kobi Shetty:** Given the interjections, I seek more time for further information.

**The SPEAKER:** Given the circumstances, I will grant an additional two minutes for the Premier to complete his answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It is fair to say the member is a sceptic of it—does not support it. In any event, there is an article from the *Manly Daily* of 17 July that states in its opening paragraph, "There is a new twist in a push for the Beaches Link tunnel"—

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: The question was very clearly directed towards the Western Harbour Tunnel. The comments by the Premier are entirely irrelevant. They do not relate to the Western Harbour Tunnel. The member for Balmain asked a question that is relevant to her electorate and the Premier is straying all over the North Shore.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume his seat and remain seated until I call him. The member for Wahroonga will resume his seat. I have heard the point of order.

[*Interruption*]

I have asked the member for Wahroonga to resume his seat; it is a simple concept. I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier has been very relevant to the question, which gives him latitude to expand on his answer subsequently. I think I would have heard from the member for Balmain if the Premier had departed from the substance of the question. The Premier will resume his answer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Let me formally apologise to our friends from Samoa for the Opposition's behaviour. It is appalling, but we endure. In any event, there is another quote from the *Manly Daily*. The new kid, Rory Amon, has entered the fray. He said that he is demanding we build the \$10 billion Beaches Link.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume his seat while I hear the point of order from the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** It is under Standing Order 129, relevance. Clearly, the Premier will not guarantee the Western Harbour Tunnel. He is seeking to avoid the question by deflecting to the northern beaches. He wants to cancel that tunnel, if he can.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier's time has expired.

## BUS SERVICES

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (11:37):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Can the Minister update the House on the standard of bus services inherited from the former Government?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:37):** I can update the House. I thank the member for Coogee, and Parliamentary Secretary for Transport for her advocacy for quality, safe and reliable bus services for her community and all the communities across New South Wales. On this side of the House we know how important public transport is for passengers and how important it is for the essential workers who help us deliver that service. It is very clear that the bus system we inherited is not working. The last month, in particular, has shown us what a disaster the previous Government left behind. We have a bus system that does not work for anybody. It does not work for passengers. It does not work for bus companies. It does not work for bus drivers. As we know, the previous Government awarded contracts based on the lowest price, without any apparent concern for the services the communities need or a reliable service that people could depend on. It put price above passengers every single time. It did not consider the value of long-term operators that know communities, like the Punchbowl Bus Company, for example, which has served the community for decades.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Those opposite did not ask any operators whether they had experience operating a bus contract in Sydney, for example. Let us look at the results, and where better to look than at Region 10? Region 10 is in the Leader of the Opposition's part of the world—St George in the Sutherland shire—and that is where we have seen the result of the complete incompetence of those opposite in effect.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** You've left kids on the side of the road.

[*Government members interjected.*]

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** No, you did. It resulted in a 92-year-old woman left on the side of the road. It has resulted in schoolchildren being left on the side of the road.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Miranda to order for the first time. That interjection was absolutely unwarranted but the reaction from Government members was over the top. Members will calm down and come to order. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I would love to know whether the member for Miranda objected to the contracts being signed, because she was a part of the Government that signed up the community to this complete and utter disaster—schoolchildren left on the side of the road, unable to get home. Liberal Party members are desperately running around trying to distance themselves—like the Leader of the Opposition, for example.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was about inherited mismanagement. There is no inherited mismanagement. It is this Minister, with her eye off the ball, who has done nothing for three months.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. He knows that is not a point of order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Before I call the Leader of the House, I recognise that the member for Coogee is on her feet seeking the call. The Leader of the House rises on a point of order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Far too many baseless points of order are being taken under Standing Order 129. They are also accompanied by gratuitous comments. The House is far too disorderly, and no-one can hear the answers given by Ministers. Mr Speaker, I ask that you restore order to the House and deal with members who take baseless points of order.

**The SPEAKER:** I think the member for Wahroonga will agree with the member for Heffron.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** To the point of order: Mr Speaker, you just called to attention the overreaction of Government frontbenchers. I do not know why the Leader of the House is taking a point of order when you have just drawn attention to the poor behaviour of the Government.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will resume their seats. There is no point of order. I call the member for Coogee.

**Dr Marjorie O'Neill:** I seek further information about the mess this Government has inherited from those opposite and what they have left behind.

**The SPEAKER:** I must consider whether I will grant a two-minute extension. In this case, I will decline it. The member for Coogee knows that that is not the way to seek additional information.

#### RAIL FLEET FACTORY VISIT

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (11:43):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Did the Government pay for any travel for rail union representatives to visit a rail fleet factory in Spain?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:43):** I thank the member for Dubbo for his question and, indeed, his interest in public transport, because, as we have been considering this morning, a range of elements across the Transport portfolio are a complete mess.

**The SPEAKER:** Members on both sides of the House will come to order. The Deputy Premier will come to order.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I assume that the member is referring to the overseas-made trains that his Government purchased.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: It is a pretty direct question. Did the Government have a union representative on a trip, enjoying a bit of sangria and paella, on the taxpayer dollar—not transport officials, a union official?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo has taken a point of order about direct relevance. I draw the Minister's attention to the substance of the question and ask her to be more directly relevant to it. It was a very simple question.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** It was a bit unclear. I assume the member is referring to the trains that were made in Spain that his Government purchased. Those trains did not fit the tracks. In fact, they are so full of defects that we have inherited a multibillion-dollar price tag to fix them and make them suitable for operation.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order: It is on relevance under Standing Order 129. The question is not about trains. It is about whether a taxpayer-funded junket was had by a union official, sanctioned by this Minister.

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard the point of order. The member for Hornsby embellished his point of order by referring to a "junket". That was not in the question. I ask the Minister to answer the question in a more direct manner.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Yes, of course we sent transport officials and transport workers to Spain to inspect the trains that those opposite purchased, because that is how we will deliver a transport network that actually works.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: The question was about union officials, not transport officials. I ask that in the time remaining the Minister—

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Transport workers. Those opposite did not speak to them, and that is why we are facing a billion-dollar price tag to fix the trains that they purchased from overseas. But, in the end, this Government will build the next generation of trains right here to avoid that problem.

#### RENTAL MARKET

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (11:46):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. Will the Minister update the House on what steps the Government has taken to create a fairer, more modern rental market?

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (11:47):** I thank the member for Penrith for her question. What a hardworking member she is. We were recently in her community for the first Community Cabinet meeting.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for North Shore will come to order.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** Those opposite have no chance at all of taking the electorate of Penrith from the current member in a few years' time. Before I start, I send warm greetings to our Samoan friends. As the member for Macquarie Fields, I have a lot of Samoan Australians in my electorate. Balofa and fa'afetai for joining us today. Thank you very much. I particularly welcome the tone of the question from the member for Penrith because, as we all know, the rules governing our rental market are indeed outdated and quite unfair. The member knows her facts, and we are delivering on our promise to renters in her electorate, and in all electorates, whether they are on a short-term rental or a fixed agreement.

But there is a new class of renters. They are called the Liberal-Nationals, because they are permanent renters in opposition. They are going to be there for a very, very long time—permanent renters. But do not worry because our reforms are going to make those renters very comfortable. They can bring their pets to make sure their benches are very comfortable. And we will never, ever evict them from that space—do not worry.

As we know, renters are under enormous pressure in a very tight market. I know my colleagues the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Minister for Housing are working extremely hard to ease that pressure by increasing the rental supply. We know that increasing supply takes time, but that is why we are moving on rental reforms in the meantime. I also note that the reforms to rental policy have bipartisan support. During the election campaign, the Liberal-Nationals also supported changes to rental laws around no-grounds evictions and data protection. It is good that there is bipartisan support.

**The SPEAKER:** There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Willoughby will come to order. Opposition frontbench members will come to order. The member for Rockdale will come to order.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** I look forward to ensuring that Opposition members keep their word when the Government's reform is implemented in this House. The Government is taking a sensible, pragmatic approach to these reforms to make life easier for renters. That is why the Government has commissioned the State's first ever Rental Commissioner, Ms Trina Jones. That was a wonderful appointment. Trina is a fearless and pragmatic advocate for those in the rental space. She will encourage cooperation and fair engagement between

renters and owners, and finally give renters in this State a voice about the system that affects so much of their lives. She will be crucial to implementing the Government's reform agenda to make room for— [*Extension of time*]

The challenge is not just about price. No doubt prices are high because of the lack of supply that has been built up over the past 12 years. Nevertheless, the challenge of renting is also about amenity. Price matters, but so does the standard of living. A third of the population rents in this State, and no doubt that percentage is even higher in the Sydney metro area. That is why the Minns Government is asking renters—after 12 years without a voice—owners and industry representatives for their views on the critical changes that are needed to make renting fairer and better.

We are asking the community for their views on ending no-grounds evictions, by requiring that owners have a good reason to end a lease; making it easier for renters to have pets in their home; better protection for data and personal information provided by renters; and also strengthening some of the existing rules around rent increases, like making it clearer that rents can only go up once per year—which is already happening—for those on fixed agreements greater than two years. I am pleased to announce that so far 9,500 people across the State have already had their say through the online survey, and we received about 115 written submissions. No doubt more will come. I encourage renters and owners across the State to make their submissions by 11 August.

I want to be clear that we are consulting to make sure that we get those changes right. We are moving quickly, because this is an issue that is getting more urgent by the day. The people of New South Wales know that we cannot fix 12 years of inaction in just a matter of weeks. Renters did not have a voice in the last Government, but they sure do now. It is a high priority for us to make rental laws fairer. I know that it will take time, but I also know there is a sense of urgency in this Government to ensure that those who live and rent here will have a fairer system under a Minns Labor Government.

#### RAIL FLEET FACTORY VISIT

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (11:52):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What was the cost to taxpayers for any travel for rail union bosses to visit a rail fleet factory in Spain, and was the travel business class?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:52):** I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question. I can inform the member and the House that there was zero cost to taxpayers. In fact, the trip that members have referred to was essential because the former Government purchased overseas trains that were not fit for purpose. Not only did it purchase overseas trains that will subsequently cost New South Wales taxpayers billions of extra dollars, passengers have been left behind because the trains still remain in sheds here and across the world, not carrying a single passenger, when the former Government promised that they would be on the tracks by now. That is a total and utter failure from an obsession with overseas manufacture by the former Liberal Government. The Government took a responsible approach when dealing with this mess as well. On coming to government, we instituted the independent rail review, headed by Carolyn Walsh, the chair of the National Transport Commission. It recommended that the operating rolling stock would be in the review of its design. It is not rocket science, but it would make sense—

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: The question was regarding how much the cost was to the taxpayer and whether the travel was business class. Under Standing Order 129, the remainder of this answer is irrelevant. It is not directly relevant to the question.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** To the point of order: That answer is directly relevant on any view of the standing orders. The member for Coffs Harbour is engaging in deliberate conduct in breach of Standing Order 131. The member should be put on a call to order. That is the second time he has raised a baseless point of order.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has been directly relevant to the question. As a matter of fact, it is the only answer I have heard all day that started off being directly relevant. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** The member's question exposes two fundamental policy failures of the former Liberal Government: first, its obsession with overseas manufacture, which has resulted in the failure for passengers and taxpayers that this Government is rectifying by guaranteeing that future rolling stock will be built here; secondly, its disregard for essential workers, who it did not engage in the design of this rolling stock. We are fixing those problems.

## RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (11:55):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister please update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is committed to improving health outcomes for rural and regional communities?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:55):** I thank the member for Cessnock for his question and for his input and involvement in the select committee that has been set up to look at the recommendations of the important inquiry that Labor fought so hard to get established while in Opposition. The inquiry received over 700 submissions and held multiple hearings. It has laid down a pathway. I know that the member for Cessnock and other members, including the committee chair, the member for Wagga Wagga, are looking to ensure that the Government makes some real inroads into that space.

The member for Cessnock and others from regional and rural New South Wales will understand that the life expectancy of those living in those areas is significantly less. The member for Barwon spoke to me once about the fairly recent report by the Australia Institute—I think it was called *The Unlucky Country*—which stated that there was about a five- to six-year gap between those living in metropolitan Sydney versus those living in far western New South Wales. That is absolutely incredible and is not emphasised enough.

Over the past four months, and during my time in Opposition, I have spent an enormous amount of time moving in and around regional and remote New South Wales. I have had an opportunity to speak to frontline staff at a range of different services, including at some of our very small hospitals and our larger base hospitals in and around those areas. Recently at Grafton I spoke to a clinical nurse educator by the name of Angie. She had a very interesting story. She had been there for seven years, had done all of her training in regional and remote areas, and is now embedded in that community. She plays a very important role because clinical nurse educators provide the training and support for new nursing graduates.

The reality is that our system is very heavy with new graduates. It will continue to be very heavy. Despite their outstanding training and commitment to their work, new graduates need highly skilled nurses to provide them with support and training so they can watch over them as they develop their careers. That is what clinical nurse educators do. They are a very important part of the system. When I came to office, I knew we had to change the priorities within NSW Health on regional and remote health care, particularly in the more remote areas. I made the decision to appoint Mr Luke Sloane as the Deputy Secretary of Regional Health. He is a person who I know the former Minister for Regional Health in the other place, Bronnie Taylor, supports and had worked very closely with. He is driving change in regional and rural health care. [*Extension of time*]

But, more importantly, he is putting a laser-like focus on the towns, villages, suburbs and communities outside of our large metropolitan cities. In doing so, he is bringing greater focus by NSW Health on those communities. But we are also making other changes. We are expanding virtual care, which is an incredibly important part of it. A few years ago I was probably a sceptic of virtual care, but the revolution during COVID completely changed my view on it. I encourage people to have a look at vCare in Dubbo, which is providing services into the Far West of New South Wales and recently into southern New South Wales. It is outstanding service. It provides the latest diagnostics and the latest treatment and care for people in very remote communities, and uses state-of-the-art facilities and technology to do so. We have just announced a fracture clinic in partnership with Royal Prince Alfred Hospital [RPA] in Broken Hill, where people will be able to stay within that community and still get treatment from some of the most outstanding surgeons in the country. That is extremely important.

But we know we have to do more. We are rolling out incentives of up to \$20,000 for rural, regional and remote communities. We have changed the way in which the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme works. I am streamlining the application form to ensure that men and women across regional, rural and remote communities can get access to the subsidy as quickly, easily and effectively as possible. Because one of the things that those living in metropolitan cities do not see is that it is very cost prohibitive when people have to access health care from the bush. It can be a real challenge for them. We are making changes in that area. We are going to continue to work with regional, rural and remote communities from across the electorates of members of this Chamber to try to make sure that we deliver better outcomes, so that the next time the Australia Institute releases a report there will be an improvement. That is something that all of us should be committed to.

## ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (12:01):** My question is directed to the Minister for Sport. Sean Strickland, a leading contender for the Ultimate Fighting Championship's UFC 293 in Sydney in September, said at a recent UFC press conference:

... you let these women come into the workforce, now we make less money ...

He also said, "We need to put women back in the kitchen." Considering those comments, does the Minister still support the Government spending \$16 million of taxpayers' money on the UFC if Mr Strickland participates?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (12:02):** I thank the member. Let us make it clear: No-one supports those types of comments or any violence in sport. The UFC is an internationally recognised, extremely popular sport. One person has made a comment. Whatever the case, the UFC is professionally operated. It is a professional sport just like boxing or wrestling. No-one is supporting the comments of one individual. But whatever the case, the UFC has got an enormous following across the world. The announcement of the UFC has enormous economic value to this State.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 129. My question was: Does the Minister support spending \$16 million if Mr Strickland participates? I am asking about the particular person who made those derogatory comments.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** I do not support the comments Mr Strickland made. You just have to go back to my inaugural speech to understand my appreciation and support for women. I do not support anything Mr Strickland said, but I do support that there is a professional sport out there that is well appreciated around the world.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Are you going to ban him?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** It is not my job to ban him.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** The question was whether we support the decision for the UFC to be here over four years. That is what the question was. Do we regret supporting the UFC?

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order: The question that was put to the Minister—

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** What is the point of order?

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** I take my point of order under Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Port Macquarie will be heard in silence. The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** The question that was just repeated in the House by the Minister was not the question that I asked. The question I asked was, "Will the Government spend \$16 million of taxpayers' money if Mr Strickland participates?" That is my question. Is the Minister still going to support it? He said he did not agree with his comments, but is the Minister still going to support the event if Mr Strickland participates?

**The SPEAKER:** I note that there are 10 seconds left on the clock.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** I seek an extension of time for the Minister to answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I will grant an additional two minutes if the Minister has anything further to offer in his answer.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** It is not my call whether Mr Strickland participates, but we support the UFC and we are looking forward to the UFC just like hundreds of thousands of people in Australia.

**The SPEAKER:** Well answered.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Well answered? He didn't answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I liked the brevity of the final part.

#### PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACES PORTFOLIO

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (12:06):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on recent decisions in the Planning and Public Spaces portfolio?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (12:06):** I thank the member for The Entrance for his question. He has long had an interest in making sure that people have access to homes and jobs. But a big problem that we are facing at the moment is a skills shortage in planning that is being felt across the State. In recent years fewer skilled planners and assessment staff in councils have hit an increase in

demand for project assessments. We have got a responsibility to help councils deal with that. One of the ways we are doing that—and I know that it is benefiting The Entrance because there will be more homes and jobs there—is the Central Coast Council's faster development applications [DAs] program. The faster DAs program was put in place as a joint initiative, where department planners were embedded into the council to help assess DAs. Why was that done? Because the Central Coast Council was dealing with the highest number of DAs in the State while struggling to reduce that backlog.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** That didn't bankrupt them.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Wahroonga. I mean, he is a bloke who has dedicated himself to opposing DAs, opposing housing and opposing jobs. But now he is chirping away from the other side of the Chamber. But he would be interested to know that in the six months to 30 June the faster DA program is getting results. It has reduced the backlog of DAs on the Central Coast Council by 11 per cent. It has also reduced the average assessment time for those DAs by 11 per cent. Further, the program has identified and implemented system improvements that are going to help prevent future backlogs building up. There is still work to do. That is why that program will continue through to at least June 2024. As I say, it is a good start.

As I indicated earlier, New South Wales is the only State in the country that has been called out as having an urgent shortage of planners. Councils, particularly regional councils, are crying out for a new generation of people who are going to be engaged in planning the future of the communities in which they live. The National Party members might be interested in listening for a change because 80 per cent of planning jobs in some cases in regional New South Wales are going unfilled for years at a time. The previous Government did not address it. What the Minns Government has done early on is to take decisive action to support stronger planning futures and get that skilled workplace in place through the Strong Start Cadetship Program, which has connected students with jobs and councils with planners. The program is part of that solution. Recently, we had an application call for up to 64 applicants. We received 115 applications from 74 councils. More than half the councils in the State applied for this, and 82 per cent of them were from regional New South Wales. [*Extension of time*]

What did we do when we got such demand from so many new planners in the system? We funded all of them, and that is because we need solutions. We need solutions to the housing pressure that is facing our communities after the former Government allowed it to build up over years. We have an ambitious agenda to boost housing growth and provide the infrastructure to complement that growth. To enable that agenda, another one of our earliest reforms was to State infrastructure contributions, to make sure that infrastructure such as roads, parks, hospitals and schools are available to support homes and jobs. That will help to overcome those problems that the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning, was talking about earlier with respect to Edmondson Park, where houses were built and only years later was the infrastructure there to match it. We want areas of high housing growth to get access to infrastructure funding to support that growth.

How could anyone oppose that? It makes perfect sense, does it not, to match housing growth with infrastructure growth? Guess who opposed it: members opposite. The shadow Minister was out there asking how the community is going to deal with density and how it is going to deal with growth. We gave members opposite a solution. We gave them a path to get the infrastructure in place. We gave them a connection between homes, jobs and infrastructure. What did they do? They opposed it. Members opposite, when faced with the opportunity to put people in front of politics, choose politics every time. Every time! One would think a \$1 billion grants fund for councils to provide infrastructure would be supported. Members opposite did not support it. One would think members opposite would support almost \$1 billion a year in infrastructure funding to support homes and jobs, particularly given that they had already proposed it. Guess what? They did not. They opposed it, and every single community that misses out in the future has them to thank.

#### NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (12:11):** My question is directed to the Minister for Health, representing the Minister for Mental Health. In June 2022 the former New South Wales Government committed to establish four acute paediatric mental health beds at Northern Beaches Hospital. One year later, the beds have not been delivered. Will the Minister inform the people of the northern beaches what steps the Government is taking to ensure these desperately needed beds are established and provide a time frame for delivery?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:12):** I thank the member for his question and his advocacy on behalf of his local community, particularly in the areas of health and mental health. I will talk briefly in a moment about what the Hon. Rose Jackson, the Minister for Mental Health in the other place, is doing to address this. I understand that the office of the member for Wakehurst and the Minister's office are in the process of setting up a more detailed discussion around this issue. The issue was raised with me recently by Dr Scamps, the Independent

member for Mackellar, who is concerned about it. It is concerning that the previous Government promised something in June last year but, when we came to the end of March or early April, nothing had been done. That is a concern, particularly when it relates to mental health support and the real need for it in the member's community.

Unlike physical illnesses, mental illness is not an easy topic for people to discuss. That is the truth. We have destigmatised a lot of things in the process but, if we are honest, we can admit that this is still not an area that people are as comfortable to talk about as physical illness. I think every member in this place has a commitment to changing that. As leaders, we play a role in that process. Whether we are from rural, regional or inner-city locations, each of our communities relies on us to advocate for them. As the member knows, for some time now the northern beaches community has been requesting a dedicated acute mental health unit for children and young people, which the previous Government committed to deliver in June last year. It is a fair expectation, because demand is increasing rather than abating in that community.

I know that the Minister for Mental Health supports such a unit being established on the northern beaches. I am advised that the Minister has now met with staff from the Ministry of Health as well as the CEO of the Northern Beaches Hospital. She has made it clear that the New South Wales Government expects, in six to eight weeks' time, a clear plan for the implementation for this unit, and an explanation as to exactly why there have been delays in providing this unit and the funding it has secured and needs. We understand the need in the community, and we will pursue the timely receipt of this information. Once reviewed, we will be in a position to make an informed decision to determine the feasibility of these beds and, more importantly, to understand exactly why they have not been provided following the previous Government's commitment last year. [*Extension of time*]

Mental health support is needed now. As such, the Northern Beaches Hospital has developed an interim model of care to help admit young people requiring mental health care into hospital. That is an interim decision. The recently established hospital team operates in coordination with the established child and adolescent mental health services of the Northern Sydney Local Health District. These are services that operate in many of our own communities as part of an integrated response to comprehensively meet the varying mental health needs of children and young people and to provide a streamlined transition between hospital and community services where ongoing care is needed. Young people on the northern beaches are now able to receive a specialised, developmentally appropriate health response when in crisis, both in the community and in hospital. These services are delivered by the Safeguards program, which is aimed at providing care to children and young people aged nought to 17 who are experiencing high levels of mental health distress.

Knowing the Minister for Mental Health, who is a tremendous advocate for the mental health sector and those dealing with mental health challenges, I can assure the member that she is very closely monitoring the situation. I understand the offices of the member and the Minister are locking in a time when a detailed discussion can take place. Rest assured this will be a priority of the Minister for Mental Health and of mine, and I hope a priority for all of us in this place. We must show advocacy in our positions as members, regardless of who is in government, to make sure that people in our communities who are suffering mental health challenges get the same level of health care and support as we would expect for people with physical challenges. I think until we get to that point all of us in this place still have a lot of work to do.

#### *Documents*

### UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 2 August 2023.

#### *Committees*

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

#### **Inquiry**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the Minerals Legislation Amendment (Offshore Drilling and Associated Infrastructure Prohibition) Bill 2023, which was referred by the House on 29 June 2023, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER GENERAL****Deputy Chair**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with Standing Order 282 (2), I advise the House that on 1 August 2023 Dr Hugh McDermott was elected deputy chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer General.

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE****Chair and Deputy Chair**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with Standing Order 282 (2), I advise the House that on 2 August 2023 Mrs Helen Dalton was elected chair and Ms Karen McKeown was elected deputy chair of the Committee on Children and Young People.

*Petitions***RESPONSES TO PETITIONS**

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

The Hon. Prue Car—Bungendore High School—lodged 27 June 2023—(Mr Steve Whan)

*Bills***ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (DEMERIT POINT REDUCTION TRIAL) BILL 2023****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (12:20):** I am pleased to contribute to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. As legislators, we should welcome trials relating to public policy. They assist us in making decisions, particularly those that will have long-term impacts. I speak on the bill, first, as a driver; secondly, as the shadow assistant Minister for Transport and Roads; thirdly, as the son of a civil engineer who worked for close to four decades for Transport for NSW—formerly called the Department of Main Roads, the Roads and Traffic Authority, and Roads and Maritime Services—and, fourthly, and most importantly, as someone who believes road safety is important to my community and every community in New South Wales.

It would be a great day if we had a road toll of zero, and that is something that we should all aim for. New South Wales has a demerit points system. That system should not be compromised by politics, and decisions relating to it should always be driven by experts, evidence and data. However, drivers and riders should expect that we also have a fair system. The demerit points system is an Australia-wide program that is designed to encourage safe and responsible driving, along with fines. All drivers and riders start with zero demerit points when they first receive their licences. If they drive and ride safely and do not break the rules, they will continue to have zero demerit points. If offences are committed, demerit points are added to their record. Once a driver or rider reaches their demerit point limit, their licence is suspended.

There is some confusion about how the system works. Some drivers and riders believe that they start with demerit points and then points are subtracted, but it is actually the opposite. Like many members in this House, I currently have an unrestricted licence, and the according limit is 13 points. I currently have zero demerit points on my record. Alas, about a decade ago I attracted some demerit points, which certainly deterred me from speeding. When it comes to driver and rider behaviour, punishment is just one option. Another option that has bipartisan support is rewarding individuals for maintaining a clean driving record.

It was the former New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government that implemented rewards for good driving. Under the Fair Go for Safe Drivers Scheme, a person with a good driving record may be eligible for an automatic 50 per cent discount on their licence renewal fee. I, too, have benefited from that scheme. I note that during the 2023 election the Liberal-Nationals took its drivers and riders policy to the people, which was to waive the fines on a range of minor driving offences for motorists who have a clean driving record over three years. I note the average New South Wales licence holder drives approximately 12,000 kilometres per year and maintains a clean driving record over three years. In 2021 there were 227,500 fines issued for low-level offences to motorists with a three-year clean driving record.

I now move to the bill before the House. I note that Labor's bill is an election commitment. On this side of the House, members welcome election commitments being implemented. I said at the commencement of my

speech that the Opposition does not oppose the bill. I note the bill does the following: first, it proposes a 12-month trial where drivers with no offences during that period will have one demerit point removed from their record; second, the trial is a "carrot and stick" approach to motivate drivers to maintain clean records; third, the trial is expected to benefit approximately 1.7 million drivers in New South Wales; fourth, drivers without demerit points may also be eligible for reduced insurance premiums during the trial; and fifth, an "eligible person" for the trial is someone who holds an active unrestricted driver licence, except for certain exceptions like short-term suspension, licence expiration or medical reasons. Learner and provisional licence holders are also excluded.

Sixth, the trial period will start on 17 January 2023 and go until 16 January 2024 and Transport for NSW will take necessary steps to identify eligible persons before the trial starts; seventh, the section providing for demerit point removal for eligible persons will expire on 31 January 2025, or as prescribed in regulations; and eighth, Transport for NSW will develop a communication package and an evaluation plan to assess the trial's impact on road offences and road trauma. The New South Wales Parliamentary Budget Office at the March 2023 election stated that departmental resources require \$5.66 million for the 12-month trial over the forward estimates, including \$2.81 million to implement and test changes to IT systems and \$2.85 million in staff resourcing to respond to customer queries and undertake manual reviews during the 12-month trial. The trial should be met within existing resources available to Transport for NSW and Service NSW. I look forward to the outcome of the trial and making sure that we get the road toll to zero, or as close to zero as possible. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (12:26):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. I have been a long-time advocate for road safety in my area and certainly have been a proactive advocate throughout my time in this Parliament through such roles as Parliamentary Secretary to former roads Minister Duncan Gay. I have always been proactive in seeking ways that we can lower the road toll, improve road conditions and, ultimately, make driving safer for everybody. I have a significant concern with this amending bill. Whilst the Opposition is happy to proceed with the trial, I place on record that I think there is a significant flaw in rewarding bad driving. In my mind, gifting one demerit point to a person who has driven in an irresponsible and reckless manner rewards bad behaviour.

I place on record a scenario that could be recognised in every electorate across New South Wales and the country. I have great sympathy for people and their families who have suffered at the hands of reckless drivers. I guarantee that just about every member of this place has experienced the situation, as I have, where a person has driven recklessly, more than likely speeding, and as a result they have either seriously injured a person or taken a person's life. After perhaps being charged with negligent driving and being back on the road, if they drive for the next 12 months without incurring another fine that person will be rewarded with the gifting back of one demerit point under the bill. I put that scenario. I am not critical of anybody, but the fact is that is in the bill. We, therefore, face a consequence from people and families in our electorates who have suffered. My goodness, I could raise a number of cases across my electorate.

I raise one in particular, which I have spoken about in this House previously, of a young lady who, doing nothing more than driving to work one morning, had her life taken when a reckless driver drove over the median strip and put his car through her windscreen. She left behind a five-month-old baby, who her husband raises as a single parent. Imagine how that family will feel if that person returns to the road following his charges, drives fine-free for a year and then gets rewarded with a demerit point reduction. I note certain advocacy groups feel exactly the same way. The Pedestrian Council has serious concerns with this piece of legislation, as do I.

I thought the initiative that the previous Government brought in was particularly well founded. I think the 50 per cent reduction in the cost of a licence if you preserve a clean record for a number of years is a good incentive. The onus is on you to drive responsibly every time you put the keys in the ignition, knowing that, ultimately, you will be rewarded with a reduction in the cost of your licence for driving in a responsible manner. That is something that rings true to me every time I go out on the road as—touch wood—I have all my demerit points at this time.

Just this morning, as I drove to the station to catch the north-west rail line to work, my wife contacted me to say there had been a head-on collision on Annangrove Road. I do not know the outcome of that but, by virtue of the emergency services response, I know it was not an insignificant accident. Therefore, we will probably see some vision of it on the news tonight. I hope and pray that people have not been too seriously injured. If there was a head-on I believe someone will be charged with negligent driving. Hopefully it has not taken a life and people have not been seriously injured. But if they have, how would their family members feel if that driver, driving fine-free for 12 months, gets back a demerit point? Would they think that was a reward for bad behaviour? That is the way I see it.

I have concerns, and I raise them on behalf of the people whom I have great sympathy for across my electorate and across New South Wales. In the many areas that we represent there would be stories like this. The

incentive should be for people to protect and preserve their licence in full to ensure that they do not lose demerit points. The rewarding back of a demerit point, or the rewarding bad behaviour, is not an incentive that I support. However, as I said, the Opposition is happy to proceed with the trial to see what happens with it. The road toll has increased significantly in the past 12 months, and I hope that is turned around. I hope that anything we provide for road safety is well founded and reduces the road toll because it inflicts hardship on many people in our electorates.

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (12:33):** I contribute to debate on the important Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. The bill proposes amendments to the Road Transport Act 2013 to allow for the implementation of a 12-month trial period to remove one demerit point for drivers who remain offence free during the trial period. The Minister for Roads in the other place commented that the bill is based on the concept of the carrot and stick. The bill provides a carrot to encourage drivers to remain offence free during the trial period to earn a one demerit point reduction on their driver licence.

A focus on road safety must always be at the heart of any debate in this House. The objects of the Road Transport Act 2013 as set out in section 3 include "improvement of road safety in this jurisdiction". The carrot approach mentioned by the Minister aims to provide a process that will improve road safety. I note Transport for NSW recorded 202 deaths on our roads in the past 12 months, whereas in the same period in 2022 there were 162 deaths. The increase in fatalities is a worrying trend, and I hope that this bill and any others introduced in this House will reduce fatalities.

Over approximately 10 years prior to coming to this House, from about 2012 to about 2021 when COVID hit, I volunteered my time to present traffic lectures at the Traffic Offender Intervention Program conducted at Hornsby and Waitara as part of the traffic offenders program for courts. Therefore, I have some experience in speaking to people who have committed traffic offences. I spoke to persons who committed various traffic offences when presenting information as part of the legal process. Bearing in mind it was at Waitara and Hornsby, I note that the member for Hornsby and the member for Wahroonga are also fierce advocates for road safety. I commend them.

In the discussions I had with participants of the program I indicated there would be a multilayered approach to road safety that would include not only strong policy but also improvements to roads and motorways. There would also be fair regulations that applied equally to motorists to regulate the way we travel on our roads and a system that encouraged compliance with road laws. In relation to the first issue, the better and safer roadways, I note the former Coalition Government invested billions into road safety. The Coalition recognised the importance of safe roadways to save lives and to assist with traffic congestion. Members of this House are aware of the outstanding record of the Coalition between 2011 and 2023. A few of those road projects include the WestConnex M4 tunnel, which opened in 2019; the WestConnex M8, which opened on 5 July 2020; and NorthConnex, which has its headquarters in my electorate.

Apart from fantastic and wonderful implementation of road safety measures and the building of roads, the Coalition also has an outstanding record in relation to policy decisions. In about 2018 the Coalition introduced the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Road Safety) Bill, which amended the way in which people were prosecuted for the offence of low-range drink driving. Anyone who looks at records of how people are prosecuted for low-range drink driving will see that there has been a marked reduction in people being prosecuted. Prior to that legislation it was by way of court attendance notices; now it is by way of traffic infringement notices. So it would seem that the Coalition policies on road safety have, in fact, worked.

The bill must include an assurance that there is appropriate education in our community, because at the heart of the bill is making sure people are aware that, if they drive in a safe manner for 12 months and commit no offences as per the legislation, they will receive a one demerit point reduction. I hope that the Government ensures and provides sufficient funding to the relevant department to provide sufficient education to our community because, without that education, the trial will mean nothing to our community. The ultimate objective of the policy dealing with the demerit point system must have its primary consideration as road safety.

I note the previous speaker's comments regarding the reduction in cost of a driver's licence for those people who have no demerits. That was a sensible policy. I agree with the former speaker in that regard. That policy was a great policy of the former Government. Every member of society using the roads as a driver, passenger or pedestrian has a right to arrive at their destination safely. The effects of road accidents on our community are devastating. We must always work towards laws that make our roads safer for everyone. Hopefully, the bill will offer a sufficient incentive to drivers to comply with the road traffic rules and regulations. The effect of the bill will be assessed in 12 months' time, once the trial is completed. The incentive to help educate our road users on road safety should always be supported. I note that the Opposition supports the bill. I trust that the community will be adequately educated about the bill and that it will be a success.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (12:40):** On behalf of Ms Jo Haylen: In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate: the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Orange, the member for Lismore, the member for Hornsby, the member for Davidson, the member for Kellyville and the member for Castle Hill. The bill makes the necessary changes to the Road Transport Act to enable the Government to deliver on its promise to introduce a demerit point reduction incentive to reward safe driving. I address some particular issues raised by the member for Hornsby. As has been stated throughout debate on the bill, the current provisions of the Road Transport Act allow Transport for NSW to amend the demerit point register only to correct an error or mistake on a driver's record. The bill is therefore a requirement to change those provisions so that Transport for NSW will be required to amend the register to remove a demerit point from an eligible driver's record.

The bill defines who will be eligible for the removal of a demerit point, including all unrestricted licence holders who are licensed to drive heavy vehicles, light vehicles or motorcycles. The bill will also create the definition of "relevant offence". If a driver commits such an offence during the trial period, the driver will become ineligible to have a demerit point removed. The offences will include obvious breaches of the road laws that incur demerit points, such as those listed in the statutory rules, and other serious types of offences that can attract immediate roadside suspension by a police officer, and those where a conviction results in an automatic disqualification from holding or obtaining a licence for a period.

After and in alignment with the trial, an evaluation plan will be developed and include both quantitative analysis of offences and road trauma during the trial period, and qualitative measures such as surveys of drivers impacted by the trial and of the wider community. Upon completion of the 12-month trial, the analysis will be provided to the Government so that it can determine whether there is any need for a continuation of the measures or for development of an alternative approach to further incentivise safe-driving behaviours. The changes the bill will make will give something back to drivers, which is particularly welcome after what unfolded in recent times, with infringements for low-level speeding offences increasing dramatically following the removal of speed camera warning signs.

The Government's view is that a carrot-and-stick approach in which there is a combination of the application of demerit points against those who offend, as well as the new incentive of having a demerit point removed for drivers who are offence free, will have a positive impact on drivers' behaviour and thereby improve road safety for all road users in New South Wales. We acknowledge that the road toll reduced in recent years, with fewer people using our roads during the pandemic. As we are seeing an increase in travel and more people back on the network, this demerit point trial will give drivers more power to influence their own outcomes. People can choose to follow the law and not accumulate any demerit points. In return, we will reward those good decisions with a demerit point reduction. The message to drivers is simple: If they drive safely, they will get a point back. I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Third Reading

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL:** On behalf of Ms Jo Haylen: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

## ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT (RELIGIOUS VILIFICATION) BILL 2023

### Second Reading Debate

**Debate resumed from 1 August 2023.**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (12:46):** I continue my contribution to debate on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. Such a variety of faiths being present in our community often leads to debate and dialogue, which is vitally important and healthy. The contest of ideas and the right to comment must always exist for our society to be free; however, there is a balance to be struck between debate and dialogue, as opposed to hate and derision. This amending bill strikes that balance well, and I commend the Attorney General and the Minns Government for the careful and considered development of the bill. The addition of religious belief to the grounds covered by the Anti-Discrimination Act will provide protections for all members of our community from personal attacks and discrimination based on their faith. Importantly, that includes the 27 per cent of Parramatta residents who identified as persons of no religious affiliation as recorded in the 2021 Australian census.

The bill is for everyone. It protects all of us, and therefore its importance cannot be overstated. However, while we seek to legislate to address bigotry and discrimination, we must not lose sight of the fact that those who would spread hate are the exception, not the norm, among our community. We can see respect and celebration of our diversity everywhere in Parramatta. We see it in everyday interactions in the street and in the efforts and actions of the spiritual leaders and congregations within our community. We see it in the places of worship in and around the Parramatta electorate, including but not limited to St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta; Our Lady of Lebanon Cathedral, Harris Park; BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Hindu Temple in Rosehill; Parramatta Mosque; Nan Tien Buddhist Temple in Parramatta; St John's Anglican Cathedral, Parramatta—the oldest church in Australia; Sydney Korean Catholic Church in Silverwater; Leigh Memorial Church; Holy Name of Mary, Rydalmere; Salvation Army, Parramatta; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in North Parramatta.

During Ramadan I had the pleasure of attending an iftar dinner held by the St Columbans Mission Society's Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations and the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta. At this event, leaders from the many faiths represented across our community celebrated friendship and advanced their understanding of the Islamic faith and practices. This included Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Parramatta, who plays a valuable role in our community, engaging with and demonstrating his solidarity with Muslim Australians and people of all faiths united for the betterment of our community. I had also the privilege of attending the Pongal Tamil harvest festival celebrations with Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen. This celebration followed the mass for the commemoration of the Parramatta Pongal Tamil harvest festival. It was another wonderful demonstration of different faiths and cultures coming together so that we as a community can better appreciate and broaden our understanding of those we live and work side by side with.

Yet another example of that is the work of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation, which has a strong focus on interfaith connection and bringing people of different faiths or no faith together to share dialogue. I have attended several of its iftars at home, where non-Muslim members of the community are invited to attend an iftar in a Muslim household. It is such a simple concept but such a powerful way of deepening an understanding of how others practice their faith at home and of forming bonds across communities. My husband and I attended an iftar at home a few years ago, and the interaction and experience opened our eyes to many aspects of that family's life beyond religion.

As an elected representative, I receive invitations to cultural and religious festivals across Parramatta and Western Sydney. Thanks to the work of local councils, Multicultural NSW and the advocacy of community leaders, those cultural and religious festivals are now becoming mainstream drivers for community-wide celebrations such as Diwali in Little India in the Parramatta electorate, Ramadan Nights in the Canterbury electorate and the Cabramatta Moon Festival. The integration of those religious and cultural festivals into our annual local events calendars demonstrates the incredible change that our society has experienced since the introduction of the Anti-Discrimination Act in 1977.

While the increase in the cultural and religious diversity of our State has been immense in those 40-plus years, the maturity of some people's attitudes and actions towards that increasing diversity has not. Therefore the bill is important in introducing a civil prohibition on vilification on the ground of religious belief, affiliation or activity. Virtually every religion in the world fundamentally espouses the importance of helping others, contributing to the community and treating others the way you want to be treated. The essence of the bill is to enable people to live free from hostility and violence—to live their lives without others inciting hatred towards them because of their background, their relationships or their beliefs so that our friends, our families and our colleagues can practice their religion without fear of ridicule.

People's differences are often far outnumbered by their common grounds. While it is unfortunate that we have to make laws around issues such as this, it is vital that we implement this amendment to the Act. I want to ensure that we recognise that respect is the default among the majority, as well as to acknowledge the efforts of those who proactively work to combat hate. I am very proud to be a part of a Minns Labor government that is delivering on its promise of putting those protections in place and recognising the importance of combating hate speech in our communities. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (12:52):** I contribute to debate on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. Everyone should have the right to live their life with dignity and peace, free from harassment, vilification and violence. Anti-vilification laws were first introduced in New South Wales in 1989 to protect people from racist public acts that incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule. The laws followed concerns raised by the Anti-Discrimination Board and communities that failing to act against racially driven hate speech was creating an environment that condoned racially based violence. Hate speech breeds violence and puts people's safety at risk. It is a problem for all groups that experience discrimination.

In the 1990s my predecessor, Clover Moore, worked to extend anti-vilification laws to people who are homosexual or transgender, or who have HIV or AIDS. But many communities that are vulnerable to hatred and

harm from public acts do not have full protection from anti-vilification laws. In 2018 anti-vilification offences were introduced into the Crimes Act. The provisions protected a broader range of communities, including people who are intersex, non-binary or bisexual, as well as on the grounds of a person's religious belief or affiliation. I acknowledge the work of the Leader of the Opposition, who introduced those changes as Attorney General.

While those criminal offences cover a broader range of communities, they only provide a cause of action through the criminal courts, whereas those targeted often want a quick and harmonious resolution like the conciliation and education processes provided by the Anti-Discrimination Board. The Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023 will extend anti-vilification laws in the Anti-Discrimination Act to religion, giving those who are subject to hatred, contempt or ridicule for their religion access to a civil remedy. I welcome the new protections in the bill.

Freedom of religion is a human right that must be safeguarded. My electorate has many people of faith, including Christian, Buddhist and Jewish people. Jewish people and Muslim people have been especially vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination. I support full protections for people of faith under the Anti-Discrimination Act. Notwithstanding that, protections must be drafted sensitively so that they do not encroach on the rights and safety of others. Proposals in the past have attempted to introduce religious protections in a way that put LGBTQIA+ people at risk. The reforms that we are dealing with are only for vilification, for which there is a very high threshold, but I would not support such broad definitions for religion as a protected attribute for discrimination.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre and the NSW Council of Civil Liberties are concerned that, even under vilification provisions, the application of protections is too broad and could have harmful consequences. I share those concerns, which point to the lack of definition for religious belief, religious affiliation and religious activity; the inclusion of unlawful religious practices; and coverage for religious organisations. I understand the member for Newtown will move amendments to address those concerns. I will support those amendments. I welcome the Attorney General's commitment to refer the Anti-Discrimination Act to the Law Reform Commission for a full review, with additional resources to ensure it can report within a year.

The Anti-Discrimination Act is out of date in many ways. It relies on a comparator test and a substantially higher proportion test, both of which are not fit for purpose and are out of step with best practice laws in other States and Territories. People who are bisexual, asexual or non-binary; who have variations in sex characteristics; or who are sex workers—people who are subject to considerable community discrimination—have no protections at all. The landscape for some LGBTQIA+ people has been getting even more hostile. I believe there is an urgent need to provide protections for people who are non-binary or who have variations in sex characteristics. The laws also continue to allow private schools to discriminate against students and employees, which disproportionately impacts the LGBTQIA+ students and staff in those schools. Our laws are behind those of other States and Territories. We need to move forward.

My equality bill will provide an opportunity to protect those LGBTQIA+ people who are currently excluded while we wait for the Law Reform Commission process, the Government response and new legislation. I will work with all sides of this House to modernise our anti-discrimination laws so that all vulnerable communities are protected. LGBTQIA+ communities and faith communities are often inappropriately and unfairly pitted against each other or there is an assumption that somehow there is conflict between us. There are many LGBTQIA+ people of faith and many LGBTQIA+ people like me who have the utmost respect for all faith communities. We experience a very similar type of vilification, and the Anti-Discrimination Act should protect people of faith just as it protects us. I welcome the bill as a step towards achieving that.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (12:57):** I speak today in support of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. I thank the Attorney General for bringing this important legislation to the House. The bill amends the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 to make it unlawful to, by a public act, incite hatred towards, show serious contempt for or severely ridicule a person or group of persons because of their religious belief, affiliation or activity. The bill also applies to those not having a religious belief or affiliation or not engaging in religious activity.

The current bill makes vilification unlawful on the basis of race, homosexuality, transgender status and HIV/AIDS status. The reform is needed so that people who are subject to vilification because of their religion have recourse to remedies and to discourage people from spreading hatred of others because of their religion. A victim of religious vilification will be able to lodge a complaint and, if successful, will be able to access a range of potential remedies, including damages and a requirement that the other party apologises or ceases any unlawful activity. Providing protection from vilification on the grounds of religion is not novel or unusual, with religious vilification provisions existing in other Australian jurisdictions.

Religious vilification is also prohibited in other countries and its prohibition is supported by international human rights principles. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR] makes it clear that religious organisations and people of faith have the right to act in accordance with the doctrines, beliefs or teachings of their traditions and faith. Article 18.1 of the ICCPR states:

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

Article 18.3 of the covenant states:

Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Legislation that provides civil prohibition of that kind is consistent with the New South Wales policies of inclusion and tolerance. Religion is defined as the belief in a supernatural being, thing or principle. It is associated with the exercise of canons of conduct in order to give effect to that belief. In my electorate of Bega, according to the 2021 Australian census, 55.4 per cent of the population identified as having no religious affiliation. This could be interpreted non-aligned theists who do not exercise canons of religious conduct, atheists and agnostics. It is the ninth highest rate of lack of religious affiliation in New South Wales. Only 1.5 per cent of the Bega electorate identified as Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish; the remainder identified as Christian.

Former United States President John F. Kennedy said, "Religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all." Regardless of religious affiliation or lack of affiliation, this bill will ensure that an act against any believer or non-believer is an act against all. Last week I had the pleasure of being driven by a young taxi driver. He was a Pakistani Muslim who was working to support his PhD studies at a Sydney hospital. He was obviously happily married and proudly shared photos of his young son. He also shared his experience of ethno-religious violence. He had experienced an attack so violent that he was hospitalised for weeks—an attack motivated by ethno-religious hatred. Religious vilification is a reality that fuels such violent attacks, and the prevention of those attacks is the aim of this bill.

Critiques of religious vilification laws often revolve around concerns related to freedom of speech and the potential for those laws to stifle open and critical dialogue about religion. Some argue that such laws can limit the ability to express opinions, engage in robust debates, or criticise religious ideas and practices. Additionally, critics suggest that religious vilification laws might prioritise protecting religious sensibilities over other fundamental rights. They argue that laws aimed at preventing offence or insult can unduly limit open discussion and intellectual inquiry, potentially hindering the growth of a diverse and inclusive society. Another concern pertains to the potential misuse or abuse of religious vilification laws. Critics worry that those laws could be weaponised to silence dissenting voices or suppress legitimate criticism of religious beliefs or practices.

It is essential to consider the delicate balance between protecting religious communities from discrimination and ensuring that laws do not unduly restrict freedom of expression. Creating effective legislation that respects both those concerns requires careful consideration and consultation with various stakeholders, including religious groups, legal experts and advocates for freedom of speech. We all agree that people have a right to freedom of speech. People should also have freedom from fear of abuse, hostility and hatred. There are situations where freedom of speech can be limited to protect rights, reputations, national security, public order, health or morals. There are times when assumed equality of speech of vulnerable groups who are not equally placed to express their views replicates inequality and allows harmful expression.

This bill includes exceptions intended to balance the prohibition with freedom of speech. These provisions allow fair reports of a public act; communications on occasions that would be subject to a defence of absolute privilege under defamation law; and communications, done reasonably and in good faith, for a range of purposes in the public interest including artistic, scientific, or religious discussion or instruction. Those exceptions are consistent with the existing vilification provisions in the Anti-Discrimination Act.

Defining religious vilification can be challenging, due to its subjective nature. What one person considers vilification, another might perceive as legitimate criticism or disagreement. That subjectivity can lead to inconsistent enforcement and potential misuse of the laws, thereby raising concerns about fairness and selective application. It can be argued that the existence of religious vilification laws can create a chilling effect where individuals may self-censor their thoughts or opinions due to fear of legal repercussions. By limiting criticism or scrutiny of religious beliefs, these laws might shield religions from necessary public scrutiny and hinder the ability to challenge outdated practices or harmful interpretations. Concerns can be raised about the potential misuse or abuse of religious vilification laws. There is a risk that these laws could be weaponised to stifle dissenting voices, suppress legitimate criticism, or silence those who question religious institutions or beliefs. Proper safeguards should be in place to prevent such misuse and to protect freedom of expression.

Religious vilification laws must be carefully drafted to avoid unintended consequences. Poorly defined or overly broad legislation may inadvertently restrict legitimate expression or infringe on other fundamental rights. It is crucial to ensure that these laws are narrowly tailored, well defined and do not encroach upon other protected freedoms. While the intent behind religious vilification laws is often to foster harmony and respect among religious communities, there is a concern that such laws may inadvertently exacerbate tensions. Heavy-handed enforcement or an overreliance on legal measures might undermine the potential for genuine dialogue and understanding among diverse faith groups.

However, the clear definition of vilification in this bill and the exemptions previously noted should reassure this House that freedom of speech is appropriately protected and that other consequences will be avoided. The bill strikes a balance between protecting religious communities and individuals, and safeguarding freedom of expression. It will achieve its intended goals without unduly limiting fundamental rights. The House should note that this appropriately designed and implemented religious vilification legislation will provide several advantages and benefits. [*Extension of time*]

This religious vilification bill seeks to protect individuals and groups from discrimination and prejudice based on their religious beliefs or affiliations. It creates a legal framework that safeguards the rights and dignity of individuals, ensuring they are not subjected to hatred, vilification or harm due to their religious identity. By criminalising religious vilification, the bill will contribute to fostering social cohesion and harmony within diverse societies. It will send a clear message that discrimination or incitement of hatred based on religion is not acceptable and will promote a more inclusive and respectful environment for people of different faiths. The amendment will serve as a tool for promoting tolerance and respect for diverse religious beliefs and practices.

By establishing legal consequences for vilification, the bill will encourage individuals and communities to engage in constructive dialogue, to understand different perspectives and to foster mutual respect. The amendment will offer a legal recourse for victims of religious discrimination or vilification. It will provide a means for individuals or groups to seek justice and hold perpetrators accountable for their harmful actions or speech. Such legal remedies can empower victims and deter potential offenders. The amendments will contribute to preventing the escalation of conflicts and the incitement of violence. By discouraging the spread of hatred and discriminatory rhetoric, this bill can help maintain social stability and prevent tensions from spiralling into more severe forms of hostility or harm.

Religious vilification legislation can foster a culture of open dialogue and understanding. By establishing legal boundaries, this amendment will encourage individuals and communities to engage in respectful conversations, where differing religious perspectives can be expressed without resorting to harmful vilification or hate speech. By implementing religious vilification law, our State demonstrates a commitment to protecting human rights, including the freedom of religion and the right to be free from discrimination. This bill reflects New South Wales' dedication to upholding the principles of equality, fairness, and inclusivity. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (13:10):** I speak in support of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. I commend the Attorney General for developing this bill that further protects the people of New South Wales against discrimination and vilification. New South Wales is a multicultural and multifaith-based State. This bill follows through with the key election promise made by this Government to enhance measures to protect our diversity by making it unlawful, via civil prohibition, to incite hatred, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person, or group of persons, because of their religious belief, affiliation or activity.

Fairfield, like the rest of New South Wales, celebrates diversity in all forms. It is one of our great sources of strength and resilience. Protecting this diversity and promoting understanding and tolerance is, therefore, critical. According to the most recent census, 87 per cent of Fairfield's population have a religious affiliation. Fairfield's main religions include Western Catholicism, Buddhism, Islam, Assyrian Apostolic and Christianity. I have seen the positive impact religious affiliation can have on an individual and the broader community. Religion has influenced how we see the world and fit within it. It has taught us to be kind and respectful to each other, and to work together to create a better society. That is something which should be cherished and protected.

I acknowledge that this bill is not an excuse to utilise religion to perpetuate hate and distrust. It is also not an oppression of public communication for a purpose in the public interest. Rather, the bill makes exceptions, in necessary circumstances, to balance the prohibition of religious vilification with freedom of expression. These include the allowing of fair reports of a public act, communications on occasions that would be subject to a defence of absolute privilege under defamation law, and communications done reasonably and in good faith for a range of purposes in the public interest, including artistic, scientific or religious discussion or instruction.

The prohibition in the bill is differentiated from the criminal offence of publicly threatening or inciting violence on the ground of religion under section 93Z of the Crimes Act 1900. The latter requires the establishment of a public threat or incitement to violence, rather than the incitement of hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule required under the bill. As such, the legal effect of the bill is to provide a mechanism for complaints grounded on religious vilification to be made to the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW. The president can investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve the dispute by facilitating conciliation between the parties and referring the matter to the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. I note that a complainant may also seek to have the matter referred to the tribunal.

If a complaint is substantiated, the tribunal may order a range of measures including but not limited to damages not exceeding \$100,000, an order preventing the respondent from continuing or repeating any unlawful conduct, an order that the respondent perform any reasonable act to redress loss or damage suffered by the complainant, and/or an order that the respondent publish an apology or retraction. Overall, this House has the opportunity to protect persons in New South Wales who have experienced vilification based on their religion, and shield those who have yet to experience it. No-one deserves to be vilified, hated or ridiculed based on their religious beliefs. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:14):** I contribute to debate on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. Of course, being on this side of the House, I support the bill. The bill enacts a commitment Labor made in the lead-up to the 2023 election to protect the public from religious vilification. This bill delivers on that election commitment by amending the Anti-Discrimination Act. The object of the bill is to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 to make it unlawful to vilify a person or group of persons on the ground of the person's or group's religious belief or affiliation or engagement in religious activity.

Schedule 1 to the bill sets out two main amendments to the Act. The proposed part to be inserted into the Act makes it unlawful for a person, by a public act, to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the ground the person or group has, or does not have, a religious belief or affiliation, or engages, or does not engage, in religious activity. However, another proposed section makes it clear that the following is not unlawful: fair reporting of an unlawful public act; a communication or distribution or dissemination of any matter on an occasion that would be subject to a defence of absolute privilege in proceedings for defamation; or a public act done, reasonably and in good faith, for a purpose in the public interest, including academic, artistic, scientific, research or religious discussion or instruction.

Importantly, the bill amends the 1977 Act. That Act is a reminder of the important contribution, in the history of the State, of the Wran Labor Government. The Wran Labor Government introduced the original Anti-Discrimination Act in 1977. It was part of a suite of changes Wran introduced during the period of his Government, from 1976-86, that saw real social progress in this State. Social progress has a special part in the history of the State and is held very dearly in the hearts of those on this side of the House. That period of government also delivered the memorable landslide win in 1978 where Labor achieved what I think is probably its highest primary vote ever in the State: 57.8 per cent. It was a remarkable achievement by a remarkable government. Amongst the achievements I like to remember the Wran Government for is keeping Alan Jones out of this House. I think it was in 1978 as well when Ken Gabb defeated Alan Jones in the Earlwood by-election, keeping his poisonous opinions and conservatism right away from this House.

I note there are some members opposite who feel that the Act goes too far in the protections that it provides, and there are some members of the crossbench who believe the Act should go further. I am heartened by the advice of the Attorney General that the whole Act will be reviewed. It is timely that we review an Act that has been amended so many times, to bring it up to date, but we should not forget that it was an important and pioneering piece of legislation introduced by the Wran Labor Government. I will finish by reflecting further on the Wran Government. When Neville Wran announced his decision to retire from Parliament in 1983 at the Australian Labor Party [ALP] State conference, he said:

When we are all dead and buried and our children's children are reflecting on what was the best thing the Labor Government did in the twentieth century, they will come up with the answer, we saved the rainforests.

That might seem strange when viewed from our time, but I think the Labor governments across the nation in the 1970s responded positively to the growing environmental movement, engaged with that movement and started to protect their environment in a way that has been a benefit to our society in the modern age. Wran, reflecting on his Government more recently, said that he still believed the answer he gave at the ALP State conference in 1983, and added:

If I were asked what's your government's legacy, my response would be that we made NSW a slightly better place in which to live. The State's economy, if anything, was stronger; its laws were more liberal—

and he noted in brackets "(in the best sense of that word)" to distinguish his Government from the party name of its main political opponent—

and legislation relating to equal opportunity, anti-discrimination and homosexual law reform, was irrevocably entrenched on the statute books.

Multiculturalism was no longer a divisive issue. ... The arts were recognised as an inevitable and important part of our lives.

...

Above all the government's credo was *jobs, jobs, jobs*, and we worked with the trade unions and employers to achieve the best result in this respect.

Let us remember when we vote on the bill, especially those on this side of the House, that we are building on a great Labor tradition of protecting our community from discrimination. We can always do better, and we will continue to work to do better. The Minns Labor Government is building on the traditions of Labor in this State. I am proud to be part of that and vote in favour of that, and I encourage all members of the House to support the bill.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (13:20):** The Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023 seeks to introduce a civil prohibition on religious vilification, consistent with the existing vilification provisions in the Act. As we just heard, those existing provisions come from an Act that was passed by a Labor government, and we seek to build on that great legacy. The bill makes it unlawful to, by a public act, incite hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons because of the person's religious belief, affiliation or activity. So the public act—what it is and is not—is very explicitly defined.

Importantly, the bill does not prevent people from being able to express their reasonable religious views. It does not prevent the criticism of religion. It specifically prohibits public actions that incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule. That might seem like a small change to an existing Act, but it will have a very important impact on communities across New South Wales, especially in my part of the world, including south-west Sydney and Leppington. Yesterday we heard from the member for Bankstown about the kind of impact the change will have and the kinds of things he has seen and heard during his lifetime that fall outside the existing Act and why it needs to be updated.

Religion is a very significant element of the identity of many people in New South Wales and, as I said, particularly for my region of south-west Sydney. When you look at the statistics in the last census, in south-western Sydney there is a higher proportion of people who professed a religion and a lower proportion who stated they had no religion, compared to Greater Sydney and New South Wales as a whole. So 79 per cent of the population of the Liverpool local government area nominated a religion in the latest census—that is four in five people. Similarly, in Fairfield it was 78 per cent, and in Camden it was 70 per cent. Those figures are well above the Greater Sydney average of 62 per cent and the New South Wales average of 59 per cent. So in my part of the world, four in five people identify with a nominated religion. Across New South Wales and Sydney it is somewhere around three in five. So the bill will have quite an impact on the people in my part of the world.

Based on the last census, we also have a higher increase in people identifying as Muslim and Roman Catholic than the rest of New South Wales. This showcases the importance of religion in everyday life in the region I represent and, again, why the bill will have a significant effect for the people of my electorate. The bill adds new grounds for vilification to the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977—specifically, religious affiliation as well as religious activity. The inclusion of religious activity is a particularly important element of the bill, and I will outline some reasons it will have an important impact in my part of the world.

For decades my region has been the new home for migrants and refugees fleeing war and persecution. Australia held out its hand and promised a safe haven and a new home where refugees could come and thrive in a nation that allowed them to practise their culture unhindered. For many of those communities, their culture, language and religion had been repressed for decades, if not centuries. I have heard firsthand of brutal regimes under which people have had to change their names, been forced to convert or profess another religion and suffered the banning of indigenous languages that were associated with their religion. This was commonplace and used as a means to strip these people of their identity. Now that they live safely in Australia, their new home allows them to practise and teach their culture, language and religion to the next generation.

Importantly, for many people who have fled terrible regimes, faith is indelibly linked to culture and language. Places of worship are not merely where people occasionally visit for the odd wedding or funeral; they are central to our sense of community in south-west Sydney. For example, our churches, mosques, temples and other places of worship serve many purposes in addition to weekly services. They host language schools that are vital for incoming migrants, as well as those who want to learn their cultural language. Earlier today I met with a delegation from the local Kurdish community—again, a people whose language has been repressed. They have set up a language school, similar to other communities that have come from that part of the world—the

Mandaeans, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, who are also people whose culture, language and religion are indelibly linked.

Such places also organise and host community service events such as food drives, volunteering and partnering with other local organisations to provide services across the community. They encourage and provide places for youth and seniors groups that create an atmosphere of community where people make lifelong friends. They also help individuals and families through personal counselling services. All of this benefits our community and our society as a whole. Providing resources to those who need them and fostering a sense of community is one of the great aspects of these places. They also provide an outlet for the people in our community who want to give something back and make a positive impact for those in more need. More often than that not, that spirit comes from people who have found Australia as their second home. They want to repay this country, and often want to do that through their places of worship and their community.

There are many places in my electorate that provide such services and they are an integral part of Leppington, while the new community is being built. We have thousands of homes, but unfortunately we do not have enough parks, community centres, community halls and even public schools, where these types of functions would normally take place. So it has been the job of places of worship do the heavy lifting, and I acknowledge that. Among them we have Chaldean churches, Hindu temples, a Sikh gurdwara and Buddhist temples from Cambodian and Chinese backgrounds. We have it all, and I am very grateful to live in such a diverse electorate.

The question might arise that if culture and religion are so linked for some communities, would religious vilification not be inherently prohibited through existing provisions for race and ethno-religious origin? Unfortunately, it is not. The concept of ethno-religious origin for the purposes of racial vilification in the Act has been narrowly interpreted and defined, and therefore does not cover many potential circumstances of religious vilification. One such example comes from the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which determined in a case that, at least some in circumstances, Islam did not amount to an ethno-religious origin. It is for those reasons that the bill seeks to specifically add religion and religious vilification to the Act.

Explicit and particular provisions such as those in the bill are required to ensure that religious vilification is comprehensively and effectively prohibited. Ethno-religious origin cannot be an edge case. It needs to be specifically put in the Act, and I am glad that we are doing that today. With the support of a key range of stakeholders, through consultation, including with religious and faith organisations, legal stakeholders and community and advocacy stakeholders, the amendments in the bill will protect people from religious vilification. More often than not, when members debate matters in this House, we forget to speak to the people who are directly impacted. I commend the Minns Labor Government for committing to a faith council that will have a body of representatives from across the religious spectrum. The Government will consult with that council on a range of issues—this bill is a perfect example of that.

In conclusion, I am happy that we are here but the Government should probably not be doing this. For a long time this change had been promised by the previous Government. The bill will help to ensure that all members of society can participate in public life and discussion without the fear of abuse, hatred or hostility. I commend the bill to the House.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** It being 1.30 p.m., I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (14:32):** I support the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. I spoke in support of a similar bill put forward by the former member for Liverpool in the previous Parliament. I believe that bill arose from the work of the joint select committee on religious discrimination, which had identified in its work the need for this legislation, separate to a review of the Anti-Discrimination Act and the inclusion of religion within it. The joint committee recommended that any review of the Anti-Discrimination Act should:

... assess the effectiveness of the religious vilification provisions in the NSW *Crimes Act 1900* and whether ... protections are required in the Act.

In discussing the bill, I begin with some illustrations from my electorate. The electorate of Wagga Wagga and the city itself are home to communities of faith that have fled religious persecution in their origin countries. They now call Australia home. Their faith is central to their identity. Those communities include the Yazidi, Burmese and Tibetan communities. The Burmese community has fled religious and political violence in Myanmar and they have called for peace in their home country. They are a predominantly Buddhist community. On that note, Recently I celebrated the eighty-eighth birthday of the Dalai Lama with the Wagga Wagga Tibetan community and the Potowa Buddhist Group. The Dalai Lama and his followers have been subject to international sanctions and attacks.

The Yazidi community has become a very significant part of Wagga Wagga, which is home to the first Yazidi burial site in Australia. I believe more than 2,000 Yazidi refugees have resettled in New South Wales and nearly a 1,000 have resettled in Wagga Wagga. They are amongst the most persecuted religious people in the world. They have come to Australia to evade persecution. As Australians, we take pride in providing a refuge for the persecuted. The bill is an important step in reinforcing those values. Wagga also has a significant Islamic population and a proposal for a mosque in Wagga has recently been approved by the council. Sadly, it was reported in local media that Islamophobic submissions to council had delayed the process of approval.

I read some of those submissions and they are disappointing. Islamic people are described, among other things, as violent terrorists, so I can understand the concern among members of the Islamic community about the potential for vilification. We have heard instances and evidence of that in the speeches given by other members in debate on the bill. On a positive note, more than 75 per cent of the submissions received by the Wagga council were supportive. I congratulate the council on its unanimous decision to approve the first permanent mosque in Wagga Wagga. That is the background from my electorate that supports this important bill.

I believe the bill will lend support to the Islamic community and all the religious communities that have been subjected to vilification on the basis of their faith. Importantly, it will provide ways to seek civil remedies for those who have been vilified. When the previous bill was debated, opponents of it said it was not the right time and that changes should not be made until there was Commonwealth legislation and a complete review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. I understand the Government has referred the matter of religion and the Anti-Discrimination Act to the Law Reform Commission for review. That is great, but I said then and I say now that there is no time line on the Commonwealth legislation, and the joint select committee received evidence in 2021 that there were no actual impediments to implementing legislation relating to vilification. Religion should be included as an attribute in the anti-discrimination legislation as recommended by the joint select committee. In fact, we lag behind all other States except South Australia and the Commonwealth in that regard. In the meantime, the bill is a small but important step on vilification.

I note three important points that were raised by the Attorney General. First, the bill was an election commitment of the Government. Second, he noted that it will extend the same form of protection from vilification that already exists in the Act with respect to race, to homosexuality, and to transgender and HIV status to those vilified on the basis of religion. That complements the provisions in the Crimes Act that cover inciting or threatening violence, which provides remedies to people subjected to incitements of hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule on the basis of religion. Third, the Attorney General noted that complaints of religious vilification can be made to the president of the Anti-Discrimination Board, who will encourage mediation, if possible, and who can otherwise refer a complaint to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The tribunal can then order a range of remedies, including damages or an apology or retraction, if it finds that the complaint is substantiated. It was noted previously that the provisions currently in the Act relate to vilification on the basis of ethno-religious grounds; however, as many members have pointed out, they simply do not cover religious communities in their entirety. It is quite a narrow definition. Even the Public Interest Advocacy Centre indicated to the joint select committee that including religious vilification in the bill would offer broader protections than those in the Crimes Act.

I have observed some criticisms of the bill, including the fact that it includes groups, meaning religious institutions. Loss of freedom of speech is also a concern and that giving individuals and groups of faith protection will somehow fuel intolerant views from religious extremists. For many faiths, religious institutions and groups are central to the practice of religion and religious views and are considered to be sacred to their followers. In my view, it is important to include groups as well as individuals in the legislation. I am not convinced that the bill curtails freedom of speech. Based on my reading, new section 49ZE (2) allows exemptions for a number of situations, including:

- (a) a fair report of a public act ...
- (b) a communication or the distribution or dissemination of any matter ... that would be subject to a defence of absolute privilege ... for defamation, or
- (c) a public act, done reasonably and in good faith, for academic, artistic, scientific, research or religious ... or other purposes in the public interest ... I believe there is a balance in terms of freedom of speech.

Finally, there is an idea that the bill will somehow fuel intolerant views. I do not think that the bill will do that at all. The bill puts individuals of faith and faith-based groups on an equal ranking with people who have other protected attributes. The rights of others are not infringed upon, and if people have been vilified there are existing civil penalties for them. That is not changing. I firmly believe that introducing legislation to stop religious vilification is a necessary step towards creating a more inclusive, tolerant and multicultural Australia.

Freedom of speech is vital in any democracy, but it should never be used as a sword to spread hate or incite discrimination against individuals or communities based on their religious beliefs. We must have a space in our democratic society where there can be clear, respectful debate and expression of beliefs. I note the comments of the member for Sydney earlier today in relation to the pitting of faith groups and LGBTQI community groups against each other. I believe that we need to find a space in our society where public debate can be respectful, but where we can still allow a variety of views to be expressed. That does not mean people will agree with each other, but it should mean people are not treated poorly and without respect. It should mean that in a truly modern secular society like ours, there is space for the fair expression of views, and that includes religious faith, religious views and religious expression.

That is the essence, I think, of the modern society we want to create in Australia, where we accept people of different religions, faiths and views, and allow them to express them and participate in public life. It does not necessarily mean they run things for other people; it does mean they have a right to have their views heard. By passing this legislation we are sending a clear message that this Parliament values the free, respectful expression of beliefs. It is about safeguarding the rights and dignity of individuals and religious groups and ensuring that they can practise their beliefs freely without fear of persecution or harm. We are reinforcing our common commitment to upholding the fundamental principles of human rights and equality under the law.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (14:41):** I speak in support of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. I thank the Attorney General for his work in preparing the bill and his collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including religious and faith organisations, legal stakeholders and advocacy groups. The bill is an incredibly important law reform for the people of New South Wales. This State has the highest number of people of faith in Australia, yet there are currently no legislative measures that sufficiently protect our faith communities from open discrimination. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and as member for Prospect—a community with people from a vast array of religious backgrounds—and a practising Catholic, I know firsthand how important the bill is and the protection it will bring to millions of people every day.

In the electorate of Prospect, I am especially lucky and proud to represent a vibrant and significant faith community. Faith plays a meaningful and important role in the lives of members of the Prospect community and people across Western Sydney. As the member for Prospect, I have the opportunity to collaborate with a vast array of diverse faith communities, including Catholic, Coptic, Maronite, Hindu, Chaldean, Buddhist, Islamic, Orthodox and Protestant faith traditions. In fact, the Prospect electorate is home to the largest and most active faith community in New South Wales. Unfortunately, people of faith experience hate speech, vilification, dissonance, exclusion and even aggression every day in my community and across New South Wales purely because of what they believe and who they are. Speech and inflammatory actions against religious leaders, acts of Islamophobia or antisemitism, and acts that target Christians or minority groups such as Ahmadis, Baha'is or Yazidis are all manifestations of utter disrespect. They are offensive, irresponsible and wrong.

A crescent, a star, a cross—for some these symbols might mean little, but for millions they have a deep significance. They are the incarnation of immense history, a far-reaching system of values, a foundation of collective community and belonging, and the essence of identity and core beliefs. Incidents such as the recent burning of the *Koran* in Sweden, anti-Christian graffiti on religious sites in the Holy Land, and Nazi salutes given to intimidate the Jewish community in Australia have been manufactured to express contempt and inflame anger, to drive wedges between people and to provoke, transforming differences of perspective into hatred and violence. In July this year *The European Times* reported that 84 per cent of the world's population identify with a religious community. It is important to highlight that the most persecuted religion in the world today is Christianity. Since 2021 people have been kidnapped or killed across 40 countries because of their faith. Some 5,621 Christians have sadly lost their lives in the past 12 months, simply because of their faith. These upsetting figures that have been curated through various reports, scientific research and field experiences show that there is a prevailing climate of religious intolerance, and the absence of legal safeguards is particularly concerning.

Freedom of religion is a fundamental human right as specified in article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Religious intolerance is unacceptable, particularly in our diverse and multicultural Australian communities, which consist of people from different backgrounds. It is unacceptable that the spreading of public hatred and hostility exists in what should be a respectful and contemporary society. It is unacceptable that religious vilification has not been addressed by previous governments that have failed to see the rising religious intolerance in our community. On 27 July a petition of over 500 signatures was delivered to the Prospect electorate office. These signatures were from individuals and families from all over Western Sydney who wished to express their support of anti-discrimination laws that include religious vilification. I thank all individuals and families who have taken the time to reach out to me over many months to personally voice their concerns.

This reform is desperately needed so that people are discouraged from spreading hatred towards others due to their religion and beliefs. The reform will also ensure that a victim of religious vilification will be able to lodge a complaint with the president of the Anti-Discrimination Board and, if successful, will be able to access a range of potential remedies including damages, an apology and cessation of any future unlawful activity. It will also bring New South Wales into line with religious vilification laws in other Australian jurisdictions such as Victoria, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania. The bill is the first step in recognising the unaddressed discrimination faced by the communities that I represent and all faith communities throughout New South Wales. Specifically, the bill will amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 and will implement the Labor Government's election commitment to introduce a civil prohibition on religious vilification.

The Minns Labor Government has also made a pre-election commitment of some \$10 million to help faith organisations improve safety and security at places of worship, schools and community centres. It is sad that it has had to make such a commitment. In a community town hall meeting in February 2023, the Premier also affirmed that government has a role in supporting and defending faith traditions "against those who advocate hatred and even violence against other citizens". The Anti-Discrimination Act in its current form makes vilification unlawful on the grounds of race, homosexuality, transgender status and HIV/AIDS status. Including religious vilification in the Act is a welcome and desirable outcome for the New South Wales community. The bill will also make it unlawful for a person, by any public act, to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person, or group of persons, because of a person's religious belief, affiliation or activity. Those measures are consistent with the existing vilification provisions in the Anti-Discrimination Act, which prohibits vilification on the grounds of race, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS and transgender status.

Schedule 1 to the bill will insert part 4BA. New section 49ZD outlines the definitions relevant to the bill, namely the specification of what constitutes a "public act". For the purposes of the bill, a public act is intended as communication that is not private, and it covers a variety of possible acts. For instance, it includes forms of communication such as speaking, writing, printing, displaying notices, broadcasting, telecasting, screening and playing recorded material. It also includes conduct such as actions and gestures, and the wearing of or display of clothing, signs, flags or insignia.

It is important to note that the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal observed in *Riley v State of New South Wales (Department of Education)* [2019] that it is not always possible to proscribe all possible acts that may be considered public rather than private in advance of time. Factors that are relevant in considering whether a communication has been acted in public include where a speaker addresses an audience, irrespective of whether the speaker has a pre-existing relationship with that audience. New section 49ZE in part 4BA specifies provisions that make religious vilification unlawful. It also makes clear that the following actions are not unlawful: a fair report of an unlawful public act; a communication or the distribution or dissemination of any matter on an occasion that would be subject to a defence of absolute privilege in proceedings for defamation; and a public act that is done reasonably and in good faith for a purpose in the public interest, including academic, artistic, scientific, research or religious discussion or instruction.

The exemptions are intended to allow public acts that have been done reasonably and in good faith in the public interest for a range of purposes, including discussion and debate. That exemption is consistent with the exemptions proposed in other religious vilification laws and frameworks, such as the precedent set by *Sunol v Collier* [2012] 81 NSWLR 619— [*Extension of time*]

*Sunol v Collier* held that for a public act to be considered to be reasonable, it must have a rational relationship to the protected activity and not be disproportionate to what is necessary to carry it out. In the creation and implementation of the bill, it has also been appropriate to consider how best to balance freedom of speech and expression with the protection of people of faith from vilification and harm. Freedom of speech is a critical aspect of our society. However, it is appropriate that there are some limits to protect members of our community from religious vilification. This decision is consistent with other jurisdictions across Australia and established by international law. For example, article 19 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that freedom of expression may be limited by law when necessary to protect the rights and reputations of others, national security, public order, public health and morals.

The exemptions proposed strike an appropriate balance to ensure that specific conduct is not deemed as unlawful. That includes actions done reasonably and in good faith, such as religious discussion or academic research. That exemption helps to prevent religious vilification laws from being used to stop legitimate public discussion and expression on contentious or important issues. In short, the bill does not prevent people from being able to express their reasonable religious views. In conclusion, the bill is a long-overdue reform that is necessary to further enhance acceptance and respect in our modern multicultural society in New South Wales. It ensures that millions of people of faith in our communities can practise their faith without fear of harm, contempt or discrimination.

It is important to remember the immense benefit that diversity brings to all societies. All people have an equal right to believe or not to believe. That is fundamental to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that unites us. We must continue to promote interfaith harmony and mutual respect in the interest of all people and all communities in New South Wales. Irrespective of one's own religious belief, or lack of belief, people need to act with respect for all others. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and State member for Prospect, which is home to the largest practising faith community in New South Wales, I am proud to support the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023 that has been introduced by the Minns Labor Government. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (14:55):** I make a brief contribution to debate on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. As the title suggests, the aim of the bill is to make it unlawful to, by a public act, incite hatred towards or seriously ridicule a person, or group of persons, due to their religious beliefs, affiliations or activities. That will be achieved by amending the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 to introduce a civil prohibition of religious vilification, consistent with the existing vilification provisions under the Act. Simply, it draws a line in the sand and provides protection for people who may have been, or would be, targeted by others simply because of their religious beliefs.

The bill is consistent with existing vilification provisions in the Act that prohibit vilification of people on the grounds of race, sexual preferences, HIV/AIDS status or transgender status. Let me make it clear: the bill aims to prevent people from being vilified on religious grounds. It does not protect those who choose to use religion as grounds to vilify others. We have come a long way as a society in terms of acceptance, but there is still plenty of room for improvement. It was 120-odd years ago that women in Australia were finally granted the right to vote. It took another 60 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be granted the same basic democratic right. We should strive to be a State and nation of acceptance and inclusivity, not one that divides and vilifies. We should be a State and nation motivated by love, not hate. That is what the bill aims to achieve.

The Law Reform Commission is tasked by the Government to review the Act as a whole. I certainly welcome that review; however, there is no need to wait for the review to be completed before introducing legislation that prohibits religious vilification. It is a no-brainer to draw a line in the sand regarding vilification of any type, whether that be based on gender, sexuality, race or, in this case, religion. The bill is a far cry from the one introduced last year by a One Nation member in the other place. That bill, as we all know, was essentially a sheep in wolf's clothing that aimed to protect people from being vilified on religious grounds while also protecting them from vilifying others on those same grounds. That bill, like many of that member's views and opinions, was out of touch with the progressive nature of our society and our State.

It is important to note that the bill will also protect those who hold no religious beliefs or affiliations. It really is a bill that aims to protect everyone in this State from being vilified due to their beliefs. The New South Wales Government is not reinventing the wheel; the amendments are broadly consistent with those in other States and Territories, including Queensland, Victoria, the Australia Capital Territory and Tasmania. It is a shame that New South Wales could not have been a pioneer in this space. However, as history shows, progression was not a concept the former Government was familiar with during its 12 years in power.

It is also important to clearly define exactly what vilification is. The bill makes it clear that vilification occurs if a person, by a public act, incites hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group because of a protected attribute or ground. The grounds share a common definition of public act, which includes any form of communication to the public, including speaking, writing, printing, displaying notices or broadcasting. Again, I reiterate that the bill aims to stamp out intolerance, hostility and abuse, and to promote acceptance, diversity and inclusivity.

There are critics that claim laws such as this suppress free speech; however, I do not believe those concerns are justified. Freedom of speech is used far too often as a shield that cowards who preach hate hide behind. The bill makes sure that those who spread and incite hate are held responsible and are accountable for their actions. I am proud to represent the electorate of Heathcote, which leads the way in acceptance and embracing others. We only need to travel to the Royal National Park, the second oldest national park in the world, on a hot summer's day to witness the incredible cultural diversity on display. It is always heartening to see both visitors and locals enjoying the beauty of the Royal National Park together. I commend the Attorney General for his work regarding the bill.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:00):** I contribute to debate on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. This important bill is long overdue and the result of a Labor commitment in the most recent election. The bill amends the Anti-Discrimination Act to introduce a civil prohibition on religious vilification consistent with the existing vilification provisions in the Act. It makes it unlawful to, by a public act, incite hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person, or group of persons, because of their

religious belief, affiliation or activity. It is consistent with the existing vilification provisions in the Act that prohibit vilification on the grounds of race, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS status and transgender status.

The bill includes important exemptions to the prohibition that allows public communication for a purpose that is in the public interest. It is in line with private members' bills introduced in the past two parliaments by the former member for Liverpool and shadow Attorney General, Paul Lynch. Those bills were supported by Labor and many crossbench MPs, including the member for Wagga Wagga, but were consistently rejected by members opposite. They thought that the Commonwealth was going to act in this regard and they kicked the can down the road, which means that this reform is long overdue.

A complete review of the Anti-Discrimination Act is warranted, and the Law Reform Commission is currently undertaking such a review. But it is important that we make this amendment to the Act today because it is so overdue. We cannot wait any longer to provide people with protections that are so sorely needed. The bill is needed so that people who are subjected to vilification because of their religion can have recourse to remedies. It will discourage people from spreading hate to others because of their religion. It is needed because this has been tested in the courts and the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal on multiple occasions and been found wanting. Under these reforms, a victim of religious vilification will be able to lodge a complaint and, if successful, they will be able to access a range of remedies, which can include damages and a requirement that the other party apologise or cease any unlawful activity.

New South Wales is an incredibly religious State, and it has a huge diversity of faith. The spreading of public hatred or hostility should not be accepted in any modern society, and certainly not in one like ours where we have such a diversity of faith and where people generally live in harmony with one another. We need to protect and enhance that. There are existing protections against vilification in the Anti-Discrimination Act, and it is appropriate that those protections are also available to people because of their religion. I refer to a few examples of people being subjected to appalling discrimination on the basis of their religion. We need to send a strong message that it is unacceptable.

Many times houses of worship of many different faiths have been attacked—with vandalism, pig head dumping or graffiti. That incites fear in all people who practise their faith at those places. Only a few months ago, the BAPS Mandir in Rosehill—across the road from my house—was targeted because it is a Hindu temple. The member for Oatley, other MPs and I visited to offer our apologies on behalf of the communities we represent. Whoever sprayed graffiti all over their building thought that somehow being Hindu meant that people supported the extreme Hindu nationalist elements within the Indian Government. They sought to characterise the Prime Minister of India as a Hindu extremist. Some people think that; some people do not. But certainly that was the message that the people who sprayed graffiti over the temple wanted to spread. It was distressing for everyone involved. They were very keen to turn the other cheek and move on with their lives.

I refer also to an incident at Bay Vista in Parramatta in November 2019 when Rana Elasmara, a 38-week pregnant woman, was assaulted while sitting in the outdoor dining area. She was just eating dessert with her friends when a man jumped across the table, punched her, tried to remove her hijab and said all sorts of despicable things about Muslims. These sorts of incidents are unacceptable. Elements of them are captured by crimes legislation, but the language used is totally unacceptable in modern society, and vilification makes people fear violence.

The bill is also needed because the racial definitions used in the Act do not effectively cover ethno-religious origin and have limited effectiveness in protecting people from this form of discrimination. It has been investigated and, while it may have been the intent of the original drafting, the Act only protects people against religious discrimination on very limited grounds. As an example, for Jews or Sikhs ethnicity and religion are one and the same thing. Members of large religions such as Christianity or Islam, or even Hinduism and Buddhism, which have many different ethnicities, have no protection whatsoever.

It has been tested in the courts in the case of *Jones And Harbour Radio Pty Limited v Trad* [2011], which related to incitement by Alan Jones when he made all sorts of appalling comments about Lebanese Muslims prior to the Cronulla riots. In that case was observed the need for a common religious origin and other characteristics that can fairly be seen as so closely akin to those of an ethnic group that it is reasonable to call the group one of ethno-religious origin. The tribunal determined that Islam did not amount to an ethno-religious origin because it is far broader. The same view was held again in 2019 when Sonia Kruger was found to have vilified Muslims. Even when she made a clear link between the community and terrorism, it was found that she had not vilified Muslims because they are not part of a common ethno-religious origin and not protected by the Act—not because she did not do it.

That is very much consistent with the existing provisions in the Act. I know there are concerns that this will be too broad, but it is actually narrow. We see constantly that people are not using the Act. People who are

protected by the existing provisions of the Act use them not when they are offended but when they are vilified and have a reasonable fear of persecution and violence from the incitement against them. In the past, some have argued that religion need not be protected because people choose their religion and that is somehow different from ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender, which people are born with. But most people inherit their faith from their parents, and most converts feel that their faith found them. Some people who are subjected to religious discrimination are not religious but are assumed, because of their cultural and family backgrounds, to hold a faith. So they are subjected to the same incitement and hatred as people of faith who are far more religious. This legislation is long overdue and must be passed by the Parliament. [*Extension of time*]

Incitement is narrowly defined in the bill, which is important. It is defined as "to rouse, stimulate, urge or spur on others". It is not necessary to prove that the vilifier intended to incite hatred or that anyone was incited by the practice, but it is much more serious than conveying hatred, serious contempt or ridicule. That is what is important here. This is not an attack on freedom of speech. People will still be allowed to ridicule others because of their religion or lack of faith. It is not a nice thing to do, but it is an important balancing act that must be achieved. Incitement of vilification is quite terrifying for people who are subjected to vilification. For that reason, this important bill is worded carefully.

This issue has been the subject of advocacy from faith communities for many years. It has been considered carefully every time we have debated this subject in the Chamber. The bill is long overdue. It is important that we pass it today to protect communities like the one I represent, where over 20 per cent of the population are Catholic, over 20 per cent are Muslim and over 10 per cent are Hindu. Nearly 90 per cent of the people in my community are people of faith. They need to be able to practise their faith in peace and harmony, and to establish new houses of worship without being demonised, criticised unduly or even subjected to attack and incitement, which has happened in the past. It is distressing to hear that that has happened when someone has applied to build or acquire a building for the purpose of enabling people to come together to pray.

Providing these protections is important for the harmonious functioning of our society. But, alongside that, we should recognise the work of many people within faith communities to support interfaith dialogue, which is also important to the harmonious functioning of our multi-faith society. I particularly commend the work that has been done over many years by people such as Bishop Vincent of Parramatta, Sheikh Shadi and so many others who are committed to making sure that we have a harmonious society and that people have an opportunity to ask questions about other faiths and promote greater understanding. That too is important. Today we are presented with important legislation that will provide much-needed and long-overdue protections against religious vilification. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:14):** I speak in support of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023, which seeks to make it unlawful to vilify a person or group of persons on the ground of the person's or group's religious belief or affiliation or engagement in religious activity. It targets a gap that religious stakeholders have raised with the Government and with me, which is extending vilification protections in the Act to include religion and providing an important protection for people of faith. The current provisions on racial vilification apply to vilification on the basis of ethno-religious origin, and communities have indicated that this has been interpreted narrowly. I therefore welcome the amendment in the bill that means religious vilification complaints can be considered through their own separate ground without needing to inquire into whether an ethno-religious origin can be established.

The bill also ensures, through new section 49ZE (2) (c), that legitimate public discussion in the public interest is not made unlawful by the provisions. This aligns with and maintains the rights of our community to continue to express and challenge views in a peaceful and productive way. It is something that has cemented New South Wales as the multicultural success story it is today, ensuring that people can carry on their own religious practices and expression. New South Wales has embraced migrants since the earliest days of settlement, and we continue to welcome new communities as we adapt to global economic, political and demographic trends. I am proud that our State sets an example to the rest of the world as a peaceful and harmonious multicultural society. The civil prohibitions in the bill will complement the existing related criminal offence in the Crimes Act 1900, section 93Z, which the Liberal-Nationals Government introduced in 2018.

As the Attorney General stated in his second reading speech, it is important that there are reasonable limits on expression to prevent people being the target of hatred. The bill is intended to ensure that people in New South Wales can maintain their religious beliefs and practise their religion without fear of vilification, and to provide a remedy for religious vilification if it occurs. While today is an important step, it would be remiss of me not to call out the Government's lack of consultation on this bill with the Religious Communities Advisory Council. The former Liberal-Nationals Government created the council while I was Minister. It aims to formalise the work and collaboration that has been happening between the Government and religious communities for years. So when I was listening to stakeholders, some of whom are members of the council, in the lead-up to this debate, I was

extremely disappointed to hear that the Government did not even attempt to bring this group together. The Government should have taken the time to work with our religious community on this to ensure that, if community leaders want further reform, it could have been included in this debate and discussed today.

Our Parliament has worked tirelessly to ensure that New South Wales is the multicultural success story we are today, and after today the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023 will further back our history of achievements in this space. Although today is another step in ensuring that we maintain and protect the freedoms of faith and religious communities, we must all continue to play our part in working with religious and multicultural stakeholders to ensure that they can practise their faith as freely as possible. The Government needs to commit to continuing to work in this space and act on any advice that the Law Reform Commission provides following its review.

While criminal and civil laws can provide a degree of protection to the community, they need to be complemented by efforts to empower communities to play a positive role in preventing and responding to hate. The former Liberal-Nationals Government also supported community-led responses to counter hateful, divisive and extremist influences through initiatives like Community Partnership Action—or COMPACT—and Remove Hate From The Debate. I strongly encourage the Government to continue to take a holistic approach to prevent religious vilification, hate and division, which threaten our successful multicultural and multi-faith society. The bill is one positive step in that direction, but there is still more to do in protecting the freedoms of religious communities across New South Wales.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (15:19):** I speak in support of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. The bill is a long time coming and seeks to redress the injustice and discrimination experienced by some in our community. I for one am glad to see the conversion and sudden understanding of the importance of the bill by those on the other side of the Chamber. The bill does so by amending the Anti-Discrimination Act to introduce a civil prohibition on religious vilification, consistent with existing provisions in the Act that prohibit vilification on the grounds of race, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS status and transgender status.

Although Australia is a proudly secular democracy, faith and religion are a core tenet of many people's lives, especially in my community. The recent census showed that people in the Liverpool local government area identified as amongst the most religious in the country. Our richly multi-religious community—which includes Christians of many denominations, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, Mandeans and those of many other religions—is quite vibrant. I often engage with people in my community in places of worship. Religions span national, geographic, cultural and ethnic boundaries and may be the focus of individual and/or family identification.

Religious institutions and observances play an important role in catering to people's social, psychological and cultural needs, as well as their spiritual needs. When we speak of the beauty of Australian multiculturalism, we often focus on food, festivals and fun. We focus, rightly, on the innumerable benefits that having diversity in our classrooms, our workplaces and our community spaces brings. However, the complexities of our multicultural and multi-religious society mean that we must have an appropriate legal infrastructure and pathways to enable justice for those who experience religious vilification in our community.

Currently, the Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits religious vilification in a limited manner. For the purposes of the existing racial discrimination provisions, the term "race" is defined to include "colour, nationality, descent and ethnic, ethno-religious or national origin". However, "ethno-religious origin" has been interpreted narrowly in tribunal considerations of the issue. Determining whether a group has an ethno-religious origin for that purpose requires considering evidence about whether members of the group identify with the shared history and customs associated with the group's religious practices. The group should regard themselves as being one community and be viewed by those outside the group as having a distinct and separate identity. That concept has not been found to apply consistently to all religions, with the tribunal having variously held that "Middle Eastern Muslim" is a race within the definition of ethno-religious origin, while "Australian Muslim" is not. The amendments in the bill will ensure that that protection is properly extended to all religions.

Vilification under any of the grounds in the Act and in the bill occurs if a person, by a public act, incites hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons because of a protected attribute or ground. The grounds share a common definition of "public act" that includes any form of communication to the public, including speaking, writing, printing, displaying notices and broadcasting. They share a similar set of exceptions that ensure that particular actions are not unlawful for fair reports of a public act; communication of any matter on an occasion that would be subject to a defence of absolute privilege under defamation law; or public acts done reasonably and in good faith for academic, artistic, scientific or research purposes or for other purposes in the public interest, including discussion or debate about and expositions of any

act or matter. Those exceptions are intended to ensure an appropriate balance with freedom of speech and expression.

Members in this place have a responsibility to ensure that we provide protections for those who are most vulnerable in our community. In my inaugural speech I said that having a voice is powerful. It is a privilege because so many do not have a voice when they should. It is largely people who find themselves vulnerable and without a voice who are currently unprotected. The bill will help redress that. Every so often outrage is transmitted virally via social media and other networks at incidents of racism, discrimination or religious vilification in our public spaces. What we do not often see are the after-effects of those incidents on the people who have experienced the abuse or vilification. The fear and humiliation experienced by people and groups targeted by vilification can prevent them from properly engaging in public life and discussion. It leaves them vulnerable to emotional, psychological and physical impacts that are corrosive to the fundamental identity and soul of a person. Furthermore, experiencing vilification based on such a core aspect of one's identity also underscores the idea that some in our community do not belong.

In an age when we celebrate our rich multiculturalism and reap the benefits of our diversity, it beggars belief that that has not been addressed by previous governments. I acknowledge and commend my predecessor in this place, former member for Liverpool Paul Lynch, for his advocacy and work in addressing that issue as the shadow Attorney General. He understood the importance of ensuring the Anti-Discrimination Act contained specific protections against religious vilification. It gives me great pleasure to see the current Attorney General and the Minns Labor Government finally moving towards ensuring natural justice for parts of our community that have thus far been denied it.

As the member for Bankstown so rightly said earlier in the debate, the bill is about giving people a shield rather than a sword. It is about providing protections to some of our most vulnerable community members. In doing so, the bill seeks to set a standard that this Government stands for inclusion and acceptance. It tells the young girl in a hijab, the young boy wearing a turban and others who visibly practise their faith that they belong in our community and our society, that if they experience vilification then the problem is with the other person, not with them, and that they can expect this Government and the law to protect and stand up for them and to afford them the dignity of natural justice. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (15:26):** I support the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. The object of the bill is to make religious vilification of individuals and groups unlawful. It does so by amending the Anti-Discrimination Act. It has been a long-held view by the Labor Party that religious vilification should have been included in the Act. The Act already lists a number of attributes of individuals in relation to which vilification is unlawful. The bill proposes to add religion to those other attributes. Proceeding in that way has the advantage of building upon a structure that is already there with a jurisprudence that has been developed over time.

Schedule 1 to the bill inserts new part 4BA into the Act. It also inserts new section 49ZE, which makes it unlawful for a person, by a public act, to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the ground that they have or do not have a religious belief or affiliation, or engage or do not engage in religious activity. Schedule 1 also inserts new section 49ZD, which defines "public act" in a manner consistent with the existing vilification provisions. A public act includes any form of communication to the public, including speaking, writing, printing, broadcasting or screening, as well as non-verbal conduct observable by the public.

The definition also includes the distribution or dissemination of matter to the public with knowledge that it promotes or expresses hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the grounds of religious belief or affiliation or religious activity. The new grounds for vilification covered by the bill is holding or not holding religious belief or religious affiliation, or engaging in or not engaging in religious activity. New section 49ZE (2), inserted by schedule 1 to the bill, contains three exceptions that prevent conduct that would otherwise amount to religious vilification from being unlawful.

The exceptions apply to a fair report of a public act; a communication or the distribution or dissemination of any matter on an occasion that would be subject to a defence of absolute privilege under defamation law in proceedings for defamation; and a public act, done reasonably and in good faith, for academic, artistic, scientific, research or religious discussion or instruction purposes, or for other purposes in the public interest, including discussion or debate about and expositions of an act or matter. The final exception contained at new section 49ZE (2) (c) ensures that legitimate public discussion in the public interest is not made unlawful by the provisions.

It is a minor amendment long sought for by members on this side of the Chamber. I welcome the revelation that members on the other side of the Chamber now accept this long sought-after amendment to the Act that Labor

members pursued. I urge members, particularly those on the crossbench, to reference previous bills introduced by the Labor Party in this Chamber. I particularly acknowledge the work of former member for Liverpool Paul Lynch, our colleague who long sought to amend the Act, and that of Billal Rauf, who has done considerable work.

It is also a change that is very important to many residents within the Auburn electorate community who have also long sought this minor but significantly important change. As the previous shadow Attorney General, Paul Lynch, noted in this House, there was obviously an attempt to make illegal some types of religious vilification in the Anti-Discrimination Act in the 1994 amendment. Whilst originally section 20C of the principal Act rendered racial vilification unlawful, vilification against a person or a group of persons on the grounds of the race of the person or persons was and is unlawful. After the 1994 amendment, section 4 of the Act defined race as including ethno-religious origin. This was an important step forward towards the recognition of both race and religion and, according to the second reading speech of the then Attorney General, Jim Hannaford, intended to include Sikhism, Judaism and Islam. There was clearly an intention by this Parliament, at least in relation to some religions, to make religious vilification unlawful. Hannaford stated at the time:

The effect of the ... amendment is to clarify that ethno-religious groups, such as Jews, Muslims and Sikhs have access to the racial vilification and discrimination provisions of the Act.

This formulation built upon a report to the other place by the Hon. James Samios in 1992. This amendment, therefore, is not inconsistent with the intent of the original legislation and makes the incremental adjustments to ensure that the original bill works in the way it was intended by the New South Wales Parliament, in particular as outlined in that second reading speech. The civil prohibition in the bill will complement the existing related criminal offence in section 93Z of the Crimes Act 1900, which applies to religion and prohibits publicly threatening or inciting violence towards a person or group on grounds including religious belief or affiliation.

It is a reality in my electorate that women, in particular, are the subject of hatred and vilification, especially when travelling on public transport and in public spaces. Many in this Chamber will recall the appalling attack on Rana Elasmari in Parramatta in 2019 while she was sitting at a cafe. The *Islamophobia in Australia - IV* report noted that attacking religious appearance was the most common form of abuse and accounted for 64 per cent of insults, with insults to women wearing the hijab being 65 per cent of insults made offline. Overwhelmingly, the majority of female victims were harassed by male perpetrators. Two out of three Muslim women victims who reported to the Islamophobia Register were harassed by a male perpetrator. Women experienced more verbal intimidation and harassment than men. The report also found that a victim's gender played a role in the content of anti-Muslim racial slurs. Violence was associated with Muslim men, which would be covered by the Crimes Act, while religious insults and misogynistic foul language were particularly directed at women.

This lies at the heart of why this amendment is so important to women. I urge crossbench members, particularly my comrades from The Greens, to support this legislation specifically for its protection for women who are at the heart of vilification that is received. The Government recognises that the Act as a whole is out of date and in need of an overhaul. That is why there has been a commitment to tasking the NSW Law Reform Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of the Act. However, given the long history of how we have pursued this legislation in the House and given the severity of vilification towards women, particularly in my electorate, it is untenable that this legislation is not passed now.

When the first outbreak of COVID happened in Western Sydney, members of the Chinese community and particularly women of Chinese heritage were subjected to appalling treatment and vilification due solely to their race, especially while travelling on public transport and in public spaces. Likewise, as has been noted in the Islamophobia Register, women of the Muslim faith in particular have also been subject to appalling vilification and harassment solely on the basis of religious appearance, again while travelling on public transport or in public spaces. One act of vilification has been covered by the Act; the other is not. This quite straightforward bill before the House fixes that problem.

A person will be able to lodge a complaint with the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board, who will attempt to encourage conciliation but who may also refer the complaint to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. If the tribunal finds a complaint is substantiated, it may order a range of remedies depending on the particular circumstances of the matter, including damages or orders requiring an apology, a retraction, or to not engage in further unlawful activity. This is an important bill that will fill a gap in the law. It tries to deliver on the Parliament's original intention in 1994. It meets a request of advocates and will encourage a more tolerant society. I urge all members of the House to support this bill.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (15:35):** I support the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023, which amends the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. The bill affirms this Government's election commitment to make religious vilification unlawful. This amendment makes it unlawful to incite hatred, serious contempt or ridicule of a person or persons on the basis of their religious beliefs, affiliation or activity.

Australia is one of the world's strongest, most open and most fair democracies. Australia is also one of the most successful multicultural societies, where integration with the Australian way of life does not require people to abandon their culture or faith. This inclusivity has enriched our society. It has culminated in a society where everything from the way we celebrate to the foods we eat is made better by multicultural communities. For many families, different nights of the week often mark a different type of cuisine from the local Chinese, Indian, Italian or Japanese—or it might even be Macca's or Mexican take-out.

In our society, a place is often celebrated for its unity and harmony. There is no place for hostility or violence. Strengthening the protection against religious vilification is in the spirit of the Australian way and will further entrench these values within this great State. To maintain our successful multicultural way of life we must always remain vigilant and can never fall into a cycle of hatred. Different cultures often follow different religions. Someone's religious affiliation should never be grounds for them to be vilified. These reforms provide remedies for those who are subject to discrimination based on their religion, and consequently discourage the spread of hatred. Victims will have the ability to lodge complaints and, if successful, access remedies such as damages, apologies or a cessation of any unlawful activity.

Religion plays a great role in the identity and lives of many people in New South Wales. This is particularly the case in Riverstone, a vibrant and diverse electorate that is home to many cultures and religions. In my electorate the number of Hindus has tripled and the number of Muslims has doubled, with other religious affiliations also growing just over the past five years. The number of those born overseas has more than doubled over the past five years. For immigrants, religious ties serve a strong link to their cultural background and facilitate important community interactions. Across the Blacktown local government area, part of which is also the Riverstone electorate, there are 188 different places of birth and over 183 different languages spoken.

The people of Riverstone need this amendment. I have heard countless stories from my constituents about hateful sentiments being hurled in their direction based solely on the fact they believe in a different god or engage in practices that may seem foreign. I have attended events held by many religious groups and have witnessed firsthand the importance of religious beliefs to many of my constituents. Religious organisations within Riverstone play an important role in the social fabric. They engage in philanthropic work such as food donations, flood clean-up assistance and elderly care. I have seen it firsthand while working alongside people who are dedicated to their faith and to their community.

As the populations of differing religious affiliations grow across the State, and especially in Riverstone, this amendment is needed to offer those from diverse cultures and faiths much-needed peace of mind and security. This amendment tells the people of New South Wales that they can practise their faith without fear of reprisal. It is a step towards stamping out the hate that lingers evasively within our State. The crucial protection offered to the people of New South Wales by this amendment has been drafted with appropriate consultation with affected stakeholders, such as religious organisations and community groups. The Department of Communities and Justice wrote to over 50 separate organisations seeking consultation. The majority of responses were very supportive. Consultation allowed for fine-tuning of the amendment, ultimately creating legislation that appropriately reflects the diversity associated with religion.

It is important to note that statutory protection from religious vilification is not a novel concept. The amendments introduced by the Minns Government are broadly consistent with laws found in other jurisdictions such as Victoria, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania. While this Government has also tasked the Law Reform Commission to conduct a review into the 1977 Anti-Discrimination Act as a whole, there is no need to wait when it comes to protecting the people of New South Wales from religious vilification. This amendment fills the gap in existing provisions, creating accurate legislation that adequately represents the diversity within New South Wales. In that light, the amendment also provides protection for those who do not follow a religion. A lack of religious alignment constitutes a position in relation to religion and, hence, these persons will also be protected from being vilified. This measure aligns with provisions laid out in all other jurisdictions.

Another important element of this amendment—indeed, any anti-discrimination legislation—is consideration of the impact on an individual's freedom of speech. Our democratic and open values have driven this amendment—the same values that hold freedom of speech as a critical tenet of Australian society. I, for one, am a staunch supporter of a person's right to freedom of speech. However, it is crucial to note that there are some limits on freedom of speech and expression, with limits already existing within a range of contexts such as national security and defamation law. Our people deserve protection from hateful sentiment, which is not productive for our society and only aims to abuse and vilify people or groups based on their religious affiliation. An appropriate limiting of freedom of speech in this context affirms our society as an inclusive one and aligns with religious vilification laws in other Australian jurisdictions and, indeed, in international law. This amendment will not

prohibit unpleasant or offensive speech. It will apply only to public actions that incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule.

The Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023 is a crucial step towards upholding Australia's values of inclusivity, diversity and respect for all individuals regardless of their religious beliefs. As a vibrant and multicultural society, Australia's strength lies in its ability to embrace different cultures and faiths, allowing for citizens to practise their beliefs without fear of vilification or discrimination. The amendment, which makes it unlawful to incite hatred, contempt or ridicule based on religious beliefs, is a testament to this Government's commitment to promoting a cohesive and harmonious society. It sends a clear message that hostility and violence have no place in our communities and that religious affiliation should never be a ground for vilification. For the people of New South Wales, this amendment provides much-needed security, particularly in places like Riverstone, where the population with diverse religious affiliations has been growing rapidly.

By offering protection to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and faiths, the amendment fosters an environment where religious ties can serve as strong links to cultural heritage and facilitate essential community interactions. The drafting of this amendment is the result of thoughtful consultation with religious organisations and community groups, ensuring that the legislation appropriately reflects the diversity associated with religion. Moreover, it aligns with laws in other jurisdictions, showcasing a collective commitment to tackling religious vilification right across Australia. While freedom of speech is a fundamental pillar of our democracy, it does not give someone the right to perpetrate hate or harm. This amendment strikes the right balance, preserving freedom of speech while safeguarding people from hateful sentiments and the incitement of violence based on religious beliefs.

In the spirit of an inclusive and progressive society, this amendment does not seek to stifle unpleasant or offensive speech but focuses solely on public actions that incite hatred, contempt or severe ridicule. It respects the rights of individuals to hold different beliefs, while fostering an environment where open dialogue and understanding can flourish. With the passage of the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023, this Labor Government will take a significant step towards creating a more tolerant, compassionate and united society. It will send a powerful message of solidarity to our citizens, assuring them that their religious beliefs are respected, protected and, indeed, celebrated in this great State.

**Ms SOPHIE COTIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (15:45):** I make a short contribution to debate on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. I commend the Attorney General and the Minister for Multiculturalism for bringing this important bill to the House. It has been talked about for a very long time. When Labor was in opposition, we made a number of attempts to bring a similar bill forward and the previous Government knocked it down on each occasion. A lot of work has gone into the bill. I am proud that this Government has introduced it. The Premier has been the key driver of the bill and I acknowledge the leadership that he has shown.

It is important that people who practise a faith are treated with respect. As the member for Canterbury, I represent one of the most multicultural communities in Australia. In Lakemba, there is Lakemba Mosque. In Belmore, there is the All Saints Greek Orthodox Parish, and St Joseph's Catholic Church is on Canterbury Road. In Earlwood, there is another Greek Orthodox parish and Our Lady of Lourdes church. There is also a number of temples in the Canterbury electorate. Our community has several places of faith and I represent thousands of people of faith. So I put on record that these vilification laws are important to my community. As I said, I represent a very multicultural and diverse community. In a tolerant and pluralist society such as ours, it is important that people have the right to live without experiencing hostility and abuse on the basis of protected attributes or characteristics.

These vilification laws, like others in well-established areas of law such as defamation and national security, recognise that there are legitimate limits on freedom of expression. Vilification laws appropriately limit freedom of expression to the extent that its use harms and infringes upon the rights of others. Vilification provisions generally, as well as religious vilification protections, have a basis in international human rights law. Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides for the prohibition by law of any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Some critics of vilification laws suggest that they unacceptably limit freedom of speech and expression. However, it is appropriate that freedom of expression has some limits when it competes with other fundamental freedoms such as the freedom to live without fear of abuse, hostility or hatred. Freedom of expression has never been understood to be absolute or unlimited and laws in a range of areas have limited it over time—for example, secrecy and national security laws and defamation laws. Allowing or tolerating vilification limits the freedom of expression of others. The fear and humiliation experienced by groups targeted by vilification can prevent them from properly engaging in public life and discussion.

There are exceptions to the prohibition on religious vilification in the amendments consistent with the existing vilification grounds in the Act that balance the prohibition with freedom of expression and religion. Under the amendments, it will not be unlawful to make public statements or perform public acts if done reasonably and in good faith for purposes in a public interest such as academic, artistic, scientific, research or religious discussion or instruction purposes. This exception ensures that the amendments do not unduly stifle reasonable debate or speech. It also ensures that the amendments do not prevent reasonable expression or criticism of religious views.

As I mentioned earlier, I represent a very multicultural community. New South Wales is a highly diverse and multicultural society where religion is important to many people, with more people having a religious affiliation in New South Wales than in any other State or Territory, according to the 2021 census. Some 33 per cent of people in New South Wales indicated that they did not have a religion or religious affiliation—the lowest proportion of any State or Territory. New South Wales has a high proportion of non-Christian religious people, at 12 per cent, compared with the national average of 10 per cent. In particular, New South Wales has a large Islamic population, with 4.3 per cent of people in New South Wales characterising themselves as Islamic—349,240 people—compared with 3.2 per cent of Australia as a whole. New South Wales also has a significant Hindu population of 273,780, which is 3.4 per cent of the population as a whole. The New South Wales Buddhist population is 222,770. New South Wales has approximately 3.84 million Christians, who make up 47 per cent of the population.

The Anti-Discrimination Act currently prohibits religious vilification in a limited manner. For the purposes of the existing racial vilification provisions, the term "race" is defined to include colour, nationality, descent and ethnic, ethno-religious or national origin. However, ethno-religious origin has been interpreted narrowly in tribunal considerations of this issue. Determining whether a group has an ethno-religious origin for this purpose requires considering evidence about whether the members of the group identify with the shared history and customs associated with the religious practices of the group. The group should regard themselves as being one of community and be viewed by those outside the group as having a separate and distinct identity. The concept has not been found to apply consistently to all religions, with the tribunal variously having held that "Middle Eastern Muslim" is a race within the definition of ethno-religious while "Australian Muslim" is not. The amendments in the bill will ensure the protection is properly extended to all religions.

In the little time that I have left, I will talk about the Islamophobia Register, established in 2014, and the issues I raised with the Government at the time. The register was set up because, at the time, there were a lot of cases of Islamophobia. They were affecting women in my community who were riding on the bus, at the check-out or pushing their pram down the street and would get called a whole lot of names because they were wearing a hijab. These findings were derived from 930 incidents—515 offline and 414 online—reported to the register from 2014 to 2021. It was not a government register. It was a register set up by community members who, in the 2000s, were sick and tired of their community being vilified, including women who were doing their work, going to the mosque or walking down the road being vilified because they were wearing a hijab. This applied not only to women of Islamic faith but also to women from other religions, such as Christian women going to their place of worship at a church.

In recent times a number of people in my community have spoken to me about feeling vilified because of their faith. We are, as we have said, a very tolerant society. But we also need to stamp this out once and for all. I acknowledge the Attorney General, who is in the Chamber, for his work. Particularly for members of my community, the bill is really important. Again, I say to women of Islamic faith in particular that the Labor Party is doing something about this. I put on record my acknowledgement of all people of faith and people of non-faith. We live in a very harmonious community. We all respect each other. As I said at the beginning of this contribution, in Lakemba the Lakemba Mosque is one kilometre away from the All Saints Greek Orthodox Church. We live harmoniously, but we also need these laws to protect people against vilification.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (15:56):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate. It was a long and elucidating debate. I thank members representing the electorates of Wahroonga, Rockdale, Albury, Bankstown, Newtown, Mount Druitt, Holsworthy, Willoughby, Parramatta, Sydney, Bega, Fairfield, The Entrance, Leppington, Wagga Wagga, Prospect, Heathcote, Granville, Oatley, Liverpool, Auburn, Riverstone and Canterbury for their contributions. I will address some of the matters that have been raised in debate. Some members raised concerns that the amendments may inhibit the ability to make statements of religious faith or criticise religion or religious practices. The amendments are intended to strike an appropriate balance between protections from vilification and ensuring appropriate freedom of speech and expression. The amendments only prohibit public actions that incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule of a person or group on the basis of religious belief, affiliation or activity. They do not generally prohibit statements of religious belief or other statements about religion.

Further protection is provided by the exceptions to religious vilification. They explicitly provide that public acts done reasonably and in good faith for religious discussion or instruction purposes, or for other purposes in the public interest, including academic, artistic, scientific or research purposes, will not be unlawful. This means that the amendments do not prevent a person from stating their own religious beliefs or views about religion, provided it is done reasonably and in good faith.

Some members have argued that the Anti-Discrimination Act needs a holistic review and that the reform embodied in the amendments is premature. Other members expressed the view that other aspects of the Act are in need of reform. The Government made two election commitments in relation to the Anti-Discrimination Act: firstly, to refer the Act to the NSW Law Reform Commission for review; and, secondly, to make religious vilification unlawful, as we tried to do on a number of occasions when we were in opposition. The Government has taken action on both of those issues.

The Government recognises that there have been significant shifts in society since the Act was established in 1977, and it is time for anti-discrimination laws to come under scrutiny to ensure they are fit for purpose. As I said in my second reading speech, the Act has now been referred to the New South Wales Law Reform Commission for comprehensive review. I expect that this review will consider whether the specific grounds that are protected from discrimination by the Act should be reformed. However, there is no need to wait for the completion of this review to fix the existing gap in vilification protections, and to extend those protections to religious grounds.

The Greens have raised three main issues with the bill and have indicated they will move amendments in relation to those. The amendments are unnecessary. I will address the issues in turn. The member for Newtown has suggested that the expression of the grounds for religious vilification in the bill is too broad and goes beyond the concepts used in the provisions of other States and Territories. The bill has been drafted to ensure the prohibition on religious vilification clearly extends to vilification on the basis of religious belief, affiliation and activity. Consultation on the bill was undertaken with a range of stakeholders. Faith organisations in particular were supportive of clearly separating the grounds of religious belief, affiliation and activity. The grounds protected also include not having a religious belief or affiliation or not engaging in religious activity. This expression of the grounds for religious vilification is generally consistent with provisions in other jurisdictions.

Each jurisdiction has broadly similar formulations of the protected ground. Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory all prohibit vilification on the basis of religious belief and activity. The Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania also prohibit vilification on the basis of religious affiliation. Queensland's provisions do not define the term religion for the purposes of religious vilification. Queensland includes a concept of religious belief and religious activity for the purpose of its discrimination provisions. The grounds for vilification set out in the bill are consistent with those in the other jurisdictions that maintain religious vilification provisions.

The member for Newtown has suggested that the protections in the bill should only apply to "lawful" religious activity. With respect, that change is not necessary. I am advised that the common-law concept of religion already incorporates an element of lawfulness. Because of that, I am advised that it is likely that unlawful religious beliefs or activities would not fall within the scope of the protection from vilification created by the bill. In addition, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania do not confine their religious vilification protections to "lawful" beliefs or activities.

The member for Newtown has raised concerns that a person reproached or asked to move on from a safe access zone outside a reproductive health clinic would be able to make a complaint of religious vilification under the bill. Reproaching or asking a person to stop protesting in a safe access zone would not amount to religious vilification. That is because it requires that the conduct incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule. In addition, the bill includes exceptions, consistent with those in the Act's existing vilification provisions, that balance the protection with actions done in the public interest. Actions done reasonably and in good faith in the public interest, including public discussion and debate, are not made unlawful by the amendments.

The member for Newtown has also suggested that the bill should explicitly confine the scope of the protections against vilification to natural persons. The bill is intended to apply to the vilification of individuals or groups of persons, rather than to organisations, consistent with the existing vilification provisions in the Act. Amendments to address this issue are not necessary or appropriate for three reasons. First, confining the protections would be inconsistent with the existing vilification provisions in the Act, all of which are expressed to apply to a person or group of persons.

Second, I am advised that a corporation or other organisation is not likely to be able to bring a religious vilification complaint in its own right, due to a lack of standing. Section 88 of the Act provides that a vilification complaint cannot be made unless each person on whose behalf the complaint is made either has the characteristic

that was the ground for the conduct that constitutes the alleged contravention or claims to have that characteristic without sufficient reason to doubt the claim. Previous tribunal decisions have found that the standing requirements could not be construed as applicable to anyone other than a natural person. In relation to the expression of religious beliefs and their protection, the Victorian Court of Appeal has found that a corporation cannot have a conscious state of mind amounting to a religious belief in the case of *Christian Youth Camps Ltd v Cobaw Community Health Services Ltd*.

Third, the Act already allows a vilification complaint under any of the grounds to be made by a representative body on behalf of named individuals, and this would also apply to a religious vilification complaint under the bill. To conclude, the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023 will amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 to make it unlawful to vilify a person or group of persons on the ground of religious belief or affiliation or religious activity. It implements the Government's election commitment to make religious vilification unlawful, and introduces a prohibition aligned with the existing civil vilification provisions in the Anti-Discrimination Act. I commend the bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time. A division has been called for. Under Standing Order 181, there being only three members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

### Noes, 3

Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Motion agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Ms Jenny Leong.**

### Consideration in Detail

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** By leave: I will deal with the bill in groups of clauses and schedules. The question is that clauses 1 and 2 and schedule 1 be agreed to.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:14):** By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet c2023-057C in globo:

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|-------|---|
| No. 1 | <b>Individuals to be protected from vilification</b><br>Page 3, proposed section 49ZD, definition of <i>public act</i> , paragraph (c), line 20. Omit "a person on the ground the person". Insert instead "an individual on the ground the individual". |
| No. 2 | <b>Individuals to be protected from vilification</b><br>Page 3, proposed section 49ZD, definition of <i>public act</i> , paragraph (c), line 22. Omit "a person on the ground the person". Insert instead "an individual on the ground the individual". |
| No. 3 | <b>Individuals to be protected from vilification</b><br>Page 3, proposed section 49ZD, definition of <i>public act</i> , paragraph (c), line 24. Omit "persons". Insert instead "individuals".  |
| No. 4 | <b>Individuals to be protected from vilification</b><br>Page 3, proposed section 49ZD, definition of <i>public act</i> , paragraph (c), line 26. Omit "persons". Insert instead "individuals".  |
| No. 5 | <b>Individuals to be protected from vilification</b><br>Page 3, proposed section 49ZE(1)(a), line 31. Omit "a person on the ground the person". Insert instead "an individual on the ground the individual".  |
| No. 6 | <b>Individuals to be protected from vilification</b><br>Page 3, proposed section 49ZE(1)(b), line 34. Omit "persons". Insert instead "individuals".   |

This is the first of three sheets of amendments drafted by The Greens on behalf of those in the community who have raised with us concerns about the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023. The amendments are straightforward and relatively modest. In fact, someone I have worked with closely for many years described them as being almost "centrist" on my part. They are an attempt to improve and address some of the gaps in the current anti-discrimination law that we are amending today. Experts from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and anti-discrimination law experts advising the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, along with a number of other experts and organisations, have raised serious concerns with us about the bill.

The six amendments on sheet c2023-057C address concerns raised by key stakeholders about the bill's usage of the word "person" and derivatives thereof. The current drafting of the bill grants protection to a person or a group of persons from vilification on the basis of having or not having a religious belief or affiliation. The Greens do not object to that in principle because we would take, as the basic definition, the concept of "persons" being natural persons. But, in actual fact, under the Interpretation Act 1987, the term "person" includes not just an individual but also a corporation and a body corporate or public.

It is unclear whether it is the intention of the Attorney General and the New South Wales Labor Government to grant protection from religious vilification to corporations and, indeed, organisations in addition to individuals, because that is what the current drafting of the bill provides for. The Australian Discrimination Law Experts Group said in its submission on the Commonwealth Religious Discrimination Bill in 2020:

Human rights are expressly designed to protect innately *human* characteristics. While bodies corporate and other organisations should, consistent with other federal anti-discrimination laws, be prohibited from *engaging in* discriminatory conduct, such bodies should not be permitted to themselves *bring a claim* of discrimination

The amendments would very clearly narrow the scope of the bill to bring it in line with the principle expressed by those law experts that only individuals and groups of individuals have course of action against religious vilification. I note that during the second reading debate the Attorney General in his speech in reply identified that religious vilification is comparable to other areas of vilification, specifically race or HIV/AIDS status. Members of this Chamber will be very aware that an organisation like the Ethnic Communities' Council, for example, does not have a race. It would not be able to take action under the racial vilification protections.

That is very different from the Catholic Church or another religious body identified under the bill as a corporation or a group that would hold a religious belief and engage in religious activity. ACON, which is a group responsible for doing a lot of AIDS and HIV work, does not itself have HIV or AIDS status. However, a religious group, organisation or corporation is in a position to be able to have a belief. There is not a comparable distinction between individuals and groups in the context of religious status as there is with race or HIV/AIDS status. I urge the New South Wales Labor Government to reconsider supporting The Greens amendments. It is deeply disappointing that it has chosen not to engage with them and address not the drafting concerns but the political reality of the choices being made in this Chamber. On the whole, it is disappointing for The Greens to see this kind of approach taken to this issue.

Given that religious vilification protection is being prioritised over and above other protections that are absent from the Anti-Discrimination Act, I would have expected that the Government would recognise in good faith that passing these minimal amendments to make sure this law has consensus support across the political spectrum would ensure that we would not enter into a discussion around reform of the Anti-Discrimination Act while holding serious concerns about the bill.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (16:19):** All of the representations on each of the amendments moved by The Greens and the representations made to me, other Ministers and the Government in respect of those amendments and the Anti-Discrimination Act generally have been heard and considered. They have all been brought to me with respect and in good faith, and the many discussions that I and my staff have had with the member for Newtown and other members have all been conducted in the same manner. There is no ill will or lack of bona fides in the bringing of the bill. The amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act were promised by Labor, and members have sought to effect them in this place for a number of years. We are acting in accordance with the promise that we made to the people of New South Wales and delivering on that promise.

The member for Newtown mentions the word "consensus". When one deals with issues that involve religious belief, affiliation and other religious expressions, or expressions and issues that deal with sex, gender and LGBTQI+ matters, it is very difficult, depending on the question that is being considered, to get consensus. The role of the Government is to look at the mischief, the shortcoming, the problem or the issue that is seeking to be remedied by legislation, to listen to views and then to try to seek a balance between competing interests. At the end of the day, it must arrive at a position that represents the belief of the Government. It is not always possible to get consensus. We will not get consensus on this issue because The Greens disagree with the Government's position. But we have arrived at our position respectfully and in good faith, and that is the way we intend to conduct ourselves every single day of this four-year term.

The amendments seek to omit a reference to "persons" in the bill and replace it with a reference to "an individual" or "individuals". I understand that the reason for this is to address a concern about whether non-natural legal persons—for example, corporations—would be protected from vilification. My expert departmental advice is that the amendment is not necessary. I agree with that advice. I am advised that a corporation is unlikely to be able to bring a religious vilification complaint in its own right due to a lack of standing. I am further advised that, as a general principle, organisations are commonly considered to be incapable of having the characteristics that are protected by discrimination legislation, such as race, sex, disability or sexuality.

Further, section 88 of the Act provides that a vilification complaint cannot be made unless each person on whose behalf the complaint is made has the characteristic that was the ground for the conduct that constitutes the alleged contravention, or claims to have that characteristic, and there is no sufficient reason to doubt that claim. The proposed amendments would also be out of step with the rest of the vilification provisions in the Act that apply to a person. Finally, I note that the Anti-Discrimination Act already allows a complaint to be made by a representative body on behalf of named persons, which will apply to the religious vilification provisions even if they are amended as proposed by the amendments.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:23):** I respond briefly to the remarks by the Attorney General, particularly the comments on the difficulty of reaching consensus. It is absolutely true that it is difficult to reach consensus, especially on issues of discrimination and the intersection between people's rights, responsibilities and beliefs, and considering people's different levels of practice. I note that both the member for Auburn and the member for Liverpool referred to the bill of the former shadow Attorney General, Paul Lynch. I point out, particularly to those members who are new to this place, that bill did have consensus. The Greens and I stood in this Chamber and supported that bill. But that bill is not this bill. The bill put forward by the then shadow Attorney General in fact contained a number of the things that The Greens have proposed as amendments. It clearly defined "religious belief and affiliation", and it also addressed the issue of just religious belief and affiliation, not religious activity, which is the reason for The Greens raising some of these concerns.

I agree that consensus is difficult, particularly on these kinds of issues. However, we heard many members talk about the powers of the Anti-Discrimination Act being a way for us to treat all people equally. We cannot prioritise acting on the religious vilification amendment to the Act now without making clear whether it is acceptable to the Minns Labor Government for, say, a very wealthy church to take action against an individual who had engaged in severe ridicule of that church. I think about the survivors who have disclosed the very significant and traumatic abuse that they have experienced at the hands of the Catholic Church, and I think about the kinds of things that those people may have said online. I think about whether them engaging in that public act would be seen by the Catholic Church as a form of severe ridicule or inciting hatred. I think we would consider it justifiable in those circumstances for those people to be able to express their view, given the traumas that they have experienced within the Catholic Church.

Under the provisions in the bill, because it is unclear whether an organisation or corporation would be able to take action against an individual, we could see a wealthy corporation, body corporate or organisation taking this action. I note the Attorney General says that he has received advice that says it is unlikely that this would take place. "Unlikely" suggests that it is still possible, and that is why The Greens have proposed amendments that would make the changes from "persons" to "individuals". If it is not the intention of the Attorney General and the Minns Labor Government to allow large religious organisations with significant legal resources at their disposal to take action against an individual, we should pass these amendments to make sure that unlikely possibility does not become a reality.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet c2023-057C be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 4**

Mr. A Greenwich  
Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Amendments negatived.**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:33):** By leave: I move The Greens amendments Nos 1 to 5 on sheet c2023-059A in globo:

- No. 1      **Individuals to be protected from vilification**  
Page 3, proposed section 49ZD, definition of *public act*, paragraph (c), line 20. Omit ", or does not have,".
- No. 2      **Individuals to be protected from vilification**  
Page 3, proposed section 49ZD, definition of *public act*, paragraph (c), lines 24 and 25. Omit ", or do not have,".
- No. 3      **Meaning of religious belief or affiliation**  
Page 3, proposed section 49ZD. Insert after line 27—  
*religious belief or affiliation* means holding or not holding a religious belief or view.

- No. 4      **Individuals to be protected from vilification**  
Page 3, proposed section 49ZE(1)(a)(i), line 32. Omit ", or does not have,".
- No. 5      **Individuals to be protected from vilification**  
Page 3, proposed section 49ZE(1)(b)(i), line 35. Omit ", or do not have,".

Of the five amendments on this sheet, I draw members' attention to amendment No. 3, which is the consequential one. It would insert in new section 49ZD a definition of the term "religious belief or affiliation" to mean "holding or not holding a religious belief or view". It is another attempt by The Greens to try to improve the bill and make it more similar to the one that was introduced by the former shadow Attorney General, which had support across the Chamber, including the support of The Greens. The amendment would bring the definition contained in the bill in line with the definition in section 93Z of the Crimes Act 1900 and eliminate any ambiguity as to the interpretation of "affiliation" in this context. All other amendments on this sheet are simple language tweaks to omit the "or do not have" phrasing from the relevant parts of new sections 49ZD and 49ZE because inserting the definition I have just described would make it superfluous.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The member for Newtown will be heard in silence.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** The changes would bring the bill in line with section 93Z of the Crimes Act and eliminate any ambiguity as to the interpretation of what constitutes an "affiliation"—an attribute that I note is not protected in comparable religious vilification provisions in Tasmania, Victoria or the Northern Territory. The changes would also improve the bill in line with advice provided by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, which wrote in correspondence to the Attorney General, the shadow Attorney General and the crossbencher on Monday to "urge that New South Wales follows the national best practice on this issue, opting for the narrower and clearer approach of covering 'religious belief and activity' and providing clear definitions for those terms."

I appreciate that the Attorney General indicated in both his speech in reply and in response to the first set of amendments moved by The Greens that he did not support the amendments. That is a serious cause for concern given that NSW Labor is so insistent on going further than other jurisdictions by offering protections for not just religious belief but also affiliation. At the very least, those opposite could provide some peace of mind by including a definition of this term in the bill in line with the Crimes Act. It is not an unreasonable ask. The result is that the bill confers broad protections for anyone purporting to have an affiliation with a religion or a religious group while, as I have previously noted, other groups in our community remain without the barest of protections.

I turn to the comments made by the member for Auburn, who urged The Greens to support the bill and mentioned the need to protect Muslim women in our community as one of the reasons that we need to step up. Let me be clear that The Greens absolutely support protecting Muslim women in our community against vilification, which is why we supported the bill introduced by the former shadow Attorney General a number of years ago. We have moved these amendments and raised concerns because this bill is much broader. The Attorney General keeps referring to advice he has received from the department on the drafting of the bill, but it is not clear whether it is the intention of the Minns Labor Government to go as far.

Labor made an election commitment to protect people from religious vilification. I think everyone wrongly assumed that meant the bill drafted by the former shadow Attorney General would be brought back to the House. Instead, the bill before us is much broader. As the Attorney General pointed out, religious groups have been consulted about the bill, but anti-discrimination lawyers and experts have raised serious concerns. I urge the Government to reconsider its support, or lack of support, for the amendments in that context.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (16:38):** The Greens amendments seek to define "religious belief or affiliation" and should not be supported. The amendments in the bill are intended to ensure that prohibition of religious vilification clearly extends to vilification on the basis of religious affiliation. This is broadly consistent with the civil prohibitions on religious vilification in other jurisdictions and reflects stakeholder feedback received in the course of consultation on the bill. The Greens amendments also specifically propose that the definition of "religious belief or affiliation" includes not holding a religious belief or view. This is clearly not necessary because it is already incorporated into the operative provisions of new section 49ZE (1) (a) (i), which refers to a person who "has, or does not have, a religious belief or affiliation", and new section 49ZE (1) (b), which refers to a group of persons who "have, or do not have, a religious belief or affiliation". I do not agree with the member for Newtown. I do not support the amendments.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:39):** I support all of The Greens amendments. I understand that the Government and the Opposition will not support them. The issues raised by the member for Newtown are important and should be considered in the context of the Law Reform Commission review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Should the Government not support these amendments today, I will continue to support

the legislation in the form that passed the House. But I think the issues raised in all of The Greens amendments are important and need clarification. I hope the Law Reform Commission will be able to provide guidance to the Parliament on those issues.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (16:40):** I thank the member for Sydney for his remarks. For the avoidance of doubt, I indicate to the House that the entirety of the Anti-Discrimination Act—including as amended if it is amended by the Parliament this week or when we come back—will be referred to the NSW Law Reform Commission. So the bill as amended will be up for review as well.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:40):** I appreciate that the whole bill will be up for review. I acknowledge that the Attorney General made it clear that the amendments that we are making to the Anti-Discrimination Act will also be up for review. It is one thing to say that consultation has been done but another to listen to the expert views that have raised the concerns. The cautious approach would be to take these concerns and put them in the bill. If the review found that they were unnecessary, then that process could be done as part of the consultation. Instead, we have political decisions by the Government to broaden the commitment in a way that raises serious concerns to many in the community who are excluded from the Anti-Discrimination Act.

We would all agree that religious vilification is something we do not want to see in our communities, but do we think that protections for people who hold a religious belief are more important than protections for people who may be transgender or non-binary women? Because non-binary women are currently not protected from vilification under the Anti-Discrimination Act in New South Wales, nor are women who are sex workers or bisexual. None of those people are currently protected. We would all agree that vilification of any of those women is unacceptable. The idea that we are prioritising protection from vilification for a certain woman with a certain type of belief over others goes completely against the concept of what an anti-discrimination law should be, which is to treat everyone equally under the law.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that The Greens amendments Nos 1 to 5 on sheet c2023-059A be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being only four members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 4**

Mr A. Greenwich  
Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Amendments negatived.**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:48):** I move The Greens amendment No. 1 on sheet c2023-058A:

No. 1 **Protection only applies in relation to lawful activity**

Page 4. Insert after line 2—

**49ZEA**

**Religious activity protected only if lawful**

Section 49ZE(1)(a)(ii) and (b)(ii) apply only to the extent the religious activity consists of conduct that is not unlawful under another Act or otherwise unlawful.

This final amendment from The Greens would amend the bill to make clear that only religious activity that is lawful would attract protection from vilification and, in doing so, attempt to plug a gaping hole that risks causing the already divisive issues in our community to flare up even further. The Greens have serious reservations in general about how broad the bill is in protecting religious activity, something that the bill brought by the former Labor shadow Attorney General did not include. But this amendment does not seek to remove protection for religious activity entirely but instead seeks to salvage a protection that is questionable at best. This amendment would insert new section 49ZEA, making clear that only religious activity that is not unlawful under the Act would be protected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member for Newtown will be heard in silence.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** The amendment seeks to have religious activity protected only if it is lawful. It states:

Section 49ZE(1)(a)(ii) and (b)(ii) apply only to the extent the religious activity consists of conduct that is not unlawful under another Act or otherwise unlawful.

This commonsense addition to the bill would bring it in line with Victoria and Queensland.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** In correspondence received by me, the Attorney General and the shadow Attorney General, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre wrote the following:

As noted above, the Bill applies to all 'religious activity'. Unlike equivalent provisions in Victoria and Queensland, however, this is not limited to 'lawful' religious activities, but is instead left unqualified.

This means the Bill would allow complaints to be brought by individuals and organisations who allege they have been vilified for engaging in religious activity despite that activity itself being unlawful. This is, in PIAC's view, excessively broad.

It is unclear why those engaged in unlawful religious activity should receive greater protection from speech than exists under the general law, and greater protection than those engaged in lawful charitable or community activity, for example.

By way of example, we note the Government has also promised to outlaw sexual orientation and/or gender identity conversion practices, given these practices cause serious harm to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people.

However, in the majority of instances where these practices occur, it is possible the perpetrators (individuals and/or organisations) may assert these are 'religious activities'. Given the Bill is not limited to *lawful* religious activities, even after the Government prohibits conversion practices, perpetrators of these harmful practices may nevertheless be able to bring vilification complaints in response to public criticism of their activities.

In working with Parliamentary Counsel to draft these amendments in good faith, The Greens chose to give the Government the benefit of the doubt about where these things are. Surely, we believed, the intention of those opposite was not to provide to those undertaking unlawful religious activity additional protections from legitimate public criticism and of a severity commensurate with their actions by allowing them to make claims of religious vilification. This amendment is absolutely critical. If it is not passed in this place, The Greens will move a similar amendment in the other place. We hope that Labor members in the upper House will realise the significance for both the hard-won protections for people in safe access zones outside of reproductive clinics and the future protection of people in relation to so-called gay conversion therapies if we do not ensure the bill only protects lawful religious activities.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (16:53):** This amendment seeks to make explicit that only lawful religious activity is protected. This amendment is not necessary. The common-law concept of religion already incorporates an element of lawfulness. In the case of *Church of the New Faith v Commissioner for Payroll Tax (Vic)* [1983] 154 CLR 120, the High Court identified two criteria for religion: first, belief in a supernatural being, thing or principle; and, second, the acceptance of canons of conduct in order to give effect to that belief, though canons of conduct that offend against the ordinary laws are outside the area of any immunity, privilege or right conferred on the grounds of religion.

In addition, the bill does not prohibit reasonable criticism of religious beliefs or practices. The amendments do not prohibit people from expressing views about religion or particular religious practices that may be controversial or even offensive to some people. Instead, they only prohibit public actions that may incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the basis of religious belief, affiliation or activity. That is a significantly higher requirement. The bill also includes exceptions, consistent with the existing vilification grounds in the Act, particularly for actions in the public interest, including debate or discussion. I am advised that the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania do not confine their religious vilification protections to lawful activities. I do not agree with the amendment.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:55):** I am concerned by the possible escalation of the situation by not ensuring that this religious vilification protection is limited to lawful religious activity. The Attorney General mentioned two jurisdictions that do not limit their protections to lawful religious activity: Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. However, Queensland and Victoria are more comparable in their size and scale to New South Wales. Both limit their definitions to lawful religious activity.

Members in this place, no matter their positions on the bill in 2018, will recall the hard-won protections for safe access zones outside reproductive health clinics. People feel strongly about the idea of a woman's right to choose and a person's right to choose. I respect that many members in this place hold differing views on whether a woman should have the right to choose. That said, we have a law that ensures safe access zones so that women and people can enter those abortion clinics and those reproductive health clinics without disturbance or disruption. Section 98D of the Public Health Act makes it an offence for anyone within a safe access zone to:

... make a communication that relates to abortions, by any means, in a manner—

- (a) that is able to be seen or heard by a person accessing, leaving, attempting to access or leave, or inside, a reproductive health clinic at which abortions are provided, and
- (b) that is reasonably likely to cause distress or anxiety to any such person.

Let us say that that communication was a religious activity done on the basis of a religious belief or affiliation and it was seen or heard by a person attempting to access or leave that reproductive healthcare clinic and that it caused them severe distress and anxiety and that person then engaged in severe ridicule or serious contempt of that individual in that very traumatic situation as they were seeking to get reproductive health advice and were having people shouting and yelling at them in that safe access zone. This could be claimed to be religious activity, but it would be clearly illegal religious activity.

Our understanding and our reading of the bill and the advice that we have received from anti-discrimination lawyers is that, if they then responded, absolutely that person would still be engaging in an illegal act. However, that person engaging in that illegal religious activity could take action simultaneously, using this vilification protection. The individual who was traumatised by the interruption and disruption to their attempt to seek health care inside a reproductive healthcare clinic would have action taken against them under this vilification protection. We should not be providing protection to people who engage in unlawful activity at a higher rate than that of the average member of our community. The Greens do not support the unacceptable principle that someone engaging in illegal religious activity gets higher vilification protections under our law than people working in community organisations or community groups. Hopefully the upper House will see sense and recognise that it also should not support it.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The question is that The Greens amendment No. 1 on sheet c2023-058A be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 4**

Mr A. Greenwich  
Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Amendment negatived.**

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

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

### **Third Reading**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that this bill be now read a third time. A division has been called for. There being fewer than five members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Noes, 3**

Ms J. Leong  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Business of the House*

## **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:08):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the moving forthwith of a motion of which notice has not been given amending the resolution of the House for the order for papers relating to investigations into money laundering.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Documents*

## **LIQUOR AND GAMING DATA COLLECTION**

### **Production of Documents: Order Amended**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:08):** I move:

That the resolution of the House of 25 May 2023 for the order for papers relating to investigations into money laundering in clubs and pubs, subsequently amended on 21 June 2023 and on 1 August 2023, be further amended by:

- (1) Omitting paragraphs (1) (h) and (1) (i) and inserting instead:
  - (1) (h) any documents relating to gaming machine compliance checks or the New South Wales Crime Commission Inquiry into Money Laundering via electronic gaming machines.
- (2) In paragraph (2) omit (1) (i) and insert instead (1) (h).
- (3) Inserting the following new paragraph after paragraph (5):
  - (6) That documents that are considered to be intelligence profiles shall be so identified in the return and, until such time as otherwise ordered by the House, their inspection shall be restricted to members only and no copies or extracts thereof shall be permitted.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:10):** I support this amendment to my call for papers, albeit with some reluctance. It relates to about 38 documents, which I have been informed are intelligence profiles. Those documents have been redacted by the Crime Commission and were always going to be redacted ahead of their public release. From a meeting that the Government facilitated with Liquor and Gaming, I understand there is a concern that within those profiles there could be other ways in which things could be identified, including investigative practices. That said, in a review of a sample of those documents it became very clear to me that those documents should have been provided to the Crime Commission and should have always been included in this call for papers, but especially when it comes to Project Islington.

From documents I have seen it is very clear that this was about money laundering and the potential for money laundering in clubs and pubs in the remit of Project Islington. I am deeply concerned that they were not provided to the Crime Commissioner. Members will be able to see for themselves the content of those on Friday. Importantly, those documents will not be made available for public dissemination because of any information that may compromise ongoing investigations.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:11):** I inform the House that I have consulted with the Manager of Opposition Business about this motion and the Opposition agrees to my motion. I indicated yesterday that Liquor and Gaming said that the 125 documents to which the member for Sydney referred had been marked for production to the Crime Commission. While I accept what the member for Sydney says, there is no basis to conclude at this point that there was any deliberate intention by Liquor and Gaming NSW or anybody from that department to deliberately withhold the documents from the Crime Commission.

I thank the Minister for drawing to my attention—and consequently I drew to the attention of the member for Sydney—the nature of those documents to which this motion relates. They are matters of an intelligence profile. I was shown samples of those documents, unredacted, and I asked for those to also be shown to the member for Sydney so there was some understanding of the nature of the documents, with a request to the member for Sydney to agree that those documents should not be made public but should not be withheld from members of this House.

On examining those documents, I knew that they are documents of investigative agencies that are traditionally not made public. In fact, many investigative agencies will assert methodology and other matters, even when in the past they have not really been sustainable, as part of protecting intelligence documents. But in any event, those documents will be made available to members of the House. I thank the Minister and the department for making those documents available in the way in which they did this morning. I thank the member for Sydney for his cooperation in respect of the matter. I understand that the department may need more time. I received a request this afternoon indirectly via a staff member that Friday may not be enough time for the purposes of redacting the material that needs to be redacted.

In view of what the member for Sydney and I saw today, the redacting looks like it has taken place anyway. Rather than delay the process, I have not adhered to that request. I have raised it with the member for Sydney and he does not agree to that request. We will maintain the production of papers for this Friday. Again, I thank the member for Sydney for his cooperation. I thank the Minister and his department for cooperating in making those documents available.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** It being after 5.00 p.m., the public interest debate will now proceed.

*Public Interest Debate***HOUSEHOLD GAS CONNECTIONS**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:16):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the decision by the Victorian Labor Government that from 1 January 2024 new residential properties as well as government buildings, including schools and hospitals, will only be powered by electricity.
- (2) Recognises that this ban on new gas connections was supported by the Property Council and Master Builders Association (Victoria), the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Clean Energy Council, Climate Council, Friends of the Earth Melbourne and the Energy Efficiency Council.
- (3) Notes the Victorian Government estimates that the change will save households up to \$1,000 on their annual energy bills (\$2,200 if they have solar installed) and reduce emissions.
- (4) Calls on the New South Wales Government to require that no new homes or government-owned properties built from 1 January 2024 will have gas connections.
- (5) Urges the New South Wales Government and all members to take urgent action to tackle the climate crisis.

I am pleased to introduce a motion for today's Public Interest Debate on behalf of The Greens in the Legislative Assembly—the member for Newtown and the member for Balmain. I credit an extraordinary Australian thinker, engineer—indeed, a genius—Saul Griffith. I will be borrowing heavily from his thinking and his words in his essay entitled "The Wires That Bind: Electrification and Community Renewal" published in 2023 in the eighty-ninth issue of the *Quarterly Essay*. It is a good read. Saul has been the principal investigator on research projects for NASA as well as winning a MacArthur Genius Grant, and he is the founder of Rewiring America and Rewiring Australia as well as having many other accolades. I know that he advises the President of the United States and, closer to home, I am told he advised the former Minister for Energy, Matt Kean.

The call The Greens are making today is to the Premier and to all members in this place. We have the power to green-light—excuse the pun—the household electrification national project that we need to start and continue in New South Wales. The modest but courageous and strong action that Victorian Labor has taken, which we are calling for today, must be taken in New South Wales as we steadfastly do everything we can to support every household and person in this State to replace their fossil fuel-reliant cars and appliances with ones powered by clean energy. This project that Saul outlines in his essay is the "clean electrification project that can unite us in a period of dislocation" in a "nation building opportunity to define the twenty-first century". His essay sets out a road map for the dual challenge we face if we are to achieve, even remotely, a 1.5 degree Celsius of future warming: the early retirement of the heaviest emitters in our country—coal and gas—and the mandated replacement, we hope, of the millions and millions of machines we use at end of life to electrical fuelled by clean, renewable energy.

The experience of the climate crisis is no longer abstract for billions of people across the globe. It is not abstract for people in my community after the 2022 floods, and it is certainly not abstract for the hundreds of thousands of people in this State affected by drought, the Black Summer bushfires and the floods of 2022. But what is abstract is often what action individuals and households can take to become net zero themselves. We know that the big levers to retire coal and gas infrastructure as quickly as possible will need to be pulled by governments. But what Saul lays out for us are the millions of opportunities, backed by government, that households and consumers can take up as they literally become parts of the renewable energy network. None of this is new, but what is new for me is the clear path forward for members of my community and of every community represented in this place. The challenge is simple. I ask the Premier, "Will you have the courage to do this? We need you to do it as soon as possible."

The Australian electricity network is the largest machine Australia has ever built. It physically links every household in the country and, simultaneously, every person in every household in every community across Australia. Saul describes this energy transition as a "machines problem"—the millions of machines that we use every day that need to be electrical and replaced, and the subsequent opportunity that provides to us. On the energy demand side, Saul paints the picture of these millions of machines: 1.5 million homes have bottled gas, gas feeds, six million gas heaters, 4.8 million gas water heaters, 1.9 million freestanding gas stoves, four million gas barbecues—and on and on. He estimates that we have about 60 million demand-side residential and commercial machines that are burning fossil fuels. This includes the 20 million vehicles in our garages, the roughly 12,000 aeroplanes, the one million boats and the tens of millions of golf carts, jet skis, lawnmowers, whipper snippers and dirt bikes.

To replace all of those machines with electric machines, we also need new infrastructure. Saul estimates that we need an additional five to seven million household batteries and about 10 to 20 electric vehicle chargers. He goes on to estimate that, overall, just to support our renewable energy electric future, we need 30 to 40 million

new machines. How do we get to the 100 per cent end-of-life replacement curve that we need? We need the decisions to start now. We cannot keep kicking this can down the road. We need the Government to say that there will be no new gas stoves, no new petrol vehicles and no new gas heaters after a certain date. We would like that date to be 2025 or sooner. Consumers would be told, "There is no other option. You simply cannot purchase anything other than those machines that are supported by renewable electricity."

But consumers cannot do it alone, and we sure as hell cannot let them replace their cars and stoves and heaters with the same fossil fuel models. That is madness, because we know what is coming. We know what is needed. I think of the opportunities lost in my electorate—how many appliances have been replaced since the 2022 floods? But I know that my community is savvy and they will have made this decision already. We need the subsidies. We need government-backed annuities. We need whatever it takes—maybe that is interest-free loans—to get every single household to net zero. That is easy. It is low-hanging fruit, and I know that many members in this House agree with that. I give a big shout-out to the member for South Coast for the community battery project that is happening in her electorate. There is so much opportunity. I really hope that the Government will support this motion today.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (17:23):** I am delighted to speak in this public interest debate. We all know that our State, our nation and, indeed, the world are in the midst of a climate crisis. There can be no denying that fact—no matter how hard Opposition members try. That is why the New South Wales Minns Government is determined to reduce the State's net emissions. The Government currently has a number of programs in place to encourage and support households to not only electrify their home but also reduce their energy use. Whilst there are restrictions—most notably, budgetary—that impact which households can and cannot electrify their homes, these programs certainly assist.

The first program is the Energy Savings Scheme. The Energy Savings Scheme's primary aim is to reduce emissions and household electricity bills, which we all know have risen sharply in recent times. Under this scheme, households can replace existing gas equipment with electric alternatives such as heat-pump water heaters. There is also the rebate swap for solar [RSS] program. The RSS program allows households to receive a free solar system, which can result in savings of up to \$600 per year. Given the rising cost of living, household budgets are being stretched further and further, so any measures to reduce power bills are a positive step. If it benefits the environment as well, then that is the cherry on top. Eligible households are able to opt into the RSS instead of the \$285 low-income household rebate over 10 years.

These programs are critical in ensuring that our State adopts more energy and environmentally friendly options of power energy supply. As I have highlighted, it also puts money back into the hip pockets of households who are doing it particularly tough. Research shows that electric appliances are up to four times more efficient than their gas counterparts. That is a wonderful incentive to switch to electric appliances over gas. The Grattan Institute produced some incredible results regarding savings from switching from gas to electricity. The institute found that households throughout New South Wales could save between \$1,970 and \$7,280 over 10 years by making the switch. The New South Wales Government has made it clear that its priority is to transition our State's energy system away from coal to renewable energy. This is not a secret. The Premier has been extremely transparent about this goal, but the switch from coal to renewable energy will take time—Rome was not built in a day.

The transition cannot occur without the political will to facilitate the change, and that is something we did not see from the former Government. Those on the opposite side of the Chamber were more concerned with rescuing their fledging political careers rather than investing in changes that would make a positive difference to the State for generations to come. Banning gas connections is currently not a priority of the New South Wales Government. The Premier has made this abundantly clear. Why? It is because the Government is taking a holistic view of this issue. The Government is looking at various options to reduce energy costs for households and to create healthier homes and communities throughout our great State. Those opposite had 12 years to achieve these things. But, as history shows, they failed to meet any of these targets.

Of course, we know it is not just households that are suffering from higher energy prices, and households are not the only contributors of emissions throughout our State. Businesses, too, play a major role and that is why the New South Wales Government is preparing a business decarbonisation program. This program will help businesses to make practical improvements, which will not cost an arm and a leg, to help our State reach the goal of zero emissions. I believe the \$22 million invested in the program is money extremely well spent. On this side of the House, we have a plan. We have a vision. And, unlike those in opposition, when we make a promise, we keep it. I will always welcome the opportunity to talk about sensible and practical ways to reduce our State's emissions and lessen cost-of-living pressures for households. I thank the House.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (17:27):** I thank the member for Ballina for introducing this important topic for discussion, and I thank my Greens colleague the member for Newtown and other members for speaking

in support of the motion. It is an important debate, and I too speak in support of the motion. The most urgent issue facing New South Wales and, indeed, the world is the climate crisis. We need to throw everything we can at this crisis. If we are to limit the most devastating impacts of our changing climate, no emissions reduction strategy should be taken off the table. Transitioning rapidly away from gas appliances is an important step that can be taken relatively quickly, as we have seen in Victoria. In addition to the environmental benefits, there are also significant health benefits to getting gas out of homes.

Recently I met with Doctors for the Environment Australia, an organisation of doctors who recognise that human health and wellbeing require an environment that is free from pollution, capable of providing nutritious food, rich in biodiversity and able to provide for current and future generations sustainably. That is right—and doctors are a group that is hardly renowned for holding radical or outlandish points of view. One of the primary things they raised with me and many other members of this Parliament was a concern about the health impacts of burning gas indoors. They pointed out that the burning of gas in homes is not only contributing to catastrophic climate change, such that we have seen the planet record the hottest month of July ever, with severe heatwaves being experienced across the northern hemisphere, but also harming the health of the people of New South Wales.

Domestic gas use poses a range of direct and indirect risks to health, which many will be observing in the communities we serve. Indoor pollution from gas appliances causes and exacerbates asthma and other illnesses that can even cause death. According to Doctors for the Environment Australia, pollution from gas stoves has been estimated to account for 12 per cent of the childhood asthma burden in Australia. A child living in a house with a gas stove faces a roughly 30 per cent increased risk of asthma, which is shockingly comparable to a child living with household cigarette smoke.

Gas flames release benzene, which can cause cancer and therefore should be kept at the lowest level possible indoors. I can tell you from my own experience, as a parent of an asthmatic child, that such research is absolutely accurate. We try to live sustainably at our house. We switched our gas cooktop earlier this year to an induction electric cooktop that we power with solar power. Despite having an awareness that gas appliances impacted asthma, I have been shocked to see the enormous improvement in my son's asthma. He has gone from a kid who could not get through a soccer match without using his puffer to rarely using it at all. The health impacts of gas in the home cannot be overstated. It is something that we do not talk enough about.

Doctors for the Environment Australia are concerned about these kinds of health impacts but also about the alarming health impacts of catastrophic climate change. They say, and we have all seen for ourselves, that "climate change is a health emergency that has become all too apparent to New South Wales residents in recent years due to devastating bushfires, floods and heatwaves, all of which can have significant and potentially life-threatening health impacts". It is outrageous that we are still building unsustainable homes and buildings in New South Wales, which are increasing our carbon emissions, doing long-term damage to our environment, ramping up climate change and endangering the health of our communities.

Profit-driven property developers will need to be dragged kicking and screaming on this issue, as we know from the developer lobby's response to the former Government's proposed Design and Place State Environmental Planning Policy. That policy would have introduced a very modest set of conditions on the planning system, requiring such "radical" things as allowing room for mature tree plantings to cool backyards in Western Sydney and light-coloured roofing materials to mitigate the urban heat island impacts of new residential development. Developers pushed back against those reforms, and they were scrapped.

It is our job to legislate to bring about change. We are not here to kowtow to the vested interests who want to profit from the status quo, causing further damage to our climate, our communities and our health. The New South Wales Labor Government should be championing this change, as the Labor Government in Victoria has done. It must take a brave stand against its gas industry donors and ensure that any new homes or government-owned properties built from 1 January 2024 will not have gas connections. We must all commit to doing everything we can to take urgent action to tackle the climate crisis. Our communities are crying out for this. We are watching climate change unfold around us. The planet is burning, and the public is desperate for governments to take action.

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (17:32):** I thank the member for Ballina for moving the motion. The New South Wales Coalition is committed to maintaining a strong economy, improving the quality of life for the people of New South Wales and protecting the environment. Our position has been that action on climate change must be grounded in science and economics, not ideology. We all know that emissions reduction can and does enhance, not undermine, the prosperity and quality of life enjoyed by the people of New South Wales. We led the nation with our net zero targets, we led the nation with our net zero road map and we led the nation with our Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

Getting to net zero will not be easy. That is why our *Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020–2030* comprehensively set out how the State would deliver on the objectives of achieving net zero over the next decade. It also included the role of citizens and their household energy choices, the key word being "choice". We know that, as global demand for low emissions products and services continues to grow and mature, low emissions technologies are coming down the cost curve. Since 2010 the cost of solar generation has fallen by more than 73 per cent. Electric vehicle battery prices have also fallen by more than 85 per cent and, as prices continue to fall, consumers are showing that they will make decisions to change their energy habits. That includes the electrification of their homes.

The former Coalition Government understood that consumers and businesses want to act on climate change. That action may take the form of buying a more fuel-efficient car, installing rooftop solar, planting trees or, as many are doing, shifting from gas to electricity in their homes. Whatever action individuals decide to take is a matter for them. However, people should be empowered to make meaningful choices and contribute as much as they want to and in the way that suits them and their families. That is why the second priority of our net zero plan was to empower people with information about the carbon impacts of key goods and services and give them opportunities to offset those impacts.

A giant leap in dealing with the substantive issue of this motion, being the use of gas in households, would have been illuminated by our nation-leading home energy efficiency pilot program. This \$8 million pilot program, endorsed by Saul Griffith, is now at risk of being cut. The pilot program was to look at innovative ways to fully decarbonise homes in up to three local communities across New South Wales. The trial was to focus on finding the best ways to save households money on their energy bills by installing zero emissions appliances, like electric stovetops and other technologies. Recognising that no two homes are the same, the pilot looked to work across standalone homes in the regions to apartment blocks in the cities. It would have provided important data to identify the cheapest suite of zero emissions technologies across different communities.

I call upon the Government to commit to the important \$8 million pilot program that we had announced to help electrify homes and save households money on their energy bills. That important trial must not go the way of our energy rebate or other important programs that are now being cut or facing the axe. Impartial observers—or even, begrudgingly, partisan groups—recognised that the New South Wales Coalition led the nation when it came to decarbonising and putting forward sensible policies that were both innovative and welcomed. We hope, for all of our sakes, that that continues.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:36):** I thank the member for Ballina for bringing this very important issue to the House. I note the widespread support for electrification from those from whom we would not expect it. I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting paragraph (4).

I will explain why shortly. When I think back to history and who in the Western world first drew the world's attention to the magnitude of the effect of climate change on humanity and its significant threat to the planet, it was as the Berlin Wall was falling, it was 1989 and it was Margaret Thatcher. The most ultraconservative leader of the Western world drew attention, in a trilogy of speeches, to the threat of climate change. And despite the attempts of many to advocate for that cause, and the transition of some members of the conservative parties in this State, like the member for Manly or the member for Hornsby, we would not believe that there are still those amongst us who advocate day in and day out, on television and radio, that climate change is a myth. However, it certainly is not.

As we progress in this space, we must take the community with us. If we do not, we finish up like Kevin Rudd, Malcolm Turnbull or Matt Kean. The reality is that we must take our colleagues with us as we progress along a particular path. Labor's view and the Government's view is that, whilst we know that climate change presents an urgent challenge for our State, over the coming years it is essential that we decarbonise our homes, businesses and industry. In New South Wales, the gas being used to heat homes, power industry and sometimes generate electricity represents something like one-quarter of gas use. But that role is changing and will continue to change as alternate sources become cheaper and we step up our efforts to combat climate change. However, as the Premier has indicated on behalf of the Government, we face significant challenges in reducing emissions from our electricity sector and managing reliability as coal retires—that is our focus.

We are not proposing to ban gas connections in new homes, as they did in Victoria. I remind the House of the number of Victorian gas connections. Producing and using gas accounts for around 7 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions in New South Wales, compared to Victoria at 18 per cent and Western Australia at 56 per cent. That could indicate the genuine need to prioritise decarbonisation, without compelling change as Victoria has done—particularly bearing in mind that there are cost-of-living issues.

The member for Balmain also raised—and I appreciate her doing so—that as part of a study done in collaboration between Stanford University in the United States and the University of Melbourne, considerable concern was expressed when they started monitoring pollution levels in homes with unventilated kitchens where a gas stove was switched on. There were levels of nitrogen dioxide and respiratory irritants linked to asthma in the air and those pollutants were rapidly climbing. But everything that we learn as scientific advances occur will also serve to drive change with community support. It is the Government's view that now is not the time to imitate what has occurred in Victoria.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (17:41):** I contribute to the public interest debate and acknowledge the contributions by my Greens colleagues the member for Ballina, who brought the motion to the Chamber, and the member for Balmain. Electrification is the future. By now we all know the harmful effects of gas on the environment and on human health. It is baffling that in 2023, in spite of that knowledge, we have still not moved beyond relying on that toxic fuel, including members in this place, when we should be making sure that everyone's home is safe and healthy. I echo my colleagues' concerns and disappointment that, for all its talk about acting on climate, the New South Wales Labor Government is still refusing to implement a ban on gas connections for new homes.

Thankfully, where this Government is failing to show leadership in the movement away from coal and gas toward an electric future, our communities are stepping up. Just last week I had the pleasure of meeting with the Asian Australians for Climate Action—soon to be the Asian Australians for Climate Solutions—to hear about its grassroots campaign to encourage Asian communities to swap their gas stoves for induction. My colleagues who come from an Asian background will understand that the gas hob is an important cultural item for many of us. We grew up knowing that the clang of the wok, the click of the ignition and the sizzle of hot oil meant that a delicious meal was soon to come.

When my own parents remodelled their kitchen, the biggest priority for my dad was finding the largest and hottest gas cooker that he could fit into the kitchen so that the wok would be hot. He regularly talks about the tactics he has for ensuring that he gets the best char kway teow by ordering separate dishes at separate times so the noodles go into the hot wok in a way that tastes best. Thankfully, the love of generations of family recipes—and, indeed, char kway teow—in these meals is not the gas stove. In fact, it is actually the way that it is cooked and the connection to our community and our culture. The Asian Australians for Climate Action are doing everything they can to encourage people like my dad in Asian communities to make the switch to electric, to make sure that we are not engaging with this toxic fossil fuel any longer. It is an important reminder that culture is a living and growing thing, and we evolve with the times. I encourage everybody to check out the TikTok video that the Asian Australians for Climate Action made of cooking a delicious char kway teow on an induction stove.

Beyond this, I want to caution that we are talking about electrification and that, in doing so, we do not overlook the fact that many people simply cannot afford to transition away from gas. Many renters, seniors, public housing tenants and those on limited incomes would struggle to cover the costs of purchasing and installing a new cooktop or heater, let alone paying to have solar panels or batteries installed in their homes. In many cases, because their landlords make those decisions, they are in no position to make the choice for themselves. I give a shout-out to the public housing tenants in Redfern, in the heart of the Newtown electorate, who have worked with our office to start a petition calling on the Government to install solar panels on the roof of all public housing properties in the State. A publicly owned windfarm would help propel us towards a cleaner, greener electric future, as would government subsidies to help low- and middle-income households transition away from gas. The Greens hope to see both of those things on the horizon soon and will keep pushing them on the agenda. I note that the member for Heffron has moved an amendment to the motion. The Greens seek to amend the member's amendment. I move:

That the amendment of the member for Heffron be amended by inserting at the end "and insert instead: (4) Urges the New South Wales Labor Government to follow the Victorian Labor Premier and move urgently to a future where all new residential properties and government buildings, including schools and hospitals, are powered by electricity."

The Greens believe that it is not okay for the New South Wales Labor Government not to stand strong and follow the lead of the Victorian Premier and the Victorian Government by moving urgently to a transition away from gas. The Greens believe that we absolutely need to get the entirety of the State off coal and gas, but this motion is specifically in relation to new builds. It is clear that the New South Wales Labor Government does not understand the urgency. We need to take the climate crisis seriously in this Chamber, at this time, and move towards a situation where we would see all new residential properties and government buildings, including schools and hospitals, powered by electricity into the future.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (17:46):** First, it is great to see a public interest debate being used to address an issue of genuine public interest in comparison to the political point scoring this section of the sitting day schedule is commonly used for. I thank the member for Ballina for bringing this important topic to the Chamber today—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** What, the Matildas?

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN:** Even that one. Indeed, the public interest case for fully electric homes and buildings, meaning no connection to methane gas, is very compelling. Fully electric homes are cheaper to run, are healthier for families and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I welcomed the announcement from the Victorian Labor Government last week to accelerate a shift to fully electric homes and public buildings. That follows a similar announcement from the Australian Capital Territory Government last year. I am in good company in welcoming that show of leadership from the Victorian Government. The Property Council of Australia, the Master Builders Association of Victoria, the Royal College of General Practitioners and many climate and energy advocacy organisations have all applauded the Victorian Government's decision.

The New South Wales Government should take heart from this broad support and also act decisively to require new homes and buildings to be fully electric as part of a broader vision to electrify everything. The reality is that getting off gas is a powerful measure to reduce cost-of-living pressures. The Climate Council's 2022 report *Switch and save: how gas is costing households* found that home owners in Australia's capitals could save between \$500 and \$1,900 every year on their bills by replacing gas heating, cooking and hot water appliances with electric alternatives. If that electricity was sourced from solar panels on their roof, the savings would be multiple times more. That is a plug for my plan for interest-free loans on solar.

With the cost-of-living crisis at the forefront of our minds right now, getting off gas is a smart way that the Government can help people save money. Not only is gas expensive, but the evidence is also mounting to show that burning methane gas indoors is dangerous for human health. Australian research published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* in 2018 estimated that, across the community, 12 per cent of childhood asthma is attributable to the use of gas cooking stoves. Gas burning in homes is an avoidable health risk. From a public health perspective alone, we must move quickly to address that risk. The statement from the Premier in response to the Victorian announcement, making it clear that New South Wales will not be following suit, is disappointing. I note, however, that NSW Labor made a commitment to stakeholders before the election to deliver a gas road map to give clarity to industry and households on gas decarbonisation.

I want to see that plan developed quickly and I want it to represent a serious effort from the Government to move away from gas. I am ready, willing and able to help make that a priority for the Government. On this theme, tomorrow from 1.00 p.m. at the level 9 Parliament rooftop garden I am co-hosting an event with the Speaker called "Cooking without gas: new opportunities in electrifying NSW". I encourage all members to RSVP for some beautiful food prepared on an electric barbecue and to hear from a panel of experts, including Kate Minter from Rewiring Australia. Full electrification of buildings, including phasing out methane gas, has so many benefits. Taking away the gas, a pollutant, from inside homes is good for people's health. It is cheaper for households. When paired with rooftop solar it is disinflationary, as households are liberated from volatile gas bills. It reduces gas demand, weakening the business case for opening up the State's prime agricultural land on the Liverpool Plains to coal seam gas mining. And, best of all, it cuts greenhouse gas emissions, helping to limit dangerous climate change, which threatens our very way of life.

The Government should act to deliver those benefits for the people of New South Wales instead of piping in infrastructure that at best will be redundant very soon and at worst will lock in the use of expensive, polluting methane gas for many years or decades to come that otherwise could have been avoided. Let this House take a multi-partisan position. Let us give a clear signal to the market that this is where we are heading and that our State is ready for the rapid transition to an electric future. It is time to wake up, New South Wales. Let us get on with it.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:50):** In reply: I thank the member for Heathcote, the member for Balmain, the member for Manly, the member for Heffron, the member for Newtown and the member for Wakehurst for their contributions. The final comments by the member for Wakehurst really said it all. Others have made the analogy to Roosevelt's era in the United States. We have to be beyond political ideology on this issue. I also note that the member for Heffron alluded to that when he mentioned that Margaret Thatcher was talking about climate change in 1989. But I would say to the member for Heffron that the community is already there. I am not sure that we care that much about members opposite taking their political colleagues with them. We get that that is how sausages are made. But the communities in their electorates are absolutely screaming. And if they are not, they will be soon. They will be screaming at members opposite to take action.

We recognise the election commitment on a gas road map to decarbonisation. We encourage the Government to get on with it. The Greens are very glad that Labor is in government, because I sat in the Chamber for eight years listening to climate deniers. It was extremely upsetting to members of my community. We welcome the measures that the Government is taking. When the member for Heathcote referred to electrification fuelled by renewable energy reducing the cost of living, she said helping the environment was the cherry on top. I would say to her that it is not an option. It is not about saving the environment; it is that we are headed towards 1.5 degrees

Celsius of warming now and a 2.5 degrees Celsius model is uninhabitable for most of the globe. It is not really about cherries on top.

The member for Balmain spoke eloquently about Doctors for the Environment Australia and the health impacts of gas. We echo the lament of the member for Manly that funding is in doubt for the pilot project that Saul is leading. The member for Newtown talked about Asian Australians for Climate Change. I would really like to try her father's char kway teow. We look forward to the member for Wakehurst's event tomorrow. We will not stop pushing this. It is very disappointing that Labor cannot make this very simple commitment today. It is not crazy; it is simple.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Ballina has moved a motion, to which the member for Heffron has moved an amendment, to which the member for Newtown has moved a further amendment. The question is that the amendment of the member for Newtown to the amendment of the member for Heffron be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being only five members for the question, the question is resolved in the negative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Ayes, 5**

Ms J. Hannan  
Ms J. Leong  
Mr M. Regan  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Amendment negatived.**

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The question now is that the amendment of the member for Heffron be agreed to. A division has been called for. There being only five members against the question, the question is resolved in the affirmative. I direct that the names of those members be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**Noes, 5**

Ms J. Hannan  
Ms J. Leong  
Mr M. Regan  
Ms K. Shetty  
Ms T. Smith

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

*Bills*

**STATE INSURANCE AND CARE GOVERNANCE AMENDMENT (ICNSW BOARD) BILL 2023**

**Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 28 June 2023.**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (18:02):** I indicate The Greens' support for the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023. I acknowledge that the Minister is in the Chamber. The bill will amend the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 to appoint an employer body representative and an employee body representative as directors to the icare board. During the past few years, we have seen icare's completely disastrous management of the workers compensation scheme, and we have seen questions over the appalling mismanagement of the fund. *Four Corners* exposed that more than \$80 million in wage theft from 52,000 injured workers took place while senior executives were paid on average \$660,000 each. The consequences were not just the misuse of immense amounts of public money but also a systematic failure to care for tens of thousands of workers who either got sick or were injured on the job through no fault of their own.

Injured workers missed out on essential medical care and financial support while greedy and immoral executives pocketed a vast amount of public money that was supposed to be set aside for vulnerable people who rely on this support to survive. The icare body was set up and exists to serve the interests of injured workers, but

we know from the mismanagement of the scheme that there has been a gross failure on that front. While the bill does not go far enough in overhauling the New South Wales workers compensation scheme that has caused—and continues to cause—ongoing harm to so many injured workers in this State, we recognise that it is a start and we acknowledge the Minister's commitment, alongside the Treasurer's, to address the many reforms that are needed. We welcome that the Government has identified addressing icare's performance and financial sustainability as a key priority. We also welcome its acknowledgement that this is the start, not the end, of ongoing reforms that are desperately needed.

Changes to the icare board to appoint employer- and employee-nominated directors is a small step in the direction of strengthening board oversight of icare and its operations. Injured workers need to be at the heart of any workers compensation scheme, not profits and executive salaries. Over the past 12 years, icare has operated without the involvement of the people most affected by its decisions. This has led to deep cultural issues within icare that have resulted in underpayments to injured workers and dust diseases victims, and to the personal data of injured workers being leaked to employers. I thank Unions NSW and the Injured Workers Campaign Network for their feedback on the bill and for their tireless advocacy for the rights of injured workers. I note their support for the legislation, which in their words "provides for a genuine voice for injured workers at the executive level of icare from organisations such as the Injured Workers Campaign Network".

I also acknowledge that this is just one of the key asks from the election pledge of the Injured Workers Campaign Network, which The Greens were proud to join Unions NSW in signing onto and committing to. The pledge calls on the New South Wales Parliament to build a workers compensation and rehabilitation system that requires injured worker representation on the board of icare; that returns injured workers to work when it is safe to do so; that has doctor-led care with timely and appropriate medical treatment; that protects injured workers from unfair terminations; that ensures polite, timely and accurate responses to all enquiries and requests; and that provides ongoing medical and financial support for workers unable to return to work by removing sections 39 and 59A of the Workers Compensation Act 1987. I was proud to join with the member for Balmain, who was not yet then the member for Balmain, to sign onto this pledge just prior to the election and give our commitment to back in the calls of the Injured Workers Campaign Network. We stand in solidarity with and support injured workers across the State, who deserve fair compensation and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Every worker deserves to be safe in their workplace. When someone is injured on the job as a result of the work that they do, they need to be supported for as long as necessary to deal with the effects of their injuries. They also need to be supported to return to work if that is what they want and need to do. I support the bill and urge the Minns Labor Government to do everything it can to back in and support the calls of the Injured Workers Campaign Network and Unions NSW to protect vulnerable and injured workers in New South Wales. It is absolutely critical that we work together with unions and the new Government to ensure that we deliver on these desperately needed reforms to make our workers compensation scheme fairer for the people who need it most.

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (18:07):** I support the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023, which provides for the appointment to the board of icare two nominee directors by the Minister responsible for icare—one nominee representing employees and one nominee representing employers. This resembles how boards in the superannuation system look, with mandated representatives for workers and employers. I support the bill for three main reasons. Firstly, it seeks to improve the governance, management and performance of icare. Although I acknowledge the efforts of the new leadership of icare to turn the ship around, its grave mismanagement under the previous Government continues to have very serious consequences not just financially but for workers and employers, who are icare's key stakeholders.

A perusal of the icare annual report for 2021-22 lays bare the financial mess that the organisation is in. Looking at the accounts for the Nominal Insurer, there is a net loss of \$993 million. That is an almost \$1 billion net loss in financial year 2022. There is an underwriting loss of \$116 million. It gets even worse when looking at the financial accounts of the Treasury Managed Fund. It is an important fund that provides workers compensation insurance for over 380,000 workers and over 140,000 volunteers across the State, as well as insurance for almost \$300 billion of the State's assets, including the Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and critical infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and services for the people in the communities of New South Wales. In other words, it is really important that this insurance organisation is financially stable and sustainable.

What do the financial results from financial year 2022 show? From a net earned premium of \$2 billion, there were net claims expenses and scheme costs of \$3.6 billion. Adding to that, there was an underwriting expense of about \$300 million. In other words, there was \$2 billion of revenue and approximately \$4 billion of expenses, resulting in an underwriting loss of almost \$2 billion. Adding to that, there was an investment loss of \$614 million, which means there was a total operating loss of about \$2.5 billion. Let us put that into perspective: \$2 billion of premium revenue was brought in, but there was a total loss of \$2.5 billion.

Because of that quite shocking financial situation, the former Government had to top up the Treasury Managed Fund by \$1.9 billion in 2022. Most recently, the Treasurer had to announce a \$669 million further top-up in June this year. In June 2020 the then Government injected \$2 billion of emergency capital into the Treasury Managed Fund, on top of a \$1 billion top-up in 2019. That is an example of the financial mess that the Government has inherited. Whilst all of those losses and bailouts were happening, the use of premiums by icare somehow included paying \$700,000 to a US Republican Party operative to work in a Liberal Treasurer's office; an \$18 million contract awarded to a Liberal Party printer and major donor; \$4 million of bonuses going to eight top executives in 2018, when the organisation lost \$873 million; and awarding a \$140 million IT contract in a seven-day tender.

This financial mismanagement is bad for not just the taxpayers of New South Wales but also the very people that icare is meant to protect and serve—that is, employees and employers. For employees, return-to-work rates have been falling or are stagnant, which contributes to the scheme expenses. For employers, part of the reason for the massive losses in the scheme is a failure to price premiums for the appropriate level of risk. From 2014 to 2021, the previous Government refused to put in place appropriate rate rises despite repeated warnings. The result, as everyone can see, is the recent attempt by icare to raise premiums for employers by 22 per cent during this cost-of-living crisis, when businesses across the State are under unprecedented pressure. In order to keep the scheme viable and sustainable, the ask was for a 22 per cent premium increase. The Minister for Industrial Relations refused to allow that to happen by capping rate rises at 8 per cent per year, recognising the pressure that a 22 per cent increase would put on struggling businesses.

Secondly, I support the bill for the simple reason of board diversity. It is irrefutable that a more diverse organisation and more diverse boards are more effective. In 2019 *Harvard Business Review* noted that it is important to have a broad definition of diversity on a board. It is not just about gender; it has to include culture, race, age and social diversity, including professional backgrounds. The key is diversity of thought, which is what the bill seeks to do. It improves diversity of thought. Plain diversity in itself is also not enough; the culture of the board is also very important. The culture has to be inclusive and allow diverse voices to be heard and have influence.

Having employee representatives on a corporate board is not new. In Germany, under the principle of co-determination, all companies with over 2,000 employees must have 50 per cent of their supervisory board members elected by workers or representing unions—or work councils, as they are called there. Companies in Germany with 500 to 2,000 employees must have one-third of their supervisory board members elected by employees. The University of Sydney Senate, with which I have been involved for a long time, has two staff representatives and two student representatives. I can say that it vastly improves the diversity of voices that are heard at that level.

Thirdly, I support the bill because it very simply gives a voice to the organisation's principal stakeholders—that is, employees and employers. It is a simple reflection of the principle that those who are impacted by the operations or decisions of an organisation should have a voice in the decision-making of that organisation. I acknowledge the work of Unions NSW and the Injured Workers Campaign Network over the past 10 years. They have been advocating for this important reform. I also acknowledge Business NSW and other industry and employer groups that have raised concerns about the performance and governance of the Nominal Insurer. The bill is the first step to fulfilling the Government's election commitments and mandate to strengthen the regulatory oversight and governance of the State's workers compensation and care insurance schemes and to ensure their financial sustainability for the long term.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Before I call the member for Hornsby, I acknowledge the people in the public gallery, particularly the beautiful woman who happens to be my baby sister Jackie Hornery.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (18:16):** I also acknowledge your baby sister Jackie. It is great to see her in the gallery for the debate on this riveting piece of legislation. The gallery is packed with people who are dying to hear more about the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023. What a night to be in the bearpit, as they call it. But it is a slim bill, like so many bills that have been introduced in this session so far. It would amend the provisions in the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 dealing with—

**Ms Anna Watson:** You call \$4 million for executives slim?

**Mr MATT KEAN:** —the composition of the board of Insurance and Care NSW [ICNSW], which is the formal name for icare. I did not quite catch the interjection by the member for Shellharbour.

**Ms Anna Watson:** I said, "You call \$4 million in bonuses to executives slim?" That is not slim.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Shellharbour will cease interjecting. Comments will be directed through the Chair.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I am more reflecting on the fact that there is not a lot of content in the bill, other than changing a couple of minor provisions. If the member for Shellharbour calls this reform, it is going to be a long four years of their Government. Notwithstanding that, under the current provisions, the board consists of the chief executive of ICNSW and up to eight other directors appointed by the Minister. In considering appointments to the board, section 5 (3) of the Act requires the Minister to ensure:

The appointed directors are to be persons who, in the opinion of the Minister, together have skills and experience relevant to the administration of State insurance and care schemes and that will assist ICNSW in exercising its functions.

The bill would effectively nullify the provisions in relation to two of the appointed directors who would now be appointed not based on any consideration by the Minister of any "skills and experience relevant to the administration of State insurance and care schemes" that would "assist ICNSW in exercising its functions" but simply on the basis that they have been nominated by Unions NSW or an employer group.

Even if the Minister were of the opinion that the nominee did not have anything to contribute to the "skills and experience relevant to the administration of State insurance and care schemes", the appointment would nonetheless need to be made. It should be noted that the chair of the icare board appointed by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government, Mr John Robertson, is a well-respected former secretary of Unions NSW and that one of the other appointed directors, Mr Mark Goodsell, is national head of work health and safety policy for the Australian Industry Group. This shows that the legitimate contributions of persons with a background in unions or employer groups can be drawn on without contracting out the Minister's responsibility to two external bodies.

It should also be noted that the board of icare is responsible for a range of insurance schemes that do not involve workers compensation and are not directly relevant to Unions NSW or employer groups, including the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme, which provides treatment and care to people who have a severe injury caused by a motor vehicle accident in New South Wales; CTP Care, which provides treatment and care to people who have a motor accident injury with long-term needs and an ongoing New South Wales CTP claim; the Home Building Compensation Fund, which helps home owners to rectify incomplete or defective works done by a builder or tradesperson; the Insurance for NSW scheme, which protects more than \$266.6 billion worth of the State's assets, including the iconic Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge as well as critical government infrastructure like schools and hospitals; and the Sporting Injuries Insurance Scheme, which provides cover for registered players and officials of certain sporting organisations.

Notwithstanding these comments, the Opposition will not oppose the bill. We hope that both Unions NSW and whichever employer group the Minister requests to nominate directors for the icare board will nominate persons with the relevant sets of skills and experience.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (18:20):** I also acknowledge Jak Hornery in the gallery and welcome her to the New South Wales Parliament. She has a brilliant sister here; we are all very proud of her. I speak in favour of the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023 and thank the Minister for Work Health and Safety for bringing it to the House. It is well and truly overdue. The bill is the first step in fulfilling the Minns Labor Government election commitment to strengthen the regulatory oversight and governance of the State's workers compensation scheme. Changes to the scheme were introduced in this place in 2012 and that was the start of the bastardisation of our workers compensation laws. The icare board could benefit from more diverse perspectives, ensuring that the needs and interests of both premium payers and workers are looked after.

The bill will ensure that all parties impacted are appropriately represented on the board, with a director nominated by New South Wales employer bodies and another director nominated by Unions NSW. This is a fair and appropriate arrangement. Having both employer and employee nominee directors on the board will ensure diverse perspectives are considered during decision-making. I expect that the discussions at board level will be robust, and that is a good thing. It would be no surprise to members that, as a proud trade unionist and former union organiser, I enjoy a robust discussion myself. I certainly have had plenty of discussions in this House over the past 12 years, particularly around workers' rights, workers compensation and the union movement and the fantastic job that it does for all of us. As someone who has always fought hard to ensure workers get a fair go, I am extremely supportive of the mandated inclusion of a director who can be a champion for employee perspectives. It is time that this occurred.

The new-look icare board will be similar to industry superannuation boards. Whilst members opposite hate it when employees have a voice, the bill will ensure that there is a balanced approach and will go some way to make sure that injured workers' voices are heard at the board level. That will give so much comfort to so many families, not only now but going forward. The Minns Government inherited a huge mess from members opposite

regarding icare, and it will take us years to fix. Despite the numerous warnings, the Liberal Party and The Nationals did nothing to fix the issue of inadequate premiums to cover the costs of the scheme over the past decade. It is a mess that they created, and it is a mess that the Labor Government will fix. Of course, they looked after their mates and approved an \$18 million contract to a printer that just happened to be one of their major donors; that is shameful.

Even though the scheme lost \$873 million in 2018, the former Government thought it was a good idea to give \$4 million in bonuses to the top eight executives. Wow, that is just mind-blowing. Just so we get this straight, they made a complete mess of icare, the scheme lost \$873 million and then they gave \$4 million to the top eight performers! If we could get a job like that we would all be pretty happy, right? What a waste and what a disgraceful legacy that you guys opposite have left us. I know that you know I am right.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** The member will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** What a kick in the guts to all of those injured workers who have lost their jobs, their homes and their families. Many have suicided over that disgraceful piece of legislation that was brought to this place in 2012. I thank the unions and also the Injured Workers Campaign Network for their fantastic advocacy over the past 10 years and their push for these changes. I fully support the passage of the bill, which is an important first step to ensure fair representation for workers on the icare board.

I further acknowledge all of those men and women who came to my office in Shellharbour, who have been fighting since 2012 to get access to finances and decent medical care but who were turned back and told that their case was closed while employers and icare knocked back every single claim that came across their desks. This is almost akin to the Federal Liberals' robodebt scheme, which lines up with the Liberal-Nationals mentality. They are the puppetmasters of the Liberal Party. I am so pleased that the Minns Labor Government is going to clean up the obscene mess of Coalition members opposite who have inflicted so much pain on workers across New South Wales. I fully commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (18:26):** I welcome the opportunity to speak to the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023. The New South Wales agency icare provides insurance and care services to statutory authorities and people with injuries under various compensation schemes, providing workers compensation insurance to more than 329,000 public and private sector employers in New South Wales and their 3.2 million employees. In addition, icare insures builders and homeowners and provides treatment and care to people severely injured on New South Wales roads. The organisation and its board are also tasked with protecting more than \$266.6 billion of New South Wales Government assets, including the Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, schools and hospitals.

The bill seeks to amend the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 to provide for the appointment of directors nominated by employee and employer bodies to the ICNSW board. Schedule 1 amends section 5 relating to the board of directors of ICNSW by omitting section 5 (2) (b) and inserting in its place a new subparagraph with the following directions for directors appointed by the Minister, called the appointed directors:

- (i) 1 director nominated by an employee body,
- (ii) 1 director nominated by an employer body,
- (iii) up to 6 other directors.

New directors must fulfil a duty to the public that requires definite skills, according to section 5 (3) of the Act. The subsection provides:

- (3) The appointed directors are to be persons who, in the opinion of the Minister, together have skills and experience relevant to the administration of State insurance and care schemes and that will assist ICNSW in exercising its functions.

New sections 5 (6) and (7) are to be inserted. New section 5 (6) will allow the Minister to make the board appointments if no nomination has been presented. It reads:

If an employee body or employer body fails to nominate persons for the purposes of subsection (2)(b)(i) or (ii) within the period specified in a written request given to the body by the Minister—

- (a) the Minister may appoint a director under that subparagraph, and
- (b) the appointment is taken to have been made as if the director had been nominated under the subparagraph. In new subsection (7) "employee body" means Unions NSW and "employer body" means a body that represents employers in New South Wales. The intention—and the opportunity—is clear. The Minister can bring employer and employee voices onto the board of directors leading the State's workplace compensation organisation. What about the representative for employers, the people and organisations who pay the premiums for the scheme? There is a wide choice. The representative can come from any employer body. You can see how this might change over time, move between organisations and diversify. The employees' representative must be nominated by a single organisation, to be entrenched in law—Unions NSW. Of course,

Unions NSW is a body that has many unions as its members, representing many employees. Unions NSW has an active agenda of advocacy. The Minister, in her second reading speech, noted:

The Government recognises that the icare board could benefit from more diverse perspectives. ...

Once enacted, the bill will ensure that both employers and employees are appropriately represented on the icare board through the appointment of two nominee directors, one representing employers, and one appointment for unions representing workers. This change will ensure that the board is more representative of the community.

One media organisation, in response to the Government's announced plans for directorships of icare, summed up its interpretation with the heading "Union muscle to be invited to icare board table in NSW". Is this being harsh? In any event, this is what was being talked about back in June. I take a moment to draw out the issue of director responsibilities and the management of conflict of interests. A thoughtful piece written by James Dunn and published by the Australian Institute of Company Directors states:

The duty to avoid conflicts of interests is derived from both general law and statutory provisions found in the Corporations Act 2001 (the Act), which requires directors to avoid conflicts of interest. Under the Act, directors must:

1. Exercise their powers and discharge their duties with a reasonable degree of care and diligence (section 180).
2. Act in good faith in the best interests of the company or for a proper purpose (section 181).
3. Not use their position to obtain an advantage for either themselves or a third party, or to cause detriment to the company (section 182).
4. Not improperly use information gained through their position as a director to obtain an advantage for either themselves or a third party, or to cause detriment to the company (section 183).

Conflicts of interest can occur when private interests exert influence on the board's interests and on a director's duty to advance the corporation's objectives within the parameters of its charter documents. Quoted in the article, Dr Simon Longstaff, AO, Executive Director of the Ethics Centre, said:

We each have a lot of relationships, but they don't always line up perfectly. It's not because you're greedy or indifferent to your duties that these things arise. The problem only occurs when they're not adequately addressed.

He pulls the single idea of conflict of interest into two parts: a conflict of interest and a conflict of duty. Of these, he says, conflicts of duty are more common. Dr Longstaff said:

These arise where you've got a duty to two parties, whose interests are not compatible, in relation to a particular matter. You might be on the board of another company, or you might owe a duty to someone who's an associate, which is incompatible with discharging the interests of the company you serve.

A common understanding of conflict of interest is that, when a director identifies the potential for conflict, he or she must step back from the decision, the motion or even the board discussion. And that should be sufficient—all good. Longstaff raises the less frequently expressed extension of this when he asks what happens when you have a conflict that stops you being able to act at all. To quote Dunn:

This can occur where the director is involved on the other side of a transaction, and decides to step outside of board consideration of the transaction. "That's what's expected of them, and they think they're doing the right thing, but it becomes a different problem if the transaction becomes so large that effectively, they're having to step aside from doing anything significant on the board. At some point, you have to recognise that you can't just keep a seat warm while the business of the board goes on without you," says Longstaff.

A director must not only recognise a conflict of interest but also his or her actions in response must not breach the director's duty to the organisation to lead, to think, to debate, to bring their skills—perhaps identified and chosen according to the board's recruitment matrix for directors—and their capabilities. Longstaff says:

If you're basically on the sideline for a long period of time, you're not going to be able to do that. There's an infrequently discussed ethical question as to whether or not, if the conflict is serious, you should actually step down completely.

Conflicts of interest or duty do not have to be restricted to the financial. There might be family involvement or advancement, friendships, opportunities, preferential treatment, personal moral leanings or directives for obedience. These are fairly obvious issues when conflict can arise. But, returning to icare and its board, let us add these potential conflicts: making public comment on a board agenda item or decision; breaking the confidentiality of the board's discussion or decision-making process; refusing to work collegially with the rest of the board; and not letting go of a subject where the board has reached its decision but the parent body behind a director maintains its push, to the detriment of proper functioning of the board.

When it comes to such a critical and public organisation as icare, with the immense responsibilities of looking after injured workers while not driving employers out of business through unaffordable premiums or unnecessarily burdensome administration, it is right to question the board's composition and the consequences of the selection of directors who must put first and foremost the discharge of the duties and statutory obligations carried by icare on behalf of all workers and all employers across the State. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, as at June 2023, puts the number of employees in New South Wales at 4,367,100. Unions NSW claims that its member unions represent approximately one-seventh of this number of employees in the State. This Government

is entrenching in legislation a single directive for the representation of employees in New South Wales. This is not a decision made in the interests of equity of representation for the other six-sevenths of employees. [*Extension of time*]

There is no need to be coy here. Labor's self-interested decision drops a heavy hand onto the icare board to advance a union-backed agenda. It is a limited vision. Why must the only permissible ministerially appointed employee representative be the union? Is it so intolerable to contemplate rotating this directorship across the spectrum of employee organisations, just as the employer director will be expected to change now and then? It is not a reform that is very trusting of employees, is it? When the Government announced its proposed changes to the icare board selection process, Phil Kewin, CEO of the National Insurance Brokers Association, promptly identified the timidity in ambition of the Government's thinking on the State's workers compensation scheme. What about ongoing affordability, the sustainability of the scheme, premium rises placing additional cost pressures on small businesses, and how these impacts and pressures will affect not only employers but also employees?

As cost-of-living pressures continue to punch holes in the budgets of households and businesses, the Government must do more than this bill comprehends if it wants to keep people in jobs and keep small business affordable for those who take on the bold task and the risk of running a business and becoming an employer to others. I make these comments as someone who is a business owner, who employs great people to work in a team and who has seen firsthand the impact of insurance premium increases of up to 75 per cent in Victoria. I ask the Government how it is supporting small businesses to survive today's cost-of-living pressures. Icare premium support would be a good place to start.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (18:38):** The State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023 is a first step towards reform and to restoring confidence in the workers compensation system for injured workers and businesses alike. It sets out the composition of the icare board, which is responsible for setting icare's strategic direction and oversight of its senior executives and their management of icare's business operations. In icare, the Government inherited a mess, after more than a decade of decline and neglect at the hands of the previous Government. For 10 years the former Government did nothing to address the inadequacy of premiums to cover scheme costs. Not only that, between 2014 and 2021, the Government refused to put in place adequate rate rises despite repeated warnings to do so.

However, as noted by the member for Shellharbour, while allowing icare to raise a staggering debt, it used premiums to pay a United States Republican Party operative \$700,000 to work in a Liberal Treasurer's office, which is more than the Treasurer's remuneration. It also awarded to a Liberal Party printer an \$18 million contract and paid \$4 million in bonuses for eight top executives in 2018, despite losing \$873 million in the same year. The mess we have inherited will take years to fix. One thing is clear: The system needs reform. Many injured workers have experienced the system firsthand. They found it difficult to navigate and unsympathetic to their position.

I was distressed to hear a firsthand account last week from Tracey, who is a nurse in my electorate. While at work she was treating an elderly person with dementia who kicked her in the face, breaking her jaw. One would think that in those circumstances a workers compensation claim would be a straightforward matter. Tracey did not want to make a claim for pain and suffering. All she wanted was for her medical expenses to be covered and the sick leave that she had to take to be returned to her. The medical bills were nothing outrageous, amounting to a measly \$1,200, but for Tracey the cost was more than one week's wage. Tracey's claim was rejected. The reason given was that Tracey had neglected her teeth and that is why her jaw broke. Tracey appealed the decision and lost again. In the end she gave up, which is exactly what icare wanted her to do. If we add up the time the case worker and others took to reject the claim, it would far outweigh the mere \$1,200 Tracey was asking for under her workers compensation claim.

The bill is about changing the composition of the icare board by ensuring that employers and employees are appropriately represented. It requires two nominee directors to be appointed by the Minister responsible for icare—one to represent employers and one to represent unions, who look after workers like Tracey. That is simple, fair and transparent. It resembles what boards in the industry superannuation system look like, with mandated representatives of both workers and employers built into the system. It will ensure that the board is more representative of our community.

I acknowledge the work of Unions NSW and the Injured Workers Campaign Network over the past 10 years, which have been advocating for this reform. They recognise that a high-performing and successful icare board must, as a matter of course, take account of and be responsive to the needs and interests of those they serve. For workers compensation, that is New South Wales workers and businesses. For injured workers, that can translate into a focus on the timely payment and accurate calculation of entitlements, improved claims management by insurers in the system as well as their case managers, and treatment to support recovery and return to work outcomes. The mandated inclusion of employee perspectives will go some way to making icare and the

way it operates more accommodating to injured workers by ensuring that their voices are heard at the highest level.

I acknowledge Business NSW and other industry and employer groups that have raised their concerns about the performance and governance of the Nominal Insurer. Including new perspectives on the icare board will also help to drive accountability for those outcomes most vital to scheme participants. For business, that can mean a focus on premium setting, affordability, and making the system easier for business to understand. This Government was elected on a platform to reform icare so that it better serves the people of New South Wales, injured workers and premium-payers. That is what the bill is all about. The bill is the first step in fulfilling the Government's election commitments and its mandate to strengthen the regulatory oversight and governance of the State workers compensation and care insurance schemes to ensure their financial sustainability for the longer term. This is not the end of our reform of icare; it is just the beginning. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (18:44):** I support the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023, aimed at reforming icare, the default insurer for workers compensation in New South Wales. I express my wholehearted support for this crucial step taken by the Government. For far too long icare has been plagued by issues of performance and financial sustainability, affecting businesses and workers alike. It is evident that the current structure of the icare board needs to be improved and the proposed amendment presents a clear solution to the problem. By appointing employer- and employee-nominated directors to the board, we will bring much-needed diversity and balanced representation to the highest level of icare. Diversity on the icare board is essential because businesses and workers across the State directly depend on its work.

I share my own account that speaks to the failure of the previous Government and its handling of icare. Before representing the people of Riverstone in this place, my business was required to hold workers compensation with icare. A few years ago I had a fall while on location at a photo shoot and shattered the bones in my little finger on my right hand. I will not subject the House to the gruesome details of the injury or how it happened; however, I point out that it required a visit to hospital and occurred a couple of days before I was due to fly to Perth to cover a round of the Australian Rally Championship. Aside from dealing with the injury and the medical care, I had to complete the job I was on and organise a replacement for the other work I had committed to.

After getting the injury treated and lining up someone to cover the upcoming rally, I set about dealing with icare for workers compensation. To its credit, the insurer agreed to cover the cost of the contractor I needed to employ, but then slapped me with a fine of almost \$2,500 for late reporting of my injury. I explained that I was both the employer and the injured employee and that I had prioritised seeking urgent medical attention over reporting the incident. However, that was deemed to be irrelevant. While disappointed, I thought that at least I was able to employ contractors to cover work while I recuperated. Over the course of the following three months, I accumulated approximately \$10,000 worth of invoicing from the contractors I needed to use to cover the work. When I submitted those to icare, I was informed that they would not be paid because I was supposed to contact icare and receive approval before I contracted the work, each and every time.

That is an excellent example of what is supposed to be a service to business being the complete opposite. Instead of helping the business and its employee, a broken finger cost me over \$12,000, despite over a decade of paying mandatory insurance that was supposed to protect me. Experiences like mine and those of countless others highlight the need for insurers to have real-world understanding of the needs of business and employees when it comes to providing workers compensation insurance. Representatives from employer and employee bodies can ensure that genuine, practical perspectives are brought to the table, enhancing the efficiency, transparency and accountability of icare's operations. In turn, that will build confidence among employers and employees, fostering a stronger and more inclusive workers compensation system.

I acknowledge the appointment of a representative from Unions NSW, and that unions represent approximately one in seven workers in this State. However, I note that the board is made up of nine members. The Government is committed to upholding diversity on the icare board and will work with employer and employee bodies to identify suitably qualified individuals from a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds. That may extend beyond gender to include cultural and linguistic diversity, rural and regional perspectives, and representation for disability groups. Indeed, representation by unions is representation of employees.

To ensure the nomination process is transparent and fair, NSW Treasury will develop guidelines outlining the selection criteria for those nominating to be directors. The selection criteria will be clearly and transparently defined in advance to support the nominating bodies in identifying suitably qualified individuals with skills and expertise relevant to icare. The proposed amendment will ensure that all board members, including the nominee directors, have an appropriate level of financial literacy in line with the requirements of the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015. The Government will work with the nominating employer and employee bodies to

identify suitably skilled and capable individuals, and NSW Treasury will be responsible for developing guidelines and selection criteria to ensure a transparent and robust nomination process. While I appreciate there may be concern about the financial impact of modifying the board's composition, frankly it pales in comparison with the expenditure and questionable financial decisions made by the previous Government.

From a service perspective, icare is a failure. Financially, it is a disaster. For 10 years, the former Government did nothing to address the inadequacy of premiums to cover scheme costs. However, it did oversee multimillion-dollar bonuses to executives. It awarded multimillion-dollar contracts with little public oversight that coincidentally went to major donors of the Liberal Party. The mess we have inherited will take years to fix. This decision will see the total number of directors appointed to the icare board remain unchanged. However, the experience of the executive team will be vastly different. What this reform brings is a profound change in the representation and accountability of the board, setting the groundwork for long-term financial sustainability and improved serviceability.

I recognise that change can be daunting, and some may wonder about the time line for implementing these new nominee directors. But this amendment is change that is drastically needed. The Minister for Work Health and Safety will have a 12-month transition period to appoint the two new nominee directors after the bill's proclamation. This staggered approach ensures a thoughtful consideration of the board's renewal and diversity while maintaining the expertise needed for high performance. The State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023 is not just a step towards reforming icare; it is a step towards restoring confidence in our workers compensation system as a whole. By broadening the diversity of the board and including representatives from both employers and employees, we will create a more inclusive and efficient system that prioritises the needs of workers and businesses.

This is the first step in fulfilling the Government's commitment to strengthening the regulatory oversight and governance of our State workers compensation and care insurance schemes. Remember that this is just the beginning of our journey towards a fairer and more compassionate workers compensation system. This Government will build a future where workers can trust that the system is there for them in their time of need and that employers will receive the benefits they need. This Government will create a stronger and more inclusive icare that serves the people of New South Wales with dedication and compassion. I commend the Minister for introducing the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (18:52):** In reply: I thank members for their diligent and important contributions to debate on the State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023. I thank the member for Newtown, who is very passionate about this area of law. She is very committed and has had many dealings with vulnerable people, injured people, in this State over many years. I have worked with her over the years, particularly on workers compensation matters, and I know her passion in this area. We have a long way to go because we have been left with such a huge mess.

I acknowledge my very good colleague the member for Strathfield. He talked about the improvements to governance, management and performance. With his background in finance, he spoke intelligently about the 2022 financial reports, the Nominal Insurer and the Treasury Managed Fund and gave an outline of what the figures are like—and they are terrible. He is also very committed. We share a community. Working with the member for Strathfield, I know that we will move forward and improve the lives of people not only in our community but also across the State.

I acknowledge the member for Hornsby, and shadow Minister for Health for his contribution. I note that the Opposition will not oppose the bill. However, in his former role as Treasurer, the member had an opportunity to make changes. When our Treasurer—then shadow Treasurer—put forward similar amendments, the government of the day opposed them, which is quite shameful. I did hear what the member for Hornsby said about skills and qualifications. In terms of his sincerity, I take him at his word and assure him absolutely—and, as the former Treasurer, he knows this—that there are very strict processes regarding the appointment of directors. But I am disappointed with him and his Government for not fixing this mess.

We heard from the member for South Coast and the member for Riverstone—new members in this place—about the experience of a constituent and a personal experience. I acknowledge the member for Shellharbour for her strong advocacy on behalf of injured workers in her community near the Illawarra. She has been a champion for them since 2012, raising issues and campaigning. She has worked diligently for injured workers. I know that she is very passionate about this area. I acknowledge the member for Albury and shadow skills Minister, who spoke about premiums but neglected to mention his Government's shocking record, which created the problem we have inherited. I acknowledge his thoughtfulness and his reference to Simon Longstaff with respect to ethics and conflicts. I absolutely take my duties in this role very seriously. I acknowledge his consideration, and I assure him that there are strict processes around these appointments.

I acknowledge the new member for South Coast. I am proud of her; she is doing a phenomenal job. I congratulate the member on her very strong advocacy for injured workers in regional New South Wales, particularly on the South Coast. I mentioned to the member that I will take up the case of her constituent—a nurse who was kicked in the face and whose claim for medical expenses was rejected by icare because it formed the view, and I am paraphrasing, that her teeth were not that good. I will investigate that matter. It is fantastic to have the hardworking member for Riverstone from the north-west of Sydney in this place. He is doing a fantastic job representing his community. I will also inquire about the matter that he raised on behalf of all businesses. I congratulate him on his very strong advocacy in this area.

The bill sets out the composition of the icare board responsible for setting icare's strategic direction and oversight of its senior executive and their management of icare's business operations. During the past few years there have been significant pressures on the financial position of the schemes administered by icare, as well as questions over the sustainability of the fund and icare's culture and performance. The icare board has responsibility for setting the strategic direction and management oversight of icare. It is therefore appropriate that considerations for reform start at the highest level to ensure that the board has the expertise needed to oversee icare and its strategic direction. This extends beyond technical skills and professional experience in the financial services and insurance sector; it also ensures that stakeholder views are appropriately represented.

A high-performing and successful icare board must also take account of, and be responsive to, the needs and interests of those it serves—that is, New South Wales businesses and workers. It is critical that these perspectives and viewpoints are taken into account in board deliberations and decision-making. The bill will mean that New South Wales employers and employees will have a voice on the icare board. This change will ensure that the board is more representative of our community. On that note, I refer to what the member for Hornsby said earlier. He was critical about the Government's reform program. However critical, those opposite had an opportunity to fix and implement the full McDougall recommendations. This is the first of a tranche of reforms that we have with respect to icare.

Just a few days after I was sworn in, I intervened in a decision that icare had made to increase premiums by 22 per cent for small businesses. I issued a ministerial directive and stated that, as tough as it is for small businesses—really tough—the premiums would increase by an average 8 per cent. That is still tough. I know that small businesses are going through a very tough time at the moment, but we are in this position because the previous Government did nothing. The bill will ensure that both employers and employees are appropriately represented on the icare board through the appointment of two nominee directors. Those two directors will be nominated by New South Wales employer bodies and Unions NSW to represent employer and worker interests and perspectives. The inclusion of employer and employee perspectives is intended to deliver many benefits.

Most importantly, employer and employee nominee directors have the potential to contribute diverse perspectives to board decision-making. This will engender more robust discussion at board level and ensure that employer and employee priorities are factored into their decision-making. Employer and employee perspectives on the icare board will also help to drive accountability for those outcomes most vital to scheme participants. For employers, this will mean a focus on premium setting and affordability, and supporting return to work for injured workers. The mandated inclusion of employee perspectives will go some way to making icare, and the way it operates, more accommodating to injured workers by ensuring that their voices are heard at the highest level.

The Government is committed to upholding diversity on the icare board. We will work with nominating employer bodies and Unions NSW to identify suitably qualified individuals from diverse perspectives and backgrounds. Diversity extends beyond gender to include cultural and linguistic diversity, regional and rural perspectives, as well as representation of disability groups. Having more diverse perspectives reflected in board deliberations has the potential to drive better quality decision-making supported by the robust exchange of different views. Importantly, employer and union nominated directors can help bring practical, real-life experience and perspective to icare and its operations. It also extends to those standards icare must meet in the efficient, transparent and accountable conduct of its operations to meet community expectations. The proposed bill will change the composition of the current icare board. Two existing non-executive directors will be replaced by the two new nominee directors. Employers and Unions NSW will have primary responsibility to nominate individuals to represent perspectives.

I turn now to address some of the concerns of those opposite. As the responsible Minister, I will have the ability—and not just me but any Minister in the future—to appoint nominated individuals who satisfy the requirements of the Act for appropriately qualified directors who possess skills and expertise relevant to icare in the exercise of its functions. I may also request an alternate candidate where I am not satisfied that the proposed nominee meets the requirements set out in the Act. Supplementary guidelines will be developed to provide clarity, transparency and accountability in the selection process of nominating employer and employee bodies, as well as

potential nominees. There will be early engagement with the nominating bodies to encourage a broad-based search to identify suitably qualified nominees with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

A transition plan will be developed to support the appointment of the two nominee employer and employee directors. Under this plan, the nominee directors must be in place within 12 months of proclamation. There will be some flexibility over the 12-month transition period around timing of the new appointments. This is important so that I can focus on giving effect to this bill to appoint the two new nominee directors and the need for renewal and diversity of the icare board, while giving appropriate consideration to the need for some continuity and stability, including the need to maintain an appropriate mix of the technical skills and expertise required of a high-performing board.

The purpose of the bill is to have employer and worker perspectives represented on the icare board. The inclusion of those perspectives is intended to support better quality, more robust and well-considered decision-making that takes into account diverse views. I acknowledge the work of Unions NSW and the Injured Workers Campaign Network over the past 10 years in advocating for this reform. Injured workers want to have representation on the board. The Minns Labor Government has a mandate, and today we are delivering. This has taken 10 years.

I acknowledge Business NSW and other industry and employer groups that have raised their concerns about performance and governance of the Nominal Insurer. I acknowledge Business NSW, in particular, and the other employer groups. They represent thousands of small business operators across all of our electorates, and I acknowledge their very strong advocacy. They do not come in and say, "We want this cut" or "We want this gone." Our dealings on how we can work together have been very respectful and considered. I know that small business is hurting. I know that small business is going through a tough time.

In my many discussions with icare I have said that I want more outreach with our small businesses—whether it is working with the local chamber of commerce, with our community groups or with members of Parliament across politics. This is about injured workers who need support and immediate triaging. When a person runs a small business, they do not have a human resources department or a technical department or a grants department; it is just that person, as a sole owner-operator, or their partnership. They are a businessperson providing a service. They are there for the community. They do not have time. We want to make sure that we are getting information out to them so that they are aware of how they can support themselves, how they can support their apprentices, how they can support their employees, and how we can assist them in looking at certain incentives. Small businesses are not aware of quite a lot of things, so I am working with icare about outreach—getting out there and talking to injured workers and to local small businesses.

I also thank the SafeWork NSW family and injured worker support group for its work in this area and acknowledge the advocacy and contributions of all of those injured workers and grieving parents. Continued access to the State's workers compensation and care insurance schemes is a key priority for the Government. At the same time, that must be appropriately balanced with scheme affordability, efficiency and viability to ensure support for injured workers is secured. The bill is a first step in a broader reform agenda to address governance, regulatory oversight and frameworks to ensure the financial sustainability and future of the State's workers compensation and care insurance schemes. Addressing icare's performance and financial sustainability is a key priority for the Government, and changes to the icare board to appoint employer- and employee-nominated directors is a key first step intended to strengthen board oversight of icare and its operations.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **RUSSELL LEA PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (19:11):** This Education Week I recognise Russell Lea Public School for fostering a positive and collegial school environment. On my recent visits to the school I have met with leaders Audrey Allan, Kiaan Thakkar, Jemima Woods, Kaelan Wan, Georgina Maniscalco and Indira Andrews. On my first visit student leaders organised to take me on a fun and informative tour of their school, where I met each year group and the wonderful and dedicated teachers. Most recently, as part of National Tree

Day, student leaders helped me plant a native bottlebrush in a beautiful spot on the school grounds. We hope the native tree provides a habitat for birds such as wrens and thornbills for years to come. In my time at the school I learned that what makes the community so special is its student leaders. They are respectful, compassionate, kind and a wonderful example to their peers. Once again I thank Audrey, Kiaan, Jemima, Kaelan, Georgina and Indira. I also acknowledge Mr Dan Sprange, principal of Russell Lea, for opening the school to me.

#### **SOUTH SUDANESE COMMUNITY AND YOUTH ASSOCIATION OF NSW**

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:12):** I recently joined Minister Harrison and the South Sudanese Community and Youth Association of NSW at the launch of the South Sudanese and culturally and linguistically diverse communities volunteering diversity and inclusion project and community barbecue on Sunday 9 July. The project aims to enhance cultural awareness and competency by promoting available volunteer opportunities through targeted recruitment processes. It will focus on volunteer recruitment and recognition, and on providing volunteers with invaluable support through training and engagement, with a focus on building stronger volunteer relationships that will support their communities to deliver much-needed culturally appropriate community programs and activities. I thank Ms Arek Desak, president of the South Sudanese Community and Youth Association of NSW, for the invitation to celebrate the South Sudanese culture.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DON SOUTHWELL**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (19:13):** I recognise the late Mr Don Southwell. Mr Southwell was born in Balgowlah, Sydney, completing schooling within the district before going on to study and complete his diploma in civil engineering. He landed his first job with the Forestry Commission and then worked as a cadet engineer at Warringah Shire Council, followed by roles at several other councils. Gaining his qualifications as a town and country planner, Mr Southwell went on to work with the State Planning Authority before commencing his role as the deputy engineer and town planner with Crookwell Shire Council in 1987. His achievements at the council included a review of the council's planning scheme, design and construction of stage one of the Goulburn Street Crookwell CBD and several other town improvements. Mr Southwell was elected to Crookwell council in 1996, serving two terms until 2004. Mr Southwell also served as deputy mayor for a year. Known for his exemplary work with the council, Mr Southwell was also undoubtedly well known as a community champion, always aiming to assist others in a variety of roles. It is a great honour to acknowledge Mr Southwell's contributions.

#### **TWO LITTLE BEANS CAFE**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:14):** Due to COVID, fires and floods, the much-loved community of Mount Victoria has been doing it tough. Despite that, it is heartening to see the birth of a new business: a great cafe in Station Street called Two Little Beans. Sisters and best friends Bek and Sam are doing their bit to bring tourists into Mount Victoria for great coffee and delicious home-cooked food whilst also giving residents a local treasure to enjoy. There is something to tempt everyone at Two Little Beans, with home-cooked savoury and sweet food to die for. I encourage all members to stop off at that amazing cafe on their next visit to the Blue Mountains. Say hello and pick up some tasty treats. While members are there, they should take a little time to wander around Mount Victoria and see what else that historic place has to offer. It has taken a lot of courage for those two young local mums to follow their dreams in these challenging economic times. Bek and Sam's Blue Mountains community wishes them all the very best. May their business flourish; I have every faith it will.

#### **CATHOLICCARE COMMUNITY KITCHENS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (19:15):** I recognise the volunteers at CatholicCare Community Kitchens, Forster and Taree. The amazing initiative serves up warm and nourishing meals six days a week to our community members in need. During my recent visit, it was heartwarming to witness the generosity and dedication of the volunteers who make it all possible. The community kitchens operate solely on donations from local businesses, which means they can only give what they receive. They depend on kindness and support from individuals and businesses within our community to continue to help others. Since opening in December 2015 they have made over 100,000 meals. While that is a significant milestone, unfortunately it is not one to celebrate. I thank the CatholicCare volunteers and those businesses that contribute to making a significant impact on the lives of those in need.

#### **AHMADIYYA PEACE SYMPOSIUM**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (19:16):** I recognise Mr I. H. Kauser, Grand Imam of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Australia; and Mr Mirza Sharif, national public relations director. They hosted the Ahmadiyya Peace Symposium 2023 on 8 July 2023, which I attended. It was the thirty-eighth peace symposium organised by Ahmadiyya community. The Ahmadiyyas are always quick to volunteer for their

community, whether it is during a bushfire, flood or any natural disaster—and even Clean Up Australia Day. Their motto of "Love for all, hatred for none" is a message of tolerance and inclusion that I believe to be integral to all communities. I congratulate the organisers of the event for putting together another wonderful symposium and hosting a positive event for the community.

#### TRIBUTE TO ANN HARRISON

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (19:17):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges the sad passing of Angela—better known as Ann—Harrison, the loving wife of Bob Harrison. Ann served as an alderman on Shellharbour Municipal Council with her husband from 1973 to 1977 and again from 1980 to 1991. Together, Ann and Bob were the first and longest serving husband-and-wife team in New South Wales local government, contributing much to the growth of Shellharbour over 35 years. In 2001 Ann was awarded the Centenary Medal, which commemorated 100 years of Federation and acknowledged the challenges of the new century by recognising citizens and others who made a contribution to society or government. Ann received the honour for her service to the community through local government and voluntary work with Meals on Wheels. In 2013 Shellharbour city centre's five-hectare park was renamed Harrison Park in honour of Ann and Bob's contribution to the community. The couple were also inducted into the Shellharbour City Hall of Fame. The Parliament of New South Wales recognises the work and legacy of Ann Harrison. There is no doubt Ann made our community a better place, helping countless people and causes during her many years of service. On behalf of the community, we wish Bob and Ann's family peace and offer our sincere condolences.

#### SOCIAL FUTURES

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:18):** I show my appreciation to the team at Social Futures for their fabulous organisation of the Waves Central Coast inclusive dance parties. In June I was thrilled to join Waves' first birthday. It warmed my heart to see a truly inclusive space, full of laughter, dancing, friendship and fun. The Waves dances for young people with and without disability are organised every three months by a committee of people aged from 18 to 25 with the support of Social Futures, a not-for-profit NDIS partner in our community, and the Terrigal Rotary Club. Andie Poetschka, a fabulous local who lives with cerebral palsy, is one of the amazing people who brought the idea into reality. She shared that they started Waves because there are not too many events for people with disabilities on the Central Coast. That is the kind of initiative that makes me proud of the younger generation in our community, and I encourage the Central Coast community to join the next Waves party at Central Coast Leagues Club on 8 September. I am certain they will all have a great time.

#### DAY OF ASHURA

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (19:19):** Today I speak about the Day of Ashura—the tenth day in the month of Muharram in the Islamic lunar calendar. This year it was marked on Saturday 29 July. On this day Muslims and non-Muslims alike commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, his family and companions. Peace be upon them all. They were martyred on the plains of Karbala in Iraq. The events that took place at Karbala are the epitome of reliance on God, courage, bravery, sacrifice and steadfastness. They provide a universal message of human justice and teach us to always show up, stand up, and speak up for truth and justice. The ultimate sacrifice that occurred at Karbala has been commemorated across multiple events held across Greater Sydney, including in my electorate of Holsworthy. It has been a pleasure to attend and participate in those events. I offer my sincerest condolences on the martyrdom of those raised in the household of revelation. I thank the House.

#### TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM "JIM" MACKIE

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:20):** I acknowledge the passing of Mr William "Jim" Mackie, a former Navy Reserve member and long-time member of the local Cumberland RSL Sub-Branch. Jim grew up in Auburn and attended St John's Primary School and Marist Brothers Auburn, now known as Trinity Catholic College. He was a glazier and leadlighter and did his apprenticeship with Tanner Middleton in Auburn, working across several glass companies throughout his career and also teaching the trade at Bankstown TAFE. Jim's parents would not give him permission to join the navy at the age of 17, so he joined the Navy Reserve. He served for three years including service on the *Cootamundra* and the *Warramunga*. Jim was an active member of Granville RSL Sub-Branch for many years before his mates Russell Knight and Kell Campbell persuaded him to transfer to the Auburn, now Cumberland, sub-branch. A parishioner at the Holy Family Catholic Church, East Granville, Jim also served time as P&C president when his children attended the local parish school. I send my condolences to Jim's wife of 64 years, Denise, and his entire family and thank them for his wonderful service.

#### TERRY MELHUIH

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:21):** I recognise the tireless commitment to service and a well-earned retirement of Wellington man Terry Melhuish, who has just hung up his helmet after 23 years at Fire

and Rescue NSW, Wellington brigade. Over his 23 years, Terry has responded to plenty—from structure fires to hazmat incidents to vehicle accidents, and even major incidents in surrounding towns. With an attendance rate of 90 per cent—a feat very rarely achieved—his commitment to serving and helping others is very clear. Terry's contributions to Fire and Rescue NSW have been nothing short of exceptional. His leadership, expertise and willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty have inspired his colleagues and set a high standard of excellence in the Wellington brigade. As an all-round community man, Terry is also an active member of Legacy and the Wellington Town Band and is known to many as a true gentleman and outstanding team member. I thank Terry for his many years of service. I wish him a very happy retirement and many wonderful years to come.

#### **SARAH WALSH**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (19:22):** Sarah Walsh is certainly an inspirational person. The 25-year-old Sutherland District Athletics Club member recently finished fifth in the T64 long jump event at the World Para Athletics Championships. The dual Paralympian was 18 months old when her foot was amputated due to fibular hemimelia—a condition where all or part of the fibula is missing. However, the Engadine local, now based in Canberra, did not let that setback prevent her from becoming one of the country's top athletes. Her recent achievement in the World Para Athletics Championships is proof of her will and determination to be the best. Sarah uses a running blade to assist her in running prior to launching herself into the long jump sandpit. Her achievements to date include finishing sixth in the 2016 Rio Olympics, third at the 2019 World Championships in Dubai and seventh at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. I have known Sarah for nearly 20 years and she is a humble young woman. Her family and the entire Heathcote electorate are extremely proud of her.

#### **LIFELINE HARBOUR TO HAWKESBURY**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (19:23):** Lifeline is Australia's leading suicide prevention service. In the community I represent, we have Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury. This year marks 55 years of outstanding service. Headquartered in Gordon, volunteers save lives every single day by providing vital services. Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury workers are there to listen by answering over 100,000 phone calls every year. Whether it be pandemic, bushfires, droughts and floods, our mental health has been impacted. Today suicide remains the leading cause of death for Australians aged 15 to 44, and 75 per cent are men. On average, nine Australians are lost to suicide every day and we must do better. Suicide is preventable, and Lifeline is helping to do exactly that. I pay tribute to Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury led by chief executive officer Elizabeth Lovell, board president David Scott and directors Chris Kinsella, Mark Hedges, Arabella Tuck, Councillor Barbara Ward, Bruce Young, Peter Tuchin, Guy Amon and Marie Soghomonian. Disconnection and despair drive suicide. Connection and hope prevent suicide. I thank Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury for 55 years of service.

#### **DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE NICOLE FOLLINGTON**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:24):** I congratulate Detective Senior Constable Nicole Follington on receiving a NSW Police Force State Crime Command Excellence in Policing Award on Tuesday 16 May 2023. Detective Senior Constable Follington has 21 years of service with the NSW Police Force, with eight of those years attached to the State Crime Command. She is currently with the drugs and firearm squad and was nominated for her investigation under Strike Force Aphrasia, which investigated a criminal syndicate that involved the importation, manufacture and supply of prohibited drugs across Sydney's south-west. Detective Senior Constable Follington demonstrated strong leadership in coordinating her team through a complex and difficult investigation. The investigation successfully resulted in the identification of safe houses and the main principals involved with the syndicate. Multiple search warrants were executed and three arrests were made, two tonnes of drug precursors were located, and some \$3 million in cash and steroids were seized. I thank Detective Senior Constable Follington for her commitment to preventing and responding to crime, and for helping bring justice to victims. I congratulate her on her award.

#### **MATILDAS FOOTBALL TEAM**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (19:25):** On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I acknowledge the Australian women's football team, the Matildas, who have made it through to the next stage of the FIFA Women's World Cup after a resounding victory against Canada, the Olympic champions, and finishing first in their group. Countless Newtown residents have been proudly striding down King Street in a gold Sam Kerr or Ellie Carpenter jumper. It is wonderful to see such talented women hold a central space in the Australian zeitgeist, becoming strong role models for younger generations—the way women like Cathy Freeman were for others. Some 4.7 million people tuned in for Monday's game—more than for the Ashes—conclusively smashing any negative myths about public enthusiasm for women's sport. With one of the highest numbers of queer players in the tournament, the Matildas are also powerful leaders and role models for the queer community. I commend their championing of equal pay and conditions in sport, including using their platform to call out sexist discrepancies in prize money and raising awareness about women athletes' pay in Australia and abroad.

### ANTOINETTE SULFARO

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:26):** I recognise the amazing work of Antoinette Sulfaro of West Hoxton from Ladies Like to Lunch, a local charity based in south-west Sydney. Antoinette recently competed in the Dance for Cancer competition, taking out first prize with her dancing partner, Robert Michael from Dance Latino. In total, Antionette raised \$13,747 for the Cancer Council as part of the competition. Ladies Like to Lunch was formed to support women in south-west Sydney affected by cancer. Each year they organise a series of events and fundraisers for cancer-related causes, including their premier event, the annual Pink Ribbon Luncheon, which I have had the pleasure of attending over the past few years. I congratulate Antoinette on her boundless energy and determination to raise awareness and funds for this very important cause. I look forward to supporting the Ladies' many endeavours into the future, including this year's gala to be held on 29 October.

### ST JOSEPH'S ABERDEEN SLEEPOUT

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (19:27):** Recently I mentioned that year 12 students of St Joseph's High School, Aberdeen, would do their Vinnies Community Sleepout during the winter school holiday, and I can now provide an update to the House. I say a big congratulations to the 40 students who participated to raise funds and awareness about homelessness and disadvantage. With the support of the community, the fundraising tally has reached almost \$11,000. On behalf of the Joeys year 12 cohort, I pass on a massive thankyou to Tim O'Toole, leader of wellbeing and engagement at St Joseph's, Aberdeen, for his support in organising and supervising the sleepout in 2023. A highlight of the evening was to watch one of their fellow students, Evie Jones, make her debut for New South Wales in the under-19 Women's State of Origin rugby league encounter. But, most importantly, they also heard from Carol O'Brien of St Vincent de Paul, Muswellbrook, on how their donations would support the community. I again congratulate year 12 students of St Joseph's High School, Aberdeen, on their great efforts.

### ASSYRIAN CULTURAL AND SOCIAL YOUTH ASSOCIATION

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (19:28):** Over the years, the Assyrian Cultural and Social Youth Association Inc. has worked towards the conservation and protection of Indigenous Assyrian culture both within Fairfield and more broadly across the world. This has mainly been achieved through efforts pertaining to advocacy, scholarly contributions, community engagement and hosting various exhibitions and events. I extend my thanks and congratulations to Stella Kina, the outgoing president of the association, while also acknowledging the work of Stephanie Basdekis, Jessi Arabou, Jennifer Shahin, Stephen Sargon, Ramy Jajo and Ramsin Edward. This group of young, intelligent and enthusiastic individuals fills me with great confidence that the Australian Assyrian community is in good hands, with a promising future ahead.

### NORTHBRIDGE FOOTBALL CLUB

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (19:29):** I take great pride in the sporting life of my community, and tonight I congratulate the Northbridge Football Club on its recent success, building on a proud history of more than 70 years. A strong, successful and inclusive club, Northbridge FC caters to boys and girls and men and women of all ages, from junior kids right through to the senior competition for over 45s—which I would be eligible to play in. The club competes in both Northern Suburbs Football Association and Football NSW competitions. The club's side was runner-up in the Football NSW U16 Girls State Cup final on Saturday 15 July. The girls played a fantastic game of football at a first-class standard and did their club and our community proud. I salute the entire team, well led by captain and goalkeeper Georgia Andrade Wood. I was delighted to present medals to both teams on the day. I thank Football NSW and everyone involved, including referees, coaches, parents, supporters and, of course, the wonderful players, for staging a great day of competitive football.

### EVERLY MORGAN

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:30):** I take this opportunity to recognise one of my young constituents, Everly Morgan, from Milton. Everly is only nine years old and is already achieving some amazing things in the world of surfing. Everly is a member of Ulladulla Boardriders and earlier this year competed in the Billabong Oz Grom Cup at Gallows Beach, Coffs Harbour. In the Under 10s Female division, Everly impressed the judges with a 13.03 total heat score. Everly utilised her skills, catching a whopping seven waves in just 15 minutes, securing herself a position in the finals. Everly recently competed in the Mad Mex Grommet State Titles at Maroubra Beach in the under-12s girls section and won her division. Everly caught an impressive seven waves, gaining the State title in the under-12s division. I congratulate Everly and cannot wait to see what she will accomplish next.

### PINK FINSS

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (19:31):** I acknowledge the extraordinary work of Pink Finss, a local charity support group within the Hawkesbury. On 20 July 2023, I was delighted to see the outcome of a \$40,000 grant awarded by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government under the Community Building Partnership program. The funds enabled Pink Finss to purchase a vehicle that volunteers can now use to transport clients undergoing cancer treatment and wellness activities. The Pink Finss organisation was established in 2010 by Jodie Amor after battling cancer herself. It offers cancer support to over 175 Hawkesbury families. Pink Finss provides practical, emotional and financial support to men and women through organised programs such as oncology massages, yoga, book clubs and social groups. Jodie continues to use her strength to run Pink Finss alongside a small team including Emma-Jane Garrow and Kym Burton. I applaud Pink Finss for its dedication and commitment to the Hawkesbury community.

### WEST BLACKTOWN VETERINARY CLINIC

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (19:32):** I congratulate West Blacktown Veterinary Clinic on winning the Pet Care category in the Blacktown Local Business Awards. West Blacktown Veterinary Clinic has been serving the community for over 49 years. In 2019 ownership of the clinic was entrusted to Katrina Bulloch and Dr Amy Lee. The clinic currently employs 17 people. From check-ups and puppy school to surgery and emergency, the team at West Blacktown Veterinary Clinic provides quality care to our furry and feathered friends. Katrina and Amy are extremely proud of winning the award in only their first year of entering. They attribute their success to their dedicated and hardworking staff. The vets and nurses realise that a visit to the vet is a scary experience not just for the animal but also for the whole family, who must be put at ease as they anxiously await news of the health of their beloved pet. I congratulate West Blacktown Veterinary Clinic on winning this prestigious award and appreciate its important contribution to the people and pets of Blacktown City.

### SHOALHAVEN COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (19:33):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Shoalhaven Community Preschool, which is moving to a new purpose-built centre for the start of term 3. The move was necessitated as part of the Shoalhaven hospital upgrade. Several generations are preparing to bid a sad farewell to the old Shoalhaven Community Preschool. With a new purpose-built preschool in North Street, Nowra, set to open when school resumes for term 3, the former preschool on Shoalhaven Street is due to be demolished to make way for the new Shoalhaven hospital expansion. Before its demolition, generations of people who attended the preschool are invited back to paint or write messages. Children have already been writing messages, some talking about how they met their best friends there. The preschool has been part of Nowra's social fabric for many decades. It was opened in 1958 in the former Diggers' Hall that was previously part of the Shoalhaven RSL Sub-Branch. Two years later, the preschool was moved from Junction Street to a site on Shoalhaven Street next to the Shoalhaven hospital, where it remained for the next 63 years. With the move to the new \$5 million purpose-built centre, the preschool is expanding its enrolment from 40 to 60 children per day. It is exciting times for a new generation of children.

### NSW COUNCIL FOR PACIFIC COMMUNITIES

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (19:34):** Appreciation and recognition are powerful motivators to boost engagement and morale within a community. Tonight I acknowledge the NSW Council for Pacific Communities 2023 Pacific Awards Night that I recently had the pleasure of attending, which honoured significant contributors within the Pasifika community in New South Wales. The NSW Council for Pacific Communities is focused on strengthening core values and collaborative work with government and Pacific communities across New South Wales, especially those in Liverpool, Campbelltown and Fairfield, where significant populations of Pasifika people work and live. This year's theme of "Unsung Heroes" honoured the people who work silently but steadily among us. These heroes do what they do not for glory but for the community good, and they rightly deserve acknowledgement. I was so pleased to participate in the awards ceremony and acknowledge the immense civic contribution made by the finalists and award winners. I especially congratulate the many children and young people who were recognised. I congratulate the chair of the NSW Council for Pacific Communities, Malamie Freuen, and the board on organising such a successful evening.

### FIRE AND RESCUE NSW

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (19:36):** I acknowledge work recently conducted by Fire and Rescue NSW to increase fire safety awareness in the Upper Hunter community of Merriwa. During the week of 17 July, Fire and Rescue Station 393 Merriwa held a safety blitz, making safety visits to homes across the township. Merriwa even got to host a critical mass of firefighters, with support from Station 392 Muswellbrook Fire Station, Station 284 Delroy Fire Station, Station 387 Mudgee Fire Station and Team Region West Area

Command, putting 15 troops on the ground to work their way across town to visit each house. During the safety visits firefighters checked that residents have smoke alarms that are in good working condition and installed in suitable areas. It was encouraging to see the Merriwa brigade out on the street, engaging with the local community, and I hope getting others interested in its work. Station 393 continues to have the welcome mat out for any prospective on-call firefighters who want to join its ranks.

#### VEDANT AGRAWAL

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:37):** I congratulate Vedant Agrawal, who recently opened his own small business in Western Sydney—an independent real estate agency, TAG RE Wentworthville, where he is also the selling principal. Vedant is a successful and motivated member of our community in Prospect, having graduated in 2018 from one of our local public high schools, Prairiewood High School. While he was a student at Prairiewood High School, Vedant was a diligent leader who bonded well with his peers and teachers and applied himself enthusiastically to his learning and schooling experience. Despite being only 22 years old, Vedant has already won the AREA Rising Star of the Year Award, which is a national recognition presented during the Annual Real Estate Agent Excellence Awards. Vedant is a shining example of our hardworking and inspiring youth in Western Sydney and the success of public education in fostering driven and talented individuals. I again congratulate Vedant on his achievements and on the official opening of TAG RE Wentworthville. I wish him every success in his career and future endeavours.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### PCYC NATIONS OF ORIGIN

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:38):** It was such a pleasure to attend the PCYC Nations of Origin multi-sports tournament over four days in July. It is the ninth year that the tournament has been held, and this year Western Sydney hosted the events. This four-day sporting tournament included over 910 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from across New South Wales, representing 25 Indigenous nations, to celebrate and promote reconciliation, cultural identity, education and sport. They competed in rugby league, netball, gymnastics, basketball and football fives. The event is held in such high esteem that, during the tournament, Her Excellency the Governor Margaret Beazley, AC, KC, Minister Catley, Minister Harris, other MPs, the mayor, the deputy mayor, councillors, Commissioner of Police Karen Webb, APM, and PCYC CEO Dominic Teakle and staff all attended.

The annual Nations of Origin tournament is a multifaceted program that provides an opportunity for youth to develop leadership skills, forge lasting friendships and leave a legacy that honours the Elders whose custodianship of the land and culture we respect and acknowledge. The tournament aims to empower Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth by encouraging them to celebrate the rich diversity of Aboriginal culture and its profound impact on our history. The Nations of Origin has grown from strength to strength, bringing together young boys and girls from PCYC with New South Wales police and the community to compete in the five different sports, build skills, character and leadership, and encourage cultural respect and connections among young people.

The event is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate and promote reconciliation, cultural identity and education, all through a shared love of sport. We all know about the profound and positive impact that sport can have on youth and the power of sport in aiding mental health and fostering social inclusion. I especially commend the outstanding work that the PCYC does, not just in Penrith but across the State, providing a safe, welcoming space for our young people.

The event is just one example of celebrating our First Nations culture, and it is fitting that it followed NAIDOC Week, when we celebrated the important role of Elders in our community. Indeed, connection to culture through an Elder is a prerequisite for participation in the tournament, together with good behaviour and a 70 per cent school attendance record. These attributes are justly rewarded with the right of the participant to proudly wear their Nation's jersey, which they did with such pride it was palpable. Acknowledging their hard work and discipline in this way gives our young people goals and positive reinforcement. I also commend the NSW Police Force, which has had a significant involvement in the tournament, and the hard work that it does each and every day to connect with our young people to break down barriers. I also look forward to working with all our youth groups in my role as deputy chair of the parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People.

#### MR BOB MARSH

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (19:41):** I pay tribute to a remarkable individual and a close friend, Mr Bob Marsh. In 1990, on the feast day of the Jesuit St Francis Xavier, Bob joined the staff of St Ignatius' College Riverview, certainly an auspicious day to start his association with the college and the Jesuits. And what an illustrious association it has been. Joining the college from the University of Sydney, Bob became the property manager at St Ignatius' under the leadership and guidance of the Jesuits, who for the most part still ran the college

at the time. The legendary Father Greg O'Kelly was college headmaster, and Father Charlie Fraser, famed for shooting a rogue steer from his office window for eating his beloved roses, was still there.

As many of us know, a job advertisement can sometimes be a little misleading. The job that Bob signed up for was Monday to Friday, 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., and three weekends a year—the Gold Cup Regatta, the former Art Show and the Indian Bazaar. I can say with some degree of certainty that the job advertisement did not say that Bob would be leading the capital works projects at the college over three decades or becoming the custodian of the school's observatory, or that Bob would even end up delivering the college matron's first child on the college premises. But that is the wonderful thing about Bob: He did not view the college as simple employment. He recognised that the college was so much more. It was a home for many of the students and their teachers, it was a custodian of centuries of Jesuit tradition and it was the backyard for many of the local families. It was and still is the anchor of the local community, a fact that Bob recognised, embraced and indeed promoted.

As I touched on before, Bob began his stint at the college as property manager, but his roles and responsibilities quickly expanded. Since Bob first arrived, the college has undertaken numerous construction projects, including the construction of the Regis Campus, the infirmary and the Gartlan sports centre, the refurbishment of the Therry Building—the list goes on. Those projects were made possible thanks to the capable leadership and expertise of Bob and his great team. Bob has also taken a keen interest in the preservation of the college's observatory. Father Edward Pigot founded the observatory in 1908 with the first permanent seismograph in Australia. Known to many students as a rather unassuming building, it has a rich history, which included monitoring Soviet Union nuclear testing on behalf of the Americans during the height of the Cold War. In fact, the equipment that was donated by the Americans still remains at the observatory to this day. It is thanks to Bob's work that this rich history lives on with the college.

Bob is a man of great faith, devoted to the Jesuit ethos of magis and to the credence of Ad maiorem Dei gloriam, for the greater glory of God. Beyond his constant attendance at mass, Bob has also spent countless hours restoring and tending to the graves of Jesuit priests at Gore Hill, a thankless task but one of vital importance to the legacy of the great men that rest there. On a personal note, I thank Bob for his friendship and guidance throughout my journey as mayor of Lane Cove and then member for Lane Cove. His support and insight have been invaluable over the years, and I owe him a debt I can never repay.

I also pay tribute to Bob's family for their support over the years, including his wife Patricia and their children Michael, Rachael, Kathleen, Amy, Sarah and William. I know that their love and support has meant the world to Bob. After three decades with the college, Bob has decided to retire, a painful decision for both Bob and the college. Bob leaves behind not only a loving community but also his home for the last 30 years. The college community loses a devoted Ignatian and guardian. From all of us in the Ignatian community, I thank Bob for his immense contribution. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten.

### **MOUNTAIN OF YOUTH PROJECT**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:45):** There is a local filmmaking group using the meeting room in my office for a few months for some workshops they are conducting. They are part of a mentorship program called Mountain of Youth, which is focused on tackling issues of social isolation for at-risk youth through the power of immersive storytelling. I have talked about the program before in this place, but I want to talk about it again, and about our young people more broadly, because it is an important conversation we should all be having. Mountain of Youth was created by Kalani Gacon and is in its second year. The program had a stellar first run in 2022 with Katoomba High School students, thanks to Kalani's vision and the support and hard work of his production and mentoring team, Riley Saxton and Helena Zadro-Jones.

This year the team is working alongside students from Springwood High School. I love the energy this group brings to my office. Members understand the day-to-day workings of an electorate office. It is busy, at times unrelentingly so. There are good days when you and your team feel energised by the work that you do, but then there are days when no matter how strong the desire to fix the ills of the world, you just cannot. Since the Mountain of Youth crew have taken up residence in my meeting room, there is a feeling of hope emanating from that space, a youthful exuberance that is infectious and a reminder of the possibilities that exist if we open ourselves up to them. My team and I feel buoyed by their presence, and that is having a positive impact on the work that we do for our community.

The transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood is a crucial time for establishing positive social behaviours and interactions. It can be an awkward, vulnerable time for some, when the desire to be different competes alongside an equal if not stronger desire to belong. There is a lot of pressure at this time in one's life to make decisions for the future, to have a plan and to feel certain about how you want your life to unfold. We are discouraged from choosing pathways that are deemed to be impulsive or ill thought out. We are led to believe that if we muck it all up, we will set ourselves up for a tougher journey later in life. I remember when I was in high

school there was a perception that the smart kids went on to do their HSC and those who were less academic finished up in year 10, signed up for an apprenticeship or got themselves into line at the Department of Social Security. It was an incredibly narrow-minded perspective that left no room for the nuances of an individual's potential outside the expected norms.

Thankfully that mindset is shifting and there now seems to be an acknowledgment that we must make room for flexibility and diversity, and allow young people to take time to explore what the world has to offer. Every generation of young people has had their burdens to bear, and, in that sense, this generation is not unique. Our grandparents faced world wars and the Great Depression. When I was a teenager, we lived in fear of nuclear war triggered by global superpowers. That segued into a prolonged, ongoing and paralysing fear of terrorism and its perceived stranglehold on democracy. In more recent times, we faced our fragility as a species when COVID-19 brought the world to a standstill. There is one thing, though, that sets this generation apart in terms of an omnipresent, inescapable challenge: social media.

I am grateful that I grew up in a time before its existence—before the preoccupation with selfies and the pressure to present a version of oneself to the world that is focused on its palatability to others. The world does not appear to underestimate the dangers of this, especially to young, developing minds. But still, the social media circus prevails. It is difficult to ignore the irony of an invention that holds tight to a narrative of connectedness and yet feeds into a growing phenomenon of isolation and disconnect that is arguably shaping our culture like never before.

We all face challenges with climate change and the environment. It is too big an issue to fit into a few brief paragraphs, but I recognise the enormity of what future generations face and I feel a deep sense of sorrow that that burden and its impacts weigh heaviest on the shoulders of our young people. To our youth, I acknowledge the struggles of your time and the challenges that you face as you navigate your way in a world that you did not create. I admire you. I am inspired by your inventiveness, your courage and your spirit. I urge you to keep demanding better from the generation that came before you. Hold us to account in those moments when we talk about handing over the baton to you, especially when the passing on of that responsibility is premature and when there is still more work for your predecessors to do—more work that we are obliged to do. Let us be inspired by our young people.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (19:51):** A common idiom heard in the health industry is "consistency is key". Professionally, I know that navigating the complex world of health can lead to unwanted detours and failures. Today I insist that we pave a footpath pointed towards success. That direction begins by laying foundations in our own backyard. An alarming 58 per cent of adults in New South Wales are overweight or obese. HealthStats NSW also highlights that the situation is more dire for those living in regional and remote areas. Meanwhile, a snapshot from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW] explicitly points out that 55 per cent of Australians do not meet the national guidelines for diet, with unhealthy food and drinks making up 35 percent of the daily energy intake for adults and children. Only 5 per cent eat the recommended fruits and vegetables. That desperately needs to change.

The NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2022-2032 attempts to combat those concerning trends over the next decade. I note that the first strategic direction is preventative programs, some targeting canteens, drinking water and the like. But I question whether these programs are falling on deaf ears. Is that enough to prompt healthy change? The fourth strategy regards healthy food and built environments. The Macleay Valley offers an example of built environments enhancing overall wellbeing. If we turn our lens on the construction of the Five Headlands Coastal Experience and the Kalateenee Mountain Bike trails, those new initiatives are moving us there. There needs to be greater consistency in creating the healthy environment adults are exposed to. I implore the Minister for Health and other councils to expedite strategies and resources to promote initiatives that create active people and active communities.

Being physically active is important across all ages and contributes to the growth and development of our youth. Understandably COVID-19 prompted sedentary activities and incited further time behind electronic screens, but now we need to inspire and create excitement in the world beyond our four walls and smartphones. The Five Headlands Coastal Experience, driven by Kempsey Shire Council and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, is a prime example of how investing in the region's landscape creates not only a fun but also a physically immersive adventure. More than \$3.3 million secured under the Regional Tourism Activation Fund—an initiative championed by the National Party—will connect the four headlands between Point Plomer and Grassy Head. Walking trails will link up and down the magnificent Macleay Valley coastline for individuals to take leisurely strolls or indulge in rigorous hikes over multiple days.

That is an exciting project for the Macleay Valley, and it is brimming with endless possibilities. Kempsey Shire Council earmarked the Five Headlands as a key project in its Horizon 2030 strategy and committed \$850,000 to see it bloom into fruition. Now Kempsey Shire Council actively seeks funding to expand the outdoor experience to include water adventures like kayaking. These opportunities are ours for the taking. If we want to push for consistency in health, we must consistently support local initiatives. The AIHW insists children aged between five and 17 partake in one hour of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity per day. For adults, the minimum is 150 minutes per week or 30 minutes on five days. Who in this Chamber did that this week? With the current cost of living and commitments, it is not always easy to access private gyms or memberships. Places like the Kalateenee Mountain Bike Trails promote free public participation.

The mountain bike trails consist of more than 30 kilometres adapted to all rider abilities. The Macleay Valley Mountain Bike Club has harnessed those outdoor installations and motivated more than 60 new members to adopt mountain biking sports. This is a perfect example of what investing in programs like Places to Play is about. The \$301,000 grant for upgrades continues to drive community enthusiasm, and we must stay consistent with those government programs. As members know, I will not stop advocating for the improvement of health and wellbeing. It is a complex topic and requires a multi-pronged approach, but we must not fall short of looking at our external environments as a tool to wield in this battle for betterment.

There is plenty more work to do in the space of healthy eating. The accessibility of and overall exposure to processed foods needs to be addressed—and it needs to be addressed now, not later. I applaud the environmental initiatives undertaken by councils, but I call for targeted intervention to minimise compounding chronic health conditions. In 2021, coronary heart disease was the leading cause of death in males and the second in females. We cannot allow trends in obesity, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes to grow—that is just to name a few. I invite the Minister, who also holds the Regional Health portfolio, to venture into our regions and explore what investing in healthy eating in the heartland of a community can do for our overall society. I ask him to use the Macleay Valley's initiatives as a springboard to set precedents for putting our State's health as a top priority through clear and definitive nutritional strategies, as consistency is key.

#### PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE PROJECTS

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:56):** Just four months since coming to office, the Minns Labor Government is getting on with the job and delivering for the people of Port Stephens. There is so much going on that it is hard to know where to start, so I will start where my journey to this place began: Medowie's public high school. It might come as a surprise to everyone, but I am going to talk about that again tonight. In my inaugural speech in 2015, I spoke about the former Liberal-Nationals Government's failure to deliver on the promise it made in 2011 to make Medowie's public high school shovel ready. Every year since then, Medowie's population has continued to grow and new housing developments have seen an influx of young families move to Medowie. But the former Government continued to deny that a public high school was even needed. That is not to mention the significant growth in surrounding towns, as well.

With the Minns Labor Government, it has taken no time at all for the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education, Prue Car, to come to Medowie. As we walked around Medowie Public School, the Deputy Premier was surrounded by a sea of excited students. They were almost as excited as I was with the announcement of the first step towards making a local public high school a reality. For a town of 10,000 residents, with two independent high schools already, a public high school is long overdue—but we will not be waiting for too much longer. Last week the Deputy Premier made it clear: Medowie's public high school will be built by 2027. We are already getting on with the job, starting with site selection. It is going to be an exciting journey and the whole town is now along for the ride.

Other essential services are also needed to meet Medowie's growing needs, so it was a relief to recently officially open Medowie's first ambulance station. Since being elected, I have received countless complaints from residents waiting too long for an ambulance to turn up in their time of need. That gave me the fuel I needed to fight for the ambulance station as a local MP. To see it delivered now is magnificent. I acknowledge the former Minister for Health, Brad Hazzard, who worked constructively with me to see it become a reality. I welcome the entirely new crew of talented young paramedics who are serving our community and thank them for helping locals in their time of need.

But that is not all. Our new Government has also made it safer for locals and holiday-makers visiting one of our most iconic destinations: Fingal Spit. I was delighted to press "go" on the emergency response beacons that have been installed at Fingal Island and Fingal Spit, a stunning but notoriously dangerous spot. Many people will be familiar with the site, as it was beamed around the world when Lara Bingle asked, "Where the bloody hell are you?" But its quickly changing sand formations, clashing waves and tricky tides have taken lives. Earlier this year, a holiday-maker tragically drowned there. In response, our Government has delivered lifesaving technology at

both ends of the spit. When every second counts, the emergency response beacons will give visitors a link to lifesaving services during emergencies. I thank Surf Life Saving NSW not only for delivering that technology but also for having its members on deck to respond when needed. The amazing volunteers at Fingal Beach Surf Life Saving Club were first at the scene of the tragedy earlier this year. They regularly retrieve people who have come unstuck. Backed by Surf Life Saving NSW and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Minns Labor Government wants to ensure that only great memories are made when visiting Port Stephens' beautiful beaches.

Another notorious patch in Port Stephens is a traffic bottleneck that locals know far too well. It is a stretch we all try to avoid at peak periods and at all costs in the holiday season—Hexham Bridge. It is why I was so excited to join the Federal infrastructure Minister, Catherine King, and the New South Wales Minister for Roads, John Graham, to finally announce progress on the M1 motorway extension to Raymond Terrace and the Hexham Straight widening project. The widening project has recently started and is due to be completed in 2026. It will see three lanes in both directions from Newcastle Inner City Bypass to Hexham Bridge. Drilling is also underway on the M1 to Raymond Terrace bypass, which is due for completion in 2028.

With the Minns and Albanese governments working so closely and constructively together, we are finally seeing action. Both projects mean a lot of local jobs. They will eventually end people sitting in bumper-to-bumper holiday traffic when they are not even on holiday. It will also mean spending more time at home with loved ones. After only four months in government, works are underway. To wrap up, in the first four months our new Government has taken the first step towards making Medowie's public high school a reality, opened Medowie's ambulance station, switched on emergency response beacons at Fingal Spit and kicked off works to end the Hexham bottleneck. There is much more to come. Let us just say that it is exciting times for Port Stephens under a Minns Labor Government.

### **BALLINA ELECTORATE RENEWABLE ENERGY BLUEPRINT**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (20:01):** I raise matters that are very dear and important to the members of my community, particularly after the 2022 floods. We are at a crossroad not only with what our State can and must do if we are to address runaway climate change and where global warming is headed but also with what members of my community can do to get to net zero in their own homes. It is not just about encouraging responsible action from consumers and the right government policy settings; it is about taking advantage of the tremendous opportunity that adopting the right technology will bring. We can make our whole economy run more efficiently, powered by renewable energy, which will slash energy bills and carbon emissions. We all know that.

What is so exciting is that Saul Griffith sets out the blueprint and foundation that we need in his book *The Big Switch: Australia's Electric Future* and his more recent article in the *Quarterly Essay* "The Wires That Bind". During the eight years that I have been in Parliament, I have honestly felt overwhelmed by the rising temperatures, particularly in our region, and the Black Summer bushfires and the floods. We are living through the climate catastrophe. The blueprint shows a practical way forward for our community. I always say that I am a closet doomsday prepper but the blueprint speaks to what we all need to do, not because we are hiding from the world but because we are literally the electricity grid of the future. We also want to withstand future extreme weather events and, indeed, natural disasters. As Saul says, Australia can be a positive example for the rest of the world, a north star guide for the planet.

We know that change can be difficult. Over the centuries we have seen how new technologies have reshaped our society for the better. My brother is a New York Times bestselling author. One of his early works is set in Hazelbrook in the Blue Mountains and is a fictional re-imagining of when electricity first came to that area. I will never forget it. It is such an evocative story because people were terrified of the change that having bright lights in the home had on morality. People get nervous about new technology for a variety of reasons, but one of the things that people in my community are most nervous about is the cost. For example, the cost of having a Starlink so that if something happens they can access telecommunications, or the cost of a battery. I am still waiting for those to come down from \$10,000 or \$12,000. That is simply out of reach for most Australians. Whilst there are subsidies, solar rooftops are still very expensive and there is nothing for renters or people in social housing.

What Saul lays out is the actual steps. He also talks about the million-plus machines that need to be replaced. That is why we need to be ready. We know we have to transition from gas, but we also know that consumers are making decisions all the time. I believe that the Government's role is to start to incentivise what we want and disincentivise what we do not want. Saul has done incredible work in the United States with the Biden administration to pass the Inflation Reduction Act. I note that they had to call it the Inflation Reduction Act because anything that remotely suggested climate change or some left-wing cause would have failed. Most people might not realise how difficult it is to get a law through Congress in the first place.

Australia cannot be left behind. Saul Griffith estimates that a similar ambition in Australia would be the equivalent of around \$50 billion over 10 years. That is a realistic and achievable target if we have collaboration between the States and Federal Government. The Greens took a very ambitious plan to the last election—a policy called Get Off Gas, offering rebates and zero-interest loans to all households. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Labor Government, those on the crossbench and, indeed, all members to move to the electrification of the State and where we need to go.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (20:06):** I acknowledge the member for Ballina for her contribution and I thank her for her recent hospitality while I was in the Northern Rivers. Professor Griffiths is working with the Government. He is a great constituent of the member for Heathcote. He is a Thirroul resident in the Gong. I have been fortunate enough, along with the Federal member for Cunningham, to have spoken to him on multiple occasions about how the State and Federal governments might work better to improve planning laws to allow greater uptake of renewable energy systems in a distributed generation and storage fashion, not just in the big community batteries or the big storage and energy projects. He is very passionate about making sure that offshore wind happens. That provides an opportunity to use the Illawarra's economy to power a low-carbon economy of the future. I thank the member for drawing Professor Griffith's great work to the attention of the House. I look forward to continuing to work with him.

#### TRIBUTE TO VERA HATTON, OAM

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (20:07):** I inform the House of the passing of Vera Hatton, OAM, on 21 July. She was 85. Vera died peacefully at her home surrounded by her family and was farewelled during a funeral service last week in the Vera Hatton Gallery at her beloved Jervis Bay Maritime Museum. She was the beloved wife of John Hatton, AO. John was a former member of this place as the member for South Coast for over 20 years. Vera was a treasured mother and mother-in-law of John and Daisy, Kim and Glenn, and Robert and Robyn; and a cherished grandmother and nan to her grandchildren, Maureen, Jessica, Jasmine, Brennan, Alesha and Aidan, and her four great-grandchildren. Vera and John met when they were both teaching at Nowra High School and were married for 65 years. Vera has been a pillar of our community for decades and was a major part of establishing the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum. She was also involved in numerous youth services, social welfare groups and historical organisations.

Vera also became involved in local school P&C groups and school canteens and was the secretary of both the Huskisson Scouts and Girl Guides for many years. As her own children grew up, Vera became a driving force behind the Jervis Bay Meals on Wheels and helped start the Sussex Inlet toastmistress club. Vera's attention turned to history in 1981 when a group of community members headed by John Hatton, AO, returned the locally built Sydney Harbour ferry, the *Lady Denman*, to Huskisson, and Vera wanted to give it a fitting home. In the 1990s, with a passion for history and to help in her work with the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum, Vera attended James Cook University and completed a graduate diploma in community museum management, topping the course two years in a row. Vera was also on the Shoalhaven City Council heritage committee and received a Healthy Cities award for work in communities across the Shoalhaven and Illawarra.

Vera was invited by Premier Bob Carr to join the Ministry for the Arts committee, where she fought for grants for small museums across the State. Vera became a key influence in the way maritime history is acknowledged around the world. In 2012 Vera was awarded an Order of Australia medal for service to the museums sector through her work with the Lady Denman Heritage Complex, and for her work with youth, social welfare and historical organisations across the Shoalhaven. Vera inspired an active group of volunteers to preserve the region's boatbuilding, fishing, Indigenous and non-Indigenous history, leading to the creation of the Lady Denman Heritage Complex that continues to grow and thrive. The Vera Hatton Gallery will now be a lasting memorial to Vera.

Vera's example of community spirit, volunteerism and social justice will continue to inspire others. Her selfless dedication to her community will be forever remembered, and we are grateful for everything she did. Vera's life was one filled with love, empathy and compassion. I extend my heartfelt condolences to Vera's family and friends. The thoughts of the residents of the whole South Coast are with them during this sad time. The Shoalhaven has lost one of our cherished champions and most passionate advocates. This quote by Maya Angelou came to mind when reflecting on the life of Vera Hatton:

A great soul serves everyone all the time. A great soul never dies. It brings us together again and again.

Vale, Vera Hatton, OAM.

#### GOULBURN ELECTORATE TAXI ACCESSIBILITY

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:11):** I discuss the availability of wheelchair-accessible taxis in Goulburn and regional areas. Taxis in general and their accessibility have been an ongoing issue affecting

the Goulburn region for some time. After concerns first being raised with my office, I received word from several constituents that they were experiencing significant waiting times and frequent cancellations, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights to travel to and from the Goulburn town centre. When I raised the issue with the Point to Point Transport Commissioner on behalf of my constituents, the service provider essentially responded with a rejection of the concerns, asserting that the number of vehicles and drivers for the area was sufficient. This was directly contrary to the experiences detailed by my constituents.

Following this, my constituents began to raise a more specific problem surrounding the access and availability of wheelchair-accessible taxis. This matter was brought to my attention in August last year, and again I raised the issue through formal representations. The response to those representations detailed the value of safe passenger transport, the laws surrounding the service and the monitoring of compliance with the law and the required safety standards, but it offered no real solution for the people seeking help. Although our region has community transport providers, this service can depend on Commonwealth home support programs and home care packages. Often community transport is only available for those who are deemed eligible. While those who are eligible for community transport can certainly include seniors and pensioners, not every person who requires wheelchair-accessible transport is eligible for it. Furthermore, community transport does not guarantee the availability of passage, particularly at short notice or during times outside business hours if and when transport is required.

I have met with the local bus operator for Goulburn, Punchbowl Bus Company [PBC], which expressed to me its interest in finding a solution to making more disability-accessible available transport in Goulburn. PBC is certainly working towards a solution for disability access across its services, with its modern low-floor fleet being used extensively across the network, including on regular services provided to the Goulburn and Crookwell region. But people who require wheelchair-accessible transport still have a lot of obstacles to overcome as a bus service can only be used in specific situations. For example, the stepless-entry buses must be used on the route they require, the bus route must match their location of travel, the footpaths to and from the bus stops must be well maintained and not too old, and the weather must be reasonable for travelling in and around the Goulburn area. All such factors are not always amenable—particularly in the case of reasonable weather in Goulburn.

PBC has expressed a desire to overcome many of those factors by providing an on-demand bus service to bridge the gap for wheelchair-accessible transport. I stand here today in support of that initiative. I have also been approached by a constituent who expressed an interest in operating an additional wheelchair-accessible taxi in Goulburn. The issue for both parties is that the cost to initiate the service is an obstacle that they must be financially supported to overcome before they are able to offer a solution to the community. I have been contacted by a great number of constituents who have expressed their concern and detailed their struggles. Each of them joins me in seeking action from the Government.

At the last census 2,315 people in the Goulburn Mulwaree Council area reported that they needed help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. This equates to 7.2 per cent of the population in the area, which is higher than the Australian average. Additionally, 5,743 people in Goulburn are 65 years and older, which equates to 18.2 per cent of the population. Currently our area only has one community transport provider and one wheelchair-accessible taxi. It is essential that the Government supports the provision of wheelchair-accessible taxis, particularly in regional New South Wales. Everyone should have access to affordable, accessible and safe transport. I call on the Government to work to achieve equitable access to taxis for wheelchair users in regional New South Wales.

#### HEFFRON ELECTORATE RAIL TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (20:16):** I discuss aspects impacting rail transport accessibility in my electorate of Heffron. In an era where convenient, affordable and efficient transport is a fundamental right and absolute necessity of a truly egalitarian society, it is imperative that we prioritise and enhance the accessibility of public transportation for all members of our community. Regardless of their physical abilities, age or socio-economic background, everyone should have the opportunity to commute to their places of education, employment, health care and leisure activities. Public transport is not merely a business, it is also a lifeline for those who do not or cannot own private vehicles or for those for whom active transport options are not feasible. Truly accessible rail transport involves modifying outdated infrastructure with ramps, elevators and tactile indicators, as well as providing clear signage, audio announcements and digital platforms for information and accessibility.

When the St Peters station upgrade was announced through the Transport Access Program in May 2021, residents and commuters thought they were getting a station that would be made easier for all individuals to use. Instead, one of the key aspects of the upgrade—the installation of lifts—was counteracted by the removal of the ramp on Goodsell Street due to the design chosen by the previous Government. Believe me, my community was not fooled by those opposite into believing that forcing a person with a wheelchair or a parent with a pram to

detour in order to access the concourse from a further, less convenient and possibly less safe ramp was indeed an "accessibility upgrade". This comes on the back of the Tempe train station upgrade, which involved the stairs to the station being closed for more than two years from April 2021 by the former Government. Those stairs reopened recently and, while this delighted many Tempe residents, many others were bewildered to find no noticeable difference in the condition of the stairs that would have helped rationalise its extensive closure.

We then come to the Mascot train station upgrade. When works were announced in June 2020 to construct a second commuter entrance and upgrade the electrical infrastructure to provide for increased services to and from the station, I welcomed the news as a win for my community. We were told at the time that the works would commence in late 2020 and be completed within 12 months. That time frame was based on the knowledge that the tunnel connecting both entrances would not need to be dug out from scratch as it could leverage an existing service tunnel. By 2021, when the project should have been nearing its final phase, we were told that completion would be delayed until the end of 2022. But as of March this year our community's dreams of a second entrance still exist only as a large hole on the western side of Bourke Street, leaving thousands of nearby residents longing for the days when they no longer have to wake up to extensive hoarding and construction noises.

The former Government failed not only to deliver tangible improvements to accessibility at stations throughout my electorate but also to adequately maintain the infrastructure they had. The recent independent Sydney Trains Review exposed a system in dire need of repair, with over 1,900 crucial maintenance matters left unattended. I recognise my colleague the Minister for Transport for implementing an accelerated maintenance program to prioritise the resilience and reliability of the train network in time for the 2024 timetable. The program may disrupt commuters on weekends, but it is a necessary step to revive a rail network that was neglected for 12 long years.

In the lead-up to the election, we said that a Minns Labor Government will make station accessibility a priority. It is a message that my residents have certainly taken to heart. Their desire to see a New South Wales government that pursues reasonable, timely and cost-effective solutions to accessibility issues, particularly in Labor electorates, has been heard loud and clear. We face a herculean journey ahead, but I want my community to know that the Government is rising to the challenge of putting accessibility and upgrade projects back on track and is repairing our broken, neglected rail network.

#### **OATLEY ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (20:21):** I voice my community's frustration and anger towards the new bus operator in my electorate, U-Go Mobility. Since it took over the contract and began operating on 1 July, my community has experienced buses running late, not stopping at bus stops, going in the wrong direction or completely off route. In many cases, they do not show up at all. But the situation only gets worse. As school resumed two weeks ago, reports began to emerge that the operator cancelled several services that are mainly used by schoolchildren, leaving many of them stranded and without a way to get to or from school. One student wrote to me on the matter, outlining that the persistent lateness caused by the unreliable service this month has affected their school attendance and, in turn, impacted their academic standing, lowering their chances of securing an apprenticeship opportunity next year.

Those issues were non-existent under the previous operator, Punchbowl Bus Company. Many times in this Chamber I have praised the Punchbowl Bus Company. It operated in my community for over 75 years and provided a safe, reliable service that I—and I believe the Premier—used growing up. Those impacts are not limited to school students; they affect the entire community. It has been particularly distressing to the most vulnerable, including seniors and people with disabilities, who cannot drive or pay for rideshare and taxi services on a daily basis. Over the past few weeks I have received over 100 emails and phone calls from people right across the Oatley electorate who have shared their stories about the impacts this disruption is having on their lives. It is truly appalling.

I share a few more stories with the House. One constituent called my office to advise me that the 944 service between Mortdale and Peakhurst did not show up at 4.13 p.m. or 4.43 p.m., leaving them stranded for over an hour until a service showed up. In another particularly distressing example, one of my constituents who has a disability finished work late at night and was left stranded outside in the dark because their usual bus did not arrive to take them home. It is disgraceful that an operator has been able to get away with this day after day for the past month. Although I am glad that the Minister for Transport has listened to calls from me and my parliamentary colleagues to intervene and fix the situation, it has come far too late. An explanation of what went wrong is needed from the Government. The member for Wollongong can laugh as much as he wants.

Transport for NSW and U-Go Mobility have had since the beginning of the year to prepare for the handover and knew well in advance the required services they would need to manage. If they knew they could not maintain those services, there should have been ample notice and proper communication with my community. I understand

that an investigation is now underway to find out exactly where this went wrong, and the results need to be made public. At the very least, my community deserves to know what went wrong. A number of my colleagues and I raised those concerns directly with the Minister's office, her staff and Transport for NSW prior to the new operator starting. At the time we were told that everything was okay because a handover from Punchbowl Bus Company to U-Go Mobility had taken place. They indicated they would be ready to take over the routes with minimum disruption to services.

It is clear now that was not the case. No-one should be subjected to school services being suspended and school communities being notified about it on the first day students return from holidays. No-one should be put in a situation where they miss doctor appointments or arrive late to work. As soon as someone knew the operator was unable to maintain the regular timetable, there should have been immediate intervention to prevent the situation from getting worse. Ample notice and proper communication should have been provided to the community. I sincerely thank everyone in the Oatley electorate who has taken the time to meet with me, write to me or phone my office about their concerns. I will continue to advocate on behalf of every single one of them and will not stop until our community has the level of service and reliability it had under the Punchbowl Bus Company.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (20:26):** The member failed to include in his statement that he was in the Cabinet room when the buses were privatised. He was a Minister in the last Government when the contract was signed for the bus service that he is talking about. It was signed at the eleventh hour in February last year by members opposite, including the member for Oatley, who was a Minister in the Government at the time. The member for Oatley has got a track record of trying to be on both sides of every issue that confronts his electorate, but it is a bit rich of him to speak about this in the Chamber now when he was one of the chief advocates of privatisation in the former Government. Every second motion that was moved by Labor to warn members of this sort of stuff happening if bus routes were privatised was amended, or attempted to be amended, by the member for Oatley, who defended the privatisation regime of the former Government. There was a great service in the shire. He should make sure that he tells his community the truth—he was part and parcel of the privatisation.

#### HEARING LOSS

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:27):** Tonight I speak about the issue of hearing loss in infant and school-aged children, which has profound impacts on long-term health and educational outcomes. Hearing loss, whether brought about by virtue of a child's environment or genetics, is an issue that is not often publicly spoken about and presents a public health challenge with tremendous negative externalities. In Australia, about one in every 1,000 babies is born with significant hearing loss. That statistic rises with age, with an estimated two in 1,000 children by school age and three in 1,000 children by secondary school age requiring assistance due to hearing loss. Those afflictions also acutely impact Indigenous children, with Indigenous infants less than one year of age being four times as likely as non-Indigenous infants to develop acute otitis media, or middle ear infection.

In New South Wales the Statewide Infant Screening Hearing Program, or SWISH, aims to identify all babies born in this State with significant permanent bilateral hearing loss by three months of age and enable those children to be able to access appropriate intervention by six months of age. Identification of significant hearing loss is achieved through universal hearing screening of all newborns. Although approximately 90 per cent to 95 per cent of newborn hearing loss is picked up at this point, there is a significantly lower rate of early childhood hearing loss being picked up prior to the child entering school. Although the rate of hearing loss is lower in children than in adults, the burden of moderate to severe hearing loss in a child's formative years poses profound risks to their development. This extends to their language, cognition, social skills, behaviour and literacy. Those consequences, along with the emotional and financial burden of increased medical care, have the potential to put greater stress on families.

Numerous factors influence how significant the inhibitions may be. First, the age of onset—whether at birth, infancy or during school years—provides an indication as to the severity of hearing impairment. Moreover, the availability of technology, education and support influences how well a child and their family adjust to those circumstances. However, the most important factor in determining the outcomes for hearing-impaired children relates to early identification and intervention. Early identification and intervention are crucial, with research suggesting that intervention before a child reaches six months of age may result in favourable speech and language development and would reduce the need for ongoing special education.

For example, a cochlear implant can be a suitable option for infants as young as three months, ensuring that children have the same opportunity to develop listening and hearing skills as their peers and reach their hearing potential. However, interventions are not limited to cochlear implants. For over 50 years one of the most significant care providers in this space, the Shepherd Centre, has provided support to children and families afflicted by hearing loss.

**Mr Paul Scully:** A great organisation.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA:** I note the Minister's interjection and the presence of the Shepherd Centre in his electorate. The organisation cares for over 700 families across seven in-person centres in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Its life-changing support architecture emphasises the role of families at the centre of a child's support network and aims to develop critical sensory and cognitive skills. Through collaboration with the Sydney Children's Hospital Network; ear, nose and throat specialists; and educational professionals, the Shepherd Centre creates tailored programs focused on early intervention as well as multistage strategies that prepare the child for schooling and minimise the developmental impacts of hearing impairments.

Recently I had the pleasure of visiting the Casula Shepherd Centre where I met the centre's clinical staff, volunteers and participating families. The centre provides a comprehensive level of support, with frequent NDIS sessions for parents and an onsite preschool to enable school preparation and group support sessions for children. Importantly, the preschool caters to non-hearing children, providing an integrated environment for all. While not-for-profit services like the Shepherd Centre are there for families, the need to raise awareness of early intervention and identification cannot be understated. For children who face socio-economic status disadvantage, the various consequences surrounding hearing loss are compounded by difficult or inadequate access to primary health care and limited psychosocial or educational support. As we move to a society that prioritises inclusion, access and embraces a spectrum of abilities, we must ensure that every possible pathway is taken to ensure that early detection, assessment and intervention for childhood hearing loss. Our families, our young people and our communities deserves it.

### REPUBLIC OF ARTSAKH

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (20:32):** I speak this evening on a matter of major concern to many Willoughby residents: the ongoing blockade of the Republic of Artsakh by Azerbaijan and the humanitarian crisis it has created. It is now over 230 days since the Lachin corridor—the only road of life for the 120,000 Armenians of Artsakh—was blocked and inhabitants placed under effective siege. Landlocked between eastern Europe and western Asia, the Republic of Artsakh is an ethnically and culturally Armenian country, with 99.7 per cent of its population identifying as Armenian. The main language is Armenian, and the majority of its population belong to the Armenian Orthodox Church.

However, for too long Azerbaijan has claimed control over Artsakh and its territory. I decry the recent aggression of Azerbaijan towards Artsakh and strongly condemn Azerbaijan's blockade of Artsakh, which has been in force since 12 December 2022. Recently the Azerbaijani government intensified its blockade by closing a bypass dirt road and installing a checkpoint at the Lachin corridor. This blockade has had disastrous consequences for the population of Artsakh, with the importation of essential food, fuel and medicines being blocked. The 120,000 residents of the region are trapped and denied access to essential goods and services, including life-saving medication and health care. Shortages of food, medicine and electricity are widespread, resulting in severe rationing and widespread unemployment.

According to a report by Amnesty International, access to health care has become the most pressing issue in the blockaded region, with a deficit of medicines and medical supplies as well as insufficient fuel to enable outpatient care. The situation is particularly acute for older people and people with disabilities, many with chronic health conditions, whose access to healthcare services is severely limited or in some cases completely disrupted. The adverse effects of the blockade have extended to education in Artsakh as well. Amnesty International reported that schools and kindergartens, attended by around 27,000 children, were temporarily closed due to a lack of heating and electricity shortages. Although schools have now partially reopened, school time is limited to only four hours a day. Only very limited relief has been able to be passed through, not nearly enough to address the humanitarian crisis plaguing the nation.

With the enormity of the crisis gripping the nation of Artsakh, the only satisfactory resolution is nothing less than an immediate lifting of the blockade with a full reopening of the Lachin corridor. For this crisis to be alleviated, it is essential for normal trade to resume along this vital corridor to restore the supply of essential goods and services that the people of Artsakh rely upon for their livelihoods. Aside from the immediate humanitarian impacts of the blockade, this action by Azerbaijan must be condemned for its assault on the Armenian people and their culture. Azerbaijan's actions are part of a historical pattern and an ongoing attempt to ethnically cleanse the Artsakh region of Armenians. Those actions include the destruction of Armenian Orthodox churches and other cultural and heritage sites.

Given the horror of the Armenian genocide only last century, Australia and the world must be extra vigilant that this dark chapter of history is never repeated. We therefore have a collective obligation to act swiftly to protect the Armenian people of Artsakh from oppression once more. This begins with a demand for Azerbaijan to immediately lift its blockade of Artsakh. I welcomed the decision of the International Court of Justice on

22 February 2023 to order Azerbaijan to end the blockage of the corridor. While the order is binding, the court has no way of enforcing it, which means Australia and the international community must continue to bring pressure to bear on Azerbaijan to cease its blockade of Artsakh.

The affairs of Armenia and the surrounding region are of profound interest to the Willoughby electorate, which is home to a strong, proud Armenian-Australian community. I appreciate immensely the rich contribution they make to all facets of Willoughby life and to New South Wales at large. Every April I am honoured to join my local Armenian community in a moving church service, street procession and open-air memorial observance to commemorate the Armenian genocide that claimed the lives of 1.5 million of their people from 1915 to 1917. We do this not so much to dwell on the past, but to learn from it. With the present-day aggression of Azerbaijan towards Artsakh, this lesson could not be more instructive. History teaches us to never forget, nor repeat, the mistakes of the past, and this impels us to take the stand we are taking today to protect the Armenian people of Artsakh from yet another round of suffering and persecution. As a freedom-loving Australian, friend of the Armenian community and proud member for Willoughby, I am calling on our nation to condemn Azerbaijan's illegal blockade of Artsakh, and to actively support the rights, freedoms and opportunities of the Artsakh people to their territorial sovereignty, culture and self-determination.

### EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (20:37):** Local Government NSW is making strong representations on behalf of councils concerning the increase to the emergency services levy, the ESL. The New South Wales Government provided a one-off subsidy to Local Government in the 2020 financial year, and this one-off subsidy was then repeated for the financial years ending 30 June 2021, 2022 and 2023. The definition of one-off funding support is an event that occurs once and is not repeated. The subsidy was never guaranteed to continue, and the New South Wales Government provided additional assistance during the COVID years to assist local councils. Any good, prudent budget ought to have included councils' fair share of the ESL funding, which is approximately 11 per cent of the total statewide emergency services funding program. During question time on 1 June 2023 the Minister for Local Government said:

I want them—  
councillors—

to be given the opportunity to manage the finances in their council areas, because if elected people were able to do that then we would not be receiving reports from the Auditor-General about the crisis in local government.

This statement created outrage across the sector. I am not sure why. The local government Minister was trying to empower local councillors in the budgetary discussion process. Each year, councils knew that at some point the one-off subsidy would end. The subsidy stopped because this new Labor Government was handed a budget blowout of \$7 billion and State gross debt is anticipated to be above \$180 billion. This Labor Government wishes to focus on providing more staffing for our schools, hospitals and Police Force, and more social workers; addressing key societal challenges; and managing the infrastructure cost blowouts left behind by the Liberal-Nationals Government.

Blacktown Council was so incensed that it put in everyone's letterbox a newsletter stating that services will be cut as a result of the ESL. The council was implying that it no longer wanted to support the SES and the RFS, but the mayor was still keen to get his photo with them. The council report shows the total cost per year of the emergency services levy contribution and a second column, which identifies "New South Wales Government one-off funding". Councillors and managers chose not to account for the full amount in the budget. They gambled on the hope that the one-off subsidy would continue for a fifth year.

What is involved for councillors in developing a budget at Blacktown Council? On 15 February 2023 the first meeting of Blacktown Council's budget estimates committee opened at 6.36 p.m. and closed 6.42 p.m., six minutes later. On 15 March 2023 the second meeting opened at 7.02 p.m. and closed 7.44 p.m., 42 minutes later. On 19 April 2023 the third meeting opened at 6.34 p.m. and closed at 7.40 p.m., 66 minutes later—at least it took more than an hour. On 3 May the council had an extraordinary meeting to present the budget. It opened at 6.33 p.m. and closed at 7.33 p.m., 60 minutes later. In developing and tabling the budget, Blacktown councillors had four meetings, totalling 174 minutes, to discuss a \$787 million budget. That is \$4.5 million of the budget decided every minute. The deputy mayor delivered the budget speech, stating:

Once again, we are presenting a balanced and financially responsible budget.

...

This budget ensures that infrastructure and services are provided efficiently, effectively and sustainably.

Nowhere did the deputy mayor mention that the ESL was a challenge, and nowhere were any concerns of financial sustainability mentioned. Members can imagine my shock when I received a letter from the deputy mayor stating:

... to avoid serious impacts on the financial sustainability of our council as a result of the New South Wales Government's decision to impose enormous increase in the ESL.

I am confused. The one-year increase of \$1.6 million out of \$747 million, which ought to have been budgeted for but was not, by their choice, is seriously impacting on the financial sustainability of Blacktown Council. Really? Its first cost saving can be to stop writing, printing and distributing crap to the ratepayers. As the local government Minister indicated, local councillors need to take control of their finances. Ratepayers expect that councillors undertake their due diligence in questioning and guiding the budget, and do not simply take instructions from their staff. I am still waiting on an answer from the mayor about whether he wants a financial administrator appointed to the council to help manage the approaching fiscal cliff that the deputy mayor believes it is heading towards.

#### YANDAARRA AUNTY GRACE ROBERTS COMMUNITY AWARDS

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:42):** Indigenous cultures are dear to the heart of our great State and nation. On the Coffs Coast and across the country we celebrate NAIDOC Week every year with pride in and deep respect for our First Nations people. The festivities and special events give us all the opportunity to learn about the oldest continuous living cultures on our planet. In Coffs Harbour we recently came together on Gumbaynggirr country for the NAIDOC Week 2023 flag-raising at the City of Coffs Harbour's administration building, where we began a week of reflection and celebration. It was a privilege to be at this important observance, which is drawing bigger and bigger crowds every year—an indication of just how much local Aboriginal people and their culture are treasured.

I take this opportunity to thank the many Indigenous organisations and individuals who continue to advocate passionately for their community on the Coffs Coast. Their achievements and talents are recognised each NAIDOC Week in the Yandaarra Aunty Grace Roberts Community Awards, hosted by the City of Coffs Harbour's Yandaarra Aboriginal Advisory Committee. For 25 years the awards have showcased and endorsed Coffs Coast First Nations community members who are paving the way for others. They are people who are proudly driving and promoting positivity. The community awards have grown into an event of major significance for the Coffs Coast and are enthusiastically supported by the local community.

This year's nominees and winners for the Grace Roberts Memorial Community Development Award were Steven Skinner, Tyson Ferguson, Angela Cowan, Al Perkins, Yvette Pacey, Tory Paasi and Richard Widders. Tyson Ferguson was the winner. He has gone above and beyond for his clients at Galambila Aboriginal Health Service, where he coordinates the diabetes clinic, specialises in chronic disease and is the cultural support officer for the GPs and registrars. He also supports their Aboriginal health workers and is now an Aboriginal health practitioner. The Aunty Award had two nominees: Aunty Angela Brown and Aunty Michelle Sinclair, who was declared the winner and is another person who is always willing to go above and beyond for her community and in ensuring that people's health and wellbeing are looked after. The Uncle Award had four nominees: Uncle Jim Hurley, Uncle Mervin Bolt, Uncle Mark Cuddy and Uncle Richard Widders, with Uncle Jim Hurley being declared the winner. He has worked with Galambila Aboriginal Health Service for 25 years and is extremely supportive of patients and others in the community. Uncle Jim is known as a fix-it uncle.

The award for the Aboriginal Community Organisation or Business of the Year had three nominees: One Mob Radio, Gumbaynggirr Coffs Coast Raiders Aboriginal Corporation and Saltwater Sistas. We were lucky to have two winners: Saltwater Sistas and Gumbaynggirr Coffs Coast Raiders Aboriginal Corporation. Rhiannon Mitchell founded Saltwater Sistas, which mentors and supports Indigenous and non-Indigenous young women. In April, Saltwater Sistas was supported by the Youth Active Rewards Program at Coffs-Clarence Police District. This partnership ran a five-week program for nine at-risk and/or offending girls, leading to remarkable results and a change of negative behaviours. Coffs Coast Raiders brings local men, women and children together to promote rugby league and healthy lifestyles, focusing on and building strong relationships.

The Sports Achievement Award had two nominees: Matthew Montgomery and Zayden Parry. Zayden Parry was announced as the winner. The 10-year-old loves his sport. In summer he plays cricket and aims to be a great all-rounder. He plays under-10s and under-12s and has his sights on third grade with the men next year. In winter he plays soccer and is keen to hone his skills as a goalie. He also enjoys golf and horseriding. The Arts and Cultural Achievement Award had five nominees: Darryll Lockwood, Matty Devitt, Danielle Burford, Tory Paasi and Jessica Mercy. Matty Devitt was the winner. He is an inspirational artist and gifted musician who helps to improve community relations and the quality of life for Coffs Coast Aboriginal people. He supports local business events and the tourism sector with his live performances. He keeps his culture alive and front and centre at his gigs.

Isaiha Kelly was named the Youth of the Year. Isaiha has been involved in All One Under the Sun through the Change the Story hip-hop and cultural awareness program. He is completing year 12 at Orara High School and is considered a rising hip-hop and rap star. He is also a talented footballer and a proud learner and speaker of

the Gumbaynggirr language. He is undertaking a school-based traineeship in tourism through Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation and is a dedicated performer, writer and community-minded person who would like to be a teacher when he grows up. I congratulate all of the winners and hope everyone across the land had a great NAIDOC Week.

### HEATHCOTE ELECTORATE VOLUNTEERS

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:47):** Volunteers are the lifeblood of our communities. Without them there would be inadequately patrolled beaches, unattended Rural Fire Service stations, no community sport and no drivers for the Meals on Wheels vans. Put simply, we could not survive without those selfless people who continually put their hands up to volunteer their time to make the lives of others better. The Heathcote electorate is particularly blessed. From the pristine shores in the Royal National Park through to the sand flats of Bulli Beach, there is an enormous amount of coastline that attracts local residents and tourists alike. Who could blame them?

I may be biased, but I believe I represent the most picturesque and beautiful electorate in the State. However, as we know, those picturesque sandy beaches and that crystal-blue ocean can also be the scene of devastation. That is why our surf lifesaving club members are so incredibly valuable and important. For instance, these are some of the statistics from clubs who fall under the umbrella of Surf Life Saving Illawarra. Last season 404 rescues were performed, 133 of those by lifesavers at Austinmer Surf Life Saving Club. There were 7,664 preventative actions, 2,593 of those by Helensburgh-Stanwell Park. There were also 314 first aids. However, the statistic that really stands out to me is the total of 47,632 patrolled hours from members at clubs throughout Surf Life Saving Illawarra. That is 47,632 hours where lifesavers volunteered their time to keep other people safe.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the three clubs located in the Royal National Park: Era, Burning Palms and Garie Beach. The challenges faced by those clubs are particularly unique given their remote locations. I recently met with members of Burning Palms Surf Life Saving Club, who shared with me their rescue-related figures from the 2022-23 season. They included 293 preventative actions, 96 first-aid interventions, four major incidents, four surf rescues and five helicopter evacuations during patrolled hours.

RSL sub-branches and clubs are also particularly prominent throughout the Heathcote electorate. They include Austinmer-Thirroul, Coledale, Helensburgh, Heathcote, Engadine and Woronora River. All sub-branches and associated clubs provide a space for the veteran community—including their loved ones—to meet, socialise and discuss important issues. They also spend countless hours organising commemorations such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day services. Those services are incredibly important not only for our local communities but also for our nation as a whole. They serve two vital purposes: first, to recognise the brave men and women who have served and continue to serve our country valiantly; and, secondly, to ensure that our youngest generations are given the tools and knowledge to make sure those stories of brave men and women are told for generations to come.

Recently I attended the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations of Coledale RSL and Coledale RSL Sub-Branch. It is fair to say that no club or sub-branch would have been able to exist for 75 years without the efforts of many volunteers. The fact that Coledale RSL Club and Coledale RSL Sub-Branch celebrated 75 years is a testament to the many members who have volunteered their time for the past three-quarters of a century. Of course, we are incredibly lucky and grateful to have so many rural fire brigades protecting the community of Heathcote. Rural fire brigades operate on the goodwill of volunteers. Those RFS volunteers run towards an emergency and crisis, not from it. The volunteers sacrifice their own welfare to protect and serve their communities. I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of those RFS members throughout the Heathcote electorate to express my gratitude for their commitment and dedication to our community.

If predictions are accurate, we are staring down the barrel of an extremely worrisome fire season this summer. It is an extremely grim prediction, given the devastating fires that occurred across the State in the 2019-20 summer. Those blazes resulted in the loss of property and the loss of life, some of it from RFS members battling fires. On behalf of the Heathcote electorate, I thank every volunteer for their incredible contribution and sacrifice. Our community is eternally grateful for their contributions.

### ACTIVE KIDS PROGRAM

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (20:52):** Call me old-fashioned, but I believe when people make a promise they should keep it. This Premier and his Government went to the last election saying that, if they were elected, important measures to help ease the cost-of-living pressure on families would be retained. As Opposition leader, Chris Minns said that he would keep the Active Kids rebate, the Creative Kids rebate, the First Lap voucher, the regional students travel card and the regional seniors travel card. But now that Chris Minns and his Labor Government are in office, they are breaking all of those promises to the 750,000 families across the State

who have received the Active Kids rebate, many of whom would have voted Labor believing those important cost-of-living measures would be retained.

In my electorate 95,698 vouchers have been issued since the program began, with 13,798 being issued this year alone. Put simply, those families were cheated and lied to for nothing more than political gain. I am sure the boffins in the Premier's office are feeling pretty chuffed with themselves, thinking people will simply forget about it. Let me tell them something: I will not let them forget—not just the betrayal of families in my community but also the total breach of trust with the electorate. Members cannot say one thing before the election and do something totally different after the election.

Launched in 2018, the Active Kids rebate was designed and implemented to increase the participation of school-age children in sport and physical activity by providing vouchers to help cover the costs of registration and members' fees. With so many cost pressures on families, the rebate provided important relief and help to many families that on their own simply could not afford to send their kids to after-school sport activities. The program was also a huge help to so many volunteer-run sporting clubs that used the rebates to pay for essential equipment and administrative costs. Cuts to the Active Kids rebate mean that those clubs will either have to put up fees or scale back activities.

Many parents would have seen the email blasts from Service NSW last week advising, "A brand-new Active and Creative Kids voucher program will start in early 2024." That is deeply disingenuous and misleading because the only thing new about the rebates is that they have been cut in half. It is also new that the program will no longer apply to every child, with new eligibility criteria that restrict access to the program. Experts have applauded the rebate, with research showing it delivers important results. BMC Public Health undertook research that concluded:

The Active Kids program significantly increased children's physical activity levels and these increases continued over a six-month period. The Active Kids voucher program shows promise as a scaled-up intervention to increase children and adolescents' physical activity participation.

Healthdirect research showed that "fewer than one out of four children aged five to 14 years get the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day". It found that encouraging children to be physically active benefits a child's heart and lungs and helps them maintain a healthy weight. It also found:

Their brain will develop vital connections, leading to improved concentration and thinking skills.

They are less likely to develop chronic diseases, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

But perhaps the best anecdotes come from parents, and I will read onto the record some of the comments that my office has received since the announcement. Jade Hanson wrote:

I wish to stress the importance of the Active Kids voucher program continuing for the sake of kids' health and fitness which needs to be encouraged as much as possible at a young age. My son has really developed a love of sport thanks to this program! Without this program I definitely would not have been able to afford for my son to do more than swimming as an after-school activity, which is a life skill.

Since the program my 5-year-old son was able to do weekly acrobatics as well and his core muscles developed so much that it has made him a stronger swimmer!

Please do continue this program. It is such a benefit for every community.

Graham and Kathy Nevill wrote:

I write to express my deep disappointment at the reckless decision by the Minns regime to cut the Active Kids Program.

It is clear this regime have only been in power for a short period and to my dismay the architects of this incredibly inept party is very apparent.

This decision has far greater consequences which have not been explored nor explained by a sensible person. It is simply bad policy from a bad regime.

Johnathon Seller wrote:

I write to you as a parent of 2 daughters that play both organised community sport and non-organised sports. I am and have a long history as a Volunteer in the youth and community sectors. There is an old saying when it comes to keeping young people engaged in positive community and sporting pursuits. "Given incredible things to do, kids will do incredible things. Given nothing to do, there's no telling what they will do.

With all of the cost-of-living pressures that families face today, with Australians being counted as some of the most obese people in the world and with social issues around youth crime, helping families to keep their children engaged in sport and other community activities provides dividends to our society far beyond the transactional value of a voucher.

A person who requested anonymity gave another quote, but I will leave it there and say the program should be continued. [*Time expired.*]

### MEMBER FOR NEWCASTLE

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Minister for the Hunter) (20:57):** In recent days I have made a subsequent disclosure to the Premier's office to self-report an omission on my ministerial disclosures as required by the code of conduct. My disclosure included a property owned by my wife and another property owned by my wife with her siblings. A further property owned by my wife was unfortunately omitted in that disclosure. I believe that disclosure was the first required after my appointment as a Minister in the Minns Labor Government. At that time I also disclosed that my father-in-law owned property at Broadmeadow but undertook that I would notify under the code of conduct of any changes to any perceived conflict.

Subsequently, I provided another return that included the omitted property owned by my wife. I also provided a subsequent updated disclosure under the ministerial code of conduct that again identified the subject property owned by my wife at Broadmeadow. I also took steps to subsequently notify the Premier that I had now become aware that properties owned within Broadmeadow by my in-laws also now represented a conflict of interest. In recent days I again notified the Premier's Office that I had now spoken to both my in-laws and my siblings' in-laws to assemble a full list of each of their interests, and I have provided those to the Premier's office. I appreciate and firmly believe Ministers must be held to the highest standards and would like to note that this oversight was identified due to my own self-reporting. I thank the House for its consideration.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (20:59):** From unseasonably warm winter days in Sydney to scorching summer temperatures and wildfires across Europe, and scientists confirming that July is the hottest month on record the Earth has ever experienced, the United Nations Secretary-General has given us a grim warning: The era of global warming has ended and the era of global boiling has arrived. In Australia we are bracing for scorching summer temperatures, with many scientists predicting the first El Niño in three years. It is clear that we need to immediately end our dependence on climate-wrecking coal and gas, keep fossil fuels in the ground, and make the big polluters pay for the damage that they have caused and continue to cause. But instead, tragically, the New South Wales and Federal Labor governments continue to be captured by vested interests connected to the fossil fuel industry.

While we are watching temperature records being broken day after day, and alarm bells are ringing in all directions in the form of wildfires and melting ice caps and extinctions, the New South Wales Labor Government continues to log our native forests, refuses to break the addiction to the fossil fuel industry and steers us further and further towards climate catastrophe. This week, instead of taking the opportunity to follow Victoria's lead to ban gas in new homes and buildings in that State and signal there is no place for gas in a clean energy future, the Premier instead chose to shut this move down, declaring in reports that he did not need "another complication"—never mind complications like the catastrophic floods, the raging bushfires, the extreme heatwaves and the droughts that our communities are facing as "complications" to their lives.

Meanwhile at a Federal level, Labor's environment and water Minister, Tanya Plibersek, has approved three coalmines in just the past two months—a new mine, a mine extension, and an exploratory licence. Our community would hope that, as the Federal environment Minister, the Federal member for Sydney would act to protect the environment, which is supposed to be one of her core responsibilities. Instead, she has tried to spin her decisions by citing laws that require applications for new fossil fuel projects to be considered on a case-by-case basis and not according to their cumulative contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Both federally and in New South Wales, Labor's climate strategy seems to be to condemn a decade of Liberal inaction in Parliament—and let us be clear, that inaction is real. But it is important to realise that Labor is now in power in New South Wales and federally. It is not enough to just condemn past Liberal inaction. We need to act now to make sure that we are not expanding coal and gas while continuing to log our native forests.

The reality is that, on all fronts, Minister Plibersek, the Albanese Labor Government and the New South Wales Minns Labor Government sadly continue to side with the coal and gas industry over the urgent and desperate need for climate action. We cannot put out this fire while pouring petrol on it and we cannot afford to continue to go down this path. Our inner-city communities, inner-west communities and all communities across New South Wales expect more. We know that the people who will be impacted most by extreme heat are also the people who are the most vulnerable in our community—those who are marginalised or are facing economic insecurity. We already know, and have seen, that during hot summers parents in Western Sydney resort to driving their children around in cars to keep them cool enough to get to sleep, and older people are forced to spend time, day in and day out, in shopping centres to avoid the extreme weather.

Soaring energy bills and the rate of support below the poverty line—which is another thing the Federal Labor Government has failed to address—mean that people on income support cannot afford to keep themselves

warm or cool, with renters freezing or sweltering in their homes because they rarely have access or the funds to fix their cooling or heating systems, and there are no minimum energy standards to ensure their homes are safe. The Greens back the calls from Sweltering Cities and other organisations to keep people safe during extreme heat and extreme cold. Beyond the individual household solutions we desperately need real action and real leadership from the New South Wales Government and the Federal Labor Government.

The earth is burning. We need to put an end to coal and gas and move towards 100 per cent renewables. We need to stop the destructive logging of our native forests and make coal and gas corporations pay for the damage they are causing to communities and the environment. No ifs, no buts. This is not the time to make apologies or excuses. The earth is boiling and it is time to act.

### **SYDNEY METRO WEST**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (21:04):** I speak tonight about the Sydney Metro West project, which I fully support. I also put on record that I fully support the Government waiting until October for a comprehensive review of the project. From what I have observed as a local member, the project has been handled very badly from the very start. That is particularly true of the compulsory acquisitions of properties in my electorate—which I have mentioned many times in this House—and also the part of Granville that is now in Madam Temporary Speaker's electorate of Parramatta, where some businesses on Crown land were compulsorily acquired. From the very start, I believe the budget was based on assumptions about underpaying people for their properties and treating people really badly. I know that adjustments have been made, which have been very costly thus far.

In Westmead an entire block of units and freestanding houses was acquired. Under just terms compensation, people are supposed to receive the maximum developable value of their land. Instead, at the start of the six-month negotiation period people were notified that their property was going to be acquired. They received the first valuation and offer after five months, leaving only a few weeks to negotiate. That is not in good faith. The owners received really low-ball offers. I have some examples from constituents for whom I have made representations. They were at least 20 per cent below market value at the time and independent valuations showed that the properties were worth much more.

For example, a constituent was offered \$505,000 for a unit that was valued at \$580,00, and a less desirable unit in the block had recently sold for \$557,000. Another property is a freestanding house on a site where I believe units should be built. It will be over the top of the metro, so the owners should get the maximum developable land value. However, they received a low-ball offer of \$1.38 million for just the freestanding house. A week later a property on a site half the size sold for about the same amount of money. The former Government treated Sydney Helicopters in Granville, which has now relocated to Penrith, absolutely appallingly in an effort not to pay much in relocation costs.

The Government pretty much said that, as a government tenant on Crown land, it should not receive much money at all. It certainly did not want to provide much support. That was no way to treat an organisation that only a few months beforehand had flown over 4,000 hours fighting bushfires for the Government. The Government finally negotiated with the company, but it was a huge fight that involved the Office of the Valuer General. In contrast, Billbergia received \$35 million for its site, which was worth minus \$7 million, and the Government took on the entire contamination remediation liability of that property in Camelia.

Westmead Public School made a submission complaining about the noise and dust that would be generated by truck movements past the school, all day, every day. The Sydney Metro West people told the school that the movements would have to be adjusted, which would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of the project. If they were planning all along to run trucks spewing dust past schools during years of construction, that is not acceptable. Camellia should have a station. Some 10,000 units are proposed for the area and, as I mentioned before, Westmead should have units built over the station. All of those opportunities need to be looked at. I believe the poor handling of this development is probably reflective of the very poor handling of the entire project. I welcome the review of Sydney Metro West and I will welcome the project when it eventually arrives.

### **CASTLE HILL ELECTORATE STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (21:09):** I speak today to contribute to discussions concerning local planning powers. I note that the member for Heffron has spoken about local planning powers on previous occasions. The Local Government Act 1993 specifies that it is one of the functions of the governing body of a council to develop and endorse the community strategic plan. The Act provides:

The role of the governing body is ... to develop and endorse the community strategic plan, delivery program and other strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies of the council.

It is the elected councillors who are accountable to the community and who are entrusted by the community to make strategic planning decisions. Unelected, faceless members of local planning panels are not accountable to

the community. Members of the local planning panel may not even live in the community. As you would know, Madam Temporary Speaker, the development of a strategic plan takes place over a lengthy period and involves an extensive community consultation process. The formulation of the plan involves detailed work to plan for sustainable development. After the community consultation period has ended, councillors vote to approve the strategy. The strategy is known as the local strategic planning statement [LSPS]. The Hills Shire Council's LSPS specifically identifies that the council will:

Discourage commercial and residential uplift in Baulkham Hills town centre until transport and traffic issues are resolved.

Notwithstanding the clear statement contained within the LSPS, landowners continue to seek residential uplift within the Baulkham Hills town centre, which is in my electorate. Two proposals have recently received different outcomes. To explain the outcomes it is necessary to consider the planning proposals. The first proposal was an application to develop a site at Jenner Street, Baulkham Hills, for the purpose of building 228 residential units. The proposal sought a considerable uplift that would have resulted in more residential dwellings in the Baulkham Hills town centre. Council resolved that the Jenner Street proposal would not proceed to gateway determination.

The second proposal was an application to develop a site located at Seven Hills Road, Baulkham Hills. The proposal sought to rezone the land to increase the maximum height of the building to accommodate an eight-storey residential flat building comprising 66 units. Council resolved that the Seven Hills Road proposal would also not proceed to gateway. Both proponents sought a rezoning review of the council's decision. Inexplicably, different decisions were given by the planning panels. In relation to the Jenner Street proposal, the planning panel upheld the council's decision. The panel correctly stated, "The Panel considered that the proposal is inconsistent with the ... Local Strategic Planning Statement's intention to 'discourage commercial and residential uplift in the Baulkham Hills town centre until transport and traffic issues are resolved'." The panel further stated, "The LSPS has been consistently applied by both Council and the Panel in respect of similar schemes proposing uplift."

In relation to the Seven Hills Road apartment complex proposal, the planning panel inexplicably determined that the proposal should proceed to a gateway determination. The reasoning of the planning panel raises a serious concern for all local government areas. The panel gave the reasoning behind its decision and stated, "The whole of the Panel agreed that the Planning Proposal, to enable greater residential density, had Strategic Merit." In giving its reasons, the panel further stated, "Delivering housing supply is a priority issue for Sydney for all levels of Government." The situation where unelected, faceless members of planning panels can override council strategic planning decisions cannot continue. I note that on 22 February 2022 the member for Heffron, who is now the Minister for Local Government, said in this House:

This is the problem with planning decision-making bodies made up of faceless individuals who have little to no connection to the community that must live with the impact of the decisions that the planning panel makes.

To have unelected panels comprised of people who do not live in the community, who do not have to answer to the community and who can be dismissive of council's policy settings is—as one councillor put it at a recent meeting of The Hills Shire Council—outrageous. All communities are entitled to be concerned knowing that local planning panels can so easily dismiss council policy settings to fulfil the perception that governments at any level require more housing. The Hills Shire Council is exceeding its housing target, which makes the panel decision even more extraordinary. A council should never have its strategic planning policies overridden by the planning process. It undermines public confidence in the planning system.

### **SYDNEY METRO WEST**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (21:14):** I am concerned by recent media reports that suggest the Government is contemplating delaying, or potentially scrapping, the Sydney Metro West project. This has caused a lot of angst and unrest in my community. Yesterday in this Chamber during question time I asked a question of the Minister for Transport and sought the Government's commitment to rule out cancelling or removing the promised stations located in the Drummoyne electorate at Five Dock, Burwood North—or Concord Oval, as it is known by my community—and North Strathfield. The Minister's answer revealed that my community must wait until at least October, and potentially even longer, to have any certainty and clarity about the Government's intentions for the future of the project.

The metro west has the potential to be a game changer for my community, creating the prospect of thriving community hubs. It is a fast mode of transport, with a promised journey of 20 minutes from Parramatta to the CBD. The new stations will unlock transport options for areas of my electorate that do not already have access to a station and will ease the pressure on already burdened stations. That is why any delay or scrapping of the project would be catastrophic for communities right across the inner west, especially in my electorate of Drummoyne. I do not blame my community for feeling worried because, when you stop to think about it, it is a classic move in

the Labor Party playbook to stall and not deliver infrastructure. It is the same old Labor—the very Labor Party that when last in government cancelled the Rozelle metro after more than \$300 million of taxpayers' money was spent without even laying a track. Well, I will not stand for it, and I will work constructively to ensure that metro west gets delivered on time.

In the past week I have listened to the comments of local mayors, including the Labor Mayor of Burwood, John Faker, who highlighted the importance of the project being delivered without delay. Local railway stations in our communities are already at capacity and alone can no longer meet the needs of a growing metropolitan area. Populations in our communities are set to increase as a result of the Federal Albanese Labor Government's immigration policy, and that is all the more reason this project should be delivered without delay. I am very concerned about further construction delays because businesses and town centres where construction is taking place are already suffering. As far as I am concerned, any delays in construction are unacceptable, because delays mean more impacts to communities, households and small businesses.

In recent days I have seen commentary and rhetoric saying that the Sydney Metro West is only in the early stages of construction. To that I say, "Come to Five Dock." Right across the road from my electorate office and at Concord Oval there are huge holes in the ground, hundreds of workers are on site, trucks are going in and out, tunnel boring machines are in place, and households and businesses are feeling the effects of construction. Those businesses and households affected by construction have now been left in limbo. Others in my community made the financial decision to purchase a home in the vicinity of a proposed metro station, and now there is no certainty that those stops will even be included on the route. In recent days my office has been inundated with correspondence from frustrated members of my community and I share some of those views. Romano said:

This is a vital piece of Infrastructure that Sydney requires to move ahead with its ever-increasing population. To stop this Metro line going ahead or adding stations at this late stage of ongoing construction is ludicrous. We are the premier state, changing this line will be a major detriment to the development of the ever-expanding Sydney, and we risk becoming a joke like the poor Infrastructure planning occurring in Melbourne.

Susannah, another concerned constituent, wrote to me. She said:

Like many local residents, I have taken the Government's commitment to building the metro lines in good faith. Cancelling them now will make public transport access far worse, not to mention billions of taxpayer dollars wasted that has already been spent on the project.

I also quote a senior Labor figure, former Minister David Borger. In an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, he stated:

Boring machines are already in the ground and on their way from White Bay towards Parramatta. Let's just get on with it.

I could not agree more. Let us get on with it. The Premier made a promise at the election that the Sydney Metro West would be delivered. However, we have seen him taking steps to break that promise already. I call on the Premier to tell my community the truth about his Government's intentions. The project needs to keep going, and I will fight to ensure its timely delivery. The people of Drummoyne deserve a world-class metro. Labor needs to commit to building it and to building three stations in my community, as promised. I will not stop until it does.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:19 until  
Thursday 3 August 2023 at 10:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

**According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.**

#### **FIT KIDZ FOUNDATION-STRONGER TOGETHER**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I am pleased to record that on 29 July 2023 Fit Kidz Foundation hosted the 'Stronger Together' Conference at the Castle Hill RSL Club. Fit Kidz Foundation was founded by Mick and Melissa Scaife and has been operating as a not-for-profit early intervention provider since 2015. Fit Kidz Foundation helps parents and the wider community understand, support, and include children with Neurodivergent Conditions including Autism (ASD); Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and other development disabilities to engage with and participate in society. Fit Kidz operates early learning centres at locations including Dural North, Dural South, Glenwood North, Glenwood South, Putney, Rouse Hill, Turramurra, Vineyard and Warrawee. The Stronger Together Conference provides a space where parents/carers from across the community were able to build connections, access information, and to hear from inspirational speakers. The Conference was opened by the Mayor of the Hills Shire Council, Dr. Peter Gangemi. Inspirational speakers included Melissa Scaiffe and Ellen Witzlspurger from Fit Kidz, Kate Strohm, Jo Abi, Briana Blackett, Rob Hale, Sandy Golder, Michael Theo and many others. I congratulate Melissa and Ellen, and I recognise the important work of the Fit Kidz Foundation in the area of early childhood development.

### NATIONAL TREE DAY - WHEELIE PARK-GABLES

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—This year National Tree Day was held on 30 July 2023. I had the pleasure of attending Wheelie Park, Gables where The Hills Shire Council celebrated National Tree Day by planting 4,500 native plants and trees. Residents were invited to attend and enjoy the park and to plant native plants and trees. Kuldip Kaur Pooni, the ASA Senior Citizen Group Co-Ordinator from the Sikh Temple, Glenwood arranged a bus for volunteers to attend. Kuldip said, "I just saw the tree planting on the council website, and I decided to organise people to come out and have a wonderful day." Linda Pine, Chair of the Council Bushland Conservation Committee said: "It is fabulous so many people from different communities are here on National Tree Day to plant trees." Castle Hill Lions Club organised a great barbeque for those in attendance. It was a wonderful morning in the sun planting native plants and trees. The trees and native plants will provide shade and a great place for our native fauna. I commend the Mayor of the Hills Shire Council Dr Peter Gangemi and to all those who attended. The community enjoyed a wonderful morning.

### STEPZ FITNESS, ROUSE HILL

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I congratulate Sanjiv Bhalla and Paramjeet Singh on the opening of Stepz Fitness Rouse Hill. The opening was on Sunday, 30 July 2023. I had the pleasure of attending the opening. Sanjeev is an experienced and qualified professional who has served the community for many years. Paramjeet is a local businessman who arrived in Australia in 2009. The opening of the gym was the result of a decision taken by Sanjeev and Paramjeet to open a business which would bring the community together to help everyone become fit and healthy. Stepz Fitness takes a holistic view of health. It is about the mind and body working together. Wellness is a journey which is different for everyone. The approach to fitness offered at Stepz Fitness is to assist members reach fitness goals in a fun and healthy environment. The opening was attended by the Federal Member for Mitchell, Alex Hawke, the Lord Mayor of Parramatta Sameer Panday, Mayor Dr Peter Gangemi, Councillors Reena Jethi and Frank De Masi from The Hills Shire Council and Councillor Moninder Singh from Blacktown as well as many community members. I am sure Stepz Fitness Rouse Hill will be a success.

### CRONULLA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—Last week at the annual general meeting of the Cronulla Chamber of Commerce (which I attended), Mark Aprilovic and Annette Tasker retired from the executive after 13 years as president and 15 years as treasurer respectively. They have become synonymous with the Chamber and been great champions for businesses in Cronulla, but decided to move on to allow renewal with a younger cohort. The new executive is Brad Lord of Ray White Commercial (President), Geoff Trio of Brass Monkey (Vice-President), Maria Anton of The Den (Vice-President), Patch Clunes of EOS Worldwide (Secretary) and Jack Hewitt South Sydney Advisory Pty Ltd (Treasurer). Mark Aprilovic and Annette Tasker leave big shoes to fill and I am confident that the new executive will be up to that task.

### SUTHERLAND SHIRE JUNIOR CRICKET ASSOCIATION

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I commend the Sutherland Shire Junior Cricket Association for its ongoing work to give boys and girls in the Shire the opportunity to enjoy the game of cricket. I recently had the privilege of joining players, officials and volunteers at their presentations for the 2022-23 season. I congratulate players from the 96 teams who competed in the local competitions in ages from under 10s to under 16s and recognise the boys and girls selected to represent Sutherland in representative teams. It was exciting to see a growing number of girls at the presentation and hear about the growth in girls' cricket in the Shire. I acknowledge the tireless work of the many volunteers who coached, managed and did the other support jobs throughout the season. I particularly highlight commitment and efforts of the Association's management committee members, Matt O'Brien (President), Tim Laws (Vice-President), Bryon Camin (Competition Manager), James Young (secretary), Scott Philipson (Representative Manager), Stuart Gordon (Assistant Rep Manager), Brad Abrook (Treasurer), Kirsten Benhiam (Girls Cricket Manager), Nathan Hayward (Child Safety Officer), Phil Jaques (Reps High Performance) and Adam Fleming (Committee) and recognise outgoing members Roy Amos, Stuart Clark, Terry Spyrides and Matt Kennedy.

### CAROL GUEST

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise the long and dedicated service of Mrs Carol Guest of Grays Point, who retired at the end of term 2 from Shire Christian School. In 1980 Carol began volunteering at the school when her children started there. In 1981 she took up a voluntary position in the school's office, and in 1987 took up a formal paid position. At the time of her retirement after 42 years as part of the school's administration team, Carol was its longest serving employee. Her duties were diverse, including greeting parents and students in reception, answering phone calls, providing secretarial support to teachers, first aid, archiving and

administrative support for staff professional development. I congratulate Carol on her long and loyal "innings" as a highly valued staff member, who will be sorely missed.

#### **NICK AND JANNENE GEOGHEGAN - SMALL ACRES CYDER**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to congratulate Nick and Jannene Geoghegan, the owners of a boutique cidery at Nashdale, near Orange. Small Acres Cyder recently achieved a gong internationally, winning a gold medal at the Japan Cider Cup, staged in Tokyo, which drew entrants from around the globe - including more established brands from the US. Described as a 'labour of love', the couple's 2021 Sparkling Perry took out its class, rewarding the Geoghegans for their hard work since taking over the business almost three years ago. Family-owned and operated, Small Acres is Orange's only cider producer and has its own orchard but also works with local fruit growers to craft ciders and perries using traditional methods. The production of sparkling perry, or pear-based cider, is a more complex and time-consuming manual process compared to the production of sweet apple cider, and the gold medal is wonderful reward for the family's hard work. Judges at the Japanese event described it as 'a step head' of its competition rivals. Located in the heart of Orange's wine country, Small Acres Cyder is doing its bit to grow the district's reputation as a wine and food destination.

#### **MARIA KENNEDY**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Speaker, I recognise the contribution to education of Orange resident Maria Kennedy. Maria has recently retired after almost three decades at James Sheahan Catholic High School, Orange. In her 30-year career in the front office, Maria has come in contact with thousands of students, supporting them from their often nervous first year of high school in Year 7, through to young adults in Year 12. Maria's compassionate and nurturing nature made her extremely popular with students over the years and she has enjoyed every minute of her working life at the school. She was so often the conduit between parents, students, teachers and the school executive, endearing her to the school community through her kindness and compassion combined with her bright personality. She was highly respected by other staff, and her longevity in education proved she was a valuable asset to the day to day running of the school. Her professional approach to her work ensuring there was always strong lines of communication between the various elements of the school community, made Maria a great asset to the school. I wish Maria all the best in her well-deserved retirement.

#### **MARILYN PIZZARO**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I recognise Parkes resident Marilyn Pizzaro for her 50 years of membership to the Parkes Day VIEW Club. Mrs Pizzaro has made a wonderful contribution to the community of Parkes over several decades. Through her commitment and dedication, Mrs Pizzaro and her fellow club members have made a real difference in the lives of children and their families who have faced hardship. It is an enormous achievement dedicating yourself to a service club for so many years and Mrs Pizzaro was recently honoured by her peers with the presentation of her 50-year service badge. Now more than ever, the work of Mrs Pizzaro and her VIEW Club is helping to fill the gap in the lives of children whose families are struggling to provide the everyday basics to go to school and remain engaged in education. Mrs Pizzaro has made an enormous contribution to her VIEW Club over the years, stepping in to fill a number of executive positions during that time. Through her work with the VIEW Club she has been part of the Learning For Life sponsorship program supporting three students during their educative years.

#### **SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY ACADEMY OF SPORT AWARDS NIGHT**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Recently I was delighted to attend the South-West Sydney Academy of Sport's annual athlete graduation and sports dinner. I joined over 200 others to celebrate 20 years of successful junior talented athlete development. SWSAS also celebrated the recent success of its 20 scholarship athletes and 54 volunteer coaches and support staff. The evening featured a stellar cast of guest speakers, including Olympic freeskiier Mia Rennie and Illawarra Hawks stars Tyler Harvey, Dan Grida and Tim Coenraad. The musical component was provided by the fabulous string and quartet stage band from Thomas Hassall Anglican college. I'd like to specially recognise Chief Executive Gerry Knights and Board Chair Peter Campbell on being awarded lifetime achievement awards. Having been part of the board previously, I can attest to their passion and commitment in supporting our regions emerging sporting talent. I congratulate all the award winners on their achievements. They are part of a region with a long and proud history of sporting excellence.

#### **AUSTRALIA BANGLADESH BUSINESS FORUM GALA NIGHT**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—I had the pleasure of attending the inaugural Australian Bangladesh Business Forum dinner at Ottimo House. This fantastic not-for-profit organisation prides itself on being a common voice for local businesses that straddle the bridge between Australia and Bangladesh. Instrumental in alerting State and Federal Governments to local business needs, the ABBF has assisted over 300 businesses already through its business forums. The growing economic relationship between the economies of

Australia and Bangladesh, with two-way trade amounting to over 2.5 billion dollars, is a huge opportunity for southwest Sydney. We have a growing community that speak 6th most spoken language in the world, as well as numerous female entrepreneurs who have established businesses catering to the needs of our community. I congratulate the ABBF President Abdul Khan and General Secretary, Brian Laul for their hard work, and I recognise all those responsible for making the night a great success. I look forward to continued collaboration with ABBF so that we can form strong networks and relationships to drive a strong local economy in south-west Sydney.

#### **GERRINGONG BOWLING CLUB MIXED TEAM**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Gerringong Bowling Club's mixed gender team which has taken second place in the NSW State Finals, beating out more established and successful clubs around the State. The State finals were played over three days until 2 July, with the first two days held at Dundas Sports Club, and the finals played at Northmead Bowlo. The Gerringong Team dominated their section with a 10-0 win over South Cronulla, 8-2 win over Old Bar, and 10-0 over Mudgee. Earning their spot as the top ranked team in their section, Gerringong beat Singleton RSL in the quarter finals, followed by another win over Old Bar in the semis to make it into the Grand Final. Unfortunately, Gerringong just lost in the Grand Final falling short to Ballina in a close game with a score of 72-64. The local team took out the inaugural open gender bowls competition for Illawarra's division No. 7 in May, admitting the Club into the State Finals event. A huge congratulations and well done to everybody at the Gerringong Bowling Club's mixed team on their outstanding recent achievement.

#### **KIAMA HIGH SCHOOL UNDER 14S**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales congratulates the Under 14s boys Kiama High School team who have progressed to the next round in the Buckley Shield! The team travelled to Wagga Wagga last week defeating Koorringal High School 42-0. Zac D scored 5 tries! All students were exceptional bonding together as a strong team. Next game is against Kincumber High School in Term 3. Best of luck to Year 12 student Hayden Buchanan as he represents Kiama High School and NSWCHS at the Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League in Redcliffe these July school holidays. On Friday 16th June, Year 12 Aboriginal Studies students put a 'Thank-You' afternoon tea on for family, friends and community members who helped support their journey with their Major Projects. Thank you to all who attended. I also acknowledge the Kiama High School volunteers. These students help out at Gerringong Public School. Students from Kiama High School also volunteer at our local libraries, preschools and primary schools in the Kiama community. Well done and thank you very much to all Kiama High School volunteers for giving back to our local communities. We are extremely grateful for your efforts.

#### **VIETNAM VETERAN REMEMBRANCE VIGIL**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales acknowledges that a Vietnam Veteran Remembrance Vigil will be held at Wollongong Memorial Garden to mark 60 years since the arrival of the Australian Army Training team in South Vietnam. The event will complement the Commemorative Service which will be held two weeks later on 18 August at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in Canberra to mark 50 years since the complete withdrawal of combat troops in 1972. The Remembrance Vigils are providing surviving Vietnam Veterans, next of kin and the Australian people the opportunity to participate. I acknowledge Rick Bensley, a Vietnam Veteran who lives in Kiama. Rick was called up for National Service in the first intake on 30 June, 1965. He joined C Company of the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment and rose to Corporal, Section Commander, in charge of nine front-line soldiers. The Illawarra Vigil, organised by the Illawarra Vietnam Veterans Association and Dapto/Port Kembla RSL Sub-Branch, will commence at two locations within the Wollongong Memorial Garden where the four Australian soldier's remains and their plaques are located. The event will also be broadcast on the ABC.

#### **SHELLHARBOUR STINGRAYS SELECTED FOR THE AUSTRALIAN U18 SCHOOLGIRLS TEAM**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate the Shellharbour Stingrays for having four of their talented players selected in the Australian Under 18's Schoolgirl Rugby League team. Indie Bostock, Caley Tallon-Henniker, Kasey Reh and Evie McGrath were all selected for the Australian side following the inaugural Secondary Schools National Championships recently played at Kayo Stadium in Queensland. Tackle rugby league has only been available to them for the past two to three years, so to be selected to play for Australia is a remarkable achievement. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to the Shellharbour Stingrays for developing local young talent and congratulations to the four young talented women on being selected to represent Australia.

### ZAC DE JESUS

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Zac De Jesus, from Dapto, for signing a three-year-deal with Sydney FC after one season with the Sky Blues academy program. 17-year-old Zac arrived at the opportunity quicker than anyone could have anticipated. He played just one game for Sydney FC's under-18s before getting called up to their senior men's team in the NPL NSW competition. Zac's football journey began when he was four years old, playing the majority of his junior career with the Lakeside and Dapto clubs. The huge turning point came last August when he was called up to the Joeys squad to compete at the AFC Under 17s Asian Cup. It was a great opportunity for Zac to represent his country, but also saw him enjoy a positional switch, moving from the wing to right back. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Zac for signing on with Sydney FC and we wish him well in all his future sporting endeavours.

### LUKE FIERRO AND ROBERT ARCHER - ACTUALLY CHICKEN SALT

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Shellharbour duo Luke Fierro and Robert Archer who have discovered their own set of secret herbs and spices to create their own brand of chicken salt simply labelled "Actually Chicken Salt" which residents of Shellharbour are flocking to buy. The pair undertook an extensive research process to come up with the right ingredient combination, before launching earlier in June. Whilst the majority of initial sales have come from Shellharbour, demand has grown, and they are now posting the product around Australia. Luke and Robert are aiming to take the business from Facebook orders and kerbside pickup to an online store and into local grocers. Their long-term goal is taking it internationally and selling it to the American market. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Luke and Robert and wish them well in their business venture.

### EVOLUTION ADVISORS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The Lake Mac Business Excellence Awards are a showcase for the outstanding businesses in the Lake Macquarie Local Government Area, and at the 2023 Awards the Charlestown Electorate put in a strong showing! Evolution Advisers, a Warners Bay-based business and personal advisors firm, was recognised as the Employer of Choice in the 21 or More Employees category at the gala ceremony held at Belmont 16s. This is a fitting salute to a business which has continued to grow since its establishment in 2004, and it is not their first time being recognised by the Lake Mac Business Excellence Awards—they were recognised for their workplace training and development in both 2013 and 2014! Evolution's commitment to helping their staff thrive and grow is one of the business' great strengths. Though their business extends well beyond Lake Macquarie, they're vocal about how fortunate they feel to belong to a dynamic region like Hunter—even highlighting our local recreational pursuits and lifestyle opportunities. Evolution says that natural advantages of the area help provide a better work and life balance—and I couldn't agree more! My congratulations to managing director Jane Beverley and her team on this well-deserved recognition.

### A GROWING UNDERSTANDING

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The Lake Mac Business Excellence Awards are a showcase for the outstanding businesses in the Lake Macquarie Local Government Area, and at the 2023 Awards the Charlestown Electorate put in a strong showing! A big congratulations to A Growing Understanding Speech Pathology, which was named 2023's Business of the Year! The speech pathology service, which operates from locations in Warners Bay, Adamstown and East Maitland, was praised for its innovative approach to assisting children with communication and feeding difficulties. The judges commended A Growing Understanding's innovation, contribution to the city, community support and work culture. It was an absolutely fabulous night for A Growing Understanding, which not only also took home the Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award, but saw founder Lauren Haskins receive the Outstanding Business Leader Award. Lauren said that her business' success is built around a strong team who share values and have a clear vision of providing industry-leading speech pathology services. I'm so glad the dedication of Lauren and her team has been recognised. I want to once again congratulate them on their success, and I can't wait to see what's next for this fantastic business.

### BUSINESS GROWTH CENTRE

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The Lake Mac Business Excellence Awards are a showcase for the outstanding businesses in the Lake Macquarie Local Government Area, and at the 2023 Awards the Charlestown Electorate put in a strong showing! The Business Growth Centre, a non-profit at Gateshead, was named Outstanding Community Organisation at the gala ceremony held at Belmont 16s. Founded in 1998 as the

not-for-profit Business Enterprise Centre, Business Incubator and Registered Training Organisation, the BGC was taken over on 1 July 2021 by Central Coast Community College to become the College's third location. It now operates as a business park providing tenants with light industrial and office space options, and delivers a range of nationally recognised business courses and training options. Equipped with a vision of creating a community where people are empowered to achieve their potential and have a positive impact, the Business Growth Centre is a fantastic service for the local area. It's great to see this service be recognised at the Business Excellence Awards, and I am glad to see the Business Enterprise Centre is in such good hands.

#### **BOB ONOFRI**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces)**—Bob Onofri was Wollongong's friendliest real estate agent who, at 90, recently retired after 56 years in business. Bob is a boiler maker who emigrated from Italy in 1952. After working on the Snowy Hydro-Electric scheme and at EPT, Bob entered the real estate industry in 1961, opening his own business in 1967. In the years since this Bob, has become a local fixture along Crown Street, always sharply dressed and often sweeping the footpath in front of his shop. Bob has always treated his clients with respect, dealing with them honestly and often going above and beyond to help those who needed assistance. He preferred a landline and personal conversations to mobile phones and computers noting, "I'm old fashioned, I believe talking to people". Bob also resisted rent rises in recent years when many other tenants across NSW and Australia were feeling the sting of the cost of living. Bob's tenants were often long term with some staying with him for over 20 years and many of them were migrants themselves. I wish Bob good health and happiness in his retirement. His presence will be missed by me and others who occupy properties on lower Crown Street.

#### **RENATA AND PETER LOVISON**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the work of Kogarah residents, Mr Peter and Ms Renata Lovison for their commitment and dedication to helping students at St Raphael's Catholic Primary School. Peter and Renata have been volunteering at St Raphael's Catholic Primary School South Hurstville since early last year. The two of them have assisted with the Schools Gardening Club which aims to enhance student wellbeing and educate students about sustainable food practices. Peter and Renata assist in growing the school's tomatoes, rockmelon, mint, rosemary and many other fruits and vegetables. The students absolutely love being involved in the Gardening Club which is a testament to the caring and nurturing environment that Renata and Peter have fostered. Initiatives such as the Gardening Club cannot exist without people like Peter and Renata who continuously give up their time and energy to make a positive impact in our community. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Peter and Renata Lovison for fostering a positive and enjoyable environment both for students and parents at the school.

#### **PATRICIA WILL**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate, Ms Patricia Will, for her commitment and dedication to Gabbies Sewing Angels and more importantly to her local community. Gabbies Sewing Angels is a community organisation which gathers at St Gabriel's Church Bexley every Thursday. The community group makes all types of children and adult clothes to be distributed to charities across Australia. Patricia founded Gabbies just over 20 years ago. Now the group has more than 40 members, both men and women, aged from 42 to 90. Without fuss or grandiosity, Patricia and her team of volunteers produce over 8,000 clothing items each year. Just, this week Ms Will and her team of volunteers knitted and sent over 10 batches of clothing, tops, blankets and bed linen to flood affected families in Lismore. Whenever she can, Ms Will looks to her local community and other places to grow the organisation and let people know there is a welcome place for them should they like to share or learn sewing skills. I would like to thank Ms Will and express my deepest appreciation for the wonderful work that Gabbies does for our local community.

#### **VOLUNTEER BIOGRAPHY TEAM**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to recognise and acknowledge the work of the Volunteer Biography Team at Calvary Health Care Kogarah. This team of volunteers help palliative care patients write their biography and recall their life stories. A patient is teamed up with a trained volunteer for approximately six sessions. Using a voice recording device, the volunteer prompts the patient to recall significant experiences and memories from their life. After each session, the volunteer types up the recording and finalises an electronic manuscript. A bound printed copy and an electronic copy is then provided to the patient. This wonderful program gives patients the opportunity to celebrate their achievements and reminisce over their accomplished life. These biographies later become treasured legacies for the patient's family. A patient who recently went through this initiative acknowledged its helpfulness saying, "I am extremely grateful for this biography service. After receiving a diagnosis of a terminal disease, I was left feeling very empty, deflated and hopeless. Having the opportunity to

review my life has been a blessing. I want to thank the team of dedicated volunteers at Calvary Health Care for the wonderful work they do looking after our local community.

#### **MARIE VAN GEND**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise today to recognise Dr Marie Van Gend for her continued commitment to local choirs and spreading the appreciation of beautiful music. Marie has been inspirational in bringing people together across all ages to create choirs, leading them with passion and boundless enthusiasm with astounding results. As a teacher, Marie taught Science at St Columba Anglican School (SCAS) and became deeply involved in coordinating multiple choirs, including a Chamber Choir and one that consisted only of boys. In 2018, Marie mentored and accompanied a choir of students from SCAS to New York, where they were invited to perform at Carnegie Hall - a lifechanging experience for all. During Covid-19, Marie miraculously brought the individual voices of Kala Rava together, to create one voice online. In amongst this incredible busy program focussed on music, Marie completed a PhD in Music from University of Newcastle with a focus on adolescent choirs in high schools. She was instrumental in launching the Mid North Coast Choir of Hard Knocks and to top it all off, produced and hosted her multi-episode podcast 'Lulluby: The First Steps.' Marie believes that life is a song, sing it!

#### **PORT MACQUARIE OZTAG PLAYERS - 2023 WORLD CUP**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I'm excited to report to the House the exciting news that a team of Port Macquarie Oztag players will attend the 2023 Tag World Cup to be held in Ireland this week. A cohort of 10 local players will fly to Limerick, Ireland to compete in the 2023 Tag World Cup amongst a league of proven champions, all competing for the prestigious title and illustrious championship status. It clearly demonstrates the vast talents and skills being produced right here in regional NSW. The local players selected to compete for Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain and our Indigenous Australian side include; Mandy McKinnon, Alan Darling and Shaun Magnus (Australia). Greg Gleeson and Darren Northey (Great Britain). Tana Marino, Maia Marino, Georgia Marino and Tyrone Flanagan (New Zealand) and Cian Cowdrey (Indigenous Australian team). Senior Oztag Convenor Claire Thurlow proudly commended the local players for representing Port Macquarie on the world stage against the best out there in Oztag football. I thank Oztag Port Macquarie for cultivating the next generation of professional football players to represent Australia and beyond. On behalf of the community we wish you every success at the Tag World Cup. Congratulations.

#### **DON WILLIAMS JUNIOR GOLF MEMORIAL SHIELD**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I am extremely honoured to share with the House the winner of the inaugural Don Williams Junior Golf Memorial Shield is Eddie Coombes. In loving memory of my late husband Don, our family with the support of the Port Macquarie Golf Club and his playing partners the 'Motley Crew', officially launched the Don Williams Junior Golf Memorial Fund, aimed at encouraging participation and recruitment of our local junior golfers. Congratulations to Eddie who was announced the winner of Don's Memorial Shield recognising him as the best performing Port Macquarie player at the Junior Seaside Tournament on 9th July 2023. Congratulations to the Overall Champion, Milla Adamson from Coffs Harbour: Girls Champion Candice Cook from Wauchope: Boys Champion Harrison Golledge from Kew and Runners Up Riley Webber and Bryella Golledge. While the day evoked much emotion for many of us, I again extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every one who generously donated to Don's Memorial Fund. Thank you also to PGA Club Professional James Single as well as the Junior Committee for hosting another successful Junior tournament for our rising junior golfers whom I know Don would have been proud to have supported.

#### **RECOGNITION OF MOREE BAND - KICKED IN THE BICKIE TIN**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise Moree local band 'Kicked in Bickie Tin' on the recent announcement they will be going on tour, along with the positive message conveyed through the music they create and perform. The band is made up of Moree locals Shaun Mills on lead vocals and guitar; Zach Hauser on drums and backing vocals; John Fing on bass and are supported by their Manager James Deakin. I congratulate the band on their recent accolades, especially for being chosen as Unearthed Artist Pick of the Week on Triple J and I thank the band for promoting mental health, shining a light on drug addiction and depression, which affects many in rural areas, and improving lives through music. I commend the group for their hard work and for bringing their brand of music and entertainment to audiences from the bush to beyond. The band successfully debuted in Brisbane recently and will followed up with a tour of New South Wales and Queensland and we wish them every success!

#### **GUYRA STUDENTS REPRESENT ARMIDALE DIOCESE AT NSWCPs CROSS COUNTRY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I would like to recognise the achievements of five St Marys Guyra Primary School students for being selected into the squad to compete at the NSWCPs Cross

Country, in Sydney on recently. This selection followed their outstanding performances at Barraba in May, qualifying them for this event. I congratulate Ellie Bavea, Hugo Sisson, Scarlett Newberry, Bella Hayes and Flynn McFarlane for your individual performances. Flynn will go on to the NSWPSA Cross Country to compete later in the year. I commend each of the players on their hard work in preparation for this event and commitment to Cross Country Running. Each of you are great representatives for your sport, school and community.

#### RECOGNITION OF DONNA TAYLOR

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I would like to recognise the achievements of Pius-X Aboriginal Corporation CEO Donna Taylor, for being presented the Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network, Primary Care Leader of the year award, at the 2023 Primary Care Quality and Innovation Awards. The awards celebrates the outstanding contributions providers and individuals make to the Primary Care sector. I congratulate Donna on this award and for overseeing the delivery of culturally appropriate services and programs to improve the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal Community of Moree and district. We thank Donna for her 23 years of service to health, bringing Specialists and health care professionals to Moree and for her enormous contribution to health promotion. I commend Donna, Pius-X Board members, along with facility health professionals and supporting staff, for your hard work and team work. We thank Donna for her ongoing commitment to the community, leadership and longstanding years spent in the health industry to improve the health of Aboriginal people.

#### JUSTINE'S COFFEE BAR

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Owner Justine Fernance from Justine's Coffee Bar in the Chapman Building at Wyong is dominated by Brazilian beans grown along the slopes of one of the most geologically rich volcanic regions in the world. The supporting coffee bean origins of Columbia, Uganda and Guatemala are blended to create an easy-drinking coffee with hints of nuts, honey and citrus. Justine not only makes a great coffee but recently raised her hand to be a drop off point in Wyong to donate packets of pasta and rice for the organisation Coast Hands from Central Coast. The café received kilos and kilos of rice and pasta which assists the Coast Hands with their frozen meal initiative. Dozens of local restaurants, cafes, clubs, Tafe's, and even schools cook the ingredients for free and local businesses and charities provide the free cooked meals for struggling families and individuals across the Central Coast. It is great to see the community come together from all over the Central Coast and see local business owners be a part of this great initiative.

#### ABBIE MCTEARE

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—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 year 11 student Abbie McTeare from Gorokan who took out gold in the Boxing Australian National Championships in Adelaide in July. Abbie is the Under 19's Women's 60kg Champion of Australia with more than 8 years of experience in boxing and apart from training she coaches children and adults at Boxing and Body Mechanix located in Gorokan. Last year Abbie was announced Australian Champion 2022 under 16's & 18's women's 57kg. Abbie takes pride in creating a balance of training & encouragement with focus on respect and kindness while empowering individuals to be the best they can possibly be in all aspects of life. I wish Abbie all the best in the upcoming competition in August.

#### IRIS LODGE ALPACA'S BUSINESS AWARD 2023

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—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 local business Iris Lodge Alpaca's from Yarramalong for being recognised as a finalist in the Business Awards 2023. Owner Sean and Sharon Hooper shared their passion for alpacas to the community in January 2020 with only two alpacas and now has developed into a tourist attraction with 80+ alpacas, 9 llamas, plus sheep, cows, and horses. The lodge developed a unique alpaca experience such as Breakfast with Alpacas that attract thousands of visitors from around the world. Recently the lodge received the 2023 Global Recognition Award winner and over the last couple of years they were acknowledged from Top 25 Most Popular Active Activities, Central Coast Local Business Awards, Australian Small Business Champion Awards, Resort and Retreat Awards, Business Awards, Best Accessible Agritourism Attraction in NSW, and Best Agritourism Attraction in NSW 2023. Congratulations to all the finalists announced. I wish you all the best in the upcoming 2023 Business Awards Celebration Event.

### RETIREMENT OF ROD MULLAVEY

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I extend my appreciation and congratulations to Rod Mullavey, a partner with Johnsons MME-Albury, who has decided to step into the next chapter of his life with a well-deserved retirement. Over the years Rod has played a pivotal role guiding the chartered accountancy and advisory firm through important milestones. These include the de-merger from PWC in 2000, development of tailored solutions for clients and assisting professionals to reach their potential. The initials 'MME' represent the founding partners who, in 2000, established this leading local advisory service. In so doing, the name continues to acknowledge Rod and another founder, Fred Johnson. Rod, thank you for being a great role model and exceptional mentor to young Albury accountants. I wish you all the best as you embrace the exciting opportunities that retirement will bring.

### HAMISH SIDGWICK YEAR 11 - TRINITY ANGLICAN COLLEGE

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Hamish Sidgwick, a year 11 student at Trinity Anglican College Thurgoona, who has been awarded the Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship. This unique opportunity will provide Hamish with a study tour accompanied by a military historian, providing a deeper knowledge of the history of Australian men and women in the World Wars and conflicts. The tour provides visits to historical sites in Singapore and Darwin. Hamish has been described by his peers as a mature individual who demonstrates leadership skills. He has achieved academic excellence in Information Software Technology and is an active participant in school activities such as camps and other events. Fundraising has also been part of Hamish's endeavours within his community. He holds the rank Flight Sergeant in the Australian Force Cadets and has proven instrumental in organising the cadet ceremony for the school's ANZAC service. Congratulations Hamish. I trust you will learn much from your study tour and share new insights with your classmates.

### WASSIM SALIBA AND GABOR HOLMIK 4,000 KILOMETRE BIKE RIDE

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I extend my appreciation and support for Wassim Saliba – owner of La Maison restaurant -- who organised a fundraiser for the Carevan Foundation, with colleague Gabor Holmik. Both embarked on a great adventure to raise funds by riding their bicycles almost 4000 kilometres from Perth to their hometown of Albury-Wodonga, to support local charity Carevan, which feeds the homeless and disadvantaged people in our community. Their strong community connections enabled the riders to raise over \$60,000. The money raised from this fundraiser will not only go towards Carevan but will also support programs like Sun Smiles – a Children's Dental Health, and Kids Cooking and Caring Program. The commitment displayed by Wassim and Gabor serves as a beacon of inspiration to our community. You are champions!

### DR KARL KRUSZELNICKI'S VISIT TO BANKSTOWN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, a scientist, doctor, engineer, and author was recently welcomed by Bankstown Girls High School as he further advocated and promoted the importance of science to year 10 students. He is also the recipient of several prestigious awards including a Nobel prize for research. The year 10 schoolgirls had the opportunity to explore possible future careers in science, genetics, engineering, basic physics, computer sciences, and most importantly, the worldly environment. Dr Karl discussed the impact of human-driven climate change, which prompted larger group discussions about potential solutions moving forward to reduce this harm. As a Julius Summer Miller Fellow at the University of Sydney, Dr Karl captivated the students by sharing his career experiences, skills, knowledge, and advice. In particular, the students were keen to hear more about Dr Karl's recent trip to Antarctica. The 'Australia's National Living Treasure' generously provided ample time to the students who were extremely excited to ask questions and to share their concerns on science-related topics. The students thoroughly enjoyed talking to Dr Karl and loved taking a few selfies or two to document his momentous visit to their high school.

### MUSLIM WOMEN AUSTRALIA - REFLECT AND CONNECT YOUTH IFTAR

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I am pleased to recognise and thank Muslim Women Australia (MWA) for the hard work and dictation that they have put into creating the Reflect and Connect Youth Iftar for the holy month of Ramadan. MWA has inspired young Muslim females for over 35 years to commit to fairness, equality, and justice. The Iftar was held on 12 April 2023 with the aim to create purposeful connections during Ramadan. This gathering was attended by 40 young females, as well as MWA staff and volunteers. This was an opportunity to encourage everyone to connect and strengthen their faith, and to assist them during the last 10 days of Ramadan. During the Holy Month of Ramadan Muslims fast from dusk till dawn. Through this beautiful form of connection, the community had the opportunity to join and celebrate this wonderful event. All remaining food was neatly packaged in containers and distributed to Linking Hearts across their refuges. This

ensured the continued work of the MWA's policy to minimise food wastage and be more sustainable. I am delighted to have such a great organisation continue to be of service to our communities.

#### **RIVERWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE'S FAMILY FESTIVAL**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On 17th June 2023, over 2000 people from approximately 30 diverse cultures participated in the popular, annual Riverwood Community Centre's Family Festival. Local respected Indigenous elder, Uncle John Dickson, opened the festival with a traditional Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony, expressing respect for the traditional custodians of the land. The harmonious festival encapsulated fun and engaging activities, multicultural performances for families to enjoy, handcrafting ornaments and delicious multi-ethnic street food allowing everyone to taste the diversity of our multicultural community. The event also featured African musicians who invited young children to try the art of drumming! Riverwood Community spokesperson and Councillor, Karl Saleh OAM, said: "The main aim of this event is to bring our local community and families together to get to know each other and to celebrate our diversity." Organising events like this takes a lot of hard work. I want to extend my gratitude to all those involved; The Riverwood Community Centre, Humanity Matters, The Department of Communities and Justice, St George Community Housing, Club Rivers, Canterbury Bankstown Council and Multicultural NSW for their ongoing involvement and efforts in making this brilliant event such a big success.

#### **NGARALA PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping)**—One of my proudest accomplishments as the Member for Epping, Treasurer and Premier has been the Liberal Government's track record on school infrastructure. During the past decade we built and improved hundreds of schools throughout NSW. One such school is Ngarala Public School, recently opened and built on the old TAFE site on Chelmsford Avenue, Epping. This school now adds to the first-class standard of public education on offer in the Epping District as well as easing pressures on the local school system. The word 'Ngarala' comes from the Dharug language, and means 'learning together'. A more in-depth understanding of the phrase could be read as learning together by way of listening, hearing and thinking. I hope that this philosophy permeates through the school and continues through its future. Not too long ago, I had the opportunity to receive a guided tour of the new school and its facilities by the school's first principal Bek Zadow. I was impressed with the high standard of learning environments situated in a tranquil setting. Bec, I wish you and your team all the best and I look forward to visiting again soon.

#### **WARREN GLENNY AM**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping)**—Last month, the Hills District lost a local hero. Warren Glenny AM, the former President of the Castle Hill RSL Group was an inspiration to his community. Warren was the longest serving President of the CHRSL Group and oversaw and led the organization through its highest growth period in decades. Warren lived in Castle Hill for nearly 50 years and was a passionate advocate for those less fortunate than himself. He was patron to a great many charities and was president of community groups. He was the Commissioner for the St John Ambulance and the CEO of AustCare. As a former Major General and a veteran of the Vietnam War, the veteran communities in the Hills and Parramatta Districts were forever close to him. He gave a voice to the voiceless when few others would. I remember meeting with Warren on many occasions, and would look to him for counsel and guidance as one who knew the community better than most. He was a gentleman to the end and will be sorely missed. I express my sincere condolences to his family and former colleagues. May he rest in peace.

#### **DENIS DOYLE**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—The spirit of Ireland is coming to Kandos and the man driving a new Irish café, bar and store in the town is realising his dream. Congratulations to Denis Doyle who is behind the venture which aims to bring to life the newly renovated site in the historic 20 Angus Street building. Denis is the son of Irish immigrants who spent time in the region in his 20s on air at the local radio station before moving to Lithgow and working on 2LT and then making the move into the business world. He owns an Irish Shop location at Stanmore in Sydney which has been operating for more than three decades, but his foray into Kandos is the first time he will venture into dining. Denis is to be applauded for his confidence in the local economy. He is already getting enquiries from across the Central West and I am sure that once the business is established, it will become a classic model for others to follow due to sales also being available online on the website. Good luck Denis, I am sure your venture in Kandos is going to be a huge success.

#### **GRANT AND CHEZZI DENYER**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—High profile local couple Grant and Chezzi Denyer will be taking on the world when they take part in this year's series of "The Amazing Race Australia". They will be flying the flag for

Bathurst when the television series goes to air later this year and what great advertising it is for our region. Better still, if they do happen to take out the \$100,000 prize, they intend donating the funds to Lifeline Central West in what would be a simply wonderful gesture on their part. The Denyers have three young children and admit that while they will be stepping out of their comfort zone by taking part in the series, they will also be using the experience as an opportunity to show the kids that while it can be daunting taking on a challenge, being brave is an important part of life. So it's exciting times ahead for the Denyers as they on 10 other Australian celebrities when the show premieres later this year. I wish them the very best of luck and know that all of Bathurst will be behind them and keeping their fingers crossed for that \$100k pay day.

#### **GREG BOURNE**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Volunteers are the lifeblood of communities and Greg Bourne is no exception. Greg is the president of the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway (OTHR) and has been involved with the organisation since 2017. He was voted the Oberon "Volunteer of the Year" in the town's 2023 Australia Day Honours list and also nominated for the town's "Citizen of the Year". Over the past few years, the OTHR has received major funding from government which allowed Greg and his team to achieve some real results in getting back on track. The good news is the railway line all the way from Oberon to Hazelgrove is completed and they are just about finished the work for accessible access to the platform at Oberon Station. Greg has been a driving force in obtaining government grants and really has been flat out applying for and managing this vital funding as well as working on job restoring the station and carriages with his team of about 15 volunteers. The Oberon Tarana branch line, which is some 24.3km long, was originally built between 1921-23. Thanks to volunteers like Greg, the future for the OTHR is bright and that's great for the region.

#### **GERALD "GERRY" ROSS HUGH**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I would like to note the passing of well-known Adelong identity, businessman, husband and family man Gerald Ross Hughes. He was 88 years old and survived by his wife Betty, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Gerry and his wife Betty ran the May Williams Grocery Store from 1958 for a total of 25 years which later became the home of Bendigo Bank Adelong Branch. Later Gerry and Betty operated a number of other local businesses and the Yaven Creek mail run for 12 months and the Tumblong mail run for 22 years before retirement. In retirement Gerry discovered a love of bowling and gardening. Gerry was farewelled by his friends, his family and his community at St Paul's Anglican Church on Neill Street in Adelong and was buried in the Adelong Cemetery. Community member Penny Mitchell said on the notice of passing from Beavan's Funeral Home. "I can still remember coming through Adelong on family trips when we were kids and stopping at Gerry and Betty's shop and being given a Cherry Ripe every time. Such great lifelong family friends". Vale Gerald Ross Hughes.

#### **TOM LEMERLE - BIKE CANTEEN**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I would like to recognise and congratulate the Wagga Wagga Bike Canteen project. Started by Tom Lemerle in 2021, the project began out the back of his Koorungal garage and has the stated mission of giving everyone access to the power of the bicycle. The Bike Canteen is run by Tom and his partner Olivia Jones and volunteers. They repair unwanted bicycles and donate them along with Bike Canteen branded helmets to those who need them. In 2022 the Bike Canteen was the recipient of Riverina Water's 2021-22 Community Grants Program and received \$6705 to aid community members improve their social connection. Over 120 community members have used the Bike Canteen since 2021. Now the Bike Canteen will be moving out of Tom's garage to a space donated by the Wagga Masonic lodge. Wagga Wagga will soon be host to 56 kilometres of bike paths under the Active Travel Plan. The power of the bicycle will improve social connections and health in our community and to this end Tom has reached out to the multicultural council. I thank Tom Lemerle for his initiative and perseverance.

#### **ROUSE HILL HIGH SCHOOL - SLAM**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville)**—Congratulations to Rouse Hill High School, who introduced an incredible program to lift its attendance rate to over 95%. The program called Student Led Attendance Monitoring (or "SLAM") is targeted to students in years 7 & 8, empowering them to make changes in attendance for themselves. Students set their own attendance goals, identified barriers to their attendance and discussed strategies to overcome the barriers. Their attendance has then been monitored, and check-ins and mentoring helped support students to meet their goals. The result so far has been rates of over 90% of Year 7 students increased from 72% to 80%; and in Year 8, over 90% of students have had an increase from 57% to 73%! This is an incredibly successful program created by the school. The faculty should be commended for their initiative, and the students congratulated for their increased efforts in making it to school each day. Well done.

### OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY PRIMARY SCHOOL, ST MARYS

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—I would like to recognise the Year 6 students and teachers from Our Lady of the Rosary St Marys, for their outstanding efforts in donating much needed items to refugees in Australia. These students and teachers donated basic living necessities to the Jesuit Refugee Service who support over 120 families seeking asylum in Australia. These students have demonstrated kindness and generosity to support individuals in need, while learning about the struggles that refugees endure. I commend these students and teachers from Our Lady of the Rosary on their great work and selfless actions.

### ROBOTHINK STEM SCHOOL HOLIDAY WORKSHOPS

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—RoboThink, a global organisation that teaches students the basics of robotic construction held school holiday workshops within Jordan Springs and Claremont Meadows. These workshops became a massive success with classes fully booked across the two-week holiday, with new classes being added after school hours and on weekends. As digital technology has become a part of our everyday lives, STEM education provides students with the necessary skills needed to succeed at school and beyond. These workshops enable children to gain important skills, socialise and spark interest in science, engineering, and technology. I commend RoboThink on providing their services to Jordan Springs and Claremont Meadows and look forward to witnessing the expansion of their initiatives in Western Sydney.

### JOEYS ASIAN CUP

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—I rise to acknowledge and congratulate an up and coming local footballer, Mitchell Glasson. Mitchell was recently selected to represent the Subway Joeys in the upcoming AFC Asian Cup in Thailand in what he calls a dream come true. Mitchell, who is 17 years old and currently a year 12 student at Clancy Catholic College in my electorate, has been a regular in the under 17s Australia Squad in the lead up to the Tournament. Currently playing for the Sydney FC youth side, Mitchell was a former player for local grassroots club Liverpool Rangers before moving into the New South Wales National Premier League with the Southern Districts Raiders. During qualifiers for the upcoming Cup, Mitchell scored five goals across three matches to help lead his team to the top of their group. Congratulations Mitchell, all the hard work and persistence has paid off with a fantastic performance. Good Luck to Mitchell and all the Joeys in Thailand!

### WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - DANIYA SYED

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—The 2023 NSW/ACT Young Achiever Awards were held in early June. Among the awards was the Western Sydney University Academic Achievement Award. This years winner was Daniya Syed, a former student of Unity Grammar College at Austral in my electorate. I've had the pleasure to follow Daniya's academic and community work for a number of years. She is currently a first year Mechatronics Engineering student who has participated in regional, national and international robotics championships for the past six years as a member of STEMCells. Daniya was also captain of the silver medal winning Team Australia at the 2022 FIRST Global, an annual robotics challenge with over 180 nations participating. Along with Daniya's academic overachievement, she also serves as Youth Ambassador for the Shahid Afridi Foundation which helps raise funds for underprivileged girls in Pakistan. I commend Daniya on her achievements and the example she sets for all students in Leppington. I wish her the very best for the bright future that lies ahead.

### MIRACLE BABIES

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On 7 June I visited the Miracle Babies Foundation to discuss the vital work they do supporting the 48,000 newborn babies requiring specialist care every year in Australia. Miracle Babies are Australia's leading not-for-profit supporting premature and sick newborns, founded in my backyard of South-West Sydney. Miracle Babies was formed in 2005 and have provided advocacy, awareness, resources and services Australia wide since. Their vision is "better, healthier outcomes for newborns and their families challenged by prematurity or sickness". It was great to hear their commitment to delivering better outcomes for families of children affected by prematurity or sickness. Like many front line health services, they were heavily impacted by COVID. Thankfully they are back running their programs locally but are keen to grow the service. Thank you to Kylie Pussell and the team at Miracle Babies for the important they have done for close to two decades.

### ST IVES ROTARY CHANGEOVER 2023

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I rise to pay tribute to the Rotary Club of St Ives who held their annual changeover on Wednesday 28 June 2023. As a member of the St Ives Rotary Club, I know firsthand they empower

individuals to make a meaningful difference in their local communities, promoting the benefits of volunteerism and inspiring others to get involved in creating positive change at a grassroots level. Established in March 1965, St Ives Rotary has long overseen projects both in the local community and abroad. Whether it be Bunnings BBQs, the Bobbin Head Cycle Classic, the St Ives Food and Wine Festival, and the Tree of Joy, St Ives Rotary helps and raises funds for worthwhile causes such as Lifeline Harbour to Hawkesbury, Ku-ring-gai Youth Development Service (KYDS), the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter, the Northern Beaches Cancer Care Charity, and Diabetes Alive. I congratulate President Bruce Farnsworth, Vice President Harold Morgan, Treasurer John Steel, Secretary Rosemary Woods, and the rest of the St Ives Rotary executive team who will continue in their leadership roles into 2024.

### **TURRAMURRA ROTARY CHANGEOVER 2023**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—Turramurra Rotary recently held their annual changeover for 2023. Founded in 1968, Turramurra Rotary Club has initiated many projects across the local community. Of particular significance is the Club's ongoing Graffiti Removal Project, led by Roger Norman, which brings young people and other members of the community together to remove graffiti from the local area. Turramurra Rotary also oversees the Joey Joy flight, which involves children with disabilities and their carers being taken on a ninety-minute flight over Greater Sydney. Rotary Markets in Gordon is another fantastic initiative. Every second Sunday of every month, members of our community converge on the council carpark at Gordon to purchase a diverse range of goods. Of course, a community favourite organised by Turramurra Rotary is the Bobbin Head Cycle Classic – also known as 'the Bobbo' – which sees cycling enthusiasts compete in race through the North Shore and Northern Beaches. The event usually raises over \$130,000 for numerous charitable causes. I pay tribute to outgoing President Ian Spencer, who has done a tremendous job in the role, and incoming President Dallas Booth. I am eager to continue my positive engagement with Turramurra Rotary well into the future.

### **ROTARY CLUB OF BELROSE CHANGEOVER 2023**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—The Rotary Club of Belrose recently held their annual Changeover for 2023. Since the Belrose Rotary was chartered in 1986, they have stood as a shining example of community spirit by actively engaging in local initiatives that make a lasting impact. Through their numerous projects, Belrose Rotary performs vital services for our community. They support young kids by providing a Community Street Library for parents to borrow kids books. They support students through initiatives such as the Year 6 Public Speaking contest. They support small businesses through the Club's annual vocational awards. They help those less fortunate by setting up a Tree of Joy every Christmas.

They enable members of the community to donate second-hand mobile phones as a means of safe and private communications for victims of domestic violence. I pay tribute to outgoing President David Barnes for his public service. I congratulate new President Brian Fairweather and the continuing members of the Belrose Rotary executive who I'm sure will continue to keep the flame of community spirit alive. I look forward to engaging with Belrose Rotary Club well into the future. Well done to all involved.

### **THE MIND CAFE**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I congratulate the Mind Café in Narrabeen on winning the Northern Beaches Inclusion Award at the 2023 Northern Beaches Local Business Awards. The Mind Café is more than just a place you can go for a coffee and a bite to eat, it's a safe environment, where all are welcome. I recently visited the Mind Café and enjoyed a phenomenal sandwich and the welcoming ambience. The staff at the Mind Café were attentive and friendly, it is clear why the café is so successful. The Mind Café also hosts several community initiatives including Coffees with Kindness on Wednesday morning and the MoWaNa Safe Space on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. Thank you to the owners of The Mind Café, Guy and Anne, for all you do to create an inclusive space. The people of Narrabeen and Pittwater are fortunate to have such a wonderful hub within our community. I am pleased that these words of recognition will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country.

### **HB AESTHETICS**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I congratulate HB Aesthetics on winning the Outstanding Beauty Services Award and the 2023 Northern Beaches Local Business Awards. HB Aesthetics is a world class clinic based in Newport, offering a range of specialist services from cosmetic injections, non-surgical medical treatments, and skin-enhancing procedures. Heidi Bryant, the owner of HB Aesthetics, and her wonderful team are highly trained medical professionals, who utilise the best technology to deliver outstanding results for clients. A full-service skin health specialist clinic, HB aesthetics have treatments to suit all clients and skin conditions. Thank you, HB Aesthetics, for providing quality services to our community. I am pleased that these words of recognition will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament of our country.

### NORTHERN BEACHES WOMEN'S SHELTER

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I pay tribute to the wonderful team who support the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter (NBWS). Domestic and family violence has devastating impacts and the team at NBWS do exceptionally important work supporting survivors transition back into the community. Rosy Sullivan, Chair of NBWS, has substantial experience in the business, education, disability and welfare sectors. Rosy is a strong advocate and has contributed so much to the success of NBWS during her 13 years as a board member. Beth Lawsen, Co-Chair of NBWS, has served our community for years in the local government sector. In 2018, Beth joined the board of NBWS, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge about the community. The work of NBWS would not be possible without the dedication and passion of its board members. To Luke Mitchell, Fiona Reid, Sarah Falzarano, Orla Keane, Megan O'Leary, Rita Yates, and Eloise Matthews, thank you for your work supporting the NBWS. It was an honour to join with representatives from NBWS on 27 July 2023, to unveil plans for a new shelter in Pittwater, which was made possible because of the advocacy of NBWS board members and supporters.

### LUGARNO PROGRESS ASSOCIATION - TREE PLANTING EVENT

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to recognise the Lugarno Progress Association for their Tree Planting Event on Sunday 30 July 2023. The Lugarno Progress Association is an important community-focused group in my local area which provides a forum for local residents to voice their concerns and run fantastic initiatives. I recently had the pleasure of attending and sponsoring their Tree Planting Event at Evatt Park, where volunteers planted around 400 native seedlings to bolster the tree canopy in Lugarno. It was fantastic event where young and old got to come together to improve our natural environment and celebrate the beauty of our local area. It also coincided with Planet Ark's National Tree Day and demonstrated our community's commitment to a better future for all. We had a number of local community groups join in such as the Lugarno Lions, Friends of Glenlee, Oatley Flora & Fauna, Mortdale Scouts, Club Rivers and Penshurst RSL Rugby, this event really brought the entire community together. I want to particularly thank Vice-President of the Lugarno Progress Association, Jasmine Theophile who put this event together and all the members of the association for their excellent work.

### MARY LEMAN

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate Mary Lemman on her many years of service to the Music Teachers Association of NSW (MTA). Mary first began to work for the MTA as an Administrative Assistant in 2004, before moving to the role of Office Manager and then onto the more senior role of Secretary in 2010. Speaker, Mary's time as Secretary of the MTA was defined by her compassion, dedication and happy personality. Mary has always been available to the members of the MTA to assist them in any way she can and her calm and happy persona was a delight for all those who have had to deal with her. From handling phone enquires to meeting with members, setting up events and the general day-to-day running of the association, Mary has always had a smile on her face throughout her many years of service. Mary has always had the good of the association at heart and she has willingly worked many hours of overtime in order to allow the association to function smoothly and efficiently. Speaker, I want to congratulate Mary on her many years of service to the MTA and wish her well on her future endeavours.

### SDN RIVERWOOD - TRAFFIC SAFETY

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to recognise the fantastic work of SDN Riverwood who recently mounted a mini-campaign to improve road safety around their centre as part of National Road Safety Week. To that end, the children put together an amazing poster outlining their concerns to me and presented it to my office to highlight the need for change. Speaker, the children at SDN Riverwood put to me their request for a traffic light to be installed at the intersection of Belmore Road and Roosevelt Avenue in order to allow parents to arrive and exit the centre safely. I was so amazed by their work that I had to go down to the centre and meet the budding community advocates myself to discuss how I can help turn their words into actions. Speaker, I have written to the Mayor of Canterbury-Bankstown Council and Minister for Roads to ensure their request has been raised with the appropriate authorities. I want to thank Centre Director, Christie Sherfan and all of the staff at SDN Riverwood for their amazing work to nurture our next generation of community-minded local residents.

### EMMAUS CATHOLIC COLLEGE - VINNIE'S WINTER SLEEPOUT

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—Congratulations to the exceptional staff and students at Emmaus Catholic College for their remarkable participation in the Vinnie's Winter Sleepout at the end of June this year. Their commitment and compassion shone brightly as they dedicated their night to creating and organising food packs for those most in need during this winter. The initiative by the St. Vincent De Paul Society is truly commendable. I take immense pride in witnessing members of my community, particularly the staff and

students at Emmaus, step up and volunteer their time to support the vulnerable among us. Their selfless actions reflect the true spirit of empathy and solidarity, making a meaningful difference in the lives of those facing hardships. By coming together and actively participating in this event, they have proven that a small act of kindness can create a ripple effect of positive change. I wholeheartedly applaud the staff and students at Emmaus Catholic College for their compassion and dedication in supporting those in need.

#### **BLACKWELL PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgers Creek)**—I want to express my deep admiration and gratitude, seeking to recognise the extraordinary dedication and love demonstrated by the teachers at Blackwell Public School. Their selfless commitment to volunteering their time to deliver free breakfast to students before school is a testament to their profound impact on the lives of the next generation. As members of this house, it is crucial that we acknowledge the immense difference our teachers make in shaping the future. These students, who may one day occupy seats in this very place, carry the potential to take our society to new heights and create a positive impact on the lives of others. The simple act of providing a healthy breakfast to students showcases the profound care and concern our teachers have for the well-being of their students. In doing so, they plant the seeds of nourishment and support that can bloom into incredible opportunities and achievements for the students they serve. Thank you to the selfless teachers at Blackwell Public School.

#### **BUDJERAH**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed)**—During the recent NAIDOC week celebrations, the Tweed was fortunate enough to have the very talented Budjerah, an ARIA-award winning local singer-songwriter, perform at the opening event. A Goodjinburra man from Fingal Heads, Budjerah is an immensely gifted musician whose success continues to grow. Budjerah recently supported Ed Sheeran on his Australian tour and Vance Joy on an overseas tour and was a surprise special guest during Meg Mac's Splendour in the Grass set where he received a huge reaction to his new single Video Games. He's also on the line up for the upcoming Split Milk music festivals held around Australia. It is so pleasing to see a Tweed local shining on a national and global stage and Budjerah is very deserving of this accomplishment. He is a lovely, family-orientated young man who is very generous with his time, always happy to have a chat. Budjerah is an inspiration to so many, including the young people of the Tweed Electorate. He has worked hard and dedicated himself to his craft and I can safely speak for all of the Tweed when I say we are proud he calls the Tweed home.

#### **GOULBURN LEGACY**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Legacy Australia. Legacy Australia proudly celebrated its one hundredth birthday in July. The organisation was established to support veteran's families, inclusive of those who had lost family members in the war. Services offered includes emotional, social, and financial support. To celebrate the centenary, Legacy Australia Inc. in partnership with Perfect Events held a Legacy Torch Relay and presented by Defence Health. The relay started in Pozieres, France on the 23rd April, leading up to ANZAC Day services, then continued to travel across Australia's forty-five Legacy Clubs. Proudly the Goulburn Legacy Branch held its leg of the Relay on 27th July 2023. Commencing at the iconic Big Merino with relay walkers making their way down to Belmore Park, where a cauldron was jointly lit with Goulburn's Legacy President Don Pennay and long serving Legatee Rob Wilson. A commemorative service followed led by Junior Vice President, Legatee Dean Ferraris, and the unveiling of the Legacy Centenary Plaque. It is with sincere praise that I acknowledge this significant milestone for Legacy Australia, the longevity of work, and many proud and serving members of the Goulburn Legacy Branch.

#### **MR BRUCE MACDONALD**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise the late Mr Bruce Macdonald. There is no doubt that Bruce Macdonald had a resolute commitment to ensuring that the 1883 Appleby Beam Engine at the Goulburn Waterworks was brought back to life. Mr Macdonald and his dedicated friend Don Collins spent many weekends travelling from Sydney to Goulburn working relentlessly in less-than-ideal conditions at the Marsden Weir site to restore the engine that had been sitting lifeless for over forty years. It must be recognised that the work undertaken did not come easily as Mr Macdonald first had to convince the Council that this rare engine was a historic icon. Their work continued over eighteen months, gaining working order in 1958, nicely timed with Lilac City Festival and seeing the Museum commence operation at the Marsden Weir. Proudly the Marsden Museum of Historic Engines was opened in April 1970 operating close to twenty years, before closure in late 1974, reopening in April 1975 with Mr Macdonald engaged as Manager for two years prior to his retirement. It is with great acknowledgement of Mr Macdonald's knowledge and passion for steam engines that the Appleby was restored bringing joy to many. Vale Mr Bruce Macdonald.

### AWARD WINNERS

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I want to congratulate the winners of the North Coast Tourism Awards recently announced on the Tweed Coast. Bryon Bay Blues Fest won the major award on the night. Two headline festivals from my electorate featured in the top three. Casino Beef Week has taken the silver gong, which is a real credit to the committee and the hard work they do for the festival and the community. I attended Beef Week this year, and the feeling around town was electric. The Grafton Jacaranda Festival took out the bronze gong. The Jacaranda Festival is coming up at the end of October and Early November this year. These community-led festivals contribute significantly to my community and add hundreds of thousands of dollars to the local economy and are a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire community, including the volunteer committees that work all year round to make sure these festivals happen. I would also like to congratulate the board and staff of the Casino RSM Club on winning the silver award in the "Excellence in Tourism Services" section of the ceremony. This is a great credit to everyone involved.

### THE HAYDEN ORPHEUM PICTURE PALACE

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The Willoughby electorate is home to a proud and unique national icon in Cremorne. For a century the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace has served as a cultural hub and gathering place for people of all ages and backgrounds. This has been an extraordinary year for theatres. Whether you are caught between the Oppenheimer or Barbie debate the Orpheum offers something for everyone. Its historic 70mm projector has attracted cinema aficionados from all over Sydney providing an immersive experience that cannot be replicated at home. I thank the General Manager Alex Temesvari for his continued leadership and management of this institution. I reaffirm my commitment and advocacy to the protection of the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace. As an Art Deco icon, the Orpheum bares considerable historical, architectural and cultural significance. I continue to work towards the listing of the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace on the State Heritage Register to preserve this great institution. By fostering a sense of togetherness and entertainment, the Orpheum enriches the fabric of our community and helps preserve the magic of cinema for generations to come.

### REDLANDS GALA ARTS SHOW - CHATSWOOD CONCOURSE

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I would like to commend the Redlands School of Cremorne for once again staging its annual Gala Arts Show at the Chatswood Concourse. Established in 1884, Redlands is renowned for its well-rounded, liberal education across all disciplines, not least, the performing arts. The Gala Arts show is an opportunity for the School to showcase the exceptional artistic talent of its students. The 2023 Gala Arts show on Friday night 21 July was a roaring success with brilliant student performances across dance, theatre, photography, vocal and instrumental items. These were well received by the audience who offered tremendous support. I offer my sincere congratulations to all the winners of the Gala Arts Show and applaud the efforts of every participant. They have done their school community proud. I thank the staff, students, parents and alumni of Redlands School for all their input into this fantastic community event. I am grateful for the contribution Redlands School makes to enriching the artistic and cultural life of the community.

### BUSHCARE CASTLECRAG

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On Sunday 9 July, I had the pleasure to join one of many local Bushcare groups in Castlecrag. There are no less than ten groups in this one suburb surrounded by beautiful native bushland. Bushcare is a community-based volunteer program that helps regenerate and preserve bushland owned or managed by Council. Free training, technical advice, tools, plants, newsletters and celebrations are provided to support Bushcare volunteers. I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who organises and volunteers for this precious work of tending to our local environment. I saw firsthand what a valuable and practical difference Bushcare makes to our local environment. I would like to thank Matthew and the crew who worked so well together that Sunday just below The Rampart in Castlecrag. I would also like to thank Willoughby City Council for their support for this local environmental work. I look forward to continuing to follow the work of Bushcare closely as they restore our bushland.

### CITY OF RYDE PRAYER BREAKFAST

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I had the privilege of attending the City of Ryde Prayer Breakfast on 20 June 2023 at the Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club. The Prayer breakfast is a longstanding tradition dating back to 1992 that serves as a unifying force, bringing the community together to foster goodwill through prayer. The guest speaker for this year was none other than Greig Whittaker, of the Ryde Salvation Army. Greig delivered an enlightening talk on the topic of "How can we build healthy communities in vertical villages?" With our city undergoing transformation, it becomes imperative for us to contemplate an appropriate response. While the construction of our homes forms one part of the equation, the creation of thriving communities within them is equally important. I also acknowledge the leadership of Emaline Crowther-Albornoz and Emmanuel Wilkinson

of Northcross Christian School; and Shyan Govekar of Holy Cross College, Ryde sharing their inspired bible readings with our community. You each represented your school with distinction, and created an important connection between our community members, and faith-based schools. Our community is that little bit stronger thanks to the efforts of all involved, and I look forward to attending again next year.

#### **MACQUARIE PARK ROTARY EXECUTIVE**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Congratulations to the newly elected co-presidents of Macquarie Park Rotary, Roseanna Gallo and Lydia Scuglia. With their dedication, expertise, and passion for service, the future of this great club will be bright under their leadership. They succeed outgoing President Leo Driessen, who led the club through a highly successful term. As is often the case among Rotarians, he vacates the office of President, but I know will continue to support the club and volunteer his time supporting Roseanna and Lydia. Together, they bring strong leadership and strategic thinking to the role which will ensure the continued success of Macquarie Park Rotary into 2023 and beyond. Among many other initiatives, this club is responsible for the famous 'Carols on the Common', a major event in the Ryde community calendar that brings together thousands of local residents to celebrate Christmas, and raise important funds for charity. With Roseanna Gallo, Lydia Scuglia, and the new executive team's collective efforts, the Macquarie Park Rotary Club is poised to create a lasting impact and empower positive change within the community. I congratulate them on their election, and look forward to working with them closely throughout their term.

#### **MACQUARIE PARK ROTARY AWARDS**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I rise to congratulate recipients of the Macquarie Park Rotary Club awards, announced at their recent changeover dinner. To the following individuals, I offer my heartfelt congratulations and thanks for the work you have done to support our community: Pride of Workmanship Award: Angela Hakim - MQ Health and Claire Wakeham - Driessen Insurance, for their dedicated service to community and pride in the everyday work they do. Community Service Award: Teja Cherukuri and Anthea Richards, for their weekly volunteer visits and support to Shalom Nursing Home in Macquarie Park. Roseanna Gallo OAM Award: Maddison Clancy for her amazing organisation of the Intergenerational Program Initiative. Triple Ruby Paul Harris Award: Roseanna Gallo OAM, for her unwavering dedication, exceptional achievement and example of inspiration to our local community. These recipients embody everything that is good about Rotary - service, community and dedication. We are lucky in Ryde to have such an abundance of talent, and while I know none of these awardees do what they do for the accolades, I am delighted that they have been formally recognised for their contributions to our community. Each is an example to others in our community, and I congratulate them on their achievements.

#### **GOODSTART GLEBE**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the House Goodstart Early Learning Glebe, a local childcare centre that has been working to promote active transport and sustainability. Goodstart Glebe encourages families to walk to the centre utilising the easy walking pathways, ground level access and safe and secure storage for prams or utilise the local bicycle lanes and cycle to the centre. I recently had the pleasure of visiting Goodstart Glebe and seeing their commitment to sustainability and high-quality early education in action – it's inspiring to see local organisations stepping up and contributing to making our communities more connected. Thank you to Andrew Ludington, Melissa Heng and all the staff who contribute to making the centre such a great place to learn.

#### **MICHAEL AMOS**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Rural Fire Service Group Captain Michael Amos was one of the eight recipients of the Australian Fire Service Medals for 2023. This medal is for recognition of his dedication and hard work and for distinguished service by a member of an Australian fire service. Michael began volunteering for RFS more than 20 years ago when he joined North Bourke Bushfire Brigade in 1995 and in 1996 was elected as captain. In 2001 he was elected as Group Captain for the Bourke District. Michael has also been Brigade president for 26 years, Brigade treasurer for 4 years, Brigade secretary for 1 year and Brigade permit officer from 2015, which he continues to do today. Since early 2000's Michael has been a dedicated member of the Barwon Darling Zone training committee, where he has attended large fires with his team and several major fires out of the area. I congratulate Michael on receiving the Australian Service Medal and I thank him for his many years of commitment to his community.

#### **STARS OF NARRABRI**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—The Stars of Narrabri 2023 Dance for Cancer raised a record \$115,000. This has been the largest amount raised since the fundraiser started in Narrabri. The dancing stars included Ben Duncan, Mitch Creighton, Kylie Browne, Karen Kirkby, Stacey Dunn, Nikki Shields, Louise Tout, Brett

Dickinson, Terrence Duncan and Fiona Redfern. The stars worked tirelessly raising much needed funds for the Cancer Council, by running raffles, gaining local sponsors to support them, and learning a dance routine to perform on stage in front of judges and a large crowd. The funds raised will go back into the local community to help people living with cancer. I thank the stars of Narrabri and the behind-the-scenes organisers for the event for dedicating their time to raising money for cancer. I would also like to thank the members of the community who supported this event by donating the much-needed funds.

#### **WANDA DUNNETT**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—Narrabri Local Wanda Dunnett was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the print media industry. Since 2007 Wanda has been Co-proprietor of The Courier and Wee Waa News and in 2020 became managing director of the Gunnedah Times and the regional North Western Guide. Wanda also serving as a Country Press Australia board member since 2019 as NSW Country Press Association vice president and is involved in the regional newspaper industry at both state and national levels. I congratulate Wanda on receiving the OAM. I also thank her for the years of dedication to deliver the news and events across her community.

#### **ARCHIE ALDERRUCIO - BALRANALD**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise a youthful Archie Alderrucio of Balranald. Archie's love of football commenced at the age of three years old, when he wouldn't sleep without his beloved football and could sing the Collingwood theme song from beginning to end. He commenced playing Auskick as soon as he was eligible; then played for Balranald Roos, where he won back-to-back Under 12's Best & Fairest in 2021 and 2022. Archie also won the Under 12's coaches award in 2019 and was selected to the Polding football team in 2021 and 2022. As a result of playing in 2022 in Coffs Harbour, he was selected in the NSW State Team. He trained with the Blue Pups and was presented with his NSW Guernsey in Sydney by Swans Players and played Nationals in Adelaide. He was also Balranald Council's Young Sportsperson of the Year. Being a noted high achiever, totally dedicated to his football and known amongst his peers as a kind and unselfish team player, I congratulate and wish Archie continued success in his football endeavours.

#### **GOL GOL P&C**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise the Parents & Citizens Committee of Gol Gol Primary School. During May they hosted a wonderful Fair, the first in four years. Locals flocked in their hundreds on a crisp sky-blue Sunday for the fun of it. They rummaged for bargains; tasted diverse confectionary; watched live stage shows; purchased fresh produce grown in the school garden by the students; and arranged a variety of 'fun' activities for children in a specially designed zone. The Gol Gol School Fair provided the jam-packed program which bristled with local bands; activities including storybooks; Irish dancing; Tae Kwon Do and such exciting opportunities as dunking your teacher. Vintage, classic and "muscle" cars also made an appearance, polished to perfection; the highlight being Gol Gol Fire Brigade display with their training simulator. All 18 local business enjoyed and supported this small community Fair. I would like to congratulate and praise the organisers for their commitment and ultimate success in bringing this community together and raising funds to support the Gol Gol Primary School.

#### **DEAN SMITH - HAY**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to acknowledge the work of Mr Dean Smith of Hay, a Paramedic, who has served the people of NSW for the past 36 years. Dean moved to Hay in 1988, and has stayed ever since, being the first responder for many people during health emergencies for the people of the Hay and surrounds. Dean recently retired, after spending the last 33 years in the town of Hay, dedicating his time and energy to people in dire need. Dean has now moved to Wagga Wagga to enjoy his retirement with his wife Julie, who he met as a paramedic while she was a nurse at the hospital. I would again like to thank Dean for his dedication to the health of his community and wish him the best in Wagga Wagga. Enjoy your hard earned break.

#### **ALISON HUNTER**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Alison Hunter has made significant contributions to the Maitland community through her exemplary customer service and fundraising efforts at Maddies of Bolwarra. The fresh delicious food, coffee, and overall atmosphere is one not to miss on any visit to Maitland. Alison is also generously supports community fundraising events across areas of need such as disability, unemployment and homelessness. She not only provides the same level of hospitality to these charity events but contributes by pricing the event so the optimum funds are raised to assist the particular cause. Alison is generous and respectful to individuals and groups who are the recipients of the funds being raised. During the difficult period of COVID lockdowns Alison was able to pivot her business to provide service to the community with a focus on convenience and flexibility. In addition to her professional contribution to many

organisations, Alison employed and continues to employ local people and is a genuine and kind person. I acknowledge Alison's contribution to supporting worthy causes in the Maitland community.

### **2023 CONCERT IN THE PARK**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—The 2023 Concert in Maitland Park hosted by the City of Maitland Pipes and Drums Band took place on Sunday July 30. Thousands came to Maitland Park to enjoy Celtic entertainment, live music, delicious food, local stalls and a display of vintage cars. Seven pipe bands from across NSW took part in the concert, as did musicians from Hunter Valley Grammar School, Maitland Brass Band, Elevate Irish Dance and Scotia Highland Dancers. The pipe bands joining City of Maitland Pipes and Drums were Cessnock's United Mineworkers Pipe Band, Sydney's Hills District Pipe Band, Hornsby RSL Pipe Band, City of Newcastle RSL Pipe Band, NSW Highlanders Pipes and Drums and Governor Macquarie Pipe Band. The quintet competition was won for the second year in a row by Cessnock's United Mineworkers Pipe Band. The concert was special for three of City of Maitland Pipes and Drums newest members, Dylan Byrne, Eamon Brown and Kelsey Philpott-Robinson, who had never played in a mass band before. Congratulations to the City of Maitland Pipes and Drums committee and volunteers from Maitland Lions Club and Maitland Classic Motor Association helped the day run smoothly.

### **MAITLAND FC NPLW TEAM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Women's football is certainly topical this month with the FIFA Women's World Cup and recently, women's football was celebrated in the Hunter with the annual Northern NSW State Cup. The State Cup sees teams play off in a three-day tournament held at the Lake Macquarie Football Facility and has run since 2017. It uniquely includes top rung NPL Women's Northern NSW clubs, a Northern NSW Indigenous Team and community football teams from across the state. Congratulations to the Maitland Football Club team who secured the cup last month. Maitland's team, made up of first grade and reserve grade NPLW squad members, took on rivals Charlestown Azzurri in the grand-final after both teams easily won their semi-final matches. Captain Sophie Stapleford opening the scoring in the 10th minute and the win was secured when a Madison Gallegos free kick was slotted home by Bronte Peel. The win capping a fabulous squad effort across the weekend. Congratulations also to the Lochinvar Rovers FC and Greta Branxton FC clubs who participated in the cup, playing for the community plate. A special shout out to the Greta Branxton girls, competing for the first time and making the semi-finals, well done.

### **MAVIS PATTERSON**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to recognise the remarkable achievements of a truly inspiring member of our community, Mavis Patterson. At the impressive age of 101, Mavis recently took part in the Legacy Centenary Torch Relay, carrying the torch in the Forster-Tuncurry section. Mavis's dedication to Legacy spans over two decades, joining after the passing of her husband, Reginald, a World War II veteran. Through Legacy, Mavis found a supportive community that has brightened her life and provided assistance in numerous ways. I had the privilege of witnessing Mavis carry the final torch to light the cauldron. It was a moment that I will carry with me forever. Mavis serves as an inspiration to us all, reminding us that age should never be a barrier to participation, engagement, and making a meaningful difference in the lives of others. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mavis and express my gratitude for her extraordinary contributions to our community and her dedication to Legacy.

### **NAIDOC TAREE HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to recognise the Taree High School community for their dedication in honouring and respecting the Biripi elders during the "For our Elders" NAIDOC concert at the Manning Entertainment Centre. Under the leadership of Taree High School's community engagement officer, Tannika Lewis, the event commenced with a heartfelt welcome to country delivered by Uncle Russell Saunders and the Biripi Strong Women's Elders dance group. Throughout the night, the talents of Taree High School, Chatham High School, Tobwabba, and Old Bar Public School dance groups were showcased, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of the region. The musical entertainment featured performances of the Taree High School staff and student band, accompanied by Uncle Russell Saunders, Todd Saunders, Tyler Williams, Khai Gahan, Taree High School students, and Matty Zarb. The Taree High School Elders sewing program empowered students to model Aboriginal-designed clothing, highlighting the importance of preserving and celebrating Indigenous artistic traditions. I commend Taree High School for their commitment to raising cultural awareness and respect within the community, and I express my gratitude to the Biripi elders for their wisdom and contributions.

### RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—Mr Speaker, I rise to recognise Sarah and the volunteers at Ronald McDonald Family Retreat in Forster. Myall Lakes is truly blessed to be home to the largest Ronald McDonald Family Retreat in all of Australia! This remarkable facility provides a haven of support and respite for families during challenging times. During my visit to Ronald McDonald Family Retreat, I was delighted to learn about the incredible generosity of our local businesses. Many of them have donated various items and services to this amazing charity. It warms my heart to see our community rallying together to make a difference! It is with great admiration that I commend Sarah and the entire team of volunteers at Ronald McDonald Family Retreat for their dedication and tireless efforts in making a difference in the lives of those facing adversity.

### LISA GREISSL

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I want to acknowledge the super-human efforts of a true Lake Macquarie hero, Lisa Greissl of Macquarie Hills. In June this year Lisa represented Australia at the 17th International Para Rowing Regatta on Lake Varese in Gavirate, Italy, bringing home two gold medals in the PR3 mixed-coxed four boat class. Lisa has shown dogged determination, training alongside members from the Lake Macquarie Rowing Club for the past two years, in an effort to secure a spot on the Australian Rowing Team. Seven years ago Lisa was diagnosed with a rare cancer and while her treatment was successful, it also caused a spinal cord injury. As a result of her injury, Lisa was forced to give up her love of running but she picked the oars to stay fit and to aid both her physical and mental recovery. Lisa is also the founder of national charity The Big Hug Box. The Big Hug Box provides people diagnosed with cancer specially selected products to help them through their treatments. Lisa is now focusing on securing a spot on the Australian Paralympic Rowing Team in 2024. I wish her all the best with this endeavour.

### MORISSET FIRE AND RESCUE NSW BRIGADE

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—Our emergency service workers are true heroes in every sense of the word, selflessly saving lives every day often at risk to their own. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts firefighters from the Morisset Fire and Rescue NSW 383 crew went to last week, to save a young man's life. In the early hours of 25 July 2023, the crew responded to a call for help after a car driven by a man in his 20s crashed at high speed into a tree off Hue Hue Road near Wye. The force of the impact was so strong the driver was trapped in his car underneath its engine for an hour. The fast actions of Station Officer Garry Nash, Deputy Captain Scott Ganado and fire fighters Ross McDonald, Sam Cleasby and Christopher Rawlings, along with other emergency workers including the Westpac Rescue Helicopter medical team undoubtedly saved his life. It was a very delicate rescue operation, and I must also note that fire fighters Cleasby and Rawlings had only recently completed their rescue training course. I would like to thank everyone involved on a job superbly done.

### RICHARD BRISENDEN

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Richard Brissenden from Cooranbong who has to be one of the kindest blokes in Lake Macquarie. Since 2016, Richard has been an integral member of the Southlakes Incorporated team, volunteering his time, skills and caring manner to those most in need. Richard has become the charity's Jack of all trades and is always first on the scene whenever a door needs to be fitted at the food bank, or a tyre pumped up on their mobile hairdressing for the homeless van. He's also Southlakes Incorporated first port of call if someone needs to open up at 6am to allow a delivery truck in. Richard is never shy of going the extra mile to ensure everyone feels welcome, valued and cared for. He knows each and every client by name and greets all of them every Monday and Wednesday with a big smile, and I might mention that that's no mean feat considering that Southlakes Incorporated has 150 clients who visit the food bank each week. I thank Richard for his kindness and dedication to helping the most vulnerable members in our community.

### CARUSO'S

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—It was devastating for the neighbouring Gymea community when Caruso's Italian Restaurant closed earlier this year. But there is no doubt that Gymea's loss is Kirrawee's gain. Rocky and Kerrin Pitarelli recently opened up their Kirrawee premises, Mama's Cuccina – much to the excitement of residents throughout the Sutherland Shire Local Government Area (LGA). Sutherland residents will recognise the premises as the previous home to Howling Forest café. Despite the closure of Caruso's Italian, Rocky was intent on keeping on his staff where possible. Food trucks and catering events served their purposes but the new Kirrawee premises provides a more permanent home. The Kirrawee premises still features much loved Italian dishes and produce like arancini balls and cured meats like salami. We are incredibly lucky throughout in Heathcote to have such a diverse community and wide variety of cuisine. There is little doubt that small businesses

are the fabric of our community. They employ so many local residents and provide vital goods and services. Once again, congratulations to Rocky and Kerrin on your new store in Kirrawee. I am sure it will be a big hit - particularly with local residents.

**NSW POLICE FORCE STATE CRIME COMMAND EXCELLENCE IN POLICING AWARD -  
DETECTIVE SERGEANT LAURA BEACROFT**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Detective Sergeant Laura Beacroft on receiving a NSW Police Force State Crime Command Excellence in Policing Award on Tuesday 16th May 2023, presented by the Rotary Club of Holroyd. Detective Sergeant Beacroft has 22 years of service with the NSW Police Force, with 16 of those years attached to the State Crime Command. She is currently with the Sex Crimes Squad and was nominated for her investigation under SF Southwood which investigated historical inappropriate sexual relationships between teachers and students in Northern Beachers educational facilities. As a result of her investigation, three persons were arrested and charged. Detective Sergeant Beacroft was also nominated for her investigation under SF Veteran which investigated allegations made against a high-profile sportsman regarding aggravated sexual assault. Detective Sergeant Beacroft worked tirelessly to ensure that the accused was arrested, charged, and bail refused, which also ensured that the victim was appropriately supported. Thank you, Detective Sergeant Beacroft for your commitment to preventing and responding to crime, and for helping bring justice to victims. Congratulations again on your receipt of this Award.

**NSW POLICE FORCE STATE CRIME COMMAND EXCELLENCE IN POLICING AWARD -  
DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE DANIELLE KIRCHEN**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Detective Senior Constable Danielle Kirchen on receiving a NSW Police Force State Crime Command Excellence in Policing Award on Tuesday 16th May 2023, presented by the Rotary Club of Holroyd. Detective Senior Constable Kirchen has 12 years of service with the NSW Police Force, with 6 of those years attached to the State Crime Command. She is currently with the Robbery & Serious Crime Squad and was nominated for her role as Officer in Charge under SF Jigsaw which investigated the robbery and wounding of an individual at their home addresses by high-raking members of an OMCG. Detective Senior Constable Kirchen was integral in identifying several other investigations that were targeting the same OMCG members. Targeted covert strategies were initiated on individuals and physical premises resulting in the arrest of six individuals who were charged with serious indictable offences, and the seizure of several firearms and weapons. Thank you, Detective Senior Constable Kirchen, for your commitment to preventing and responding to crime, and for helping bring justice to victims. Congratulations again on your receipt of this Award.

**NSW POLICE FORCE STATE CRIME COMMAND EXCELLENCE IN POLICING AWARD -  
DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE NICHOLAS BAYLISS**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Detective Senior Constable Nicholas Bayliss on receiving a NSW Police Force State Crime Command Excellence in Policing Award on Tuesday 16th May 2023, presented by the Rotary Club of Holroyd. Detective Senior Constable Bayliss has 16 years of service with the NSW Police Force, with 9 of those years attached to the State Crime Command. He is currently with the Organised Crime Squad and was nominated for his role as case officer under SF Trobriand which was an investigation into an organised crime syndicate. The investigation resulted in the arrest and the charge of 9 syndicate members, with offences including supplying large commercial quantities of prohibited drugs. Detective Senior Constable Bayliss showed great dedication and attention to detail during the investigation. The investigation was successful in the seizure of approximately \$8.5m in cash and over 3 tonnes of illicit tobacco. Thank you, Detective Senior Constable Bayliss, for your commitment to preventing and responding to crime, and for helping bring justice to victims. Congratulations again on your receipt of this Award.

**SCHOLARSHIPS TO SUPPORT STUDIES**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—It is important that we continue to look for ways to support our next generation of bright young people to achieve their goals. Thanks to the Royal Agricultural Society Fund Rural Scholarships, we have seen 73 scholarships awarded to help support our next generation of students who show a passion in rural issues. I would like to congratulate two recipients representing the Cootamundra electorate, Heather Walker of Grenfell and Emma Dixon of Quandialla. Heather is keen to share her knowledge with others as she continues her studies to become an agriculture teacher studying a Bachelor of Education Technology and Applied Studies. I am sure Heather will pave the way for the next generation around the agriculture industry. Emma has a passion for regional healthcare, specialising in Diagnostic Radiography, currently in her fourth year studying a Bachelor of Medical Radiation Science. I know Emma's knowledge and training will be a great asset to our regional health services. These scholarships remove some of the burden on students, allowing them to focus

on their studies without the worry of costs involved. I wish Heather, Emma and all the recipients all the very best in their studies.

#### **OLD JUNEE COMMUNITY SPACE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I recently had the pleasure of visiting the community of Old Junee to see how the grounds at Old Junee Hall had been transformed to provide the community with their only active recreation space in the village to enjoy various sporting activities such as tennis, cricket and basketball. I was pleasantly surprised to see how much work had been completed, walking along the new concrete paths which are surrounded by landscaped native gardens and a lovely bridge connecting the garden to the recreation space. The community of Old Junee now have a place to come together keep active and stay connected. The project to re-connect the community was made possible thanks to the vision of Old Junee Hall Progress Association in securing funds through the Stronger Country Communities Fund. Well done to everyone involved in providing a beautiful social and therapeutic area for the community to come together and enjoy the outdoors.

#### **50 YEARS FOR LESLEY FAIRWEATHER**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I extend a huge congratulations to local Ganmain women, Lesley Fairweather on her retirement from a remarkable banking career. Lesley will retire from her current position at Beyond Bank in August this year after nearly 50 years of service to the Coolamon and Ganmain communities. After completing her schooling, Lesley began her career in Banking in Coolamon, where Lesley worked fulltime for 33 years at Commercial Banking Company before it changed its name to National Australia Bank. Following this Lesley worked for 14 years with Wagga Wagga Mutual before it transferred over to Beyond Bank. For almost 50 years, Lesley has worked tirelessly meeting the banking needs of the community. Lesley is a much-loved member of the community who always goes above and beyond for the people of Coolamon and Ganmain. Ganmain are hosting a farewell afternoon tea at their Hall to thank Lesley for her dedication through banking and show their gratitude to Lesley for her support to the community. I congratulate Lesley once again for her outstanding service and wish her the best of luck in her new chapter of retirement.

#### **BEAUTY POINT PUBLIC HEADS TO GAME CHANGER CHALLENGE SEMI-FINALS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I acknowledge the incredible efforts of the Beauty Point Public School students heading to the semi-finals of the Game Changer Challenge. Each year schools are encouraged to compete in this competition in teams of five students who initially make a video pitch of their understanding of real-world problems and how it relates to their community. Maddie, Buya, Nandin, Anton, and Lucy are the lucky team heading to the semi-finals this term, and their pitch was concerned with issues facing homelessness in our community. The team will participate in a full-day workshop and challenge where industry experts will guide students through the design thinking process to create a solution to a complex problem. I congratulate all the students from Stage 3 at Beauty Point who participated in this year's Game Changer Challenge, Heidi, Alexander, Kaelin, Lola, Talei, Juliette, Kayla, Thomas, Joanna, and Skyler. Congratulations to all involved.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY COMMUNITY CENTRE OPEN DAY**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I congratulate North Sydney Community Centre on another successful open day that brought the local community together for a day of celebration and excitement. There was activity and entertainment for all throughout the day from Dare the Magician showcasing his mesmerising skills in close-up magic, a visit from our local fireies who kindly brought their fire and rescue truck for all to enjoy, as well as different play stations complete with playdough and oversized lego blocks. The day was also accompanied by live music from talented guitarist and choir students, filling the air with delightful melodies, along with a range of mouth-watering food on offer to enjoy. This was an incredible opportunity for the community to come together, celebrate and support small local businesses. I thank the entire North Sydney Community Centre team for their amazing efforts in organising this successful event.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY BEARS TO BECOME A FEEDER CLUB FOR MELBOURNE STORM**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to acknowledge the success of the North Sydney Bears after recently signing a historic partnership to become a feeder club for the Melbourne Storm. The contract will commence on November 1st, allowing some local players and staff to participate in Melbourne's pre-season training program. This partnership reinforces that the Bears are a well-respected club in the NRL, and this partnership will enable a development pathway route for future NRL players. The North Sydney Bears has a strong legacy in our community, and this new partnership will ensure that the Bears keep going from strength to strength. I note, in particular, the work of North Sydney Bears CEO Gareth Holmes and the leadership team over the past few years. I congratulate the North Sydney Bears for all their incredible efforts over the years, and I know

I join a chorus of local supporters looking forward to the day that the Bears return to the NRL competition as the 18th team. Go the Bears.

#### **GRAHAM DAVIS RUNNING FOR CANCER**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Mister Speaker, I would like to recognise Graham Davis of Terrigal, a 71-year-old cancer survivor who is fronting up again this year to defend his age group title in the Sydney Harbour 10KM run. Graham has always been into sport, mainly football, and was a reasonable runner at school. He took up running again in 1999 at the age of 47 and has been a member of the Terrigal Trotters since 2000. In May 2013 Graham's world changed when he was diagnosed with bowel cancer. The week before he was diagnosed, he competed in an ironman triathlon event and wasn't feeling well. The cancer diagnosis was quite a shock. Graham had an operation to remove part of his colon in Late July 2013 and then commenced six months of chemotherapy. Following his recovery Graham was carrying an extra sixteen kilos so he set a goal to get fit again and try to complete another ironman in May 2015. Graham will be testing himself on the 10KM course to raise vital funds for research and it will be a great warm-up for the Sydney Marathon. Thank you Graham for your efforts and best of luck.

#### **TEAM AUSTRALIA INVICTUS GAMES**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Mister Speaker, I would like to recognise Karl Woodward and Craig Ball who will be competing in the Invictus Games Dusseldorf 2023. The healing power of sport continues to help Karl maintain purpose, focus, and discipline in his everyday life. As well as working on his physical fitness, the former competitive swimmer and Surf Life saver with North Avoca SLSC participates in sport to manage chronic back pain and mental injuries. Karl's greatest sporting achievement came at the 2022 Australian Indoor Rowing Championships where he placed third in the 1000 metres. Karl applied for Invictus Games to reignite his passion for sport and meet like-minded veterans. Karl will compete in indoor rowing, wheelchair rugby and captain the swimming team. For Craig Ball, competing in the Invictus Games was a chance to be part of the Defence community again, and an opportunity to raise awareness of men's mental health. Sport has been an important vehicle for Craig in managing both physical injuries and mental illness and Craig he will compete in archery, indoor rowing and sitting volleyball. I wish both Karl and Craig all the best at the upcoming Invictus Games Dusseldorf 2023.

#### **EMPIRE BAY BOATSHED**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Mister Speaker recently I had the great pleasure of attending Empire Bay Heritage Boat Shed Associations public meeting. The event was a great display of community support for the boatshed, which is one of the last remaining historic boatsheds on the Central Coast and one of the few remaining traces of our regions rich boating and boat building history. Special thanks to go to Kincumber Rotary for putting on a wonderful sausage sizzle, and Central Coast Ferries for a free passage from Saratoga to Empire Bay on the day. A great display of a wider community spirit. It was a pleasure to hear from speakers such as local historian Peter Rae who spoke on the history of Empire Bay boatshed including the involvement of the local community in the establishment of the boatshed. The boatshed building is one of the last of hundreds that were once on Brisbane Waters. I want to thank the boat shed association for organising this fantastic public meeting, alongside Kincumber Rotary, Central Coast Ferries and the wider community for attending and showing their support. A great example of community coming together.

#### **WRAS - MILLIE SUTCLIFFE**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to congratulate Dubbo's Millie Sutcliffe, who was recently awarded the Western Region Academy of Sport's (WRAS) Outstanding Achievement by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Athlete Award 2023. This is the second consecutive year Millie has won the award, which is a testament to her unwavering commitment to excellence in the sporting arena. Millie's journey over the past 12 months has been nothing short of exceptional, and her accomplishments on the basketball court are a true reflection of her talent and hard work. Millie's achievements this year include selection to represent Country NSW at the National Championships (U16), selection in the Basketball NSW State Performance Program (U16), the NSW Country team for the Australian Country Junior Basketball Cup (U16), the All-Star team at the 2023 Academy Games, the NSW Combined High Schools Basketball team to play in the All-Schools Championships (Opens), and winner of the John Martin Country Tour Premier Division with Dubbo Rams. Well done Millie, and all the best for the future!

#### **WRAS - SKYE MORRISSEY**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to congratulate Narromine's Skye Morrissey, who was recently awarded the Western Region Academy of Sport's (WRAS) Para-Sports Athlete of the Year award for her incredible swimming performance in the 2022/23 season. Skye's journey to this highly-prestigious award

is marked by her exceptional results at the national level of the Australian Age Championships on the Gold Coast in April this year. She competed fiercely against the best swimmers in the nation during this challenging three-day meet, leaving a lasting mark on the Australian swimming community. Not only did Skye excel at the national level, but she also represented the Macquarie Yabbies at various carnivals across the region throughout the summer and showcased her talents for Narromine at the Combined High School Championships. Her dedication to competitive swimming and the sport she loves is truly commendable. Behind Skye's impressive accomplishments stands her biggest supporter and coach, her proud mother, Krista Morrissey. It is through Krista's guidance and Skye's tireless efforts that she has reached the pinnacle of success in para-sports. Well done Skye – I can't wait to hear about your future endeavours!

#### **AVA HOSKING**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to congratulate young Dubbo sportswoman Ava Hosking who recently snagged a silver medal at the Australian Youth Ultimate Frisbee Championships in Brisbane. At just 16 Years of age, Ava joined a mixed gender team from NSW full of teammates she had never met before, and whilst being the only player from Dubbo in the side, she settled in well with her new team and coaching squad. Playing 6 games over 3 days, the NSW team managed to win 4 out of their 6 matches, falling short to the only other NSW team who went on to become the gold medal winners. Gallantly, the team was stoked to have earned the silver medal and were equally pleased for their fellow NSW team for taking out top spot. I'm so proud of young sportspeople like Ava representing our region at a national level and shining a light on the sport she loves. Congratulations again Ava, I can't wait to hear about your next success with frisbee in hand!

#### **NSW VARIETY BASH 2023**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—May 27 marked the revving of engines across Newcastle, when the 2023 Variety NSW Bash drove into town. Beginning in Dubbo on May 21, the Bash is a 2160km charity journey with 300 participants in over 100 wacky cars that raises money for Variety children's charity. It provides financial support for kids and their families with wheelchairs, specialist equipment, therapy, and medical supplies for those who can't afford it. The cars – each of which are at least 30 years old – journey across the state to visit schools with beneficiary kids of the fundraiser before ending at Foreshore Park. There, they were greeted by a huge crowd and a free family fun day. The bash has been running for many years now, with many participants having attended for over a decade. There were many Wallsend locals participating in the effort. I would like to thank all the participants of the 2023 Variety NSW Bash. You took part in a great cause and children across the state will be better off as a result of your efforts. Well done!

#### **RHIANNAN IFFLAND**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Lake Macquarie athlete Rhiannan Iffland, was crowned World Aquatics High-Diving Athlete of the Year for 2022 and the first ever high-diver to win 3 World Championships. Rhiannan learned to dive at 9 and initially had dreams of joining the Police Force or becoming a journalist. At Belmont High School, she did some acrobatic trampolining and spent her formative years training at Lambton Pool, attending the Hunter United Diving Academy, then the Institute of Sport. Initially dominated by men, the sport of high-diving opened to women in 2013 and Rhiannan started in 2015. She also worked on cruise ships as an aquatic acrobat. High-diving, sometimes called cliff-diving, is judged the same way as Olympic diving - but from heights of 20 or 22 metres, taking about 3 seconds to hit the water at around 82km/hr. Rhiannan spends the European summers competing around the world and is at home in the off-season, training 6 days a week. She is determined to ensure that her beloved "rock and roll diving" becomes an Olympic sport. Congratulations to Rhiannan on a wonderful achievement.

#### **MAREE CONNOR'S DEATH VALLEY ULTRAMARATHON SUCCESS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Congratulations to Maree Connor for an amazing achievement in finishing seventh amongst 100 competitors in the Death Valley ultramarathon. She completed the event in 27 hours and 49 minutes and was the third woman to cross the finish line. Maree is now the ninth fastest female in the 46-year history of the event. This achievement is even more commendable as Maree had spinal surgery for chronic back pain five years ago. Maree is only the seventh Australian woman to be invited to compete in the 217km ultra marathon, described as 'the world's toughest foot race'. The start temperature at 10pm was 47 degrees at Badwater Basin and increased to 59 degrees within 2 hours heading to Furnace Creek. The event crosses two big ranges and drops onto the desert floor in between. The final push is a half marathon and 1500m elevation. Maree is a 43-year-old, Lambton mother of two and Calvary Mater Emergency Department Nurse Unit Manager. Congratulations to Maree and her support crew for completing this gruelling event.

### QUONG TART - BLUE PLAQUE UNVEILED

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Minister for Heritage Penny Sharpe has unveiled a Blue Plaque in Ashfield, recognising the life of historical figure Quong Tart and celebrating his political advocacy and charity work in the 1800s. Quong Tart was a Chinese Australian icon and an early pioneer of what would become known as multiculturalism. From his birth in 1850 in Guangdong Province in China he became a well-known identity in Sydney and owned a network of tearooms. He was a philanthropist and community leader, known for providing refreshments and entertainment to many disadvantaged groups. In 1998 a bust of Quong Tart was erected in Hercules Street near Ashfield Railway Station and his mansion was later converted into a nursing home and renamed Quong Tart. It's only fitting that the Inner West, the birthplace of multiculturalism, honours Quong Tart, someone who is a historic figure for all of Australia. I want to pay tribute to the Ashfield Historical Society and all other local groups which campaigned so hard for this blue plaque. It is a form of recognition that is long overdue.

### GLOBAL GREENS CONFERENCE 2023

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown Electorate, I would like to acknowledge the Global Greens Conference 2023 held from 8th - 11th June in Incheon, South Korea and hosted by the Greens Party of Korea. I want to acknowledge and thank all of the participants, speakers, and organisers who made the conference happen, including Chulseong Lee, Woohee Lee, Keewon Kim and Kim Chan-hwi. Over the 4 days the conference was held, hundreds of Greens members came together from over 80 countries to connect about our shared values and challenges in our progressive movements for change. I personally had the pleasure of hosting a panel with Lois Maldonado, Snigdha Tiwari and Eun-kang Yoo who are young Greens women, activists, and representatives that are connected with strong community campaigns, engaging in nonviolent direct action against extractive industries, big polluters and for climate action in India, Venezuela and South Korea. As a united international movement, the Global Greens reaffirmed our commitment to stand united in collective action for the climate crisis, biodiversity, social justice, peace and security, and democracy. I look forward to our ongoing work together across borders and political boundaries to create long lasting change.

### BONNET BAY FOOTBALL CLUB

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Bonnet Bay Football Club who are the successful recipients of \$44,176 from the NSW Government's 2022 Community Building Partnership Program. Established in 1982, the Bombers have a reputation as a welcoming club with an incredible ability to coach and develop quality talent in our community. With the words "Belong, Engage, Grow" on display in the Bombers crest, the club is at the heart of our local community. This funding will enable the installation of a new retractable awning to offer community members shelter from all weather conditions when using the clubhouse. Of course, none of this is possible without the hard work and dedication of the Bonnet Bay Football Club Executive Committee. I acknowledge Garry Barnes, Krissy Bennet, Kate Cochrane, Ryan Cummings, Marc Orklin, Ian Petrovski, Carla Richardson, Clive Riseam, Andrew Symes and Gary Williamson for their efforts. I thank the members of the Bonnet Bay Football Club for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it delivers to our community.

### MIRANDA MAGPIES FOOTBALL CLUB

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the Miranda Magpies Football Club who are the successful recipients of \$27,852 from the NSW Government's 2022 Community Building Partnership Program. The Miranda Magpies Football Club was established in 1951 and was the first club to join the Sutherland Shire Football Association. Since its founding, the club has gone from strength to strength and developed incredible football talent including Alex Gersbach, Teigan Collister and Mark Natta. Through this funding, the club will upgrade its kitchen facilities to enable the provision of healthier alternatives to players and supporters and also create an environment to facilitate social gatherings. Of course, none of this is possible without the hard work and dedication of the Miranda Magpies Football Club Executive Committee. I acknowledge Gary O'Riordan, Craig Smith, John Summers, Darren Smith, Jo Milburn, Gerard Burgess, Adam Webb, Michael Whawell and Harry Grigoros for their efforts. I thank the members of the Miranda Magpies for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it makes for our community.

### JANNALI EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the Jannali East Public School Parents and Citizens Association who are the successful recipients of \$35,000 from the NSW Government's 2022 Community Building Partnership Program. Jannali East Public School has developed a reputation in the community as a friendly and dynamic environment where all students work towards achieving their personal best in academic, cultural and sporting endeavours. This funding will deliver a new basketball court to replace an underutilised grassed area at

the school allowing students to safely play basketball and engage in active play. Of course, none of this is possible without the hard work and dedication of the Jannali East Public School Parents and Citizens Association. I acknowledge the Executive Committee members including, Lyndell De Ridder, Shamus Toomey, Heather Nash, Ajshe Pritchard, Rebecca Kelly and Kelly Carter, along with Principal Katherine Horner who has worked collaboratively with the Parents and Citizens Association on this project. I thank all members of the Jannali East Parents and Citizens Association for bringing the importance of this project to my attention and look forward to seeing the positive impact it makes for our community.

#### **LEVEL 6 WESTMEAD INNOVATION CENTRE**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—I was honoured to open the new Level 6 Westmead Innovation Centre on July 24th. The University of Sydney's investment will ensure that our current and future medical and nursing professionals have the very best training possible based right in the heart of the Westmead health precinct. Westmead has long been a key centre for training and teaching our health professionals thanks largely to the University of Sydney's commitment not only to Westmead but the region for over 40 years. With new facilities like Level 6 Westmead Innovation Centre, our medical and nursing students are not only being equipped with the most innovative research and training spaces, they are in the best place to seize opportunities and advance their careers. I would like to extend a big thank you to all whose hard work and vision has made this project possible. The continuing collaboration between USYD, WIMA, WSLHD, the Sydney Childrens Hospitals Network and CMRI is delivering fantastic results for our community. I look forward to seeing the magic continue in the precinct as those who train, and work there improve the lives of those in our community and around the globe.

#### **2023 MUSWELLBROOK BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I want to acknowledge all entrants in the Muswellbrook Business Awards presented in early-June. A high number of entries were received from Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce members across the nine award categories. Entries were judged and scored in two parts including written submissions and a face-to-face interview with judges at the entrant's place of business. The awards culminated in a gala awards presentation dinner at Muswellbrook RSL Club attended by nearly 200 guests. Business of the Year was Hunter Belle Cheese with Tania and Geoff Chesworth also rewarded with the Excellence in Tourism Award. Lavinia Hutchison acknowledged as the Outstanding Business Leader. The Royal Hotel Muswellbrook recognised for Excellence in Large Business. A Corp Computers won Excellence in Small Business as well as having Alexander Slade named Outstanding Young Business Leader. EkulPoint collected Excellence in Micro Business and the Outstanding New Member was Muswellbrook Laundrette. Hollydene Estate won the title for Outstanding Business Presentation and/or Customer Experience. Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music named Outstanding Community Organisation, Best & Less Muswellbrook collected Outstanding Resilience and Commitment to Community – and Radio Hunter Valley (Power FM & 2NM) presented with the Making Muswellbrook Award.

#### **BRANXTON PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION WEEK AWARDS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Education Week 2023 celebrates 175 years of Public Education in NSW and I want to add my congratulations to the Branxton Public School recipients of the Rutherford Learning Community Awards. Congratulations, Prue Dennis on your recognition for Excellence in Teaching. The Outstanding Contribution by a Non-Teaching member of staff presented to Julie Cassidy. I acknowledge Bek Keast on being recognised for an Outstanding Contribution by a School Community Member to the school and/or region. The Aboriginal Education Achievement Award for an Aboriginal student was presented to Jaxon Legg. Ivy Grozdki received the Excellence in Student Achievement Award with the School Achievement Award going to the Branxton Public School Gardening Club. To all award recipients, enjoy the recognition for your efforts on this significant anniversary for public education in NSW. Branxton Public School celebrated Education Week with a full school assembly on 2 August 2023.

#### **2023 SINGLETON BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Congratulations to Singleton Business Awards recipients announced at Singleton Civic Centre on July 1st. Not-for-profit, Star Club Equestrian Program for people with an intellectual disability awarded Business of the Year and recognised for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion. Morgan Engineering collected two awards for Excellence in Innovation and Excellence in Large Business. Winners also progressing to the Business Hunter Awards include Australian Army School of Infantry Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Thapthimthong, in Business Leader of the Year. Singleton's Employee of the Year, Mary-Ann Holland, and Jess Stewart, the Young Business Leader of the Year. Singleton Neighbourhood Centre crowned Outstanding Community Organisation and SportsPower for Excellence in Small Business. Meyn Street Meats won Excellence in Retail, HSV Heaven named People's Choice for Best Customer Service, Wake Ag Contracting awarded Excellence in Agriculture with Hollydene Estate winning Excellence in

Hospitality and Tourism. The President's Award recognised Bulga Coal for supporting Bulga and Broke during the July 2022 flooding emergency. Business longevity, Milestone Awards, to HVL Group and Ariel Conveyancing for 25 years and Pit Express for 30 years. Fundraising during the event for the Rotary Australia Hunter Valley Bus Tragedy Appeal raised over \$3,700.

#### **MOOCOBOOLA'S BACK**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove)**—Moocooboola is an annual community festival held in Hunters Hill. On Sunday it will be the first time it has been celebrated in three years back in its natural home, Boronia Park Oval! The festival is organized by the Hunters Hill Council and celebrates the local community, culture, and environment. It typically includes a range of activities, entertainment, live music, food stalls, and community showcases. Moocooboola provides a wonderful opportunity for residents, visitors, and local businesses to come together and enjoy a day of fun and celebration. The festival showcases the unique spirit and identity of Hunters Hill, fostering a sense of community pride and unity. We would like to extend our heartfelt recognition and appreciation to the Hunters Hill Council and its Mayor Zac Miles for their unwavering dedication to provide such a vibrant event.

#### **DOMREMY MUSICAL: THE ADDAMS FAMILY**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—On 21 and 22 June, students from Domremy College Five Dock performed the musical, The Addams Family. With months of rehearsals and so much effort from students, teachers, and parents, I am glad to see creative arts thriving in schools. Congratulations to Estelle Nunes, Cassidy Morris, Maria Kouknas, Sofia Taravel, Mila Faine, Stephanie Maguire, Tahlia Hayashi, Georgia Kelly, Lana Vidovic, Grace Campbell, Emelie Covic, Isabella Colussi, Bridget Duggan, Chloe Low, Sophia Mauro, Mariam Hammoud, Vianna Lu, Mary Nu Vuong Phan, Myra Banerjee, Christina Porter, Alicia Barresi-Smerdel, Elissa Barzan, Allanah Roche, Alessandra Bianchi, Ashley Kim, Lucia Baysari, Bella Blake, Sarah Banoob, Lucia Christophoratos, Isabella Colubriale, Sophia Denina, Olivia Denny, Lilly Fernandez, Isabella Haramis, Sienna Hayashi, Siena Kelly, Veronic Mifsud, Katherine Nicolaou, Sophia Pollicina, Trish Powter, Isabel Revello, Anastasia Sakoulas, Sofia Savelyeva, Roxi Trueba, Zoe Vlahos for your hard work and an incredible performance, as well as all teachers and students involved behind the scenes, I know many were looking forward to the musical. I also wish to congratulate Domremy College Principal Mrs. Antoinette McGahan on her support of creative arts within her school, and Mrs Julie Mathers on a wonderful production. Congratulations to all involved.

#### **VELANI**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—Congratulations to Velani, a small business located in Five Dock for creating wonderful dresses for popular Australian entertainment industry figures to wear at the TV Week Logie Awards held on Sunday night. The amazing woman behind Velani, Nicky Apostopoulos designed dresses for Sarah Harris, Sophie Monk, Emily Symons, Georgie Parker, Samantha Armytage, Michelle Lim Davidson, Angela Bishop OAM and Katie Robertson. Nicky is an extremely talented woman who has been in business for over 30 years. She has designed and made dresses for brides to sparkle on their special day, couture gowns for red carpets and special occasions, and children's Christening gowns. Nicki has previously created showstopping evening gowns for stars including Kate Ritchie, Delta Goodrem, Ada Nicodemou, Miranda Tapsell, Samantha Jade, Amanda Keller and Natalie Barr. Her gowns have graced many red carpets nationally at the Logie Awards, Dally M Awards and Brownlow Awards and notably internationally at the Oscars. All dresses are dreamed up, sewn and fitted at the Velani atelier in Five Dock with Nicky and her dedicated team in the sewing 'engine room' upstairs. Congratulations Nicky, you have done our community proud. Thank you for putting Five Dock on the map.

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