

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Tuesday 12 September 2023**

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

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

### *Members*

#### **MEMBER FOR WILLOUGHBY**

**The SPEAKER:** I wish the member for Willoughby many happy returns for his recent birthday.

### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a warm welcome to guests of the member for Oatley: Mr Douglas Yu-tien Hsu, representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Australia, and his wife, Ms Claudia Li-Yun Tu; Mr David Cheng-Wei Wu, director general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Sydney; and other guests with whom I will be meeting later this afternoon. I also welcome to the Chamber Ms Gail Morgan, a guest of the member for Kiama. I welcome back the member for Maitland—it is good to see her back in the Chamber—and acknowledge her guest, Ms Remy Doust, who is undertaking an internship in the member's electorate office. I welcome to the gallery visitors from the Chilean-Australian community, guests of the member for Liverpool. I also welcome guests of the member for Cootamundra from Sacred Heart High School, who are seated in the upstairs gallery. Unfortunately their member is unwell today and not with us in the Chamber. Finally, I acknowledge my guests, members of Westlakes Macquarie National Servicemen's Association. I also welcome His Holiness Brahmishi Shree Kumar Swami Ji.

### *Announcements*

#### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS**

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

### *Bills*

#### **DRUG MISUSE AND TRAFFICKING AMENDMENT (APPOINTED PERSONS) BILL 2023**

##### **Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

### *Announcements*

#### **ROUTINE OF BUSINESS**

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members that according to the resolution of the House dated 24 August 2023, question time will occur after I take the chair at 12 noon on Tuesdays and general business notices of motions will occur after question time and the associated routine of business.

#### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FACEBOOK PAGE**

**The SPEAKER (12:05):** I am pleased to announce that the Legislative Assembly has now launched its new Facebook page to provide reliable and timely information directly from the Chamber and our committees to the public. I encourage all members to follow this new page.

#### **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS**

**The SPEAKER (12:06):** I inform the House that an official photograph of the Fifty-Eighth Parliament will be taken immediately prior to question time tomorrow. The House in session photograph is a longstanding tradition of the House that memorialises the composition of each Parliament after the official opening, along with

parliamentary staff who are routinely involved in sittings of the House. I ask members to take their allocated seats in the Chamber promptly before 11.00 a.m.

*Bills*

**ICAC AND LECC LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023**  
**REVENUE, FINES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023**  
**DRUG MISUSE AND TRAFFICKING AMENDMENT (APPOINTED PERSONS) BILL 2023**

**Assent**

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

*Question Time*

**POLICE TASER USE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (12:08):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. On 1 September the Minister's office responded to a Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 [GIPAA] request for documents created between 17 and 31 May regarding the tasering of Mrs Clare Nowland on 17 May. Although the Minister has told Parliament that she was told on 17 May and let the Premier's office know on the same day, why has her office not produced a single document, redacted or not, created between 17 and 19 May?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (12:09):** The first premise of the member's question is right. I have answered this question repeatedly and publicly. I knew on 17 May. I am not sure what more I can tell you. You have put in a GIPAA request and you have received every document covered by the GIPA Act. I am not sure what more the Leader of the Opposition wants me to do. It is very clear to me that he does not understand the Act. I have provided all of the information that has been requested. There is no other information; there is nothing further to produce. I am not sure why there is this continued attack on the New South Wales police, because there is nothing further to tell.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. I am not asking the Minister to explain what she thinks my understanding of the GIPA Act is or is not.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Clearly you need assistance.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** If the Minister's extraordinary proposition is that there are no documents created between 17 May and 19 May, that is how she should answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the context of the question and the concept of direct relevance. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will answer the question directly.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I have answered the question. In accordance with the GIPA Act, I have provided the information as lawfully as I am instructed to do.

**Mr Ray Williams:** But not honestly.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I note that interjection. There is no dishonesty in this.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Give up the information.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** It has been provided.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Kick him out. Calling me dishonest—kick him out now. There is no more information. I have answered the question. There is no further information to come from my office. If I had further information I would have done what was asked of me because I am open, I am honest and I am telling the truth.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Kellyville to order for the second time.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (12:11):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on what options there are available to ensure that we have reliable, secure and renewable energy and on the actions the Government is taking to get the energy road map back on track?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (12:12):** It is a very good and an important question for New South Wales. The New South Wales Government is committed to producing 33 terawatts worth of renewable energy in New South Wales by 2030. That is a massive undertaking via renewable energy and it requires investment by the private sector in renewable zones. By any objective measure, any independent analysis will indicate that the previous energy Minister's Renewable Energy Zone Roadmap was way off track, over time and over budget in every respect. He was the self-described greatest environment Minister in Australia's history. At the end of the day, the New South Wales Government has made interventions relating to renewable energy to keep costs low, to keep renewable energy pumping and to ensure that the lights stay on in New South Wales.

That is why we have committed \$800 million to the Transmission Acceleration Facility, bringing that investment to \$2 billion. We have come good on our election campaign commitment to generate and establish the Energy Security Corporation with \$1 billion for storage and battery technology for dispatchable power. Admittedly, we will engage with the private owners of Eraring Power Station in order to keep the lights on during the transition period. That is extremely important in New South Wales. This morning that decision met with support by upper House member the Hon. Sam Faraway. He was interviewed on 2MC Bathurst and was asked, "How about Eraring? What do you think about the extension?" He said, "Well, they have no choice, Tim. They have no choice."

That was interesting, but it was immediately contradicted by the member for North Shore. She said, "The Government should listen to market operator AEMO, which said New South Wales would meet reliability targets without an extension to Eraring." That was her view in contradiction of the Hon. Sam Faraway. There was another intervention from the member for the Upper Hunter, who said, "I want to work with AGL to ensure that Bayswater remains operational." Forget Eraring; we are on to the next coal-fired power station. Then there is the member for Willoughby.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** In August last year he said, "I will continue to make the case for nuclear energy in New South Wales." Forget coal; he is on to nuclear. The member for Vacluse also jumped in. She said, "First small modular nuclear reactor approved for commercial use in the US. Quite a game changer." That was interesting. It is a controversial view in Vacluse. [*Extension of time*]

**The SPEAKER:** The member for North Shore will calm down.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The quote from the member for Vacluse was deleted, but it was for small-scale nuclear technology. Upper House member the Hon. Wes Fang said:

... I said that I would have a nuclear reactor in my backyard if it was one of the small modular reactors.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will resume his seat. The Clerk will stop the clock. It is early in question time and there have not been many points of order so far. Government backbenchers will come to order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It is great to see the Premier's media team is working hard, but that is not the question. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question was about the actions the Government is taking, not about the opinions that others may have on the matter.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The Hon. Wes Fang said he would have one in his backyard, confirming his status as the worst next-door neighbour in Australia. Then the former Minister for Energy, Matt Kean, said that the Federal Coalition should stop "chasing unicorns" when it comes to nuclear power in New South Wales. The Leader of the Opposition is for Eraring, saying, "I think it needs to be extended." But he also said that there is a huge margin of comfort, and there is a reliability standard that has not been met. As a result we do not quite know what his view is. The one person who did not comment at all is the shadow Minister for Energy. He did not say anything.

What we have here is one member who supports coal-fired power, one who wants more coal-fired power, one who does not want any coal-fired power, one who wants nuclear power, and someone who will not tell us what his view is at the end of the day. That is the Coalition policy when it comes to energy in New South Wales. The Opposition wants energy policy back in New South Wales—seven different hands reaching for the steering

wheel, seven different feet reaching for the accelerator, seven different feet reaching for the brake, all at the same time, driving this policy right off the road. On this side of the House, there is a consistent, fact-based road map to get the renewable energy pipeline back on track.

#### TEACHER WAGES

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (12:18):** My question is directed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. What is the cost of the proposed teacher salary increase and what offsets have been identified to pay for this increase?

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will come to order. The member for Riverstone will settle down.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:18):** I thank the member for her question. I know that the teachers and their families in her electorate of Vaucluse welcome a pay rise for the first time in 12 years. These men and women are dear to our hearts. I acknowledge the very hard work of the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Education, and Government members who have been advocating for a very long time. I also acknowledge all the primary and secondary teachers who have done a phenomenal job, particularly over the past couple of years throughout the COVID pandemic. Throughout our time in government and in opposition, the Minister for Education has spoken about the vacancies that exist because the merged classes—

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. The Opposition appreciates how hardworking our teachers are. That was not the question. The question—

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will come to order. The Clerk will stop the clock. Government members will cease interjecting. They are being completely unreasonable. The member for Vaucluse will be heard in silence.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** The relevance is the financial management. That is the point the Opposition is raising. What is the cost and what offsets have there been?

**The SPEAKER:** I note that we are close to halfway through the time allocated for the answer. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be directly relevant.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I appreciate the Dorothy Dixier, but the 95,000 teachers of this State were let down by Opposition members who did absolutely nothing for 12 years. The teachers of this State were the worst paid in this country.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Wahroonga rises on a point of order. The Minister will resume her seat.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Mr Speaker, the Minister is flouting your ruling and is not directly relevant—costs and offsets.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister is flouting my ruling. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be directly relevant to the question.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I apologise for flouting your ruling, Mr Speaker, but I am very excited about this fantastic agreement—and everyone will hear more in the budget in a week's time. Today this State's teachers are the highest paid in Australia, and they deserve their pay rise.

#### HEALTHCARE WORKERS

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (12:22):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Government is working to reinvest in our frontline health workers?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:22):** I thank the member for Leppington for his advocacy for his community and the broader south-west Sydney community as well. I know that all Government members, and I think all members of the House, strive to enter Parliament to make a difference to the lives of the citizens that we are very fortunate to represent. When a member gets the honour to be a Minister, they are able to influence and have an impact on lives across New South Wales. Over the past couple of weeks the Government has made some significant inroads to the way in which we will rebuild and reform the State's health services. We will do that by repairing our budget and delivering funding back into our essential services and essential workers.

I inform the House of a number of key initiatives the Government has been working on over the past few months and which have come to a head over the past few weeks. The State has entered an historic agreement with

the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association to transform the way in which we staff our hospitals across New South Wales. That is the largest reform of the way in which the State staffs its hospitals in well over a decade. The previous system based on nursing hours per patient per day is out of date. We need to move to a safe staffing model. That will see an injection over the next four years of 1,200 additional nurses and midwives.

More importantly, we will start focusing hospitals towards a shift-by-shift basis, starting in our emergency departments and then moving to other parts of the hospital. It will be the single biggest reform in the way in which we resource and staff our hospitals. There will be challenges along the way because reform like this has never been done. Never before have we had a health system staffed and rostered in this way. I will continue to work with the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association, and I thank the association for its advocacy on behalf of its members, to ensure that the reform is delivered for the benefits of patients and healthcare workers across New South Wales.

We have also entered into an historic agreement with over 50,000 members of the Health Services Union, some of the lowest paid members of the health services profession, to make sure that when they are engaging in salary sacrifice they start to give back the benefits and it is not split between the government and them, which it has been since the early 2000s. This reform is 20 years overdue. It will see a cleaner on around \$55,000 per year get an extra \$14 to \$15 a week in their salary packet. *[Extension of time]*

This is about making sure everyone in the healthcare services get the benefits. I make no apology for focusing on some of the lowest paid workers who deliver the healthcare services that hospitals rely on to keep the doors open. A hospital cannot be kept open if it is not clean. A hospital cannot be kept open if patients cannot be fed. A hospital cannot be kept open if patients and their families and staff cannot be secured. This is a landmark reform that I am extremely proud of and one that the Government will be focusing on going forward.

Today the Minister for Women, the member for Summer Hill and I also made a significant announcement to reform women's healthcare services and healthcare centres. For the first time since the 1980s, the Government will be delivering record funding of \$34 million over the next four years to 20 services across New South Wales servicing the most vulnerable people in the community. That will deliver real benefits, real healthcare outcomes and real improvements to the lives of people fleeing domestic violence, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, those with mental health issues and those who are not always in a position to access normal medical services.

I thank everyone who has advocated for the reform, particularly Government members. It was an important election commitment, and the budget will start to deliver on that. We need to have a continuum of healthcare workers. Today the Government also announced that over the course of the next five years, 12,000 healthcare professionals will be given subsidised professional degrees to make sure the State has a pipeline of healthcare workers that the system needs and that patients deserve in the future. We have a lot more to do, but I thank Government members for their incredible advocacy and I thank healthcare workers who deliver our essential health services every day.

#### SYDNEY AIRPORT REGIONAL FLIGHT SLOTS

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (12:27):** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport regarding the current review of the Sydney Airport Demand Management Scheme, with specific reference to the so-called "regional ring fence" for slots allocated to regional airlines. That guarantee was won out of the original privatisation process and has been under threat many times in the years since. Will the Minister advocate to the Commonwealth to preserve those slots and make clear the New South Wales position on keeping the slots at Kingsford Smith airport and not moving them to another airport in Western Sydney?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:28):** I thank the member for Barwon for his question, and I acknowledge his continued advocacy for regional aviation carriers' access to Sydney Airport. As the member is aware, the Federal Government is responsible for the regulation of slots at Sydney Airport, including those for regional services. Following a Productivity Commission inquiry into the economic regulation of airports in 2019, the former Morrison Government announced a review of the Sydney Airport Demand Management Scheme. That scheme, along with the management of movement caps at Sydney Airport and curfews, provides a guaranteed number of slots for New South Wales regional services. The practice of allocating designated slots for regional services is known as the "regional ring fence". The review in 2020 noted that the Sydney Airport Slot Management Scheme did not reflect contemporary practices, and the final review report released in 2021 included several recommendations to drive greater flexibility in managing the regional ring fence.

The Federal department has been conducting technical working groups to refine the details and understand the impacts of the review recommendations. This consultation and review will inform the remaking of parts of

the legislation governing the management of the scheme that are due to expire from April next year. The Federal transport and infrastructure Minister, Catherine King, will respond to that report and the recommendations before that time. I assure the member for Barwon and, indeed, all members that the New South Wales Government absolutely understands the vital connection that air services provide to regional communities, particularly to communities like the ones that the member represents.

**Mr Steve Whan:** The Nats want to give them to Qatar Airways. Outrageous!

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** We're not going there.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Monaro to order for the first time. Members will come to order.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** These services are absolutely essential for people who want or need to seek medical appointments. They are essential for businesses. They are essential for social services. They mean that the constituents of Barwon can make a daytrip to Sydney rather than have the additional cost of overnight accommodation. We support the growth of regional aviation in New South Wales and the preservation of the regional ring fence at Sydney Airport. Maintaining the regional ring fence ensures that regional communities that rely on aviation will continue to have access to Australia's busiest airport, Kingsford Smith airport. Ring fence slots provide an important protection for rural and regional communities. [*Extension of time*]

That access, particularly slots in the morning and the evening, provide the opportunity for same-day travel. It is very important for people to be able to come to Sydney to see a doctor, to see a specialist or to attend a meeting without having to organise overnight accommodation that is an additional cost for them as well as for businesses. We need the access not only for the efficiency of our economy but also to look after people in regional communities. We have to make sure that the investment in Western Sydney Airport does not undermine the opportunity for those communities to fly into Kingsford Smith airport.

The opening of the Western Sydney Airport in 2026 will provide an opportunity for increased aviation connections and capacity to Sydney and the rest of the State. However, the Federal Government's recently released *Aviation Green Paper* suggests that there will be a period of operations before it determines the appropriate regulations. Given that approach to Western Sydney Airport, it is absolutely essential that we retain the ring fence at Sydney Airport. On that basis, we will be urging the Federal Government to continue to provide a fair level of access to Sydney Airport for regional communities. In March this year our Government was elected to represent all communities across this State. I will continue to stand with the member for Barwon and all members that represent regional communities to make sure that their constituents get fair access to Sydney Airport so that they can access the essential services that they need.

#### PARAMEDIC WAGES

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (12:33):** My question is directed to the Minister for Industrial Relations. Last week the Government caved in to union demands to announce large pay increases for teachers. Why will it not give paramedics the same deal?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order: Under Standing Order 128, questions are not to contain argument, ironical expression or matters of opinion. The question by the member for Hornsby probably offends against all three points. If the member has a question, he should ask it without commentary.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. The member for Hornsby will redress the problems with his question, which I am sure he can do quite quickly.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** My question is directed to Minister for Industrial Relations. Last week her Government announced large pay increases for teachers. Why will she not give paramedics the same deal?

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:34):** I would like to know what members opposite did in government. They did nothing. The Minns Labor Government is systematically working through industrial relations reform. We are negotiating and we are talking. The door is open. We are sitting down and we are listening. We are working through things systematically and methodically in a considered way. What did those opposite do? They imposed a draconian 2.5 per cent wages cap in 2011. On 1 September it expired.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Point of order: My point of order is direct relevance under Standing Order 129. The Government does not need to negotiate to give paramedics the same deal. The question is why it will not give them the same deal.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister will resume her answer.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** The Minns Labor Government is in negotiations with public sector unions and is bargaining in good faith. We are sitting down and negotiating.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** There are some excellent ideas from paramedics and health workers—

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I'm excited.

**The SPEAKER:** I know you are. You are way too excited. I need to hear the point of order from the member for Hornsby.

**Mr Matt Kean:** My point of order is on relevance under Standing Order 129. Why will paramedics not get the same deal that was offered to teachers?

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. Government members will come to order.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** I welcome the question from the member for Hornsby and his interest in his local paramedics. That is a good thing. We will take his feedback into consideration, but we are negotiating in good faith with all public sector unions. As a government we made a commitment that we would remove the wages cap, and on 1 September the draconian cap was removed.

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

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS:** We are listening. We are sitting down and negotiating. We are working through the 12 years of stagnating conditions under the previous Government. I am excited about award reform. As an industrial relations nerd, I cannot wait. The award reform is fantastic. It means stability. *[Time expired.]*

#### TEACHER WAGES

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:37):** Mr Speaker, you are looking well.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** And you are doing a good job—other than the error you made a couple of minutes ago.

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

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Can the Deputy Premier outline to the House how this Government's historic pay rise for teachers will address the teacher shortage crisis?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (12:38):** I certainly can, and I am delighted to do so. I thank the member for Cessnock for his question. He is one of many former chalkies in this place. This is an historic week because finally the people of New South Wales have a government that supports teachers. As we have heard from the member for Cessnock, the Minns Labor Government is delivering the biggest uplift in teachers' wages in a generation. After years of suppressed wages and being undervalued by members opposite, teachers are finally getting the respect and recognition they deserve.

This Labor Government is taking New South Wales teachers from being amongst the worst paid to the best paid in the country. In doing so we are aiming to finally break the back of the teacher shortage crisis in this State, which is the whole point, to ensure that we have the right amount of teachers to improve student outcomes. This historic pay rise means that on 9 October—the first day of term 4—starting salaries will increase for beginning teachers by about 12 per cent to \$85,000. Teachers at the top of the scale will rise by 8 per cent to about \$122,000. Pay scales will be completely overhauled, meaning more rapid progression over the first seven years. It has been over 30 years since teachers in New South Wales have received this sort of pay rise. There is a clear reason that we had to act. As I have said to the teachers of New South Wales many times, pay is a function of respect. This pay rise demonstrates just how much this Government and our community values teaching as a profession in society. It goes a long way to restoring the value of teaching.

We cannot break the back of the crisis we face with merged classes, vacancy rates, cancelled classes, hundreds of kids in covered outdoor learning areas and on basketball courts being minimally supervised if we do not address the pay question. Sadly, it seems that those opposite are still opposed to valuing teachers. In fact, it is very confusing where they stand on this topic. I note that the member for Vacluse acknowledged earlier just how hardworking teachers are. Someone should tell that to the Hon. Bronnie Taylor and the Hon. Damien Tudehope,

or start by telling the former Minister and the now shadow Minister, who on radio a few days ago refused to properly value or pay teachers. She said:

We haven't heard anything from this government in relation to increasing teacher supply. They seem to have put all their eggs in one basket which is all about salary increases.

[*Extension of time*]

I thank the House for its indulgence. That statement is quite confusing. According to the former Minister, are we supposed to expect that increasing salaries has nothing to do with attracting teachers? Come on! It is simple maths, straight from the Barnaby Joyce school of logic. I remind the House that that is the same person who said that teacher shortages did not keep her up at night and that they were a beat up and something that she was not overly concerned about. It is a no-brainer. Everyone knows that. I bet members' constituents are telling them that as well. Pay is essential to any effort to attract and retain our wonderful, quality teachers.

But we still do not really know the position of members opposite on pay rises for essential workers. We have been further confused in question time today. What is their position? Will they stand up and say that they support it? I do not know if members are familiar with the Roald Dahl book *Matilda*, but the Hon. Damien Tudehope is sort of like the Miss Trunchbull of New South Wales politics. He said that teachers only deserved a pay rise if they lifted their game. Does he have any concept of how much pressure teachers in New South Wales are under? Then the Deputy-Deputy Deputy Leader of The Nationals—or whatever they are—upstairs, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor, who said—

When you get a pay rise, you normally need to do a bit more.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. That is all very fascinating, but it is not in answer to the question. It is not directly relevant. The question is about the Government's policy; it is not about alternative use.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. I have said previously that if Ministers are directly relevant at the beginning of their answer, they are given some latitude later to expand on their remarks. The Minister is being directly relevant. The Minister has the call.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I will talk every day about what this Government is doing for teachers. The Hon. Bronnie Taylor said:

When you get a pay rise, you normally need to do a bit more.

That is from someone who wants a pay rise for herself but no pay rise for teachers.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order—

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

[*Interruption*]

I apologise for the confusion. I call the member for Shellharbour.

#### RESTART NSW FUND

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (12:45):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Roads and Transport. Will the Minister update the House on the Restart NSW Fund and how it will spend on projects?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (12:46):** It is great to be back. I really enjoyed watching Parliament on television, but I am glad to be in the Chamber. I thank the member for Shellharbour for her question. The member and Parliamentary Secretary for Roads is concerned about regional communities, having lived in one. I was shocked when I heard about this. I cannot say I was shocked, because it is normal behaviour from The Nationals, but it is shocking behaviour. I was looking at the news. The bastion of budget intelligence from the other place, the Hon. Sam Farraway, will be talking about the budget next week. It has been quite interesting. He spoke about—

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. The Clerk will stop the clock.



**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** We can put up with jokes if they are funny, but this level of harassment of members in the other place is not.

**The SPEAKER:** Government members will come to order. I am not sure what the point of order is. I understand that the member for Coffs Harbour took umbrage on behalf of a member from the other place. I ask the Minister to be more careful with her introductory comments.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I take harassment very seriously, having been harassed and belittled a lot in this Chamber by members opposite. I do not want to harass the honourable member. When members talk about what is in and what is out of the budget, they have to put into context that they had \$98 million—unfunded—for the Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card. They are creating a petition on the regional seniors travel card, which they never managed to get Parliamentary Budget Office [PBO] costing for. Also, if members look at the PBO costing for the last election, there were zero dollars—donuts—for the next time—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. If the member is going to talk about PBO funding, what has she done with her funding?

**The SPEAKER:** That is not the appropriate way to take a point of order. The member for Dubbo will be more considered in the way he takes points of order. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** There are donuts for the 2024-25 financial year because members opposite did not put any money in the budget. I will not be lectured by them, particularly the former Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, about how to run the budget because he has no credibility when it comes to budgets. How do we know that? Fundamentally—back to the member's question—very well. We have had the cat belled—\$1.46 billion stolen from Restart by The Nationals. Those opposite—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will resume her seat.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** I make a number of points. One is misleading the House.

*[Government members interjected.]*

Do you understand what Restart actually is?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will not debate the Minister's answer.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** My other point is made under Standing Order 73.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order under Standing Order 73. The claim of misleading the House is drawing a long bow.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

I think we can probably let the comment pass and not attach the worst connotation to it. The Minister will resume her answer.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That money had been stolen from Restart and from the pockets of regional New South Wales residents. I thought about this a lot, and I thought to myself that there are about three million people in regional New South Wales—2,859,257, to be precise for those opposite. Those opposite ripped \$500 per person in regional New South Wales. They dipped into the pocket of every man, woman and child in regional New South Wales and said, "No, we're not going to spend this money on you." What did they get for it? What have they got to show?

**Ms Anna Watson:** I seek an extension of time.

**The SPEAKER:** I am slightly challenged about allowing additional time. However, on this occasion I grant an extension of two minutes. I ask the Minister to ensure that her answer is relevant.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is absolutely relevant, Mr Speaker. It is \$1.46 billion. Over \$500 was ripped from the pocket of every man, woman and child in regional New South Wales. It had been promised to them under the legislation, and that lot opposite let it go to—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** We are now three minutes and 20 seconds into the Minister's answer. The question was about how the Minister is going to spend the money. Does the Minister have some projects that she will actually—

**The SPEAKER:** No—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** The question related to spending.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** You just mentioned it yourself, Mr Speaker.

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** There has been \$20 billion in cost blowouts on projects, transport and other infrastructure and the metro at the expense of our regional communities. I was out in those regional communities just last week. The lack of funding out there for projects that are game changers has been disgraceful. Not only did those opposite steal that money—

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Remember, we had the \$80.3 million that got taken out of Fixing Country Roads that you got back because of me. You got it because I pushed for it. What about the money you stole from the taxi drivers? Now you want to be oxygen thieves. This is a problem with the National Party. They are oxygen thieves. It is just talk, talk, talk. Show us the money! We want the money.

**Mr Gurmeh Singh:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Gurmeh Singh:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 73. Is that language permissible in this House now, Mr Speaker?

**The SPEAKER:** The point of order cannot be sustained under Standing Order 73. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is a pretty common vernacular, when you just want to talk and talk over the top of people: oxygen thieves. That is what you are. Give us back our \$1.46 billion. Give us the money. [*Time expired.*]

#### SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT FOR NSW

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (12:53):** My question is directed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Was the Minister consulted on the appointment of Josh Murray as Secretary of Transport for NSW?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (12:54):** I thank the member for her interesting question, which is great to hear. I am very happy with the new transport secretary. I have met with Josh—

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will resume her seat. I note that it is very early in the Minister's answer but I will hear the Leader of the Opposition's point of order.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question is not "Is this Minister happy?" It is "Was she consulted?" Or is she completely irrelevant?

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, I ask that you ask the Opposition leader to withdraw that comment. It is unparliamentary, and he should withdraw it. He knows what he said. He should withdraw it.

[*Opposition members interjected.*]

You set the standard that you walk past. You set the standard.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Swansea will resume her seat. While I am fairly close to the action, I am completely in the dark as to whether anything was said that may have caused offence. I will hear further from the member later. I remind members that the Minister has only just commenced her answer. Members cannot anticipate what she might say. It would be totally unreasonable to rule that she has not yet been directly relevant

when she is only 20 seconds into her answer and was making introductory remarks. I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister will return to the question.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I have been away for a few weeks, and that was the first question that I had. I know there was feedback from the other side that I was a bit too far into it. So I took the feedback, and I thought I would be nice. I was nice about the member for Myall Lakes; I was nice about Josh Murray. I actually really like Josh Murray. I also like the member for Myall Lakes. Let us all calm down, okay? It is all good.

**The SPEAKER:** I have been calling for calm for months.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I know. I am trying to help you so much, Mr Speaker. What I will say is that this place and these portfolios and our Government are really about building transport for the future, and we cannot do that unless we are a team. One of the things that I love about the fact that I have this important portfolio—it is the most important, thanks, Premier—of Regional Transport and Roads is that it is part of a great team, and part of that team is the Minister for Transport. We also have the Minister for Roads, John Graham, in the other place. That is—

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. I will hear the point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business. Government members—particularly frontbench members—will come to order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129 relating to direct relevance. It is a yes or no question. Was the Minister consulted about the appointment, or wasn't she? All we are getting is fluff, and we are not getting a direct answer to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** It is not a yes-or-no answer; we do not have them in this Chamber. However, the Minister is not being directly relevant or even relevant. The Minister will assist me by being directly relevant to the question.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Speaker, I do want to do that, but not everything is a big binary thing like that. It is not yes or no. Sometimes we have to look at the situation, and the situation in New South Wales is that we want to deliver the best transport system and road network for the State—

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Point of order—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I want to give the answer, but I want to give the context.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister will resume her seat. The member for Tamworth rises on a point of order.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Mr Speaker, it is—

**The SPEAKER:** Government frontbench members will come to order.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. Was the Minister consulted or not?

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Tamworth. I have ruled that the Minister must return to the leave of the question and be directly relevant. She has not achieved that yet. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Speaker, it is still within the leave of the question, because I am talking about how we as a group of Ministers within the Minns Labor Government, which is a team-oriented—

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

When those opposite were in government, they did not even have each other's mobile phones. They did not call each other. They could not have joint briefings in the transport portfolio. It was a joke.

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** If the member wants to ask for an extension of time, I will give a yes-or-no answer.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume her seat. The member for Oatley will get the Minister a glass of water.

#### BUS SERVICES

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (12:59):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on what actions have been taken to address the crisis in bus services inherited from the former Government?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (13:00):** I thank the member for Coogee, and Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, for her continued advocacy for bus services. We know in this House and in our community how hard she has been working when it comes to buses.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will resume her seat. The Manager of Opposition Business rises on a point of order. May I please have a copy of the question?

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I take a point of order under Standing Order 128 (2) (b). The question is argumentative.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I have heard enough. I have read the question. I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister will continue her answer.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** I thank the member for Coogee because, like so many members in this place, she is dealing with the mess left by the former Government and nowhere is it more apparent in the transport system than in our bus network. We have seen the privatisation of our bus services and we have been left with an absolute mess. When we came into office, the community was experiencing record cancellations across Greater Sydney. In fact, we inherited a record driver shortage, with 500 vacancies of bus drivers across our Greater Sydney region.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** We have also discovered that private operators were appointed by members opposite who had zero experience in running bus contracts in our city.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Why is that so important?

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Because buses play a crucial role in helping us move our communities.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** In fact, more than 44 per cent of trips taken on public transport are taken on a bus. Buses do the heavy lifting in our public transport system. But, as we have seen reported in the Telegraph and the Herald today, those opposite put an absolute wrecking ball through our bus services. They hurt the industry. They also put profit before passengers.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question was about "actions". We are now two-thirds of the way into the answer and we have not heard one single bit of action—that is, apart from employing a spin doctor to run the agency.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** The fact is that it is uncomfortable for the Leader of the Opposition. The fact is that the government that he was a part of signed up to contracts that were not capable of delivering services, which has resulted in passengers being left on the side of the road. Those contracts that they signed do not work for passengers, bus operators and bus drivers. It is one of the many reasons why, on coming to office, we established the Bus Industry Taskforce.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Oatley will come to order. I call the member for Oatley to order for the first time.

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** That taskforce involves the bus operators, the community and passengers, and our workforce. *[Extension of time]*

That taskforce has been charged with helping us improve the reliability, quality and effectiveness of the bus services that our communities need. I have already outlined to the House that the taskforce has released its first report. The Government has accepted all the recommendations in that report. We have already started to deliver on several of those recommendations, including launching a sector-wide recruitment campaign. I am pleased to report to the House that there are 144 drivers now in training. They are the green shoots. We will start to see those vacancies falling. Those opposite may well call the report a waste of money, but I doubt that the shadow transport Minister would agree when we are talking about recruiting bus drivers. The fact is that members opposite could have foreseen this driver shortage. In fact, the report makes very clear that they knew about it but failed to do anything about it.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** They failed to deal with the problems that are confronting our community. The report also reveals that the former Government promised to grow the bus network when they privatised it. They said that they would invest the savings from privatisation in the new services that were required, particularly in the growing suburbs of Western Sydney. But what did they do? They quietly banked those savings and forgot to add any new services for the growth areas of Western Sydney. Those opposite might say that the report is a waste of money, but it is absolutely revealing the truth—and the passengers of Western Sydney would agree. The other thing it reveals is that they failed to invest in basic technology that would tell passengers where their bus services were. Members like the member for Wakehurst, for example, would really like his passengers to be able to know when a bus is coming. The fact is that we are getting on with fixing the mess that those opposite left us. [*Time expired.*]

#### REGIONAL SENIORS TRAVEL CARD

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (13:05):** My question is directed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and member for Maitland. When does the Minister plan to tell the 8,368 seniors in her electorate that their regional seniors travel cards are about to be cancelled?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (13:06):** I thank the member for his question. I really appreciate it. I love the little campaign that you guys are doing.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Every regional electorate, including yours, would probably appreciate it.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It's not a conversation, mate.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister and the member for Dubbo will cease conversing across the table. The Minister will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I have seen these pictures—and we do want the card back, Dugald, because it is important. But the other one that I liked seeing a lot of—actually, I might have given it to someone. I was thinking that there is this nice one of chilled out Barilaro 2.0. Anyway, it is nice that he has got something to campaign on. But the simple fact is that the program has been paused because there was fraud. The reality is that you cannot have a program where you are giving people government payments that are not means tested to a high degree and not distance tested.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. If the Minister is happy to tell the 8,000 people in her electorate that they are fraudulent, I would like to see it.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo cannot introduce a point of order in that manner. He will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The simple fact is that members opposite had an idea of how they were going to get more votes. What they were doing with that card was giving up on providing proper regional transport and doing the proper repairs required on our roads. The program over the last few years has cost—

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

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Goulburn will come to order. The Clerk will stop the clock. I am starting to get pushed by the number of points of order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order is regarding direct relevance. The question was: When does the Minister plan to tell a number of seniors in her electorate that their cards are being cancelled? She seems to be justifying why they are being cancelled, but she has not even gotten close to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Wairoa for his point of order. I draw the Minister's attention to the specifics of the question. The Minister will be directly relevant.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Now that I have heard that again, I must apologise because I reject the whole premise of the question. The cards that people have in their pockets right now have never been cancelled and will not be cancelled. People will have time to spend that money. Government members have said that we will not go further down the path. We have put that program on pause pending further information about how we can clean up The Nationals' mess of giving out money that can be spent on cigarettes, gambling and any other products that are sold at service stations. That is a problem given the Hon. Sam Faraway from the other place talked about how he would expand that project. However, he did not provide money for it in the budget. He did not actually promise anything for it. He did not put forward the Parliamentary Budget Office costings at the last election. It is a complete fake that The Nationals were going to provide this card, because it was not budgeted for. The money for the apprentice card came straight out of the Transport budget.

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The half a billion dollars they spent on that program came out of funding for roads in the region. You are a thief!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maitland to order for the first time. Ministers should be mindful of the clock and not run over time. The Minister had a very good run on that answer.

#### **BUSHFIRE READINESS**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (13:10):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Emergency Services. Will the Minister please update the House on how progress is being made by our emergency services to get through the hazard reduction and back-burning backlog ahead of summer?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:10):** I thank the member for Lismore and Parliamentary Secretary for her question. At the moment her community as well as other communities in northern New South Wales, which are represented by members on all sides of the Chamber, are dealing with fires. They are still recovering from the floods and this is their next challenge. Over the past couple of days people in Sydney in particular would have woken up to the smell and sight of smoke. They would not be alone in thinking that that is problematic; it is problematic.

With a bad bushfire season predicted, there is a very good reason for that smoke, and the reason is simple: We are trying to get ahead as far as we can. I have been up-front on a number of occasions and said that these are the challenges we face as a community as we head into the bushfire season. We knew that we were a long way behind due to circumstances that we could not control. It does not matter which side of the House members are on. We could not do the hazard reduction burns that we needed to do; we could only complete about 20 per cent of them at the start of this financial year. That means we are focusing primarily—with a singular, laser-like focus—on doing as much hazard reduction as we possibly can to be as best prepared as we can as we head into this hot and dry summer. Indeed, later this week we will hit temperatures of 30 degrees to 33 degrees. That will be a reality check about what we face this season.

As a result of the critical work that we are doing at the moment, there is additional smoke haze. I apologise for that. But I am sure people would agree that we would much rather deal with that at the moment than face the consequences of not doing that hazard reduction. I would rather be in a situation where we have a little hazard smoke, rather than telling people that they need to evacuate their homes or that their homes have burnt down. We have had to take this pragmatic approach. I acknowledge not only the RFS but also the other agencies that are assisting in that, including Forestry Corp and national parks. We can do a number of things, but we have only a narrow window in which to do them, so we will do them while the time is right.

I spoke also about the \$10 million that the Government has put into hazard mitigation. A day like today, which is good in terms of weather conditions, is a good time to do hazard reduction burns. But volunteers are not always available. That is why we have gone that next step to employ additional hazard reduction mitigation crews so that whenever the opportunity is there we can do that hazard reduction, not only by back-burning but also by clearing tracks and fire trails. *[Extension of time]*

As we speak, 40 fires are burning in New South Wales, mostly to the west and up north, and a number of planned hazard reductions are taking place. The last time I spoke on this matter I encouraged people to download the Hazards Near Me app, which I again encourage people to download. It is a really simple app. It is like the old Fires Near Me app, but it basically includes any hazards and it links in with the SES as well. It is a really good app. We must make a concerted effort as a parliament to get people to download that app because it indicates not only what hazards are nearby, in terms of whether or not there are planned burns, but also whether there is a bushfire nearby and the condition that it is in at that moment. I encourage people to visit their local RFS this weekend, particularly on Saturday, and to share the message.

The Get Ready Weekend campaign begins this weekend, before we get into the fire season. We know that 38 local government areas are already declared to be in the bushfire danger period. I will suggest four simple tips that members can consider right now, and I encourage all constituents to do the same: trim overhanging trees and shrubs; mow the grass, remove cuttings and have a clear area around the home; make sure to clear and remove debris and leaves from gutters; and prepare a sturdy hose that can reach around the whole house. Government members are doing all we can to ensure that we do not have a situation where we are telling people that we could have done more but we did not. We have the Get Ready Weekend and our RFS volunteers. I take this opportunity to thank our over 70,000 RFS volunteers, who give up their time to support their communities and to support one another. There are many things that I could talk about. I am happy to continue talking about that—

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** —because I know that people are very keen. Today I will be—sorry, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the Minister inadvertently went over his time. I could tell from the excitement in his voice.

#### LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (13:16):** My question is directed to the Premier. In the Government's 2023 pre-electoral commitments, local organisations were nominated by Labor candidates for small funding grants under what is now being called the Local Small Commitments Allocation [LSCA]. What conflict of interest disclosures were given when recipients were nominated, what procedures were put in place to manage any such conflicts and who has the Premier since appointed as the independent probity advisers for the program?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (13:16):** I am happy to answer the question, absolutely.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I thank the member for Balmain for her question. I am happy to report to the House that the Premier's Department has appointed Procurement Co as the independent policy advisers for the LSCA program.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Rockdale will cease interjecting.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Procurement Co has reviewed and provided advice on the guidelines, the LSCA assessment plan and the management of conflicts of interest, as well as guidance documents for Ministers and their staff. Procurement Co was appointed by the Department of Transport in March 2021, under the previous Government, to manage conflicts of interest and go through the procurement guidelines to ensure that promises made in the election campaign for all 93 electorates were complied with, as per Labor's election commitment. I point out to members that this came about precisely because of the rorting of grants by The Nationals. I hate to go after The Nationals because its members seem to be the only ones who are trying at the moment; the Liberal Party has gone to sleep.

I must point out that it is an ignominious record: the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery grants went exclusively to Coalition electorates; the Regional Cultural Fund was worth \$44 million and funded 56 projects in 23 electorates, 20 of which were Coalition electorates; and, of course, who could forget the Stronger Country Communities Fund, under which 96 per cent of the \$250 million in funding went to Coalition electorates. Some communities got money when they did not even ask for it—that is how transparent it was. It was so amazing. Two members opposite—the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Leader of The Nationals—have been quite critical of the LSCA program, which is unwarranted.

**Ms Kobi Shetty:** Point of order: My point of order relates to direct relevance. The grants schemes that the former Government undertook is not what I am keen to hear about. I want to understand what conflict of interest disclosures were given when recipients were nominated.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I answered that straight off the bat. I talked about procurement.

**Ms Kobi Shetty:** Sorry, I did not hear it.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** That is not my fault; members opposite were talking all the way through. The only social media post that we have had from the Leader of the Opposition has been on the Cronulla Cliff Top Walk at Hungry Point, which was a \$7 million pork-barrel promise by the Leader of the Opposition in his own electorate. When it is \$7 million for his own electorate, that is not pork-barrelling, but when it is equally distributed to every electorate in the entire State, somehow that is a breach of the rules. At the end of the day, we want this money to be distributed equally. We think it is reasonable under the circumstances. The Opposition opposes it. We ran on this at the election campaign, and we stand by those procedures.

#### Documents

#### NSW BUSHFIRE INQUIRY

#### Reports

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I table the document entitled *NSW Bushfire Inquiry 2020 Progress Report: Implementation of the NSW Government's response to the NSW Bushfire Inquiry: Reporting Period April to June 2023*.

**INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION****Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 74 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, I announce receipt of the report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled *Investigation into the conduct of three former councillors of former Hurstville City Council, now part of Georges River Council, and others (Operation Galley)*, dated August 2023, received 30 August 2023. I order that the report be printed.

**INSPECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION****Reports**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 77A of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, I announce receipt of the report of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled *Special Report 2023/02: Investigation into the time taken by the ICAC to furnish its Operation Keppel Report to Parliament*, received 30 August 2023. I order that the report be printed.

**ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 146D of the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, I announce receipt of the report of the Environment Protection Authority entitled *NSW Litter Report 2021-22*, dated May 2023, received out of session on 7 September 2023 and authorised to be printed.

**OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, I announce receipt of the following reports:

- (1) Report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations entitled *Bus Safety Investigation Report – Bus Fire m/o9340 – Lane Cove Tunnel, 14 April 2022*, received out of session on 28 August 2023 and authorised to be printed.
- (2) Report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations entitled *Bus Fire Safety Report – Bus Fire and Thermal Incidents in NSW from 2013-2022*, received out of session on 31 August 2023 and authorised to be printed.

**INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with section 19 of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992, I announce receipt of the following reports received out of session on 28 August 2023 and authorised to be printed:

- (1) Report of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled *Review of the NSW Rail Access Undertaking*, dated May 2023.
- (2) Report of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled *Interoperability pricing for Electronic Lodgement Network Operators*, dated June 2023.
- (3) Report of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled *Competitive neutrality in NSW*, dated May 2023.

**THE STAR PTY LTD****Reports**

**The CLERK:** In accordance with the Casino Control Act 1992, I announce receipt of the report entitled *Report on the implementation of recommendations from the Independent Review of The Star Pty Ltd by Adam Bell SC under section 170A of the Casino Control Act 1992*, received out of session on 28 August 2023 and authorised to be printed.

*Committees***LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY****Reference**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety has resolved to conduct an inquiry into e-cigarette



regulation and compliance in New South Wales, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

**COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION  
AND THE CRIME COMMISSION**

**Reference**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the 2023 review of annual and other reports of oversight bodies, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

**LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Reports**

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ:** As Chair: I table the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 3/58*, dated 12 September 2023. I move:

That the report be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Petitions*

**PETITIONS RECEIVED**

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

**Sydney Coastline Artificial Reef**

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly call on the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of an artificial reef by having an ex-navy ship scuttled off the Sydney coastline, received from **Dr Marjorie O'Neill**.

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

*Business of the House*

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: PETITIONS**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:24):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that the paper petition lodged by the member for Port Macquarie be set down for debate on 21 September 2023, and the paper petition lodged by the member for Coojee be set down for debate on 12 October 2023.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (13:25):** The Opposition agrees to the motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: APPROPRIATION AND COGNATE  
BILLS**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:25):** I move:

(1) That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Tuesday 19 September 2023 to:

(a) provide for the following routine of business prior to 3.00 p.m.:

- (i) at 12 noon, Speaker shall take the chair;
- (ii) a Minister, on behalf of the Premier, to introduce the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills;
- (iii) the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC, Treasurer, to be immediately admitted to the House for the purpose of giving a speech of unlimited duration in relation to the New South Wales budget 2023-2024;
- (iv) a Minister, on behalf of the Premier, to move: "That these bills be now read a second time", and after the Minister concludes speaking, debate to be immediately adjourned without motion;
- (v) tabling the 2023-2024 Budget Papers;
- (vi) items 2 to 10 (question time and the associated routine of business) for sitting Tuesdays, with the Speaker to then leave the chair; and
- (vii) Speaker to resume the chair at 3.00 p.m.

- (b) on the Speaker resuming the chair, provide for the giving of general business notices of motions for up to 15 minutes, followed by the remaining standard routine of business for sitting Tuesdays (items 13 to 17).
- (2) That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Thursday 21 September 2023 to provide for:
  - (a) At 10.00 a.m., Speaker shall take the chair;
  - (b) the Leader of the Opposition to speak on the appropriation and cognate bills;
  - (c) following the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, the passage through all remaining stages of the appropriation and cognate bills with the questions "That these bills be now read a second and a third time" being put forthwith, without consideration in detail of the bills;
  - (d) a member, immediately following the passage of the appropriation and cognate bills, to move the motion "That this House take note of the budget estimates and related papers for 2023-2024." After which:
    - (i) the debate is to be adjourned without motion moved; and
    - (ii) the resumption of the debate is to be set down as an order of the day for a later time, with the mover able to speak again prior to their right of reply.
  - (e) The House to proceed with the remaining standard routine of business for sitting Thursdays, with the following exceptions that general business orders of the day for bills may proceed up until 1.20 p.m.; and
  - (f) notwithstanding any of the above, business will be interrupted at 11.00 a.m. for question time and the associated routine of business.
- (3) That a message be sent to the Legislative Council inviting the Treasurer to attend the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday 19 September 2023.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (13:28):** I make a short contribution. A significant insertion within the motion, which we have not seen in this place for over a decade—indeed, it only seems to be Labor governments that do it—is the insertion of permission for the Hon. Daniel Mookhey to be admitted to the House for the purposes of giving a speech of unlimited duration. Mr Speaker, when current Government members were in opposition, they often used to refer to your esteemed predecessor Mr Rozzoli. I will read onto the *Hansard* some things that Speaker Rozzoli said about this procedure. He stated:

... opening up an opportunity to any person not elected as a member of a House, for the purpose of participating in debate and proceedings in that Chamber, is based on a wrong and unfortunate premise, and is a bad precedent for this Parliament to embrace. It is pertinent for a Parliament to resolve to allow a person to come on to the floor of the House for a function such as presentation of the Mace to our Parliament. It is also suitable for a distinguished visitor to come on to the floor of the House, in acknowledgment of that person's importance in the overall scheme of things.

But it would be contrary to the principles of elected representation, under which people periodically go to the polls to elect representatives to act on their behalf, for a person who is not an elected representative to come on to the floor of the House to make a contribution to debate.

Former Speaker Rozzoli concluded, quite accurately, that the Treasurer's speech was:

a completely non-functioning and non-participatory useless waste of time because the content of the speech could well be delivered by the Premier. He would have unlimited time to deliver the speech delivered by the Treasurer in another place.

This motion is a poor reflection on the House. It is a poor reflection on the Labor Party and its lack of respect for our institutions and reflects the dearth of quality amongst the rabble opposite. The reality is that there are 45 members of the Labor Party in this House and apparently not one of them is up to delivering the budget speech. It is a sad state of affairs for this State and for the Government—a minority government—when it cannot even put up an elected representative of this House to deliver the budget speech.

It is important that members note the dearth of talent of members opposite and the irregularity and undemocratic nature of this motion to suspend standing orders. The learned Leader of the House loves getting up in this Chamber and being Rumpole of the Bailey; why can he not deliver the speech? Why can the Hon. Daniel Mookhey not deliver the speech in the Jubilee Room or in his own House? Why are members allowing unrepresentative people—unelected members of this party—to come to our Chamber and deliver speeches? It is utterly undesirable and undemocratic.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Mr Speaker, if you wanted an example of the fact—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Is the member seeking leave to make a contribution?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I seek leave.

**The SPEAKER:** Is leave granted?

**Government members:** No.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** You are going to deny leave when members are debating allowing someone from the upper House who we have no oversight of—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. I am looking to the Leader of the House. I asked whether leave was granted for the member to make a contribution and I am not quite sure of the answer yet. Is leave granted?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** No.

**The SPEAKER:** Leave is not granted.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** That is secrecy! You are shutting down debate on the budget. You are a disgrace.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Kiama to remove himself from the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until after lunch.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Kiama left the Chamber at 13:32.]*

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (13:32):** In reply: If that is the job application by the member for Wahrenoona to become leader of the Liberal Party, he has failed miserably. On a motion to suspend standing orders he has embarked upon all this research. I would have thought Liberal members would have been better served doing their research before question time. The member's contribution was as poor a contribution as I have heard. He was given the courtesy of being supplied with notice of this motion three hours ago. Instead of occupying his time examining public policy issues before question time he has raised this nonsense as if, somehow or other, he has a genuine, fundamental belief in the Westminster system.

The reality is that the member knows this is not an unusual motion to be carried by this House. A motion to allow a Treasurer who happens to be a member of the other place to come into this House has been passed in several instances over more than 27 years. It happened with the Hon. Michael Egan; it happened with the Hon. Eric Roozendaal. It is the same motion that has been repeatedly carried by this House. If the member for Wahrenoona—that eminent silk for whom those letters "SC" still stand after his name—fundamentally believed in the Westminster system then he would understand that the constitutionally appointed Treasurer needs to come into the people's House to be accountable for the budget that he has put together and proposes. It is only this House that can approve appropriation bills. If the other place does not agree, the government of the day goes to Her Excellency for assent in any event.

The traditions of this House and the Westminster system and the constitutional requirements by convention insist that the Treasurer stands in this Chamber—the people's House—which must approve the appropriations for this State. The Treasurer must be accountable and not hide in some other place. He must not hide behind a big folder as the member for Wahrenoona does at question time. I wish the member spent more time reading the standing orders of this House and providing better assistance to the Speaker instead of wasting time on opposing a motion of this nature. What was the legitimate forensic purpose of the member raising this issue? What genuine reason did he have to waste the time of this House? He had no reason whatsoever other than to grandstand in a leadership application. I say to him, "I'm sorry, old son, but you'll never get there." He does not have the numbers, his colleagues will not wear him and he cannot work with them. His days are done.

**The SPEAKER (13:36):** For the benefit of the member for Wahrenoona, I note that it is Mr Rozzoli's birthday tomorrow; he will be absolutely chuffed to have received that mention. Before I put the question, I note that it is open to this House as to how it deals with the question before it. However, the Clerks have provided me with further advice on this matter. Since 1995 there has been a consistent approach taken by the Assembly to the delivery of a budget speech where the Treasurer has been a member of the Legislative Council. The standing and sessional orders are suspended to allow the Treasurer to be admitted to the House to deliver a budget speech "of unlimited duration". A proposed amendment to the suspension of standing orders to allow the Treasurer to take questions has been consistently rejected by the House.

Since the Hon. Michael Egan gave the Budget Speech in 1995, the Hon. Michael Costa and the Hon. Eric Roozendaal have followed the precedent for a total of 15 budget speeches delivered in this manner. It is a question for this House to consider. However, while not taking away from any ruling of Speaker Rozzoli at the time, I reflect that this appears to have been a convention for quite some time. Therefore, I have no view on it; it is for the House to determine.

The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*[Notices of motions given.]*

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

*Bills***HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2023****First Reading****Bill introduced on motion by Mr Ryan Park, read a first time and printed.****Second Reading Speech****Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (14:30):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to bring the Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2023 before the House. The bill is part of the Government's regular review and monitoring of legislation to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant. I thank everybody involved in the development of the bill. To that end, the bill seeks to make a number of miscellaneous amendments to various Acts within the Health portfolio to ensure the Acts are operating effectively. I will now outline the nature of the amendments proposed.

First, in relation to the Health Administration Act 1982, the amendments in schedule 1 to the bill will ensure the health secretary can require a health services organisation to conduct a serious adverse event review, or SAER, where the secretary considers that an incident has occurred that is sufficiently serious to warrant investigation. Those reviews are important to ensure that hospitals can understand what went wrong when an incident happens and consider how to mitigate the risk of the incident happening again. Currently, a serious adverse event review must be conducted if the chief executive of the organisation, many times the local health district, considers that the incident was a reportable incident or the incident is one that may be the result of system issues. The health secretary, however, has critical oversight, governance and control functions relating to the public health system. The bill aims to strengthen those functions to ensure that the health secretary, as overall manager of the public health system, can require the organisation to conduct a review where the secretary considers that an incident was a reportable incident or the incident is one that may be the result of systemic issues.

The bill recognises that there may be differing opinions about whether a serious adverse event review is required. As such, importantly, if either the chief executive or the health secretary considers that an incident is serious enough for a review to occur, the bill requires the review to take place. That is an important change. The purpose of the change is to aim to improve the public health system's response to serious incidents. I am sure all members and their communities expect and deserve that. The bill also makes a minor amendment to allow relevant health organisations to appoint alternative or additional assessors to a serious adverse event review. Currently, there is no express mechanism under the Health Administration Act 1982 to appoint alternative assessors if an assessor is unable to continue in their role. Assessors may become unable to continue in the role for reason of illness or unavailability. The change aims to mitigate any potential delays, which is very important when dealing with a serious adverse event review to help better protect the public.

I turn now to schedule 2 to the bill, which makes a minor change to the definition of "disciplinary body" in the Health Care Complaints Act 1993. Under the Act, the director of proceedings can decide whether to prosecute a complaint against a registered health practitioner in a "disciplinary body", which is intended to mean both a professional standards committee and the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Professional standards committees usually hear fewer serious complaints about medical practitioners and nurses than the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Due to an amendment to the Act in 2022, however, the reference to "professional standards committee" in the definition of "disciplinary body" was inadvertently removed. The bill will fix that, which is an important but small error to fix, and reinstate a professional standards committee in the definition of a "disciplinary body" as intended.

I turn to the amendments to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW) as set out in schedule 3 to the bill. The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW) regulates registered health practitioners, such as medical practitioners and nurses, and is an applied law scheme. That means that New South Wales applies, via the Health Practitioner Regulation (Adoption of National Law) Act 2009, the schedule to the Queensland Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, which I will call the Queensland national law. However, New South Wales did not adopt the complaints processes under part 8 of the Queensland national law and instead retains its own complaints mechanism involving the very important Health Care Complaints Commission, which I know many members are aware of, and the health professional councils. From 2022, any amendments to the Queensland national law do not apply in New South Wales unless a regulation is made applying the changes, with or without modification. The combined applied Queensland provisions and the specific New South Wales provisions is known as the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW).

The bill includes a new offence in the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW) relating to directing or inciting a registered health practitioner to engage in "unsatisfactory professional conduct". There is currently an offence at section 136 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW) that relates to directing or inciting unprofessional conduct or professional misconduct. That is an applied provision and applies in all jurisdictions that apply the Queensland national law. However, the offence does not work as intended in New South Wales because the term "unprofessional conduct" is not a term used in New South Wales. Unprofessional conduct is equivalent to the New South Wales "unsatisfactory professional conduct", which is conduct that is below the usual standards expected of registered health practitioners but is not as serious as professional misconduct. To ensure that New South Wales makes it an offence to direct or incite a registered health practitioner to engage in unsatisfactory professional conduct, the bill inserts new section 136A into the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW).

The bill also creates a clarifying definition of a "prohibition order" for the purpose of the public register provisions in the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW). Currently, the national boards, such as the Medical Board of Australia, are required to keep a register of all registered health practitioners and those who have had their registration cancelled or are subject to a prohibition order. A prohibition order is an order preventing a person from providing a health service. New South Wales already has a definition of a prohibition order in section 138, however it is a New South Wales specific provision that relates to complaints processes in part 8. There also needs to be a definition of a "prohibition order" for the purposes of the public register provisions that includes prohibition orders made in all the other jurisdictions. Importantly, the bill fixes that by including a new definition of a "prohibition order" for the purposes of the public register provisions.

I turn now to the amendments to the Human Tissue Act 1983 as set out in schedule 4 to the bill. The bill amends section 37 of the Human Tissue Act 1983 to, importantly, clarify that the family of an organ or tissue donor can consent to the release of information about the donor when the donor has died. Section 37 currently makes it an offence for a medical practitioner or staff at a hospital to disclose details about a donor, including a deceased donor, except in limited circumstances, including with the donor's consent. While section 37 does not prohibit family members from speaking publicly about their loved one's experience, the change is intended to recognise that and expressly allow the next of kin of a deceased donor to consent to the release of information about the donor. These amendments align with legislative changes happening at the Commonwealth level, which are aimed at ensuring consistency across jurisdictions and ensuring that there is no bar to family members sharing their stories, including publicly commemorating donors. I hope the House sees that it is important and supports the change.

The bill includes an amendment to the Mental Health Act, which is set out in schedule 5. The amendment aims to ensure that a person detained in a mental health facility is aware of their rights. Currently, when a patient is detained in a mental health facility they must be provided with a statement of their rights. The statement is set out in schedule 3 to the Mental Health Act. The statement of rights currently does not include details about the obligation of the mental health facility to take reasonable steps to provide a detained person with grooming items, such as shaving equipment and make-up, before the person appears before an inquiry at the Mental Health Review Tribunal. The bill ensures this right will be included in the statement of rights.

I turn to the amendments to the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act which are set out in schedule 6 to the bill. The Act regulates scheduled medicines and poisons. Currently under the Act, if scheduled medicines and poisons are seized, generally a magistrate's order is required to dispose of the seized goods if the persons from whom they were seized does not consent. Getting a magistrate's order will often not be practical, as I am sure members can understand, particularly when there is a high volume, such as seizing e-cigarettes containing nicotine.

The bill modernises the destruction provisions in the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act by allowing the Health secretary to order the forfeiture and disposal of goods seized under the Act in certain circumstances, including where the secretary is satisfied that a person has been convicted of an offence in connection with the seized goods or the goods cannot be lawfully returned to their owner. A person from whom goods were seized may make submissions to the secretary, which must be considered before the secretary makes a forfeiture order. This change is in line with the new Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act, which Parliament passed last year and when it commences it will replace the existing Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act.

Schedule 7 to the bill makes minor amendments to the Public Health Act to remove the procedural requirements for making a code of conduct for non-registered health practitioners and health service providers. The current requirements for making such a code are in addition to the procedural requirements for making subordinate legislation. As the code provisions are now well established, it is no longer considered necessary to have additional procedural requirements for making a code of conduct. The bill also amends the definition of

"immunisation certificate" so that it refers to the up-to-date name of the Australian Immunisation Register. Members are well aware of that register.

Minor amendments are made to the Public Health (Tobacco) Act, as set out in schedule 8 to the bill. The bill updates and clarifies the powers of tobacco inspectors to help better protect the public from the risk of harm of illegal tobacco, which all members would support. Under the Act, tobacco and e-cigarettes must be hidden from public view and stored behind closed cabinet doors, which members are used to seeing in their communities. In addition, it is an offence to sell certain types of illegal tobacco, such as tobacco not in its original packaging or tobacco packaged without a health warning. The previous Commonwealth Labor Government introduced and pursued those reforms. These types of tobacco products pose a particular risk to children because they are generally sold at significantly reduced prices to legal products, making them more attractive to young people.

Inspectors have express powers to seize illegal tobacco. The bill clarifies that inspectors can search the areas where tobacco and e-cigarettes are stored, which must be hidden from public view. In addition, the bill allows other inspectors who find illegal tobacco to use powers under other legislation to seize the illegal tobacco. For example, if inspectors under the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act inspect premises for illegal e-cigarettes containing nicotine and also come across illegal tobacco, the inspectors will be able to seize the illegal tobacco. Those changes will help inspectors to effectively undertake their compliance and enforcement activities to ensure illegal tobacco can be seized when found on premises.

The changes in the bill are fairly minor but they will ensure that the legislation in the Health portfolio remains up to date and relevant, which all members would agree is important. I acknowledge a number of people involved in the development of this legislation. From my office, I acknowledge my deputy chief of staff and director of policy, Jenelle Rimmer, and our senior policy adviser, Rosie Rand, who is also in the adviser's area today. From NSW Health and the ministry, I acknowledge Gemma Broderick and her team. I acknowledge everyone from NSW Health who has been involved in this somewhat small but important legislation, which will ensure our Health portfolio has the modern legal requirements in which to operate.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Committees*

### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

#### **Membership**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

- (1) That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, the House agree to the Legislative Council's proposed amendment to the resolution of the House of 22 June 2023 appointing a Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, namely, that paragraph (4) (b) of the resolution be amended by omitting "Five members of the Legislative Council" and inserting instead "Six members of the Legislative Council".
- (2) That a message be sent acquainting the Legislative Council with the terms of this resolution.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Bills*

### **CRIMES AMENDMENT (CORRUPT BENEFITS FOR TRUSTEES) BILL 2023**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 22 August 2023.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (14:47):** I contribute to the debate on the Crimes Amendment (Corrupt Benefits for Trustees) Bill 2023. Since 1536 and the Statute of Uses, parliaments throughout the world have been struggling with how best to regulate the trust to ensure that trustees fulfil their duties and that the interests of beneficiaries are appropriately protected. The New South Wales Parliament is no exception to this endeavour. We need strong regulation of trusts because they are responsible for so much of our financial security. This is not simply an issue for the big end of town. Almost all of us have our retirement security in the hands of a superannuation trust, and any chance we have of a comfortable retirement depends on the actions and decisions of our trustees.

While an area of Federal regulation, the New South Wales Crimes Act also has an important role to play. Currently, section 249E (2) creates an offence where a person entrusted with property—that is, a trustee—receives or solicits a benefit for anyone as an inducement or reward for the appointment of a person to be entrusted with the property, or where any person offers or gives a benefit to a person entrusted with property as an inducement or reward for the appointment of any person to be entrusted with the property without the consent of either all of

the beneficiaries of the trust or of the Supreme Court. This offence carries a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment.

On its face this is a very sensible provision. However, recent decisions of the New South Wales Supreme Court, such as *Application of MLC Investments Limited (ACN 002 641 661)* [2022] NSWSC 1541, have called the operation of this provision into doubt. There are more decisions other than this most recent one. In the recent decision, the court found that no corrupt purpose is required for the offence in section 249E (2) to be made out. His Honour Justice Stevenson held that the required mental element was not corruption but a specific intent to offer, give, receive or solicit a benefit without consent as an inducement or reward for any person to be entrusted with property. The practical result of this decision is that it now appears a large number of routine, good faith transactions may potentially be captured by the criminal offence in section 249E. Those could include contractual indemnities in favour of an outgoing trustee. That is undesirable because, without such protections as indemnities and the like, good persons will be hard to find to act in a trustee capacity.

We need to catch corrupt conduct but not hamper good faith conduct in the interest of beneficiaries, which occurs in the ordinary course of business. It is for this reason that the Opposition will support the bill, which seeks to amend section 249E. It is true that the existing section 249E provides a mechanism for trustees to receive the consent of all beneficiaries, but it is a difficult and costly process in the case of a superannuation trust or to seek the consent of the Supreme Court. However, it is commercially desirable if trustees who are not engaged in conduct for their own benefit do not have to engage in either of those costly processes to avoid being possibly liable for corrupt conduct, especially because those processes would ultimately be funded by the beneficiaries that they are designed to protect and they will seek to diminish the trust fund that the beneficiaries are to benefit from.

We are happy to support the bill, which makes three major changes to the existing law. The conduct of the trustee—offering, giving, receiving or soliciting the benefit—must be done corruptly. At the moment, the word "corruptly" is not within the legislation. Consent from each beneficiary or the Supreme Court is no longer required, which will reduce the cost to the trust property. The Attorney General is no longer required to consent to commence proceedings, which is another undesirable procedural hurdle.

The bill has a retrospective operation which, as a matter of principle, requires care, especially in the area of criminal law. Retrospective legislation affects fundamental rights and should never be enacted without careful consideration. However, in the circumstances of the bill, it is our view that retrospectivity is justified. Section 249E sits in part 4A of the Crimes Act, alongside section 249F. That section governs commercial advisers and others who counsel, aid and abet. Under that section, any adviser who in good faith has been involved in routine decisions to, for example, indemnify an outgoing trustee, may find themselves guilty of an offence if the consent of the Supreme Court or of all beneficiaries has not been obtained. So the retrospectivity in the bill will not retrospectively criminalise otherwise lawful conduct; it will do the opposite. It will excuse conduct that, in the past, was not intended to be criminal conduct and make it non-criminal.

Section 316 provides that it is an offence to conceal a serious indictable offence of the type created by the current section 249E. There may be an ongoing obligation for advisers to report offending clients to the police. Without the retrospectivity proposed by the bill, both trustees and their advisers, who have conducted what they honestly and reasonably believed to be routine, good faith business transactions in the past, may be exposed to significant criminal penalties. We do not believe that that is the original intention of the legislation, so it is appropriate that it be amended with retrospective effect. This will ensure that past corrupt conduct will be caught, as will those who aided and abetted that corrupt conduct and those who sought to conceal it. But past good faith conduct will be safe and protected from any criminal law sanction.

In no way should my observations about the decision in *Application of MLC Investments Limited* [2022] NSWSC 1541 be interpreted as any criticism of His Honour Justice Stevenson. His Honour is an excellent judge, who had an excellent commercial practice at the bar before he was appointed to the bench. I believe His Honour correctly applied the wording of the current section 249E of the Crimes Act. The decision that His Honour made was mandated by the current legislation made previously by this Parliament. The current legislation had an inappropriate commercial consequence, which serves to act against the interests of beneficiaries. The current legislation does not require a corrupt offer or receipt. In my view His Honour was correct not to read such words in the statute. It is for this Parliament to cure that omission in the existing legislation, which is why the Opposition supports the bill. I thank the House for its indulgence.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (14:55):** I support the Crimes Amendment (Corrupt Benefits for Trustees) Bill 2023 as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General. I am pleased that the Opposition also supports the bill. I thank the Attorney General and the Department of Communities and Justice for their work in preparing the bill and for their collaboration and consultation with a range of stakeholders in the legal and financial sectors. The Crimes Amendment (Corrupt Benefits for Trustees) Bill 2023 is an important piece of legislation that aims to strengthen the processes that target dishonest and improper conduct, while supporting parties who engage

in good faith transactions. The bill introduces amendments to expressly distinguish corrupt conduct and to protect previous and future good faith transactions from inadvertent criminal penalties.

The bill amends section 249E of the Crimes Act 1900 to expressly require corrupt conduct to establish the offence. Section 249E (2) of the Crimes Act currently deems it an offence where a person entrusted with property receives or solicits a benefit for anyone as an inducement or reward for the appointment of any person to be entrusted with the property without the consent of either all beneficiaries to the trust or the approval of the Supreme Court. The intended purpose of section 249E is to prevent a person who is entrusted with property from any persuasion of personal gain to exercise their power to appoint a substitute trustee. That section determines when the giving and receiving of a benefit to a person entrusted with property will constitute a criminal offence. It applies to trustees, executors, attorneys, financial managers and administrators of deceased estates.

Following the recent Supreme Court judgment in *Application of MLC Investments Limited* [2002] NSWSC 1541, stakeholders have raised concerns that that provision has the potential to capture a large number of routine, good faith transactions in the current offence. In the case of *Application of MLC Investments Limited*, the Supreme Court found that a corrupt purpose is not an element of a section 249E offence. That matter involved an application by MLC Investments for the court's consent to solicit and receive a number of benefits from Channel Investment Management Limited when appointing it to several registered and unregistered managed investment schemes. MLC sought the court's consent to the proposed terms of the transaction because it was concerned that some of the benefits could be caught under section 249E.

Whilst there was no suggestion that the benefits were to be provided dishonestly or corruptly, terms of that transaction were caught by the provision and deemed as a reward that could be considered an inducement for the appointment of property under section 249E of the Crimes Act. This matter demonstrated that there was no requirement for dishonest or corrupt conduct to have occurred. The assessment for the intent of a section 249E offence is focused on whether there was an intent to use the benefit as an inducement or reward. In this decision, Justice Stevenson held that the only mental element required to satisfy section 249E is a specific intent to offer, give, receive or solicit a benefit without consent as an inducement or reward for any person to be entrusted with property. The judgement has a potential flow-on effect as it may apply when the benefit or reward offered is in the interest of beneficiaries.

In light of the decision in *Application of MLC Investments Ltd*, the bill amends section 249E to expressly require corrupt conduct in order to establish the offence. In item [1] of schedule 1, the bill substitutes the existing offence in section 249E with a new section. The proposed new section conveys four principal changes: One, it clearly specifies that conduct must be done corruptly; two, it removes the requirement to obtain consent from each person beneficially entitled or from the order of the Supreme Court; three, it excludes the requirement for the Attorney General to consent to proceedings commencing; and four, it gives way for the changes to be retrospectively applied. Imposing an express requirement for conduct to be done corruptly will ensure that the criminal offence only targets dishonest and improper conduct. This will clearly distinguish criminal conduct from good faith transactions by emphasising that a criminal offence is committed only when benefits are offered, given, received or solicited under corruption.

The bill will also amend section 249E to remove the requirement that the consent of beneficiaries or the Supreme Court of New South Wales be obtained where a benefit is provided as an inducement or reward for the appointment of another person to be entrusted with the property, whilst under section 249E an offence will not be committed if the benefit or reward is provided with the consent of the beneficiaries or, in fact, by the order of the Supreme Court. However, it can be difficult to obtain such a consent. In some circumstances, the consent of several beneficiaries may be required or some beneficiaries may lack the capacity to give their consent. As a result, the Supreme Court would be required to authorise the transaction. Given the costs of pursuing an application to the Supreme Court, it may add unnecessary expense that could be disproportionate to the value of the trust. It will also increase the complexity of the transaction and be an inefficient use of court resources. The requirement for either the Supreme Court or beneficiaries to consent to transactions under section 249E has also been removed because the requirement for corrupt conduct makes this consent redundant. It goes without saying that neither beneficiaries nor the Supreme Court would approve corrupt conduct under such circumstances.

Furthermore, the bill will remove the requirement for the Attorney General's consent to commence proceedings for an offence under section 249E. The addition of the express requirement for "corrupt" conduct negates the requirement for the Attorney General to approve prosecution under section 249E. Given the broad scope of an unamended section 249E, the Attorney General's approval offered a safeguard to ensure that prosecutions were not brought in inappropriate circumstances. However, it has become clear that this was not the best solution to manage prosecutions. It is a problematic mechanism, as it creates a great deal of uncertainty and undermines the operation of the criminal law. Without this amendment, section 249E has the potential for individuals to be encouraged to break the law on the basis that their criminal activity could not be prosecuted and,



therefore, could not be punished. It also creates uncertainty for trustees and advisers when advising on the legality of certain transactions. Significantly, it is a misuse of public resources to investigate potential offences and to then have a decision handed down not to prosecute.

The amendments proposed in item [2] of schedule 1 to the bill provide that the proposed new section 249E is to be applied retrospectively to extend to conduct engaged before the commencement of the bill. This will ensure that past routine and good faith transactions are not potentially subjected to criminal penalties. Schedule 1 [2] also provides that section 249F and section 316 of the Crimes Act will apply only to conduct that contravenes new section 249E, and the offence of concealing a serious indictable offence under section 316 of the Crimes Act relates to new section 249E. As a result, any past transactions captured by section 249E would provide an ongoing obligation for advisers or trustees to report offending transactions to the appropriate authorities.

The retrospectivity of these amendments is necessary, as many parties engaged in good faith transactions would otherwise technically be at risk of criminal liability. Prior to the recent Supreme Court decision in *Application of MLC Investments Ltd*, many trustees and advisers believed that an offence under section 249E required corrupt conduct. The ambiguity about the application of the law risks inadvertent and unfair prosecutions. These amendments offer greater clarity and certainty to the application of the law, whilst not changing the intended function of this provision. Parliament has the power to introduce retrospective laws, yet seldom exercises it in awareness of the potential inequities such retrospective laws can provide, and it is particularly uncommon for reform to criminal law to be introduced retrospectively. [*Extension of time*]

Despite these concerns, retrospective laws are justified in certain circumstances to set the standard that our society expects. The bill exemplifies a relevant circumstance for a retrospective amendment, and it protects the rights and interests of innocent parties and gives greater clarity to previous and future transactions. It narrows the scope of conduct that is criminalised. The amendments provided in the bill will not impact on other statutory obligations or principles under the general law of trusts and corporations that serve to protect the best interests of beneficiaries. As in the matter of *Application of MLC Investment Ltd*, the benefits in question were not provided corruptly or dishonestly. In fact, the benefits preserved assets for beneficiaries and were in their best interests. Similarly, it is common for trustees to receive benefits upon the appointment of a new trustees—even in good faith transactions. It is, therefore, important that these amendments are implemented to protect genuine transactions, and ensure that resources are utilised to prosecute only actual dishonest and corrupt conduct.

Considering that a section 249E offence carries a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment, it is important that this distinction is made to protect good faith transactions from the risk of unfair criminal prosecutions. These amendments offer important changes to the New South Wales criminal law to ensure that transactions can be engaged in fairly and honestly, in full confidence and understanding of the law. The bill responds to significant stakeholder concerns regarding the necessary changes to the operation of section 249E. By amending the law to require that corrupt conduct needs to be engaged in to constitute this offence, the bill will improve the overall effectiveness of the provision. In conclusion, the bill will enhance mechanisms to target actual corrupt and dishonest transactions, whilst ensuring that trustees and their advisers can continue to conduct routine, good faith transactions without the risk of exposure to criminal penalties. For those reasons, and with the surety that these retrospective amendments do not alter the objects of the Crimes Act, I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (15:07):** On behalf of The Greens, I speak in debate on the Crimes Amendment (Corrupt Benefits for Trustees) Bill 2023 and indicate that The Greens oppose the bill. The bill amends section 249E of the Crimes Act 1900 to impose an explicit requirement for the conduct of a trustee to act "corruptly" in order to consider it a criminal offence. The intention of this is to ensure that only dishonest and corrupt conduct is criminalised and that routine, good faith transactions are not considered as corrupt conduct. Currently, section 249E requires a specific intent to offer, give, receive or solicit and benefit, without consent, as a requisite for offences. The intention of this change is to streamline section 249E with part 4A of the Crimes Act.

The bill also removes existing requirements for consent to be obtained from each beneficiary or the Supreme Court. It removes existing requirements for the Attorney General to have to sign off on proceedings for the offence to be prosecuted. The reasoning given for removing consent is that it is not always possible to obtain the consent of every beneficiary. For example, where a trust is a large super fund or managed fund with many thousands of members, it will not always be practicable or possible to obtain consent. The bill requires that conduct engaged in before the commencement of the bill is dealt with as if it had occurred after the commencement of the bill so that cases can be dealt with retrospectively. Under new section 249E, the offence of corrupt conduct carries a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. The bill also ensures that those who could otherwise be found guilty of aiding and abetting the commission of the offence as it is currently defined will also not be liable for such an offence. The Greens have no concern with the intention of the bill. Unfortunately, during our consultation with stakeholders in the trustee and guardian space, a number of significant concerns have been raised and as such we do not support the bill in its current form.

It is disappointing that the Government has not engaged in a broader program of consultation in the preparation of the bill. In particular, the Government has not sought the view of those who represent the most vulnerable of stakeholders and it has not heard the voices of those stakeholders themselves. We believe that oversight should be corrected. The Greens are alarmed that the bill will make it easier for trustees to move clients, which are their beneficiaries, without the scrutiny of those beneficiaries or the court. The Greens urge the Government to conduct the further consultation required in order to bring about the intended reform without any unintended consequences impacting the most vulnerable in our community and failing to protect their financial interests. We believe that care must be taken to ensure that the bill proceeds in a manner that will not bring about unnecessary and unintended harm.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (15:11):** I support the Crimes Amendment (Corrupt Benefits for Trustees) Bill 2023. The purpose of the bill is to amend section 249E of the Crimes Act to provide that corrupt conduct is required to establish the offence of providing or seeking a benefit in return for the appointment of a person as a trustee. I will outline some of the background to the bill. New section 249E (2) will make it an offence for a person entrusted with property to receive or solicit, or for another person to offer or give that person, a benefit as an inducement or reward for the appointment of any person to be entrusted with the property without the consent of the beneficiaries or the Supreme Court. That is the important part of the provision. The offence is punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment—it is taken very seriously—and the Attorney General's approval is required to commence prosecution proceedings.

The proposed amendments respond to stakeholder concerns about recent decisions and, notably, a decision of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in *Application of MLC Investments Limited*. In that case the Supreme Court held that a corrupt purpose is not an element of the offence created by section 249E. As a result, many routine, good faith transactions may be inadvertently captured by the offence. It is necessary to change that. That is the reason why the bill amends the Crimes Act: to include the express requirement that the conduct be corrupt to establish the offence. It will remove the requirement to obtain the consent of beneficiaries or the Supreme Court of New South Wales where the benefit is provided to a person who is entrusted with property as an inducement or reward for the appointment of another person to be entrusted with the property. It will remove the requirement for the Attorney General's consent. That is in the statement of public interest.

Why is the objective couched in the terms of the public interest? We have to look at the mental element of the offence and that can only be satisfied if corrupt intent is found. The change would also bring section 249E in line with other similar offences in part 4A of the Crimes Act. It is appropriate to remove the need for the court or beneficiaries to consent to the transactions as well. Under current section 249E, the Attorney General must consent. There is a strong public interest to ensure that only corrupt conduct is criminalised. That is the key point or the nub of it. That has to be put beyond doubt. Without the amendment, trustees and their advisers who do conduct routine, good faith business transactions would be exposed to criminal penalties and there would be very few who would then want to take on those roles.

It is common practice for outgoing trustees to receive benefits upon the appointment of new trustees. Some of the benefits that are commonly provided may fall under the offence in current section 249E. They include two particular examples: contractual indemnities in favour of the outgoing trustee that restate indemnities available at general law, including the right to be indemnified out of trust assets for any expenses of liability properly incurred; and also an arrangement under which a third party will pay the transaction costs of the outgoing trustee to avoid those costs being paid out of trust assets. It is important that the trustees and the advisers who are acting in good faith have that protection so that only corrupt conduct is criminalised.

The changes in the bill will apply retrospectively. Under the rule of law, it is not the practice to routinely apply retrospective changes, but there are circumstances where it is appropriate to do so and this is one of those occasions. There is case law on that but it is High Court case law. Prior to the recent Supreme Court decisions, many people had incorrectly assumed that current section 249E required the finding of corrupt conduct to be demonstrated—or were unaware of the provision entirely. As a result, many changes of trustee have occurred that could be argued breach current section 249E, notwithstanding that everyone acted in good faith and that the relevant benefits were provided in that good faith and without corrupt intent—that is, without the mental element being present. The parties who were involved in such transactions remain technically at risk of criminal liability if the proposed amendments do not apply to them retrospectively. So this is one of those clear cases where retrospectivity can be applied.

The proposed amendments will not affect existing State and Commonwealth laws and principles at general law that protect the beneficiaries where a change of trustee is proposed and where a benefit is provided to the outgoing trustee. The existing statutory obligations and the general law of trusts will continue to operate in the context of a change of trustee, and it will offer protections to beneficiaries in the absence of the scrutiny of the court. Some people have asked what alternative policies and mechanisms were considered in advance of the bill.

Of course, the Government did consider the existing legislative framework and whether it provided an adequate response. It was determined that it did not. When considering or introducing a bill, good governance means that you have to look whether there is an alternative. That was done rigorously and forensically.

However, if the proposed amendments are not made, those parties conducting routine transactions properly and in good faith could face criminal penalties if the unanimous consent of the beneficiaries of the Supreme Court is not obtained. That puts them in a very parlous situation. It would be unfair for us not to correct that situation through the law so that they can continue to do that work. It is good work; we need it. A lot of people do it as trustees and advisers, and that must continue. Now that they have been alerted to this issue by the Supreme Court case, fewer people will be likely to put up their hand to do the job. Hence, the amending bill is absolutely necessary.

Views were sought from affected stakeholders and considered in making the policies. Consultation was targeted towards the New South Wales Bar Association, the Supreme Court of New South Wales, the NSW Trustee and Guardian, the Department of Communities and Justice, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners, the Association of Super Funds of Australia and various other stakeholders. In particular, there was strong support from stakeholders for the retrospective application of the changes. Those stakeholders regularly come to the Government saying that it must uphold the rule of law. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:21):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: In reply: As Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General, I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Crimes Amendment (Corrupt Benefits for Trustees) Bill 2023. The bill amends the Crimes Act 1900 to require conduct to be engaged in corruptly in order to establish an offence under section 249E. Currently, section 249E applies to all benefits received or provided as an inducement or reward for the appointment of a replacement trustee, even if the benefit is provided for a proper purpose, in good faith, and is otherwise in accordance with the law. An offence will not be committed if the benefit or reward is provided with the consent of the beneficiaries or the Supreme Court. However, that consent can be difficult to obtain.

The proposed amendments in the bill are a direct response to concerns expressed by stakeholders in the legal and financial sectors following recent decisions of the New South Wales Supreme Court. The court has held that a "corrupt" purpose is not an element of the offence created by section 249E. Stakeholders are concerned that, as a result of these decisions, trustees and their commercial advisers may be exposed to serious criminal liability, even if their conduct was in good faith and for a proper purpose. It is appropriate to amend section 249E in response to these concerns to ensure that the criminal law remains fit for purpose and does not apply to proper conduct. I will briefly address some matters raised during debate on the bill. In response to the member for Wahroonga, my comments on current section 249 and the Supreme Court's interpretation of that section should not be taken as criticism of the court. The Supreme Court has made a ruling on the law as it is written. It is the role of Parliament to change that law if it is not operating as intended.

The proposed amendments in the bill were requested by stakeholders following the Supreme Court decision of *Application of MLC Investments Limited* [2022] NSWSC 1541. Stakeholders all support the object and purpose of the bill. The policy development and drafting of the bill was informed by targeted consultation with stakeholders in the legal, superannuation, and trust and estates sectors. Targeted consultation was conducted with the following long list of stakeholders: the New South Wales Bar Association, the Law Society of New South Wales, the Supreme Court of New South Wales, the NSW Trustee and Guardian, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, a number of law firms in Australia including MinterEllison, the Asia Pacific Loan Market Association, a Sydney barrister and senior law lecturer specialising in the field of corrupt benefits under New South Wales law, the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners, and the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia.

The proposed amendments will not alter the rights of beneficiaries under the general law of trusts and corporation legislation. These laws will continue to protect beneficiaries and provide remedies against trustees for improper conduct. The Supreme Court maintains a broad supervisory jurisdiction over trusts in New South Wales. Under general law, any appointment of a trustee made for an improper purpose may be struck down. The doctrine of fraud on the power operates to avoid any exercise of power by a trustee that is for a purpose beyond the scope of, or not justified by, the instrument creating that power. Also under the general law, trustees will continue to owe fiduciary duties and obligations to beneficiaries, including to act in their best interests, to act in accordance with the terms of the trust, to avoid conflicts of interest and to avoid making unauthorised profit from their office.

Equitable remedies from the Supreme Court will continue to be available if a trustee acts in a way that is contrary to their fiduciary obligations. A number of remedies are available if a beneficiary becomes aware that a proposed change of trustee involves the trustee receiving an unauthorised benefit. For example, a beneficiary may bring proceedings in the Supreme Court for an injunction or other equitable relief to prevent an improper

transaction from taking place. The court may also appoint a replacement trustee or temporary receiver. The trustee could be ordered to recast the transaction so that it does not involve a breach of the trustee's duties. Under equitable principles of accessorial liability, the court may also impose sanctions on third parties who knowingly assist or are otherwise involved in a trustee's misconduct.

The court may order the trustee and any involved third parties to make good any loss to the trust fund and disgorge into the fund any unauthorised benefit received. In addition to the protection afforded to beneficiaries under the general law, statutory protections under New South Wales and Commonwealth law will continue to regulate the conduct of trustees. For example, section 14B of the Trustee Act 1925 specifies that there are four main duties for trustees in New South Wales, including a duty to exercise the powers of a trustee in the best interests of beneficiaries. The Supreme Court may intervene if a trustee breaches these duties. A trustee will also retain the ability to make an application to the Supreme Court for judicial advice under section 63 of the Trustee Act 1925. Any trustee who is in doubt as to the propriety of accepting a benefit upon a change of trustee may seek judicial advice on the matter.

Corporate trustees and trusts established to provide financial services are subject to additional levels of regulation under Commonwealth law. The Corporations Act 2001 imposes obligations on trustees and directors who hold an Australian financial services licence. Under section 912A (1), they are required to do all things necessary to ensure financial services are provided efficiently, honestly and fairly, and to comply with financial services laws. In addition, the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993, which is also a piece of Commonwealth legislation, sets out covenants at sections 52 and 52A that must be complied with by a trustee and its directors. That includes covenants to act honestly and perform the trustee's duties and exercise the trustee's powers in the best financial interests of the beneficiaries. A breach of these covenants can result in civil penalties. A court may order that a person involved in a contravention pay a monetary penalty of up to 2,400 penalty units, which is currently \$660,000. If a person contravenes a civil penalty provision dishonestly and intends to gain an advantage for themselves or another, a criminal offence is committed, which is punishable by imprisonment for up to five years.

In the managed investment scheme context, the Corporations Act 2001 regulates the retirement and removal of responsible entities. Sections 601FD and 601UAA of the Corporations Act impose civil penalties on officers of managed investment schemes and licensed trustee companies who make improper use of their position to gain an advantage for themselves or for some other person. These penalties are in addition to criminal penalties for offences arising from a dishonest breach of the fiduciary obligations of a director in breach of section 184 (2). The Australian Securities and Investment Commission has broad powers to investigate under section 13 (1) of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001, including where ASIC suspects a contravention of a Commonwealth, State or Territory law involving fraud or dishonesty, and which relates to a corporation, managed investment scheme, or financial products or services.

In conclusion, the bill substitutes the existing offence in section 249E with a new offence that will ensure only corrupt conduct constitutes an offence under section 249E. The bill removes the requirement to obtain the consent of beneficiaries or of the Supreme Court to a benefit provided upon a change of trustee. It also removes the requirement that the Attorney General consent to a prosecution under section 249E. These safeguards against inappropriate prosecutions become redundant once corrupt conduct is required to establish an offence. The bill provides that the proposed new section 249E will apply to conduct engaged in before the commencement of the bill, and that the current section 249E will cease to operate in relation to such conduct. Section 249F and section 316 of the Crimes Act, which contain accessorial offences relating to section 249E, will also only apply to corrupt conduct. The retrospective application of the new offence ensures that trustees and their advisers are not at risk of prosecution for proper conduct that predates the passage of the bill.

The bill also provides that conduct which was permissible under the current section 249E will not be made unlawful by the bill. Convictions for an offence under section 249E will also be unaffected by the bill. These amendments preserve legal certainty and guard against unfairness. I thank stakeholders for raising this issue and for their detailed engagement throughout a swift reform process. This has resulted in the development of a finely tuned solution that has wide support. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL AMENDMENT BILL 2023****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from 22 August 2023.**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (15:33):** The Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023 implements recommendations made by the report of the statutory review of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013, tabled on 23 December 2021. It implements 13 of the 15 recommendations made in the report. The NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] was an initiative of the Coalition Government, and, pleasingly, the report concluded that the policy objectives of the Act remain valid and that the terms of the Act remain appropriate to achieve those objectives. I think that one of the strengths of NCAT is its use of experienced practitioners to decide cases within their areas of expertise. I have, however, from time to time heard criticisms from constituents and others as to the procedures and progression of matters before NCAT. The review recommended changes to improve the operation of the Act, and the Opposition is pleased to support these.

The policy motivating the Coalition's introduction of the tribunal was to provide people with better access to justice and to create more efficient procedures for the administration of justice in New South Wales for matters that were appropriate to raise in the tribunal. We are always happy to cooperate with measures that will make a good tribunal even better. We also note that these changes appear to be well supported by stakeholders who submitted to the inquiry. At the heart of the tribunal is the idea of a just, cheap and quick resolution of disputes. The bill changes matters including clarifying the composition of the tribunal for hearings in relation to members of the legal profession; allowing for a two-person tribunal for urgent guardianship matters; clarifying that confidentiality extends to documents given to applicants for their personal use; clarifying the power to correct the names of applicants, and the effect of non-compliance with a summons; and finally, but importantly, providing more flexibility to the president in the allocation of tribunal members.

The bill also makes minor and consequential amendments to correct cross-references to other Acts. These amendments are all to implement recommendations made in the report, and are well considered and clear. What is less clear, however, is why all the recommendations from the report are not being implemented. Recommendation 2 is contingent on the building of the case management system, and hopefully the recommendation will be implemented once that has concluded, but recommendation 1 appears to have been put to one side, at least for the moment. This unimplemented recommendation called on the Department of Communities and Justice to strengthen provisions in the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, or GIPA Act, to restrain NCAT applicants from engaging in improper conduct. The review recognised that there is indeed an issue with improper applications being lodged, and recommended that changes to the GIPA Act be explored as the best solution. It is unclear why this recommendation has not been acted on.

The submissions received by the review on this issue were few in number but raised an issue of significant importance. Confidential submissions asked that NCAT be given additional powers to dismiss or decline to hear applications under the GIPA Act where the applicant is engaging in conduct designed to harass, cause delay or detriment, or achieve another wrongful purpose; or where an application lacks merit. The review did not support the view of these submissions that section 55 of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act should be amended and that, in these circumstances, NCAT should be empowered to dismiss an application whether it has merit or not. However, it did clearly acknowledge that "harassment or other improper conduct by applicants, particularly where such conduct continues over a long period of time, is a serious issue that can affect the mental health and wellbeing of agency staff, as well as tribunal members and officers".

This is an important workplace issue, which should not be ignored, especially since NCAT staff are New South Wales public sector workers and the Government of New South Wales is their employer. It is very disappointing that the Government has not at this stage responded to this recommendation, and does not appear to be acting to support workers and protect them from harassment. The review noted that, as the issue had "only been raised in relation to applications made to the tribunal under the GIPA Act", the Department of Communities and Justice should consider amending sections 109 and 110 of the GIPA Act, which are intended to restrain improper conduct by applicants. They wanted assurance that these provisions are operating as intended, and to have opportunities identified to strengthen these provisions.

It should be noted that it would be undesirable if the GIPA Act were changed in a way that would limit the accountability and transparency of government, which is the intention of the Act, but obviously that accountability should not have the capacity to have unintended and undesirable consequences, which was the subject of the recommendation. The legislation before the House is silent on this recommendation. It is in the public interest for the Parliament to be told what is being done by the Government to address this important workplace issue.

All New South Wales workers deserve respect and a safe workplace, and the Government as employer should be working to protect its own workers from harassment, abuse and challenges to their mental health. We await the introduction of follow-up legislation by the Government that deals not just with minor machinery amendments but addresses the other two recommendations that have not been addressed in the bill to this point in time. Perhaps the House will be given an update on the two matters that have not been implemented during the speech in reply. Despite this, the Opposition is happy to support the rest of the changes to the tribunal, which will fine-tune the working of NCAT and help it become an even more efficient process for the people of New South Wales. The Opposition will support the bill.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (15:40):** I speak in support of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023 as the State member for Prospect and in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General. I thank the Attorney General, the Hon. Michael Daley, the Hon. Justice Lea Armstrong, President of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], and the Department of Communities and Justice for their work in preparing this bill. With support from the Department of Communities and Justice, the Attorney General collaborated extensively with 82 different stakeholders to undertake a statutory review of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013. After careful consideration, the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023 has been developed to implement recommendations arising from that statutory review.

NCAT was established under the Act to reduce the complexity of the tribunal system. NCAT consolidated 22 former tribunals to offer a single tribunal for civil and administrative matters in New South Wales. NCAT plays a fundamental role in providing access to justice, dealing with approximately 42 per cent of civil law matters finalised in New South Wales. Under section 3 (d) of the Act, NCAT's guiding principle is to resolve the real issues in proceedings justly, quickly and with as little formality as possible. Comprised of a panel of empowered experts, the tribunal considers issues to reach impartial outcomes across four divisions: administrative and equal opportunity; occupational; consumer and commercial; and guardianship. Additionally, where there is a right of appeal, the tribunal has an internal appeal panel. The Act provides a high-level framework that enables NCAT to take a flexible and tailored approach across its different divisions. As a result, NCAT proceedings can be more accessible and less formal than judicial proceedings, giving people in New South Wales greater access to have their matters heard and resolved.

Given NCAT's significant function in New South Wales, the amendments proposed in this bill are essential to ensure the efficacy of tribunal proceedings. They implement recommendations of the statutory review required under section 92 of the Act. Under this provision, the Act is required to undergo review by the Attorney General after five years of operation to determine whether its policy objectives and terms remain valid and appropriate for securing those objectives. The review concluded that the policy objectives and terms remain valid and appropriate. Thus, this bill seeks only to make minor adjustments to the tribunal's policy settings to support efficient proceedings and timely justice for our community.

The bill implements recommendations arising out of the *Report of the Statutory Review of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013*, which was tabled on 23 December 2021. The amendments fine-tune the operation of the Act and make minor corrections to cross-references in other Acts. To ensure these reforms were reflective and capable of achieving their intended aim, extensive collaboration was conducted with those most impacted. Submissions were sought from all invested parties, with a total of 94 submissions received from over 82 varied organisations and individuals.

The amendment proposed by schedule 1 [3] to the bill will increase efficiency in proceedings by eliminating the scope for technical legal argument regarding the tribunal's duty to ensure all materials relevant to the proceedings have been disclosed. Under section 38 (6) (a) of the Act, NCAT has a duty to ensure all relevant materials to the proceedings have been disclosed. Currently, the tribunal satisfies this duty by directing parties to exchange all materials and evidence at the commencement of proceedings. It is unrealistic and requires an extensive use of time and resources for the tribunal to assess this in every case. Schedule 1 [3] to the bill amends section 38 (6) (a) by inserting the words "as far as practicable" to refine the scope of the tribunal's duty and limit this argument in appeal.

The NCAT is headed by a president of the tribunal, who is also a Supreme Court judge. The president is empowered to replace a member of the tribunal under section 52 of the Act. This provision enables the president to replace a member of the tribunal after consideration of a matter has commenced, but before a decision has been handed down by the tribunal, only if the member becomes unavailable or ceases to have a qualification required to participate in the proceedings. Schedule 1 [4] to the bill will extend section 52, allowing the president to replace a member at his direction.

The changes proposed to section 52 are safeguarded by qualifications in amendments proposed by items [5] and [6] of schedule 1 to the bill. This will insert a new section 52 (2A), which requires that the president first consult the member to ensure removing them is in the interests of justice, achieves expeditious and efficient

conduct and is otherwise appropriate having regard to the objectives of the Act. A new section 52 (2B) will also allow the president to appoint additional members after consideration of a matter has commenced. These amendments will grant more flexibility to efficiently allocate resources and improve time to justice. It is worth noting that powers in section 52 are consistent with equivalent tribunals in other jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Schedule 1 [7] to the bill alters the tribunal's requirement to give written reasons for a decision under section 62 (2). Whilst this requirement importantly promotes transparency and accountability, it is a misuse of resources. Item [7] refines the tribunal's obligation to no longer require written reasons for minor procedural decisions or decisions that do not have a determinative impact on the parties. This change balances transparency and accountability against the interests of quick, just and cheap resolutions of substantive issues in proceedings before NCAT.

Schedule 1 [8] proposes an amendment to section 63 (3) of the Act. Currently section 63 (3) provides the tribunal with a general power to correct obvious clerical errors in the text of a notice, decision or written statement. Item [8] extends this general power to correcting inconsistencies between the name of a person in a notice or decision and the name stated on the person's identification documents. Such a correction can be made without the unnecessary delay of a hearing. This change is particularly important to decisions under the Guardianship Division, where time is often of the essence to access health, accommodation or essential services.

Items [9] to [11] of schedule 1 to the bill extend the powers of the Act to restrict publication or broadcast of a report of proceedings to only sound recordings and transcripts. The amendments prohibit publication of confidential information and ensure that parties involved are protected by reinforcing penalties and clarifying publishing prohibitions. Amendments in items [12] to [19] of schedule 1 to the bill seek to improve procedural and administrative functions of NCAT, ensuring efficiency in its operations. The amendments clarify that a person is guilty of contempt of the tribunal if that person fails to comply with an issued summons without a reasonable excuse.

Schedule 1 [13] specifically allows the president of NCAT to reallocate a matter from the administrative and equal opportunity tribunal to another division of the tribunal. It is appropriate that functions specifically allocated to the Administrative and Equal Opportunity Division continue to be exercised by that division. However, these amendments provide flexibility to ensure the most appropriate division determines the decision. Further, the amendments stipulate that functions relating to the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 are allocated specifically to the Occupational Division of the tribunal, and that initiation of such proceedings is limited to a designated local authority against a respondent lawyer under the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act. [*Extension of time*]

The amendments also provide for changes to required panel composition for different matters brought under the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act. Proceedings of original jurisdiction, such as those relating to unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct, will continue to require three members, whilst the tribunal may otherwise be constituted by one or more members in other related matters. Item [20] makes minor technical amendments to improve efficient conduct in proceedings, particularly for significant and high-risk applications. The amendments allow the tribunal to be constituted by either a one- or two-member panel, rather than the usual three-member panel, to determine applications under section 46A of the Guardianship Act 1987. This section of the Guardianship Act empowers the tribunal to override a patient's objection to treatment in particular circumstances. Some situations of these serious determinations warrant a one- or two-member panel to seek urgent medical care provided efficiently.

The subsequent amendments proposed in items [21] to [23] identify the tribunal's duty to observe guiding principles of the Guardianship Act 1987 when exercising functions under that Act. These principles ensure that the welfare and best interests of persons subject to the proceedings are given paramount consideration. While the Guardianship Division considers these principles in their function, the amendments in the bill codify section 4 of the Guardianship Act to ensure they are always exercised in decision-making. In high-risk and time-sensitive circumstances it may be necessary for the tribunal to consider applications relating to urgent medical care of a person under guardianship. It is imperative that the interests and needs of the person central to the hearing are chiefly considered.

NCAT plays an integral role in New South Wales, offering an independent forum for people to resolve disputes more swiftly and with less associated costs compared with judicial proceedings. Broad powers across a wide range of jurisdictions attest to the tribunal's substantive role in New South Wales dispute resolution to provide efficient and accessible solutions to our communities on issues, with as minimal formality as possible. The work of NCAT is imperative to support our Western Sydney community to access cost-effective and timely dispute resolution on personal matters. NCAT considers matters relating to residential tenancy, strata, housing,

motor vehicles, anti-discrimination matters, guardianship applications, administrative review of government decisions, including information requests, and professional disciplinary matters.

Providing our communities, particularly the diverse populations that I represent in Western Sydney as the member for Prospect, with an accessible legal avenue to resolve their concerns is paramount. Given the nature of matters addressed by NCAT, the people that these reforms will benefit are our everyday residents and families, many of whom are in vulnerable positions and are facing significant personal struggles that require effective resolution. With these proposed amendments, I am confident that NCAT will be equipped to continue offering quick, just and inexpensive outcomes to the people of New South Wales, in particular in Western Sydney, whilst preserving the integrity and accountability of the tribunal. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:53):** I speak in support of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023. The bill implements the recommendations arising out of the *Report of the Statutory Review of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013*, which was tabled on 23 December 2021. The NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] commenced operation on 1 January 2014. It replaced 22 former tribunals, including some of the larger and better-known tribunals, such as the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal; the Administrative Decisions Tribunal; the Guardianship Tribunal; and various health professional tribunals. A number of other tribunals or entities exercised tribunal functions, including the Local Government Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal; the Aboriginal Land Councils Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal; the various local land boards established under the Crown Lands Act 1989; the Charity Referees, who exercised certain functions under the Dormant Funds Act 1942; and the Vocational Training Appeal Panel. In his second reading speech on the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Bill 2012, Greg Smith, then Attorney General and Minister for Justice, said:

I am proud to be a part of this exciting and long-overdue reform. I am also proud to be part of a Government that is committed to improving services for the people of New South Wales. Tribunals perform an invaluable role within the justice system. They provide timely, efficient and flexible points of access for citizens seeking to resolve disputes or to have a review of executive action. They are also cheaper, faster and less formal than court proceedings. But the ad hoc nature of our current tribunal system creates inefficiencies. Currently, many of the separate tribunals maintain their own infrastructure, including separate facilities and separate administrative structures. This results in unnecessary duplication. It also creates much of the confusion referred to by the standing committee in its report. The New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will reduce these inefficiencies. It will be a one-stop shop for tribunal services. It will be independent, transparent and accountable, and it will place customers at the centre of service design.

As the Attorney General in his recent second reading speech on the bill said:

The review concluded that the policy objectives of the Act remain valid and that the terms of the Act remain appropriate to achieve those objectives, but also recommended some minor and technical changes to improve the operation of the Act, amendments to support the efficient conduct of proceedings, and amendments relating to the Occupational Division and Guardianship Division of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Section 92 of the Act includes a requirement that the Attorney General review the Act after five years of operation to determine whether its policy objectives remain valid and whether its terms remain appropriate. The Department of Communities and Justice conducted the statutory review on behalf of the Attorney General. It received 94 submissions from 82 individuals and organisations, including the Tenants' Union of NSW, Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services, Real Estate Institute of NSW, Marrickville Legal Centre, Australian College of Strata Lawyers, Retirement Villages Residents Association, and Affiliated Residential Park Residents Association. The report concluded generally that the objects of the Act remain valid and that its terms remain appropriate.

Some general themes emerged during the consultation, including representation by lawyers and other agents, when costs may be awarded, when hearings are required, dismissal of proceedings, enforcement of orders, appealing decisions, and member qualifications and terms of appointment. The report found that many of the matters raised in submissions were beyond the scope of the review. Specifically, the review found:

A number of submissions also commented on matters relating to NCAT's operations, including the way hearings are conducted, the support materials that are provided to parties and the publication of operational data. ... However, as operational matters are the responsibility of the Tribunal, the report does not contain an in-depth analysis of these issues but instead summarises the comments and suggestions made by stakeholders for NCAT's consideration.

The report made 15 recommendations intended to clarify the operation of certain provisions, improve the efficiency of tribunal proceedings, and make specific amendments relating to the Occupational Division and the Guardianship Division. The bill implements the report's recommendations and also makes minor amendments to correct outdated cross-references to other Acts. However, I will comment on some of the matters relating to residential tenancies and NCAT, as the main forum for resolving tenancy disputes between landlords and tenants in New South Wales.

Landlords and real estate agents in my electorate have told me many times that compared with 10 years ago time lines between lodging an application to the first hearing have blown out from seven to 10 days then to



more like a month now. Tenants, landlords and agents all complain that at the first hearing generally the parties are told to go away and come back two to three months later with further documentation. With the delays come uncertainty and with uncertainty comes costs for both parties to the dispute, not to mention the need for tenants to take leave from work. The shortage of rental properties, the long waiting lists for public and community housing and increasing numbers of tenants to pay rent is putting additional stress on the system. Over the past 10 years, real estate agents have observed that the system has also become more bureaucratic, and with the increased complexity comes further delays and uncertainty.

Tenants have also told me of their experiences at NCAT. Many have told me they were forced to go to NCAT for basic maintenance and repairs, and then later had to deal with a "no reason" retaliatory eviction notice, as has been raised by many members in the House. One tenant told me recently about his personal experience of making several applications to NCAT after his agent applied unsuccessfully several times. He said:

The first notice of appeal follows a chain of three unsuccessful notices already dealt with us appearing before NCAT in person. The proposed first notice of appeal ... intends to challenge [the] NCAT decision and has no evidence of legal consultation sought. I sought legal advice from [a] solicitor today and understand the appeal is weak and unlikely to be accepted by NCAT or at most will fail. I also understand that this does not stop [the agent] from filing 5th, 6th and several notices arguing before NCAT baselessly to cause us embarrassment and loss of billable time as Small Business operator.

According to the tenant, NCAT observed:

Pursuant to section 115(1)(a) of the Residential Tenancies Act NSW 2010 the Tribunal declares that the notice of termination dated 21 March 2023 issued under section 85 of the said Act is retaliatory and of no effect. Reason: The Tribunal is satisfied that the landlord was partly motivated to give the notice because the tenant was seeking to enforce a right of the tenant under the residential tenancy agreement to have repairs done by the landlord.

Yet despite the order, multiple notices were made within the space of a few weeks. My constituent believed such behaviour would usually be seen as frivolous and vexatious, but it continued and wasted the tribunal's time. The Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023 is a definite step in the right direction, and I welcome the work done by the Attorney General in implementing the recommendations of the statutory review. I agree with the Attorney General's comments in his second reading speech, when he said:

The bill is intended to facilitate the just, quick and inexpensive resolution of proceedings in the tribunal for the people of New South Wales.

The NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal should be an accessible and transparent process to help renters and property owners resolve issues or disputes. Making applications to NCAT can be a long and expensive process, and decisions made by the tribunal can be inconsistent. There is more to do to improve the application process, case resolutions and hearing proceedings. However, the bill does not fully address the concerns that have been raised with me by my constituents. I accept that those concerns may be unique to my electorate but, having heard similar concerns from both sides—from both tenants and landlords—I can see that the system is clearly complicated and is operating less efficiently than it should. Nevertheless, I acknowledge the important work done in preparing the review and bringing the bill before the House. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (16:01):** The Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023 is crucial legislation that aims to implement recommendations derived from the statutory review of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013. That review, tabled on 23 December 2021, recommended various minor and technical changes to enhance the effectiveness of the Act, streamline proceedings and make improvements to the Occupational Division and Guardianship Division of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The report's recommendations were formulated with the primary goal of enhancing the operation of the Act and ensuring the swift, fair and cost-effective resolution of disputes within the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. To ensure the success of the proposed amendments, extensive consultations and discussions were held with stakeholders, including the tribunal. A total of 94 submissions were received, underscoring the comprehensive approach taken in the review process.

I now turn to the particulars of the bill. Under schedule 1 [3], new section 38 (6) (a) will now contain the phrase "as far as practicable", emphasising the tribunal's duty to ensure that all relevant material disclosed applies with practicality in mind. That change will help avoid legal arguments regarding whether the tribunal took adequate steps to uncover relevant evidence, reducing delays and uncertainties in proceedings. Item [4] grants the president of the tribunal broader authority to reconstitute the tribunal during proceedings in certain situations. It allows the president to replace a member not only if they become unavailable or lack the required qualifications but also if the president directs the member not to participate in proceedings. That change facilitates flexibility in tribunal composition, optimising efficiency. Item [7] indicates that the tribunal will not be obligated to provide written reasons for certain decisions that are minor procedural matters or have no significant impact on a party's rights.

While transparency and accountability are important, that adjustment aims to strike a balance with the need for swift and cost-effective resolution. Decisions such as granting adjournments or making consent orders will be exempt from the requirement to provide reasons upon request. Item [8] clarifies the tribunal's power to correct obvious errors in notices of decisions or written statements of reasons. Notably, it includes the correction of inconsistencies between the stated name of a person in the notice or statement and their name on official identification documents. That change aims to reduce unnecessary delays, especially in the Guardianship Division, where timely decisions are vital to individuals' wellbeing. Items [9] and [11] provide clarity regarding the tribunal's power to prohibit or restrict the publication or broadcast of reports of proceedings. Importantly, they extend that power to include sound recordings and transcripts, leaving no room for ambiguity. The bill also emphasises that parties may not publish confidential reports provided by the tribunal, enhancing the protection of sensitive information.

Item [12] explicitly states that failing to comply with a tribunal summons without reasonable excuse constitutes contempt of the tribunal. It aligns the tribunal's authority with that of a court of law, ensuring the enforceability of its summons. Item [13] empowers the president to reallocate matters from the Administrative and Equal Opportunity Division of the tribunal to other divisions when necessary. That change provides flexibility to ensure that cases are heard by the division with the most relevant expertise, optimising outcomes for all parties involved. Items [14], [15] and [17] clarify the functions of the Occupational Division of the tribunal under the Legal Profession Uniform Law (NSW) and the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014. They ensure that the division exercises functions under both instruments. Item [16] clarifies how the tribunal should be constituted when conducting hearings related to complaints under the Legal Profession Uniform Law. It distinguishes between cases that require a three-member panel and those that can be handled by one or more members with judicial or professional qualifications, promoting efficiency and appropriateness in panel composition.

Item [20] allows the tribunal to be constituted by a one- or two-member panel for specific urgent matters related to guardianship under section 46A of the Guardianship Act 1987. That change streamlines the process, enabling swift decisions when necessary. Items [21] and [22] state the requirement for the tribunal to observe the general principles outlined in section 4 of the Guardianship Act 1987 when exercising functions under that Act. That ensures that the welfare and interests of individuals with disabilities are paramount and that their views are considered during proceedings. Finally, item [23] grants the tribunal the power to dispense with the requirement to provide notice of a hearing under the Guardianship Act 1987 in situations where delay may pose a significant risk of harm to the person involved. That allows the tribunal to act promptly in cases where urgent intervention is required.

The Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023 encompasses a range of amendments aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The changes seek to strike a balance between transparency, accountability and the need for timely and cost-effective dispute resolution, ultimately benefiting the people of New South Wales. The bill is a creditable step towards improving the State's administrative and legal processes. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:08):** I make a brief contribution in support of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill of 2023. The bill makes miscellaneous amendments to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 to implement the recommendations of a statutory review. I am pleased to be able to highlight this pivotal institution that often operates quietly in the background but plays a crucial role in upholding justice and fairness in New South Wales. Established in 2014, the tribunal has since been a steadfast pillar of our legal system, dealing with approximately 42 per cent of all civil law matters finalised in New South Wales. I will address the tribunal's significance, its recent statutory review and the proposed changes in the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act that aim to enhance its efficiency and processes.

The NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal serves as a single point of access for most tribunal services in the State. It comprises four distinct divisions, each addressing specific aspects of justice: the Administrative and Equal Opportunity Division, the Occupational Division, the Consumer and Commercial Division, and the Guardianship Division. The tribunal also has an internal Appeal Panel, which is tasked with reviewing the appeals of matters that are being challenged. These divisions collectively form the foundation of our justice system, ensuring that the rights and concerns of individuals and businesses are heard and addressed without bias. The tribunal, like any other institution, is not immune to the need for periodic review and refinement. Section 92 of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act mandates that the tribunal be reviewed every five years. [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

This process ensures that the policies and practices in place remain relevant and effective to today's needs. The most recent review, conducted by the Department of Communities and Justice on behalf of the Attorney

General, resulted in a report tabled in December 2021. The report concluded that the fundamental policy objectives and the terms of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act remain valid and appropriate. However, it also identified areas where minor adjustments were needed to strengthen the tribunal's efficiency, processes and its commitment to delivering timely justice.

The bill is the outcome of this comprehensive review. Schedule 1 items [1] to [8] and [13] of the bill are designed to enhance the efficient conduct of proceedings within the tribunal. These amendments address critical areas such as the allocation of matters between different divisions, the constitution of the tribunal for proceedings, disclosure of material, giving of written decisions and correcting errors in decisions. These changes aim to streamline processes and ensure that the tribunal operates as smoothly and seamlessly as possible. Items [9] to [12] clarify aspects of procedure related to restrictions on the publication of tribunal information and the enforceability of summonses. These provisions are essential for maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of proceedings while upholding the tribunal's authority.

Items [14] to [17] pertain to the Occupational Division and its functions concerning matters arising under the Legal Profession Uniform Law (NSW) and the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014. These amendments ensure that the Occupational Division operates effectively and in accordance with the laws governing the legal profession in our State. Items [18] and [19] are relatively straightforward, merely updating outdated cross-references to other legislation. This housekeeping measure is essential to keep the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act in alignment with the broader legal framework. Lastly, items [20] to [23] are intended to clarify and render more efficient the functions of the Guardianship Division. These amendments enable the tribunal to be constituted with fewer members and dispense with notice requirements in appropriate cases, further streamlining the process and ensuring that guardianship matters are handled with the utmost care and efficiency.

In conclusion, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal plays a vital role in ensuring access to justice and maintaining fairness in our society. The statutory review conducted in 2021 highlighted the need for minor adjustments to strengthen its efficiency and processes. The proposed amendments in the bill aim to achieve just that. The changes proposed in the bill represent a commitment to justice, fairness and efficiency within our legal system. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (16:19):** I support the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023. Members have already run through a number of aspects of the tribunal. Most citizens in New South Wales would hope that they never have a matter that has to go before the Civil and Administrative Tribunal, as with any other dispute or resolution body. But, if they do, people would hope that it is relatively simple, affordable and fair. The purpose of the tribunal has been the theme of many contributions to debate today. The tribunal was established to reduce the complexity of the previous systems and to provide a forum to resolve disputes more quickly and cheaply compared with traditional court proceedings. There is a general feeling that the tribunal undertakes those tasks reasonably well.

The tribunal has broad powers to deal with a wide range of civil disputes, including residential tenancy, strata and social housing matters; motor vehicle matters; administrative reviews of government decisions, including access to government information and privacy matters; anti-discrimination matters; guardianship applications; and professional disciplinary matters. Interestingly, between 2014 and 2021 the tribunal finalised around 522,000 applications. That is an average of 69,000 matters per year, which is an impressive statistic. The guiding principle of the tribunal is to resolve the real issues in proceedings justly, quickly, cheaply and with as little formality as possible.

The Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 provides a high-level framework that enables the tribunal to take a flexible and tailored approach to practice and procedure in each of its different divisions. The bill is the result of a review that included submissions from many individuals. The report of the review was tabled in Parliament in 2021. The report concluded generally that the objects of the Act remain valid and that its terms remain appropriate to achieve those objectives. Its recommendations were to propose the minor improvements that a number of members have spoken about today.

Clauses 1 to 8 and clause 13 of the bill make amendments broadly in the interests of efficient conduct of proceedings in the tribunal, related to the allocation of matters between different divisions, constitution of the tribunal for proceedings, disclosure of material, the giving of written decisions and correction of errors in decisions. There are provisions to clarify aspects of procedure related to restrictions on the publication of tribunal information. There is clarity on the functions and constitution of the Occupational Division. Clauses 18 and 19 update outdated cross-references to other legislation.

There are amendments intended to clarify and render more efficient the functions of the Guardianship Division, allowing the tribunal to be constituted with fewer members and dispense with notice requirements, in appropriate cases. That is interesting because it allows the Guardianship Division to undertake its work with fewer

members. The tribunal can be constituted by one or two members rather than three when determining a request to withdraw an application from the Guardianship Division or an application under section 46A of the Guardianship Act 1987 to override a person's objection to medical treatment when the application is urgent or when the application is made as part of review proceedings. Those recommendations are implemented in the bill.

The recommendations require the tribunal to observe a set of principles and exercising functions under the Act, including that the welfare and interests of persons who have disabilities should be given paramount consideration; that the freedom of decision and freedom of action of persons who have disabilities should be restricted as little as possible; and that the views of persons who have disabilities in relation to the exercise of functions should be taken into consideration. I understand that those areas, particularly in guardianship, can be sensitive in the community. That will be scrutinised closely to ensure that it is making the process more effective, just as fair and more timely in many cases. That is important.

I listened to the contribution made by the Opposition spokesperson, and he interestingly complimented the members of the tribunal for being appropriately qualified. It is quite pleasing that no member has spoken about the tribunal being stacked with political appointments, which happened not too long ago at the Federal level with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal [AAT]. There has been a general feeling on both sides of debate that this tribunal and its many members are doing an appropriate job. I commend the former Government for that because it had carriage of this for some time. Our principles in this Government will keep that up.

People should be appropriately qualified for those positions and they should be able to exercise their experience to make the right decisions. That is a far cry from what we saw from the previous Federal Government, particularly the Morrison Government, when the percentage of political appointments in the AAT went up. Over 40 per cent were former candidates of the Coalition, former members or former staffers, and many had no legal qualifications at all and no relevant experience. That devalued that tribunal's decision-making capacity and its respect in the community. We saw a process of making political appointments to generously paid positions. AAT positions were statutory positions lasting up to seven years, with full-time members getting \$193,000-plus for those areas.

There is no philosophical problem with people being affiliated with political parties when they take on jobs, as long as they are appropriately qualified. It was clear from the actions of the Morrison Government that that was not the case. In fact, an analysis was conducted of the 974 appointments to the AAT and examined 26 years. In the lead-up to the Morrison Government being elected, there was a relatively low rate of 12 per cent being political appointments over that whole period. But that went up to 40 per cent once those captain's picks started to come in, including ex-members of the Western Australian department who had been pointed out.

**Mr Matt Cross:** What was wrong with Duncan Kerr, who was a Labor MP? What was wrong with that?

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

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Duncan Kerr had legal qualifications. He was extremely well qualified. As I just said, being a member of a political party or a former politician does not preclude someone from getting a job if they are appropriately qualified and have the skills to do it, but it definitely should not be the prerequisite for the job. It should not be about rewards for political mates. That is one of the reasons why it is important that this Government is appointing people with appropriate qualifications. Yes, they can be members of political parties.

I have to say, in my experience over 20 years, when I was first elected to this place Labor governments often appointed former Liberal and Nationals members to positions because they could offer the necessary experience and appropriate qualifications. Isn't it great that in debating the bill today we have discussed minor changes to the legislation to make the process more effective? We have not had to debate people who were appointed for the wrong reasons. It is pretty clear from the debate that this organisation is working well and has appropriate staff members. Perhaps the Liberal Party can learn that lesson for its future Federal representation and future selections, if it is ever re-elected and able to select people for positions again.

**Mr Matt Cross:** What about Minister Haylen?

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I note the interjection from the side of the House that gave us John Barilaro and his self-appointment as a trade commissioner—what an outrage—as opposed to appropriately qualified people selected for their skills in the industry. There is a big difference. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (16:29):** I make a contribution to debate on the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023 for a number of reasons, one of which is that members on one side of this Parliament are actually doing some work in this House. We are participating in debate.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

If you want to make a contribution, make a contribution. We talk about legislation, we stand up at the lectern, we voice our opinion, and we have our say. Since this Parliament was reformed after the March election, it is clear that members from only one side of this Chamber are interested in participating in debate. Members on the other side are sitting it out. If the people of New South Wales want to ask questions about where they can save money from people who are not doing their work, they should look at Opposition members on the other side of the Chamber because they are not doing any work—except the member for Wahroonga, who speaks frequently in this Chamber on different pieces of legislation.

I am happy to speak about the work that is being done on the bill before the House today. We are working on this bill because the former Government did not do the work that it should have done on this very same bill. Members opposite left it so late to start the statutory review that it could not be completed by the predicted deadline—they started it in May 2019. It was due to be delivered by 1 January 2020. They left it so late to start the review that it could not be completed. Once they started the review and were working towards finishing it, we had COVID. I will not blame the Opposition for COVID, but I will blame it for starting late. I will blame the Opposition for not getting the work done.

I will blame it for one more thing. The report ultimately was handed to the Liberal-Nationals Government in December 2021. That left the Government at the time with 12 months of being in control of this Chamber and to do the work that we are doing today, and it did not do it. It strikes me that not only are members opposite sitting out 2023; they also sat out 2022 when they were in government. What were we paying them for? I honestly and genuinely believe that the people of New South Wales right now are entitled to ask the question: What are MPs in the Liberal Party and the National Party getting paid for? It is certainly not for participating in debate in this House. That is kind of ironic. We all worked so hard to get elected to the Legislative Assembly, where we deal with legislation. If members do not want to come into the Chamber to deal with legislation, they should not stick their hands up to stand on a polling booth. They should participate or go and find something else to do.

I am participating today to debate the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023. The object of the bill is to make amendments to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013, following the statutory review in relation to the following matters:

- (a) the disclosure of reports, including sound recordings and transcripts, of proceedings, and names of persons involved in proceedings, of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal of New South Wales (the *Tribunal*),
- (b) the correction of obvious errors in the text of decisions of the Tribunal,
- (c) the provision of material relevant to proceedings in the Tribunal,
- (d) contempt of the Tribunal for failure to comply with a summons,
- (e) the reallocation of matters allocated by default to the Administrative and Equal Opportunity Division of the Tribunal,
- (f) the reconstitution of the Tribunal after consideration of a matter by the Tribunal has commenced,
- (g) the provision of written reasons for decisions of the Tribunal at the request of a party to proceedings,
- (h) the functions and constitution of the Occupational Division of the Tribunal in relation to the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014* and the *Legal Profession Uniform Law (NSW)*,
- (i) the functions and constitution of the Guardianship Division of the Tribunal.

Those amendments came from the statutory review. I should talk about that review, that process, what took place and what informed those particular decisions that will be considered by members of this House. In all, there were 94 submissions from 82 different stakeholders, representing a comprehensive sample of tribunal users. In addition to that, roundtable discussions were then undertaken in November 2020 and February 2021 with select user groups. This was all very important work to inform the review because the purpose of the review was to interrogate whether or not the Act is fulfilling its original policy purpose and intention, and whether or not the implementation of the Act can be improved to do that better. So talking to all of those stakeholders and doing the roundtables was very important.

Some targeted consultation did occur with key stakeholder groups that represent the interests of tribunal user groups, including legal service providers and stakeholders such as Legal Aid NSW, the Law Society of NSW, the New South Wales Bar Association and Marrickville Legal Centre; disability advocacy bodies such as the New South Wales Council for Intellectual Disability, Mental Health Coordinating Council and Dementia Australia; and tenancy and property advisory bodies such as the Tenants' Union of NSW, Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services, Real Estate Institute of New South Wales, Australian College of Strata Lawyers, Retirement Village Residents Association, Caravan and Camping Industry Association NSW, and Affiliated Residential Park Residents Association.

The important list that I have just read out is fundamental because those groups typically support people who are disenfranchised in many ways in terms of our legal judicial system. Often it comes down to capacity or

financial predicament. I love the fact that this State and this country, by and large, go to lengths to have organisations like those and processes like those of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal to try to find a way and a means by which justice can be afforded to all, regardless of anyone's position or status. I thank all of those organisations for participating in the process. I recognise that the former Government—in its tardy review—managed to get to all of those groups. That was excellent work.

Some fundamental changes will be made as a result of the bill if we manage to get it through the House, and I expect we will because the one member who spoke on behalf of the Opposition indicated that it will support the bill. Hopefully the bill will make things better for people. As local MPs we hear our fair share of concerns from local constituents about proceedings in the Civil and Administrative Tribunal. We probably all listen to those concerns being raised and wonder how it might have got to that point. Certainly some of the problems that were raised with me as a local MP will be addressed by some of the changes being suggested in the bill.

Recommendations 1 and 2 that came through the statutory review will not be dealt with in this particular bill, and that is for a good reason. Recommendation 1 proposes that consideration be given to strengthening provisions in the Government Information (Public Access) Act [GIPAA] 2009 that restrain applicants under that Act who engage in improper conduct. The reason that that recommendation will not be dealt with in the bill is because that does not apply to this piece of legislation. It is under the GIPA Act 2009 and not the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013, which is what the bill deals with.

The second recommendation that will not be dealt with in the bill is the recommendation that deals with consideration to be given to opportunities to streamline the enforcement of money orders made by the tribunal through its case management system. As an operational recommendation not involving legislative reform, the tribunal is reviewing opportunities to implement this recommendation as it transitions to a new case management system. There are very good reasons that recommendations 1 and 2 are not being dealt with in this bill, but it will go about enacting the many recommendations being made by the statutory review. I welcome the improvements and amendments being put forward. As a member of the Legislative Assembly I am happy to participate in democracy by coming to this House and talking about the legislation being put before it. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (16:39):** I speak in debate on the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023. Before I dig into the guts of my speech, I commend the member for Cessnock for his fabulous contribution. In particular he spoke about the work that the Government is doing. He would know all about hard work; he is one of the hardest working members in this House and he represents Cessnock, a constituency that is known for the hard work that its workers do. I thank the member for Cessnock. The bill makes miscellaneous amendments to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013. Those amendments come about from the recommendations of a statutory review.

By way of background, the NCAT—or the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal—commenced operation on 1 January 2014. In doing so, it replaced 22 former tribunals. In my part of the world, people all too often do not have the means to tackle the sometimes gargantuan hurdles of the legal process. NCAT provides a means for them to get justice. It does that through reducing the complexity of the previous tribunal system by providing a single point of access for most. It uses simplified language, and the means to get a hearing and achieve justice are much more straightforward.

I do not want to cast aspersions on our many lawyer friends in this House and the other place, but sometimes we do need simple, commonsense language in hearings to achieve justice. NCAT certainly helps in that regard. An important example of where NCAT has made things simpler—especially in my part of the world, where there is lots of growth in housing—is with the Dividing Fences Act. Anyone who has been a councillor—I note a former mayor of Blacktown and a former Liverpool councillor are in the Chamber—would know that, believe it or not, you get quite a few inquiries about fence disputes: They are too high, they are not long enough, or they have fallen down. "There was a party and my neighbour pushed it over."

**Mr Mark Coure:** Different colour.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Oatley. "We agreed on colonial green and they have put in clay" or something like that.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Socialist red.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** The election results in Leppington show there are lots of socialist red fences and there will be many more for many years to come. As we know, prior to the commencement of NCAT, such matters would bog down councils and local councillors. The tribunal has provided a way to sort some of those issues out. NCAT has also made things simpler with building disputes. I have a specific example. I will not name the builder or the client. I happened to deal with it a couple of months ago. Someone was the victim of what can

only be described as a shoddy builder. There was poor concreting work. They had actually gone through Fair Trading a couple of times and they were not satisfied with the resolution. They, in fact, used NCAT. That story is all too often repeated throughout my electorate of Leppington, where lots of new housing is underway.

Items [1] to [8] and [13] make amendments broadly in the interests of efficient conduct of proceedings in the tribunal. Items [9] to [12] clarify aspects of procedure related to restrictions on publication of tribunal information. Items [14] to [17] clarify the functions and constitution of the Occupational Division in relation to matters arising under the Legal Profession Uniform Law and the Legal Professional Uniform Law Application Act 2014. Items [18] and [19] update some outdated cross-references to other legislation. There is some tidying up there. Items [20] to [23] make amendments intended to clarify and render more efficient the functions of the Guardianship Division.

How did we get here? A review commenced in 2019 received 94 initial submissions from 82 different stakeholders. That demonstrates that the work that has gone into the bill represents a comprehensive sample of the tribunal's various user groups. Amongst them were legal service providers and stakeholders such as Legal Aid, the Law Society, the Bar Association and the wonderful folks at the Marrickville Legal Centre; and disability advocacy bodies from the disability space, such as the Council for Intellectual Disability, the Mental Health Coordinating Council and Dementia Australia. Of course, NCAT deals with quite a few property disputes, so there was stakeholder consultation with tenancy and property advisory bodies, including the Tenants' Union of NSW, Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services, the good folks at the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales, and some of the other peak bodies involved with caravan and camping, for some of the people who like to get out and about.

The report made a number of recommendations in relation to legislative amendments. They are intended to clarify the operation of certain provisions, improve the efficiency of the tribunal proceedings and make specific amendments relating to the Occupational Division and the Guardianship Division. The bill implements the recommendations and also makes minor amendments. Earlier I raised the issue of non-action and that, when people are taken to Fair Trading or then to NCAT, they do not act. There was some grey area around that. The bill includes specific amendments to strengthen some of the tribunal's powers in relation to contempt. In court proceedings, rule 33.12 of the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules 2005 expressly makes failure to comply with a summons issued by the court a contempt. However, there is some grey area and some uncertainty about whether that applies to the tribunal given the rules do not otherwise apply to it.

Item [12] of schedule 1 to the bill puts that beyond doubt. It clarifies it by expressly providing for it in the tribunal's governing statute rather than relying on court-specific procedural rules. Once again, the Government is getting on with the job of governing. Government members are doing the heavy lifting in terms of the speaking list for this particular debate. I am happy to have contributed to it. The bill is sensible. There has been wide consultation and it makes some important updates to a body used widely by people in my part of the world who would otherwise find access to fair and equitable justice out of the reach of their hip pockets. I commend the bill to the House and look forward to further debate.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (16:48):** I speak in debate on the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023. The purpose of the bill, as outlined previously, is to make miscellaneous amendments to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 to implement the recommendations of a statutory review. As my good colleague the member for Leppington just outlined, there is a need to ensure that tribunals like the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], which are a source of recourse and natural justice for many people without legal training or knowledge, are accessible regardless of people's level of education, whether they speak a language other than English or any other barriers that may prevent them from being able to access the tribunal as meaningfully as possible.

An area of great need that I came across recently, and about which I was contacted by members of my community, is in the strata space. In the past five years the number of applications made for mediation relating to strata claims is up by about 45 per cent, and the average wait time for a mediator is three months, with a further four months' wait time to proceed to a hearing or determination via NCAT. That is an extraordinary amount of time. Again, it is a significant barrier to ensuring that people who need to raise certain issues that are impacting on their life, such as issues with neighbours or other community members, are dealt with as practicably as possible.

To give some background on the amending bill, a statutory review of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act commenced in 2019. Many submissions were made by stakeholder groups and others. Roundtable discussions with select user groups were undertaken between November 2020 and February 2021 to refine the stakeholder feedback that was received and then the proposed recommendations of the review. In light of that feedback, the Department of Communities and Justice—and I note that the Minister for Families and Communities is in the Chamber—provided advice in 2023 on the proposed amendments to ensure that the terms of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act were appropriate to achieve its objectives. The report was tabled in December 2021

and recommended discrete amendments to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 to be implemented within the Government's first six months.

The review broadly determined that the objectives of the Act remain valid and that the terms of the Act remain appropriate for achieving them. There was general agreement that the tribunal has simplified the system of administrative review in New South Wales since it commenced operations in 2014, and that the high-level framework set out by the Act provides proper flexibility. I will touch on a few aspects of the bill. Firstly, the bill will limit responsibility for ensuring that relevant material is disclosed to parties. Currently, the tribunal satisfies its obligation to ensure all relevant material is disclosed by directing the parties to exchange all relevant information at the commencement of proceedings. That practice will continue. However, it is not realistic to expect the tribunal to identify whether that has occurred in every case.

Firstly, the insertion of the words "as far as practicable" in clause 3 of the bill will simply clarify that the obligation imposed by existing section 38 (6) (a) in the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act is not absolute. It will improve efficiency by limiting the scope for legal argument on appeal as to whether the tribunal has taken all steps to uncover all relevant material. Secondly, the bill broadens the president's power to reconstitute a tribunal. Currently, the president may only reconstitute a panel after proceedings have commenced if a member becomes unavailable, ceases to be a member or ceases to hold a required qualification. Schedule 1 [4] to the bill broadens the president's power to reconstitute a panel, which is directed to circumstances where additional members must be appointed in circumstances where the factual or legal issues in dispute are more complex than anticipated.

Broadening the president's power to reconstitute a panel during proceedings will benefit tribunal users by ensuring that matters are decided in the most efficient and effective manner possible, and it will save resources, which is a goal of the Government. Thirdly, the bill limits circumstances in which written reasons must be provided. While the requirement to give reasons is a crucial feature of the tribunal's role in determining the rights and obligations of parties, the absolute nature of the requirement means that it currently applies to minor or technical exercises of its jurisdiction, such as decisions to adjourn or make orders by consent. Decisions for which written reasons would not need to be given include: adjourning proceedings, dispensing with a hearing and determining a matter on the papers, applying the default position as to costs where parties have not argued otherwise, and making orders by consent.

Limiting this exception to those types of decisions preserves transparency, accountability and the appeal rights of parties, as reasons will still be required for substantive decisions but not for minor procedural decisions that do not determine the outcome of a case. Fourthly, the Government is carefully considering the NSW Law Reform Commission report and its recommendations on a wide range of complex legal issues related to open justice. However, the bill addresses a specific issue by amending the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 to ensure that any prohibitions or restrictions on publication extend to sound recordings or transcripts, as they do to any other non-official reports of tribunal proceedings.

Fifthly, I turn to the difference between complaints under legal profession law and other proceedings. In its original jurisdiction, the tribunal hears complaints of professional misconduct against lawyers made by regulatory authorities. This contrasts with complaints of unsatisfactory professional conduct, which, as the less serious form of complaint under the Legal Profession Uniform Law, can be determined at first instance by regulatory authorities, such as the Law Society Council of New South Wales. The tribunal can be asked to review the determinations of regulatory authorities in its administrative review jurisdiction. While such a review is related to a complaint under the uniform law, it does not fall within the original jurisdiction. The bill clarifies that the panel need only be constituted by two legal members and a non-legal member when sitting in its original jurisdiction.

Sixthly, on non-consensual medical treatments and full panels, section 46A of the Guardianship Act 1987 enables the tribunal to authorise a guardian to override a patient's objection to major or minor treatment. Currently, the tribunal must be constituted by a three-member panel when considering such decisions. The bill will allow the tribunal to be constituted by a reduced one- or two-member panel when making such decisions, in circumstances where the application is made urgently. In practice, section 46A applications are often made when a guardianship order is being reviewed. This amendment will enable such applications to be dealt with more efficiently as part of the review process by a member already familiar with the person's circumstances. In many respects that may prevent cases from falling through the cracks, where complete knowledge of a person's circumstances is not possible or where there has been a gap in handing over the understanding of that person's circumstances.

Seventhly, the bill amends the Guardianship Act in relation to people with disabilities. Schedule 1 [21] and [22] to the bill will ensure that people with disabilities are equally protected across the Guardianship Division regardless of the enabling Act that applies. The bill will ensure that NCAT continues to provide a quick and effective means of solving disputes and reviewing administrative action. The bill clarifies some currently ambiguous processes, tweaks some NCAT components and bolsters its already useful role by simplifying the



administrative appeals process. I began by outlining the many barriers that exist for many people in our broader community in accessing these sources of natural justice and recourses for issues they face in life. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:57):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: In reply: As Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General, I speak in reply on the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023. I thank members who contributed to debate on the bill, including the shadow Attorney General and member for Wahroonga, the member for Granville, the member for Camden, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Monaro, the member for Cessnock, the member for Leppington and the member for Liverpool. The bill implements recommendations arising out of the report of the statutory review of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013. The report recommended discrete legislative amendments to the Acts, which are intended to clarify the operation of certain provisions, improve the efficiency of tribunal proceedings and make specific amendments relating to the occupational and guardianship divisions. The bill implements these recommendations and also makes minor amendments to correct outdated cross-references to other Acts.

I address briefly some matters raised during the debate. As observed by the member for Wahroonga, and shadow Attorney General, recommendations 1 and 2 of the statutory review are not being addressed by the bill because they do not involve amendments to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013. Recommendation 1 proposed that consideration be given to strengthening provisions in the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 that restrain applicants under the Act from engaging in improper conduct. The Government is committed to ensuring safe workplaces, free of harassment or bullying. As such, it is carefully considering these recommendations so as to best ensure the safety of workers and community members.

Recommendation 2 proposed that consideration be given to opportunities to streamline the enforcement of money orders made by the tribunal through its case management system. As an operational recommendation not involving legislative reform, the tribunal is reviewing opportunities to implement the recommendation as it transitions to a new case management system.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** It being 5.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the public interest debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Budget*

### ATTENDANCE OF THE TREASURER IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

#### Messages

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the request of the Legislative Assembly in its message dated 12 September 2023 for the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC, Treasurer, to attend the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday 19 September 2023 at 12 noon to give a speech of unlimited duration in relation to the New South Wales budget 2023-2024.

#### *Public Interest Debate*

### TEACHER WAGES

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (17:01):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the devastating impact the Coalition Government's wages cap had on teacher wages, which led to teacher shortages and merged and cancelled classes across New South Wales schools.
- (2) Notes that the New South Wales Government has secured a historic pay rise for New South Wales's 95,000 teachers, landing a deal that will tackle the teacher shortage crisis and see educators go from being among the worst to the best paid in the country.
- (3) Notes that the deal will see teachers' salaries undergo the most significant uplift seen in New South Wales in almost three decades.

I am privileged to move this motion as the public interest debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge that this may be a topic that you have a particular interest in, as someone who has had a long career in public education. The motion speaks for itself, but let me point out a few reasons why this is such an important topic for us to discuss in the House. I am very proud to be the education Minister in this Labor Government, implementing a once-in-a-generation reform that has been 30 years in the making. The pay deal really demonstrates how much we value and respect teachers as a community—and the Government has reflected this. As the State's education Minister I am probably a little bit biased, but I would argue that teaching is the most important profession in our society. Every profession starts with that one. Teachers are the people that everyone in education depends on. Do

not get me wrong; I will talk a lot about the need for new schools and what we are doing. Members will hear a lot about that next Tuesday.

When it comes down to it, what is a school? A school is a classroom. It is children in front of a qualified teacher. Everything—every student outcome—depends on those teachers. We came to government on a promise to improve student outcomes. We simply cannot do that in the middle of a teacher shortage crisis if we do not get to the root causes of it. Under the previous Government, we had a crisis in education. Teacher resignations were at record highs. In fact, they quadrupled under the previous Government. One in five early career teachers quit within their first five years. The fact that anyone would not call that a crisis is beyond me. We inherited record teacher vacancies of at least 2,000; schools that could not find teachers, let alone casuals, to cover classes; teachers burnt out and overworked; and more than half of teachers in the system planning to leave the profession altogether in the next five years.

Despite this, the former Government and the Minister responsible for schools denied there was a teacher shortage even happening. The former Minister thought it was a beat-up. It did not overly concern her. They basically accused teachers of lying. When teachers were complaining about merged classes and cancelled classes, and parents reported the same thing, and the Minister said, "Oh no, that's not a problem; nothing to see here," imagine how the profession must have felt during that process. It especially affected our rural, regional and remote communities. When we came to government, in places like Tamworth there were 58 teacher vacancies, up from six in 2011. That is a disaster by any stretch of the imagination. In Dubbo there were 55 teacher vacancies, up from 17 in 2011.

That is what happens when wages are suppressed for 12 years under a wages cap. It made New South Wales teachers the worst paid in the country. That was not something that we were going to allow to keep happening on our watch. We came to government on a commitment to get rid of the wages cap and pay essential workers like teachers—the profession that starts all others—what they are worth. The former Government basically presided over a cut in real terms to teachers' wages because of the unfair wages cap. That is why I was genuinely dumbfounded—and there is no other word for it, really—to hear the former Minister, who is now the shadow Minister, put her head up in the media last week.

After she suppressed teachers' wages and created the environment for the crisis and then said there was not a crisis, you would think she would sit one this out. You would think she would say, "I might be a little bit exposed on this issue. There are thousands of cancelled classes and merged classes every day because of our actions." But no. What former Minister Sarah Mitchell claimed is unbelievable. She said, "We haven't heard anything from this Government"—that would be us—"in relation to increasing teacher supply." I had to double-check that quote and get a few teachers to have a look over it. It is a *Zoolander* type of logic; it is not something you would expect from a former education Minister. Isn't it common sense that you cannot attract and retain teachers in an environment where their wages are being cut, when study after study, including the Gallop inquiry, says you are not going to get to the bottom of this unless you deal with wages and conditions?

We cannot get to the bottom of a teacher shortage crisis while New South Wales teachers are the lowest paid in the country. That is why we are doing something about it. The pay deal will mean that starting salaries for beginning teachers will rise by about \$10,000. Salaries for teachers at the top of the scale will rise by about \$9,500. There will be a significant uplift for school counsellors, which we desperately need in our schools. We desperately need more teachers, and we know that we must do something about wages and conditions. This is something the Government will be proud of. We will be out recruiting teachers to fix this teacher shortage crisis. This has only happened because the people of New South Wales voted in a Labor Government.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (17:08):** Members have got to love the hubris of this Government. This is not the first debate we have had on this issue in this Chamber. Several weeks ago we had a public interest debate with Government members high-fiving each other and talking up how good they are. However, they forgot the memo that stated the Minister was going to renege on the handshake agreement and walk away from the unions. I love it that they are back here today with the same hubris. I have made the point before that the Minister's own words talk about a crisis nationwide. It was the Commonwealth Labor Minister Jason Clare who stated:

Teacher shortage is a key issue for all States, Territories and sectors. It is a challenge that faces school communities across Australia ...

In January of this year Fiona Longmuir stated on the ABC website:

The past three years of pandemic-interrupted schooling put extreme pressure on all involved ...

Teacher shortages have reached critical levels in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Europe and Africa.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Government members will remain silent.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** The Australian Education Union says 11,000 new teachers will be needed in public schools in Victoria in the next 10 years. More teachers are employed in New South Wales public schools than ever before thanks to the previous Government. But here we go—

**Ms Kate Washington:** What?

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** I am happy to acknowledge the interjection. In August 2023 *The Sydney Morning Herald* State political editor Alexandra Smith wrote:

Under the watch of the NSW Labor government, the number of teacher vacancies in the state's public schools has grown. In May, there were 1,820 unfilled positions. By August 3, according to updated figures from the Department of Education, that number had grown to 2,023.

This Government has said nothing else about what it will do to bring new people into the profession. It is hoping that a pay increase will be enough. That is not good policy and it is not good government. The previous Government had in place the Grow Your Own program, supporting school learning support officers to upskill and study teaching degrees while working—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member will resume his seat. The Clerk will stop the clock. Government members will cease interjecting or I will start calling them to order. The member for Albury has the call.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** As I said, it is hubris. As well as the Grow Your Own program we had "temp to perm", an initiative started by the Liberal-Nationals Government and trialled in 2021 during the pandemic. Labor took it on, and its Parliamentary Budget Office [PBO] submission stated it would create 10,000 full-time equivalent [FTE] permanent teaching positions. In response, the PBO wrote:

The PBO notes that a policy to convert 15,000 temporary teachers to permanent appointments in 2023 was announced by the Government in January.

The policy that Labor came up with was actually announced by the former Government in January this year. Labor has no original policy to attract teachers to the profession.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. I remind Government members to cease interjecting or I will start calling them to order. The member for Albury has the call.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** The Government's \$125 million Teacher Supply Strategy was projected to deliver 3,700 more teachers in specific subjects and locations. However, we put forward the policy for top performing teachers in New South Wales to receive a major pay rise. In fact, up to 600 public school teachers could have seen their salaries rise up to \$152,000 after receiving a \$40,000 pay rise compared to Labor's top pay of \$122,000.

We face the challenge of managing the economy, particularly public sector wages. Labor inherited a budget with a triple-A credit rating, with half the debt and twice the infrastructure investment compared to Victoria on a per capita basis. What is the Minister hiding? I have in my hand Labor's own submission to the PBO regarding its wages policy. It states that the cost to the budget of its public sector wage increases is zero. In fact, its PBO submission states that Labor has advised "there would be no budget impact in the four years to 2025-26". When asked at a press conference in September 2023 the education Minister could not say how much the deal would cost the Government, but she flagged cuts to the public service were on the table to fund at least part of the wage increase.

There is a risk that if a government does not manage the cost of public sector wages, which are the State's biggest expense, other programs and other projects may need to be axed. Our teachers are important. However, the focus for this Government needs to be on the eight million people who live in New South Wales. We are here to manage this State prudently and prudentially. Instead, it seems the greatest risk to the New South Wales economy is Labor.

**Business interrupted.**

*Business of the House*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG:** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended this day to permit any member to speak on the public interest debate for no more than five minutes.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....50  
 Noes .....33  
 Majority.....17

#### AYES

Aitchison, J	Hagarty, N	Quinnell, S
Bali, S	Harris, D	Regan, M
Barr, C	Harrison, J	Saffin, J (teller)
Butler, L	Haylen, J	Saliba, D
Butler, R	Hoenig, R	Scully, P
Car, P	Holland, M	Shetty, K
Catley, Y	Kaliyanda, C	Smith, T
Chanthivong, A	Kamper, S	Stuart, M
Cotsis, S	Kirby, W	Tesch, L
Crakanthorp, T	Leong, J	Vo, T
Dalton, H	Li, J	Ward, G
Davis, D	McDermott, H	Warren, G
Dib, J	McGirr, J	Washington, K
Donato, P	McKeown, K	Watson, A
Doyle, T	Mehan, D	Whan, S (teller)
Finn, J	O'Neill, M	Wilkinson, K
Greenwich, A	Piper, G	

#### NOES

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

#### PAIRS

Daley, M	Cooke, S
Minns, C	Williams, L
Park, R	Toole, P

**Motion agreed to.**

*Public Interest Debate*

#### TEACHER WAGES

**Business resumed.**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (17:25):** I begin by commending and thanking the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning, for not only bringing this debate to the House so that members can express reasons as to why the Government is taking proactive steps to address our education system but also for her hard work in getting us to where we are today—which is a stark difference to where we were 12 months ago. There can be no greater expression of importance than investment in public education. We just had a division. Those opposite clearly cannot count; they need to go back to school. Why would they gag a debate about the importance of public education and the values of teachers who educate our children? Ultimately, that is what this debate is about. The Minister and the Government have been doing a lot of hard work to deliver on what we said we would do before the election. Like a flash, that is what was achieved this week. But there is more to do.

Before I elaborate further, I refer to the member for Albury. He should have been dusted off during the campaign. He outlined the number of failures of the former government. In the electorate of Albury, there has been a 658 per cent increase in teacher absentees—from five in 2011 to almost 40 this year. Talk about getting the memo; he clearly did not get the memo that he had no teachers and he needed them. Thankfully, we now have a Labor Government that will prioritise public education. We on this side of the House know when we invest in the system we are investing in our students to get the best education that they can to achieve prosperity through their working life. We know that education is the greatest enabler. It sets many people free. It provides them with the opportunity to not only be the best person they can be professionally, but it also fills them with confidence to achieve many other wonderful things throughout life. That is the Government's agenda; it is lost on those opposite. But I do not want to talk about them too much because they do too much of a good job talking about themselves.

On 21 January this year the shadow education Minister, then Minister for Education and Early Learning, said on 2GB during this crisis, "I think it's a bit of a beat-up. Certainly in some parts of the State sometimes we do have challenges getting professionals out to regional New South Wales to staff areas." I note that the member for Dubbo has walked out of the Chamber. He probably does not want to hear this, or he may not even know—he is back in; thanks for coming. There was a 229 per cent increase in vacancies, from 16 to nearly 60 vacancies in the Dubbo electorate alone. It is no wonder he wanted to leave the House. He cannot front his own community and he cannot front members in this debate. I look forward to his response.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Campbelltown will direct his comments through the Chair. The member will be heard in silence.

**Mr GREG WARREN:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate your support. On March 2022 in the Legislative Council, the then education Minister and now shadow education Minister said, "I don't agree with the assertions that we have a crisis. Our vacancy rate is incredibly low for an organisation of our size." That statement in itself does not instil hope in the students, the teachers, the parents and everyone else who knows that public education is the path for growth in our economy. We have an educated State, but the standards that were achieved during the term of the last Government slipped to an embarrassing level. Why? Because we cannot encourage educators to come into the system or remunerate teachers to a level that makes them want to stay and provide our students with the education that they need and deserve. We talk about challenges and choices. We understand the challenges. That is why we made the choices that we made leading to the election and that is why we are delivering in government. We choose public education over political platforming.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (17:30):** I am proud to contribute to the debate on behalf of The Greens. I thank the Minister not only for bringing this motion but also for the work that she has done. We have all observed how hard she has worked to back our public school teachers in this State. I do not understand Coalition members. I do not understand why they do not appreciate the significant difference this will make for public school teachers in our electorates. At the end of the day, it is about student outcomes, and we know that.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that in 2011 the O'Farrell Government introduced a wages cap of 2.5 per cent for public sector workers that undid 80 years of Industrial Relations Commission independence. Is it any wonder that we have found ourselves in this terrible situation where teachers have been leaving in their many thousands? I give a shout-out to all public school teachers in my electorate and across the State. Since 2020 they had their "Thanks is not enough" campaign. It is worth reminding members that when a teacher goes on strike, they do not get paid. We have had casual teachers and teachers across the State who have been taking industrial action. Their campaign has been nothing short of outstanding.

It would also be remiss of me not to congratulate the Teachers Federation. As a former teacher, I am a longstanding federation member. I am showing how old I am, but during the Vinson inquiry in 2002 I had the pleasure of being the president of the Barrier Teachers Association. At the time I met with Tony Vinson and was part of the public education bus leading into a State campaign. We had all of the information in 2002, but what got in the way, unfortunately, was the Coalition agenda. In my view, it really was an agenda against public sector workers.

I congratulate the federation on introducing the Vinson inquiry. Federation members were the ones who paid for that. They also paid for the Gallop inquiry that again told us what we know, which is that if teachers are not valued, they leave. They get a better offer. Let us face it, teaching is a vocation. It is about the care of young people. It is about sparking the passion in them to follow their dreams in life. As someone said, education is the great enabler. Universal, free public education for every student in this State must be our priority.

We understand that this one-year variation to the heads of agreement will see public school teachers in this State be very well paid and become, apparently, the highest paid in the country. We know there is more work to be done. I believe the Minister when she says that she has committed to look at the workload. We know that without the independence of the Industrial Relations Commission we have not been able to have work value cases,

and we desperately need to look at the workload issues that the Gallop inquiry revealed. As someone who was in the classroom—I went from the classroom to here—I can see that in the past eight years it has gotten so much worse. Through COVID, teachers stepped up to the plate big time. That is why it was so disappointing to hear the former education Minister saying things like, "If you get a pay rise, you need to work more. You need to work harder." It is a mindset that I cannot relate to.

I also mention that the member for Newtown and the member for Balmain have worked very closely with their public school communities. At the end of the day, this is about student outcomes. If we do not have a qualified teacher who loves their job in front of a classroom, we do not get the outcomes that we need. We just do not get them. So I congratulate the Minister. I look forward to working with her closely on the next phases to address teachers' workloads and conditions. I love the whole concept of teachers being able to truly have a break from their emails and their work demands. We support the motion wholeheartedly and commend the Minister.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (17:35):** I stand here as a proud former teacher, a proud member of the Minns Labor Government and a proud member of the Teachers Federation still. I thank the other contributors so far. Since the member for Albury has left, I note for today's record that 1,138 teachers in Albury will be getting a pay rise and 285 teachers in that electorate have taken up permanency. I have an electorate with one of the highest numbers of trained teachers in the State. For the benefit of those at home in the Blue Mountains, it is with great joy that I again reiterate one of the points in this motion. The New South Wales Government has secured an historic pay rise for teachers. Ninety-five thousand teachers in New South Wales have landed a deal that will tackle the teacher shortage crisis and see educators go from being amongst the worst paid to being the highest paid in this country. That is an absolute joy for many of my constituents and teachers across the State to hear.

In May 2018, and on many other occasions, I stood in this place and talked about teachers. I was asked to by many of my former colleagues. They wanted it on the record, for the benefit of those who often talked down the work or did not understand the work that teachers undertake. This is from the boots on the ground. Teachers are at work before most parents have left the house. That means they have to get their kids ready and out the door early. Most teachers work through recess and their lunch break, and every teacher must do hours upon hours of unpaid lesson planning, marking, excursions and after-school activities. On top of that, a teacher must be an expert in their subject matter and act as an accidental counsellor of distressed students—and often their parents—who bring with them to school the baggage of their home lives. Teachers work as unofficial bureaucrats on behalf of the Department of Education, doing, usually, unpaid work and administrivia that falls well outside their remit as educators.

In 2018 a University of Sydney study of 18,000 public school teachers and principals across the State found that 97.3 per cent reported an increase in administrative duties and felt that they were enslaved to a bureaucracy that prioritised everything other than their students' learning, and they felt that they were paid peanuts. One teacher wrote, "I've been teaching for 34 years and I have never thought of resigning until now. The workload, stress and hours I am doing is taking a huge toll on my health and my relationship with my family." Last year, just after the New South Wales parliamentary inquiry into teacher shortages was announced, I pulled together a submission, which I talked about in this place. Again, teachers—the boots on the ground—provided me with some anecdotes of their day-to-day struggles. One teacher referred to:

... changes to our profession that saw an unsurmountable increase in the demands placed on our roles. Greater accountability, greater responsibility, punishing workloads, the casualisation of the workforce, an escalation in administrative requirements, all amounting to the decline of the reason we got into this job in the first place - to focus on our students and teach.

The same teacher said:

It is not just low salaries but atrocious conditions, lack of resources to support students and inadequate staffing that saw large numbers of teachers striking ...

And they are paid peanuts. I heard that a million times over. The teacher said:

Make no mistake, we are in the midst of an education crisis and the choice we have now is recovery or death.

It gives me great pleasure to be part of a government that is focusing on that recovery and valuing teachers. The Minns Labor Government has secured an historic pay rise. Teachers are valued now and will see not only remuneration but also ways to address their workload and encourage improved student outcomes. This Government values the work of teachers. I acknowledge Minister Prue Car for her exceptional work and the mighty Teachers Federation, particularly my teaching colleagues. It is a great day.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (17:40):** The problem is that the Minister for Education and Early Learning has now exacerbated a two-tier system. Early childhood teachers will be paid much less than classroom teachers, even though they have the same qualifications. Experienced preschool directors will be paid nearly the same as beginning teachers fresh out of university. People will not want to go into early childhood education. If

we cannot get early childhood teachers, we will not have access to child care and preschool, which means that children will not get the quality early learning they need before they start school.

Without that learning process in place, children will start school developmentally vulnerable, and they will not have the social, emotional and cognitive skills that make them ready to learn when they go to kindergarten. That will make it harder for primary school teachers to teach those kids because they have missed out on the quality early learning that is so important for their development. While it might look like the issue will be solved by giving teachers and the unions what they have asked for—a big pay rise—a cycle will be created to exacerbate the pay disparity issue. Kids will not get access to early childhood education because there will be no new teachers in that sector and then, ultimately, when they get to school that will impact on teachers and their workload.

Last year the Coalition set up the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund, which Labor supported through legislation in both Chambers. We know that those opposite are thinking about making cuts or changes to the childcare fund in the budget next week. Part of that fund was designed to see what could be done to support the early childhood workforce in terms of their pay and opportunities because we know it is important to have those teachers working with kids even before they walk through the gates on their first day of kindergarten. We do not know whether Labor is paying for the teachers' wages deal out of the childcare fund or how it will work and who will miss out. The flow-on effects of that are quite serious, and the Government has not been transparent about it. I have received correspondence from the director of the Werris Creek and District Preschool, who wrote:

I am greatly concerned that this will mean we will lose even more highly qualified, skilled and experienced early childhood teachers as they will {for the pay} want to move into the school system. With a significant number of our sector being not for profit or those for profit providers NOT passing on the business earnings to their staff, our workforce will be further impacted as the gap between wages grows wider! As evidenced both in the National Assessment and Rating Document and in the NSW Preschool Census Summary Report, Commonwealth and State governments require evidence of degree qualified teachers, teaching face to face with children. There is multiple research based evidence supporting the importance and benefits of children having access to a degree qualified teacher. First and foremost, our sector NEEDS pay parity for all teachers whether they work in a school, preschool or long day care early learning Centre. We all hold a university degree, we all hold and maintain the same teacher accreditation through NESA, we all are crucial in the life long learning and development of children of our nation. For true pay parity the early years sector needs an increase in funding from the government.

For true parity, the early needs sector needs an increase in funding. I urge the Minister to pick up the phone to her Federal counterpart and demand the same.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:44):** I thank the member for Tamworth for his contribution to debate. He said many accurate things, but he really missed the point that teachers do not bring other teachers down. Until March 25 this year I was a teacher in the classroom. Teachers are always happy to see teachers lifted up because we know that, as an entire sector, once we start lifting up groups of teachers and showing them respect, it tends to wash over the whole sector. We cannot pit those two workforces against each other for two reasons: they are on different awards, and that is just not how teachers work. I commend and thank the Minister on behalf of teachers, many of whom are my friends and family members whom I have spoken to in the past week. They are thrilled with this unprecedented pay rise.

I stress the impact that this will have on students by focusing on one student from my constituency. When that child started kindergarten, she would not put up her hand or speak in the classroom. She was too anxious to walk into school by herself and she needed a family member to take her to the classroom to physically hand her over to a teacher. She was so anxious about talking to other children in the playground that often an adult had to start those conversations for her. She had extraordinary teachers, who were absolutely second to none. They taught her how to read and other educational benefits. But, as far as her parents were concerned, those benefits were secondary to making her feel special, safe and loved. They challenged her to put up her hand in the classroom at the risk that the teacher might pick her and she might get the answer wrong but know that that is okay. Most importantly, those teachers made her feel smart.

That student ended up being a public speaker and a debater, and recently she was the lead in her school musical. So far, she has had 11 years of extraordinary teachers, which is nothing to do with their four-year degree. Those teachers went above and beyond. In response to the idea that those teachers do not deserve a pay rise, the parents of that child would say they deserve to be paid everything in the world. They have changed that child forever. The member for Tamworth spoke about early intervention, and it is crucial—we know that and teachers know that. The former Government's education policies led to teachers being overworked and undervalued and contributed to the significant teacher shortage we have seen across the State.

Teachers do their best work in the classroom when they are happy, calm and know how they are going to be able to afford dinner. They are now spending hours a day working through a pile of administration rather than giving our kids the best education. Until this Government and until Minister Car stepped in and started to help schools with administration by reducing it by five hours a week—which it will be—teachers were cutting excursions and camps because the amount of paperwork involved in taking students offsite had become

completely untenable. Since day one, the Minns Government has worked to fix the teacher shortage crisis plaguing schools across our State—and it is a crisis.

Just last week I was at a school in my electorate where I found out that in one day there were 75 classes without a teacher. After listening directly to teachers, the Government has come up with several measures, including converting thousands of teachers on temporary contracts to permanent positions. People who are not in the system may not understand what that means—namely, at this time every year, every principal had to count up how many permanent positions they had and say to some of their best teachers, "I may not have a space for you next year." Teachers spend term 4 looking for an alternative position. Sometimes they find one and they leave, and then on day one of the next year they discover that a position was there anyway. That is absolutely disgusting. People have been in temporary positions for decades. They could not get home loans and they could not get a stable workload. This is a fantastic situation. Quality education is a fundamental right of all students. I commend the motion.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (17:50):** I begin my contribution to this public interest debate by moving an amendment. I move:

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

- (1) Notes that the Labor Government has caved in to education union demands for a special deal that is not being offered to other public sector workers.
- (2) Notes that the Labor Government's wages policy is unfunded and poses a significant risk to New South Wales's triple-A credit rating.

The earlier motion to extend the public interest debate tells us everything that we need to know about the Minns Government—it has no plans, no policies and no ideas. In fact, it has no agenda whatsoever. The Premier said today in tactics, "Give me something to talk about. Give me an agenda." So the Deputy Premier has said, "I know what I will do. I won't have a policy. I will extend the PID. We will make it a self-congratulatory one as well, and we will go all night because we've got nothing else to talk about." One thing I will give the Deputy Premier credit for: she tells a great fairytale. But she has lifted the fairytale from other colleagues. It is to basically invent a problem, solve the problem that they invented and then slap themselves on the back for solving invented problems. That is exactly what we see. The reality is that this is a dishonest government.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The Clerk will stop the clock. Government members, including the Deputy Premier, will come to order.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 52. Members should be heard in silence. I have been listening to the debate. We on this side extended the courtesy of listening in silence when Government members were speaking. The same courtesy should be given to Opposition members. If that cannot be followed, Madam Deputy Speaker, then members should be removed from the Chamber.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I uphold the point of order.

*[Government members interjected.]*

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I welcome the interjections.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Government members will heed my ruling. Government members were heard in silence, so I ask them to remain silent when Opposition members have the call.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I was simply making the point that this is a dishonest government. This is a government that promised no tax increases, and what is the first thing it did? It increased coal royalties. This is a government that promised to bring back integrity, and what is the first act that it did? It appointed someone to the largest agency in government that its own recruiters said was a significant risk because that person lacked experience.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** Point of order: If the member for Hornsby wants to have a chat, he should have a chat about the public interest debate. The public interest debate is specifically about teachers and the way this outstanding Minister has given them something that his Government ignored for 12 years.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I remind the member for Hornsby that this public interest debate is about education and teachers.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** We are talking about the good work that the teachers do, and we celebrate that they are being recognised. What we are concerned about is that other public servants are not being recognised as well. Why are the paramedics protesting in the street today? Chris Minns looked them in the eye before the election and said that he would give them huge public sector pay increases. What has he delivered on that front? Absolutely



nothing. Why has the Government not delivered on its promise to police or to nurses or to National Parks and Wildlife Service officers?

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: The member for Hornsby should return to the leave of this public interest debate. It is about education and teachers.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** To the point of order: The member for Hornsby is speaking to his amendment.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Hornsby is speaking to his amendment and making a very broad-ranging, brief introduction to the public interest debate. The member may continue.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** The Government promised to keep the triple-A credit rating, and next week we will find out that is a lie. Why is that a lie? Because the Government has blown the budget on its reckless wages policy. It is not because it is giving out pay increases; it is because it promised to offset those pay increases with savings and it has not done that. Those opposite lied to the public before the election, and they are doing something entirely different in government. They said that they would offset these public sector wage increases for teachers and other public servants with savings from the budget. Have they done that? Absolutely not. They were dishonest before the election, and now we will see that they have lied after the election. The test will be whether they are able to keep the triple-A. The test of this Government will be whether it is able to deliver the surplus that the former Government was delivering in the last budget it handed down. The test of this Government's credentials will be whether it will deliver those things, and it will not. It is not finding the savings to offset the huge public sector wage increases that it promised to offset.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Hornsby will resume his seat. I will hear the point of order but the member for Campbelltown must be quick as the member's time has expired.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to Standing Order 160, relevance, which states:

Amendments must be relevant to the question which it is proposed to amend.

I suggest, and as substantiated by the contribution of the member for Hornsby, that this amendment is far removed from the motion of the Deputy Premier. It is not consistent with the nature or the validity of this public interest debate. The amendment should therefore be ruled out of order.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** To the point of order: As much as I like and respect the member for Campbelltown, the amendment moved by the member for Hornsby is absolutely in order. It speaks to the education deal struck by the Government and wages—and that is exactly what this public interest debate is about.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Further to the point of order: The member for Hornsby spoke to his amendment and was totally off topic. Under Standing Order 160, his contribution substantiates that the intent of the amendment is far removed from the validity of the motion. Madam Deputy Speaker, I again request that you consider disallowing the amendment.

**Mr Matt Kean:** To the point of order—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I am looking at the substance of the motion and the member's amendment. I will hear from the member for the Hornsby, and then I will rule on the point of order.

**Mr Matt Kean:** The ability to pay the State's wages bill requires the budget to be in good shape. The budget is currently rated triple A. The ability to fund 44 per cent of total expenditure in this State requires a sound financial position. That is entirely relevant to the motion that was moved.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The point of order is not about that. The public interest debate of the member for Londonderry is entitled "NSW Teacher Wages". The amendment is about public sector wages policy; it is in line with the motion.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (17:59):** I cannot believe that the former Treasurer is walking out of the Chamber, but after the contribution that we just heard, I would be walking out in shame as well if I were him. We see the way the Opposition feels about education. Its benches are filled with absolutely nobody willing to line up and speak in favour of education, teachers and this incredibly important achievement of the outstanding Minister, the Deputy Premier of New South Wales. From the very outset there was a commitment by the Minns Labor Government to value teachers and public sector workers. We see in the proposed amendment what that other party, or parties—whatever they may be—stand for.

For 12 years the Opposition literally choked the public service through their wages cap. By putting more and more pressure on wages, they forced, as we saw last year, more resignations than retirements for the first time in public school history. We heard over and over again about classes that went untaught quite simply because there just were not enough teachers. Why? Because the former Government systematically drove teachers and public education into the ground. Members on this side of the House believe in education. We believe in public education. And we want to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who are charged with the responsibility of looking after our most precious gift, our children and our future.

Speaker after speaker from this side of the House has extolled the virtues of education, what it means for public schools to be well funded and well resourced and, most importantly, the value of teachers. I know that the member for Cessnock, who is in the chair, has been in the classroom, like me and so many others in this Chamber. The Deputy Premier said time and again: Wages and pay is a mark of respect. To hear a Minister speak like that is refreshing—as opposed to what we have heard from the previous Minister or the Opposition, which has not even contributed to this debate and which, instead of saying, "This is a great thing," questions why we should pay teachers more. Look at the number of vacancies we have, the number of teachers who are leaving and their stress loads. Look at what is going on. Look at how few students in year 12 are now choosing to go into teaching as a profession.

When I went into education, I did so because I knew the contribution that I could make. But I knew that I was going to be remunerated fairly and treated right, and that there was a work-life balance. That just does not exist anymore. It requires a real change. It is not just a little change; it is a systematic change. The Aboriginal affairs Minister, a former principal as well, is nodding because he knows what it is like to make those phone calls at seven o'clock in the morning, trying to find somebody who will relieve for a class because the teacher is not there or, worse still, because the role cannot be filled.

I never thought in my life I would see a situation where people would not go into teaching. But, because of what the previous Government has done, people are turned off it. We have a courageous Minister and a courageous Government that believes in more than thanks, that believes in valuing educators and public schools, and that knows that our very future as a State and a nation only lies in the value that we give to our teachers and the way that they support students. Why are the Opposition members who talk about their great belief in education not lining up to speak in debate? Why did they vote against giving everyone an opportunity to make a contribution? "Facta, non verba" means "Deeds, not words". We are seeing deeds from this side of the House; we are hearing words from that side of the House. And the words are silent, because absolutely nothing is being said at all.

We know that teachers are at breaking point, that they are being burnt out, that they are looking at other options and that they are leaving the system. We could do what members opposite did and just pretend that the problem will go away, but we will not. Government is about solutions, making changes and building a better society. We have seen an outstanding effort by the Minister to bring people together to reach an agreement with that one ultimate goal. When we say that we value and believe in public education, it is "Facta, non verba". It is deeds, not words. The Deputy Premier has made it happen. The Minns Labor Government again stands with teachers, for teachers and for public education. They are getting every cent that they deserve.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (18:04):** I note that there are a number of Government members in the Chamber and only two Opposition members. That is an absolute disgrace. It tells you everything you need to know about The Nationals and how pitiful their response to education is. The list of the areas with the highest number of vacancies in schools in 2023 shows that nine of the top 10 in the State are in country New South Wales. Only Mount Druitt is not. Thirteen out of the top 20 are located in the regions. Not until the top 30 does it actually start to equalise.

I acknowledge the presence of all our Western Sydney MPs in the Chamber too, because Western Sydney is another area that suffers from the problem of vacancies. The 12 long years of neglect have been a real problem for our teaching profession and our education system. Last week 29 teachers came to my office and spoke to me. We talked about a broad range of issues that they were experiencing. There were school counsellors. Their pay equity issues, which the Minister has addressed, were raised. They raised, first and foremost, the wages cap and the wages issues for them. We talked about all the other challenges—the workloads and all of that stuff. But they said to me very clearly, "It is the money at the end of the day, because we are being left here to do this while our colleagues go elsewhere."

They talked to me about border towns. That is a particular issue. The member for Monaro has raised that on a number of occasions. I had the experience of going to Tamworth sometime early last year or the year before and speaking with a journalist there. Funnily enough, I saw him again in Monaro just before the State election. I said, "How do you get from Tamworth to Monaro? That is a pretty big jump." He said, "Jenny, my wife wanted to come down to Queanbeyan so we could still live in the New South Wales State but she could teach in the ACT." Tamworth to Canberra is not a hop. It is not a cross-border community.

People will move for the money, because they have wages pressures with things like rent or mortgages. That is happening in regional New South Wales. I am seeing that in my portfolio. We have had this huge migration into the regions because of COVID. People are really struggling with homelessness and housing. There are even schools in my electorate that are having trouble attracting teachers because of the housing crisis. Anything we can do to help teachers come and stay is good. Opposition members might be sitting in their offices having a little listen to the debate. We had a bit of an education session in question time about the regional seniors travel card and the \$1.4 billion Opposition members stole out of Restart and a few other policy issues that they raised.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that the motion is about education. We had this discussion before she entered the Chamber. Mr Temporary Speaker, I ask you to bring the Minister back to the leave of the public interest debate motion, which is about education and teachers.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** To the point of order: There is no point of order. Once again, the member for Terrigal is interfering with the speeches of members from this side of the Chamber. He has done it for years. He is continuing his strategy of bullying especially the female members. He is doing it again. Mr Temporary Speaker, I ask you to call on him to stop.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The member for Maitland will continue her speech. Some pretty weird and wild things have been thrown around in debate today.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I express my appreciation for the help that my colleague just gave me. It is always good to work as a team, which does not happen on the Opposition side of the Chamber, as seen by the empty benches over there. Let us run through some of the top 10. The Northern Tablelands is number two. It had a 274 per cent increase in teacher vacancies from 2011 to 2023. The member for Tamworth contributed to the public interest debate. He talked about preschool teachers, which is not within the leave of the motion. The member for Tamworth has seen an 893 per cent—close to 1,000 per cent—increase in the number of teacher vacancies in his electorate in the past 12 long years under the former Government. In Dubbo, the electorate of the Leader of The Nationals, there was a 229 per cent increase in teacher vacancies. Ever since I have known the fantastic member for Monaro, he has spoken about this issue. Where is the member for Cootamundra?

**Mr Adam Crouch:** She has a broken hip. Is that all right?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Sorry. Where is the member for Albury? Where are the Opposition members in the Chamber?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Order! The member for Terrigal will cease interjecting. The Minister made an error, for which she apologised.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I apologise greatly.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to comments made earlier by the member for Prospect about me. They were out of order, disrespectful and incorrect. I ask him to withdraw his remarks and remind him that he was brought into the Speaker's office after threatening me in the Chamber.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** The member for Terrigal will resume his seat. I call the member for Monaro.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (18:10):** It is a great pleasure to support this important public interest debate. I completely reject the Opposition's amendment. This issue is one of the primary reasons that I am back in this place. When I was asked to run for the electorate of Monaro, one of the constants I heard was the teacher shortage and the number of composite classes that were run on playgrounds for hours on end because of the teacher shortage in Monaro. I said at the time that I had decided to take up the opportunity to run again because many teachers told me about that issue and because the former Nationals member for Monaro would not even acknowledge that there was a problem. That was another disastrous element of The Nationals' campaign, apart from the factors that motivated me to become a candidate in the first place.

The Monaro electorate bounds the Australian Capital Territory, so we saw firsthand the problems caused by the difference in teacher salaries between States. I have spoken to many teachers since then. We saw an exodus of teachers to the Australian Capital Territory, where starting-level salaries and salaries throughout were higher and where workloads were lower. That is why we saw a 419 per cent increase in the number of teacher vacancies in the electorate of Monaro. In 2011, in my former term as member for Monaro, there were 10 vacancies; by 2023, there were 51.9 vacancies. I heard constantly from the 517 teachers in the public schools in the electorate of Monaro about the issues they had.

A few weeks ago I met with the Queanbeyan and Braidwood teachers associations. Again, they told me about the exodus to the Australian Capital Territory, and again they talked to me about the issues that needed to be resolved. Arrangements have now been put in place by the Government, courtesy of the Deputy Premier. I congratulate her on her work to address those issues. As we saw in question time and during this public interest debate—we have heard some very disappointing speeches—the Opposition says, "Do not raise the bar; keep the bar low because then we will not have to worry about putting up anyone else's salary." I am not afraid to talk about increasing salaries for the rest of the public sector and in other important areas that we must service, but we had to focus immediately and early on teachers because that is where we have a desperate shortage.

We heard amazing comments from the Deputy Leader of The Nationals, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor, who is a resident of the Monaro electorate. She said on 2CC radio, "When you have a pay rise, you should have a productivity increase." Clearly she does not speak to teachers about how overworked they are. Two teachers from the Braidwood Teachers Association told me that they had to roster looking after their children at night—not in the day; at night—so they could take turns completing all the paperwork that they have to do as part of their job. That situation can simply not be allowed to continue. I have no doubt the Deputy Leader of The Nationals took pride of place when the extensions were opened at Monaro High School, but I bet she did not hear from the principal that the nice, new open learning area that had been built was being used exclusively to hold composite classes because there were not enough teachers to teach those classes. That situation had to change.

I have seen that situation firsthand in our family. My daughter is a teacher at Karabar High School in Queanbeyan. Yesterday she said to my wife, Cherie—who happens to be present in the gallery, along with my mother, and I welcome them both—"I might stay in teaching for a few more years." That thrills me as a parent because teaching in our public schools is one of the most honourable and important professions one could engage in. I say thank you to the teachers in the electorate of Monaro who stayed in public education and continued teaching. I thank them for their faith in supporting a Labor government, which recognised the need to bring them up to standard to keep them in the profession. Labor has not engaged in the awful game we have seen from the Opposition. Instead of saying, "Teachers deserve a pay rise", the Opposition has said, "How can you afford it?", "You won't be able to pay for it" and "You're destroying the budget". It does not say, "These people need to be properly recompensed for the effort they put in." That is what Labor does, and that is why Labor members are sitting proudly on this side of the House.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (18:15):** Teachers are the bedrock of our community's prosperity and future success. Finally, we have a government and an education Minister who understand that. New South Wales is set to become the best-paying State for teachers in Australia, recognising the crucial role they play in shaping the minds and lives of our younger generation. This shift in teacher remuneration is a significant step towards acknowledging that doing right by our educators is synonymous with investing in our children's future. In my electorate of Riverstone nearly 70 per cent of couples have children, underscoring the tremendous responsibility that our teachers bear in moulding the intellectual and social development of thousands of young minds. When I say "thousands of young minds", there are over 38,000 children aged between five and 18 in my electorate.

Those children are not just numbers; they are the future of our region. In fact, they are the future of our nation. These kids need their education. These kids need classroom control, not dark sarcasm from the Liberals. The Coalition's opposition to this massive improvement to education seems to be framed around whataboutism. It prefers all workers to remain underpaid and yet wonders why the cost of living is out of control. Our children's future success depends on the quality of education they receive. The north-west is shifting from a semi-rural outpost to a booming population hub. The importance of investing in school infrastructure and teachers cannot be understated. Our teachers are not just educators; they are mentors and role models for our children. They instil knowledge, values and a thirst for learning that goes well beyond the classroom. Their impact extends far beyond our children's school years. Teachers shape our future citizens, who will contribute to the growth and development of our nation.

Few members in the Chamber would be unable to recall a teacher who had a profound effect on their lives. For me, it was an English teacher named Christine Knight. As the north-west area grows, so does the demand for quality school infrastructure. Every school in my electorate bar one is overpopulated, some by more than double. Adequate school infrastructure and well-compensated teachers remain the cornerstones of a robust education system, not ChatGPT or search engines. By failing to support our teachers, we risk compromising the potential of our children and the prosperity of our future. It is no coincidence that last year the number of teacher resignations outnumbered retirements. That is a direct consequence of the policies of the former Government.

Furthermore, attracting and retaining talented educators is crucial for maintaining educational excellence. We have seen virtually every measure of success for students fall over the past 10 years. We have gone from being in the top 10 down to being in the top 20. Competitive salaries help ensure that we have a pool of dedicated and

skilled teachers who can meet the needs of our students in a rapidly changing world. The recent developments that will make New South Wales teachers the best paid in the country are an essential step forward. However, it is essential to recognise that this is not just about salaries. It is about acknowledging the pivotal role teachers play in shaping our future. As the north-west area grows and continues to evolve, prioritising school infrastructure and educators is not just a choice but a necessity. We must provide our children with the education that they deserve. We must value teachers. On behalf of my entire electorate, I thank the Minister for Education for her extraordinary advocacy for teachers, for students and indeed for the future of our nation.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (18:20):** The biggest influence on one's life apart from one's parents or caregivers is teachers, and there is no doubt about that. I cannot stress enough the importance of a good education. It does not matter how low someone gets in life; no-one can take away a good education. Having been a teacher, I understand the ups and downs in the profession. Nothing is more disheartening than not feeling valued and respected by one's employer. What the Minns Government has done by increasing teachers' wages is show teachers that they are respected.

We now have to reduce the administrative burden hanging over teachers and let them get back to the classrooms, which is exactly where they want to be. Former education Minister Adrian Piccoli, who was the member for Murray, decided to merge the only two high schools in Griffith. This merger had a disastrous impact on teachers' ability to teach. The schools were about five kilometres apart, and the logistical and administrative nightmare added extra stress to already overworked and underpaid teachers. They were stressed; they were absolutely broken. I was given a commitment by Prue Car and the Labor Government that they would demerge the schools, and they have kept that promise. That commitment was made before the election. They have shown by this demerger that they really care about students, teachers and rural communities. I thank the Minns Government, particularly Prue Car and her staff, for showing our community the respect that they deserve.

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:22):** I speak in favour of the motion. I commend the Minister for bringing it to the House and also for her ongoing commitment to public education. As part of the Minns Government, I am particularly proud that we have delivered on our election commitment for our children's educators. I am aware that members in this place either have been teachers or, like me, have family and friends who are currently educators. Today the Minister signed the heads of agreement that has secured a historic pay rise for our 95,000 teachers, giving our teachers and school counsellors the recognition that they are entitled to and deserve. This investment in our State's education was desperately needed, despite the constant denials and disdain shown by the former Government. Educating our students is the greatest investment a government can make, and there is nothing more important than having qualified teachers in every classroom. From day one of term 4, starting salaries for teachers will increase from \$75,791 to \$85,000, and salaries for those at the top of the scale increase from \$113,042 to \$122,100 from 9 October.

A restructured seven-step pay scale will benefit every single teacher. School counsellors will also receive that significant boost to salary, commensurate with their double degree. This pay increase should stem the haemorrhage of counsellors into private practice. Senior psychologists will be elevated to the level of deputy principal. The offer will restore respect and integrity to the State's education sector, as other members have said in the House today. We value the work that New South Wales teachers do. We all know a good teacher can inspire hope, stimulate the imagination and instil a love for learning. The respect we accord to teachers should extend beyond the classroom. It reflects our values as a society. By respecting teachers, we underscore the importance of education and knowledge in our society, setting a precedent for future generations. It distressed me greatly when I heard comments from the then Minister in the previous Government, when questioned on the chronic teacher shortages, such as, "I think it's a bit of a beat-up."

When I was doorknocking I heard loud and clear that teachers were fed up, overworked and burnt out. They were not just walking out the door, they were sprinting! This was reflective of what was happening on the ground, with one in five teachers abandoning the profession after only four years. They had lost hope. If a government cannot even acknowledge it has a problem, how on earth can it fix it? I was constantly told that teachers were pinning their hopes on a Labor Government. Many teachers had not had a permanent role but had been in acting positions for years. Obviously this was not a clever way for the previous Government to fudge the figures. Many of those teachers were disgusted by the treatment of the previous Minister and openly told me that if Labor did not get elected, they were gone. The stats say it all. Permanent teacher vacancies more than doubled under the Liberal-Nationals Government. In 2011, there were 939 permanent teacher vacancies. By 2022, there were 1,911 permanent teacher vacancies, a net increase of almost 1,000 additional vacancies. Over the term of the previous Government, secondary school vacancies grew by an alarming 63.5 per cent. In my electorate of Penrith, teacher vacancies more than doubled.

The Liberals and Nationals refused to value teachers, and that has clearly not changed in opposition. Respect for teachers is pivotal in shaping a productive and positive learning environment. It is not merely a token

of courtesy, but a testament to the value we place on education and knowledge. By fostering a culture of respect, we can ensure a more fruitful educational experience for all our students. This is at the heart of our Labor belief and what we have delivered. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (18:27):** I worked in a school for seven years. I know teachers feel overworked and burnt out; they have felt undervalued and underpaid. That is why we on this side of the Chamber are determined to demonstrate that we value teachers and the vital work they do. I am proud to be part of a government that acknowledges and recognises the incredible contributions our teachers make. Delivering a nation-leading pay deal for New South Wales teachers is a key part of our plan to fix the teacher shortage crisis that we inherited from the former Liberal-Nationals Government. Last week, the Premier and the Deputy Premier, who also doubles as the Minister for Education, announced a historic pay rise for 95,000 teachers throughout New South Wales. As part of a deal, starting salaries would be increased from \$75,791 to \$85,000, while top-scale salaries would increase from \$113,042 to \$122,100. The deal will begin on 9 October this year and will make an incredible difference to the lives of our hardworking and dedicated teachers and their families, particularly the almost 1,200 teachers throughout the Heathcote electorate.

Our teachers are passionate about education. Our teachers are dedicated to ensuring our youngest generations are equipped with the knowledge and life skills to thrive both now and in the future. It is critical that we not only recruit new teachers but that we also retain our existing ones. We cannot attract and retain teachers and address the chronic teacher shortage unless we improve the salaries of teachers. We have done this in six months. Under the former Government the needs of teachers were completely neglected. For 12 years it refused to meet with them. It refused to listen to, acknowledge or respect them. The former Government would not even consider negotiating with the NSW Teachers Federation for a better pay deal. The former Government took our teachers for granted, and as a result they left the profession in droves.

Under the Minns Government, our New South Wales teachers will be the highest paid teachers in the country. They will have their profession acknowledged and they will be given the respect they deserve. This will now assist in recruiting and retaining teachers. I have spoken to numerous teachers since the historic deal was reached. Teachers are delighted; they are elated. The historic pay rise came just months after the Government began to roll out its promise to convert 16,000 temporary teaching and administrative positions into permanent roles. Principals tell me that the transition from temporary to permanent is a huge deal for job and financial security. No longer will those on temporary contracts have sleepless nights at the end of the year wondering whether they will have a job to return to in February. It also decreases some of the administrative duties placed on principals, assistant principals and teachers.

The Government ensured our teachers that they would be paid fairly. We listened. We heard and acknowledged the concerns of teachers. Importantly, and in stark contrast to the former Government, we addressed those concerns. Furthermore, this Government has also taken steps to ensure that teachers can concentrate on what they do best: teaching. We have reduced the administrative burden on teachers by five hours per week, meaning they are able to spend more time in the classroom engaging students in face-to-face teaching. I am proud to be part of a government that secured this historic pay rise. I am proud of our Minister, and Deputy Premier, who is a formidable supporter of every employee in the New South Wales education sector. I acknowledge the NSW Teachers Federation for its tireless and unwavering advocacy. I thank the many teachers who have written and spoken to me. I also acknowledge school counsellors, who continue to make tough decisions every day. Counsellors deal with the mental health and wellbeing of every child, and every child deserves a decent shot at life.

As someone who has worked at a school, I have an intimate knowledge of how much our teachers go above and beyond the call of duty. They truly care for each of their students and their families. I witnessed the triumphs and tribulations faced by teachers on daily basis. Not only is their strength, determination and commitment admirable, but they are also truly inspirational. I thank them for the difference they make to each and every child's life.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:31):** I am a proud product of public education. I would not be standing here today if not for some fantastic teachers and some fantastic schools I attended in my formative years. Likewise, my children are both now at public schools. I give a shout-out to my daughter, Nia, who was recently made school captain for next year. They told me not to come back to that school and now she is the captain, so there you go—it is a lesson for everyone.

**Ms Prue Car:** Watch out, she's coming for the Minister!

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY:** Yes. But the one stark difference I have seen over the past 12 years between my public education and that of my kids is the lack of resourcing. Teachers are worn out. Both kids have told me stories. Effectively due to teacher shortages, my daughter's class has been told, "Here's your lesson. We'll leave

you guys to it", and the teacher has had to leave. For most of the first term this year, my son went without a science teacher. Of course, people across the State have experienced such stories. Teacher resignations were at record highs under the previous Government—they quadrupled over its time in government—and teacher vacancies doubled during those 12 years.

In six short months we have tackled some of those problems. We were elected on a platform of fixing the crisis in education, which was certainly one of the reasons I put my hand up to run. There is no reason my kids should not have the kind of public education I was afforded; in fact, they should get a better one. Normally these things improve over time rather than go backwards. In six short months this Government has abolished the wages cap. We have converted 16,000 teachers and support staff to permanent.

A couple of months ago I had the pleasure of being at a local school doing work with students. While saying goodbyes on my way out, the principal told the teacher I was with—a relieving deputy—some great news: "You've just been converted to permanent." Once the substantive assistant principal comes back, she will have a permanent role at that school. She said, "That's great. I love the kids. This is a great school." I said, "No, what would that mean for you?" For her, it meant stability. Her and her partner could finally get a mortgage. They could invest in and move into the community that she loves and where she taught for the last few years.

Speaking of the Leppington community, it ranks fifth in the State for population growth. Over the past 10 years the population has increased by 30,000, or 51 per cent, and in the past five years alone it has grown by just under 30 per cent. One would expect the previous Government to have commensurately matched that growth in population with investment in education. Sadly, that was not the case. The stats go on: We have the third-largest growth in primary school-aged children in New South Wales. We rank fourth in the share of population for kids attending school but number one in the State for the number of students attending private schools.

There is a lack of public schools in my electorate. Despite that, the public schools that do exist are well over their enrolment caps; I note the member for Riverstone has experienced similar problems in his electorate. Austral Primary School is 30 per cent over its enrolment cap, while Leppington Primary School is 38 per cent over and Dalmeny Public School is 45 per cent over. Obviously the Government is tackling these issues. During the campaign the now Minister announced investment in my local schools. Today in this Chamber we are talking about the largest pay rise in three decades.

I finish my speech by quoting from a local resident whose wife is a teacher. Early last week he said to me, "Please thank Chris Minns. My wife and her colleagues are very happy. I think it's also that they are truly being listened to and appreciated." That stands in stark contrast to the previous Government, where comments like "It's not something I'm overly concerned about" were what people were used to. I am proud to be a part of this Government and speaking in support of this motion today.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:37):** I also contribute to this very important debate, one that is very close to the hearts of members on side this of the House, if not of those opposite. I start by paying tribute to the 743 teachers who work in the Liverpool electorate and the further 511 teachers who call Liverpool home. Since I was elected to this place five months ago I have made it my priority to visit the local schools in my community to express my appreciation for the incredibly valuable work they do and understand the breadth and depth of the issues that they face on the front line of educating our children.

I will never forget the teacher I met who was in tears. She told me that she had watched the education Minister, and Deputy Premier, give her address to all teachers across the State and had felt hope for the first time in many years. This week that trust and faith in the Minister and the Minns Labor Government was borne out as New South Wales teachers went from being amongst the worst paid to the best paid in this country. That represents the biggest pay increase in a generation and reverses the past 12 years of disrespect and devaluation of teachers by the previous Government.

It is not just wages and conditions that the Minister and those on this side of the House are addressing as soon as possible. After 12 years of the Liberal-Nationals Government teacher vacancies in Liverpool have increased by 168 per cent, from 12 vacancies in 2011 to a whopping 32 in 2023. I have spoken with teachers, parents and local health professionals who have expressed concerns about the impact of teacher shortages on our children and their educational outcomes. In my previous life I worked with many teachers and school counsellors as they navigated the impacts of COVID. Teachers were working all hours of the day and night to make things work for their students. They dealt with the wellbeing and behavioural impacts of the disruptions of COVID on young people for a long time after restrictions had eased. This is on top of the behavioural policy that actively placed teachers at risk of physical and emotional harm. The administrative burden of unnecessary busywork imposed on those teachers by the previous Government further exacerbated the burnout and disillusionment of our teaching workforce that previous members have outlined so well.

This is why it beggars belief that the response of those opposite was to demand that our already overworked and distressed teachers work longer and harder under the guise of a productivity increase. While those on the other side of the House might be tone deaf and out of touch, our community is not. This is why the More Than Thanks campaign resonated so widely and deeply. But this arrogance towards teachers is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the extent to which the former Government dropped the ball on educating and nurturing our most precious resource: our children.

Earlier this year, just after the Government was elected, I received an email from a local school principal highlighting the lack of air conditioning at the school, despite multiple applications and entreaties to the former Government. The principal told me that during the winter months students are forced to wear extra layers of clothing in the classroom. I draw the attention of the House to what the principal said to me in the email—keeping in mind that is from April this year. He said, "This is at a time when conditions in New South Wales schooling are at their worst and include significant teacher shortages, resulting in our hardworking staff suffering further effects on their already insurmountable workload."

I am proud of the work of the indefatigable Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning and this Government not only to name and acknowledge the problems facing education in the State but also to do something about it. Growing up, like many people out there, I was told that education is the most precious and valuable thing, because nobody can take it away from you. It is the great equaliser and it is the great social changer that many generations of people have come to rely on. I want to make sure that future generations of children in the State can rely on their Government to back in their teachers, their schools, their parents and them when it comes to fulfilling their potential. I commend the Minister for her commitment in this space and I commend the Government.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (18:41):** I support the public interest debate and motion moved by our passionate and committed Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. This deal rights a wrong done to New South Wales teachers over a decade of Liberal-Nationals theft of their wages and stripping of their rights at work. On their watch we saw teacher resignations quadruple, with resignation rates among early career teachers reaching a staggering 19 per cent. They made sure that every disincentive possible was in play, to the point that when they left office the vacancy rate had risen from 1.8 per cent to 3.2 per cent. I could continue listing figures but I would use all my valuable time. By any metric, teachers and teaching as a profession was desecrated by the previous Government. Yet when the previous education Minister was asked about the disastrous impacts put on our teachers by her and her Government, she simply stated she was not overly concerned.

When someone enters teaching as a profession, they are choosing to devote their working life to giving to our community and investing in the next generation. It is a life of service and teachers deserve to be able to pursue this noble career without having to worry constantly about financial pressures, the impacts this can have on their health, or even leaving the sector because they simply cannot afford to continue to pursue teaching, despite their passion and skill. I am proud to stand here today as part of a government that is listening to educators and working with them to deliver a deal that gives them the support they need so they can continue to do their fantastic work, have fulfilling careers and focus their attentions on what they do best: teaching for our State and our country's future. The deal enables them to provide the education the students and families of New South Wales expect—an education that is robust and all encompassing that provides for the learning abilities and needs of all students.

In the electorate of Parramatta there are 19 public schools: 13 primary, three secondary and three for specific purposes. That number will increase to an impressive 22 public schools after this budget, with three new schools funded for the electorate of Parramatta. And am I proud and pleased about that! As the member for one of the fastest-growing electorates in New South Wales, I am proud to be part of a government that is investing in schools to address the significant growth. Of course, the ability to open the doors of these future schools will depend on the decisions we make now to address teacher shortages. We know that the best way possible to do this is through remuneration. Within the 19 public schools we have at the moment, there are 978 hardworking and invaluable teachers. On behalf of my community, I thank them for their work, their commitment and for believing in our Government that we will address teacher shortages and the loss of teaching time due to merged and cancelled classes across our local schools, and deliver an historic pay rise that will see educators go from being amongst the worst paid to the best paid in the country.

Unfortunately, the vacancy rates are through the roof. When those opposite came to government, vacancies across Parramatta schools were at 11.4, rising to a whopping 29.4 in 2023—an increase of 158 per cent; unacceptable in anyone's language. Between 2011 and 2023, while this vacancy rate kept growing, members on this side of the Chamber spent those years meeting with teachers, listening to their concerns and understanding what was needed to retain and attract teachers to the profession. The response was crystal clear: Cut the public sector salary cap and remunerate teachers to a level that recognises their skills and their importance to our society and economy not only to help retain teachers, but also to attract teachers to one of the oldest professions. Our



New South Wales Government has made history, not just because of an historic pay rise for New South Wales' 95,000 teachers, but because that pay rise will result in an unprecedented increase in teacher training enrolments—an unprecedented change in the classroom as a wave of new people embrace teaching as a career—thus making an historic change across our entire social and economic landscape. I support the public interest debate.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:47):** I begin my contribution to the debate by thanking the teachers and the school support staff for their work for public education in the 16 public schools in the electorate of The Entrance. The motion before the House:

- (1) Notes the devastating impact the Coalition Government's wages cap had on teacher wages, which led to teacher shortages and merged and cancelled classes across New South Wales schools.
- (2) Notes that the New South Wales Government has secured an historic pay rise for New South Wales' 95,000 teachers, landing a deal that will tackle the teacher shortage crisis and see educators go from being among the worst to the best paid in the country.
- (3) Notes that the deal will see teachers' salaries undergo the most significant uplift seen in New South Wales in almost three decades.

I support the motion wholeheartedly and acknowledge the hard work undertaken by the Minister for Education and Early Learning and her passion for public education that has been achieved through this agreement with our State's public school teachers. What this means for the 815 teachers who live in the electorate of The Entrance and the 688 teachers who work at public schools in the electorate of The Entrance is proper recognition as a society of the value we place in public education, in teaching professionalism. It recognises their status and allows them to get on with the job of imparting their knowledge and teaching the children of this State in the public education system, which is the basis for equality in society that we are trying to achieve in New South Wales.

That also means it is a rejection of an ideology which says that public servants and workers are to be kept outside of an industrial relations system. The industrial relations system has been one of the foundations of the Australian idea of fairness because it allowed workers and employers to resolve their differences and get arbitration when those differences could not be resolved. That idea was turned on its head by the members of the Opposition when they were in government. By scrapping the wages cap and reaching an agreement with our State's public servants and teachers, Labor has recommitted to that Australian idea of a fair and just industrial relations system.

I also acknowledge the NSW Teachers Federation, particularly local teachers who came to see me with their organiser Theo Bougatsas. I particularly acknowledge Belinda Sanderson, the president of the Wyong Teachers Association, and teacher delegates Rhiannon O'Brien and Paul Castles for the conversations they had with me regarding their wages. Finally, I end on a personal note about how important the issue is to me as someone who has spoken in this place, particularly in my inaugural speech. Public education has played an important role in my life, and the State delivery of public education has played an important role in making me the man I am and developing the political ideas that I bring to this House. The House should support the motion.

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (18:50):** I contribute to the public interest debate on New South Wales teachers' wages and indicate my support for the motion. I am very fortunate to have gone through the public education system in New South Wales both in my primary and high school years. I understand that our New South Wales Government has secured an agreement with the NSW Teachers Federation for a pay rise for this State's 95,000 teachers. I am advised that 1,661 of those teachers are in my electorate of Cabramatta. The deal will tackle the teacher shortage and see educators go from being among the worst paid to the best paid in this country.

The agreement, as stated by the NSW Teachers Federation, represents "the most significant improvement to New South Wales teachers' wages in decades". It is a momentous step forward that deserves our attention and support. It is a historic milestone for teachers in New South Wales and an achievement that not only marks a significant improvement in the welfare of our teachers and their families but also addresses the critical issue of a statewide teacher shortage. The previous Coalition Government's wage cap on teachers' wages led to teacher shortages and merged and cancelled classes across New South Wales schools. In my electorate alone, the vacancy rate for teachers has gone from 13 full-time equivalent positions vacant in 2011, when Labor was last in government, to 25.6 in 2023.

The starting salary for New South Wales teachers was increased from \$75,791 to \$85,000, while the salary for a top-of-the-scale teacher will rise from \$113,042 to \$122,100. Teachers in New South Wales are set to become the nation's best-paid teachers from next term: 9 October 2023. That significant wage increase is not just about numbers on a pay cheque. It is about recognising the valuable contributions of our teachers to our society. It is about ensuring that our teachers are rewarded fairly for their dedication to shaping the futures of our children and also our futures.

The agreement goes beyond just salaries. It acknowledges the critical role played by school counsellors, who are instrumental in the development and wellbeing of our students. The introduction of a new salary scale for school counsellors will address staff shortages in their discipline. That recognition of their dual qualification and the importance of their work is long overdue and will undoubtedly help in retaining and attracting talented professionals to the field. I am so proud of being part of a government that believes in educating future generations of students. This is the greatest investment a government can make, and nothing is more important than having qualified teachers at the front of every classroom.

The previous Liberal-Nationals Government was demanding that already overworked teachers work longer and harder. It was talking about schools and teachers as if they were businesses. Over the past few weeks I have been to many schools and spoken to many principals and teachers, and they have all informed me of similar things. They said that their hours are getting longer, especially because of doing paperwork and administrative work. They all welcome the news of the wage increases and the current Government's views and approach to our education system.

I believe this Government, led by Premier Chris Minns and Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education, Prue Car, knows that teachers cannot work harder than they currently are. The Government is committed to making the education system work more efficiently so that teachers spend more time in classrooms teaching students. The agreement between the New South Wales Government and the NSW Teachers Federation is a momentous occasion for teachers, students and our entire State. It is the most significant uplift seen in New South Wales for over three decades. I support the motion.

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:55):** I contribute to the public interest debate on teacher wages and indicate that I support the motion of the Deputy Premier. I acknowledge the incredible work that she and the Minns Labor Government have done in supporting the 95,000 teachers in New South Wales with a very long overdue pay rise. Over a thousand teachers work in the electorate of Granville and over 400 live in my electorate. I have spoken to many of them about the dire situation the education system has been in over the past decade, which has got progressively worse during that time. As we have heard many times, last year for the first time, resignations in the teaching profession exceeded retirements. Teachers are leaving in droves.

The Government has worked tirelessly, particularly the Deputy Premier, to deliver the agreement with the NSW Teachers Federation to raise salaries and start valuing teachers. They asked us to show them more than thanks, and we have delivered. Starting salaries for teachers are going to increase from \$75,791 a year to \$85,000 a year and at the top of the scale, teachers' salaries will increase from \$113,042 a year to \$122,100 a year from 9 October. We have not wasted time. We have got on with valuing our teachers because we cannot waste any more time.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of teaching time were lost in my electorate last year and earlier this year from cancelled classes and merged classes. Some schools, like Granville Boys High School, had hundreds of classes cancelled because of teacher vacancies. Unlike members of the Opposition who would deny that the teacher shortage is even a problem, we understand there is a problem. There is a huge problem with recruitment, retaining teachers and morale, and we are trying to fix that problem. We are going to have the highest-paid teachers in the country. Teachers are going to stop moving to Queensland for cheaper housing and better pay. That is on top of moving temporary teachers to permanent positions. We promised 16,000 permanent positions and already 12,000 have been delivered in just six months. That will be delivered by Christmas.

We are also going to get on top of the ridiculous burden of administration, reducing the amount of admin that each teacher will do by five hours a week. That frees up an hour for every day of the working week to get on with teaching or get on with having a life. It is not fair that teachers are working 50-plus hours a week on some of the lowest salaries in the country, and we cannot expect them to stay working in the classroom under those circumstances. Of course they are going to leave and go where they are better valued and can have work-life balance. It is really unfortunate; our kids are the ones that suffer. Every time their lessons are cancelled, it is a learning opportunity missed. It is important that the Government does this, and I am proud that it has achieved it so quickly.

We have heard ridiculous arguments from members opposite, particularly from the former Treasurer, who said that the Government is doing nothing for anybody else in the public sector. That is not true. The Government has busted the wages cap. The Government is getting on with valuing the public sector and its employees. The achievement for the teachers seems incredible compared to others, but we are going through them systematically. Everybody else is getting a 4½ per cent pay increase this year. The Government is going through it systematically because it values public sector workers and understands that the public sector is important for providing the services we need. We cannot just pay over the odds to consultants all the time, like members opposite did. We have to value people if we are going to provide the services needed. It is so important, and I am proud that the Government is delivering this increase in teachers' salaries.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (19:00):** Our teachers are extraordinary. I am sure that every member in this Chamber can remember a special teacher they encountered in school during their learning—teachers who pushed them to achieve more than they thought they were capable of; teachers who supported them through difficult times in their lives, at home or with family; and teachers who made a particular class or subject that little bit more special and fun, which sparked their learning. I remember Mr Blair, my high school master, who many people from my year are still in contact with and are friends with on Facebook. He shows up to school reunions. I remember Mr Dixon, who was my biology teacher and had the worst dad jokes ever. I am not going to share them right now, but I am happy to afterwards.

**Mr Rory Amon:** Do it. Share them.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No. He is a biology teacher; they were pretty bad. I remember Mr Rees, my year 7 English teacher, who inspired me to push further than I thought I was capable of. And I remember Mrs Jeffs, my year 3 teacher, who had the most fantastic stories about fairy penguins visiting her home. Those teachers inspired me and created in me a love of learning. I am sure that every one of us had teachers who did the same. During the pandemic we saw proof of how extraordinary our teachers are as they had to switch from face-to-face learning to online learning and back again, often with little chance to prepare and without much support.

One kindergarten teacher in my electorate, Mr Brendan Jackson from New Lambton South Public School, went out of his way to entertain his young students with musical lesson plans during remote learning. He was a fabulous dancer. That kind of creativity and dedication is a hallmark of our teachers. It is why they were rightly recognised as heroes during the pandemic. But here is the thing about heroes: When we call workers heroes, we sometimes forget that they are still workers that are doing a job for which they deserve to be properly recognised. I have met with local teachers many times, and we have talked about the challenges that they have been experiencing and the fact that the pandemic exacerbated an existing problem. One teacher wrote to me after I had met with some teachers. She said, "Uncompetitive salaries and unmanageable workloads mean teachers are leaving the profession and graduates are not entering it."

I am proud to be part of a government that is tackling this problem. I pay tribute to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning, for the passion that she brings to this. So far, the Labor Government has made 12,000 teachers and school support staff permanent across the State, including 190 in my electorate. That gives those workers the security and stability they need to support themselves and their families. The impact of that change on teachers across the State has been incredible. One teacher wrote to me during the process of conversion and said:

This is a welcome change and is one way to stem the flow of qualified and experienced teachers from the profession. As a classroom teacher with over 20 years' experience, but without a permanent position, I know well the stress that begins in about September every year as all of us temporary teachers wonder if we will have work the following year.

The Minns Labor Government has concluded an historic negotiation with the NSW Teachers Federation, resulting in an agreement that will make New South Wales teachers the highest paid in the country. It is proof of the value the Government puts on the profession of teaching to change lives. I particularly acknowledge the passion and dedication of the Deputy Premier towards changing young people's lives through education. It will benefit every teacher in the State and is of special significance in my local area.

My electorate is home to the fourth highest number of teachers of any electorate in the State. Our children deserve a quality education. Ensuring teachers and support staff are paid properly to remain in public schools is an essential part of achieving that. The reforms mean that a new generation of students will get to meet truly special teachers, like Mr Dixon, Mr Blair, Mrs Jeffs and Mr Rees, and that those teachers will be properly compensated for the important work that they do. We have not even been in government for six months. This is a massive outcome.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (19:05):** I contribute to the public interest debate brought to this House by the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning, the Hon. Prue Car. I thank the Minister on behalf of the young people in the Cessnock electorate, who are more likely to have passionate teachers, and more of them, back in front of them. To the teachers across the Cessnock electorate who might be re-energised about their work and might change their mind about whether or not they are going to stay or leave, I say thank you. To the parents who care deeply about the education of their children and wanting quality teachers to stand in front of their children to make them as great as they can be, I say thank you. To all of us in this House who, in the future, are going to need to be cared for and looked after by the incredibly intelligent, wonderful, empowered, creative young people who are today's students, I selfishly say thank you.

I thank the Minister. I thank the Minns Government. I thank the teachers who, on polling day and through the election process, changed the government. Importantly, I say to all teachers that their work is not done yet,

because there is an amendment to the public interest debate being moved by the Opposition that says that this Government has "caved in to education union demands". Those opposite still do not get it. The work of teachers is not done. Those opposite hate the fact that teachers are getting a pay rise. They hate the fact that teachers are empowered by the collective movement of the NSW Teachers Federation. They hate the fact that teachers are going to be properly and decently respected with this monumental pay increase. They simply still do not get it.

When the 2027 election comes around, I want teachers to remember the quote from the former Treasurer that the Government has "caved in to education union demands" with this pay rise. The work of teachers is not yet done. There are 95,000 teachers out there. I know that they went to work this morning at some time around seven o'clock, eight o'clock or possibly earlier. I know that they did not go home from work today until four o'clock or five o'clock this afternoon. I know that they probably did not stop to have a lunch break. I know that many of them would not have had time to go to the toilet today.

I know that they would have gone home tonight to be a parent, a carer, a husband, a wife, a brother, a sister, a son or a daughter. They would have got dinner organised and put the washing on. I know, as this debate continues in the New South Wales Parliament a little bit after 7.00 p.m., that they are about to clock back on. They are about to go back to work to do another two or three hours today. That will be their 12 hours today, like their 12 hours yesterday, their 12 hours tomorrow and their 12 hours the next day—last week, next week, last month and next month.

I know that teachers are doing that, but let me tell this House what the Liberal Party and National Party members have been doing in this Parliament since the March 2023 election. They have been sitting it out. While the workload of teachers is going up, those members have disappeared. They do not participate in government business. They are barely participating in tonight's public interest debate. Their contribution was to say that the Government has caved to education union demands. While the workload of teachers is going up, Opposition members have cut their workload in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales by 80 per cent. They are getting the exact same pay for doing 80 per cent less work, and they say that we caved to union demands!

What is happening in this Chamber right now is disgusting. We should be collectively congratulating and applauding this incredible, long-overdue wage offer for teachers that was artificially oppressed for the last 12 years. The Opposition is sitting it out. I know teachers are working their butts off. I thank the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Our future is assured. There are HSC students today talking about going into the teaching profession because of this wage increase. I thank and support the Minister; I am disappointed with the Opposition.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (19:10):** It is with incredible pride that I am here this evening, like all of us, beside our fantastic Minister for Education and Early Learning. As a former teacher, I could not be prouder to be part of the Minns Labor Government that is absolutely delivering on its promise to teachers in New South Wales. I know that this is not the end. This is just the beginning of understanding the terrible situation that teachers endured for 12 long years under the previous Government. I left teaching six years ago. It was spiralling downhill when I left, and it has spiralled downhill ever since. I thank Minister Carr for the work that she is doing to support our teachers and the work she is doing with the Teachers Federation. Despite his little dummy spit in the press, I thank Angelo Gavrielatos, who is an old friend from my teaching days in Western Sydney. I once had an old station wagon with "Strike one—tolls. Strike two—education. Strike three—you're out, Mr Carr" painted on the side of it.

Teachers are passionate about getting the best possible outcome. I thank the teachers across New South Wales who have been so passionate about what they believe they deserve. They deserve the trust of the Minister for Education and Early Learning and they deserve the support of the Government of the day. In Labor, the teachers of New South Wales have that. Last week the New South Wales Government made a decisive statement: Teachers are valued and appreciated by this Government, and the critical work they do is now recognised in the remuneration they receive. Our State has world-class teachers, and they are finally getting world-class pay. This is most exciting for young teachers coming into the profession. The member for Cessnock just spoke about the importance of those HSC students who are now considering teaching as a profession. This recognition is absolutely crucial. So many classes across every electorate in New South Wales are left uncovered because there are not enough casual teachers. Under the former Government teachers were continually disrespected. Their highly skilled status was disregarded and the wage caps imposed saw New South Wales teachers amongst the lowest paid in this country. It is disgraceful.

The historic agreement now sees New South Wales teachers receiving the highest single pay rise in over two decades to become the highest-paid teachers in Australia, and so they should be. Under this Government, teachers receive the respect they deserve. The teaching profession will be elevated to the position it deserves—a profession to aspire to. That is what we want and what the kids of the future deserve. Previously, the education system was in crisis, but 16,000 teachers and support staff have now been made permanent. The fact that that was

not a reality for so many of my friends is heartbreaking. The financial freedom that a permanent position gives to teachers, single mums and families is so important, and the reduction in workload is crucial.

I was out with my teacher mates on the weekend. My partner is a teacher and we know that teachers are working incredibly hard. It is not just the classroom delivery, which is so important, but also the administrative burden that is being placed upon them. Teachers operate from the heart. They want to give so much, but the administrative burden has been chipping and pulling away at their ability to give and teach from the heart. They provide so much more than the lesson plans and syllabuses are meant to be delivering. We have seen teachers not able to go on excursions, have debates and do all those extracurricular activities they do passionately with the kids. We believe that this wage increase will restore those opportunities in public education, which is a building block of this great State.

I truly believe that teachers have 13 years to turn children's lives around. I have had the privilege of teaching in some pretty vulnerable communities where kids came from backgrounds that did not respect education. But I have had the privilege of seeing lives being turned around and kids who have become the first in their family to go to university, enter the workforce and aspire to work in places that their families had never even dreamed of. We know education is the greatest enabler and teaching in public education absolutely changes lives. There are 95,000 teachers in New South Wales, and it is so satisfying to be amongst the group that has worked so hard to deliver something that, according to the Liberal Government, was not deliverable. This is an investment in the future of this great State and what is possible. I close by saying thanks to Mrs Mason, who had a sticker on her desk that said, "Girls can do anything." Teachers teach us so much.

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (19:15):** I come from a non-English-speaking background, and my cousins and I were the first in our family to attend university. My mum had to leave school when she was 10 or 11 years old, so she has not had a formal education. She is illiterate, in the technical sense, but put her anywhere and she will be able to navigate her way. She is a survivor. For somebody with no formal education, she was able to ensure that her two children had access to education and opportunity. I learned from my parents that we treat our teachers the same as our parents. Teachers have the same nobility and greatness as our parents. Twelve years ago in this House the O'Farrell Government introduced section 146C into the Industrial Relations Act to impose a wages cap on our public service. They imposed that wages cap because, as we have seen over the past 12 years, they could not manage the budget. They could not manage their finances.

Opposition members can start accusing us, but they have to look at their record and their legacy. They should be ashamed that they left behind a highly casualised workforce in education. As the Minister for Education and Early Learning and her hardworking staff acknowledged, we have seen that 40 per cent of teachers were casualised. It is extraordinary for a strong education system in New South Wales to have 40 per cent of staff in casual positions. Then we had temporary teaching. We did not see the Opposition achieve in 12 years what Premier Minns and Deputy Premier Car have achieved in 12 weeks. Close to 16,000 teachers and support staff have now taken up permanent positions. That has changed their lives. Thousands of teachers in the electorates of members opposite have taken up that opportunity because they were on six-month contracts and could not plan anything in their lives.

These people are highly educated, and they were mistreated by the former Government. Those opposite can say what they like. They love taking photos with teachers and going out to the schools, but they should be ashamed of themselves. They systematically decentralised and caused havoc within education and our public services. I have seen this firsthand. They removed the importance of our public institutions here in New South Wales. The first bill they introduced established the wages cap. Their second bill weakened workers compensation and attacked the Industrial Relations Commission. We said to them back then, "We know you don't like the workforce. You are introducing draconian laws and down the track you are going to cause immense damage." And we have now seen that damage. What is our OECD ranking? We are down on the lower end of the scale because of what the former Government did.

We have teachers in our State who are crying because they cannot teach their method. They are teaching merged classes and holding classes out in the playground. Teachers in the regions, in the electorates of those opposite, cry to us because the former Government closed the door on them. The former Government deliberately, systematically absolved itself of responsibility. We cannot clean its mess up overnight, but we are doing things responsibly and in a considered way. I acknowledge all of the people who have been a part of this very important agreement.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:21):** I am a proud product of public school teachers, and a proud product of the public education system. I am also now a very proud member of the Minns Labor Government, because we are doing what Labor governments do: We value public education, we value public services and we value the public

sector workforce. At the heart of the public sector workforce are dedicated, committed people, across a range of different sectors. Tonight we are here to honour teachers and to talk about kids, who are the future of our communities, our State and our nation.

The pay rise that our Government has committed to delivering to the 95,000 teachers across this State means that children in our schools will have a teacher available to teach them, in a classroom. It is a pretty simple concept, but one that was lost over the past 12 years under the former Government. It lost sight of the fact that so many kids across the State were turning up to school to find out that their teacher was not going to be there, or learning that they were going to be sitting in a covered outdoor learning area [COLA], with four other classes, because there were not enough teachers at the school to be able to teach them in a classroom where they felt safe and could get the education that they needed.

I am so proud that this Government has started things moving and that we have landed this position. I thank the Minister for Education, Deputy Premier Prue Car, and her team, because the hard work that they have put in has delivered an outcome that will make a difference for the children of this State and to our State's future. I put on record my thanks to all teachers across the State, but particularly the teachers in Port Stephens, who raised their voices about what was happening under the former Government—how they felt so undervalued, how they were so overworked, how every single day they were so worried about the children in their classrooms that they would turn up when they were unwell because they knew it would place pressure on the other teachers if they did not. They knew what would happen to the students they care so much about if they could not turn up to work. Students would be forced into another classroom or sitting in the COLA for half a day, not getting the education that they needed and deserved. Teachers were under so much stress that it was no wonder they were leaving in droves.

It was a whole system that was spiralling out of control and a crisis that the former Government—including the then Education minister, which is just astounding—chose to ignore. This new pay rise, which will kick in at the beginning of next term, means that new teachers in Port Stephens and across all of the electorates that we represent will have an increase of \$10,000. At the upper scale there is going to be almost the same increase. This is an historic, groundbreaking pay rise for an entire workforce that makes a difference to the lives of children every single day. I hope that the communities that we represent realise that what we are achieving today is going to turn around the system that their kids rely on. This is an investment in the future. Members of the former Government have stood up here today and said that this is bowing to unions and it is going to risk the State's credit rating. I ask them, "What risk is being taken if we do not do this?"

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:26):** I congratulate the Minister for Education and the Minns Labor Government on securing this historic pay rise for New South Wales' 95,000 teachers. As the daughter, niece, sister, mother and aunt of teachers, I know how hard teachers work and what this agreement means to them. This agreement will not only tackle the chronic teacher shortage crisis; it will see our educators go from being amongst the worst paid to the best paid in the country. Under the Liberal Party and The Nationals we had a teacher shortage crisis which was getting worse and worse every day. Teachers were resigning in record numbers, with resignations actually quadrupling over the Coalition's time in government. Yet, as we have heard today from the Minister, the Liberals and The Nationals denied they had an issue, with the former Education minister calling it "a beat-up".

I am not sure that the previous Government really understood the gravity of the situation, because at the end of the day it was our children, the next generation of Australians, who were the ones suffering. Classes were unable to be covered, children were left sitting in quadrangles, literacy and numeracy indicators dropped and, in despair, teachers were leaving the profession in droves. In fact, I am not sure that Opposition members get it now. On 2CC radio this morning, the Deputy Leader of The Nationals stated, "When you have a pay rise you should have a productivity increase. And when you get a pay rise you normally need to do a bit more." And my favourite quote was, "Wage increases with no productivity gains—no-one can run a business like that." Can someone please tell the Opposition that teaching and education are not businesses?

This Government knows that teachers cannot work any harder than they currently are. After 12 years of failed policies, the former Liberal-Nationals Government left a bloated mess of a system. We still have many bad decisions left to unwind, but I know that the Minister for Education will continue to rebuild the State's public education system in New South Wales. To the teachers in the South Coast electorate, thank you for everything you do. I want you to know that this Government values your work and is committed to ensuring that we restore pride in the profession. That is why we have already abolished the wages cap, converted 16,000 temporary teachers and support staff to permanent, reduced excessive workload by five hours and employed an additional 400 administration staff.

I thank the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning, for her tireless work fighting for the teachers of New South Wales and fighting for the future of our children and grandchildren. The

endorsement of this agreement marks an important step forward not only for teachers but for students and families alike.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (19:29):** The date of 25 March was an important day for New South Wales. It marked the return of adults back in charge of the State. It put in charge of the State people who could actually analyse a problem and put in place solutions, and no-one has done that better than the Deputy Premier. In a very short amount of time, through hard work and diligence, she was able to analyse the key issues with education—something that the now Opposition could not do over 12 years. Opposition members changed the system from an education system to a system run by managers, not educationalists. They put in place a business model for how we run schools. And guess what has happened over that time? Standards have gone down. Teacher morale has been the lowest ever on record, and teachers are leaving in droves. We have a system in crisis.

Then along came the Deputy Premier, who worked with the union—I am a member of the union; I put that up-front—and that is not an easy thing to do. Our union is a challenge because it is made up of very passionate people who believe in looking after the children of our State, and they do with it an incredible single-mindedness. Even though teachers recognised that we needed to give them a pay rise, their number one concern was workload. What the Deputy Premier has done working with the union is tackle both of those issues. She has tackled the workload and at the same time made sure there is a significant pay rise for teachers. She understands that it is not one or the other; it has to be both.

I have been across my schools over the past 12 years and more recently visited Erina High School, which is in the electorate of the member for Terrigal. The principal there looked exhausted. I said, "Geez, are you having a tough day?" He said, "No, no. It's pretty good." Because teachers and principals like to talk up their schools. If you go to their school, they will always tell you the best things. You have to draw the bad things out of them. I said, "What's been happening?" He said, "I've been out in the playground looking after five classes." I said, "What's going on, mate?" He said, "We can't get teachers. We ring around and there's no replacements."

A few days later, the Central Coast MPs met with the private school teachers and their complaint was the same. The reason why this decision by the Labor Government is so important is that private school wages are linked to the public sector and that means they will get pay rises as well. It means in New South Wales we will have a system that values teachers again and gives them a reason to stay with us. I was a principal for 18 years and in education for 23 years. I used to say to my staff when I went to a new school that our number one priority is to ask ourselves this question: Is this good for kids? That was the only thing that mattered.

When I talk to the Deputy Premier now about this incredible announcement I ask my question, "Is this good for kids?" It absolutely is, 100 per cent. That is what it is about. It is about every young person in the classroom—from the brightest kid to the kids with learning disabilities and the kids with disability. It means we will have high-quality teachers attracted to work in young people's classrooms. That is what this is about, and that is what members on the other side do not get. To them it is all about numbers and wage caps and managing this and managing that. They forget the whole reason we have our education system: to educate young people so they can be productive in our society in years to come. Who does that? Highly qualified, committed teachers. The buildings are important, but they do not teach kids. Teachers teach kids. That should always be the focus. So while we are congratulating ourselves today, my message to our teachers is that we do value them. We want them to stay in the system and we want them to keep teaching our kids at the best level they can.

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (19:34):** On behalf of my mum, who is a hardworking teacher of 40 years, I congratulate the Minister for Education and Early Learning. On behalf of the electorate of Strathfield, which is an epicentre of education with many great schools and the reason so many migrant families come to live in the area, I congratulate the Minns Labor Government and the Minister on this historic piece of progress that has been made.

I was appalled by the comment of the former Treasurer that somehow the teacher shortage crisis and the crisis in our education system is a fantasy. Statistics do not lie. With 60 per cent of teachers saying they want to leave the profession in the next five years—is that a fantasy? The mother at the cafe in Burwood near my office with a son in year 12 at one of the State's top private schools expressing concern about his HSC results because the school could not find a teacher to teach business studies—is that a fantasy? The falling education standards and the performance of Australia in the Program for International Student Assessment results—is that a fantasy? Teachers leaving for interstate or other industries where they are respected and better paid—is that a fantasy?

This fantasy line by the former Treasurer goes to the heart of what was wrong with the former Government. Former Government members just did not get it. They refused to accept that there was a problem. But it is worse. They did it deliberately. What did they do? They came in here and they suppressed public sector wages. They

suppressed teacher wages and they casualised 40 per cent of the workforce. Number one, they varied the wages bill. Number two, they sold off assets, including 49 public schools in 2018 when Gladys Berejiklian was Premier. Number three, as we all know, they loaded up the State's balance sheet with debt, approaching \$190 billion. Do members know what this sounds like? It sounds like the operating model for a private equity leveraged buyout fund model of running the education system in New South Wales, and we know the value that is destroyed when that occurs.

But we are on the road to fixing it. We are starting with paying teachers properly. I looked at the average scores for the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment in maths, science and reading and discovered the following: No. 1 was China, No. 2 was Singapore, No. 3 was Macau, No. 4 was Hong Kong, No. 5 was Estonia, No. 6 was Japan, No. 7 was South Korea and No. 8 was Canada. Why can't we be number one?

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** We can.

**Mr JASON LI:** We can. But we have to do it right, and the starting point is by respecting and elevating the status of teachers.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (19:38):** In my profession, sometimes it is good news and bad news. I will start with the bad news in this situation. The previous Coalition Government undermined the foundation of this State through its neglect of the education of its youth. A crisis existed in education in the Bega electorate and across New South Wales. Under the previous Government I was overwhelmed by the number of distressed educational professionals who approached me with their submissions describing the degraded state of the education system in Bega. Their stories reflected a statewide decline in education caused by the former Government. The consequence of that is the effect on a generation of New South Wales students. The 13 years of their formal education correspond to the 12 years of Liberal Government, during which time teacher numbers declined to unsustainable levels and education outcomes plummeted.

The students have a right to receive and the Government has a responsibility to provide universal and equitable levels of education. The platform of NSW Labor states that a successful education system should aim to provide a core of knowledge, skills and attitudes to empower people to become fully functional and productive members of society and achieve their personal goals. How could that be achieved with 60 per cent of the teaching workforce intending to leave the profession within the next five years because of their conditions? They described collapsed and merged classes. They suffered intolerable and unsustainable workloads because of a lack of staff and overly burdensome administrative expectations, like health workers who are leaving health services because of failing health outcomes.

Despite their efforts, teachers could no longer tolerate the failure of educational outcomes, which was beyond their control. That control was with the previous Coalition Government, which neglected teachers and students for 12 years. How can a highly trained teaching professional continue to witness the drop in New South Wales educational standards? Our students have fallen from sixth to twenty-third in the world in reading, from ninth to thirty-first in the world in mathematics and from third to twenty-third in the world in science.

Teachers have been reduced to tears by our degenerative and neglected State. They have informed me of a local high school where more than 700 classes have been uncovered in less than a year and up to 150 classes have been uncovered in a month. The teachers have covered double classes, worked through sickness and worked outside their field and qualifications somehow to maintain this State's education system. They have been unable to fulfil their continued professional learning and development because of a lack of replacements. Students have been left unsupervised and overcrowded in playgrounds or simply sent to the library due to a lack of teaching staff.

The previous Government neglected the neediest students and the lowest achievers, including those in special education and those with mental health and emotional problems. They widened the gap of educational equality for our Indigenous students. Within the Bega electorate, before the last election, seven schools were over the enrolment cap. There were 40 vacant teaching positions and an acute shortage of science, technology, engineering and mathematics teachers. We need the best and brightest to undertake a career in teaching. Rural communities in particular should not miss out on qualified teachers.

Our teachers are being deprived of the potential for future education, training and career employment prospects. Their future, and that of our State, was endangered by the fact that our schools faced a chronic shortage of 11,000 teachers over the next decade. What was the response of the previous Government? It delivered less than 1 per cent of the 3,700 teachers promised by the former Premier last year. How many of the promised 500 STEM teachers were recruited from overseas?

I turn now to the good news. The New South Wales Labor Government has started treating teachers with due respect. It has taken positive and constructive actions to improve pays, conditions and workloads. NSW Labor



is investing in schools, students and teachers. It has achieved a generational improvement in the salary of teachers and other educational professionals. It is delivering practical plans to train and recruit more teachers, to reduce class sizes and to eradicate inappropriate class mergers, thereby providing more individual attention to the neediest students. Under the previous Government, education would have continued on its downward spiral, as did health care. I congratulate the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education for this generational achievement.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (19:43):** In reply: In summary, I thank all members who contributed to this important debate. We can all agree—certainly on this side of the House—that a well-resourced and properly respected public education system is the foundation for a just and fair society. That is what we believe and what we are showing we believe through moving the motion to increase teacher wages. I thank all members who spoke about their electorates and the impact of this issue on the hardworking teachers and the students who need those teachers. We have a duty of care and a responsibility to students to provide first-class public education. It is the law in New South Wales; it is a right of every child in this State.

It would not shock members to know that many teachers will watch this debate. They are very well informed about their profession and are very active in their profession. I love them for that. I say to the teachers of New South Wales that we respect them. We not only say it, but we show it. Moving the motion this evening is not about congratulating ourselves; as a government, it is saying that we believe in public education and we know that the most important ingredient is the teacher. We know that they have been undervalued and overworked for far too long. We are only just getting started. We are doing the work to cut down their workload. We are working with NESA to streamline accreditation. We are slowing down the curriculum so they can do their expert work. We are giving them more administration support. We are starting the process of winding back the terrible disaster that was Local Schools, Local Decisions.

Members opposite are voting against public education and voting against our teachers. Using the words of the former Treasurer, they are saying that this was a fairy tale and that we are making it up. Every teacher in New South Wales will know about that and they will remember. The former Government is voting against a pay rise for teachers in New South Wales. But they deserve it and this Government is proud to be delivering it. It is just the start of what we are going to do to reform public education and improve educational outcomes for every child in this State.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** The member for Londonderry has moved a motion, to which the member for Hornsby has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....33  
Noes .....49  
Majority.....16

#### AYES

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

#### NOES

Aitchison, J	Harrison, J	Quinnell, S
Bali, S	Haylen, J	Regan, M
Butler, L	Hoenig, R	Saffin, J (teller)
Car, P	Holland, M	Saliba, D
Catley, Y	Hornery, S	Scully, P
Chanthivong, A	Kaliyanda, C	Smith, T

## NOES

Cotsis, S	Kamper, S	Stuart, M
Crakanthorp, T	Kirby, W	Tesch, L
Dalton, H	Li, J	Vo, T
Davis, D	McDermott, H	Voltz, L
Dib, J	McGirr, J	Ward, G
Donato, P	McKeown, K	Warren, G
Doyle, T	Mehan, D	Washington, K
Finn, J	O'Neill, M	Watson, A
Hagarty, N	Park, R	Whan, S (teller)
Hannan, J	Piper, G	Wilkinson, K
Harris, D		

## PAIRS

Cooke, S	Leong, J
Toole, P	Shetty, K
Williams, L	Minns, C

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL AMENDMENT BILL 2023****Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:57):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: In reply: I continue with the speech in reply on behalf of the Attorney General as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General. I will briefly address some matters raised during debate on the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2023 by both sides of the House. As observed by the member for Wahroonga, the shadow Attorney General, recommendations 1 and 2 of the statutory review are not being addressed through the bill as they do not involve an amendment to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013.

Recommendation 1 proposed that consideration be given to strengthening provisions in the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 that restrained applicants under that Act who engage in improper conduct. The Government is committed to ensuring safe workplaces, free of harassment or bullying. As such, it is carefully considering those recommendations so as to best ensure the safety of workers and their community members. Recommendation 2 proposed that consideration be given to opportunities to streamline the enforcement of money orders made by the tribunal through its case management system. As an operational recommendation not involving legislative reform, the tribunal is reviewing opportunities to implement this recommendation as it transitions to a new case management system.

I raised when I spoke on the bill that the statutory review concluded generally that the policy objectives and terms of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 remain valid and appropriate, and align with best practice principles such as accessibility, fairness, efficiency, informality and transparency. I also noted that the bill will insert the words "as far as practicable" into section 38 (6) (a) of the existing Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 to simply clarify that the obligation imposed by the section is not absolute. In adversarial proceedings, it is the responsibility of the parties to identify and provide relevant evidence to support their case. Placing an absolute obligation on the tribunal to ensure the disclosure of all relevant information does not reflect the adversarial nature of the tribunal's functions.

Currently, the tribunal satisfies its obligation to ensure all relevant material is disclosed by directing the parties to exchange all relevant information at the commencement of proceedings. That practice will continue. However, it is not realistic to expect the tribunal to identify whether it has occurred in every case. The amendment will improve efficiency by limiting the scope for legal argument on appeal as to whether the tribunal has taken all steps to uncover all relevant material. On a different issue, while the requirement to give reasons is a crucial feature of the tribunal's role in determining the rights and obligations of parties, the absolute nature of the

requirement means that it currently applies to minor or technical exercises of its jurisdiction, such as decisions to adjourn or make orders by consent. Giving written reasons for those kinds of decisions results in misallocation of the tribunal's resources in circumstances where the relevant decisions do not finally determine the rights or obligations of parties.

Schedule 1 [7] limits the requirement to provide written reasons by listing the decisions for which written reasons would not need to be given, including adjourning proceedings, dispensing with a hearing and determining a matter on the papers, applying the default position as to costs where parties have not argued otherwise and, finally, making orders by consent. Those decisions were identified through stakeholder consultation as not having a final or determinative impact on the rights of a party and include circumstances where default positions as to costs apply. Limiting the exception to those types of decisions preserves transparency, accountability and the appeal rights of parties, as reasons will still be required for substantive decisions but not for minor procedural decisions that do not determine the outcome of a case.

I thank the member for Granville for her contribution and note the concerns raised by her constituents and the complex issues being experienced in relation to residential tenancy and housing. As noted, the bill is focused on implementing the recommendations of the statutory review into the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013, none of which relate to the tribunal's functions of hearing tenancy and social housing disputes. The Government has committed to rental reforms, including by appointing a new Rental Commissioner, removing no-ground evictions, making it easier for tenants to have pets, improving data protection and privacy for tenants, and implementing a portable bond scheme. Those reforms are being pursued through a separate review process led by the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Mr Anoulack Chanthivong, MP. That process will consider the problems faced by renters holistically. Public consultation has been undertaken with a view to legislation being developed by the end of this year. The Government has also committed to an operational review of tribunal processes in relation to rental matters, with the timing of that review still to be confirmed.

As observed by the member for Camden, the bill clarifies the tribunal's powers in relation to contempt. Those powers are the same as that of a court. In court proceedings, rule 33.12 of the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules 2005 expressly makes failure to comply with a summons issued by a court a contempt of that court. However, there is uncertainty about whether that applies to the tribunal, given those rules do not apply otherwise to it. Item [12] of schedule 1 to the bill puts this beyond reasonable doubt by expressly providing so in the tribunal's governing statute, rather than by relying on court-specific procedural rules.

As also noted by the member for Camden, section 46A of the Guardianship Act 1987 enables the tribunal to authorise a guardian to override a patient's objection to major or minor treatments. Currently the tribunal must be constituted by a three-member panel when considering such decisions. Schedule 1 [20] will allow the tribunal to be constituted by a reduced one- or two-member panel when making such decisions in circumstances where the application is made urgently or while a reduced panel is already deciding on other matters as part of a review process. "Urgent" is defined as circumstances where a delay would be likely to cause a real, material and imminent risk of harm to the subject person. A reduced panel will therefore only decide such matters where the timing of treatment decisions is crucial and the delay caused by an adjournment to reconvene a full panel could result in real harm to a person under guardianship.

In practice, section 46A applications are often made when a guardianship order is being reviewed. As those reviews are typically heard by a single member, the amendment will enable such applications to be dealt with more efficiently as part of the review process by a member already familiar with the person's circumstances. That will reduce the need to adjourn review proceedings and reconstitute guardianship panels. In addition, as noted by the member, items [21] and [22] of schedule 1 to the bill will ensure that people with disabilities are equally protected across the guardianship division regardless of the enabling Act that applies. It will do so by ensuring that the tribunal is required to observe those principles when it is exercising division functions in relation to a person with disability under any Act, not just the Guardianship Act 1987, as is currently required.

The member for Mount Druitt highlighted the tribunal's establishment in 2014 as a single point of access for most tribunal services in New South Wales. It plays a fundamental role in providing access to justice, dealing with approximately 42 per cent of all civil law matters finalised in New South Wales, and exercises a range of jurisdictions across five divisions: administrative and equal opportunity; occupational; consumer and commercial; guardianship; and appeals. Section 92 of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 requires the Attorney General to review the Act to determine whether its policy objectives remain valid and whether the terms of the Act remain appropriate for securing those objectives five years after introduction.

The Department of Communities and Justice conducted the review on behalf of the Attorney General. The review concluded that the objectives of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act remain valid and that the terms of the Act remain appropriate for achieving them. There was a general agreement that the tribunal has simplified the system of administrative review in New South Wales since it commenced operations in 2014, and that the

high-level framework set out by the Act provides proper flexibility to tailor practice and procedure to the needs of each of the tribunal's divisions and lists. Against the general understanding that the Act and tribunal are meeting its aims, the recommendations reflect fine-tuning of particular principles or procedures rather than more fundamental reform.

As observed by the member for Monaro, the guiding principle for the tribunal is to facilitate the just, quick and cheap resolution of the real issues in the proceedings. That is mandated by section 36 (1) of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013. I also thank the member for Cessnock and the member for Leppington for their contributions to the debate. The Legislation Review Committee has commented on the proposed insertion of new section 52 (1) (d), which would broaden the president's power to reconstitute a panel. This amendment is directed to circumstances where additional members need to be appointed when the factual or legal issues in dispute are more complex than anticipated.

Currently, the president may only reconstitute a panel after proceedings have commenced if a member becomes unavailable, ceases to be a member or ceases to hold the required qualification. Subsection 52 (1) (d) will allow resources to be flexibly relocated and help ensure the efficient resolution of matters. Important safeguards have been included in the bill to ensure that the independence of a trial is maintained. To direct a member to not take part in proceedings, the president must be satisfied that it is, firstly, in the interests of justice to do so; secondly, in the interests of achieving the expeditious and efficient conduct of proceedings; and finally, in line with the objectives of the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013.

These safeguards have been modelled on equivalent protections set out in section 19D of the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975, with the requirement that the interests of expeditious and efficient conduct of proceedings be an additional protection. Broadening the president's power to reconstitute a panel during proceedings will benefit tribunal users by ensuring that matters are decided in the most efficient and effective manner possible. In conclusion, the bill makes a number of minor and technical amendments to the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2013 to clarify the operation of certain provisions of that Act and facilitate just, quick and inexpensive resolution of proceedings before the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. I commend bill the to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **TRIBUTE TO MARK "BLOCKER" HOULDER**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (20:11):** I pay tribute to the late Mark "Blocker" Houlder. Blocker was an institution at Avalon Beach, where he was born and raised. Blocker's passion for all things Avalon—and for the people of Avalon—was evident. His career as a firefighter and station officer and Avalon Fire Station exemplified his unwavering dedication to public service. Blocker's service to the Avalon Beach RSL Club was unparalleled; he spent almost 40 years on the board, became president in 2011 and then life member in 2021. Blocker was the longest serving captain of the Palm Beach Golf Club, where he was also a board member. In 2021 he was made a life member at the club. With two life memberships at significant organisations, Blocker's contributions were immense. I was pleased to spend time and share many conversations with Blocker over recent years at the various events hosted by the Avalon Beach RSL Club. Blocker was more than just the titles and roles he held; he was a community servant, loyal, a mate to all and a gentleman who sadly passed away recently. Blocker, you will be missed. Rest in peace.

#### **SYDNEY WILDFLOWER NURSERY**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:12):** One of Heathcote's most loved businesses will celebrate its fortieth anniversary this spring. The Sydney Wildflower Nursery has been a favourite of many locals since 1983. Originally, the shop was opened by Penny and John Rose, and then in 2005 it was subsequently bought by their son, David. The nursery is an enormous ambassador and promoter of native plants, which, of course, play an incredibly vital role in a healthy and sustainable ecosystem—as is evident when taking a stroll in the nearby Royal National Park. The nursery often has a variety of feature plants that it showcases on a regular basis to

customers. One of the current feature plants is the Sterling Silver, a spring flowering plant that is drought tolerant and ideal for gardens on the coast. My family and I love visiting the Sydney Wildflower Nursery. I needed plants recently, and when I visited the centre it was hosting a talk about all of the different Indigenous plants. I congratulate Sydney Wildflower Nursery on its fortieth anniversary.

#### **GROUP 2 RUGBY LEAGUE GRAND FINAL**

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (20:13):** Footy clubs, players, spectators and sponsors converged on Coffs Harbour on Sunday 10 September for 2023 Group 2 Rugby League grand final day. C.ex Coffs International Stadium was the venue for this grassroots rugby league showcase, which was enjoyed by big crowds proudly cheering on their teams. The ground erupted when the Woolgoolga Seahorses clinched the first grade grand final for the first time in its history with a 26-10 win over the South Grafton Rebels. Head coach Sam Sinclair, assistant coach Brad Collinson and co-captains Michael Curnow and Dane O'Hehir should be very proud of the team, which played disciplined football and united Woolgoolga. Celebrations erupted too when the Coffs Harbour Comets claimed the reserve grade crown 24-22 over Woolgoolga. The under-18s Macksville Sea Eagles defeated Coffs Harbour 50-12. Coffs Harbour secured the league tag premiership with its 30-6 win over Woolgoolga. Congratulations to everyone involved in a successful 2023 season, particularly the team led by New South Wales Rugby League Group 2 chairman Warren Gilkinson.

#### **SOUTH COAST SPECIAL OLYMPICS CLUB**

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (20:14):** I congratulate the South Coast Special Olympics club. Recently, 12 club members competed at the New South Wales Tenpin Bowling National Championships, which were held at Campbelltown City Bowl on the weekend of 20-21 August. This special team was awarded a total of eight medals, including three gold medals, one silver medal and four bronze medals. The championships involved 200 competitors from 12 regions in a very successful competition. Congratulations to Chair of the South Coast Special Olympics club, Kathy Godwin. I acknowledge the successful medallists: Amy Louise Foot, Alisha Tetley, Steve Malmo, Liz Godwin, Cameron Banson and Hayley Badenoch. These individuals live up to the Special Olympics motto of, "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

#### **GREG BROOME**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (20:15):** I acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding contribution of Mr Greg Broome, who recently stepped down as president of the Collaroy Surf Life Saving Club after 10 years in the role. Under Greg's leadership, the club has thrived and become an integral part of our community in Wakehurst. Greg has dedicated countless hours to ensuring the safety of beachgoers and fostering a spirit of camaraderie among club members. His passion for surf lifesaving has inspired many to join the club and serve our community with pride and in partnership. As a tireless advocate for the club, Greg has played a pivotal role in securing resources and support for its growth and development. His commitment to excellence has made Collaroy Surf Life Saving Club a shining example of community service and engagement. On behalf of the people of Wakehurst, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Greg Broome for his exceptional service. His presidency will continue to inspire and guide the Collaroy Surf Life Saving Club for years to come.

#### **UNITING GRANTHAM HEIGHTS EARLY LEARNING CENTRE**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (20:16):** It was great to visit Uniting Grantham Heights Early Learning Centre in Seven Hills on Monday 4 September. Uniting Grantham Heights Early Learning Centre is a not-for-profit organisation that strives to give every child access to quality care and education. Rated "excellent" in the National Quality Standard, the centre is committed to providing engaging first learning experiences. Programs at the centre celebrate individuality and diversity within our community. The Bush Kindy program invites children to explore the outdoors whilst respectfully engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives like environmental stewardship.

The centre's community pantry, library and diversity feast foster a culture of belonging by supporting children and families to access essentials and build connection through sharing. The centre gives children a head start in reaching their full potential. I thank director Kamila Mahfouz and the entire Uniting Grantham Heights team for their holistic support at the early learning centre, which offers excellence to our Western Sydney community.

#### **GEORGE CRAVEN**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (20:17):** I recognise a truly outstanding constituent and true gentleman, George Craven. Recently, I caught up with George to acknowledge his ninety-ninth birthday, which is a significant milestone. Sergeant George William Craven proudly served as a member of the Royal Australian Engineers in the Pacific Islands with the 2/11 Australian Army Troops Company in World War II. I first had the pleasure of

meeting George on Anzac Day in 2015. It was my first Anzac Day as a newly elected member, and I will never forget the conversation we had that morning. As George proudly showed me a well-worn photograph of his younger self in his serving uniform with his beautiful young bride, he uttered the words, "I hope they don't forget us." He was only 18 years old when he enlisted. George, we will never forget you and your service to our nation. I wish George a very happy ninety-ninth birthday and I look forward to catching up with him again on Anzac Day next year.

#### **SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY CHILEAN COMMUNITY**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (20:18):** Yesterday, 11 September, marked 40 years since the violent coup d'état in Chile that precipitated a period of military dictatorship lasting from 1973 to 1990. Following the coup and subsequent overthrow of democratically elected President Salvador Allende's Government in 1973, the military junta under the leadership of General Augusto Pinochet was responsible for the death, exile and torture of tens of thousands of political opponents of the regime. Facing reprisals and political violence, over 500,000 Chileans fled the country, with 21,000 people seeking sanctuary in Australia. This accounted for a large wave of Chilean migration to Australia and accounts in large part for the tremendous growth of the Chilean Australian community. I acknowledge the lasting contributions of these community members to south-west Sydney. To mark the years of memory, struggle and solidarity since the coup, members of the Chilean community have organised a commemorative event in this place. I thank the organising committee, comprising Rodrigo, Cecilia, Adriana, Franco, Paula, Hilda, Miguel and Diego, for their hard work in keeping the memory of what happened alive for a new generation so that such atrocities may never be repeated.

#### **EWEN JONES**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (20:19):** I acknowledge Captain Ewen Jones, who has hung up his helmet after almost 32 years of service to Fire and Rescue NSW. His journey began at Station 401 Narromine in December 1991, when firefighting operations were conducted differently from how they are today. Throughout his career, he has been a steadfast presence during numerous local fire incidents. This includes some big ones, like the Imperial Hotel, the motorbike shop and a two-day hazmat incident at Narromine High School. His courage and dedication during these challenging situations undoubtedly made a significant difference. His involvement in providing fire safety information to the Narromine community and his participation in various community engagement events like fire station open days, seniors' weeks and new residents information evenings further underscore his commitment to educating the community and to provide outreach. The contributions that Ewen has made, however, extend beyond his role as a firey. His 24 years of service to the now defunct Apex Club and his election to the Narromine Shire Council in December 2021 reflect his deep roots in the community. I congratulate Captain Ewen Jones.

#### **LIFELINE OUT OF THE SHADOWS WALK**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) (20:20):** On Sunday we marked World Suicide Prevention Day. Suicide is the most frequent cause of death for Australians aged 15 to 50. Over 3,000 lives are lost every year, which is nine Australians every day. Each year around this day, I get up before the sun and join hundreds of other Novocastrians for the Lifeline Out of the Shadows walk. Together we walk to acknowledge the lives lost and to give hope and support to those in distress. For every one of those lives lost, hundreds are impacted. I have had the honour of leading the Out of the Shadows walk and speaking at the event over the past few years. It is bittersweet to see the attendance at the event grow each year. I thank everyone who walked with me this year and in years past, and I thank Rob Sams and everyone at Lifeline for organising the event. It gives us a space to share our stories and our losses. It means so much to me and my community.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DAVID LAMB**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (20:21):** I was deeply saddened by the recent passing of local Shoalhaven Heads resident David Lamb, who will be greatly missed. David was instrumental in the Shoalhaven Heads Golf Club, where he was member number one and a life member. I had the pleasure of working alongside David to secure \$40,000 from the State Government to upgrade the Shoalhaven Heads golf course. It was combined with \$80,000 in support from Shoalhaven City Council, which made a critical difference to completing the upgraded layout of the course, including the final three holes. In May 2012, I was extremely pleased to attend the official opening of the completed course, which was a tremendously large community celebration, with former member for Kiama Matt Brown and Shoalhaven City councillor Greg Watson. I visited the Heads course numerous times and spoke to David, who was a humble man and incredibly hardworking. If he set his mind to achieving a goal, he would always see it through. I will miss David and so will the Heads community. David is survived by his wife Christine, daughter Rachel, son Robert, and grandchildren and great grandchildren. Vale, David Lamb.

### OUR LADY OF MERCY COLLEGE

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (20:22):** Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta's 2023 Art and Design showcase was incredible. To see the level of creativity and self-expression in the mixed media artworks of these young women was truly inspiring. The importance of the fine arts to our individual expression and wellbeing cannot be overstated, and it was wonderful to see so many bright and talented young women using these media to express themselves and explore their inner self. I was delighted to present the principal's award to Charlotte Jenner and the highly commended award to Sophie Daly. Sophie also received the Principal's Award for Design and Technology, with Isabella Gifford receiving highly commended. I congratulate the staff of Our Lady of Mercy College on this fantastic showcase, in particular Principal Lucie Farrugia and head of visual arts Annette Chippindale. I offer my sincere congratulations to all the students for their hard work, dedication and artistry. I encourage the students to pursue creative endeavours beyond school and to follow their passions, because the creative arts should be considered a genuine career path, not just a hobby.

### TOONGABBIE PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (20:23):** I acknowledge the excellent students, staff, and parents and friends of Toongabbie Public School. Toongabbie Public School is one of the oldest schools in the electorate of Winston Hills. The school has been serving the local community and its young minds since its founding in 1886. The school is an active participant in the local community, with students consistently engaging in local competitions, outreach events and charity drives. Many of the activities are organised by the Toongabbie Public School P&C. The school's motto is "Learn to live", which is embodied by the teaching style of the staff and the special focus placed on the school's extracurricular programs. Students are encouraged to take part in activities such as band, chess, choir, dance, debating, drama and a number of inter-school sporting activities. I particularly acknowledge the school principal, Craig Brown, for his strong leadership of this community, and I thank him and his staff for their continued investment into the development of the young people of the Toongabbie area.

### FAIRFIELD RSL SUB-BRANCH AUXILIARY

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (20:24):** Over the years, the Fairfield RSL Sub-Branch Auxiliary has continuously demonstrated its commitment and dedication to the Fairfield area, alongside its work in supporting those who have served and are currently serving in our Defence Force. With the help of the Fairfield RSL Sub-Branch, local schools and Bunnings, the auxiliary has coordinated the organising and sending of thousands of care packages to veterans deployed on operations overseas. Coincidentally, whilst I was deployed, I received one of their packages, which helped boost my morale. It really meant a lot to me. In addition, the auxiliary has raised funds for various veterans' initiatives. Our veterans have given up so much for us, so it is only fitting that we do our best for them. I especially thank the president of the auxiliary, June Young, OAM, and the many other committee members for all they do.

### DARREN COGGAN

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:26):** I acknowledge the musical contributions made by Wagga Wagga local, award-winning country musician and former Koorringal High School student Darren Coggan. I especially celebrate Darren's latest song, *The Five O'Clock Wave*. The song is based upon a local urban legend in Wagga Wagga. As the story goes, at precisely five o'clock each day, a single giant wave washes down the Murrumbidgee River following the release of water from Blowering and Burrinjuck dams. Depending on water levels at the time, the speed and power of the five o'clock wave allows regional surfers to ride the wave all the way to the nearby town of Narrandera over 100 kilometres away, or at least that is how the story goes. Some say the story is a myth; others swear by it. The best way to see the truth for yourself is to visit Australia's best regional beach and one of Australia's top 10 beaches, Wagga Wagga Beach. Come at five o'clock. Bring a surfboard, sunscreen and an open mind.

### TRIBUTE TO ROSS GATES

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (20:27):** It is with great sadness that I inform the House of the passing of Ross Gates, captain of the Jervis Bay Territory RFS Brigade. Ross was an instrumental part of the emergency services family in the Shoalhaven. Prior to his retirement, Ross was a NSW Ambulance paramedic, and he was always a highly respected member of the RFS. Ross first joined the Rural Fire Service in 1976 when he signed up with the Sanctuary Point brigade. During his 47 years of service, Ross was a part of Huskisson, Errowal Bay, Crossroads, Christians Minde and Jervis Bay brigades. Ross held many positions in his 47 years of service, from group captain to permit officer and brigade callout officer. Ross fought many fires throughout the Shoalhaven and was deployed to numerous out-of-area fires. Ross will be sorely missed, and my thoughts are with Ross's wife, Anne, and his family. Ross was a gentleman who never hesitated to help, and he contributed more than anyone could ever account for. Vale, Ross.

**JOHN VANDEVEN**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (20:28):** I extend my appreciation to Albury Fire Captain John Vandeven, who has decided to retire after nearly four decades of outstanding service, leadership and mentorship in the Albury Civic Brigade and broader community. John first began his journey as a fireman in March 1986 following a suggestion by a colleague. He progressed to take the position of head of Kiewa Street Brigade in January 2005, having previously been the brigade's deputy captain. Throughout his journey as a firefighter, John attended many major incidents that will long be recalled, from the Black Saturday fires to the fires in the Blue Mountains in 2014, and, closer to home, the 2019-2020 Black Summer fires, which is when I caught up with him at Khancoban. His role extended far beyond firefighting and encompassed the compassionate care and understanding needed to assist his peers through trauma and with peer support, which he found a rewarding element of his work. As John embarks on a well-deserved retirement, he leaves a legacy of service, leadership and selflessness. I thank him for his many years as a member.

**DRIVER LICENSING ACCESS PROGRAM**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (20:29):** On 28 July 2023 I had the pleasure of attending the graduation ceremony of the Driver Licensing Access Program, a commendable initiative conducted by the GyMEA Community Aid and Information Service. This program has been specifically crafted to empower refugees and migrant communities with the essential skill of driving. During this heart-warming event I had the opportunity to meet and interact with refugees and migrants who had successfully completed the program and obtained their driver licence. For many of these individuals, having a driver licence is not just a convenience but a crucial step towards independence, better job opportunities and full integration into our society. Witnessing their achievements and the smiles on their faces as they received their licence was truly inspiring. The GyMEA Community Aid and Information Service deserves immense praise for its unwavering commitment to facilitating this important journey towards self-sufficiency and inclusion. It was a privilege to be part of such a meaningful celebration of success and empowerment.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** Government frontbench members will come to order.

**KU-RING-GAI NETBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (20:30):** On 2 September 2023 the Ku-ring-gai Netball Association transformed Canon Road to celebrate the annual finals of the 2023 season. I pay tribute to all the players, officials, volunteers and spectators for yet another wonderful season. I acknowledge the Ku-ring-gai Netball Association Committee, particularly president Rod Jackson, vice-president Ruth Havrlant, secretary Helen Pratt, treasurer Ian Eldershaw and executive members Gillian Boyd, Mick Flarey and Alan Prentice. In particular, I pay tribute to Brenda Williams, OAM, the wonderful patron. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our community and I know their contributions have been greatly appreciated both on and off the court. Before long the 2024 season will begin. I forward to the spring competition from October to December. I also look forward to working with the Ku-ring-gai Netball Association throughout this term of Parliament and beyond. Netball is a wonderful sport and wonderful for our community, from preventative health to mental health and, of course, physical health.

**BANKSTOWN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL ROBOTICS TEAM**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (20:31):** On Friday 18 August 2023 I met Kimmy, Yin Yin and Yelleina from Bankstown Girls High School. Under the guidance of their teachers Ms Doai and Ms Saisanas and their sponsor, EduTech Australia, those students were invited to compete in the 2023 Universal Robotics Challenge world final in Osaka, Japan. The school was first invited to compete in 2019. Although it did not win a place that year, it did not give up. This year those talented students placed eighth in the world. The challenge to design a new robot based on the idea of stacking presented them with the opportunity to showcase their incredible robotics design talent. No doubt many hours were spent ensuring their robots were up to the task. In the end, it was not just about a robotics competition but the invaluable experiences gained, the friendships formed and the immense personal growth that took place. I am sure that this journey to Japan will forever hold a special place in the hearts of the students and everyone involved. Well done to Bankstown Girls High School, an excellent example of a local public school giving every kid an opportunity, and well done to the girls for placing eighth in the world. Arigatō gozaimashita.

**SHOALHAVEN NEPALESE COMMUNITY**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (20:32):** Namaste, Mr Temporary Speaker. Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Shoalhaven Nepalese Community, which hosted a special event, the Teej women's festival celebration, at the Nowra School of Arts on Saturday 9 September 2023. I acknowledge Bina Adhikari, vice-president of the Shoalhaven Nepalese Community in Nowra, and the committee members, volunteers, cooks



and festival dancers who helped to make this a tremendous gathering and an enjoyable occasion for everybody in attendance. I thank the Shoalhaven Nepalese Community, which is making an incredible contribution to our multicultural community. They are warm, hardworking and amazing people. I also acknowledge Shoalhaven City Council Deputy Mayor Paul Ell, who was in attendance. More than 130,000 Nepalese people live in Australia, including 60,000 students. Many qualified Nepalese students have made Australia their home, building successful lives and careers, and have made Australia a better place. The Nepalese Australian Association was established in 1976 with the objectives of assisting newly arrived Nepalese and acting as an unofficial embassy to provide information about Nepal to Australians.

#### **AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (20:33):** The Autism Community Network supports and engages autism families across the East Hills electorate through a unique grassroots network of volunteers. The network is led by mother of five Vanessa Gauci, who has personal experience with the joys and challenges of raising a child with both autism and Down syndrome. Vanessa's role as CEO goes far beyond a professional title. It is fuelled by her personal experiences, genuine empathy and deep understanding of the unique needs of individuals with autism. Autism Community Network has flourished under Vanessa's guidance, providing invaluable services, support groups and awareness campaigns that have helped many families. Her tireless efforts have not only empowered individuals with autism but also have fostered a sense of acceptance and understanding within the community. In recognition of Vanessa Gauci's leadership and selfless contributions, we extend our deepest appreciation. Her unwavering commitment to the autism community is an inspiration to us all. Her profound impact will be felt for generations to come.

#### **THE DORMITION OF OUR LADY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (20:34):** I acknowledge and congratulate recent community achievements of The Dormition of our Lady, Greek Orthodox Church in Wagga Wagga. Firstly, I welcome the full-time appointment in April 2023 of Father Agathangelo Masteas as the first Greek Orthodox priest in Wagga Wagga. This is the first such appointment in over 20 years; previously the church has been supported by visiting priests. I wish Father Masteas all the very best in his new role in Wagga Wagga. In June 2023 the church was honoured to be visited by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios. This was the first time Wagga Wagga had received such a visit by an orthodox primate in over 43 years, the last time being in 1980. I thank His Eminence for the visit. It meant a tremendous amount to the Greek community of Wagga Wagga. On 4 September 2023 the Greek Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Georges Papacostas, made a surprise visit to the church, where he was greeted by parishioners and local officials. I thank the Dormition of our Lady for making Wagga Wagga such a welcoming place for its community.

#### **MACARTHUR ANGLICAN SCHOOL SHOW**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (20:35):** I am pleased to extend my heartfelt congratulations on the exceptional achievement showcased in the musical extravaganza *The Pirates of Penzance*, which took centre stage at Macarthur Anglican School. I had the honour of attending its final show. Producer Mrs James, artistic director Mrs Margin, music director Dr Bennison and technical director Mr Palmer worked tirelessly with their students, investing six hours per week across two terms to deliver one of their best performances to date. I also commend Macarthur Anglican School's young, talented actors, such as the vivacious portrayal of Frederic by Ryan Watson, the enchanting embodiment of Mabel by Holly Austin, Brajden Johansen as The Pirate King, Peter Thomas as Major General Stanley, Lucy-Lei Mingay as Ruth, Peter Mawere as the head constable, Felix Petrin as the formidable pirate Samuel, and finally the trio of Antonija Johansen, Jacinta Johnson, and Isabella Hyam as the talented daughters. As a former music teacher, I always loved working with my students to get musicals up and running, but I also appreciate the stress and anxiety delivering for the school community. Once again I extend my congratulations.

#### **TRIBUTE TO SYDNEY THOMAS WELLER, OAM**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (20:36):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales remembers the life and contribution of Mr Sydney Thomas Weller, OAM. Sydney sadly passed away on 24 July. The funeral was held on Friday 4 August at Worrigeec. In 2018 Sydney Weller was awarded with a Medal of the Order of Australia. Mr Weller was honoured for his service to rugby league and our community. Mr Weller lived in Nowra and his story is incredible. He was born in the back of a sulky on the Nowra Bridge. His dad, the late Syd Weller, was away at war and his mother, Pearl, was being taken to hospital. Mr Weller was First Grand Principal and Grand Master of the United Supreme Grand Chapter of Mark and Royal Arch Masons of NSW and ACT. Sydney was integral in establishing the Shoalhaven Jets, which became the Nowra-Bomaderry Jets. He was a life member and was involved with local juniors, Nowra Warriors and South Coast Group 7. The Nowra-Bomaderry Jets named its best and fairest award for Syd, and it is given to someone with the same energy and passion as him.

I acknowledge his wonderful wife, Carol, and Syd's extended family and friends. He made an enormous contribution to our community and will be greatly missed. Vale, Sydney Weller.

#### **SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH LOCHINVAR**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (20:37):** Earlier this month, 3 September 2023, the Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar celebrated the 140-year anniversary of its arrival in Lochinvar. In 1883, four sisters made the arduous journey to Maitland from Perthville near Bathurst, travelling by train, boat and buggy and arriving to a warm community welcome. This day marked the beginning of Catholic education in the Hunter Valley. This grassroots Catholic education sought to bridge the gap between the wealthy and poor. The sisters made it their mission to teach children who would otherwise not receive an education. The sisters worked tirelessly, establishing schools and convents across the diocese. Lochinvar became their mother house, accommodating more than 200 boarders at one point. That first modest school grew into St Joseph's College, now a thriving co-educational high school with almost 1,000 students. Over the years the sisters' network has grown from that one building at Lochinvar to 50 primary schools and 10 secondary schools across the Hunter, mid North Coast and Port Macquarie-Hastings. Today 59 sisters still live on the school site at Lochinvar and are valued members of our community.

#### **MOORES CREEK BUSHLAND GROUP**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (20:38):** In early September I had the opportunity to join the volunteers of the Moores Creek Bushland Group in Roseville and see their work conserving the iconic Ku-ring-gai bushland that encompasses the electorate of Davidson. Since 1996 the aim of the group has been to conserve the natural environment around the Moores Creek area—consisting of Roseville Avenue, Merlin Street, Luxor and Amarna Parades, the Roseville Golf Course and the Little Digger Track in East Lindfield, named after former Prime Minister and member for Bradfield, Sir Billy Hughes. Whilst sharing tea and coffee, it was great to hear their stories about the group's efforts to maintain the natural environment by planting native plants and to hear how they got involved in the group. Many of them are undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh Award. I thank Marlene and Stan Dyne from the Moores Creek Bushland Group for their kind invitation and the work that they do. I, like many others in the electorate of Davidson, look forward to many bushwalks over the summer.

#### **TRIBUTE TO RON PRETTY, AM**

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (20:39):** Renowned poet, teacher, publisher and editor Ron Pretty, AM, recently passed away. In recognition of his contribution to lifting the profile of Australian poets and poetry, in 2002 Ron was awarded the New South Wales Premier's Award for Poetry and was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to Australian literature. He was instrumental in establishing the Poetry for Australia Foundation, and between 1983 and 1999 he was head of writing in the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong, where he encouraged and inspired students while building his own impressive academic record. In 2015, he was made a Fellow of the University of Wollongong. His citation included the following:

Ron Pretty is a teacher, scholar and a relentless advocate for new and young writers. He has made an extraordinary personal contribution, sometimes at the cost of his own art. A critique of his poetry describes him as: "a craftsman, a thinker, a lover of language, with a knowledge of the poets who have come before him, and the result is poetry of quality, ambition, and daring."

I also knew Ron as a Labor Party member committed to advancing progressive ideas and ideals. I thank him for his contribution and his dedication to enriching our nation's culture. He will be missed.

#### **PORT HACKING HIGH SCHOOL OPEN GIRLS SOFTBALL TEAM**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (20:40):** I congratulate Port Hacking High School Open Girls Softball Team on their recent win at the NSW Combined High Schools Sports Association Softball Tournament. The tournament hosted at the Strikers Softball Club in Newcastle brought together teams from across New South Wales to compete for the prestigious Plate Cup. After overcoming an early loss against Elderslie High School 8-1, the Port Hacking team went on to score wins against Menai High School 16-4 and Callaghan College 8-1, before facing Moss Vale High School to take home the Plate Cup with an emphatic 18-4 win. I acknowledge the incredible players whose skill, growth and love of the game culminated in this win. I recognise captain Shadae Watt, Makayla Alexander, Milly Cohen, Mykaela Cooley, Kayla Fergusson, Stephanie O'Sullivan, Joanna Panter, Seveanee Patakos, Kellie Parker and Jemma Pekert. I commend Port Hacking High School Open Girls Softball Team for their win and wish them every success in their future sporting endeavours.

#### **ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL WOY WOY**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (20:41):** I am excited to wish St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School Woy Woy a happy 100th birthday. What a great milestone. Initially established as a church in 1914, this beautiful school was opened in the 1920s because of the growing population on the Woy Woy peninsula. In 1922, St John

accommodated around 50 students outside of mass time. With a beautiful recipe of creativity and determination, church pews were used as desks and cloth curtains hung to separate areas of the hall to facilitate lessons. One of the most significant contributions in the early days to this fantastic educational institute was the dedication of the three sisters of St Joseph, who had arrived at Kincumber as early as 1887 and commuted daily by train from Gosford to teach. Currently, St John is proudly providing a learning space for 530 students, career opportunities for 56 staff, a social gateway and a religious connection for hundreds of families. I salute St John's school and its staff. It is wonderful to see such an achievement in our great community.

*Personal Explanation*

**MEMBER FOR TERRIGAL**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (20:42):** By leave: Earlier tonight I made a comment about the member for Terrigal. I withdraw that comment.

*Private Members' Statements*

**FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER**

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (20:43):** Every year, at 9.09 a.m. on the ninth day of the ninth month, the importance of being alcohol free for the nine months of a pregnancy is observed. Last Saturday was International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder [FASD] Awareness Day, the start of FASD Awareness Month, and the Red Shoes Rock! Day of NOFASD Australia. FASD is the leading cause of non-genetic developmental delay. It has a prevalence in Western countries of between 1.1 per cent and 5 per cent, and may be as high as 12 per cent in some Indigenous communities. There is a shortage of accurate data in Australia and that data is necessary to guide the understanding of drivers of alcohol intake before and during pregnancy, identify those at risk, and provide necessary support for women and their affected children. FASD is an umbrella term which covers the lifelong developmental and physical effects from prenatal alcohol exposure. It has been described as an "invisible" disorder as those affected may have no physical sign of prenatal alcohol exposure. It is also described as a whole-body disorder with physical, mental health, behavioural and cognitive effects.

Alcohol is a teratogen. It is a known substance that causes birth defects, including irreversible central nervous system effects. Unlike some teratogens, alcohol exposure can affect the fetus during all stages of pregnancy. Its effects are related to the quantity and pattern of alcohol consumption, maternal and fetal genetic factors, maternal age, nutrition, smoking and other drug use, maternal mental health and interrelated social determinants, including lack of education, stress, exposure to violence and poverty. Because of these social determinants, the effects can be intergenerational. The physical manifestations of FASD include facial dysmorphism, a thin upper lip, a smooth philtrum—the ridge between the upper lip and nose—and short palpebral fissures, which is the distance between the inner and outer eye opening. Intrauterine growth restriction and/or postnatal growth restriction can occur, and microcephaly or small brain size and structural brain anomalies may occur.

Neonatal abstinence or withdrawal syndrome, including irritability, tremors and seizures, can occur as well as childhood recurrent nonfebrile seizures. In addition, individuals affected may have developmental, learning and cognitive problems, as well as behavioural and socio-emotional problems. It would not be surprising that FASD is higher in children living in out-of-home care and that affected individuals are over-represented in the criminal justice system, starting with youth justice settings. As adolescents and adults, affected individuals may show inappropriate sexual behaviour, have problems with parenting, and experience unemployment and homelessness, as well as alcohol and other drug use. It is a condition with one and only one cause: prenatal ingestion of alcohol.

Proscription of alcohol from the time of conception has been reported from the Book of Judges in the Old Testament and in Plato's *Laws* of ancient Greece. It is described in Hogarth's 1751 *Gin Lane* illustration and Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel *Brave New World*. It is a condition with no test and no cure. As such, prevention is the cure. Quite simply, women should not drink in pregnancy nor when trying to get pregnant. There is no known safe amount of alcohol, timing of drinking or type of alcohol. Achieving this message requires education and communication in our society—from schools to workplaces, primary health care and antenatal classes. For those children, adolescents and adults affected by FASD, holistic person-centred understanding is required over the course of their lives.

Our health system must provide early intervention, which may include medical care and medication, but also behaviour and education therapy. Awareness not only reduces the risk of prenatal alcohol consumption, but also increases the identification and referral of affected individuals. In order to achieve this, funding is necessary to increase workforce capacity. It is the Government's responsibility to set priorities, identify focus areas and provide opportunities to improve the lives of those affected by FASD. Good government policy will then enable

improved services, improved diagnostic and therapeutic capacities, and result in better evidence informed interventions.

#### WINSTON HILLS ELECTORATE SPORTS

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (20:48):** Tonight I talk about some of the wonderful sporting organisations and groups across the electorate of Winston Hills. I note the countless volunteers who regularly give up their time to better the community and our local area. Families and individuals in the electorate of Winston Hills are offered a broad range of sporting opportunities to engage with throughout the year. These include soccer clubs, rugby teams, little athletics organisations, netball and softball clubs, to name a few. Players do not need to travel very far to find a football club they can join or compete with. The electorate of Winston Hills is home to teams such as the Glenwood Redbacks, Kings Langley Soccer, the Winston Hills Bears, Blacktown Spartans, Parklea Football Club, Pendle Hill Football Club, Wentworthville Uniting Football Club and the Hills Hawks. Each team has their own unique culture and history, and a special place in the local area. They host competitions for all ages and meet weekly during the season to compete with local teams and those from further afield. I also note that many of the rugby league teams in the local area have great success, including the Lalor Park Kookas and the Toongabbie Tigers, which regularly participate in the local rugby league competition.

For athletes and their families, the weekends become full of activities around the home fields of each team. Teammates gather with volunteers at their local facilities to play sport, socialise, have sausage sizzles and purchase things from the canteens. The weekends are important for family and community bonding. That is what makes the electorate of Winston Hills such a fantastic place to live, work and play. I have attended many games and it is incredible to see our community come together around a common interest. I was recently invited to attend the official season opening for the Kings Langley Little Athletics Club. This year it celebrated its fiftieth season of operations—a substantial milestone for the local club. Like other little athletics organisations in the local community, Kings Langley Little A's is a space for young athletes to develop and hone their skills in specific events.

The athletes in attendance select their preferred events at the start of the season and train specifically for them. They can be on the track, like the 100-metre sprint or the long distance 1500-metre event. There are also a number of field events like shotput, discus, high jump, long jump and many more. Over the season each participant will perfect their craft and compete with other athletes during regularly scheduled competitions to achieve personal bests and see how they have improved. Little A's organisations across the electorate further serve as hubs for local families to meet and spend quality time with each other. Residents of the local electorate can attend clubs at Blacktown, Kings Langley or Winston Hills. Each club encourages mums and dads to participate regularly in officiating and organising the events. That culture of service is reflected in every aspect of our community.

Over the past eight years as the member for Seven Hills and now as the member for Winston Hills, I have been fortunate to engage with those fantastic clubs and organisations. I have attended many matches at home fields, opening nights and award ceremonies, and I have been able to support many of the clubs in their endeavours to provide quality equipment and facilities for their players. I sincerely thank the many members of each club, particularly the committees and executives, for their work organising activities across the year. I extend my thanks to the many volunteers who give up their time to support local clubs and teams without any acknowledgement. Those volunteers embody the spirit of service to one's community and are oftentimes the glue that holds groups together.

Unfortunately, families across the electorate of Winston Hills and New South Wales will struggle to renew their memberships to fantastic local programs and clubs as this year the current Government has scrapped the Active Kids vouchers program. The voucher's value has been halved and they are now means tested. That change comes in the middle of a generational cost-of-living crisis that has seen many families cut costs to save money, and unfortunately their memberships to local clubs and organisations are now under threat. That deeply impacts many local clubs that rely on the small fees from players and the many families who will no longer be able to afford or justify memberships to their local clubs. Local clubs are a critical part of our community infrastructure. They provide an opportunity for people to connect with other local families, form strong, everlasting bonds and contribute to the fantastic community. It would be disappointing to see the important voucher program altered in any way, and I call on the current Government to continue the program in its former state so that families can continue playing the sports they love.

#### URGENT CARE CLINICS

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (20:53):** The introduction of urgent care clinics in my electorate of Mount Druitt and throughout New South Wales is important. Urgent care clinics are bulk-billed healthcare facilities established in pre-existing GP clinics, community health centres and Aboriginal community controlled health services. With no appointment or referral needed, they aim to reduce the number of individuals

attending hospitals and emergency departments for urgent but non-life-threatening injury or illness. The clinics are staffed by highly trained medical professionals. Urgent care clinics provide culturally safe, equitable and accessible care to people from all walks of life and offer support for patients who otherwise may not be able to afford urgent care. There are currently six practising urgent care clinics in Western Sydney.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the Medicare urgent care clinic in my electorate at the medical and dental clinic in Rooty Hill. The facility began operating on 7 August 2023 and was officially launched by Federal Minister the Hon. Ed Husic on 25 August 2023. The newly established urgent care clinic is open every day from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., including public holidays. A team of skilled healthcare professionals ensure that each patient receives high-quality care for urgent but non-life-threatening conditions. They are equipped to treat minor injuries such as fractures, sprains and minor burns, as well as provide wound care and stitches for minor wounds. Furthermore, the clinics are not just about providing medical services; they are about promoting community wellness. They are a testament to our commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of the people of New South Wales. By working closely with local hospitals, urgent care clinics ensure seamless transitions when necessary, thereby strengthening our local healthcare systems.

In the 2023-24 May budget the Australian Government granted \$358.5 million over a five-year period to the Department of Health to establish 58 urgent care clinics across Australia. The New South Wales Government has committed \$124 million in funding over a two-year period to establish 25 urgent care services in New South Wales by mid-2025. Those significant investments will greatly improve the efficiency of our healthcare system and will assist in alleviating the current influx of individuals into our already crowded hospitals and emergency departments. State-funded urgent care clinics have been operational in Western Sydney since 1 July 2022. In that short time they have already serviced over 2,000 patients. That means 2,000 less patients in our hospital emergency departments.

Paired with the opening of two more clinics in Western Sydney, the capacity of urgent care services has been raised to over 15,000 patients. That equates to half of the non-life-threatening cases seen in our emergency departments. The introduction of urgent care clinics in New South Wales, and Australia as a whole, is a testament to the dedication of our Government to ensuring access to health care, reducing the costs of health care and improving overall health outcomes. I commend both the Federal and New South Wales governments for this outstanding initiative, and I emphasise that the health of our citizens is our highest priority.

#### COAL ROYALTIES

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (20:57):** I speak about the Minns Labor Government's decision to increase New South Wales coal royalties from 1 July 2024. As the member for Upper Hunter, I am proud to represent the heavy lifters of this State's economy. The Premier and his Treasurer are effectively asking the coal industry in my electorate to prop up the New South Wales budget. The mines of the Singleton and Muswellbrook local government areas [LGAs] deliver more than 50 per cent of coal royalty revenue to the State's coffers. To put some numbers around that, of the almost \$12.5 billion collected for the seven financial years to 2021-22, about \$6.25 billion was paid by mines in the Singleton and Muswellbrook LGAs. The Minns New South Wales Labor Government's coal royalty hike is a lazy effort to fund its budget. It shows no respect for the economic damage it will cause to the regions, the jobs it will endanger or the nails it will put in the coffins of our community relations.

Government members know that not too many people are going to feel sorry for coalmines and coalmining companies. The industry is certainly not loved by many Government members, and many see it as a necessary evil to raise revenue. But it is the lifeblood of my region. It is disappointing that while prior to the election the Labor Government promised not to raise taxes, six months in it has done exactly that. A Government media release states, "The Government will use the funds raised rebuilding the State's essential services, as well as providing families with cost-of-living relief." Another quote is, "The changes will improve the State's budget position by more than \$2.7 billion." The Minerals Council noted the following:

... the rate increases announced today, will mean NSW coal producers will pay at least 30 percent or more in royalties than under the existing royalty arrangements, continuously throughout the commodity price cycle, including when coal prices are low.

It would appear NSW Labor has somewhat of a fixation with coal royalties from the past. The last change took effect in 2009, which was signed off on by the then Minister for Mineral Resources, Ian Macdonald. Prior to that, the former member for Cessnock and Minister for Mineral Resources, Kerry Hickey, moved New South Wales from a 23-year-old flat rate royalty to an ad valorem system that "takes into account the lean times". Doesn't that sound familiar?

The timing of the current royalty change is far from perfect. It comes at a time when coal rates have fallen right back. The Government has hit companies when they are already assessing production. The global energy market is a roller-coaster ride, and don't the people of the Upper Hunter know it. The additional challenges caused by this Government's cash grab could spell the end of an unforeseen number of jobs. But business confidence and

job losses are just part of the risks. The mines operate on a basis of social licence. They operate with the support of the community on the basis that they continue to support the community they work in.

We know that our communities need support because they have sacrificed so much to make the mines work. They put up with the dust, the traffic, the oversized and over-height loads, transient workers who impact our community, the rostered workforce, the price of housing, and challenges for essential workers and public sector employees in my region. If we start taxing coal companies and do not support the communities who support the industry, then we put the whole industry on a collision course for disruption. What the Government takes away in taxes means the coal companies have less to give back to our communities. Our communities will expect that those coal companies continue to give.

One of the ways the Government gives back to our communities and evens the ledger is the Resources for Regions program, which aims to ease the burden of living in mining communities. It is a great program. That is why I am particularly worried that the Resources for Regions program is potentially on the chopping block, or could be amended so the value that is given to our communities is cut right back. The program is at risk in the budget next week. My plea to the Premier and the Treasurer is to not risk the industry and to not damage the social licence. The coalmining companies are on notice that they will need to step up to the mark in our communities if the Government will not do it.

#### WILLOW GROVE HERITAGE BUILDING

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (21:02):** Tonight I put on record some of the decisions that have led to the budget position we will outline next week. The previous Government left us with the biggest debt in the State's history in the amount of \$187.5 billion, the equivalent of \$22,000 for every man, woman and child in New South Wales. On top of that, the deficit it handed down was \$11 billion—again, the highest ever accumulated by any government in New South Wales. The situation is the result of profligate spending, particularly on consultants, and whole lot of very bad decisions. The former Government made many commitments that were not funded in last year's budget or in the forward estimates. There are things that have been half done.

In my electorate we have had years of promises made that were not delivered. We were promised a new primary school in Westmead in 2018. No site has been acquired. That is not to mention the promise of the return of express train services to Granville, which have not eventuated. We have also been plagued with tolls until 2060 on a privatised road network. In addition, against all sane and robust heritage advice, the previous Government destroyed Willow Grove in Parramatta, which is close to my electorate. My constituents have raised their concerns with me over and over again. They loved that beautiful building.

Willow Grove was built in 1891 by Annie Gallagher, who was the proprietor of the Cash Millinery and Drapery Shop, known as The Sydney Gem, on nearby Church Street. At the time, it was unusual for a female entrepreneur to build a mansion on the Parramatta River, but she was able to. It later became the private hospital named Estella, which was licensed to another woman, Evangeline Estelle Davidson. It eventually became a maternity hospital. As well as being a very beautiful building, Willow Grove had a long women's history and was important to the history of Parramatta. It was demolished by the previous Government.

The previous Government said that it would rebuild Willow Grove somewhere else—an idea that flew in the face of the Burra Charter and every rule to protect heritage in this country. Everybody said it was crazy. The National Trust withdrew from the reference group in April 2022, saying that the building could not be authentically reconstructed. To add insult to injury, the previous Government did not provide any money or any site on which to rebuild it. It allocated \$7 million to the demolition, reconstruction and site acquisition, but it cost \$7 million to carefully demolish the building. I will give it credit for careful demolishing the building, but we have nowhere allocated to put it.

To relocate the building would be fake heritage. Willow Grove was a rendered brick Victorian building. It was not a weatherboard building that could be taken off its piers, put on the back of a truck and moved somewhere else. Even if that building lost its context and some of its heritage value, it would still be the same building. A rebuilt Willow Grove would be a brand-new Victorian-looking building with brand-new render on recycled bricks. Rebuilding it is an absurd idea; knocking it down in the first place was vandalism. While I welcome the Parramatta Powerhouse, it could have been built in a way that would maintain Willow Grove. Instead of spending so much money on consultants, \$7 million on demolition and probably another \$20 million on reconstruction, the Government could have bought the not-so-lovely 1980s high-rise building next door, which was the original plan of the council. We have lost an absolute treasure in Willow Grove on the back of bad and mad decisions.

#### RESILIENT HOMES PROGRAM FUNDING

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (21:07):** I put on record the comments of those members of my community who were affected by the floods last year due either to inundation or a landslide. Under the Resilient

Homes Program many people have applied for assistance to have their houses lifted out of harm's way, retrofitted with better floodproofing or bought back. Only one-quarter of the people who went through all of the processes and jumped through all of the hoops have been deemed eligible. People's expectations as to what the former Government announced and constantly talked have not been met. Over 17 months on, thousands of the people in the Northern Rivers and my electorate do not have the surety they seek.

Ahead of the budget next week, the message from the community is clear. They have written to me to express the impact of missing out on the second tranche. I know that the member for Lismore, the member for Tweed and the member for Clarence have also received those messages from their communities. That is why today I took a box of those letters to the Premier so that he could see the impact of not funding the second tranche. Julian wrote to me:

We officially received the call on Monday saying we are ineligible for the resilient homes program despite our house flooding to the ceiling in the 2022 floods... we are a family of five with three young daughters under the age of ten... we found the process incredibly traumatic.

Christine wrote to me:

Tamara, I live in South Golden Beach and my house was completely inundated up to my knees... I am alone (widowed) on an aged pension.

Christine tells me that she has used all her savings to raise her home so that she is protected from future floods. Christine was given the impression that she would qualify for a grant under the scheme to reimburse at least some of the costs, but she did not. Simon wrote to me:

Hey Tamara I've just had rather upsetting call from my partner whose entire property was lost in a landslide last year — he's been informed that his property is not a priority. I'm completely dumbfounded at how this is not a priority for a buyback.

Hans, the son of 80-year old David in Mullumbimby, told me that over a metre of floodwater ran through his father's home. David received a phone call from a nervous young woman from Service NSW, who read a script saying that he would not be eligible for any assistance under the scheme. She could not answer any of his questions and he was left distraught. Rachel from Ocean Shores wrote that she was told by a woman reading off a script that her house was not a priority, despite having over a metre of water inside and losing everything she owns. She wrote:

The anxiety when it rains is very stressful.

Mr and Mrs Newton from Mullumbimby, who are both in their 80s, wrote that, after it was flooded, they raised their home because of government announcements about grants and because they were told to by the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation at local meetings. They were not successful under the scheme. Lyndall and Christian and their young family from South Ballina missed out and were deemed ineligible. They wrote that they spent a night tied to their home in a boat and were unable to be rescued promptly, despite calling the SES. They said:

Homes in the same street were eligible – this doesn't make sense.

Susan from Mullumbimby has been flooded twice in the past year, has lost two cars and has had her home inundated. She is still in temporary accommodation, paying rent at premium prices out of her own pocket. She was not eligible. Katie from Brunswick Heads wrote:

Flood water came in at 1.7 metres and my home was inundated, losing all possessions and my car and the house was destroyed. My daughter and I escaped by paddle board to a nearby veranda, but the flood water was so fast flowing that we nearly ended up in the river, only saved by hanging onto a fence.

Those are just a snapshot of the voices of the people in my community who believe the promises and are still waiting and suffering. I say to the Premier that this is an opportunity. It is not just about making whole those promises; it is about making sure that, in future extreme weather events, those people are out of harm's way.

#### GIG ECONOMY WORKERS

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (21:12):** Nineteen-year old Adil Abbas had the world ahead of him. He recently arrived in Australia from Pakistan to study information technology in Sydney. Within three weeks, he was killed when his motorbike collided with a ute in Campbelltown in Sydney's south-west. It was his third day on the job as an Uber Eats food delivery driver, using the Pakistani driver licence that he obtained only last year. Adil was the youngest of three brothers, and his family had made significant financial obligations for him to study in Australia. Like many international students, Adil hoped that studying in Australia would enable him to have better job prospects to support him and his family financially.

Sadly, Adil's story is not unique. He is the second food delivery worker to die in Sydney in the past month, after the death of a 22-year old student in Epping, and the thirteenth worker known to have died in Australia in

the transport gig worker industry since 2017. That number is widely accepted to be underestimated. Gig workers in this country have no safe or fair minimum wage, no sick leave, no protection against unfair contract terminations and no workers compensation in the event of accidents. A McKell Institute survey in April of more than 1,000 transport gig workers found that roughly half earned less than the minimum wage and 56 per cent felt pressured to rush in order to make enough money and avoid losing their jobs.

In the past year, the Transport Workers' Union signed charters with DoorDash, Uber and Menulog calling for reform to set real standards. Gig workers who use a digital platform such as Uber or Menulog have low bargaining power and low authority over their work. The Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Tony Burke, recently said:

We can't continue to have a situation where the 21st century technology of the gig platforms comes with 19th century conditions.

Put simply, too many loopholes exist, and they allow pay and conditions to be undercut. Closing those loopholes will ensure that gig workers have minimum standards of working rights and significantly reduce the harm they are causing workers. The Australian Government last week shelved legislation it brought forward that was set to be the first piece of legislation of its kind in the world to protect gig workers. It sought to do three main things: provide secure jobs, provide better pay for gig workers and, most importantly, create safer workplaces by eliminating the need to work in poor and desperate conditions. It would allow people to apply to the Fair Work Commission for orders for minimum standards, including pay, penalty rates, superannuation, payment terms, record keeping and insurance. It would provide genuine flexibility for gig workers and ease the pressure on them to work as long as possible and as often as possible just to make ends meet.

Gig workers would also have new rights to seek reinstatement if they have been unfairly deactivated from the platform they use. That would provide the same financial obligations as other workers, preventing gig workers from having their platform access and livelihood unfairly cut without a fair chance to defend themselves. Those proposed reforms are now being examined by a Senate inquiry and are set to return next year. Regardless of the form of the final legislation, the current framework must be improved to save lives. Australia was once known as the workers' paradise. We pride ourselves on a fair go and on being a place where nobody should have to rely on tips to get by. We are a country of opportunity, and that is what drew Adil Abbas here.

Future students who come to Australia seeking greater opportunity should not fear having to work in dangerous and, all too often, deadly working conditions just to achieve their dreams of a world-class education. I send my condolences to Mr Abbas' family and friends during this difficult time. I commend Federal Labor and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Tony Burke, for their strong advocacy on this issue.

#### AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ORGANISATION

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (21:17):** I share with the House the remarkable experience of my recent visit to the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation [ANSTO], located within the electorate of Holsworthy. It is a privilege to represent the only electorate in Australia that houses an active nuclear reactor, which serves as a shining example of nuclear technology operating safely within our communities. As many in this place are aware, ANSTO is at the forefront of nuclear research in our nation. It is the custodian of Australia's only nuclear reactor, a versatile and multipurpose research reactor that plays a pivotal role in addressing key scientific questions related to existing nuclear reactors and the development of future nuclear systems. The reactor is a testament to our nation's commitment to advancing science and technology for the improvement of our society.

A primary objective of ANSTO's research is to enhance our understanding of nuclear fuel processes and structural integrity under high-temperature and radiation conditions, and to contribute to the safer management of radioactive waste. ANSTO researchers are actively engaged in the fabrication and characterisation of advanced fuels, as well as investigating the properties of nuclear waste and its long-term interactions with containment materials. Their work aims to improve the safety of both the short-term and long-term storage of radioactive materials. Moreover, ANSTO researchers delve into the behaviour of materials in extreme environments, analysing and predicting how they will perform under adverse conditions. That is crucial for ensuring the safety and reliability of nuclear systems, structures and components. Their research also extends to the development of improved fuels for advanced reactor designs, which could potentially revolutionise our energy landscape. It is crucial to recognise that the nuclear reactor at ANSTO is a prime example of how nuclear technology can operate safely within our communities.

The OPAL nuclear reactor, a state-of-the-art 20-megawatt multipurpose reactor, is used for nuclear medicine, research, scientific and industrial purposes. It is a beacon of scientific progress, innovation and responsible stewardship of nuclear resources. We should not fear it but rather embrace it as a symbol of our commitment to advancing knowledge, improving our lives and fostering a sustainable future. It is imperative that

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we recognise the potential synergy between nuclear power and renewable energy sources in achieving our sustainability goals.

Nuclear power, when harnessed responsibly and safely, offers a reliable and low-carbon source of electricity. It provides a stable baseload power supply that complements the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar. By incorporating nuclear power into our energy mix, we can enhance grid stability and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. This diversification not only mitigates the risk of power shortages, but also accelerates our transition away from carbon-intensive energy production. We should follow in the footsteps of France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada and other countries that have embraced nuclear energy, where diversification, like a financial portfolio, is vital to stability.

Nuclear energy is also cheaper in the majority of countries where nuclear power is part of the national energy mix. Currently, it provides 30 per cent of the world's low-carbon electricity. Now, the question many ask is "How safe is nuclear power?" Well, my answer to that is ANSTO serves as a testament to the commitment of maintaining the highest safety standards in nuclear technology. By upholding those standards, we not only ensure the safety of our communities but also build public confidence in the use of nuclear power. I understand this is an uphill ideological battle, with a Federal and State government against any form of nuclear energy in Australia. However, it makes sense; Australia has the most uranium reserves—around one-third of the world's supply. By harnessing the benefits of nuclear power alongside renewables, we can achieve a more resilient and sustainable energy future. ANSTO's expertise and research contributions play a vital role in this endeavour, and we should continue to support its efforts as we strive for a cleaner, greener and more prosperous Australia.

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#### NEWCASTLE KNIGHTS

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (21:21):** Knights fever is running rampant in Newcastle. Our men's and women's teams are taking their respective competitions by storm and showing the country what Newcastle is made of. The Knights men's team have reached week two of the 2023 NRL finals series after a thrilling elimination final on the weekend. With a string of injuries and suspensions, the season was not off to a good start for our Knights. With just nine games left before the finals, they were sitting at fourteenth on the ladder—exactly where they had finished at the end of last season. Reaching the finals seemed unlikely. It felt like wishful thinking. Yet, in a stunning turnaround, as time was almost up, they pumped out win after win. They climbed rung after rung on the ladder. They won every single one of those nine games, equalling their winning streak of 1997—the first time they took home the premiership.

Not only did they reach the top eight, but, sitting comfortably in fifth place, they secured a home final for the first time since 2006. The game sold out in less than 10 minutes. It seems that the Knights enjoy keeping us on the edge of our seats because, boy, did they put on a show in that home final. They certainly gave the crowd their money's worth, dragging the game into a nailbiting extra time period before cleaning up the Raiders and moving on to the next stage. The last time they took home the premiership, in 2001, I was among the thousands of Novocastrians gathered in Foreshore Park. There was a smile on every face, a skip in every step. It is certainly starting to feel that way in Newcastle now. Let us bring home a third premiership. Keep up the good work, and good luck in Auckland this weekend.

We cannot talk about premierships without mentioning the fantastic women's team, who are chasing last year's win. This team have been unstoppable since day dot. They have won every home game and conceded only once all season. With just one game to go until the finals series, the team are sitting comfortably at the top of the ladder. After the excitement and speedy sellout of the men's home final, the women's team have locked in another home final for Newcastle after they defeated the Roosters in a great game over the weekend. This team are just fantastic. They are making history in the NRLW and women's sport on the whole. Last year, they won the grand final in just their second season in the competition; now they are looking to top that with the minor premiership as well. In just three years, they have captured the hearts of many Novocastrians. With my daughter, I was lucky enough to be one of almost 20,000 people in their record-breaking crowd when they defeated the Sharks. The atmosphere was electric. Good luck in the game this weekend and in the finals to come. Defend the Kingdom!

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:24):** I speak in support of the member for Newcastle and wish the Knights and especially the NRLW team all the very best for a mighty performance again this season. Well done.

#### TIMBER INDUSTRY

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (21:25):** I think it was the year 2001 when my Parramatta Eels were done by the Newcastle Knights. Was that 2001? I am having some post-traumatic stress flashbacks. But good luck to you.

**Ms Donna Davis:** Go the Eels!

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON:** Go the Eels! Tonight I speak in support of the timber industry as well as everyone's right to a peaceful and lawful protest, particularly in my electorate of Clarence and, more broadly, in New South Wales. The timber industry is sustainable and environmentally responsible in New South Wales; in fact, it is the most highly regulated forestry industry in the world. This is a fact that should be acknowledged as such. There is a range of agreements, statutory licences, codes of practice and conditions of consent—all to ensure that soil and water, fauna and flora, fish habitat, cultural heritage and other values are protected during harvesting operations.

The Environment Protection Authority's authorised officers can at any time enter a closed forest, using their statutory powers, to monitor and enforce compliance within forestry legislation. It is illegal to harvest trees in certain parts of State forests. Of the 20 million hectares of forested areas in New South Wales, two million hectares make up the State forest estate. One million of those hectares of State forest is set aside for conservation forever. Of course, it all regrows. Forestry in New South Wales provides vital products for the New South Wales economy. It helps the housing industry build homes and provides power poles to keep the lights on, fencing—even knives and forks in the cafeteria in this building. Sustainable forestry, through responsible forestry management, significantly improves biodiversity in a forest; it does not destroy it. The timber is, of course, the ultimate renewable resource.

Everyone I talk to—and I absolutely mean everyone I talk to—in my electorate wants to support and encourage a thriving koala population. To portray anything else is factually wrong and insulting to everyone in regional areas who works hard every day in forestry but also works to ensure that the koala populations throughout my electorate and the broader areas of forestry in New South Wales are managed responsibly. Responsible forest management supports and improves koala habitat in New South Wales.

As I said earlier, I also support everyone's right to a peaceful and lawful protest. That is something that I hold dearly and will defend. But, I have to say, some of the behaviour that has been on display in State forests in northern New South Wales in the recent past is disgraceful. Indeed, I put it to this House that it is shameful and unlawful. To put it simply, everyone has the right to protest. It is an absolute right. But that right carries responsibilities: firstly, to do it safely and lawfully; and, secondly, I believe, not to infringe on another person's right to provide for his or her family.

The continual attacks in some of the forests in northern New South Wales on a lawful industry by protesters illegally—I allege—entering active harvesting sites are simply disgraceful and should be denounced not only by this House but also the other place. But, sadly, that is not always the case. Police resources are being diverted to deal with incidents, with some coming from hours away on a daily basis. In the recent past New South Wales police and police rescue teams have been called some 18 times to alleged offenders protesting in those forests, locking themselves to machines, entering worksites, sitting in trees and creating blockades—just to name a few activities. Imagine being one of the harvesters or forestry workers about to go on your daily routine only to find people hiding in the grass. It must stop. I urge the Government to introduce legislation that protects those workers.

#### PARRAMATTA AQUATIC CENTRE

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (21:30):** On 25 September 2023 the new Parramatta Aquatic Centre [PAC] will open to the public and the Parramatta community will once again be able to enjoy the pleasures of a local pool over what promises to be a particularly hot summer. The elegant new centre in Parramatta Park includes one outdoor and two indoor pools, a water play area, a creche, a gym, three group fitness rooms, consultant rooms for allied health professionals and a party room for hire as well as a sauna, spa and steam facilities. However, this will be the first summer in over six years that a public pool will be available to the people of Parramatta, who have sweltered through six hot Australian summers, including the blistering 2019 heatwaves.

The PAC will be a valuable addition to our city; however, it is important that the way the residents of Parramatta were let down by the previous Government is given voice to and committed to the record in this place. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government callously demolished the Parramatta war memorial pool, which, despite its promises to the contrary, proved to be a tragic casualty of the Coalition's ham-fisted stadium developments. Parramatta Pool was much loved, built with money raised by the community like scores of other pools across Australia. It was no surprise when a large community campaign was launched by the Parramatta Memorial Swim Club and the North Parramatta Residents Action Group [NPRAG] to preserve it, including an alternative plan for the stadium that would not require removal of the pool. In 2015 my Liberal predecessor, Dr Geoff Lee, gave assurances to our community that it would not be removed when he said to the *Parramatta Advertiser*:

There are no talks about getting rid of the pool. Our pool is a great pool and well-established, and it would cost too much.

Of course, there were talks and the Parramatta war memorial pool was subsequently put on the chopping block. When those opposite were asked what would be done to replace the pool, the response was that they had no

obligation to pay for it. Their focus was on delivering a stadium. I stress that, for most, the stadium is not and never was the point of contention. The contentious issue was the fact that the former Coalition Government refused point blank, at every turn, to fully fund a replacement pool and then, after a drawn-out community campaign supported by the then Labor Opposition pushed the Government into a corner, the former member for Parramatta and the former member for Penrith, Stuart Ayres, considered it completely appropriate to propose funding that would never be able to deliver a like-for-like pool, let alone meet the needs of a modern city.

Public pools are not a luxury; they are an essential amenity for public health and wellbeing. They provide a place for exercise, hydrotherapy and teaching our children water safety and how to swim. They are important recreational places for the entire community while also providing a reprieve from our scorching Western Sydney summers. The callous destruction of the Parramatta pool by the Coalition Government was an insult to the people of Parramatta. It took years of activism, advocacy and pressure to get those opposite to finally accept responsibility. We even had T-shirts saying, "Where's Parra Pool, Geoff?" In 2019 a site was selected in Parramatta Park but the construction has come at significant expense to the council. I am proud to have stood with my City of Parramatta councillor colleagues to push the Coalition to contribute a further \$3.5 million on top of the original \$35 million, but the cost to ratepayers has been unreasonably excessive, exceeding \$50 million to date.

I commend the City of Parramatta for the work done across the organisation to execute the project. It has been a long time coming but the financial cost to council, along with the delays to the project, lay solely at the feet of the previous Government, which demolished the Parramatta pool without any realistic plans for a replacement. I thank Suzette Meade, Rob and Halina MacQueen, Leslie Rogan, Finbar O'Donoghue, Bob Edgar, NPRAG members, Councillor Patricia Prociv, Parramatta Memorial Swim Club, Our Lady of Mercy College, local Labor branch members and thousands of individuals across Parramatta for their tireless advocacy. I look forward to the opening of the Parramatta Aquatic Centre and the making of new memories for our community, putting that painful part of Parramatta's history behind us.

#### MATERNITY SERVICES

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (21:35):** Women and their babies must be front and centre of maternity care, with respect, empathy and first-class communication a priority. In 2023 NSW Health published its plan for maternity care, *Connecting, listening, and responding: A Blueprint for Action - Maternity Care in NSW*. The blueprint's vision is that:

All women in NSW receive respectful, evidence-based and equitable maternity care that improves experiences and health and wellbeing outcomes.

The aim is for maternity services that are "collaborative, equitable and woman centred". Recent events in my electorate sadly highlight just how overdue the new plan is. Members will be aware that the Legislative Council Select Committee on Birth Trauma was established in June this year and has received more than 4,000 submissions. A large cohort of women in this State have identified that their birthing experiences and those of their friends and carers have been far from satisfactory. The inquiry was triggered at least in part by a group of 30 women who chose to express their concerns about care at the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. They did so through the Maternity Consumer Network, or the MCN, which in turn raised its concerns with the Health Care Complaints Commission, or the HCCC, and the health Minister. That was in June 2022.

I state that neither me nor my office was contacted about the complaints by the MCN, the Minister or the health system. It was, in fact, only in June 2023 that I became aware of the complaints after reports in the media. The reports, in fact, claimed that I had been contacted. That was not correct and it led the MCN to write to me to acknowledge that. But since then I have engaged with the MCN and several of the individual complainants to make sure that their issues are addressed. I am concerned to have learnt that it appears there were no attempts to make in-person contact with individual complainants until June this year. That is over a year of waiting.

I am aware that a comprehensive resilience assessment of maternity services at the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital has been undertaken. I understand that the care provided at the hospital is safe. I also understand that the resilience report has made recommendations to improve care and that those form the basis of the response to the HCCC's request to report on the complaints. Yet I am concerned all that has happened without, it seems, anyone making personal contact with the women affected. Letters acknowledging receipt of complaints are not making personal contact. That is not listening. Is it any wonder there is such community concern about this very personal and extremely sensitive issue? Do we have a system that has lost its way when it comes to putting patients at its centre?

Maternity care should be centred around mothers. Their perceptions, experiences and communication to health staff should be respected. Safe staffing levels need to be attained and sustained to allow care, respect and communication to happen. There must be extensive involvement and co-design by consumers in care. And

continuity of care is critical. Familiarity with and trust in a chosen clinician and healthcare team make a difference at what can be an extremely anxious time. I welcome the Minister for Health's recent announcement of a new expert advisory group "to improve the birthing experiences of mothers, their partners and families". We have a serious issue that needs a high level of focus and response.

I finish by recording my thanks to our clinicians for the work they do, especially nurses and midwives. I note the comments of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in its submission to the inquiry, which stated:

Childbirth may cause significant physical and psychological damage to women, [but] it is quite extreme and incorrect to assume that 'intentional violence' is being perpetrated by Australian and New Zealand maternity care providers towards women and the babies in their care.

That is an important point to note. Having worked in the health system for some 40 years, I have seen the miracles our clinicians perform and the care they have for their patients. I believe they too recognise the need to do more to put women and their children at the centre of the care we provide. Let us work to make sure they have the resources and support they need to do this. I call on the Government to provide those resources and that support, and to remove the systemic and bureaucratic barriers that exist to providing true woman- and mother-centred care.

#### WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE BUSINESSES

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (21:40):** Recently, I joined several prominent community organisations in Wollongong to celebrate significant milestones. Each of those organisations had humble beginnings; each share the desire to support a particular group or interest in the community, which is central to their reason for starting; each organisation has made a positive and lasting contribution to our community, which now extends well beyond their original reason for forming; and each organisation is a tribute to their founders. Greenacres Disability Services started off with a group of parents of children with disability who were determined to give their children an education. It seems somewhat incredible when considered by today's standards, but at the time—in the 1950s—parents of children with an intellectual disability had to fight to get the then New South Wales Government to consider their children as deserving of an education, as it would with any other child.

That small group of parents includes people whom I have come to know over many years, such as Wendy Richardson and John and Margaret Bilboe. The parents were repeatedly refused funding support from the then New South Wales Government, so they undertook their own fundraising and opened the Greenacres Special School in 1953. It started with 16 students. Soon after, their concerns about education turned to concerns over the employment prospects for the students. Once again, the parents raised funds to establish a workshop for school leavers by 1963. Today Greenacres is a multi-site, multifaceted organisation that provides high-quality support for people with a disability. The goal of the organisation today remains essentially the same as the shared vision of the parents who started it 70 years ago: to enrich the lives of people with disability by giving them choice.

Each week more than 600 people are supported to live the life they imagine. Greenacres supports a range of day programs and runs the Brewing Up a Storm cafe at the SES headquarters in Wollongong. Greenacres continues to be a strong voice for people with disability. The most important voices that Greenacres listens to—and the voices that Greenacres ensures are heard—are those who are supported through services or employment at Greenacres itself. All of the battles to make sure that people with disability can participate in education, employment and the community have not been won, but they are certainly much advanced from those early days when the rights of children with disability to get an education were not even recognised. Congratulations to Greenacres for all it has done and continues to do for people with disability.

Similarly, in the 1950s a small group of Italian migrants got together and put in £10 each to help form a social club. I am sure they had no idea that that club, The Fraternity Club, would become one of the premier clubs. This year The Fraternity Club celebrates its seventieth anniversary. Over the years "The Frat", as it has become known, has not only been a home to the Italian community in Wollongong, but it has also been a place to celebrate great milestones in life. The club, which formed to allow Italian migrants to socialise, has become the home of football in the Illawarra. It continues to provide fine food and service, taking out the Perfect Plate award as a medium-sized club for two years running. During COVID it supported the community and its employees. Each year it upholds Italian traditions like Castagne Day, or Chestnut Day, an Italian holiday celebrating the chestnut harvest where tens of thousands of chestnuts are roasted—the product of an operation honed over many years. As the saying in the Illawarra goes, "At the Frat, that's where it's at!"

Kembla Joggers [KJ], now one of the largest running clubs in the country, began when four work colleagues at BHP steelworks started running together in 1973. The group of runners used to, and still do, run on tracks near to where I grew up in Mount Kembla. The name morphed from the Mount Kembla Joggers to Kembla Joggers over time. Over the past 50 years, the club has grown to more than 500 members hosting track and

cross-country events each week of the year. Unlike other clubs that have designated periods for track and cross-country running, Kembla Joggers does both each week, every week, all year round. Not only has the club built up a strong group of runners, it has also built one of the premier cross-country circuits in the country. Their clubhouse and facilities have been able to host everything from school cross-country carnivals to national events.

KJ runners have also had some notable successes not only at the amateur level but all the way through to national titles and even Empire, Commonwealth and Olympic success. The KJs include among their number talented members such as Kerry McCann, the winner of two Commonwealth Games marathons; Dave Power, who won a bronze medal in Rome and won two golds at the 1958 Empire Games; hurdler Sarah Carli; steeplechase competitor Madeline Heiner; and middle-distance runner Ryan Gregson, who formerly held the Australian record for the 15,00 metres. KJ members are on hand to help other organisations, too. Again, this is another organisation that started with humble beginnings that has grown and continues to contribute to the social fabric of the Illawarra.

Wollongong is proud to count these organisations among our own. Whether people have a direct association with them or not, people feel a connectedness to them because they have become integrated with our community. I thank and acknowledge not just those who started them, but everyone who has contributed to their success and growth while retaining a bridge to the aspirations of their founders. Wollongong and the Illawarra are better for being home to each of them.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (21:45):** As the Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion, I congratulate Greenacres on its 70 years and thank those associated with the centre ever so much for the work they do. Greenacres is a local organisation that is founded in the community. It is looking after 600 people's lives and giving them a quality of life that they would not have, but for this organisation. The organisation and its members are really to be highly commended.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** We all concur.

#### STATE BUDGET AND DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoynes) (21:45):** This evening I will speak about the upcoming New South Wales State Budget. Next week the new Labor Government will hand down its first budget. This is a monumental task and something that is most important for our State and for the viability of communities like mine in the Drummoynes electorate. Since being elected in March, I have worked very hard to engage with my community, to listen and to understand what is needed so that I can best represent them in this place. In that time, I have made numerous representations to various Government Ministers about projects that are important for the Drummoynes electorate.

I take this opportunity to call on the Government to include funding for vital projects that will ensure the Drummoynes electorate remains a great place in which to live and work. Sydney Metro West is one project that is front of mind. I call on the Government to proceed with the Sydney Metro West without delay. That should be reflected in the State Budget. I remind the Premier that on 14 February this year, prior to election of this Government, he said that he would absolutely guarantee the future of the Sydney Metro West. The project has widespread support from all levels of government, including mayors across Western Sydney, the Labor mayors of Inner West, Burwood and Cumberland councils, and is supported by industry and key stakeholder groups including Business Western Sydney, which is headed by senior Labor figure and former Labor Minister, David Borger.

When the project was first announced by the then Liberal-Nationals Government, the goal was to build a 20-minute fast train from Parramatta to the CBD to replicate the western line and benefit over three million commuters in the inner west and in Western Sydney. There are three promised stations in the Drummoynes electorate at Five Dock; Burwood North, or as locals like to call it, Concord Oval—and it should be called Concord Oval; and North Strathfield. These new stations will unlock transport options for my constituents who live in areas that do not already have access to a station, and they will ease pressure on already overflowing stations. That is why any delay or scrapping of the project would be catastrophic for our community. I remind the House that when the Labor Party was last in government, it spent \$500 million on the Rozelle Metro without even laying a track. That cannot happen again.

I am calling on the Government to commit to continuing the funding for the Sydney Metro West project as significant construction is already underway. That fact must be reflected in the budget that will be handed down in this House next week. I want the Government to ensure that it is full steam ahead on this construction project because delay will mean more disruption, and that is simply unacceptable to my community. I have been working hard to ensure that the Concord High School upgrade, which was promised and funded by the previous Government, remains a top priority for the Minns Government. I call on the Government to commit to funding the Concord High School in the budget. The project is progressing and is currently at the development application

stage. Students and families living in my community deserve access to quality classrooms, teaching spaces and core facilities. The final business case has been submitted to NSW Treasury for approval. I call on the Treasurer—in fact, I plead with the Treasurer—to fund this much-needed upgrade to Concord High School.

As a candidate, I worked hard to seek a commitment to upgrade Concord Hospital. Labor did not make the same commitment. I want to highlight how important it is that Concord Hospital gets the attention and investment that it deserves. Under Labor, the Drummoyne electorate was neglected for 49 years, and it took a Liberal Government to finally upgrade the hospital. Last year, the \$341 million stage one redevelopment was completed and officially opened. I want to see continued investment into Concord Hospital's facilities. That includes a new car park, an upgraded emergency department and ICU, upgraded wards and more beds. I call on the Premier and the Treasurer to reflect that in next week's budget.

Other projects that should be funded include the extension of the Community Building Partnership program, which under the previous Government saw \$400,000 injected into each electorate to support community organisations, sporting clubs, churches, schools and councils for local projects. I want to see funding for Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club; urgent road safety upgrades in Drummoyne, particularly at the intersection between Lyons Road and Victoria Road; at-risk children experiencing trauma, who are supported by CaraCare; Touched By Olivia's Living Room Project; a second Bay Run; and funding to improve our parks, playgrounds and open spaces. I want to work productively with the Government to get the best results and improvements for my community. I await budget day to see what investments will be made in my community to ensure that the Drummoyne electorate remains a great place to live, work and raise a family.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (21:51):** The discovery that more than 1,000 of our State's nurses are temporary and not funded beyond the 2024-25 financial year is just one of many budget surprises the new Labor Government has faced following the March 2023 State election. In one of the more extraordinary exchanges to occur on the floor of this Parliament, the former Treasurer and current shadow Minister for Health, Matt Kean, interjected during question time on 23 August to inform the House that these were "COVID recovery nurses". This was the first time this fact had been publicly revealed. With that interjection, the former Treasurer confirmed that the former Liberal-Nationals Government was going to sack those 1,112 nurses at a time when the New South Wales health system remains under tremendous pressure. For my electorate of The Entrance, which is serviced by the Central Coast Local Health District, this would mean 57 fewer nurses within the year unless we can fund those positions. Nobody believes that having fewer nurses will improve our public health system, but that is exactly the budget position we inherited from the Liberals and Nationals.

The Liberals and Nationals' failure to fund our essential workers is just one line item of a \$7 billion black hole uncovered by the Minns Labor Government, which also includes a funding shortfall of \$700 million to cover the costs of children living in out-of-home care; no funding for the Cyber Security NSW office beyond 2024; no funding for the Regional Seniors Travel Card beyond 30 June this year; and no funding for the Active and Creative Kids or First Lap vouchers beyond 30 June this year. The \$7 billion black hole of unfunded programs and cuts baked into the budget by the outgoing Liberal-Nationals Government allowed the former Treasurer to claim during the election that there would be a return to surplus by 2024-25, despite providing no information about which programs were to be cut or left unfunded.

The challenge of funding the services the people of New South Wales need is made much harder by the size of the State's debt, the largest debt handed from one government to another in the State's history. This debt will be \$187 billion by 2026, or \$22,384 per person in the State, on the budget settings inherited by the Labor Government. The interest bill alone on this debt is greater than the cost of running the State's police force. When Labor's Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, delivers Labor's first New South Wales budget in 13 years next week, our priorities will be to better fund our State's public services, our schools and our hospitals, and the teachers, healthcare workers and public servants who deliver the services we all rely on.

Labor will rebalance the State's spending to deliver the investment in our public services that the people of New South Wales have said they want and need. As part of the budget repair, we will make sure that they get their fair share of revenue from this State's natural resources. Labor has already announced a new coal royalty rate, which will increase by 2.6 percentage points from 1 July 2024 and will improve the State's budget position by more than \$2.7 billion over the four years from 2024-25.

Labor's budget will not forget to invest in the infrastructure the State needs to keep it and its people moving forward. On the Central Coast, that will mean restarting the Gosford bypass, a crucial upgrade of the Pacific Highway. Work and planning for that bypass was halted in 2015 by the former Government, despite the route recording the most road and pedestrian accidents on the coast, including just last week when a student was hit by a motor vehicle. Next week's budget will begin to repair the State's balance sheet. Budget repair will enable us to

invest in our public services and meet the cost-of-living challenges being faced by the people of New South Wales. It will be a Labor budget, which will deliver for the people of my electorate and this State.

#### **SURF LIFE SAVING NEW SOUTH WALES AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (21:55):** I recently had the pleasure of attending the 2023 Surf Life Saving New South Wales Awards of Excellence. Recognising the invaluable contributions made by members, clubs and branches is extremely important to the surf lifesaving community. These annual awards celebrate the incredible people involved in surf lifesaving clubs and the impact they have on their clubs, fellow members and local communities. On the Central Coast, we have a strong surf lifesaving community. The Surf Life Saving Central Coast [SLSCC] branch is responsible for the overall management, promotion and growth of surf lifesaving on the Central Coast.

With 15 clubs, seven within my electorate, and 8,332 members, the 2022-23 season saw the completion of 604 rescues and 42,600 preventive actions. SLSCC enjoys its position as one of Australia's most successful, dynamic and celebrated branches, and I was delighted when it once again was named the branch of the year. The branch has now been recognised as the Surf Life Saving New South Wales branch of the year for six of the past 10 years. This award is a wonderful testament to the hard work of the branch and to all the clubs, directors, staff members and club members who give countless hours to the surf lifesaving movement on the Central Coast. The branch has worked hard on not only ensuring that its clubs are well equipped with crucial lifesaving resources but also on interclub collaboration, which has seen a sharing of resources and skills education. This approach shows that the Central Coast is leading the way in aquatic safety in preparation for a busy summer ahead.

I congratulate the Ocean Beach Surf Life Saving Club on taking out the Innovation of the Year award for its black spot community education initiative, Taking it to the Beach. Those closest to the Ocean Beach club know the countless hours its members have put into educating their local communities on the dangers of unpatrolled locations in our area. This initiative has been a huge success due in part to the community collaboration among the surf lifesaving clubs, the Central Coast Council lifeguard service, the Pearl Beach Progress Association and local real estate agents and shop owners who have ensured the promotion of the safety brochures to proactively prevent future drowning tragedies. Education has been identified as one of the top ways to help prevent drowning. By learning about a beach and its inherent dangers, we can make wiser choices about where and when to swim and help to educate residents and visitors.

I acknowledge the following Terrigal clubs and members who were finalists. MacMasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club was a finalist in the education categories for community education program of the year, for its community defib project, and Lyn Drummond for trainer of the year. Avoca Beach Surf Life Saving Club had four nominations this year. Its under-19 Taplin team, consisting of Mia Cracknell, Bronte Ayres, Pearl McQueen and Natalia Drobot, was a finalist for team of the year. These girls have been teammates at Avoca since they were little under-8 nippers. To see them now dominating in this event all season, winning at the branch, State and Aussies events, demonstrating a high level of skill, determination and teamwork is special. Natalia Drobot was also nominated as junior athlete of the year. Natalia had an unbelievable campaign in Perth at the Aussies, medalling in all but one event she participated in, and took home three gold medals. Natalia also broke club records, being a part of the open double ski and the under-19 Taplin teams that won gold for the first time in the club's history.

Rocky Wolters was nominated for patrol captain of the year. Rocky prioritised education of the new rookies and patrolling members, making sure that they were well equipped to face any situation that presented itself on patrol. The Avoca Beach Surf Life Saving Club and the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club were both nominated as finalists for Rescue of the Year. After taking out Volunteer of the Year at the branch awards this year, John Avis from North Avoca Surf Life Saving Club was nominated for Volunteer of the Year at the Surf Life Saving NSW awards.

Fiona Duignan from the Copacabana Surf Life Saving Club was a finalist in the Administrator of the Year category. Having joined the club back in 2002 and occupying many volunteer roles over the years, Fiona is a fantastic club member. The incredible Paul Lemmon from Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club is truly outstanding. He is a club member who has won too many medals for me to mention tonight. He was also recognised as a finalist in the Masters Athlete of the Year category.

The annual surf lifesaving club awards shine a light on our amazing surf clubs and their members. It is important that we acknowledge their amazing achievements. I look forward to attending the upcoming raising of the flags at Terrigal Beach. I also acknowledge my club presidents, Craig Sheppard from Killcare Surf Life Saving Club, Tom Tseng from Copacabana, Stuart Harvey from Avoca, Kim Findlay from North Avoca, Alison McNeill from MacMasters, Glenn Bowles from Terrigal and Adam Phillips from Wamberal. I thank everyone involved in our surf lifesaving clubs for keeping our beaches safe for more than a million visitors every year and for their

incredible contribution to our community every single season. They keep Central Coast beaches safe for locals and visitors alike.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (22:00):** I thank member for Terrigal for his comments about the fantastic Central Coast lifesaving organisations and all the work our fabulous volunteers do. I congratulate everybody who won an award at the recent awards night, individuals and teams alike. I give a special shout-out to that champion Ocean Beach Surf Life Saving Club for its education program and congratulate it on its involvement in the national 24 Hour Row Building Mental Fitness on the weekend. It was fantastic to get on a rowing machine and have a bit of fun with the club. Well done.

#### TEACHER WORKFORCE

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (22:01):** Today I speak about some of the State's unsung heroes, those who are always putting others ahead of themselves. I am talking about the fantastic teachers of New South Wales, who are in the classroom teaching and supporting students to learn and grow. For too long teachers across our State have been overworked and undervalued, which has led to their growing exodus from the profession. The Minns Labor Government has taken concrete steps to address the inherited mess in the education system left to us by the former Government. For 12 long years the former Government neglected the needs of teachers and children in the classroom. For too long it ignored teachers and did not listen to their concerns. The lack of respect for teachers from the former Government was obvious and has had a detrimental effect on the teaching workforce of this State. Last year a record 1,854 teachers resigned from their position, a shocking number that has only exacerbated the existing workforce shortages.

The Minns Labor Government has secured a well-deserved and long overdue pay rise for New South Wales teachers. It will see New South Wales teachers become among the best paid in the country. The agreement reached last week ensures that starting salaries will increase from \$75,791 to \$85,000, while salaries at the top of the scale increased from \$113,042 to \$122,100. All public school teachers will benefit from this historic pay deal, putting the 12 years of neglect behind us as the Government looks to fix the crisis in education that has seen teachers leaving the profession at an alarming rate. However, we also know that not all issues can be fixed with a pay rise. While it is an excellent start, more needs to be done to solve long-term issues that have led teachers to be overworked and undervalued. The Deputy Premier, and education Minister, has been clear that a pay increase is the start and not the end for reform in our classrooms. I congratulate the Government on converting 16,000 teachers and support staff in schools to permanent positions, providing much-needed job security for our teaching workforce.

While on the subject, I point out the former Government's failings in this area. Since 2017 only 63 per cent of the teaching workforce in New South Wales public schools have had permanent positions—truly a remarkable statistic that reveals the former Government's lack of respect for teachers. But it gets worse: The former Government matched the commitment that Labor took to the last election to convert 10,000 teachers to permanent contracts, which was a good start from the former Government. However, it made zero progress on that target. It ignored the promise it made to the teachers of New South Wales, just like it had done for the previous 12 years.

As I have said, increasing teachers' pay is only the start to attracting and retaining teachers to work in our State's schools. Issues such as administrative workloads, stress and extreme expectations all contribute to teachers in New South Wales being undervalued and overworked. Much of teachers' time is not used for teaching in classrooms but rather working through a mountain of administrative work, lesson planning and additional training, when we know that teachers are best served in the classroom and teaching. The Government has already committed to hiring additional support staff at schools to cut the administrative workload placed on teachers by five hours a week. It is a commitment that will make a real difference in the lives of teachers by leaving them to focus on teaching our children in classrooms across our State.

My electorate of Camden contains 17 public schools, inclusive of both primary and high schools. Having met with teachers and principals in a number of those schools since I was elected, I have seen that so many have teaching vacancies that have been left unfilled for months at a time. Those vacancies often leave teachers to cover multiple classes at once while children's learning is further negatively impacted. That cannot be allowed to continue. If we do not seek to fix the teacher shortage, learning outcomes will only get worse and our kids will be left behind. Lastly, I thank the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education, as well as all the amazing teaching staff and support staff across our State and in my electorate of Camden for the phenomenal work they do every day. Keep it up—we have got your back.

#### DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (22:05):** The words "Winter is coming" were made famous as the Stark family motto in the HBO series *Game of Thrones*. The words were not only a warning but also a call to action to



be prepared for an unprecedented weather event. Although we experience good times in our weather systems, they do not always last because nature works in cycles that can be unpredictable. We need to be vigilant and we need to be prepared. I stand in this place today as the Ned Stark of the New South Wales Parliament to bring members the motto "Drought is coming". This is a call to action. Just like in Westeros, we here in New South Wales face a stark future—pun intended—if we are not prepared for drought.

The Southern Oscillation—La Niña and El Niño—is a significant climate phenomenon due to its ability to influence temperature and precipitation globally, and it directly impacts New South Wales. The Bureau of Meteorology predicts El Niño will arrive this spring, which means reduced rainfall. Most major droughts in Australia have been associated with El Niño. How prepared are we for the next drought that history tells us is coming? The Federation Drought, which lasted from about 1895 to 1903, was a seminal moment in Australian history. While there had been droughts before then, it came while people were already recovering from drought, bushfires, dust storms, a rabbit plague and economic recession. People had become accustomed to long, dry spells but few knew how to recover quickly from them. Farmers had racked up huge debts from previous disasters and economic downturns and were not ready for the shock of the new drought. It sent many farmers and banks to the wall, put people out of work, and led to outbreaks of disease from lack of food.

But the Government did not do much to alleviate the misery it caused. Back then drought was considered by most people to be part and parcel of life on the land. Australia wanted to ignore the drought as much as it could because it did not fit the narrative of a land of opportunity with tough people who could make a decent fist of anything under harsh conditions. Instead, local mayors and other community-minded people started fundraising drives, and held benefits, fetes and other events to raise money for drought relief. There were also calls for the better use of water resources. Cooperation was needed among the colonies for the equitable distribution of water in the river systems. The need for broader cooperation in the face of such challenges was a driver towards Federation.

I was elected to this place in 2019. We were in the middle of a drought. Volunteers delivered drinking water to towns. Many towns were close to being evacuated due to the lack of potable water. There were even plans to deliver water to Cobar by train. Charity groups like Buy a Bale, Aussie Helpers, and BlazeAid—just to name a few—assisted with delivery of food and money so those affected could keep food on the table and pay bills. There was uncertainty for farmers and businesses. Both were caught between State and Federal politicians, who were unable to clearly articulate which jurisdiction assistance fell under, what help was available and when it would come. All the while, feed prices skyrocketed and stock prices plummeted. Whilst agriculture-dependent communities were waiting on the Government, they lost businesses and population. Generations of stock bloodlines, bred specifically for those climates, were sent to slaughter.

It sounds familiar, doesn't it? Drought policy today is scarily like drought policy 122 years ago. The findings of the 1989 Commonwealth-commissioned Drought Policy Review Task Force form the basis of contemporary drought policy. The task force was critical of drought being classified as a natural disaster and refocused policy on self-reliance and risk management, rather than a dependency on government assistance. What the task force did not consider is the changing climate and the duration of droughts we are experiencing now and will experience into the future. The good news is we can change that. To borrow another quote from a *Game of Thrones* character, Tyrion Lannister, "I drink, and I know things." A Federal review of the Australian Government drought response found that, of the 25 assistance measures available to drought-impacted communities, only 16 were consistent with national and international frameworks.

The Auditor-General of New South Wales conducted a performance report on support for regional town water infrastructure and found that town water infrastructure has not been effectively supported in regional New South Wales since at least 2014. A Legislative Assembly inquiry into support for drought-affected communities in New South Wales found that access to reliable town water supplies is fundamental to building the resilience of regional and rural communities against significant drought events. Adopting the United Nations definitions of drought can provide us with clear direction, metrics, data and thresholds for assistance, and meteorological, hydrological and socioeconomic drought. Every review for decades has said that direct financial intervention ends up capitalised into land costs and increased transport cost. The focus needs to be on resilience in areas like water supply, grain storage and diverting income into reserves that can be drawn down upon in drought. These initiatives need more investigation and support. Why are we waiting to act until the next drought? For some in this State, the metaphorical winter is no longer coming; it is here. We cannot afford to waste any more time.

#### MAITLAND ELECTORATE SPORTING TEAMS

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (22:10):**

I congratulate the many sporting teams in Maitland on their historic efforts over the past month. Maitland's reputation as a premier sporting city and region has been boosted by the efforts on the field this winter season

across many sports. The Maitland Pickers, our local rugby league team, was established in 1927. Its glory days were in the 1950s and saw the club win three premierships in a row. It has twice won two in a row in the 1930s and in 2010-11. After winning the grand final last year, the team was under pressure to repeat the effort in 2023. Maitland secured its spot in the grand final in a very close match—a hard-fought 24-22 win over South Newcastle early last month. The grand final saw a rematch between the two teams, but this game was a completely different story. The mighty Maitland Pickers dominated in the match and came out victors 46-10. The dream of repeating the run of premierships seen in the 1950s remains alive. Congratulations to the individual players, captain Alex Langbridge and coach Matt Lantry for their on-field efforts. Congratulations also to club president John Gorman and to former president Frank Lawell, who guided them through much of the past decade, and all the club volunteers who contributed to this success.

The Maitland Blacks Rugby Union Club has a proud history spanning back even longer, to 1872. When the Hunter Rugby Competition first took place in 1877, a team called West Maitland competed. Fast-forward nearly 150 years and the club proudly has its home base at Marcellin Park. Maitland last won the premiership 24 years ago and has sadly lost the grand final twice since that time. This year saw the club play last year's premiers, Merewether Carlton, in the grand final. Maitland is the only one town, one team in the Hunter rugby premier competition, and that means the black-and-white fans were out in force to support the side on the day. The Blacks broke their premiership drought with a 33-26 victory. Congratulations to the players, captain Sam Callow and coach Luke Cunningham. Senior club president Pat Howard and all the club volunteers deserve praise.

Maitland Football Club fielded both men's and women's teams in the Northern New South Wales Premier League competitions this season. Both teams secured finals berths, with the men bowing out in the first round of the finals. The National Premier League Women's side, led by captain Sophie Stapleton, made it all the way to the play-off final before finally being eliminated by Newcastle Olympic. Congratulations to club president Ray Watkins and the volunteer committee for all their hard work. The Maitland Mustangs basketball club began in 1957 and the team had a stellar year, with both their senior and youth men's teams winning their way through to the finals. The NBL1 East Men's team made it through to back-to-back grand finals and the Maitland community wholeheartedly supported them, many travelling to Sydney for the final games. The seniors suffered a heartbreaking three-point finals loss, and are already talking up their chances for next year.

Meanwhile, the Youth 1 Men's team went one better under coach Cal Wade, breaking a 22-year championship drought for any Mustangs senior team. I congratulate the team on making Maitland basketball history as 2023 Waratah 1 youth men's State champions. This Saturday the Maitland Saints AFL women's side will be the next local team to compete in a grand final for Maitland. The Maitland Saints are one of the town's youngest sporting teams, established in 2007. However, the code has quickly secured a solid player base, fielding 14 teams this season. Maitland will take on the Cardiff Hawks at Maitland No. 1 Sportsground. I wish them well, and I know that the whole of Maitland will be cheering them on.

Sport is so much more than just a game. Each of those sports and the many others that are played in the Maitland electorate have united our community, and we supported and will continue to support the players' efforts. We have seen recently the popularity and unifying force of sport with our beloved Matildas on the international stage, and I am so proud to see the inspiration that our local teams are drawing from those amazing women. I congratulate all the players, the coaches, the volunteers, the referees, the sponsors, the supporters, and of course the mums and dads who drove many of the players around for their whole childhood so they could achieve that amazing result. Go, Maitland! All the best.

#### MEN'S SHEDS

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (22:15):** Men's sheds throughout Australia celebrated 30 years of sheds this month. The story of the growth of men's sheds is truly remarkable. The first shed was formed 30 years ago in Goolwa, South Australia. From that small beginning, there are now 1,200 sheds operating within Australia. Further, there are 2,500 sheds operating in 12 countries worldwide. There are now more than 50,000 members of sheds throughout Australia. Within the Castle Hill electorate are three truly remarkable sheds—the Dural Men's Shed, the Hills Men's Shed and the Kenthurst Men's Shed.

The Dural Men's Shed was formed in 2011 and has been operating since that time. It was formed by Chris Thomas, who describes himself as the coordinator. The shed is located within the Dural Baptist centre, which provides a lot of services and assistance to the shed. I thank The Centre. The shed has about 130 members—or "shedders", as they are more commonly known. Chris received the NSW Government Community Service Award in 2021 in recognition of his dedication to the Dural Men's Shed. He has continued his dedicated service to the community through his involvement with the shed to this day. I was invited to the Dural Men's Shed to commemorate Men's Shed Week with a barbeque on 7 September 2023. I met and spoke with many shedders who told me stories of how their involvement with the shed had given them a new lease on life. The shedders support

each other and have built a wonderful community environment that supports the wellbeing of the entire community.

In addition to promoting the wellbeing of the shedders, the Dural Men's Shed provides support to the wider community, such as assisting the Castle Hill women's sanctuary. The shed helps with the renovation and maintenance of The Sanctuary women's shelter. Additionally, the shed provides funding to The Sanctuary in times of need. The Dural Men's Shed works with Living Choice Retirement Villages to remove and recycle kitchens, bathrooms and cabinetry. The shed renovates the cabinetry and then provides the cabinets and appliances to families affected by floods and other natural disasters. I observed some of the repurposed kitchens, and they are truly well-constructed kitchens. To date the shed has repurposed a total of 40 kitchens and provided them to families affected by floods. The service and commitment of the shedders to help communities devastated by natural disasters must be commended.

The shed also helps boys from schools to learn carpentry, metalwork and more general life skills. I returned to the shed the following day, on 8 December, where I met and spoke with six boys from Galston High School. The boys attend the shed each week, where they learn how to use tools and learn metalwork and woodwork. But more importantly, the life experience at the shed provides a positive, life-changing experience for each boy. Chris commented to me that he expects some of the boys will learn the skills to "likely run their own business". The second shed in my electorate is the Hills Men's Shed, which was formed in 2009. It is located within the Eric Mobbs Reserve at Castle Hill. It has about 100 members but is always looking for more shedders. Recently the Leader of the Opposition, Mark Speakman, and I visited the shed at Castle Hill, where we spoke with many of the shedders.

The President of the Hills Men's Shed is Graham Metcalfe. Graham recently observed, "The Men's Shed movement has now become one of the most powerful tools in addressing health and wellbeing". Like the Dural Men's Shed, the Hills Men's Shed has an extensive record of local community projects such as street libraries, shelving for schools and bee hotels to encourage environmental care, as well as repairing and refurbishing many items for the community. The Hills Men's Shed also provides assistance to children with special needs. Students from Tallowood, which is a school for children from kindergarten to year 12 with special needs, attend the shed, where they spend time learning skills with the dedicated shedders.

The third shed in my electorate is the Kenthurst Men's Shed located near John Benyon Reserve in the picturesque suburb of Kenthurst. The shed has 27 members, who do a lot of work with the community. I recently observed some amazing woodwork completed by the shedders at the Kenthurst shed. I thank the members of the Kenthurst Men's Shed. The men's shed movement across Australia and worldwide continues to go from strength to strength. The dedication and commitment of shedders in each of the three sheds in my electorate, and worldwide, to the wider community must be recognised and commended. They assist with the mental health and wellbeing of all communities. Like many members in this House, I consider myself fortunate to have men's sheds within my community—although the men's sheds in my electorate are truly the best sheds. I congratulate the men's shed movement.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (22:20):** I thank the member for Castle Hill for thanking the three men's sheds across his community for the work they do within the community and beyond. I also recognise the Australian Men's Shed Association, the overarching organisation with representations across New South Wales that come together to support the men's sheds across the community. Men's sheds play an absolutely crucial role in men's mental health and wellbeing. I also commend the rising presence of women's sheds across communities in New South Wales. They do such a good job for the wellbeing of communities.

#### PITT TOWN BYPASS

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (22:21):** I recognise the significance of the Pitt Town bypass to the people of the Hawkesbury. I particularly note the \$100 million already dedicated for the project by the former Liberal-Nationals Government as part of the \$1 billion commitment from WestInvest funding to upgrade critical roads across the region. Pitt Town locals have begged for this bypass for 60 years and finally the Coalition Government delivered on the funding. The route has already been finalised and all land has been acquired, with the next step to call for tenders. My fear is that the funding will evaporate under Labor. That conjures up in my mind an era reminiscent of the "Bob Carr built nothing" days. For 16 years, there was a pause on infrastructure in New South Wales and a focus on taking and not giving.

Following in Carr's ker footsteps—the word "ker" being an Ancient Greek religious term for "destructive spirit"—Premier Minns could become known as Meio Minns—"meio" being the Greek word for "minus". I note with interest a letter from the Pitt Town Progress Association's president, Chris Bell, dated 16 May 2023, to the Minister for Roads, the Hon. John Graham, in the Legislative Council. In the letter Mr Bell states:

The Pitt Town Bypass is required to avoid 1,000 heavy vehicle movements per day through four intersections through the main part of town, with the obvious impacts on safety and quality of life of residents and travellers. Much of this heavy vehicle traffic (most of them 'truck and dog' combinations) are travelling to and from the sand quarries at Maroota, transporting construction sand to the new Badgerys Creek Airport and other major infrastructure projects throughout the Sydney Area.

Mr Bell also notes that, "The total length of this much-needed piece of infrastructure is approximately one kilometre." That letter was also sent to Susan Templeman, MP, the member for Macquarie; the Hon. Peter Primrose, MLC; Premier Chris Minns and me. On the 31 March 2022 the Hon. Peter Primrose in the other place spoke of the need to have the Pitt Town bypass project funded. In that speech he refers to written question on notice No. 8337 about the Pitt Town bypass, in which Mr Primrose said the Pitt Town Progress Association and local Federal member Susan Templeman have long been campaigning for the bypass. He said:

The fundamental and basic premise of my question was that the community wants to know what is going on. I asked about the current status of the work, when it expected to go to tender, when the construction is expected to start and when the bypass expected is to open. That is basic and fundamental information that a community should have no difficulty finding out without a member in this place having to continually ask questions about it.

He goes on to say that he thinks:

... the project has stalled and will now be part of the review of the major infrastructure projects being undertaken by the State Government. It possibly will not go ahead at all. I sincerely hope that I am wrong about that.

Well, I hope that I am wrong about Premier "Meio" Minns removing the already-funded Pitt Town bypass from his infrastructure pipeline. The previous Coalition Government will go down in history as a government whose priority was creating jobs through creating infrastructure projects. I want to know that the Minns Labor Government will honour the funding of the Pitt Town bypass and not have it scrapped to accommodate the public sector pay rises that were announced recently for teachers—which Labor said would be funded through productivity savings, not by stripping the budget. One of the constant moans that I hear from members of the Labor Government, when challenged about cuts to the funding of Active Kids vouchers, Creative Kids vouchers and First Lap vouchers, is that they reckon those vouchers were not "future funded" by the previous Government. Well, guess what? They are in government, and they can decide whether to continue to support families through those cost-of-living measures or to let them down.

The \$100 million for the Pitt Town bypass is fully funded through WestInvest. The money is sitting in the bank and Hawkesbury folk do not want it robbed. The Pitt Town Progress Association and I requested a meeting with the Minister for Roads, the Hon. John Graham. Disappointingly, I was advised today that the Minister is too busy to meet with me for the next two weeks. Should I be worried? Absolutely. Should Pitt Town locals be worried? Abso-bypass-lutely! I implore the Minns Labor Government to honour the \$100 million already reserved for the Pitt Town bypass, and I hope a meeting with Minister Graham, prior to next week's budget announcement, can be accommodated.

#### STATE BUDGET AND WILLOUGHBY ELECTORATE

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (22:25):** I address a matter of paramount importance: investment in my community of Willoughby. As we await the budget, the warning signs are clear. The Labor Government is not focused on investment for Willoughby and its surrounding areas. It is not focused on easing the cost of living and it is not focused on transparency. I am deeply concerned about essential programs being cut under this Government. I have heard nothing but anger across the community of Willoughby over the cancellation of the Active Kids vouchers. I remain gobsmacked that Labor wants to hit families during a cost-of-living crisis, making it harder for kids and communities to stay active and healthy. It is just one of several programs cut under this Government. Joining Active Kids in the sin bin are the Back to School vouchers, Creative Kids vouchers and First Lap vouchers. On the latter, alarmingly, new research from the Royal Life Saving Society shows rates for Australians who do not know how to swim are rising. In what world does the Premier think cutting funding for teaching kids to swim is a good idea?

I have proudly stated the need to invest in women's sport, ensuring that support and policies allow this to flourish across our State and communities. Our Matildas have inspired a nation and a generation of girls and women that will follow in their footsteps. While the FIFA Women's World Cup ignited a conversation about the state of women's sport in this country, the Premier appeared more concerned with public holidays. The former Coalition Government committed \$11 million to the upgrade of North Sydney Oval, which is home to many teams, including the Sydney Swans AFLW team. It is commitments like that to women's sport that would see a major boost for local sporting clubs and supporters and communities. In addition to promoting and investing in women's sport, the former Coalition Government also committed \$5 million to the Gore Hill Indoor Sports Centre for netball, gymnastics and much more in women's sport and sport more broadly. I am calling on the Government to deliver those commitments. A refusal to do so should earn the Premier a red card.

Investing in roads and infrastructure matters to my community, and I am very concerned over the recent announcement of the Beaches Link cancellation. Whilst my community had a range of views on the project—its design, development and so on—and I had some strong views on those matters as well, I am particularly troubled that the Government has cancelled a project with no alternative, no solution and no action in its place. Indeed, it was the former Coalition Government that proposed an \$8 million process to commence upgrades to the Chatswood bus interchange. Chatswood is a bustling hub of public transport and enterprising community and requires investment to ensure it is future proofed. I will continue to fight for this commitment. It is glaringly obvious that electorates on Sydney's Lower North Shore and northern beaches will be forgotten by Labor. I am calling on the Government to propose a solution, one that consults and takes all community perspectives into account.

Recognising that education standards are a vital cornerstone of our community, I am calling for substantial upgrades to Cammeray Public School. It needs upgrades to its facilities to make them not just fit for purpose but world class, so our kids continue to flourish into the future. Its playgrounds are tired and aging, demountable classrooms are no substitute for permanent learning spaces and its hall is not fit for purpose. In recent years, record investment was made into local public schools. New schools were built at Anzac Park and Cammeraygal and all local schools received upgrades. But it is not time to let up, and this State Government must continue to invest in our future. I am calling on this Government to commit to significant investments in its budget to upgrade Cammeray Public School and to keep the commitment to two new schools across Willoughby.

Community grants play an important role supporting people in communities. They are not mere transfers of moneys but can be empowering for local communities, to nurture innovation and foster resilience. Grants, when well delivered, are investments in our future. I am concerned about how Labor's election fund grants were selected in Willoughby. The Labor candidate for Willoughby in the 2023 election seemingly chose three recipient organisations with little or no oversight. I am not aware of any community-based process in connection with it. Community members have raised a potential conflict of interest in respect of it. No-one locally seems to know the process or governance around it. I am calling for transparency on how, why and by whom these were selected. We are owed that at a minimum. The Community Building Partnership program was one of many grant programs that delivered investments and improvements in Willoughby over many years. It is a well-regarded, proper, fair and transparent grassroots program, and it should continue. I want the Government to continue the investments across Willoughby.

#### ETTALONG CHANNEL

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (22:31):** As a local resident and avid sailor, I know all too well how important the operation of the Ettalong Channel is to our Central Coast community. Residents rely on the channel for public transport to go to work and to school, and to see family and friends. It is used for recreational boating along the pristine waterways of the Ettalong Channel, and for livelihoods, accessing the bountiful waterways of the Brisbane Water. There is also an important tourist component. Small businesses in Ettalong have been suffering while the ferry is out of action. Since I was elected in 2017, I have been fighting for a long-term plan to properly dredge the channel. Under the previous Government, we saw a lack of leadership and blame placed on the council with no real solutions. That Government ignored the calls of the Central Coast community, which wished for a long-term, proactive solution to this ongoing problem.

This is not the first time the ferry service has been cancelled. In 2018 and 2019 the lack of dredging caused the cancellation of the ferry. In 2021 the Liberal Government announced that it would take responsibility for maintaining the Ettalong Channel, but sadly no effective dredging program has been put in place and nothing has been implemented. We have been left to clean up the mess, and it is time to stop ignoring this issue. Under the proactive guidance of the Minister for Transport, this Government is working hard to get the Ettalong Channel up and functional for our community once again. Not repeating the reactive mistakes that we have inherited from previous Government, the current Minister for Transport has directed Transport for NSW to investigate a 10-year plan to ensure that an effective plan is in place for future dredging programs. This plan will ensure that all necessary assessments and approvals are in place for future dredging campaigns to allow for dredging to occur in a fast manner without significant delay and protracted timelines. The plan will ensure that the sand is deposited in the essential locations that need it, where there is erosion.

Locals are all too aware that this has been an ongoing issue, with blame shifting resulting in issues for the community. One of those community groups is our local sailing club, which regularly has races with sailing clubs in the Pittwater. The Pittwater clubs come into the Brisbane Water to race but, unfortunately, when the channel is too shallow the yachts cannot get through. I am working closely with the Minister to improve sustainable access to the Ettalong Channel, advocating for our local community who have been ignored for too long. I thank the Minister for her swift action in organising interim measures while dredging is underway. Despite the need over many years, this is the first time that there has been a free shuttle between Ettalong and Patonga wharves, with a

further ferry shuttle service for Wagstaffe passengers to meet the shuttle bus at Ettalong Wharf. While I acknowledge that this is a timely process compared with the original ferry service, I am glad to be part of a government that provides effective alternatives to assist the community during this time.

Under the former Government, my calls for interim measures were met with absolute silence and no action. The environmental approval process and tender process took some time because nothing was put in place by the previous Government. But when those things were completed, we saw the arrival of a fabulous dredge from the Gold Coast called *Faucon*—the *Faucon* had landed. It started dredging at the point at Ettalong, which was great. But, unfortunately, there were some problems with the bow of the ship and *Faucon* suffered some damage. The *Faucon* dredge had to go back up to the Gold Coast, and we awaited the arrival of her sister ship, *Port Frederick*, which is a trailing suction dredge that will continue dredging the channel prior to the placement of sand on Ettalong Shoals.

*Port Frederick* will be removing 30,000 cubic metres of sand to create a 30-metre-wide channel both inside and on the ocean side of Half Tide Rocks that can accommodate vessels with a 2.5-metre draft. The previous work of *Faucon* can already be seen, with the channel effectively widened prior to *Port Frederick's* arrival. I thank Minister Haylen and her fabulous team for their continued work to restore access to the Ettalong Channel. I look forward to progressing the 10-year dredging plan for our community. I thank everyone involved in the dredging process, in maritime and across our community for their patience until this occurs.

#### *Bills*

### **SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK AUTHORITY AMENDMENT (HILL ROAD UPGRADE) BILL 2023**

#### **First Reading**

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later time.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 22:36 until  
Wednesday 13 September 2023 at 10:00.**

#### *Written Community Recognition Statements*

**According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.**

### **WOLLONDILLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I rise today to commend the remarkable showcase at the Wollondilly Public Schools Performing Arts Festival, an event steeped in local tradition and this year graciously hosted by Camden High School. A medley of schools - Picton, Tahmoor, the Oaks, Wilton, Bargo, Thirlmere, Buxton, Yanderra, Mt Hunter, Douglas Park, and Camden, each came together to make the event a resounding success. I want to highlight the Picton High School Concert Band, whose musical prowess carried us through the evening without missing a beat. Equally vital was the Picton High Technical crew, ensuring a seamless progression of performances. Behind every great show is a team of dedicated individuals, and it's only fitting that we acknowledge the committee members and teachers, whose tireless work behind the scenes made this possible. I had the privilege of witnessing the event firsthand, an unforgettable spectacle of talent and community spirit. A heartfelt thank you to all involved in the festival. The dedication, talent, and unity displayed was a testament to the incredible sense of community in Wollondilly. A clear testament to our shared dedication to the arts and education.

### **ROBERT OATLEY WINE DINNER**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I'd like to acknowledge the upcoming Robert Oatley Wine Dinner at the Tahmoor Inn on 10th August. This event represents the dedication of the Tahmoor Inn to bring unique and enjoyable experiences to the local community. Darren Jahn, a wine educator with firsthand experience from the Robert Oatley Wine since its inception, will guide attendees through the Signature Series of wines, coupled with fascinating stories of the winery's growth. I also want to recognise Tahmoor Inn's General Manager, Sarah Hanania, and Executive Chef, Thuong Dang, who have brought their significant experience in hospitality to provide an exceptional level of service. Thuong, with over 20 years in the food industry, has notably elevated the food quality at the Inn, evident from successful past events like the Mother's Day lunch and Christmas in July festivities. By hosting these community events, the Tahmoor Inn is not only offering entertainment but also contributing to the community's social fabric. Their effort to host such unique and enriching events is

commendable. This upcoming event is a perfect example of local businesses contributing positively to our community, and I encourage everyone to support such initiatives.

#### COMEDY FOR A CAUSE WOLLONDILLY

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I want to share with you all the fantastic time we had at the Comedy for a Cause event in support of the Wollondilly AFL's Tackle Your Feelings round and Charity night. It was an evening filled with laughter and positivity, focusing on maintaining mental wellness and community connections within our sporting clubs. Earlier in the week, the AFL coaches and captains from our community took part in the Sydney AFL's mental health training program. This valuable program, delivered by local psychologists, provided tools to help participants understand, recognise, and respond to signs of mental ill-health. The excitement continued as the Wollondilly Knights Senior AFL Club faced off against the Inner West Magpies AFL. Our Knights emerged victorious with an impressive 91-10 triumph, showing their strength and determination. A huge thank you to everyone involved for making this evening such a success, and for supporting such a crucial cause. Events like these bring our community together and reinforce the importance of mental wellness.

#### JONATHAN MOSLEY

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I was delighted to attend the recent Sutherland Shire Police Area Command Medal and Awards Ceremony and see Cronulla's Jonathan ('Jono') Mosley awarded the Commander's Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of his actions in locating a missing elderly person in the Royal National Park. On 13 May 2022, a man suffering from dementia and other health issues went missing from aged care at Heathcote and could not be located after an extensive two day land and air search. Jono ventured into the Royal National Park to help the search and heard a mumbled reply as he walked along bush tracks calling out the man's name. Jono's actions in locating the elderly man contributed to him being located alive and well. Separately, Jono has also been acknowledged by Lifeline as its top fundraiser in The Push-Up Challenge this year. Jono raised \$23,000 to help fund Lifeline's great work providing crisis support and suicide prevention services. I honour Jono for his selfless act that led to the rescue of a vulnerable person and congratulate him on his impressive push-up and fundraising efforts for Lifeline.

#### GRAHAM ETHELL - SHIRE WOODWORKING CLUB

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Graham Ethell who has recently retired as secretary of the Shire Woodworking Club, after 13 years of service. Graham remains on the club's board as a committee member. Graham joined the club in December 2003. He became a committee member in 2004 and was the club secretary from 2005 until recently. The Lilli Pilli-based Shire Woodworking Club is devoted to developing members skills in fine woodworking and giving back to the community. Members undertake their own self-directed projects, helping each other with tips and advice. Along with member's own projects the Club make hundreds and hundreds of toys and other items for several charities. Graham says that he particularly loves the community involvement associated with the club and their services to the Sydney Children's Hospital and Shire organisations.

#### GYMEA ANGLICAN SPRING FAIR

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—On 9 September I opened the GyMEA Anglican Spring Fair. GyMEA Anglican Church (now led by Rector Rev David Fell and Assistant Minister Rev Craig Stalder) has been running fetes annually for around 60 years. During the first five to ten years of fetes, the money went to paying off the facilities and church building itself. Now the fair is a way of raising funds for local and overseas mission. Spring Fair Convenor Stephen Leitch led a team of around 30 volunteers who worked hard on set up and running stalls. People from the church and broader community donate items for the stalls including toys and games, garden, cakes and jams, books, and trash and treasure, as well as staffing the barbeque and new coffee cart. Entertainment included dance by Genesis Performing Arts Sutherland, and music from the church band and the St George/Sutherland Scottish Pipe Band. GyMEA Anglican Church's other community activities include annual Christmas carols and the community food pantry held on the first and third Thursday of every month.

#### ST JOHN XXIII – SAMOAN CULTURAL IMMERSION

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—I rise to commend the remarkable students of St John XXIII Catholic College in Stanhope Gardens for their recent cultural immersion trip to Samoa. This endeavour further exemplifies the importance of educational opportunities that extend beyond the confines of the classroom. Though understandably anxious, these students embraced the challenge of experiencing a completely different culture and immersed themselves in it. Through this journey, they delved into Samoan customs and traditions, gaining invaluable insights into a culture very different to the one they know. The memories forged during their time in Samoa will surely be cherished for a lifetime, reminding us that some of the most enriching experiences are beyond

the security of our daily lives. This cultural immersion program serves as a testament to the importance of experiential learning and justifies fostering a global perspective among our youth. I applaud the dedication of students who dared to explore new horizons, the educators who made this transformative journey possible and the hosts who facilitated this profound cultural immersion. May their experiences inspire and motivate them to explore the world beyond our local environment.

#### **ROUSE HILL ANGLICAN COLLEGE – GATEWAY 8 ACADEMIC COMPETITION**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—I congratulate students from Rouse Hill Anglican College who recently participated in the annual GATEway 8 Academic Competition at Macarthur Anglican School. The GATEway 8 Academic Competition is a platform where students from Years 5 and 6 showcase their prowess in various disciplines, including Maths, English, Science, Humanities, Engineering, and Creative Arts. One particularly impressive challenge involved reimagining the classic song "The Teddy-Bear's Picnic" as a poem addressing deforestation while maintaining the original rhythm and rhyme—a task that requires creativity and a heart for the environment! This competition is a perfect portrait of the dedication and talent of our local young minds and I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Max V, Israel S, Vihaan M, Zahli P, Luke P, Amelia V, Sophie C and Zoe C for their remarkable performances. Initiatives like the GATEway 8 Academic Competition encourage and celebrate academic excellence among our youth and, after learning about the performance of RHAC's team and others, it's clear the future is in safe hands. Once again, congratulations to our talented students for their remarkable achievements!

#### **NORWEST CHRISTIAN COLLEGE BOOK WEEK**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Late last month, I learned of a brilliant Book Week initiative undertaken by Norwest Christian College. Book week is often synonymous with parades where children dress up as their favourite characters from their favourite books. However, Norwest Christian College took the opportunity to spend time with special needs students from South Creek School. As part of their weekly service program, students from the Norwest Christian College visit their peers from South Creek School and read to them. I commend the Norwest Christian College students for exhibiting an exemplary display of compassion and thoughtfulness. Reading is vital to our children's learning and overall development. Children develop creativity, empathy, and a broader world view through reading. It is the cornerstone of a child's growth and education. Seeing the Norwest students sharing the value of reading to their special needs peers makes me immensely proud. I commend Norwest Christian College and their collaboration with South Creek School, may you continue the great work.

#### **WELFARE RIGHTS CENTRE 40 YEARS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney)**—On behalf of the Sydney electorate, I congratulate the Welfare Rights Centre on 40 years of service to the community. Since 1983, the Welfare Rights Centre has provided important help for vulnerable people to access vital income support and challenge unfair Centrelink decisions. Throughout this time, the Welfare Rights Centre has offered free legal information and representation to thousands of people adversely affected by Centrelink decisions each year. The Welfare Rights Centre is the lead social security law and policy agency in NSW, championing law and policy reform to make the Australian social security system fairer and more accountable. The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme highlighted the importance of being able to dispute unfair Centrelink debt and reverse discriminatory policy decisions. I regularly refer people in the Sydney electorate to the Welfare Rights Centre and value the dedication of the board, staff and volunteers who continue to help disadvantaged and marginalised people. I thank the Welfare Rights Centre for four decades and trust you will continue to be there for people in need of this basic human right.

#### **RUN FOR THE HILLS, CHARITY FUN RUN**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The greatest community fun run, 'Run for the Hills' was held over the weekend. The Run for the Hill Charity Fun Run, formerly known as the Cross-Country Challenge, was held at the scenic and historic Bella Vista Farm. There were three courses offered, the 11.1 km expert, the 7.4 km intermediate and the 3.7 km family fun run. I joined the community and completed the 7.4-kilometre course. The event would not have been possible without the commitment and service of the Castle Hill Rotary Club. I recognise and commend the long-standing service to the community of the Run for the Hills Committee Chair, Mike Blair. I also give special recognition to committee members Raymond Danam and Terry O'Mara. I also recognise the Deputy Mayor of The Hills Shire Council Mitchell Blue who completed the 7.4 course. The event raises much needed funds for three great charities, namely the Positive Vibes Foundation, Youth Insearch, and Youth off the Streets. This year the event raised a total of approximately \$35,000.00. After expenses approximately \$30,000.00 will be delivered to the charities. Well done to everyone who participated this year.



#### HILLS COMMUNITY KINDERGARTEN, 50TH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The Hills Community Kindergarten has turned 50 years of age. Half a century of caring for our children is an important milestone and we need to stop and take a moment to reflect on the number of children who over the years have attended the kindergarten. Today there are well over 2,000 children who have attended the kindergarten. In 1969 the Torrs Street Kindergarten commenced. It was clear that a new kindergarten was required and in 1973 the Hills Community Kindergarten was opened. The kindergarten was established by the community, maintained, and managed the community. The birthday party was held in A.H. Whaling Memorial Reserve on Sunday, 10 September 2023. I attended the birthday party in the afternoon, and I was able to watch parents and children enjoying the party. The party included great family attractions including pony rides, teacup ride, plaster painting, jumping castle, giant slide, market stalls and some great food stalls. I especially recognise and commend the organising Committee and in particular Kate Krahe and Allison McCartney for outstanding service to the Hills Community Kindergarten. Funds raised will be used to maintain the kindergarten. Thank you to the Hills Community Kindergarten family.

#### KENTHURST STREET PARADE AND FAIR

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The Hills Shire's annual Orange Blossom Festival is held in September each year. The festival originally began many years ago as a parade through the main street of Castle Hill and culminating in a fair in Arthur Whiting Park. The first Orange Blossom Festival was held from 12 – 21 September 1969 and it now an annual springtime event. The festival is now a wonderful month-long festival. The festival includes a Gala Ball, photography and art competition, garden competitions, street parades and much more. On Sunday, 10 September 2023 Kenthurst Rotary Club organised a wonderful day for the entire community. The day included a street parade of vintage cars, RFS and SES vehicles, and much more. It was wonderful to see so many smiling and happy children waving and cheering as the street parade travelled down Kenthurst Road to John Benyon Reserve. The fair was a wonderful family day which included rides, stalls, displays, food trucks, face painting, fresh orange juice and the Rotary BBQ. The Kenthurst community had a wonderful day at John Benyon Park. Thank you very much to Chris Gaskin, Samantha Ellis, Paul Rapp and to the entire Kenthurst Rotary Club.

#### DEAGAN ROONEY

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Deagan Rooney, from Flinders Public School, for representing his school at the South Australia & Regional NSW Interschools Snowsport Championships at Falls Creek from 19 to 21 July 2023. The Interschool Snowsport Championships provide an opportunity for Australian school students of all ages to experience Snowsport and to participate at either a recreational or competitive level. Students from Kindergarten to Year 12, compete for their school as part of a team or an individual in any of our nine discipline events. Thousands of students have been introduced to competitive ski and snowboard competitions through the Interschools Championships, establishing a life-long love for the sport. Deagan competed in Giant Slalom and Snowboard Cross and placed 3rd and 4th respectively in each discipline. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Deagan and wish him well for his future sporting endeavours.

#### NICOLE BOTES

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Nicole Botes, who serves as a school learning support officer at Koonawarra Public School, for her remarkable dedication to teaching. Nicole is cherished within the school community, and her presence illuminates every classroom with her fervour and enthusiasm for teaching. Throughout her time at Koonawarra Public School, Nicole has diligently worked to provide support for kindergarten students in developing their foundational knowledge in literacy and numeracy. With her 16 years of experience working in preschools, the kindergarten environment is ideally suited for Nicole to excel. Both children and staff members at Koonawarra Public School consistently express admiration for Nicole, and I strongly believe it is essential for the Parliament and the Shellharbour electorate to acknowledge her contributions. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I take great pride in congratulating Nicole for her outstanding contributions to Koonawarra Public School.

#### XAVIER WILSON

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Xavier Wilson, from Shell Cove Public School, competing recently at the 2023 School Sport Australia Cross Country Championships in the ACT. Xavier secured not just one, but three gold medals in the 11 years Para Boys 2km, 11 years Boys Para Team Event and 10-12yrs Boys Para 4 x 1km Relay. Xavier's determination and hard work paid off as he defended his title and clinched the title of 11 years Para Boys National Cross Country Champion for the second year in a row. Xavier completed the 2-kilometre course at the famous Robert De Castello Running Track in Stromlo Forest

Park, ACT, showing incredible strength and speed. Xavier joined forces with his awesome teammates Kye, Caleb, and Jeremiah to win the State Team Event. Team NSW dominated, bringing home the Cross-Country Relay Trophy and the Aggregate Trophy. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I congratulate Xavier on his outstanding results and wish him all the best for his future running endeavours.

#### **ALBURY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT RYLEE STEELE SELECTED TO REPRESENT FOOTBALL NSW IN JAPAN**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I extend my congratulations to Albury High School Student Rylee Steele who has been selected to represent Football NSW in a tournament in Hiroshima, Japan this month (August). Rylee will be competing with the under-15 national team over an eight-day program. She was invited by Andrew Fearnley, manager of Football NSW regional development to participate in the competition. Rylee plays midfield for the Albury Hotspurs and trains vigorously during the week. She is supported by the Football NSW talent support program [TSP] and has recently joined the Murray United's female development program. Well done Rylee as you embark on this amazing journey, supported by great coaches and family - paving the way of perhaps one day playing in the A-League or in international competition.

#### **YACHTING YOUNGSTERS ABOUT TO TRAVEL TO CHINA FOR COMPETITION**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to two talented students from the Albury Wodonga Yacht Club who have been selected to compete in a Yachting competition in China. Connor Inglis, 13 from Walla's St Paul's College and Stirling Marshall, 11 from Table Top Public School competed in the Qingdao International Optimist Training Camp and Regatta in August. Both students have a passion for sailing, and this was an opportunity to compete against other sailors from around the world. Connor and Stirling, this is such wonderful learning experience, as you endeavour to compete internationally. I wish you all the very best of success and know you will have benefited a lot from this training camp and regatta.

#### **SILVER MEDALLIST XYLAVENE BEALE**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Xylavene Beale of Albury who was awarded a silver medal in the women's shot put at this year's Commonwealth Youth Games held in Trinidad & Tobago off the northern edge of the South American mainland. Xylavene, who is 17 years of age and a year 12 student at The Scots School Albury, has demonstrated unwavering commitment to both her studies and her passion for sport. Her ability to balance her responsibilities of year 12 studies whilst participating in competitive sports overseas is truly commendable. Xylavene's previous accomplishments include the Victorian under-18 state record in shot put with an impressive throw of 16.78 metres, earning her recognition last April as a national champion. A bronze in the open-age women's Australian Championships, under-17 all schools national titles in shot put and discus, and under 20 national silver shot put. Xylavene, your sporting journey has been a remarkable learning opportunity for you, while representing Albury internationally. I also acknowledge the work of your mentor Peter Schneider and your supportive family. I wish you all the best as you pursue your studies and exams along with your ambitions as an athlete.

#### **CROMEHRST SCHOOL BUNNINGS BBQ AND CAKE STALL**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Saturday, 2nd of September 2023 I was proud to visit Bunnings Chatswood to support the Cromehurst School at their BBQ and cake stall fundraiser. I am advised the BBQ and cake stall raised over \$10,000 – which is not surprising given how busy the fundraiser was. There was amazing energy and enthusiasm. Thank you to all the North Shore residents who bought sausage sandwiches, drinks and cakes. Cromehurst School in Lindfield is a wonderful place and community, made up of 60 students with a moderate to severe range of intellectual disability. The school and community assist every single student to reach their full potential, and the work they do is inspiring. I am pleased to acknowledge relieving Principal Melinda Ritsinas and the president of the school P&C Dusanka Matic for their ongoing work, passion and commitment. I look forward to visiting the school over the months and years ahead.

#### **STREETWORK AUSTRALIA**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Friday, 1st of September 2023, I met with the Chief Executive Officer of StreetWork Australia Helen Banu to discuss the work they do to support Northern Sydney's most vulnerable and at-risk youth to forge new paths and change their lives for the better. StreetWork undertakes important work, particularly on the frontline, to alleviate the issues impacting the Davidson's community's youth. The main program of work is the StreetWork Mentoring Program that aims to build resilience, confidence and life skills to empower young people. It is good to see that StreetWork seeks to break cycles and empower and connect young people with their goals. I encourage everyone in our community to attend their upcoming annual fundraiser, Glam and Grunge, on Friday 20 October 2023. I acknowledge all the StreetWork caseworkers and

volunteers and the CEO Helen Banu for meeting with me. I look forward to working further with StreetWork to ensure one's past isn't their future.

#### KU-RING-GAI COMMUNITY SHED

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Tuesday, 29th of August 2023 I joined the Ku-ring-gai Community Workshop, also known as the 'The Shed', to hear from members about their resources and community work they undertake. Our community has placed this shed at the heart of our volunteering community. Shed members spoke to me about the recent installation of a two air conditioners in the Lunchroom and Malcolm Bailey room, purchased with a grant from the former New South Wales Liberal Government and supported by my Hon. Jonathan O'Dea. Shed Members tell me the air conditioners have been useful in winter allowing members to use the Shed despite colder temperatures, and I am sure the air-conditioners will be useful throughout the upcoming summer. They also spoke to me about the importance of friendship the shed provides, and that as a community we need to come together to support each other's mental health. I acknowledge all members who use the Shed and thank the Shed President Brian Killin for the invitation. I look forward to the engagement I will have with the Shed over the next four years.

#### COBHAM YOUTH JUSTICE TRADE CENTRE

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)**—It was my pleasure to help unveil a state-of-the-art trade centre in Werrington last week. The trade centre inside Cobham Youth Justice Centre will support young people in custody by providing the skills needed to re-enter into the community. Currently, the centre runs programs including motor vehicle maintenance, interviewing skills, resume and cover letter writing and much more that will provide these young people with valuable new skills. Furthermore, future classes are being planned to incorporate trade-based skills such as bricklaying and painting. It is of vital importance that we focus on preparing individuals for reintegration back into the community. This is something that the Cobham Youth Justice Centre will focus on and make of priority in their new trade centre. Thank you to the staff at Cobham Youth Justice Centre, who work with these young individuals to better themselves and make it easier for them to reintegrate into the community.

#### ST MARYS SPRING FESTIVAL

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)**—On 2 September, my local community came together at the St Marys Spring Festival to showcase local businesses and performers. It was great to hear from our community about the issues that are most important to them and catch up with small business owners within my local area. The festival had a great turnout with thousands of people in attendance from all over Penrith and beyond. It was a spectacular event with many stalls, performances from local dance and singing groups and a fantastic parade to truly bring the community together. I would like to highlight the hard work of Penrith City Council, stall holders and local community groups that made this day the success it was. It is always great to spend time with the local community and come together to celebrate and showcase our achievements.

#### THE OPEN KITCHEN

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)**—Food for the soul can be just as important as nourishment for the body and I would like to recognise the efforts of an amazing team of volunteers who are providing the Lake Macquarie community with both. Twice a month, The Open Kitchen team led by its founders Kylie Stacey, Bruna Tawake and Michelle Villis and supported by volunteers Garry Duncan, Brenton Stacey, Gina Lemke, Lazio Crescenti and Allan Dalton, open the doors to Morisset Uniting Church to those in need of a hot meal and a safe space to share it in. The Open Kitchen's founders say the idea for the service was born out of their desire to do something meaningful in the community to help improve lives, and to use their love of food and connecting with people to do it. The team feeds anywhere between 40 to 80 people each night they are open and unlike many other organisations they don't just feed the homeless or those in a dire financial situation, they also invite people who are lonely or who would like emotional support as well as dinner. I thank The Open Kitchen for their wonderful care of our vulnerable community members.

#### FRANCES ROYSTON

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the work of lifelong volunteer, Ms Frances Royston. Ms Royston has been selflessly volunteering her time and energy at Clever Care Now for a number of years. Clever Care NOW is a not-for-profit organisation that provides home nursing, health and patient transport services to the community of St George. The organisation's Day Tripper program helps aged, frail or socially isolated people in our community, connect with others. Ms Royston primarily

volunteers her time, supporting patients in palliative care. As a qualified, compassionate, and highly skilled nurse, Frances goes above and beyond to ensure that patients' needs are met with dignity and understanding. She is loved by all her patients and highly regarded as an outstanding nurse who consistently goes above and beyond to make sure they feel loved and supported. At such a difficult time, Frances' expertise, and positive attitude acts as a ray of sunshine for her patients, even prolonging their life immeasurably. I want to sincerely thank Ms Royston and express my deepest appreciation for the wonderful work she does caring for our local community.

#### **JOHN RODGER**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the work of Connells Point resident, Mr John Rodger. Mr Rodger is currently the Deputy Commander of the Kogarah Unit of the NSW State Emergency Service and has been giving up his time and energy to help our local community for a number of years. The NSW State Emergency Service is designed to serve the communities of NSW as a combat agency for flood, storm and bushfire response. Mr Rodger has been deployed for emergency flood response in places like Lismore, Broken Hill and Hawkesbury and worked during the bushfires in places like Glen Innes, South Coast and Cooma. John is a volunteer with the SES Operational Support Unit which focuses on transporting life-saving equipment around the State during major incidents and natural disasters. The NSW SES organisation would not be able to run so successfully and efficiently without the dedication and commitment of volunteers such as Mr Rodger. I want to sincerely thank Mr Rodger and his team of amazing volunteers at the NSW SES agency for the life-saving work they do around our local community and abroad.

#### **LESLEY SANDILANT**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I wish to recognise and acknowledge the tireless work of lifetime volunteer, Mrs Lesley Sandilant. Ms Sandilant has been selflessly volunteering her time and effort for St George Meals on Wheels for over 27 years. St George Meals on Wheels is a community-based organisation focused on supporting the St George area by delivering fresh meals to the most vulnerable members of our community. As the longest serving volunteer, Ms Sandilant remembers when the organisation was operating from a tiny cottage in Hurstville, serving the local government area. Lesley has been serving as President of the organisation since 2016, a role she has excelled at. Through her support, leadership and encouragement, Meals on Wheels has grown exponentially and now services the communities of three local government areas. Remarkably, Ms Sandilant is always there, regardless of what time or day, she is the first on site to help resolve an issue. I would like to thank Ms Sandilant and express my deepest appreciation for the wonderful work she does to support St George Meals on Wheels and more importantly for ensuring our local community is properly fed.

#### **ANDREW PURCELL**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—Andrew Purcell is a local hero in the electorate of Vaucluse. Andrew served in the Army in the late 1950s and served in the Queensland Police Service from 24th of June 1959 until he was medically discharged on the 12th of July of 1974. Andrew was injured in the line of journey when a drunk driver collided with his police vehicle. His injuries have led to a lifetime of medical complications. Unfortunately, despite meeting the qualifying criteria of having served 15 years in the police service, because he was medically discharged prior to the 14th of February 1975, he is ineligible to receive a National Police Service Medal. Andrew truly is a great Australian. He is a humble man who has led a life of service to his community. He had not lived his life in expectation of recognition, but out of a desire to do good. I thank Andrew for his service to our community. I know your wife Janice and your children must be incredibly proud of all you have received. The people of Vaucluse are lucky to have you in our community.

#### **UNIVERSAL LIGHTING EDGECLIFF**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—Universal Lighting Edgecliff is a business in my electorate of Vaucluse that is sadly closing its doors after forty five years of service to our community. I acknowledge Eddie Isaack who has been running Universal Lighting Edgecliff for decades, and thank him for his work as a small business owner. Recently I had the opportunity to catch up with Eddie on the 5th of August 2023, and hear some of the stories of his time at Universal Lighting Edgecliff. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our community and it is always fantastic to see the shops and businesses in the Vaucluse electorate that do incredible work.

#### **VALE WARREN VAN KALKER**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—I rise to recognise the life of Warren Van Kalker, a Sydney football legend and south-west Sydney local who recently passed. Born in Holland, Warren, or Wazza as he was known, migrated to Australia at the age of two with his parents. A natural sportsman, Warren took an interest in every sport he could play and captained all his school's sports teams. His sporting career really began however after he started playing soccer at age 7, before coming into his own playing rugby union, which he later played for his school and state. After his family moved to South Australia, Warren became attracted to AFL,

which he developed a love for and played for the rest of his life. Returning to NSW in 1969, he was promoted to the Liverpool Eagles first grade team and played for NSW in the early 1970s and Southern Districts, playing over 1000 'A' grade games. Warren was always focused on the improvement of young players and in encouraging loyalty. He is survived by his wife, Sue, daughter, Katy, and his grandchildren. My sincere condolences to all that loved him, I know he made Liverpool a better place.

#### **WESTWORDS LIVING STORIES WRITING PRICE**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Stories capture the diversity of individuals and help illustrate our collective experiences. This is especially the case in Western Sydney, where stories are a connecting point for the varied cultures and life experiences within our community. I recognise the contribution of WestWords, who enable the literary pursuits of Western Sydney's emerging writers. WestWords began 15 years ago as a project of Blacktown Council, started by local writers who wanted to better tell the stories of our region. Since then, WestWords has developed 63 partnerships with various institutions and runs nearly 150 activities annually. The 2022 Living Stories Western Sydney writing competition encouraged young western Sydney writers to respond to a theme, Things Unsaid, with a unique literary piece. All 128 winning entries to the competition were showcased in the anthology book, Living Stories 2022 Things Unsaid. The winning entries from the Liverpool LGA were submitted by Liahna Gray, Nabanya Sri Krishnan, Lauren Pham and Lauren Maher. Furthermore, Samuel Kotevski, Anesuishe Masakura and Joanne Macias were highly commended for their entries. I congratulate WestWords and the budding writers of Liverpool on the success of the competition at the recent 2023 ZEST awards.

#### **SERBIAN FOLKLORIC FESTIVAL**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—The Serbian community has long been a cherished and integral part of South West Sydney's cultural tapestry. The link between Serbia and Australia goes back over 100 years, with Australian doctors and nurses treating wounded Serbian soldiers and fighting a typhus epidemic before the ANZACs landed in Gallipoli. The Serbian community in South West Sydney has hugely grown in the last 50 years however, so it was a delight to attend the opening gala night of the Serbian Folkloric Festival at Bonnyrigg Sports Club. The Serbian Folkloric Festival is a yearly, two-day celebration established with the vision to "celebrate and preserve Serbian folkloric heritage and culture in Australia". The Festival was a remarkable opportunity to experience the beauty of Serbian culture, including its vibrant traditions, folk dances, and cuisine. The accompanying presentations, performances and videos aptly portrayed Serbia's rich history and charm for the guests and community members in attendance. I recognise the efforts of Bonnyrigg Sports Club, including President Cedomir Jesic, and the many Serbian community leaders who helped organise the evening. I also acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues who joined me, as a sign of the esteem within which the community is held.

#### **PLATINUM WEDDING ANNIVERSARY – KEN AND RUBY STUBBS**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I would like to congratulate Tumut residents Mr and Mrs Ken and Ruby Stubbs for their 70th wedding anniversary which they celebrated on the 15th of June 2023. Ken and Ruby were known to each other in high school, but their first date came later at the movies at a local icon and community asset, the Montreal Theatre in Tumut. Four years later they were married at the All-Soul's Anglican Church in Leichardt on the 15th of June 1953. The Stubbs raised two daughters, Lorraine, who now lives in Darwin, and Janet, who lives at Dalton near Yass and there are now grandchildren and great-grandchildren. A platinum anniversary is a significant milestone and is a testament to the commitment and the love that they have for one another. Mr and Mrs Stubbs said to the Tumut Adelong Times that the secret to staying married is to be tolerant of each other and try to be good and understanding. Best wishes to Ken and Ruby; I trust they celebrated with their friends, family and community. May there be many more celebrations to come!

#### **GREENACRE EAGLES FOOTBALL CLUB 14.1 BOYS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On Saturday 26th August, the Greenacre Eagles Football Club 14/1 boys played their 2023 Grand Final game at Padstow Park. I want to congratulate these young boys on their remarkable grand-final victory. It is such an incredible and well-deserved achievement. Greenacre Eagles FC is a family-orientated soccer club located at Allum Park, in Greenacre. It is amazing to see such devotion, motivation, and supportive sporting spirit from these young boys, throughout the soccer season to make it to the 2023 grand final. Their commitment to excellence, training, and pursuit of improvement has been instrumental in securing this grand final win. It is a fantastic achievement from all players in the Greenacre Eagles FC 14/1 boys and it is evident that every member of the team has given their all to achieve this win. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the dedicated support team, the coach, Mohamed Ghamraoui, the manager, Noha Ghamraoui, and the volunteers who have provided invaluable guidance, resources, and encouragement throughout

the soccer season to support these boys to become the 2023 champions. Once again, congratulations to the u/14 boys on this incredible grand final win.

#### **VIVIAN DUONG NSW MINISTER'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COMMUNITY LANGUAGES SCHOOLS**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On the 4 September 2023, Vivian Duong from Bankstown Girls High School was awarded the NSW Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement, Community Languages Schools. I would like to offer my congratulations to Vivian for this incredible achievement. Every year up to 10 students from community languages schools are recognised for their hard work and excellence through the Minister's Awards for Excellence in Student Achievement. This year Vivian Duong was one of the 10 students recognised for her hard work and dedication. The event was held at the UNSW Sir John Clancy Auditorium and was attended by over 800 people with the awards celebrating the achievement of over 100 students from many language backgrounds. Bankstown Girls High School has proudly hosted the Vietnamese Parents and Citizens Association as part of the Community Language Schools program for many years. Learning another language connects young Australians to the language, heritage, and culture of their community. Congratulations to Vivian Duong for this phenomenal achievement and for being an inspiring representation of Bankstown Girls High School as well as the Vietnamese community and her family.

#### **CENTRAL SYDNEY WOLVES ALL LADIES SQUAD**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On the 27 August, the Central Sydney Wolves All Ladies Squad played in the 2023 Grand Final at Padstow Park. I would like to congratulate the Central Wolves All Ladies Squad on being crowned the 2023 grand final champions after a hard-fought grand final match. The talented Wolvettes put in the hard work to secure a victory for their team. I would like to acknowledge Ola El-Zahab, Bill Karafotias and Osmamah Alameddine for the time and dedication that they have put into strengthening their team. Being the President of the Central Sydney Wolves has allowed Ola to connect with the community together through sport. With team sports come friends and with friends, you can overcome anything. Even the most personal battles can be made a lot easier with the help of those around us. Listening to each other, solid support, or even banter will allow a team connection to form. Looking at the amazing team spirit that is formed through sports, I am pleased that I have such an incredible sports club within my electorate. Congratulations to the Central Sydney Wolves All Ladies Squad and may they go from strength to strength!

#### **EVOLUTION MINING – COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I extend my congratulations to Evolution Mining, Lake Cowal on winning the Community Excellence Award at the NSW Minerals Council conference for their work with the local Indigenous community. Evolution Mining's entry featured the establishment of a shared value project with the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) to create Galari Agricultural Company, a farming and training enterprise aimed at supporting Indigenous youth. Since its inception, Galari has achieved significant milestones including leasing 1,600 acres of land for livestock production, renovating a farmhouse to a cultural hub, hiring key personal and successfully training and employing Indigenous young people. I recently visited Evolution Mining's Lake Cowal site to see first-hand the incredible work they are achieving. Congratulations Evolution Mining, Lake Cowal on this achievement.

#### **COOLAMON LIONS CLUB**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Mr Alan White & Mr Phillip Furnell of Coolamon Lions Club were recently presented with the Melvin Jones Fellowship at the Coolamon Changeover Dinner. The Melvin Jones Fellowship is the highest honour a Lions Club can bestow on a member. Lions District Governor, Michael Ryan of the Bathurst-Macquarie Club, presented outgoing Coolamon Lions Club President, Alan White and Charter Member, Phillip Furnell with the Melvin Jones Fellowship. Mr White was recognised for his role as President of the Coolamon Lions Club for 3 years. During his Presidency, Mr White played an integral role with two major projects; the Return and Earn Scheme and paper and cardboard recycling. Mr Furnell was recognised for his 44 years of service as a Lions member, having held the positions of Treasurer and President for many years during this time. Mr Furnell is still actively involved with the Club and a strong campaigner for recycling projects. Congratulations to Mr White and Mr Furnell on being recognised for the Fellowship. I look forward to visiting the Coolamon community soon.

#### **LONG SERVICE MEDALS FOR SES VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Catherine Thompson of the Gooloogong SES Unit and Karl Milic of the Cowra SES Unit were recognised with Long Service Medals at a recent ceremony with NSW SES

Commissioner Carlene York. Karl Milic was awarded the 20-year Long Service Medal for his work with the communities of Blayney and Cowra. Mr Milic, a former Army Major, utilised his skills whilst serving in the region. Mr Milic was part of the team on numerous out of area deployments such as the 2011 Cyclone Yasi and the 2012 Brisbane floods. Catherine Thompson was recognised for her long service as Unit Commander of the Gooloogong SES Unit since 2016. Ms Thompson who is stepping down this year, has many amazing achievements and memories from the SES with her most memorable being the building of the new unit headquarters. Congratulations Karl and Catherine and thank you for your service.

#### CITIZENSHIP CONGRATULATIONS

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Mr. Speaker, The great tapestry of Ryde is now brighter, bolder and stronger for the contributions of our newest citizens who officially became Australians on 8/6/2023. To the following, I thank you for choosing Ryde: Shikha Aggarwal, Faizan Ahmed, Ayesha Ahmed, Shagufta Ali, Faaiza Amir, Didin Andijaya, Alexandra Ariawan, Vikas Arya, Mariana Gui, Madiha Bokhari, Ya-ting Cheng, Derek Chow, Emily Cabbage, Rufeng Da, Nike Darmawan, Chris Guzman, Marion Castillo, Anjana Dhody, Deepika Dodda, Xinhang Du, Hassan Farouk, Judith Fernandes, Afshin Boyaghchi, Julie Gao, Khanh Gillbanks, Salpi Gitjian, Maria Golez, Magda Greenfield, Luis Gui, Christine Hamzar, Anoop Hariharan, Herath Herath, Jessica Ramirez, Yaowen Hu, Eric Huang, Malak Hussein, Gianpiero Iacovino, Carmen Giuseppina Insana, Ashwin Shankarlyer, Sonam Jain, Tafara Jakopo, Han-jih Jiang, Zakie Kazemihassanvand, Andre Kepner, Anika Khan, Nahed Kuhail, Siu Lau, Jangwoo Lee, Ming Leung, Xiao Liang, Shih-kun Liu, Hsing-jung Shen, Weiyuan Lu, Kyle Lumsden, Wai Mak, Yiu Mak, Tom Meade, Kelly Moran, Thi Nguyen, Sain Park, Naeryang Park, Catherine Parmeggiani, Shadaab Qadri, Hui SzeQuek, Sardar Rahim. Congratulations and best wishes!

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#### CITIZENSHIP CONGRATULATIONS

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#### MORE OZ-TAG PLAYERS TRIUMPH IN IRELAND

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I would like to recognise the achievements of brother and sister combination Bayli and Ryli Johnson, who travelled to Ireland to play in the international Oz-Tag World Cup competition, as part of the under 21s representative teams. I congratulate Bayli and Ryli on their selection to represent Australia and for both winning bronze medals in their respective events. Bayli was the youngest member of the newly formed Alliance team and sister Ryli was part of the Australian Indigenous under 21s women's team. I commend Bayli and Ryli for taking up this valuable opportunity, their hard work and commitment to their sport and their well-deserved accolades. Special thanks to their family, major sponsors Ash Group Holdings and the

Moree community for their support. Bayli and Ryli are fine ambassadors for the sport of Oz-Tag and to the Moree community.

#### RECOGNITION OF PETER STANLEY

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I would like to recognise singer and song writer Peter Stanley of Armidale, for his contribution to the music industry, having written his 150th song, 'In Guyra'. The song is a tribute to the town of Guyra located in the Northern Tablelands, to the north of Armidale. I congratulate Peter on his formidable list of Aussie country songs, for the success he has received through his YouTube recordings and for putting Guyra on the map. I commend Peter for his time spent recording and entertaining audiences at community events and all over, as well as for his ongoing commitment to the music industry.

#### VALE ROBERT DWYER

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the many achievements of the late Robert Dwyer of Glen Innes who passed away recently. Mr Dwyer made an outstanding contribution to Glen Innes and was immensely respected by his peers and the wider community. I congratulate Mr Dwyer on his accomplished career, where he started out working on stations and later in the timber industry, managing a sawmill, serving as a Councillor and later as the Mayor of Glen Innes from 1998 to 2003. During this time Mr Dwyer was instrumental in spearheading the Australian Standing Stones, a monument to the pioneering Celts and a key player of the annual Celtic Festival, which recently celebrated its 31st anniversary. I commend the late Mr Dwyer on his significant enduring career and his selfless contribution to his community. Such a highly regarded leader, his passing will be a considerable loss to his community, his wife Grace and to his family. Through loss, there is a wonderful legacy left by Robert.

#### CENTRAL COAST VIETNAM VETERANS' MEMORIAL DAY

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I recently attended the Central Coast Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Day event which was held at the memorial on the Ettalong waterfront. I was delighted to have attended as the Member for Terrigal, with my wife Jill to pay tribute to those who served. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's 10-year commitment to the war. The moving service which commemorated the battle of Long Tan and Vietnam Veterans Day included a piper playing Amazing Grace and cadets from 25 Australian Cadet Union [ACU] Erina. We also heard from guest speaker Richard Douglas, Cadet captain from 25 ACU. We continue to honour the service and sacrifice of all Vietnam veterans on this day. Approximately 60,000 Australians served in the Vietnam War. Of these, 3,000 were wounded, and 521 were killed. I would like to thank the Vietnam Veterans' Peacekeepers' and Peacemakers Association of Australia Central Coast Sub-Branch for the invitation and for holding this important event. Lest we forget.

#### GREEN POINT CHRISTIAN COLLEGE – WAKAKIRRI FESTIVAL

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to congratulate my local school, Green Point Christian College for their outstanding performance at the recent 2023 Wakakirri Festival which was held at the Riverside Theatre in Parramatta. Wakakirri Story-Dance Festival is Australia's largest performing arts events for schools. Students in Year Four through to Year Six from Green Point Christian College performed "The Tree of Hope", a performance which told a story of sacrifice and hope through dance. The moving and heartfelt performance was awarded The Spirit of Wakakiri Award, the highest honour of the night. The students were then invited to present their performance at the National Institute of Dramatic Art [NIDA] on the 7th of September and to receive their state award at the Awards Showcase. Opportunities like this are a great way of exposing children to new experiences that help them grow in confidence and discover something more about themselves. Congratulations to the school, teachers, students, and everyone involved for creating such a moving and heartfelt performance which clearly resonated with the judges and audience.

#### JULIE DOLAN

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise my constituent, Julie Dolan and for her important contribution to women's football. As a nation we have all been captivated by the success of our national women's football team the Matilda's at the recent FIFA Women's World Cup 2023. It is icons such as Julie that have paved the way for female football players. Julie was 14 years old when she discovered the Metropolitan Ladies Football League in Sydney. Within a few years, at just 18 years old Julie was named captain of the Australian Women's National football team. Julie went on to have a ten-year career, playing eighteen international matches for the National Team and bestowed the honour of cap number one for the Australian Women's National Team the Matildas. In 1988, the Australian Women's Soccer Association created the Julie Dolan Medal in her honour, awarded to the Player of the Year in the Women's National Soccer League. Julie was also inducted into the Football Federation Australia Hall of Fame in 1999 and received the Queen Elizabeth II



Australian Sports Medal. There is no doubt Julie's dedication and achievements have helped elevated and inspire players and women's soccer.

#### **BAR BEACH BOWLING AND SPORTING CLUB**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—The Bar Beach Bowling and Sporting Club is one of Newcastle's long-standing local sports institutions that recently marked its 100th anniversary. The Bar Beach Bowlo is frequented by young and old alike; its walls hold many memories for many Novocastrians. Members gather there for its original bowling purposes, though that's far from the only event hosted at the club. The club is publishing a book to commemorate its milestone to give everyone the opportunity to share their Bar Beach Bowlo story. They also celebrated with live music performances and a lawn bowls tournament attended by players from all over Newcastle and the Hunter. I would like to congratulate Bar Beach Bowlo on its centenary and thank all the staff and members that make it such a part of Newcastle. It wouldn't be the same without you.

#### **HUNTER SURF LIFESAVING**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)**—Congratulations to members of Hunter Surf Lifesaving for their achievements at the Surf Lifesaving NSW Awards of Excellence. Under 14s board rescue dream team Lily Egan & Lexi Sutherland from Cooks Hill Surf Lifesaving Club were named Surf Sports Team of the Year and Rachel Soars from Merewether Surf Lifesaving Club went home with Official of the Year. Dan Collins from Redhead Surf Lifesaving Club was crowned Athlete of the Year and Steve Westcott from Fingal Beach Surf Lifesaving Club was recognised as Assessor of the Year. You've all done Newcastle and the Hunter proud. These winners are now moving forward to the Australian Surf Lifesaving Awards of Excellence in November, where I'm sure they'll reach even greater heights. Good luck to you all and well done on this impressive achievement.

#### **LAMBTON HIGH SCHOOL OPEN BOYS WATER POLO TEAM FINISHES 2ND IN NSW**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—The NSWCHS Water Polo State Finals were held March 28-29 at Lambton Swimming Centre. The Lambton HS Open Boys Water Polo team finished with the silver medal. After some excellent play, they made it through to the semi-finals at the top of their group. They defeated Albury HS in the semi-final and eventually went down to a well-drilled Balgowlah Boys HS in the Grand Final. Congratulations to all players and to long-term coach Mrs Stolk for her understanding of technique and strategy in helping the boys get to this level. A special thankyou and good luck to the departing Year 12 students who have been coached by Mrs Stolk throughout their entire LHS water polo experience.

#### **TIARNA LEE DANIEL – WORLD CHAMPION**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—After a five-year wait and two postponements, the 4th ITF Tag World Cup, the first outside Australia and New Zealand, was held at the University of Limerick in Ireland from August 2-5, 2023. The Australian contingent that travelled to Ireland, the "Tagaroos", comprised fourteen teams, including players from across the country who were selected after their performances at the 2022 Senior Australian Championships. The Tagaroos qualified for the Grand Final in all thirteen divisions entered, with eleven winning World Titles. 19-year-old Tiarna Lee Daniel from Glendale grew up in Lake Macquarie. Tiarna's team was ITF Alliance Mixed 21s. Not only did they come away as 2023 World Cup Champions, but they were also the very first ITF Tag Alliance Team to Win a World Cup. Indeed, for most of the players, it was their very first time overseas, and their first World Championships. Congratulations to Tiarna and her team-mates – and also to the players and coaches of the other Tagaroos teams. All the best for the next World Cup in 2026!

#### **LAMBTON JAFFAS NPL CHAMPIONSHIP DOUBLE**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—On Saturday 6 September at Jack McLaughlan Oval, Lambton Jaffas defeated Broadmeadow Magic 2-1 to win their second straight premiership, and third overall. This win made Lambton the first club outside Edgeworth and Broadmeadow to win the title double in the Northern NSW top division for more than 25 years. David Tanchevski coached Lambton's introduction to the NPL in 2013, and they won in 2014. After a 1-0 victory over Maitland last year, this double followed a 12-game unbeaten run to the minor premiership. Both sides created chances in an open and entertaining match which Lambton largely controlled, though not taking full advantage of a young Broadmeadow squad. A long-range strike from Reece Papas opened the scoring and after some great saves from keeper Ben Kennedy, Lambton gave up a contentious penalty. The winning goal came from Kale Bradbery in the second minute of injury time. Versatile utility Riley McNaughton, the only player to have featured in all 3 Lambton GF wins, was named Dave Williams medallist as Man of the Match. Congratulations on the double, boys and hopefully a three-peat next season!

#### **BATHURST VINNIES COMMUNITY SLEEPOUT TEAM**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Marina Gray has been a leading supporter of homeless services in the Bathurst region helping those who need it the most. Marina has passed on this passion for helping others to her

grandson Connor Klower and his school mates who all participated in the Annual Vinnie's Community Sleepout. The boys and Marina slept in swags out in the elements at Ms Gray's Billywillinga place to raise money for those doing it tough. The sleepout was a learning curve for the youngsters who experienced firsthand what being outside and alone without a safe place to call home and a warm meal at the end of the day can do. Together they raised over \$1,800 which will go towards the Bathurst Vinnies Van that is scheduled to start in late 2023 delivering meals to the homeless and offering other forms of support. Congratulations to Marina, grandson Connor and his friends Zevi Hope and Arthur Ajji.

#### MELINDA O'SULLIVAN

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—After more than 250,000 kilometres clocked up on the odometer, Melinda O'Sullivan has waved farewell to her role as the town car driver for Bathurst residents. As the friendly face of Bathurst Community Transport Melinda has been providing a vital service for those in the community that are unable to drive themselves to and from medical appointments, social visits and daily tasks. Thousands of residents have directly benefited from her support. Over the years of involvement Melinda has completed over 30,000 individual trips. Each with a smile, friendly conversation and a wave. She is an exceptional driver ensuring prompt and reliable transportation services. Her positive personality has transpired onto her passengers brightening up their day as well. Melinda's willingness to go the extra mile for clients to ensure no-one was left waiting has made all the difference. Thank you for your service to the Bathurst community.

#### HAIDYN AND JACOB WALDRON

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Brother and sister duo Haidyn and Jacob Waldron have taken on the world's best of the best competing at the 16th IDBF World Dragon Boat Racing Championships held in Thailand. Haidyn and Jacob Waldron were both part of the Australia Auroras junior team and both took home multiple medals. Haidyn won one silver and five bronze medals and Jacob won five bronze medals in a variety of races. The siblings agreed that taking part in the regatta gave them opportunities to learn from other experienced Aurora paddlers and to make friends amongst the Australian and international dragon boat junior community. They have been paddling with the Bathurst Dragon Boat Club since they were 12-years-old. The Club and the Bathurst community are very proud of their achievements and being recognised internationally for their dragon boating skills. Congratulations Haidyn and Jacob.

#### SAFFRON SHIELS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—It was so exciting to see former Hunter Sports High School student and Newcastle Basketball talent Saffron Shiels named in the Opals squad for their tour of China—but, in the context of seventeen-year-old Saffron's career so far, it's not surprising at all. Saffron Shiels is a basketball wunderkind. When she was still too young to play for a team in the local comp, she was on the sidelines, dribbling the ball and shooting goals like a natural. She went on to play for the Newcastle Representative side and repped NSW. Internationally, she has previously played at the 2022 and 2021 FIBA U18 Women's Asian Championships, the 2022 FIBA U17 Women's Basketball World Cup, and the 2023 FIBA Under-19 Women's Basketball World Cup. Now she is one of the youngest players ever to take to the court for the Opals, and one of a handful of women from Newcastle to be named to the side, joining such names as Katie-Rae Ebzery, Suzy Batkovic and Melva Saunders. She has recently been signed to play for the James Cook University Townsville Fire, and I cannot wait to see what comes next for this sensational athlete. Congratulations, Saffron!

#### BUTCHERBIRDS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—I am a long-term, passionate supporter of Central Newcastle Rugby League Football Club—the mighty Butcher Boys and Butcherbirds! I was so proud to see the Butcherbirds run onto the field at Lakeside Sporting Complex at Raymond Terrace on Saturday 9 September against the Newcastle University Seahorses. It was a chance for the Butcherbirds to bring home another title! It was a fantastic grand final match, and while the Butcherbirds fell agonisingly short of clinching the title after a field goal in the late stages of Golden Point. Their success has been a shining light during the 2023 season, and as the Club has said they have well and truly laid the blueprint for continued success. I could not be prouder of the Butcherbirds. What an amazing season for the side. Congratulations on what you've achieved in 2023, and I can't wait to see what's next. Up the Blue n Whites!

#### CHARLESTOWN AZZURRI YPL GIRLS 13S

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—On Saturday 12 August, the entire country watched on as the Matildas beat France to the semi-finals with a nail-biting penalty shoot-out, and on Saturday 2 September

Charlestown was treated to a bit of an encore. The Charlestown Azzurri Premier Youth League girls 13s side went up against Broadmeadow Magic at Darling Street Oval for the preliminary final. After a very exciting, close match, the two sides were locked 1-1 when the full-time whistle blew. The game moved onto penalties, and Azzurri's calm and steady approach prevailed: the final score was Azzurri 1(4) to Broadmeadow Magic 1(1). Congratulations to Isla McGugan, Edyn Samuel, Nelita Cifrian and Harper Demir on scoring their penalties—they and their teammates certainly earned their spot in the grand final! The final itself was another nailbiter, coming down to penalty shoot-outs once again after tying 2-2 during regular play. Despite the side's usual grace under pressure, it was the opposition Adamstown Rosebuds who emerged victorious. It has been a fantastic season for the side, and I couldn't be more proud. Forza Azzurri!

#### SEAN DAVIS

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Experienced Firefighter Sean Davis from Gorokan and 15 other NPWS firefighters called to help Canadian Emergency Services to battle unprecedented wildfires. International firefighting efforts are helping the Canadians battle wildfires across most provinces, with firefighters from the US, New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea, France, Spain, Chile, Mexico and Costa Rica joining forces. Sean will be part of the incident Management Team working in a comprehensive specialised role as Aircraft Operations Manager, alongside with the NPWS lead planning officers, air crew, divisional commanders, and Remote Area Fire Teams. The role consists of coordinating aircraft and ground crews, set up communication channels, need to know locations and timeframe, pilot hours and aircraft capabilities. With 21 years firefighting experience, Sean has a solid operational sense, and a good knowledge of fire behaviour and how weather can impact it. I wish Sean a safe return home.

#### CHRYSLER WAKE RUN CAR SHOW

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Chrysler Wake Run car show celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Chrysler VJ Valiant at Canton Beach Holiday Park foreshore, August 25-27. Car enthusiasts mourn the loss every year of the Chrysler Australia factory which was based at Tonsley Park in South Australia and was closed in August 1981. Part of the event the cars take a cruise from Canton Beach Holiday Park up to Swansea Workers Club for lunch displaying 50 cars including the Chrysler, Valiant, Dodge, DeSoto, Plymouth and Hillman vehicles in the carpark for a mini show 'n' shine. On the third day of the event, more than 100 cars competing in the categories for Top 10, Best Modern Mopar, Best Modern Mopar runner-up, Best AP5, Best VJ, Police Choice and Longest Distance. The event raises money for the Special Olympics Central Coast Region by holding a barbecue breakfast, lunch, and cold drinks. A local raffle is drawn on the day and music to match the scene is played by DJ Marty. The annual car event returns every year, and this was a special year celebrating the Chrysler VJ Valiant which was produced by Chrysler Australia 1973 to 1975.

#### THE ARY TOUKLEY

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—I would like to acknowledge the successful club The Ary Toukley for winning first place in the 2023 Your Local Club Perfect Plate Awards across the Central Coast and coming third place in the state. The awards have been successful in encouraging the community to get out and support their local club. The restaurant ZIVA Eats & Pizza within the club, served Slow-Cooked Pork Cheeks for customers who had the opportunity to rate for each competition dish they tasted by completing an online form to submit a score between one and five. Recently the restaurant received 5 stars from Score on Doors the NSW hygiene and food safety scoring program which displays the results of regular inspections of food premises. The scoring lets the public know how well local eateries are complying with NSW hygiene and food safety requirements. Congratulations to Executive Chef Alex Patterson and the team from Ziva Eats & Pizza for an outstanding result and a delicious menu to share with the local people.

#### LIFELINE HARBOUR TO HAWKESBURY

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Lifeline can provide a literal lifeline to those in their darkest moments and I was grateful to visit Lifeline Australia Harbour to Hawkesbury in Gordon on 4 August. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet and greet the amazing team of Lifeline volunteers and staff who work around the clock to help our most vulnerable. The Lifeline site serves Willoughby and many areas of Northern Sydney and receives 100,000 calls per year. I extend my warmest thanks to Lifeline CEO Elizabeth Lovell, her staff and all the wonderful volunteers, including Glenda and Graham, who have faithfully served Lifeline for seventeen years. This year of course is a very special one for Lifeline as they celebrate sixty years of serving our community. Since

its founding in 1963 Lifeline has fielded millions of phone calls and saved countless lives. Lifeline's work is so precious to our community and I'm proud to lend my voice and support to it.

#### **NORTHERN SUBURBS BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION - WNBL CHAMPIONS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I warmly congratulate the Northern Suburbs Basketball Association Bears on their recent victory in the Women's National Basketball League Championships. On Sunday 23 July, I had the great pleasure of witnessing the Bears deliver a strong win in a thrilling semi-final match. I thank the Bears leadership, staff, coach, players and community for making me and my family welcome on the day and always. I would particularly like to thank the club CEO Bret MacTavish and his family for their company on the evening. In the forty years since its founding in the early 1980s, the Club has come a long way from being a small group of interested basketball players to a champion association with over 5,000 registered playing members and a professional management team. I am very proud of the Club's achievements and look forward to many more occasions of cheering on the Northern Suburbs Bears.

#### **NAREMBURN COMMUNITY GARDENS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The residents of the Willoughby electorate take great pride in their natural surrounds and this is on full display at the Naremburn Community Gardens. Located at the end of Bongalong Street in Naremburn, the Naremburn Community Gardens provide a communal place for garden-lovers of all kinds to ply their green thumbs. The Gardens pride themselves on being a true community garden, open to all and welcoming individuals from diverse backgrounds. Over the years, its members have cultivated a beautiful garden featuring a cornucopia of delights from raspberries, limes and ginger, to mint, basil and rocket. The community compost is a core element of the Gardens, nourishing the soil for future harvests. The Naremburn Community Gardens provide a wonderful opportunity for locals to discover the magic of gardening and sow the seeds of friendship. This is a fantastic community initiative for the joy it brings to so many gardeners and for its contribution to a greener and more tightly knit local community.

#### **HARDYS BAY CLUB**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—With great pleasure, I would like to introduce you to a small not-for-profit Community Club on the Central Coast, Hardys Bay Club. This club is in beautiful Hardys Bay of the Bouddi Peninsula, an area blessed with stunning beaches, tranquil waterways, unspoilt bushland and unbridled community spirit. Besides being a perfect venue for a chill-out afternoon or a romantic dinner, Hardys Bay Club has blossomed into an ideal destination for unforgettable events such as birthdays, kids' parties, weddings and so much more. In line with their community focus, Hardys Bay Club showcases the best local produce that the Central Coast has to offer. By supporting this club, you are directly supporting local businesses such as: Loo Loo's coffee roaster and Six String Brewery. Hardys Bay Club is highly regarded for their commitment to creating a family-friendly atmosphere, while supporting the rich music scene of the Central Coast. If you have a great appetite for live music, this club will surely deliver, highlighting new and emerging artists, alongside established artists from across the Coast. I applaud Hardys Bay Club and its team for providing a fantastic venue for our locals and tourists.

#### **MANGROVE MOUNTAIN CHILDREN'S CENTRE**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Happy 40th birthday to the Mangrove Mountain Children's Centre and everyone involved in this beautiful celebration of community and love. It was an absolute joy to join community members from across the generations that have been a part of this beautiful community hub. I love hearing stories of how the Centre opened and I had the opportunity to look at some of the very early photos of fabulous memories - which made some of us feel old. Mangrove Mountain Children's Centre and its community has endured very challenging times over the past few years, including the huge bushfires that raged across the mountains district in 2019, the succession of floods in the Spencer area, as well as the Centre burning down, not forgetting the impact COVID-19 had on this strong and resilient community. Despite the setbacks, the Children's Centre has been reborn and flourishes as a very important community, gathering, linking and sharing space. Families travel from far and wide to bring their kids into care and it really is a credit to all of the staff for the work they do on the little angels that are the building blocks of our future community.

#### **PITTWATER HOUSE CADET UNIT**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to attend the Pittwater House School Army Cadet Unit's 51st Annual Ceremonial Parade. It was an excellent display of the Unit's hard work and discipline, even including an impressive marching band. Members of the Pittwater House Cadet Unit often serve at local events honouring our veterans and Australia's past military engagements. I am so proud that we have a group of young people on the Northern Beaches who are so dedicated to ensuring our community continues to remember and acknowledge the sacrifices of those who have served in our armed forces. Following the parade

was the Unit's Prizegiving ceremony, congratulations to each of the award winners: Korie Riordan, Lachlan Potter, George Pearce, Estella Bayfield, Yarra Jackson, Talia St-Clare, Finlay MacLennan, Vladislav Sushchev, Tilman Ahrens, Sophie Sommer, Hayden Wu, Mason Kaines, Ramon Berkovic, Syllas Atzei-Barnes, Elena Russell, Amelia Byrne, Emily Parker, Joe Cassidy, James Pearce, Lily Haney, Ellis Plant, Millie McEwan, Ruby Hume, Aiden Fisk, Bridget Boyd, Aiyla Thomas-Smith, Jake Crotty, Maximilian Horvath, Brandon Arnold, Tom Speter, Sophie Banham, Ryan Mitchell, Ben Rousel, Rory MacLennan, Catherine Connors, Remy Metzke and Rory Connors.

#### **BILGOLA SLSC AGM**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—Congratulations to Bilgola Surf Life Saving Club on another successful year, as marked by their AGM on 27 August 2023. I thank all volunteers for their work helping to keep members of our community safe while they enjoy beautiful Bilgola Beach. This year Bilgola's service expanded beyond patrolling the beach, with members of the club working in partnership with the SES, RFS and other emergency agencies to aid flood-impacted communities from Nyngan in Western NSW to Liverpool in Southwest Sydney. Thank you to President, Peter Fenly, and all office bearers, for your work ensuring the club runs successfully. Congratulations to the top patrollers and award recipients: Haidee Underwood, Nadine Cran, Mignon Butler, Romilly Madew, Abigail Owler, David Madew, Greg Franks, Greg Woods, Geoff Raper, David Burton, Jean Walsh, Peter Dahdah, Damian Underwood, David Heath, Gregory Woods, Steve Faddy, Caitlin Lowe, Rowan Jacob, David Driver, Sarah Wang, John Coleman, Jon-Paul Mather, John Lawson, Meaghan Harris, Keisha Tickle, Michael O'Sullivan and Andrew Gough.

#### **NORTHERN BEACHES CHRISTIAN SCHOOL HSC MUSIC**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to attend the Northern Beaches Christian School's HSC Music Performance showcase. It was wonderful to see the talent of young people in our community. For many, the HSC is a stressful experience, but evenings such as the HSC performance showcase provide an opportunity for students to celebrate their hard work and acknowledge how much they have progressed during the HSC and throughout their schooling. Thank you to the school's music teachers, you do so much more than just teach a syllabus. Music benefits so many people, whether you're a professional musician, someone who plays an instrument as a fun hobby or just the average listener. I hope each of the students remember all they have learnt and continue to enjoy their music for many years to come. Congratulations to the performers: Shion Choi, Sarah Palangio, Ellie Ambrose, Oliver Cruickshank, Azura Byrnes, Jamie Allen, Edward Rapp, Matthew Burgess, Riley Roper and Charlie Campbell. I wish you all the best during your upcoming HSC exams, in music and each of your other subjects, and all your future endeavours.

#### **DREAM FESTIVAL**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to congratulate Dubbo Regional Council and all of those involved in the 2023 DREAM Festival. The month-long, multi-sensory festival celebrating the City's sense of community, culture, and energy had something for everyone. Zoocoustics remained a favourite on the program, and the DREAM Lanterns, with a mix of stage entertainment, roving performers, children's activities, and market stalls continues to be a highlight of the festival. The fact that the lantern parade was able to proceed despite previous challenges posed by COVID-19 and rain is a testament to the dedication and resilience of the organisers and the community. It was a truly magical experience to see hundreds of local school children and community members carrying vibrant lanterns through the town, followed by a multi-sensory DREAMscape experience. The DREAMscape experience, with its 800 stories representing the eight clan groups and curated by Dubbo's own Shane Riley, was a unique and meaningful addition to the festival. Events like the DREAM Festival are what's so great about living in regional communities like ours. A big thank you to Dubbo Regional Council, the festival committee, and all the organisations involved for making the DREAM Festival a reality.

#### **DUBBO DEMONS WOMENS AFL**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to Congratulate the Dubbo Demons AFL women's side who took out the 2023 AFL Central West senior women's premiership. It's a remarkable accomplishment for the team, and a particularly emotion charged victory, considering the challenges they faced during the match, including the loss of their teammate Brooke Garland to a broken leg. Special recognition goes to Emily Warner for receiving the best on ground prize. Winning this honour for the third time is a testament to her exceptional skills and dedication to the team. Her contributions have clearly been instrumental in the Demons' success over the years. The growth of women's AFL in regional New South Wales is truly inspiring. From winning the premiership with just 13 players in 2018 to now having a team of 22, the Dubbo Demons have come a long way. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and passion of everyone involved in the team. Congratulations once again to the Demons on their well-deserved championship win. Here's to an even bigger season in 2024 and a back-to-back premiership win.

**MATT LACK**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to Congratulate Dubbo building companies Matt Lack Building, Elements Interiors and Construction and Mitch Cavanagh Projects on their recent success at the 2023 Western Regions Excellence in Building Awards. Hosted by Master Builders Association of NSW in Orange the awards are about celebrating building excellence in the Western Regions and highlighting local craftsmanship, expertise and excellence whilst contributing to a vibrant regional building industry. Matt Lack Building won two categories at the awards Gala, Contract Homes \$700,000 to \$900,000 for a home in Allison Street and House Additions, Alterations and Renovations \$200,000 for a home in Catherine Drive. Elements Interiors and Construction took out the Residential Fitout category for its Quinn Street residence and Mitch Cavanagh Projects won a Merit Award for Contract Homes \$900,000 to \$1.1million for a project called Whitewood. It is impressive to see these companies recognised for their outstanding contributions to the building industry in the regions. Such achievements not only demonstrate the skill and craftsmanship of these companies but also contribute to the growth and success of the regional building industry. Well done and Congratulations again to all three.

**AKASH MEHTA**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise today to recognise Akash Mehta, a pharmacist from Old Bar Pharmacy, for his recent achievement in being awarded Pharmacist of the Year at the Pharmacy Alliance Conference. It is a remarkable accomplishment, especially considering that Akash serves in a small town. Akash's commitment to Old Bar goes beyond his role as a pharmacist. He purchased Old Bar Pharmacy nine years ago and has consistently served our community during times of need. During the COVID-19 pandemic, floods and local bushfires, Akash extended the pharmacy's hours to provide vital assistance to our community. In recognising Akash Mehta, we honour his dedication and service to our community. He is an inspiration, showcasing the positive impact one can have on the lives of others. Thank you, Akash, for your outstanding contributions, and congratulations on your well-deserved recognition as Pharmacist of the Year. Your actions exemplify community excellence.

**CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL BULLSHARKS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise today to congratulate the Chatham High School's cheerleading team, the Bullsharks who have been named state champions. The team of 11 girls travelled to Sydney to compete in the scholastic division at Cheercon Worlds Experiences NSW Championships on August 12-13. Their win bears even greater significance as it marks the very first time these talented young girls have competed. Beyond the glittering costumes and acrobatic displays, the Bullsharks' journey into cheerleading has demonstrated great benefits. Increased attendance rates and improved grades among the team members are testaments to the positive impact of this initiative. The integration of cheerleading into Chatham High School's program is a testament to coach Hope's leadership. She recognised the potential of cheerleading as a tool for personal growth, resilience, and teamwork and pushed for the program to be included at the school. Well done Bullsharks', we eagerly anticipate your upcoming competition in Newcastle this October!

**IDEAS 2.0 WINNERS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise today to recognise Jessica Gray, Hector and Monique Lucenti on their success in the Ideas 2.0 program. Designed to give aspiring entrepreneurs a leg-up, Ideas 2.0 is a joint project between MidCoast Council and Forster Tuncurry Business Chamber designed to help local business operators and entrepreneurs refine their business plans, develop marketing strategies, and hone their pitches. This program was open to participants across the MidCoast. Jessica Gray from Smart Coast Conveyancing is working on a solution to the affordable housing crisis across the Mid Coast region and is awaiting the outcome of a significant grant application which, if successful, will create a host of jobs and provide substantial cost-effective housing in our region. Hector and Monique Lucenti are working on a concept for their Preserve app which will help immortalise family stories and make them accessible to future generations in a unique, conversational chat bot. Congratulations, I wish you all the best as you pitch your ideas to investors.

**JACK BESGROVE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Orange has produced its share of world-class athletes and I'd like to shine a light on the latest to grace that stage, softballer Jack Besgrove. At 20, the lefty has crafted an amazing career on the diamond, where his pitching talent has earned him under 18, 23 and open Australian selection. 2023 has been enormous for the former Orange Softball junior, who cut his teeth with local club Cardinals. Jack was named tournament MVP after Australia won the under 23 World Cup at Panama, then joined the New York Gremlins to win the International Softball Congress world tournament. Jack was also named the ISC's most outstanding pitcher, newcomer and a member of the All World firsts. That success followed the Australian Steelers' win the World Softball Cup in New Zealand in 2022 with Jack's last pitch securing the title over Canada.

Jack's success comes after a gruelling apprenticeship at state and regional level which had him travelling from Orange to Bankstown four times a week for training with his mum Kellie, often getting home after midnight. It also included HSC studies. I look forward to watching Jack's career and congratulate him on his efforts to date.

#### JO KINGHAM

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate Orange teacher Mrs Jo Kingham on gaining the recognition of her peers with a 2023 Industry Collaboration award. Mrs Kingham, who trained in physical education, has been teaching since 1999 before transitioning to careers advising in 2018 where she is making a further impact on the future of her students. For the past five years, Mrs Kingham has been arming students with information to transition from school to a work environment. While some have a set path in mind, for others the course is not as well defined and the foothold Mrs Kingham provides, through her relationship with students, is invaluable. She also helps students recognise there is more than one path to a goal, with five of her former students, now studying medicine, having arrived at that point after careers in nursing or paramedics. Nominated for the gong by James Sheahan High School principal Peter Meers and supported by industry and school colleagues, Mrs Kingham has been quick to reflect her accolade back onto her own vocation, saying it recognises the importance careers education has on young lives. I congratulate Jo Kingham on this well-deserved recognition.

#### SPRING HILL PUBLIC SCHOOL

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate Spring Hill Public School, a small school punching above its weight in Dairy Australia's educational program, 'Picasso Cows'. The students, all 47 of them, won the Best Learning Journal category, decorating their fibreglass cow 'Poppy' with photos, artwork and stories documenting their learning experiences in the theme 'Farm to Plate'. The kids also dressed Poppy in a 'steam punk' theme, complete with mohawk and goggles, to reflect their study of steam and its use in the food industry. Under principal Mrs Mac's guidance, the whole school was involved in the project, that's from kindergarten to year six, with the highlight a visit to Spring Hill's Studleigh Dairy, owned by the Davis family. In fact, Bec Davis, a fourth generation dairy farmer and former Spring Hill student, was on hand to explain the ins-and-outs of milk production to the students before guiding them through the dairy and introducing them to some of the cows. To win the Best Learning Journal section, Spring Hill beat several secondary school entries, an amazing effort for such a small school. I congratulate the school community on its amazing effort.

#### MACLEAN LIONS CLUB – RETURN AND EARN

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to recognise the efforts of volunteer members of the Maclean Lions Club who have put their hand up as an agent to run the 'NSW Return and Earn' recycling program at Townsend. Run solely by a dedicated group of volunteer members of Maclean Lions and Friends of Lions, the 'Return and Earn' has been back in full swing since November, after ironing out some initial teething problems. Since then they have been tirelessly counting containers and have become a very efficient and well-oiled machine. In March I attended an event March to commemorate their 500,000th container milestone – five months later they have doubled this number to an incredible one million returns and counting! Not only are they helping protect our beautiful region from unnecessary landfill, they are giving back to the local community with all profits being donated back to the local community. I thank the volunteer Lions members who give up their time to help make this initiative a roaring success.

#### CLARENCE VALLEY ANGLICAN SCHOOL DANCE ENSEMBLE

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate Clarence Valley Anglican School dance ensemble troupe who recently competed at the national Wakakirri Story-Dance Festival in Brisbane, led by Dance teacher Alison Beith. Their routine was a collaboration of 40 students. A dynamic dance, challenging racism through movement, highlighting the need for change and to foster inclusivity. Inspiring minds and shaping a better future for all. Students from Years 5 to 10 put their best foot forward and joined 250 other students from various schools, on stage to share their message for this year's theme "Change". The students revelled in the experience of being involved in a professional production and supported other performances enthusiastically. The students were awarded the Ensemble Award for Choreography and the biggest award of the night, "Spirit of Wakakirri Award", given to the school that demonstrates the best reflection of the values and beliefs of Wakakirri. Well done to the students, a group of outstanding young people, who represented the school beautifully and should be very proud of their achievements.

#### GRAFTON CITY BATTERIES

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate the Monkhouse family of Grafton on their achievement of 30 years running their local family business. In 1993 Wayne and Helen Monkhouse opened the doors of Grafton City Batteries in Fitzroy Street, Grafton, conveniently located in the heart of the

CBD. Now 30 years on the thriving family business also employs three of their children with daily visits from their grandchildren. Long-time family friend Alf Hull also works at Grafton City Batteries on a casual basis. Grafton City Batteries are providing an exceptional service to the people of the Clarence Valley and are available 7 days a week and contactable 24 hours a day. In 1995, Grafton City Batteries also became the first accredited business in the area to design and install solar systems. As the business continues to grow and adapt to the needs and requirements of the Clarence Valley community, the next generations of the Monkhouse family are writing the newest chapters in its ongoing story of success. Thank you to the team at Grafton City Batteries for their tireless dedication to their valued clients and congratulations on celebrating such a milestone anniversary in 2023.

#### **DARREN COGGAN – THE FIVE O'CLOCK WAVE**

**Dr JOE MCGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I would like to acknowledge the musical contributions made by Wagga Wagga local and award-winning country musician and former Koorringal High School student Darren Coggan. I would especially like to celebrate Darren's latest song 'the five o'clock wave.' This song is based upon a local urban legend to Wagga Wagga. As the story goes at precisely five o'clock each day, a single, giant wave, washes down the Murrumbidgee River, following the release of water from Blowering and Burrinjuck Dams. Depending on water levels at the time, the speed and power of the five o'clock wave allows regional surfers to ride the wave all the way to the nearby town of Narrandera over one hundred kilometres away. Or at least that is how the story goes. Some say the story is a myth, others swear by it. The best way to see the truth for yourself is to visit Tourism Australia 2020's ninth best beach which of course is Wagga Wagga Beach. Come at five o'clock, bring a surfboard, sunscreen, and an open mind.

#### **ACON – HONOUR23 LGBTQ COMMUNITY AWARDS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I congratulate ACON on the recent 16th Honour Awards. ACON is NSW's leading community-based organisation specialising in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer [LGBTQ] health, inclusion and HIV responses for sexuality and gender diverse communities. The Honour Awards acknowledges outstanding achievements within, or excellent service to LGBTQ communities in NSW. It is wonderful to see such a diverse range of winners and celebrate the many and varied ways that people improve the lives of the LGBTQ community. Winners included Jeff McCann for the Cayte Latta Memorial Award for Visual Arts for his striking body of works installed during Sydney WorldPride. In my Summer Hill electorate we are fortunate to be home to Jeff's latest work, the mural 'Rediscover Reimagine'. The work was made possible through funding from Inner West Council's Perfect Match Street Art program and it adds to the vibrant space Reverse Garbage have created at their new home at 30 Carrington Rd Marrickville. All funds raised from the Honour Awards goes back to the community, supporting initiatives that improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ people in NSW. Congratulations to all award winners and to ACON for such an inspiring evening.

#### **PRATTEN PARK BOWLING CLUB – INNER WEST MUSIC FEST**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Inner West Music Fest rocked Pratten Park Bowling Club on Sunday 13 August. The Inner West Music Fest is a grass roots, family friendly music, food, and cultural festival. There was something for everyone with music ranging from Motown and soul to pop, R&B, and local alternative rock, just to name a few. Not only was there fantastic live music to enjoy there, was also kids craft, awesome food, artisan stalls, a jumping castle and free bowls. This year also included Puzzle Palooza where everyone brought along old puzzles for a community puzzle swap. Despite some overcast skies the day was a hit with young and old. \$5,000 was raised to support Inner West Neighbour Aid. I congratulate Inner West Music Fest and Pratten Park Bowling Club for throwing another great event celebrating our vibrant Inner West community.

#### **ADDI ROCK YOUTH MUSIC FESTIVAL - PADDY AND AUDREY**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—On 16 September Addi Road Community Organisation will host its first Youth Rock Festival, featuring a line-up of bands and acts under the age of 18. Paddy and Audrey, members of the Addi Road Youth Committee, have taken the initiative to set up a youth focused festival after complaining to each other that it is hard as a young person to see live music due to drinking laws. Their solution? A youth run rock festival, with an exclusive line-up of under-18s performers. The Festival will be hosted at Addison Road's Gumbramorra Hall in the Marrickville Community Centre. Audrey has designed posters, stickers and t-shirts and based the collage on the stories she hears from other passengers who catch the 428 and 423 busses. Paddy is working on festival planning, trying to get his own band together and rallying as many friends as possible to support the festival. I encourage everyone to get involved and head down to the Gumbramorra Hall for this fantastic event!



#### RIVERSIDE THEATRE RECOGNISED IN IMPACT AWARDS

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—This month the entire nation learnt what we in Parramatta have known for years, that the Riverside Theatre is one of the premier performing arts venues in the country having been named the Performing Arts Centre of the Year at the 2023 PAC Australia Impact Awards. This year Riverside has shaken off the pandemic breaking 35-year box office and attendance records. The award is about more than just commercial success, it is about acknowledging contribution the theatres have made to cultivate the arts in the Parramatta community. Riverside Theatres has excelled in this field. Their outreach to engage with people about the arts, especially young people, is making a huge impact within our community. Riverside's outstanding school's program alone has exposed more than 18,000 young people to the performing arts. I am very pleased that the Minns Labor Government is investing in the comprehensive redevelopment of Riverside to include a 1300 seat theatre, rehearsal rooms and more; elevating the theatres to a world class venue. Congratulations to Director, Craig McMaster, Executive Director, Jon Greig and the entire team at Riverside Theatre on this well-deserved honour and remarkable contribution to the performing arts in Parramatta.

#### KEN THORNETT MEDAL PRESENTATION NIGHT

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—I was delighted to attend the 2023 Ken Thornett Medal Presentation Night with the Parramatta Eels, celebrating those who have made exceptional contributions to the Club. The Eels are the pride of Parramatta and hold a special place in our community, with outstanding efforts in community outreach and sponsorship especially increasing the participation of young people in sport. The Ken Thornett Medal honours the Parramatta Eels 'Player of the Year' as voted by their teammates, week by week throughout the season. Named after the legendary Parramatta player from the 1960s, it honours his legacy and celebrates exceptional contributors to the team. Congratulations to Eels co-Captain Clint Gutherson for scoring a hat trick winning the Ken Thornett Medal, NRL Nathan Hindmarsh Player's Player and receiving the Blue and Gold Army NRL Award. Other awardees included Will Penisini, Wiremu Grieg, Junior Paulo, Luca Moretti, Ky Rodwell, Nick Lenaz, Brock Parker, Steve Murphy and Monique Austin. Thanks for all your efforts in upholding the legacy and continuing the work of this great club. It was great to see the Parramatta Eels Women team in attendance. We are cheering you on to go one step further in 2023.

#### CAKE BIZ NARELLAN

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—I would like to congratulate one of the best Cake Shops in all of New South Wales, located in the heart of Narellan. Cake Biz, Narellan recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. To be a small business around for 20 years is a true testament to the quality of the cakes, food and drinks served by the shop as well as the fantastic service offered by the staff who work tirelessly to deliver the community the best quality cakes every day. Cake Biz contains the largest cake display in Sydney, offering an assortment of cakes, including Cheesecakes, Mud Cakes, Sponge Cakes and more all made on site at their local bakehouse. In addition to their cake range. Cake Biz also serves coffee and a variety of food and drinks for all those who wish to venture in-store and try out some of the delicious menu items available. Congratulations to Cake Biz for the 20th anniversary of their opening and here's to many more.

#### M LEAGUE AWARDS

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—On Wednesday the 30th of August I have the privilege of attending the annual M-League Awards. The Macarthur Football Associations Wests Group Macarthur M-League 2023 awards recognise outstanding achievement by players and clubs involved in the Macarthur Football Association's M-League. It was a great night full of talented players and their coaches. I was honoured to award Player of the Year in Women's First Grade which was shared between 2 recipients this year - Chantelle and Rhea! I would particularly like to congratulate the Camden Tigers FC on winning the club championship trophy and the 22 players that were awarded a place in the Men's and Women's teams of the year. It was fantastic to see recognition to all those involved in the competition who put in the hard work of organising the competition and the players and coaches who are involved with each of the teams who participated. Congratulations to all involved, especially award winners and those who organised the evening!

#### TYLAR BALD

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I want to commend and celebrate Tylar Bald of Glenmore Park Phantoms for a stellar performance at the 2023 Easter Classic held in Auckland, New Zealand this past April. Tylar has made our community immensely proud by returning home adorned with a gold medal. The Easter Classic, is not just a competitive platform but also a crucible for nurturing and honing softball talent. It offers aspiring players a rare and enriching opportunity to play alongside and against a diversity of talents from various corners, thereby fostering key skills and deepening their game knowledge. Tylar's achievement is not just a testament to his individual talent and dedication, but also a reflection of the potential that resides in our young

sportspeople of NSW. It also underscores the excellent training environment provided by the Glenmore Park Phantoms. Congratulations to Tylar Bald on this outstanding accomplishment.

#### HEATH LINCOLN

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I rise to celebrate a local luminary of Glenmore Park, Mr Heath Lincoln, who has dedicated 25 years to the world of music as a professional musician. His soothing renditions of easy listening pop and soft rock have been a consistent presence, enchanting audiences and elevating our local music scene. What makes Heath truly special is not just his longevity in the industry, but his unique touch. He has an innate ability to take popular songs and infuse them with his own distinctive flair, making each piece uniquely his. Locals have been fortunate to experience the magic of Heath's performances at numerous venues around our community. From Settlers Mulgoa to Rusty Penny Brewery, Squinters Brewery to AG Bar, and the vibrant Lone Star Rib House and Brews in Penrith – his music has echoed through these spaces, leaving lasting memories. A heartfelt congratulations to Heath Lincoln for a quarter of a century in music. His commitment and talent have not only enriched our community's cultural fabric but have also made Glenmore Park a brighter place through song.

#### JESSICA FOG

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I wish to bring to this chamber's attention an outstanding achievement by one of Glenmore Park's youngest talents. Fourteen-year-old Jessica Fog has astounded and inspired us all by emerging as the winner of the prestigious Penrith Ladies Cup, held at the esteemed Penrith Golf Club. In a field populated by around 50 open age golfers from across our state, not only was Jessica the youngest competitor, but she also showcased remarkable skill, determination and poise. By shooting a personal best of 3 over par, Jessica secured her first major golfing title, a feat that is truly commendable at such a young age. Jessica's success is not just a win for her but serves as an inspiration for young athletes across our community, showing that with passion, dedication and hard work, age is but a number. I wholeheartedly congratulate Jessica Fog on this monumental achievement. May this victory be the first of many milestones in a bright and promising golfing career and may she continue to make Glenmore Park proud.

#### GRACIE WRIXTON

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Gracie Wrixton for her representation of Australia at the Women's Softball World Cup. The 2023 Women's Softball World Cup was hosted in Dublin, Ireland. Gracie represented Australian Women's Softball against the United States of America, Chinese Taipei, Great Britain, Ireland, and Botswana. Gracie is a committed member of the Belmont Softball Club, playing with the club since the age of six. She is a great asset to her team as Gracie is a strong pitcher and batter. Gracie has showcased her outstanding talent in the New South Wales Open Women's Softball and was therefore picked to represent Australia on an international competitive level. Congratulations Gracie on a fantastic performance, you are a credit to your club and community.

#### CAVES BEACH SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club for its performance in the 2023 Sharkskin NSW Inflatable Rescue Boat Championships. The NSW Inflatable Rescue Boat Championship is an annual event where NSW Surf Life Saving Clubs compete in races using inflatable rescue boats. Competitors showcase their skill and accuracy in manoeuvring the vital piece of rescue equipment. The Club performed fantastically across numerous categories, the Under 23s Open, 35 and 45s male and female, and as a result was awarded its first Championship overall point score win since 2015. The Club was the leader in five out of the six categories. Congratulations Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club on your outstanding victory, you are a credit to your community.

#### STACEY GAY

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)**—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Stacey Gay for her appointment as carnival referee at the 2023 Sharkskin NSW Inflatable Rescue Boat Championships. The NSW Inflatable Rescue Boat Championship is an annual event where NSW Surf Life Saving Clubs compete in races using inflatable rescue boats. Competitors showcase their skill and accuracy in manoeuvring the vital piece of rescue equipment. Stacey Gay is from the Caves Beach Surf Lifesaving Club and is the club's first female carnival referee, and first female State Inflatable Rescue Boat carnival referee. Stacey has many years of service as an official including in the inflatable rescue boat space. Congratulations to Stacey on being appointed the carnival referee, and thank you for your service to your club and community.

### MARGARET WONSON

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I recognise the late Margaret Wonson. Margaret was born in Newcastle, and was always ready to partake in outdoors activities, from riding motorbikes to horses. It was not long before Margaret's creative attributes were demonstrated, exhibiting her skills and innovation to family. Margaret was a keen painter, utilising these skills for a broad range of activities, such as signs for picket lines. Margaret always an advocate for women's opportunity and right to participate in activities such as playing pool. After moving to Crookwell Margaret had two children and work tirelessly as a single mother, undertaking a range of roles, later moving to Picton where she became the owner of "Come by Chance" café, which also gave her a place to display her artwork. Margaret eventually moved back to Crookwell, opening "Wall Candy" preceding the opening of "Get Creative in Crookwell", which provided the opportunity for Margaret to amplify her skills in business and art. Margaret established many meaningful relationships with artists from the region, which enhanced the creativity in the township and saw Margaret being nominated as Citizen of the Year in the Upper Lachlan Shire Council. Margaret was never shy to live life. Vale Margaret Wonson.

### GEOFF GULSON

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I recognise the late Geoff Allan Gulson. Mr Gulson was born in Goulburn, attending Goulburn North Primary School, before heading to Canberra Grammar for his senior years of schooling. Mr Gulson's parents Allan and Joan Gulson raised their children at their family home, The Potteries, next to the brickworks, where Mr Gulson had a childhood full of adventure and fun. Mr Gulson went on to undertake a building apprenticeship, later joining the family business to become the fourth generation of the family to own and manage the Gulson Brickworks. The business was founded in the 1880's, operating until its closure in 1990, seen as a key industry, supplying bricks to Goulburn and surrounding districts. Mr Gulson's wife Ruth was the Brickworks secretary for thirty years. Mr and Mrs Gulson had four children. Mr Gulson also enjoyed participating in hockey, tennis, and speedway cars. Mr Gulson was a member of the Goulburn Apex, becoming zone President, a member of Goulburn Rotary, where he and Ruth received the Paul Harris Fellowship. It is with a great honour that I had the privilege to meet Mr Gulson. It was obvious that he was proud, respectful, and authentic gentleman. Vale Mr Gulson.

### LILLIAN SKELLY

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—Today I recognise Lillian Skelly. Lillian is from Crookwell and is known for her sporting abilities and achievements, which include representation roles in cross country, athletics, and soccer. In April of this year, Lillian represented Australia as a team member in the Junior Matildas, who travelled to Mongolia to participate in the first qualifier of the Asian Cup. The Junior Matildas were victorious in both of their games beating Mongolia eleven to nil and the Chinese – Taipei team three to nil. This placed the Junior Matildas in first position after the first round, with Lillian proudly taking the field in both games. It was with great pleasure that the Junior Matildas took the time to conduct a football clinic at an orphanage in Mongolia, which certainly provided the team and the children with a great experience. The team also attended the Australian Embassy on ANZAC Day. I acknowledge Lillian's inherent skills and talents and the level of training and discipline required to participate at this level representing at local, national, and international events. I congratulate and wish Lillian all the best for selection to participate in the second Asian Cup qualifying round in September of this year.

### THOMAS POWELL

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Hunter Trade College year 12 student Thomas Powell who recently competed in the 2023 WorldSkills Australia National Championships. Thomas competed in the Vocational Education and Training [VET] in Schools category, a competition with over 460 competitors. In the VET Skills Electrotechnology Category, Thomas came away with a bronze medal. The competition required him to demonstrate his skills in mounting electrical equipment, soldering electronics, preparing cable trays and performing wire terminations. The competition was tough, held over three 17 hour days and was a true test of competitors skills, perseverance and resilience. Thomas studies at Hunter Trade College two days a week and works with a Rutherford based electrical firm, J&H Commercial Services for three days a week. Hunter Trade College's program sees students undertaking at least 100 days of work placement in their preferred trade during their HSC studies, assisting students in their goal of becoming an apprentice. Congratulations Thomas and I wish you well in your aim to qualify for the world titles in Lyon France next year.

### THE UMBRELLA FOUNDATION

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Linda Harwood, first visited Nepal in 2012, volunteering for 4 months at The Umbrella Foundation. After she returned

to Australia in 2013, Linda established The Umbrella Foundation Australia as a registered Australian charity with co-founders Alana Mitchell & Carolin Mackaway. Last weekend I was honoured to attend a fundraising fashion parade at Morpeth, to support this worthy organisation and their work. The Umbrella Foundation works with Nepalese organisations and friends who are passionate about making a positive impact to the health & education of women, children & their communities who are living in extreme poverty in Nepal. Linda has a degree in international aid and community development, and is passionate about education and the need to break down the cycle of poverty in Nepal. The organisation's current projects include, the rebuilding of the Shree Bhimsen Secondary School following the 2015 earthquake, the women in kilns health and hygiene program to supports those in bonded labour in brick kiln factories throughout Nepal. Also a Children of the Kilns education program establishing schools for children in bonded labor. Linda and her team donate 100 per cent of their time to the organisation and I thank them for their important work.

#### **RUTHERFORD HIGH LAWN BOWLS TEAM**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—When you think about school sport, lawn bowls may not be the first sport that comes to mind, but it is certainly front of mind at Rutherford Technology High School. James Allerton, Jeremy Bourke and Koby Kattau last month took out the gold medal in the Combined High Schools Lawn Bowls State finals that was held over two days at Glenbrook Bowling Club. Rutherford THS knocked out the reigning champions Dapto HS in a tight 13-10 semi-final after topping their pool. In the final they were up against Blaxland HS and won the match 20-3. Koby was team captain and his performance saw him announced as 'most valuable player' for the final. The boys have been playing lawn bowls since year 7 and have developed the skills of patience, tactics and teamwork. This win comes after months of intense practice with coach David Connaughton at Greta Workers Bowling Club. This win was historic for Rutherford Technology High School, it was the first time the school has made the state final in any sport let alone winning a state final. Congratulations James, Jeremy and Koby you have made your school and community so proud.

#### **NSW YOUNG LIBERAL EXECUTIVE**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I would like to acknowledge the leadership of the New South Wales Young Liberals Executive in engaging youth in politics, training the leaders of tomorrow, and for helping to shape policy discourse of our state and nation. The Movement provides young people with the opportunity to engage in the issues affecting them and to make a difference in the community. Recently the Young Liberals welcomed a new executive. I congratulate President Chanum Torres, Metropolitan Vice-Presidents Georgia Lowden and Alex Baird, Country and Regional Vice-President Laura Middleton, Secretary Cooper Gannon, Directors and Officers Abby Donaldson, Mikayla Barnes, Jared Wright, Rory Burke, Christian Martinazzo and Sarah Halnan. I would like to congratulate and thank outgoing President Dimitry Chugg-Palmer for his strong leadership in guiding the Young Liberal Movement and in fostering a vibrant community of young people. I wish Chanum and his leadership team all the very best.

#### **ISABELLA LANZA**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I would like to take the opportunity to recognise Isabella Lanza. Isabella is a Year 12 student at Marist Sisters College Woolwich. As part of the Business Studies subject and required work placement, Isabella joined me in my office for a week of work experience. I would like to thank Isabella for her hard work and dedication. Isabella is a bright young lady and I hope that she was able to learn something new and experience what it is like to work in politics. Isabella told me that she has hopes to study at university post-school and I have no doubt that she will reach her goals. I wish her luck as she prepares for her final exams. I know that Isabella has a bright future ahead of her and I wish her all the very best in her future endeavours.

#### **THE TEACHERS' GUILD OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge a longstanding association, The Teachers Guild of New South Wales which was established in 1892. The Guild is made up of educators across all school systems to promote education and respond to the issues facing the teaching profession. At its core, The Teachers' Guild seeks to promote lifelong learning and this is clear in the logos motto 'I teach, that I may learn,' reaffirming a commitment to continued professional learning. My electorate of Drummoyne is home to preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools across the Catholic, Independent and Public School systems. The presence of the Guild encourages teachers to maintain professional standards in teaching whilst also giving educators the opportunity to be recognised for their hard work through the Guild's Recognition Awards. I wish to commend The Teachers' Guild of New South Wales for its work in supporting, promoting, and encouraging teachers across our state. I acknowledge NSW President, Dr Frederick Osman for his

strong leadership of the Guild and for his representation of teachers. I would like to recognise and thank all educators for their important work in educating our future leaders.

#### **MOSMAN COUNCIL COMMUNITY GRANTS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I acknowledge the recent contributions of Mosman Council's Community Grant's program to several local organisations. The work of the program is incredibly beneficial for the people involved in these organisations and for the community generally. The financial support allows these groups to flourish and recognises their diverse achievements and contributions. A total of \$68,982 was allocated to 21 groups such as Dance for Parkinson's, Trustee for Raise Foundation, Mosman Girl Guides, 1st Clifton Garden Sea Scouts and Lower North Shore Domestic Violence. Multiple groups received the \$4000, which is typically the maximum amount the program will contribute. The Mosman Symphony Orchestra received \$4000 to hire a venue from the Mosman Art Gallery, with an additional \$2000 to support the hosting of an annual concert. I would like to congratulate the recipients of the grants program and hope that the contributions are of benefit to your activities. I would also like to thank those involved in the running of the program for all the efforts you have made.

#### **REMEMBERING THOSE LOST AT SEA**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—On the 3rd of September each year we commemorate the anniversary of the first attack on an Allied merchant ship in World War II, only hours after Britain declared war on Germany. This year I joined the Merchant Navy RSL Sub-Branch and members of our local community at Mosman Art Gallery to commemorate Merchant Navy Day and those lost at sea. We will never know the exact number of those brave Australians who served or died during the war in the Merchant Navy. We honour those of the Australian Merchant Navy who have their lives for their country and have no grave but the sea. Merchant Navy crews often faced many dangers and carried out their duties under very difficult conditions, transporting personnel, supplies, and equipment under the constant threat of enemy attack. I want to thank the Merchant Navy RSL Sub-Branch who are dedicated in ensuring that we commemorate this special occasion each September, and of course to Mosman Council who assisted with the organisation of this commemoration. Lest we forget.

#### **RECOGNISING OUR LOCAL VOLUNTEERS**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—Volunteers in our local community are often the lifeblood of so many great causes and community organisations. The 2023 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards shine a spotlight on the incredible work of volunteer's across the North Shore region. We know that volunteers provide an irreplaceable service to the community. Volunteering benefits communities, the economy, and the health and wellbeing of the volunteers themselves. In my electorate of North Shore we have a strong volunteer ethos and community. There are a number of organisations and individual community members who give up so much of their time to others. I wish to offer my congratulations to North Shore Volunteer of the Year Gig Buddies friend Emma Cocking and our other award winners Lifeline Crisis Support volunteer Sue Swanson, Joke Klein-van Exel from Bear Cottage hospice and the tutoring team from the TAFE NSW Adult Migrant English Program. A special thank you to the Centre for Volunteering for welcoming me to present some of the awards on the day. The work that you do in recognising our volunteers is always appreciated.

#### **NSW ACADEMY OF GYMNASTICS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the incredible team at the NSW Academy of Gymnastics in Miranda on winning the Outstanding Fitness Service category at the 2023 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. Founded in 1972 by Bill Parsons, the NSW Academy of Gymnastics has been serving the Sutherland Shire for over 50 years. Bill was inducted into the Gymnastics Clubs of Australia Hall of Fame in 2023 and was named coach of the year by Gymnastics Australia for the last 10 years. Over half a century the academy has participated in two global championships, produced 10 Australian team champions, and over 1000 New South Wales champions. I acknowledge the team at the NSW Academy of Gymnastics. I recognise Bill Parsons, Christopher Kanevsky, Chrystalle Hurst, Elise Baxter, Karen Chalk, Keenan Pennini, Elizabeth Andrews, Eftalia Tsoutsas, Taya Wilson, Bailey Nicolai and Jayden Lucas. Local businesses like the NSW Academy of Gymnastics are an important part of our local community as a key provider of goods, services and jobs. I congratulate the team at the NSW Academy of Gymnastics on their success at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards and extend my best wishes for the future.

#### **SANDERS PROPERTY AGENTS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate Sanders Property Agents in Jannali on winning Outstanding Real Estate Agency category at the 2023 Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards. The team at Sanders Property Agents have been providing residents of the Sutherland Shire with quality real estate advice and customer service since 1957. Importantly, Sanders Property Agents are a family oriented and community focused

small business that invests into the people that support them by sponsoring organisations including Sylvania Heights Netball Club, Sylvania Heights Public School and Jannali East Public School. I acknowledge the team at Sanders Property Agents. I recognise Greg Calderwood, Peter Geraghty, Kristy Franklin, Nick Gleeson, Andrew Mills, Andrew Bloom, Cameron Hall, Daneke Wright, Melissa Coombs, Kirsten Williams, Kristie Batch, Cody Slavin, Polly Ninos, Gabriella Fornito, Emma Bull, Jack Tripi, Grace Christie, Kylie Graham, Jack Sipek, Tahnee Dobson, Emma Jones, Rachel Fowler and Lily Davis. Local businesses like Sanders Property Agents are an important part of our local community as a key provider of goods, services and jobs. I congratulate the team at Sanders Property Agents for their success at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards and extend my best wishes for the future.

#### **DURAL MEN'S SHED 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville)**—I recently had the opportunity to attend a celebration for the Dural Men's Shed's 30 year anniversary. The Shed, part of 'The Centre' is a great place for men to meet and contribute to the community and work on their own projects. With wood-work, metal-work and gardening facilities there are things to do no matter what one's interests. I previously in this House described men's sheds as places that prove their worth in "encouraging elderly men to get off their backsides and interact with other older blokes in a friendly, blokey environment where they can get their hands dirty, have a good yarn and a swear", and I would still struggle to find a more accurate description. But the Dural Shed goes beyond this, with programs in youth intervention, advocacy and practical training all being just part of what the Shed does, helping Western Sydney youths gain practical skills such as carpentry and giving them something of tangible benefit in their lives. My thanks go out to all involved in the Shed, particularly President Chris Thomas, and to all those who are involved in their local shed across NSW. Here's to another 30 years!

#### **THE RAY WILLIAMS CUP**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville)**—I recently attended the annual Men's (Ray Williams) Hills Cup Grand Final (albeit the first held since 2019 as a result of Covid). The culmination of the season's Hill's Cup competition, the final was a hard fought match between Kellyville United and the Rouse Hill Rams. Goal scorers included Sam Burke, Matthew Reitano and Jacob Bodnar for Kellyville United, and Andrew Bulloch and Lorenzo Rodriguez for the Rouse Hill Rams, with Jacob Bodnar taking out Man of the Match. With Kellyville United winning the game it was a pleasure to present the cup carrying my name, a reminder of the difficulties encountered in attempting to set the Hills Football Association up. As predicted all those years ago, however, the association remains a perennial success, as well-attended matches of high quality like this year's final prove.

#### **AL-AMANAH COLLEGE'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the remarkable student leadership team at Al-Amanah College on their well-deserved appointments. Securing the trust and support of their peers through a democratic election is a truly commendable accomplishment, and these students should take great pride in this achievement. I urge them to seize this incredible opportunity to make meaningful contributions to their school community and to cultivate the skills that will mould them into future community and professional leaders. It is my privilege, in this session of the NSW Parliament, to recognize and commend the outstanding student leadership team for the year 2023, comprising the dedicated Captains Siham Nachar and Omar Alwan, Vice Captains Samira Eid and Yusuf Hakouz, and SRC members Maysa Ibrahim and Ziyad Mohammed. Under the exceptional guidance of their Principal, Ayman Alwan, I have every confidence that these committed students will skilfully lead their peers through what will undoubtedly be a pivotal year in their educational journey, setting an inspiring example for the entire school community. As they continue to embody the values of Al-Amanah's motto, "Success through knowledge". I extend my warmest wishes to these student leaders."

#### **GEORGES RIVER LIFE CARE**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—On Monday 21 August 2023 I had the opportunity to tour the Georges River Life Care Centre in Peakhurst. GRLC is a local community, not-for-profit, charity organisation that has operated since the 1920s in Lugarno. Over the years, they have evolved into a comprehensive centre and recently expanded their operations to the Liverpool LGA. Their impactful work encompasses various facets, including providing support for families affected by violence through initiatives like a free legal clinic and case management. Additionally, they offer emergency relief in the form of financial assistance and food hampers. One of their standout programs is "Artslife," a creative arts program specifically designed to uplift vulnerable and disadvantaged children. During my visit, I had the opportunity to reconnect with the team: Matt Gray heading up the operation in Chipping Norton, Operations Manager Karen Power, CEO Glenn Power, and Ellen Tyrell, who serves as a Team Leader and Case Manager. The facility is truly impressive, featuring a worshipping space, an administrative area, and a community pantry tailored to support the most vulnerable members of our community.

I look forward to working with them to find a permanent home in Liverpool – further enabling their invaluable work.

#### LIBERAL FRIENDS OF LEBANON ANNUAL GALA DINNER

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—On 26 August 2023, I had the privilege of attending the inaugural gala dinner of the Liberal Friends of Lebanon, at the William Inglis Hotel in Warwick Farm. It was such a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow Liberals and the broader Lebanese-Australian community. I would like to express my gratitude to the dedicated executive team of the Liberal Friends of Lebanon: Chair Wendy Finianos, Dr. Imad Berro, Amanda Ghalloub, Eddy Nader, Carla Kassab, Ybes El Khoury, John Chedid, and George Zakhia. Your exceptional hosting made the evening truly special, allowing the Liberal Lebanese community to come together in unity. I would like to also recognise Karl Tartak OAM and Dr. Imad Berro for being recognised for their distinguished service to the Liberal Party and Lebanese Community. Additionally, I wish to recognize our esteemed patrons, federal patron the Hon. Michael Sukkar MP, as well as my good friend and state co-patron Mark Coure MP, Member for Oatley. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to the Liberal Friends of Lebanon for appointing me as a patron. I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with you all and working to support the Lebanese Australian community throughout NSW

#### AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY – BLACKTOWN CAMPUS

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was great to visit the Australian Catholic University [ACU] on Monday, 28th August 2023 to tour the Saint Joesphine Bakhita Campus, Blacktown. ACU is a university committed to the pursuit of knowledge, dignity of the human person and the common good. Ranked within the top 2 per cent of universities worldwide, ACU offers 32,000 students excellent education, research and community engagement. The Blacktown Campus joins ACU's eight dynamic learning spaces across Australia. It features purpose-built teaching facilities including nursing and science labs, simulation wards, moot court, library, chapel and many study and social spaces. Suited for domestic and international students, ACU Blacktown offers courses in education, health, law, commerce and arts. Flexible study modes are available to undergrad, postgrad and research students varying between on campus and online learning. The Blacktown Campus gives opportunities for students to study and excel in a local, convenient learning environment. With a 95 per cent graduate employment rate, ACU continues to attract and develop Western Sydney's future leaders and professionals. Thank you to Campus Dean Dr Valentine Mukuria, ACU's dedicated faculty and support team and the enthusiastic students at ACU for the vision and commitment to education in our community.

#### THE ARNOTT'S GROUP – DISTRIBUTION CENTRE OPENING

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was a pleasure to attend the official opening of The Arnott's Group Automated Distribution Centre in Huntingwood on Wednesday, 30th August 2023. For over 158-years, Arnott's has been a much-loved Australian brand. Whether it's a Tim-Tam-slam, a box of Shapes during the footy or Tiny Teddies in your child's lunchbox, Arnott's features in many Aussie consumer moments. Arnott's is pioneering sustainable, innovative practices in the Australian food & manufacturing sector. Leveraging robotics and automation, the Centre offers storage and logistics infrastructure to accommodate 60 per cent of national inventory. The Centre is fitted with 2,464 solar panels, expected to generate 50 per cent of daily electricity needs. Arnott's presence in the Electorate of Prospect continues, with the Distribution Centre situated adjacent to the Group's largest biscuit site. With intentions to make Western Sydney the beating heart of its operations, Arnott's manufacturing and industrial sites will offer employment opportunities to the generations of families who proudly call Western Sydney home. Thank you to CEO George Zoghbi, Chief Supply Officer Nigel Harrison, Director of Procurement & Logistics Tom Vicars and the Arnott's team for welcoming me to this occasion and for your continued investment into Western Sydney's growing hub.

#### 2023 ANNUAL KALAIVIZHA

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was a privilege to join our Western Sydney Australian-Tamil community to celebrate the 2023 Kalaivizha Program on Saturday, 9th September, hosted by the Wentworthville Tamil Study Centre. Kalaivizha showcases the rich cultural heritage and artistic talents of Tamil students for the Wentworthville Tamil Study Centre. This year, the program featured unique and vibrant traditional music and dance performances, student art exhibitions and thoughtful discussions. For over 35 years, the Wentworthville Tamil Study Centre has taught Tamil language and culture in our Western Sydney community and across NSW. Their hard work provides opportunity for our students to celebrate and recognise the importance of Tamil language, story and tradition. I congratulate the Wentworthville Tamil Study Centre on its opening of a new hub at Metella Road Public School. Sharing of the Tamil language, at both Girraween and Metella Road Public Schools will ensure the continued celebration and longevity of Tamil culture. Thank you to President Jegan Kirupatharan, Liaison Coordinator Kumaran Jeyapalan and the dedicated members of the Centre for welcoming me to this event.

Congratulations once again to the Wentworthville Tamil Study Centre on another successful school year,  
வாழ்த்துக்கள் (Valttukkal)!

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