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Legislative Assembly

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday 20 September 2023

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 20 September 2023

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Announcements

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

The SPEAKER: I advise members that media photographers are approved to cover question time today. There is a lot of interest in question time at the moment.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The manner in which the member for Dubbo gave notice of his motion was neither beneficial nor helpful to the order of the House. I also note that it was the fourth notice of motion today that has run over time. Members have 30 seconds to give notice of their motion and they will stick to it.

Later,

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not a time for debate. Members will be able to debate the motions at another stage. This is the time to listen. The member for Kiama will leave the Chamber quietly.

Bills

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2023

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Sophie Cotsis, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (10:20): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Minns Labor Government is pleased to introduce the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. The bill seeks to amend the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to implement some of the remaining outstanding recommendations of the 2018 review of the model work health and safety laws, the Boland review; to make miscellaneous amendments to address ambiguity, clarify intent and remove superseded or obsolete requirements; to set up the framework to allow the Government to deliver on one of its key election commitments in relation to silica, which is to establish a silica worker register in the future to monitor the health of workers exposed to silica dust; and to ensure that there are sufficient regulation-making powers under the Work Health and Safety Act.

Since July 2008, New South Wales has been a signatory to the nationally harmonised work health and safety framework, as committed under the Intergovernmental Agreement for Regulatory and Operational Reform in Occupational Health and Safety—the IGA. All Australian jurisdictions, except Victoria, have adopted the model work health and safety laws. While the existing Act and model laws create a strong framework for managing risks to health and safety in New South Wales, preliminary data shows that there have been 39 workplace fatalities this year up until 10 July 2023. There were 48 in the previous year. Serious injury and illness claims for 2021-22 in New South Wales stand at over 51,000. There is clearly a lot more work to be done.

I acknowledge Premier Minns and am pleased that he has established a dedicated Minister for Work Health and Safety. The former Government did not do that. It is a credit to him as the Premier that he took the leadership to ensure that there is a dedicated ministry for work health and safety. The 2018 review of the model laws was commissioned by Safe Work Australia, the national statutory body in charge of developing the model work health and safety laws. Extensive consultation was undertaken across the country by Ms Marie Boland, the independent

consultant engaged to undertake the review. Members may recall that New South Wales expedited the implementation of a number of those recommendations in 2020. The bill implements further recommendations, some of which were published by Safe Work Australia only in July this year, to ensure that New South Wales aligns with the model work health and safety laws. Once again, New South Wales is one of the first jurisdictions to do so.

New South Wales remains committed to the national harmonisation of the work health and safety laws. I acknowledge that harmonisation has shown great benefits for businesses in New South Wales. The Government strongly believes every worker who goes to work in this State should come home safe at the end of the day. We want workers to have healthy, safe and productive working lives. The bill seeks to ensure that we continue to protect workers and create safer working environments through commonsense reforms.

I now turn to the substance of the bill and the amendments that align with the Model Work Health and Safety Act. In 2020 New South Wales expedited the implementation of 12 recommendations from the 2018 Boland review of the model work health and safety laws. Those amendments came into effect in New South Wales in June 2020, before the model law amendments were published. The amendments introduced by New South Wales in 2020 reflect the intent of the model amendments. As we know, they were introduced by the previous Government. In July this year Safe Work Australia published further amendments to the model work health laws, reflecting some of the remaining recommendations from the 2018 review of the model work health and safety law. The latest amendments were in relation to a minor technical change to section 31, clarifying that an officer may commit a category 1 offence; an increase in work health and safety penalties; and section 244 to 244D regarding attribution and aggregation of conduct for a body corporate person conducting a business or undertaking [PCBU].

The Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023 makes the following amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act. Firstly, clause 3 of schedule 1 amends section 31 (1) (b) of the Work Health and Safety Act to clarify that an officer may commit a category 1 gross negligence or reckless conduct offence. Section 31 of the Act is the most serious work health and safety offence. That offence is committed when a person who owes a work health and safety duty behaves recklessly or is grossly negligent, exposing a person to risk of death or serious injury or illness. That is a technical amendment to address the ambiguity between the current officer's duty under section 27 and the offence under section 31. It is designed to provide clarity that is currently lacking in the existing legislation.

It is important to note that the penalties for a breach of section 31 have always included a penalty for a breach of the duty by an officer of a PCBU. That amendment removes the ambiguity and makes it clear that an officer may commit a category 1 offence. The second amendment is the proposed increase in penalties under the Act and regulations. Items [4] to [15], [17], [28], [32] and [37] of schedule 1 and items [2] to [4] of schedule 2 to the bill increase the maximum penalties in line with the equivalent increases in the model Act and regulations to achieve consistency among the jurisdictions that have adopted the model work health and safety laws. I note that, since June 2022, penalties in the Work Health and Safety Act have increased in line with the consumer price index, but New South Wales is still behind the model Act and regulations. New South Wales will be among the first jurisdictions to implement the increase in penalties in accordance with the model Act and regulations.

The key change in the case of a category 1 offence committed by an individual as a PCBU or as an officer of a PCBU is an increase in the maximum penalty from \$798,383 to \$2,168,029 and an increase in the maximum imprisonment time from five years to 10 years. In the case of a category 1 offence committed by body corporates, the maximum penalty will increase from \$3,992,492 to \$10,424,983. For a category 1 offence committed by an individual, the maximum penalty will increase from \$399,479 to \$1,041,992. That amendment sends a clear message to people who place workers' lives at risk that they will be held to account. Penalties are one of the key tools used to deter unlawful behaviour, particularly unlawful behaviours at work that expose workers and others to risk of death or serious injury or illness. It is essential that penalty amounts stipulated in the Act and regulation provide sufficient deterrence to discourage unlawful behaviour.

Furthermore, the amendment will clarify that New South Wales will continue to maintain the penalty unit and indexing regime rather than introducing the model tiers and categories. That approach achieves an outcome consistent with the intent of the model amendments. Thirdly, in relation to the aggregation of conduct by a PCBU, schedule 1 [31] amends section 244 by inserting a new section 244 and new sections 244A, 244B, 244C and 244D. These amendments will allow for aggregation of conduct in relation to relevant offences by body corporate PCBU. These are model Act provisions that have been adapted to be consistent with New South Wales law. Currently, section 244 imputes the conduct of an individual employee, agent or officer to the body corporate, thereby attributing that conduct to impose corporate culpability. The existing provisions within the Work Health and Safety Act allows for attribution of conduct in particular circumstances. However, it does not currently allow for imputation.

The concept of imputation enables the conduct of a company's officers, agents or employees to be considered as a whole in determining whether the company has committed an offence, where intention, knowledge or recklessness is the required state of mind. Imputing conduct is not permissible at common law so, if a company is to be held criminally responsible for a work health and safety breach by imputation in addition to attribution, the legislation must specifically provide for it. Providing for imputation in the Work Health and Safety Act will help to address expectations that exist in the wider community that companies should be held accountable for meeting their work health and safety duties, and prosecuted for failure to uphold their work health and safety duties in the same way that individuals are. Schedule 1 [32] seeks to amend section 272A of the Act to align with the model provisions to make void an insurance contract term that purports to indemnify or insure against liability for a monetary penalty under the Work Health and Safety Act, and clarify that the evidential burden of showing a reasonable excuse is on the accused. This aligns with recommendation 26 of the Boland review.

The bill will also introduce a power enabling the work health and safety regulator to direct the removal of illegally installed asbestos. Schedule 1 [18] creates new division 2A in part 10 of the Act, with consequential amendments made to both the Act and the regulation to bring this division into effect. These amendments will enable the work health and safety regulator to ensure that prohibited asbestos, also referred to as illegally installed asbestos, is removed permanently from workplaces. On 31 December 2003, nearly 20 years ago, an Australia-wide ban on the manufacture, use and importation of asbestos came into effect. This is clear evidence that further work is needed. Australia is one of the few countries in the Asia-Pacific region that has a comprehensive prohibition in place on the importation and use of asbestos or asbestos-containing material. It is illegal to import or use asbestos in Australian workplaces. It is proposed that the Work Health and Safety Act be amended to provide the work health and safety regulator in New South Wales with a power to direct the removal of illegally installed asbestos.

Despite the ban, asbestos has been manufactured, fixed or installed since 31 December 2003 and is still being found in Australian workplaces, unfortunately. We know of one recent example where a company unknowingly imported from overseas fibre sheeting that contained asbestos. The company installed the fibre sheeting during the construction of portable buildings and switch rooms. Existing provisions for improvement notices and prohibition notices already cover many cases where prohibited asbestos is identified. However, there is uncertainty that the conditions for those notices meant some cases could be addressed only through a prosecution. Therefore, schedule 1 [18] inserts a new provision, "Division 2A: Prohibited asbestos notices".

This new division will provide compliance powers allowing the work health and safety regulator to issue a prohibited asbestos notice, directing a relevant person to take certain measures in relation to asbestos at the workplace. This amendment aligns with the model work health and safety legislation and ensures that work health and safety regulators have the appropriate powers to deal with prohibited asbestos. It means that a notice must be issued in all cases where prohibited asbestos is found to ensure the risks it poses are promptly addressed. It puts beyond doubt that the PCBU who is issued the notice must remove the prohibited asbestos. It is important to note that this provision only relates to asbestos or asbestos-containing material that has been installed illegally after 31 December 2003, making it prohibited asbestos, when the total ban was introduced across Australia.

I now address those miscellaneous amendments to the Act that will clarify existing laws, remove onerous/outdated requirements, improve efficiency and enhance enforcement powers. However, their importance should not be underestimated, particularly regarding amendments aimed at improving safety outcomes for delivery riders working for online platforms. Schedule 1 [16] clarifies that section 162 of the Work Health and Safety Act does not permit an inspector to be directed to exercise compliance powers on a matter unless the inspector has the reasonable belief or reasonable suspicion or is satisfied on the issue of the matter. This amendment seeks to implement recommendation 5 of the Ombudsman's *Investigation into actions taken by SafeWork NSW Inspectors in relation to Blue Mountains City Council workplaces* to clarify the operation of section 162 in relation to directions given to inspectors.

This amendment is a clarification that, where the Work Health and Safety Act requires that SafeWork inspectors must hold a reasonable belief before exercising their compliance power, they cannot be directed by their superiors to take any action unless the inspector holds a reasonable belief that there has been a breach of the law. For clarification, this formed one of 11 recommendations of the Ombudsman's August 2020 final report. SafeWork NSW has accepted and implemented all the other recommendations, including training for the inspectorate on this issue. The final recommendation was for the Parliament to resolve. This amendment to section 162 will remove any doubt as to its meaning. For clarity, I note that the regulator currently has an appeals mechanism for compliance notices issued by inspectors to ensure that notices have been issued correctly.

Schedule 1 [30] amends section 243 of the Act to enable New South Wales police officers to enforce compliance by issuing penalty notices to delivery riders in accordance with clause 184U of the Work Health and Safety Regulation. Clause 184U provides that a food delivery rider must receive mandatory safety training and

must produce a record of that training if requested by an authorised person. Clause 184U (2) of the regulation provides that:

A food delivery rider must, while delivering food or drink, use or wear high-vis personal protective equipment.

These parts of the regulation are designed to protect food delivery riders, who are particularly vulnerable members of our community. I know that members in this place have been saddened, particularly over the past couple of years, to see the number of food delivery riders die on the job. Most of them are from overseas, with a non-English-speaking background, and students. There has been a lot of advocacy around protecting those workers—we call them gig workers. For many of those men and women, it is probably the third or fourth platform they are involved with.

We took to the election a comprehensive program to better their wages and conditions as well as the workers compensation system, which we are currently working on in New South Wales. We are also working with our Federal counterparts. Strong advocacy and pressure were obviously put on the former Government to do some things, but New South Wales is way behind. I extend our sincere condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of those who have died through no fault of their own. We need to do better to ensure a safe workplace for all workers. We all know that work is changing. We need to adapt to those changes and protect workers such as gig workers.

As I said earlier, because of the high number of fatalities in 2020 and the pressure that was placed on the former Government, the multi-agency Food Delivery Rider Safety taskforce was established. The role of the taskforce was to identify the factors that can lead to deaths and injuries to riders, and to engage with food delivery platforms, food outlets, unions and advocacy groups to address the issues that put riders at risk. The taskforce has since delivered an industry action plan and guide to managing work health and safety in the food delivery sector and a final report. The guide, among other matters, recommended an increased focus on compliance by both SafeWork NSW and New South Wales police in relation to food delivery drivers.

We are resolute in ensuring that tragedies like those do not affect more families. In the past few months there have been a number of fatalities. That pains me. It is just so devastating that those people are doing their jobs in providing a service and they get killed. This is not about politics. Members from all parties are one on this issue. We need to have zero tolerance and stronger compliance. We are pushing very hard on that. In no circumstances should families lose a loved one at work. New South Wales police and the Department of Communities and Justice have requested that change. Police have identified that their ability to protect food delivery drivers, by ensuring that those drivers wear high-vis clothing, is hampered by their inability to enforce the existing requirement under work health and safety regulations.

The Minns Government strongly supports any change that protects delivery drivers, including increasing compliance measures. It is a fundamental part of the Work Health and Safety Act that the duty to provide a safe workplace applies to all parts of the workplace. That includes not only the obligation on a PCBU to provide a safe workplace but also a duty incumbent upon each worker at a PCBU. It includes a requirement for an individual food delivery rider to wear their high-vis clothing. I am informed by SafeWork NSW that, if one particular platform's riders consistently fail to wear personal protective equipment [PPE], then SafeWork will take compliance action against the provider. That occurred as recently as 24 August 2023. SafeWork NSW issued five provisional improvement notices against a delivery platform in Sydney as its riders were consistently not wearing high-vis clothing, as required by the regulation, and had not undergone mandatory training.

I call on the platform providers to do their jobs and to follow the regulation. We are asking them to ensure that they provide the PPE, that their delivery riders wear the high-vis clothing, and that they follow the training regulation. It is not that much. The obligation falls on them. We will come down hard on them and they know that. I have put them on notice, and we are putting them on notice again today. They have to follow the rules. We issued those five provisional notices to that platform only six weeks ago. That is not on. We are in 2023 and people should not be losing their lives. They are on notice. The next time it happens I will name and shame them.

I am informed that currently there is a 93 per cent compliance rate with respect to our food delivery riders and workers. That is really good. In my electorate, for example, a lot of my constituents work as delivery riders around Campsie and Lakemba in south-west Sydney. I see them and chat to them mainly at night when they are doing their work. They are wearing their high-vis. The majority are doing the right thing. We want to see 100 per cent compliance. We want to make sure that all our delivery riders across New South Wales are wearing the high-vis clothing that is provided by their platform operators and that they are doing their mandatory safety training. We are at 93 per cent; let us get to 100 per cent. Let us get them wearing their high-vis clothing. I note that the shadow Minister for Fair Trading, Work Health and Safety and Building is in the Chamber. All members take this very seriously. It is about improving safety. We should all support that.

There are currently 348 SafeWork field inspectors in New South Wales. Those inspectors are the only authorised officers capable of enforcing compliance with clause 184U offences. Considering the scale of the food delivery industry in our major metropolitan centres and comparing the personnel available to SafeWork and the NSW Police Force, it is common sense to authorise police to enforce compliance and issue penalty notices under that clause. Police play an important role in regulating traffic offences such as a rider not wearing a helmet while riding a motorbike or pushbike. Therefore, it makes sense to extend the food delivery penalty notice powers to New South Wales police as the riders predominantly use the road network to make their deliveries.

Through that amendment, New South Wales police will ensure that riders are abiding by work health and safety regulations designed to ensure that workers have the necessary training and they are taking the correct safety precautions such as wearing their required high-vis clothing before getting on the road. The amendment clarifies the policy intention of the changes made to the Work Health and Safety Regulation in 2022, enabling police officers to have the authority to enforce compliance and issue penalty notices under clauses 184U (1) and (2). The amendment to section 243 ensures that an "authorised officer" includes a police officer. A consequential amendment has been made to the Work Health and Safety Regulation in item [5] of schedule 2 to the draft bill, which specifies that for clause 184U of the Work Health and Safety Regulation a police officer is an authorised officer for an offence under that clause. We owe it to the memory of the food delivery riders who have tragically lost their lives to ensure that work health and safety laws in New South Wales are fit for purpose and protect workers.

Item [35] of schedule 1 to the bill also introduces necessary reform to streamline the requirements for tripartite consultation with governments, unions and employers under section 274 of the Act when making minor amendments to New South Wales codes of practice. That will enable New South Wales codes of practice to be updated in a timely and cost-effective manner. The Work Health and Safety Act requires the approval, variation and revocation of codes of practice by the work health and safety Minister. Codes of practice are a crucial element in the work health and safety framework. A code of practice is a practical guide on how to comply with the legal duties under the Work Health and Safety Act and regulations. They enable PCBUs and workers to have detailed information to ensure that they can achieve key standards required under the Act and regulations. They provide expert advice showing duty holders how to safely manage risks and achieve compliance.

The Act also outlines how the codes of practice can be used in court proceedings. An approved code of practice is automatically admissible as evidence in court proceedings under the Work Health and Safety Act and regulations. Courts may have regard to a code as evidence of what is known about a hazard, risk or control, and may rely on the code in determining what is reasonably practicable in the circumstances to which the code relates. Presently, any minor technical or grammatical amendment, such as a spelling mistake, requires tripartite consultation to be undertaken before the Minister can approve the code. Tripartite consultation means consultation with the Commonwealth, States, Territories and employer and employee representatives. This can be very time-consuming and costly and can lead to consultation fatigue with key stakeholders.

The amendment will mean that SafeWork NSW will not need to undertake this level of consultation when amending codes of practice where only minor editorial edits are required, such as relabelling a table or diagram, fixing typographical errors or changing the name or reference to a particular document. Consultation on such changes to codes of practice is onerous and resource-intensive given they are only minor. Any changes not considered minor will continue to adhere to the existing comprehensive tripartite consultation requirements, and this amendment will not affect the tripartite consultation undertaken when developing, reviewing or revoking codes of practice.

The bill will also remove the obsolete requirement to publish a notice in a newspaper circulating throughout the State as soon as practicable after a code of practice has been amended, varied or revoked, as per item [36] of schedule 1 to the bill. All variations, revocations or updates to a code of practice would continue to be notified in the gazette. The Government is focused on taking further action to address the scourge of silicosis in the workplace. As part of the election commitment the Government took to the people of New South Wales in March, we have sought to implement further reforms to tackle this risk. Since 2017 silicosis cases have been on the rise in New South Wales. This rise in cases has been linked to work on engineered stone, a popular product with a high silica content used for kitchen benchtops, and poor work practices leading to silica dust—respirable crystalline silica—being breathed in by workers. This dust causes irreparable damage to an exposed worker's lungs, with potentially fatal consequences.

Silicosis is a long-latency disease. The latent period from exposure to development of the disease ranges from one to 10 years. However, some cases of accelerated silicosis can develop over a period as short as three to five years. Since 2017 silicosis has been a high priority for WHS regulators, and their work has focused on four key health and safety components: education, compliance, research, and regulatory and policy review. Silica continues to be a high priority for the Government and for SafeWork NSW, and their activities are guided by the

Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-33 and the SafeWork NSW Regulatory Priorities 2023. These strategies ensure a coordinated approach to reduce work-related respiratory diseases, including silicosis, and to reduce worker exposure to dangerous substances, including silica. The Government has committed to a suite of policy proposals to tackle silicosis, both standalone and as part of a national process. The bill will action a component of the Government's election commitments: health screening and tracking of at-risk workers.

Schedule 1 [34] inserts new sections 273A and 273B into part 14, division 1A. Firstly, section 273A will enable SafeWork NSW to establish a silica work register and require PCBU's to act in accordance with the regulations. The second component of this new division, at section 273B, will ensure that the register is not publicly available but will enable the information contained in the register to be shared with SafeWork NSW, icare and any other government sector agency, as prescribed in the regulations. These amendments ensure there are sufficient regulation-making powers in the Work Health and Safety Act to establish a register, with further work and consultation with unions, employers, industry and other stakeholders, including all members of this place, to be undertaken when developing work health and safety regulations in future.

This amendment to the Act creates the framework required to implement that important election commitment. It is envisaged that the register will inform health screening; enable epidemiological research and research on the incidence, distribution and control of the disease; and track engineered stone workers who are exposed to respirable crystalline silica and workers in other high-risk industries. This framework will enable the appropriate government agency to track and trace these workers to ensure they are able to access appropriate health screening and to enable monitoring of their condition over time. As members would be aware, in February this year the national work health and safety Ministers approved the drafting of a further decision regulation impact statement or report by Safe Work Australia to explore what options are available to governments in relation to the future of engineered stone. The report will be considered at a national meeting of work health and safety Ministers in October.

Silica dust also occurs in quarrying, concrete, mining and tunnelling industries. These industries were not part of the terms of reference. As a result, the outcome of the report may affect the design of the register. The Government does not intend to proceed with implementing the register until after the October meeting. This important amendment will further protect workers from the dangers posed by silicosis by removing ambiguities and clarifying regulation-making powers. Members on this side of the House have done a lot of work, as have members of the upper House Standing Committee on Law and Justice. I acknowledge my colleague the Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, as well as the Hon. Greg Donnelly, the Hon. Mark Buttigieg and the Hon. Anthony D'Adam for their work on these issues over a number of years.

Labor pushed the former Government very hard to make tougher laws. I acknowledge the former Government made minor changes to dry cutting, but we have a long way to go as we do not have a register of workplaces. A number of stonemasons gave evidence at one of the committee hearings. It was devastating to hear two men speak about their experience of being unable to breathe. They were stonemasons in their 40s, with families, who are living a terrible life because they contracted silicosis. Prior to 2017 there were very few cases. This will be asbestos 2.0. Finally, the bill puts forward amendments to the Act to remove ambiguities and clarify regulation-making powers to support the legislative framework for public registers, approval or authorisation of training providers and courses, and associated fees.

Through the bill the Government seeks to ensure that our work health and safety legislation continues to be fit for purpose in ensuring our workers are protected from the risks associated with a modern workplace. The Government wants to ensure that penalties for noncompliance are appropriate and in step with community expectation, and that they are as consistent as possible with the workplace health and safety national framework. In bringing the bill forward, the Government is addressing some of the final issues identified in the national process and amending other areas to address ambiguities and provide clarity, ensuring that work health and safety regulators can conduct their regulatory functions and contribute to the management of risks to workers' health and safety.

I thank the unions, industry, employers, stakeholders and community members who took part in consultation on the bill. I acknowledge my staff and SafeWork representatives. I acknowledge also the Australian Industry Group, Business NSW, Unions NSW and the Unions NSW WHS committee, the Transport Workers' Union, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Master Builders Association, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union. As the Minister for Work Health and Safety, it is my priority to ensure that work health and safety in New South Wales is truly a tripartite process. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The SPEAKER: I welcome everybody. I think this is the largest attendance we have had in the Legislative Assembly for question time during this Parliament, with the northern gallery also being occupied. I extend a warm welcome to the guy sitting behind the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms. He is Barry Collier, former member for Miranda. I welcome Barry. It is lovely to see him here.

Mr Mark Coure: Bring back Barry!

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order. We do not want to see that turned into a meme or anything else. But it is nice to have Barry here as a visitor. I also welcome to the Chamber a number of groups comprising school students and teachers from Caroline Chisholm College, Oran Park Anglican College, Oran Park High School and Penrith Anglican College, guests of the member for Badgerys Creek. I welcome all those who are in our Cooper gallery. I also welcome students and program managers from the Brisbane Broncos community outreach program, which focuses on supporting young Aboriginal women leaders, guests of the member for Ballina.

Members would be surprised to know that the member for Lake Macquarie has visitors here with us again today. I cannot keep them away. I also acknowledge guests of the member for Blue Mountains, including the Hon. Jacquie Petrusma, former Tasmanian Minister with responsibility for disability, women and human services and former Deputy Speaker of the Tasmanian House of Assembly.

Ms Felicity Wilson: Give our Speaker a scorecard.

The SPEAKER: The member for North Shore will come to order. I also welcome staff and children with their parents from the Shepherd Centre, an NDIS service provider and specialist in helping children with hearing loss to learn to listen and speak. I acknowledge in the northern gallery representatives of UN Youth Australia, the Aotearoa region leadership group. I also acknowledge guests from the public sector seminar. I hope they are having an informative day. I really enjoyed meeting many of them this morning, and I hope it was not too traumatising.

*Announcements***PARLIAMENTARY LIONS CLUB**

The SPEAKER: I have a special request from the member for Gosford in relation to the Parliamentary Lions Club barbecue last week. The raffle raised a total of \$1,230 for the Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre, a great organisation in Redfern supporting women and children escaping domestic violence. The raffle winner is ticket blue A69. Could the person with that ticket please contact the Parliamentary Lions Club president, the member for Riverstone.

MEMBERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The SPEAKER: The Parliamentary Counsel, Ms Annette O'Callaghan, will present at our members development session today. The session will provide information on the role of the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. It will cover drafting legislation and amendments and provide practical advice on how members can best use the services of the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. I encourage members and staff to attend at 1.00 p.m. in the theatre. A light lunch will be provided.

*Question Time***STATE BUDGET AND NSW POLICE FORCE**

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:09): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. For 2023-24, page 3-1 of *Budget Paper No. 02*, Agency Financial Statements, shows a 2.7 per cent increase in NSW Police Force spending in nominal terms, but Treasury forecasts inflation at 4.75 per cent. Labor's first budget in 13 years is cutting overall police spending in real terms.

Mr Paul Scully: You are kidding yourselves!

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I will say it again, Mr Speaker: Labor's first budget in 13 years is cutting overall spending—

The SPEAKER: Government members will come to order and allow the Leader of the Opposition to complete his question.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Labor's first budget in 13 years is cutting overall police spending in real terms. What parts of it is the Government cutting?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:10): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the Dorothy Dixier. I answered this question yesterday and gave Opposition members the opportunity to listen to all of our budget measures, but they chose not to. Instead, they interjected, which is what they do the whole time.

Mrs Leslie Williams: That wasn't the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Well, it is the question today and I answered it yesterday. Through you, Mr Speaker, I am answering the question.

Mr Matt Kean: You haven't gone near it.

Mr Mark Coure: I've got the budget papers book here, if you need it.

The SPEAKER: The offer from the member for Oatley is noted, but it is not helpful.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Those opposite ask questions yet do not want to hear the answers.

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

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The former Attorney General is spot on. I will say it again for the benefit of members: In reading the budget, NSW Police Force recurrent expenses are \$5.057 billion. There is not a cut in actual terms at all. Those opposite read the budget to address their interpretation of it, which is completely inaccurate. What they left was a shortage of hundreds and hundreds of police officers in New South Wales. That is what this Government inherited. Let us talk about the real issues of this budget. The reality of the numbers of police officers in New South Wales is that after 12 years of wages being capped—in other words, the stagnation of police officer wages—their wages were going backwards. Why would people want to join the NSW Police Force? Yesterday the New South Wales Minns Labor Government scrapped the cap and brought negotiations back to the table for all of our essential service workers.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume her seat.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: I appreciate that the Minister is being relevant to her portfolio, but she is not at all relevant to the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I answered it in the first minute.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: I ask her to be directly relevant to the question, which asked what she was cutting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat immediately. The Minister has been directly relevant to the question.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I acknowledge that there is a shortage of police in New South Wales, as does the shadow police Minister. In fact, he said that it is a problem that is happening right across Australia, which is true. But therefore we have to make sure we are paying our essential service workers properly. Yesterday's budget did exactly that. We have shortages in Health, in Education and the police.

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Those are the very people who keep us healthy, educated and safe.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume her seat. I will hear the point of order from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Mark Speakman: As I note the Minister's time is running out, I ask for an extension of time as well. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, direct relevance. The question is not about what the Government is spending. The Government is obviously spending billions of dollars on police; that is in the budget papers. We want to know what it is cutting.

The SPEAKER: I have just ruled on direct relevance. The Leader of the Opposition might not have liked my ruling and he can deal with that in some other way. But nothing has changed since the Minister resumed her answer following the point of order from the member for Coffs Harbour. Did the Leader of the Opposition forecast that he seeks an extension of time?

Mr Mark Speakman: Yes, I want to hear what those opposite are cutting.

The SPEAKER: I grant an additional two minutes to the Minister. The member for Riverstone will come to order.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the extension of time. I am so pleased. I look forward to telling members about the mess that we inherited from his Government. It is clear the wages cap had such a significant impact on essential workers in this State—our Department of Education, our health, our police and our paramedics. It was only as a result of yesterday's budget—I am going to declare it: from the best Treasurer in the world and the best Premier—that we have been able to deliver real wages for our essential services and essential service workers in this State.

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

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: For eight years I have been in this Parliament listening to accolades from those opposite when they had the opportunity to sit on the government benches.

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

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Those opposite wanted to give out certificates, three gold stars—and you name it—but they never wanted to pay those workers and they did not pay them. That is the crux of this issue. The police in New South Wales do a great job.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order—

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

Mr Dugald Saunders: We have now drifted a long way from any relevance to the question. Is there any chance of bringing it back?

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister is being directly relevant.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: There was such conviction in the member for Dubbo's point of order. I am going to send him a copy of the standing orders so he can learn them. You're a D-grader, mate.

Mr Alister Henskens: What are you hiding?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: "What are you hiding?" Don't you love it? I will tell members what we are not hiding: sticking up for workers in this State. We are not hiding the fact that we are going to get to the negotiation table and give them wage rises. We are not hiding the fact that the Labor Party sticks up for cops.

STATE BUDGET AND HOUSING

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (11:16): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will he update the House on how the Minns Labor Government's first budget helps confront the housing crisis?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:16): It is a good question, and an important one for New South Wales. For the benefit of the House, I can also shed some light on the previous question. If members look at the budget papers for this year, we are spending \$5.3 billion on the NSW Police Force. If members compare that to the budget released by the previous Government, it spent \$5 billion. That is a 6.3 per cent increase in the police budget.

I will now get to the important question from the member for Strathfield. Right now the State is not building enough houses for the future of New South Wales, which short-changes the next generation of young Australians from getting into the housing market, putting down roots, starting businesses and joining communities right here in this State. The only way we will turn that around is to increase housing supply in New South Wales. A centrepiece of yesterday's budget was a \$2.2 billion housing and infrastructure plan for the State. That included \$1.5 billion for essential enabling infrastructure to get private investment into the housing market, which will get apartments and houses going in New South Wales. It is a measure opposed by those opposite but supported by NSW Labor. The Government understands that we cannot meet our housing targets unless we have got enabling infrastructure in place. That is step number one.

Step number two is removing the red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy that has accumulated after 12 years of a conservative government in New South Wales. During that time members heard constantly that those opposite were the party of business and the party to get rid of red tape, yet those opposite accumulated so much rigmarole for honest businesses that are trying to produce the housing for the next generation of young Australians. We are focused on that, but it is a big challenge. Last year we produced 48,000 house completions in New South Wales; in the same period Victoria produced 58,000. Notwithstanding the fact that we have a bigger population, a higher average house price, increased rent and we expect more new migrants into New South Wales, we are last on a per capita basis when it comes to new housing completions on the east coast. The only way to fix that is to ensure

that we have the bureaucracy in place to assess those planning processes and that we put that enabling infrastructure in place—and that is exactly what we are doing.

I am pleased to say it has been supported by the industry. Property Council of NSW Executive Director Katie Stephenson said, "Treasurer Mookhey's budget sets the foundation for the NSW Government to tackle the States housing supply and affordability crisis." [*Extension of time*]

The Urban Development Institute of Australia said something similar. I note that Business NSW stated:

We are encouraged by the proactive measures outlined by the Government to begin the work to solve the State's housing crisis.

It is absolutely crucial and we know that part of this is an attempt by the Government to tackle this nimbyism that is gripping Sydney, in particular, and has gripped many members opposite. I point to the member for Pittwater, who was a former councillor. Somebody has been trawling through his social media posts. He is not here at the moment. He said, "We're not against development, but we're against inappropriate development."

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: He said further, "I've fought against development on the Northern Beaches. I've fought against it in Bilgola Beach, Bilgola Plateau, Ingleside, Mona Vale."

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order: My point of order relates to direct relevance. The question is about how the Government's budget is helping housing. Talking about comments by the member for Pittwater has nothing to do with the question.

The SPEAKER: The Premier is being directly relevant. He will complete his answer.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: He is tackling development in Bilgola Plateau, Ingleside, Mona Vale, Newport, Palm Beach, Terry Hills and Warriewood.

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

Mr CHRIS MINNS: He has never met a development that he would support. I have to say those opposite are short-changing the next generation of young Australians, pricing them out of the housing market, doing nothing for rents with their NIMBY approach to housing and development in New South Wales. We are determined to turn it around. It will not be easy, but at least the people of New South Wales know we on this side of the House are getting on with the job.

STATE BUDGET AND HEALTH FUNDING

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (11:21): My question is directed to the Minister for Health. The President of the Australian Medical Association [AMA] (NSW) has noted that this year's Health budget is only a 0.87 per cent increase on the prior year budget, that health inflation is expected to be at least 5 per cent and that the budget means "less access to emergency departments, less urgent surgery and non-urgent surgery". Given this is Labor's first budget in 13 years, which is cutting the overall Health budget in real terms, what exactly is Labor cutting?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:22): What an interesting but stupid question. I will probably need 10 to 15 minutes, if that is okay?

Ms Robyn Preston: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: And the Minister might be given an extension. But first I will hear the member for Hawkesbury on a point of order.

Ms Robyn Preston: My point of order relates to Standing Order 72. Offensive words should not be used in this place and I found the Minister's comments very offensive.

Mr RYAN PARK: I withdraw anything that anyone found extremely offensive.

The SPEAKER: The Minister has withdrawn any words that may have offended the member for Hawkesbury.

Mr Matt Kean: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Matt Kean: The Minister just insulted the President of the AMA, and he should withdraw his comments.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr RYAN PARK: I did not mention the AMA. How good was the budget? It is like Christmas for nerds. As a former Treasurer I thought the member would have known—I hope other MPs know this—there are four documents to the budget: *Budget Paper No. 01, Budget Paper No. 02, Budget Paper No. 03* and *Budget Paper No. 04*.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: This is *Budget Paper No. 02*. I know it is not in picture format—

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

Mr RYAN PARK: I will take members through some points to address the question.

The SPEAKER: The member for Prospect will come to order or I will place him on a call to order.

Mr RYAN PARK: It is a very good question because it allows me an opportunity to go to 7-1. This is the Agency Expense Summary, what we are allocating. Remember the figure that the member mentioned. Last year we saw an actual budget of 29,519.5, and that is in the operating part of the budget.

Mr Matt Kean: Point of order—

Mr RYAN PARK: No, the member does not get to do this.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume his seat.

Mr Matt Kean: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. If the health Minister does not understand the difference between nominal increases and real increases, that is on him and he should explain it to the House.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Minister will continue his answer.

Mr RYAN PARK: On the opex side we have seen an increase of 4.7—excluding COVID, more than 6 per cent but an increase of that. On the capital side of the budget there is an increase of around 41.3. That is a good document. I encourage people to read the document. We are delivering better health care for the people of New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: The Minister will resume his seat. I know the Minister is excited, but his time has expired.

STATE BUDGET AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (11:25): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Government is putting New South Wales on the path to universal preschool access by building 100 public preschools?

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:25): I certainly can. I thank the member for Liverpool for her important question. Before I begin to answer, I will slightly embarrass three young girls in the gallery from my old school, Carolyn Chisholm High School, and welcome them to Parliament House. This Labor budget is all about delivering repair to essential services. In education we are doing that in many, many ways. First, we are addressing once and for all the chronic teacher shortage crisis that we face in all sectors in New South Wales, created by those opposite. We are delivering the schools where they are needed, particularly in the growing parts of western Sydney, north-western and south-western Sydney. We have delivered a historic pay deal for our overworked and undervalued teachers in our public schools.

On top of that, we also know that we are boosting the chances for our littlest learners to have the very best access to early childhood education. That is giving them the very best start in life. What the budget represents, what the Treasurer handed down yesterday, is in fact the largest expansion of public preschools in New South Wales history. We on this side of the House are certainly proud of that. We have invested \$769 million to deliver 100 new public preschools. That means that every new primary school will have a public preschool on site. That is so important, not just for getting mum and dad back to work, but any educator. Any mum or dad will tell members that the transition from preschool to kindergarten is crucial in terms of learning. This will make it even easier for all children who get the opportunity to go to a public preschool.

I have visited quite a few in my time so far as Minister. When we go inside the preschools we see the magic that is happening every day. I will name one in the electorate of the member for Tamworth, Poppins Bush School.

The Klasen sisters run an unbelievably successful preschool program inside their long day care centre and now the three-year-olds at the centre will have access to fee relief. We will expand public preschools by building new public preschools, such as in Nirimba Fields in the electorate of the member for Riverstone. Recently I was in Liverpool with the Premier at the new Gulyangarri Public School, which is right in the middle of Liverpool. It will get a new public preschool on the site of its brand-new public primary school. In the electorate of the member for Parramatta there is Carter Street, right near Olympic Park. In regional New South Wales, Nowra— [*Extension of time*]

I graciously accept the extension of time. We have Nowra and Lennox Head in regional New South Wales, and we have only just started. The remaining 90 will be identified with a rigorous and independent process to determine where they are needed, ensuring that they do not cannibalise existing services, and where we can get them done to address the deserts where there is no preschool education. In contrast, the Opposition's response to the record investment in public preschools is to say, after 12 years of being in government, "We were going to do something like that. We were going to get around to do it." I will borrow a line from my boss, the Premier, who said the other day very clearly, "You know why you can't go to public preschools built by the Liberals and Nationals in New South Wales? Because there aren't any." Members of the Opposition can go on and on about how they wanted to build 500 preschools, but they only created one public preschool in 12 years. The way they did that is split a School of the Air into two. They did not even build a new preschool.

Mrs Sally Quinnell: Oh, half?

Ms PRUE CAR: Half.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: The people of New South Wales know that the Labor Government is the party and the government of education. They know that the mob opposite are the ones that claim, in some sort of conspiracy concept, that somehow we are going to stop electrical upgrades at schools to pay for teacher wages. I do not know where that came from. We have made it very clear that our investment in learners in this State will start from when they are little until they go to TAFE. The Opposition decimated it and the Minns Labor Government is building it up again.

CRIME AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (11:31): My question is directed to the Attorney General. Given the recent rising trend of offenders showcasing and publicly posting their crimes on social media platforms like TikTok and Snapchat, will the Attorney General contemplate amending section 21A of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to account for this as an aggravating factor during sentencing of these criminals?

Ms Anna Watson: Good question.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (11:31): It is a good question from a good member. I thank the member for Orange for the question and for raising the important issue. I also acknowledge his career in the Police Force over a long time, particularly as a police prosecutor. The filming and livestreaming of criminal acts and the distribution of those recordings, particularly where they involve, for example, the invasion of a person's home, which is a real incident that I have witnessed recently, or the commission of a violent or dangerous act is, as all members know, abhorrent. Sadly, there are offenders who think that they can glorify their crimes, and they should be subject to the appropriate punishment. Some of those offenders are young people but not all of them.

Within the first fortnight of becoming the Attorney General, I went to Kempsey to talk about this and other issues. I received a briefing from the police in Kempsey, including from Assistant Commissioner Peter McKenna, who has great experience in youth and Aboriginal crime, particularly in the north and the west of New South Wales. I spoke with Magistrate Scott Nash and spent a day with him. We discussed this trend of offenders filming behaviour, and I watched videos of that. We recognise the impact this type of behaviour is having in our community.

Thankfully the Police Force is adept at rising to new challenges, and the posting of crimes on social media is a new challenge. I know that the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism has spoken about that quite a lot. She has not only met with the police on a number of occasions but also with the eSafety Commissioner and various social media companies to better address the issue. The NSW Police Force is also working on strengthening its partnerships with social media companies so that they can streamline the reporting of illegal behaviour online and have the videos or livestreams taken down where appropriate, as they should be.

The bottom line is, where people are broadcasting their crimes on social media for notoriety or to big-note themselves, or for whatever reason, the videos should come down. It is obviously not just a New South Wales

issue, and I assure the member for Orange and the House that I will be speaking to attorneys-general from other States and Territories to see what work is being done in those jurisdictions to see if we can also get a national approach. I will be speaking to the Hon. Mark Dreyfus about that national approach. On the specific suggestion to amend section 21A of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, it is important to note that judicial officers generally have a wide sentencing discretion. [*Extension of time*]

When exercising that discretion, judicial officers have to follow the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 and other applicable statutory provisions. They also have to have regard for the purposes of sentencing, facts and circumstances, maximum penalty and other factors. Any amendment should be considered within the context of the generally wide sentencing discretion that judicial officers have and the ability of the court to take into account relevant objective or subjective factors that affect the relative seriousness of the offence, whether or not it is mentioned in section 21A. That means the courts can already take matters outside of section 21A into account, where relevant and appropriate. A court can already, in some circumstances, take into account what is referred to as post-offence conduct when assessing the objective seriousness of a crime. A sentencing judge could, where appropriate, take into account not only the conduct that actually constitutes the crime but also any surrounding circumstances that are directly related to that crime that can properly be regarded as circumstances of aggravation or mitigation.

Finally, I note that the Crown is required to prove aggravating factors beyond reasonable doubt. The practicality of doing that in the context of recordings that may be made and distributed on apps that automatically delete them after a set period of time needs to be worked through. In direct response to the member for Orange, I will seek some advice from my department about the issue. I will do the things I mentioned in my answer. I will consider those responses and communications I have with other jurisdictions carefully, and I will come back to the member directly with the outcomes of those discussions.

REGIONAL EMERGENCY ROAD REPAIR FUND

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:36): My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister please update the House on the Government's record investment in the Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund?

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (11:36): I thank the Parliamentary Secretary. She is a genuine advocate for the regions. I appreciate her question on the issue. It contrasts so sadly with members of the Opposition who failed to ask one question in this House yesterday about the regions. The Nationals did not ask one question. We gave them extra time after the budget went out to be able to do a little bit of reading, get their ideas in play and ask some questions. They did not take that opportunity. The Leader of The Nationals was rushing out with his little comments. I thought that was hilarious because the Government has invested massively in the Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund. We will roll out \$390 million before the end of the year.

The shadow Minister in the other place was bleating on last week that the Government was only going to put \$30 million out the door, but the Leader of The Nationals said, "There's now about \$46 million to share between 93 different councils." The problem is that he cannot read the budget papers. The Leader of The Nationals went to the budget *Infrastructure Statement* looking for road repair funding. The infrastructure budget papers are about new roads. That is part of our \$334 million program, of which we are spending \$46 million this year, and then we will do more in the forward estimates. The \$390 million for road repairs goes all out the door this year.

The SPEAKER: The member for Dubbo will come to order. I call the member for Dubbo to order for the second time.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: He does not understand that issue. I ask him to perhaps take the sage advice of the former Nationals' road Minister the Hon. Duncan Gay, who I think was giving some advice to the member for Miranda at one point, saying, "Building a road's not like buying a handbag." It is also not repairing it. That is the difference. What I want to say is that regions are excited about this. The Dubbo Regional Council in the electorate of the Leader of The Nationals will get over \$7 million for roads by the end of the year. Councils in the Barwon electorate will get over \$78 million by the end of the year. That is a far cry from what The Nationals leader said when he did his rough maths and said that councils would be receiving \$130,000. It is absolutely ridiculous.

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

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: He also said that he had billions of dollars committed to regional roads and rail before the election. That is very funny. [*Extension of time*]

The \$1 billion looked like donuts last financial year and donuts this financial year. Of that \$1 billion that the previous Government committed to, \$85 million would go out the door next year—so not even 10 per cent of the amount would have gone out in the first three years of the program. That is in its own costings to the Parliamentary Budget Office.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order: Despite the Minister's objection to the former Minister, we would like to hear what this Government is doing for regional roads, not what the previous Government did or did not do.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Do Opposition members want to hear it? I will do what Jacinda Ardern did. Members can stop me if I run out of time or ask for another extension. Our Government's spending on regional roads includes Albury City Council at \$1.4 million, Armidale Regional Council at \$4.7 million, Ballina Shire Council at \$1.8 million, Balranald Shire Council at \$4 million, Bathurst Regional Council—the member for Bathurst would not have done this—at \$3.1 million, Bega Valley Shire Council at \$3.8 million and Bellingen Shire Council at \$1.5 million.

Mr Dugald Saunders: What about Narromine?

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Don't get me out of alphabetical order. Narromine is getting \$4.2 million.

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

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Don't slow me down, Dubbo. You don't get it. Berrigan gets \$3.5 million, Bland gets \$6.4 million, Blayney gets \$1.8 million, Bogan gets \$4.1 million, Bourke gets \$6.2 million, Brewarrina gets \$4 million, Broken Hill gets \$651,000, Byron gets \$1.5 million and Cabonne get \$5.9 million—they love me out in the Far West, let me tell you. They love it. Carrathool gets \$6.6 million, the Central Coast gets \$5.7 million, Central Darling gets \$6.1 million, Cessnock gets \$2.7 million, Clarence Valley gets \$6.3 million, Cobar gets \$5.7 million, Coffs Harbour gets \$2.2 million and Coolamon gets \$3.5 million. There is \$4.1 million for Coonamble. Cootamundra gets \$3.4 million, Cowra gets \$3.2 million and Dungog gets \$1.8 million. The list goes on and is so good. Ask me another question, please!

STATE BUDGET AND EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (11:42): My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Page 5-1 of *Budget Paper No. 02* shows that the 2023-24 Department of Education budget increased its spending by 0.9 per cent in nominal terms but Treasury forecasts inflation at 4.75 per cent. Given Labor's first budget in 13 years is cutting overall education spending in real terms, what is the Minister cutting?

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:42): The fact that members opposite would ask a question about investment in education—

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

Ms PRUE CAR: The amount of credibility that members opposite have on investment in education is literally zero. That is a number that they should take heed of—zero. Let us address this question up-front. The issue is this: We inherited a system with chronic teacher shortages. Members opposite may think this is funny, but there are children in merged and cancelled classes because of them.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: It is not funny. We are investing a record amount—

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: The question was about the fact that the budget increases by 0.9 per cent but Treasury says there will be 4.75 per cent inflation. What is the Minister cutting?

Mr Ryan Park: Mr Speaker, he stood up with no point of order.

The SPEAKER: We know that the point of order is about direct relevance. The Minister is getting to the point. She is given some latitude to make introductory comments.

Ms PRUE CAR: Members opposite are simply wrong. We are investing a record amount in education. On the capital side of the budget, it is more than an 8 per cent increase because we are building schools where they are needed. But the most important thing we are doing in education is making the courageous decision to spend billions of dollars on recruiting and retaining the one thing that makes a difference in a classroom, and that is the teacher. Those are the teachers that Opposition members drove out. Let me tell the House a story of the previous Government when it comes to waste in education.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: What they presided over with their diabolical policy called Local Schools, Local Decisions—

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. The question is about what the Minister is cutting in education. She has not answered the question.

The SPEAKER: The Minister is being directly relevant.

Ms PRUE CAR: Opposition members might want to confect something, but it is just not true. Members of the previous Government had 12 years and had their chance. They burdened teachers and principals with an unbelievable amount of administration and paperwork. There was a proliferation of executives in schools who were not teaching.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: If the point of order relates to relevance, I will place the member for Coffs Harbour on a call to order.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: We know that maths is not the Minister's strong point. The question was why the budget is being cut.

The SPEAKER: I have heard the point of order. I call the member for Coffs Harbour to order for the first time. I am surprised that an extension of time has not been requested.

Ms PRUE CAR: Members opposite are wrong and cannot make it up when it is not a fact.

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

STATE BUDGET AND ROAD TOLLS

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (11:46): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport, in her capacity representing the Minister for Roads. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government has fulfilled its election promise through the toll cap?

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:46): I thank the member for Camden for her question.

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

Ms JO HAYLEN: She represents thousands of people who have no choice but to drive on toll roads every day. Because of those opposite, our Government has a lot of work to do to assist families like the ones that she represents. Why? Because under the Liberals, Sydney became the most tolled city in the world. The Liberals set up a privately owned toll road monopoly where over one million trips a day are tolled. Thousands of households and businesses across Sydney are paying whopping tolls. In fact, \$2 billion a year is paid in tolls. The Liberals' privatised toll roads hit Western Sydney families and businesses the hardest. In fact, 17 out of 20 of the worst tolled postcodes are between the north-west of Sydney and the south-west of Sydney. The Liberals' toll mania hurt those in Sydney who can least afford it.

Towards the end of the term of the last government, the unfairness got so bad that those opposite were forced to extend toll relief from their own toll mania. The former Government commissioned some work on toll reform. They did a bit of work, but they sat on the report, headed out the door and left the mess to us. We have inherited a patchwork of toll roads. They are underutilised and riddled with inefficiency. It is an economic cost to our State. It increases the cost of living and limits our potential to be a great global city. Toll mania is the shocking legacy of 12 years of the Liberals' pump-and-dump big road infrastructure obsession. The people have had enough.

Members on this side of the House are very proud that toll relief is the largest cost-of-living measure in our budget. We are delivering immediate support for Sydney residents to assist with their household budgets. Yesterday we announced that almost three-quarters of a million motorists will qualify for toll relief under our Government through the \$60 cap beginning on 1 January. We have allocated \$561 million over two years to the toll cap. That will benefit three-quarters of a million toll account owners, with motorists able to claim any spend above \$60 a week with a quarterly refund from Service NSW. Some 4,893 of those households will be in Camden. On average, they will be able to claim back \$294 next year.

Mrs Sally Quinell: I seek an extension of time to hear more about how this will benefit my community.

The SPEAKER: I grant the Minister an additional two minutes.

Ms JO HAYLEN: This makes the member for Camden one of the best members for Camden ever; she is delivering for her community after six months in government. Our toll cap will help motorists across Western Sydney. For example, a motorist in Silverwater, in Auburn, will be able to claim back \$475 from next year; in Glendenning, in Blacktown, a toll account owner will be able to claim back on average \$540 next year; in Rose Hill, in Parramatta, they will be able to claim back \$504 next year; in Quakers Hill, in Riverstone, \$446; in Holsworthy, \$286; in Winston Hills, \$468; in Epping, \$422; and in Gosford, \$199. Those are important toll relief measures for families across Sydney.

Toll mania also hurts local communities because it causes rat-running in parts of Sydney like Stoney Creek Road and Forest Road, and trucks take the local roads instead of the toll roads. Thanks to our changes in yesterday's budget, trucks will pay two times the toll on the M5 East and the M8 instead of three times the toll. That will see our trucks using toll roads instead of local roads. We are supporting our trucking industry, reducing the cost of goods and services and, most importantly, reducing traffic on local roads. That is great news for local communities who have had a gutful of their roads becoming truck highways. Along with those changes, our \$60 toll cap is great news for families. We are repairing our budget to provide more essential services and help families with cost-of-living relief.

STATE BUDGET AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (11:51): My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. The budget allocates \$1.6 billion for preschool fee relief. Is that \$1.6—

Mr Paul Scully: Isn't it great?

The SPEAKER: The member for Wollongong will not interject during the question.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: Is the \$1.6 billion allocation in addition to the \$5 billion Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund and the \$5.7 billion for universal pre-kindergarten or is the \$1.6 billion allocation out of one or the other?

Mr Paul Scully: The Minister answered this last week.

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:52): I did in fact answer this last week. I said clearly to those opposite that the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund and universal pre-kindergarten will be in the budget. What happened yesterday? It was in the budget. As part of our investment, we have announced—

Mr David Mehan: That's revolutionary.

Ms PRUE CAR: It is revolutionary. Unlike those opposite, as part of our investment, we have announced a way to get to universal preschool, an investment in workforce and the building of 100 public preschools. As the member cited in her question, we have announced \$500 additional fee relief for every three-year-old in preschool programs in long day care centres. That is a modest cost-of-living initiative. It will encourage parents to send three-year-olds to preschool, which we know is so important. As I said in my previous answer—

Mrs Sally Quinnell: Early intervention is so important.

Ms PRUE CAR: Early intervention is so important, not just for getting mum and dad back to work—

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order: My point of order is on direct relevance under Standing Order 129. It was a specific question. We know that the Government announced a \$1.6 billion fee relief package. We know that there is a \$5 billion Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund. We just want to know—

The SPEAKER: This is not an opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition to make a speech.

Mr Mark Speakman: It is not a speech.

The SPEAKER: I understand the point of order; it is seeking direct relevance. The Minister was being directly relevant. If she is not, I will ask her to be relevant to the question. There is no point of order.

Ms PRUE CAR: Those opposite do not like the answer because they got their question wrong, but that does not mean they can continue to take points of order. They had a fairytale plan to build 500 preschools, which they never could have built.

Ms Anna Watson: They built one.

Ms PRUE CAR: They did not even build one. We have a concrete plan to build 100 public preschools and we are giving new fee relief for three-year-olds. I have answered the question clearly. It is in the budget. We

have kept the funding that we supported in opposition. The gotcha moment from those opposite has not been realised. They thought they were going to get a gotcha moment, but they did not.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Chris Minns: Five points of order have been taken so far during this answer.

The SPEAKER: I will hear the point of order. I do not need advice from the member for Dubbo. I call the member for Dubbo to order for the third time.

Mrs Leslie Williams: I need a simple answer. Which fund did it come from?

Mr Chris Minns: What's your point of order?

Mrs Leslie Williams: It is under Standing Order 129, but we do not have to cite a standing order. Read the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: The member for Port Macquarie will resume her seat. Members will come to order. The Minister will complete her answer without being interrupted by further points of order. The Minister has the call.

Ms PRUE CAR: By all means, Opposition members can come into the Chamber every question time and ask the Government questions about education because what they did in education resulted in the election of a Labor government.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Port Macquarie to order for the first time.

Ms PRUE CAR: They decimated our education system, left a chronic teacher shortage and had no concrete plan to invest in universal pre-kindergarten. We are fixing that.

STATE BUDGET AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (11:56): My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces representing the Treasurer. Will the Minister update the House on what waste and mismanagement was uncovered in the budget that we inherited? How does addressing it allow the Government to invest new funding in essential services?

Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:56): I thank the member for The Entrance for his question. There is plenty of waste and plenty to discuss. The member for The Entrance cannot stand wasteful expenditure in the budget because he understands that when a dollar is wasted it is a dollar that cannot be spent on his community. For the past decade, his community has been missing out. This budget ends wasteful, short-term, politically motivated pork-barrel spending—spending that was the hallmark of members opposite for more than a decade. This budget marks the beginning of responsible investment—

The SPEAKER: The member for Dubbo and the member for Terrigal will take their conversation outside the Chamber.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: —that will confront the housing crisis, rebuild our essential services and repay Liberal Party debt. The Government undertook a careful, comprehensive expenditure review, and I commend the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance for doing that. It was a challenging process for us Ministers, but it worked. Part of that review looked over completed projects to see whether there was still cash sitting around in government bank accounts and, extraordinarily, there was. The former Government was so sloppy with budgeting and management that some of the money that was underspent was there, from small amounts to significant amounts.

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Unlike people during the cost-of-living crisis, members opposite struggle to understand the value of a dollar. My grandmother used to say, "Waste not, want not," and that formed part of this Government's approach to the budget. The Treasurer and the Minister for Finance looked forensically at 700 projects dating all the way back to 2014, and they found \$10 million down the back of the couch in government bank accounts.

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: That will not fix everything or deliver everything that the community of the member for The Entrance missed out on for years, but it is a start. We did not stop there. In total, the comprehensive expenditure review found \$13 billion worth of wasteful expenditure. We are cutting that waste and redirecting it into the State's priorities.

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

Mr PAUL SCULLY: We are reducing \$537 million in consultants and labour hire. We are ending COVID programs that we no longer need, saving \$100 million. We are reducing and freezing pay for senior executives and politicians, and we are reducing senior executive numbers by 15 per cent. That will save a further \$745 million. We are no longer proceeding with projects like raising the Warragamba Dam wall, the Dungowan Dam or the Wyangala Dam. That will save at least \$5 billion. [*Extension of time*]

In my portfolio, we are streamlining agencies. We are bringing planning staff from two agencies—the Greater Cities Commission and the Western Parkland City Authority—back into the Department of Planning, saving \$111 million along the way with that efficiency. These were not easy decisions, but they are necessary. We will not stand by and see the interest that we had to pay on debt going to bond holders when it should be going to essential workers to support their wages and deal with the cost-of-living crisis. As I said yesterday, we prefer to uncap wages and cap tolls. That is our approach to budget management. By cutting the waste, we have been able to reduce the growth in debt by a whopping \$14.8 billion—\$14.8 billion!

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Hornsby to order for the second time. The member for Goulburn will come to order.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: It is not just about reducing the growth in debt. It is about making sure that we are not paying \$2.3 billion—

Mr Matt Kean: You can't read the aggregates!

Mr PAUL SCULLY: You are upset, aren't you, mate? The member for Hornsby is really upset that we have discovered how to fix his budget mess. He called me a fool a second ago, and I let that go. But he has opened his mouth and declared himself one.

Mr Matt Kean: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I will hear the point of order from the member for Hornsby. The Minister will resume his seat.

Mr Matt Kean: I take a point of order under Standing Order 129, relevance. The planning Minister raised \$8.8 billion worth of increases in stamp duty and has delivered a fraction into housing. What a joke!

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. As the member for Hornsby is on two calls to order, under Standing Order 249A, I direct him to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time. The Minister has the call.

[*Pursuant to standing order the member for Hornsby left the Chamber at 12:02.*]

Mr PAUL SCULLY: He gives himself a rap on the way out. The fact is that we are redirecting the \$2.3 billion in interest savings into things like helping—

Mrs Tina Ayyad: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Holsworthy rises on a point of order.

Mrs Tina Ayyad: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 130, "Answer not to debate". I believe the Minister was attacking and debating with the member for Hornsby while he was answering the question.

The SPEAKER: I would so love to uphold the point of order, but I cannot. There is no point order. I do not believe the standing order applies in this circumstance. The Minister has the call.

Mr PAUL SCULLY: Members opposite might not like it, but let us be clear. The previous Government's decade of damage is over. We are getting on with cleaning up the mess.

MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT PROPERTY DISCLOSURE

Ms ELANI PETINOS (Miranda) (12:02): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Leaving aside the Minister's relationship with transport secretary Josh Murray, her two properties near Sydney Metro projects—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: While the member for Miranda has not completed her question, I believe we have heard enough for the Leader of the House to take a point of order. The Leader of the House has the call. The member for Dubbo will come to order.

Mr Ron Hoenig: The question is predicated in breach of Standing Order 128. It contains ironical expressions or other matters that are not necessary to the question. It also contains an imputation, which is not permitted. Mr Speaker, I ask you to rule the question out of order and move on to the next question.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. I rule the question out of order, but I will give the member for Miranda an opportunity to—

Mr Mark Coure: Let her ask the question first.

The SPEAKER: I place the member for Oatley on three calls to order. The member for Miranda can reconstruct her question so that it is in order.

Ms ELENi PETINOS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Leaving aside any relationships, the Minister's two properties near the metro south-west project and now her membership of the Qantas Chairman's Lounge, is there anything that the Minister has not disclosed in accordance with the ministerial code of conduct?

The SPEAKER: Government frontbench members will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (12:04): I thank the member for Miranda for her question. I have answered variations of questions like this over multiple weeks in this place to the members of the fourth estate—to anyone who wanted to ask me. The fact is that those opposite cannot ask me questions about public transport because they are just obsessed with process.

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

Ms JO HAYLEN: Today they have shown that they cannot even read the budget papers. In fact, it is five past 12 on the day after the budget, and they have moved on. They have given up. They have realised that they cannot read them. It does not meet their own political requirements.

Ms Eleni Petinos: Point of order—

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

Ms Eleni Petinos: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Minister has been speaking for a minute and not one moment of that minute has been about any conflict of interest as requested of her.

Ms Yasmin Catley: To the point of order: I was going to take this point of order when the question was asked. It is tedious repetition. The Minister has answered the same question for weeks. Obviously those opposite do not listen.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Swansea. Tedious repetition does not apply over a span of time.

Ms Yasmin Catley: It is very tedious, though. You have to agree with me.

The SPEAKER: It may well be for the member for Swansea. I uphold the point of order. The Minister has not yet been directly relevant to the question. I ask the Minister to return to her answer.

Ms JO HAYLEN: I have made all the relevant declarations that I am required to make. I am pleased that I have made those declarations both to the Parliament and to the Premier, as I am required to do, on the matters that the member has raised. The fact is that members opposite are asking questions about process because they cannot ask questions about public transport. For example, they cannot ask about the second stage of the Parramatta Light Rail, can they? In our budget, only released yesterday and which those opposite have already moved on from, we have invested an extra \$200 million to deliver a project that they promised—in fact, the former Government announced it 17 times but did not even put a single shovel in the ground.

Remember former transport Minister Andrew Constance? He is trying to run for the Senate again, I think. That guy removed the money from the budget. Those opposite announced 17 times that they were going to build Parramatta Light Rail stage two without any work whatsoever. They failed the people of Camellia, Rydalmere, Ermington, Melrose Park and Wentworth Point. In fact, yesterday the shadow transport Minister said it is all spin. I will tell members what is spin: failing the people of Western Sydney for 12 years by promising them projects that those opposite never delivered. In contrast, we are fast-tracking these critical projects, rescuing the mess that they left us and delivering the public transport services that the people of Western Sydney deserve.

STATE BUDGET AND RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (12:08): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government's first budget is delivering for rural and regional health?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (12:08): What a fantastic question from a hardworking member. We still have not found someone in Lismore who does not vote for her, but I am sure someone will be revealed. Earlier the member for Tamworth made reference to a part of *Budget Paper No. 02*, which I am glad that he has read. I will make another reference to *Budget Paper No. 02*, page 7-1. No, there are no pictures, but I will try to outline it. There has been a 4.7 per cent increase in the operating side of NSW Health's budget. There has been a 41 per cent increase in the capital side. I know that my mum, my dad and the member for Hornsby are watching the broadcast now. I will make it clear to the member. If we exclude the impact of one-off factors, it is actually a 6.4 per cent increase. What could be a one-off factor? Probably a global pandemic. The Dragons winning a premiership might be a one-off factor.

I think what the member for Hornsby is asking me to do is to reinstate the testing facilities that we had on every corner. We have got to get those back. We have got to get all the personal protective equipment back on the staff that were in those testing facilities. What do members opposite want? Do they want that sort of expenditure or not? The reason we are able to invest so heavily in regional and rural New South Wales is because we have got expenses under control. I make no apology, because I am going to continue to look through every line item in the budget for NSW Health, particularly around COVID expenditure, and ask myself whether that is needed anymore. Because if it is not needed, I could put it back into the front line like we have in relation to—people in regional and rural New South Wales will like this—securing 1,112 nurse positions that were going to be booted.

The SPEAKER: I remind the member for Dubbo that he is on three calls to order.

Mr RYAN PARK: The member for Lismore comes from northern New South Wales. She will be pleased that that means we have saved 51 nurse and midwife positions in that local health district. In the mid North Coast and Murrumbidgee, we have saved 43 and 41 respectively. There have been massive savings in relation to that. *[Extension of time]*

What I have been fascinated by is why the member for North Shore has not asked me a question. We have direct mail about it, so she should not panic. In her electorate, there are not 10, 15, 20, 35 or 50 more nurses, although that would be substantial. There are 82 nurses.

Ms Felicity Wilson: And none of them know who you are.

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

Ms Felicity Wilson: The Minister has seen the TikTok.

Mr RYAN PARK: They will know soon. The member should not panic. We have ads coming. She should not worry about it. We are about to do our newsletters.

Mr Tim James: We will make sure they know who you are.

Mr RYAN PARK: Calm down, New York, New York. You will get there. The Opposition keeps going through its list of members. "Who has not asked a question?" "New York?" "No, next person." The member for Willoughby should not panic.

The SPEAKER: The member for Willoughby will stop being incited by the Minister.

Mr RYAN PARK: There will be 500 more regional and rural paramedics. It is the biggest investment in paramedics in the bush. The Government is implementing safe staffing as well as securing 1,112 more nurses for the workforce. That is great for regional and rural New South Wales. We are making sure that we have a pipeline of healthcare workers, which means that we are providing subsidies directly to people studying paramedicine, nursing or medical degrees. We are building hospitals along the length and breadth of New South Wales. We are going to continue to invest in regional and rural health care. Why? Because we need to do better. If I can continue to find the funds to do so, we will be directing money back into the workforce and back into the men and women who deliver health care across New South Wales.

BUSHFIRE READINESS

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (12:13): My question is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services. In the Snowy Valleys community, several organisations have been funded to prepare their communities for disasters. Those communities were devastated by the Black Summer bushfires. The organisations have done great work, but funding has not been extended and there is work still to be done. Given the recent warnings about the approaching bushfire season and the recent declaration of an El Niño event by the Bureau of Meteorology, what steps is the Government taking to ensure that communities are prepared for disasters such as those that bushfire-prone communities may face in the very near future?

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his short novel. I call the Minister.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (12:14): I was thinking it was a long question. I lost track of it. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga. He is an outstanding local MP. I have had the pleasure of spending a lot of time with him in his electorate. He is obviously someone who not only works incredibly hard but is also very passionate about his local electorate and the issues affecting it. As the question correctly identifies, the work of disaster preparation extends beyond government to every member of the community. As we heard yesterday, El Niño has now been declared. I reiterate to the House that we have a number of total fire bans across Greater Sydney, Upper Hunter, the greater Hunter area and also in the west.

All of us have a responsibility to be careful and conscious of those things. Again, I remind members to download the Hazards Near Me app. No-one will leave the Chamber today without me checking their phone to make sure they have got it. On a serious note, it is a really important app and I ask members to take responsibility and tell their communities about it. We might joke around about certain things, but there are some things that we cannot laugh about. We are in a bushfire season. We cannot laugh about that sort of stuff. Right now, there are 64 bushfires and grassfires across the State, of which seven remain contained. So far 624 personnel, 202 appliances and 14 aircraft have been deployed. I have talked about the total fire bans. They serve as a reminder of the challenges that New South Wales faces. I ask individual members, if they can, to encourage people to do stuff at home: mow the lawn, remove cuttings, clear the area around the home, have a sturdy hose that reaches everywhere, clear debris and anything that is combustible, and prepare everything they can.

Concerning the specifics of the member's question, as we have discussed, the Snowy Valleys Resilience Hub was funded under the Bushfire Community Resilience and Recovery Fund stream 2 funding. As of August, the Snowy Valleys Resilience Hub has been incorporated, which will allow it to seek additional grant funding, corporate support and fundraising initiatives to continue to support the communities across the Snowy Valleys. The NSW Reconstruction Authority is working with the Snowy Valleys Resilience Hub in achieving its strategic outcomes, which includes disaster preparedness. That includes assisting local communities in maintaining, educating people on, promoting and taking stewardship of those plans as part of the sustainability model for those plans. More broadly, the Government is appropriately resourcing the NSW Reconstruction Authority to manage the preparation of disaster adaptation plans so that New South Wales manages the full life cycle of disasters from adaptation to mitigation, recovery and reconstruction.

Dr Joe McGirr: I seek an extension of time for additional information to complete my short novel.

The SPEAKER: I grant the Minister the remainder of time left for question time, which is less than two minutes.

Mr JIHAD DIB: This will be the chapter and verse to the introduction. That joke fell flat, didn't it? As I said, we did telegraph what we saw in the budget yesterday, that \$115 million will go to the Reconstruction Authority to assist local communities. There are 69 rural fire brigades and 2,377 volunteers across the RFS Riverina fire district, which incorporates Coolamon, Junee, Lockhart and Wagga Wagga local government areas. The bushfire danger period starts on 1 October, and 38 are already in the Wagga Wagga local government area [LGA]. I encourage everyone to start thinking about the danger period right now. In the first quarter of the 2023-24 financial year, \$102,065 has been allocated from the RFS supplementary mitigation funds to the Riverina district for roadside slashing and works along firebreaks. As members know, last weekend was Get Ready Weekend. Downside, Forest Hill, Lake Albert and Wondalga rural fire brigades held community engagement events in the Wagga electorate.

In recent weeks two hazard reduction activities covering more than 47 hectares were completed at the Pomingalarna Reserve and on the Stuart Highway in the Wagga Wagga local government area [LGA]. Several more hazard reduction activities are planned in the near future, including a large burn covering 394 hectares at Kapooka in the Wagga Wagga LGA, along with two others at Tarcutta and Lockhart. In total, these works will cover more than 415 hectares, providing protection for 188 properties statewide. We continue to exhaust all efforts to prepare New South Wales, including by acquiring the Chinook and investing \$10 million in additional mitigation crews. I am happy to confirm that yesterday's budget provided an additional \$11.3 million initial investment in delivering vehicle-as-a-node technology to the RFS in conjunction with the Telco Authority.

The SPEAKER: The time for questions has expired. I note that, in accordance with Standing Order 131 (4), question time concluded prior to the asking of 14 questions.

*Business of the House***BUSINESS LAPSED**

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that, in accordance with Standing Order 105, general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 242 to 269 will lapse tomorrow.

*Bills***CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AMENDMENT (CHILD SEXUAL OFFENCE EVIDENCE) BILL 2023****First Reading**

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

Second Reading Speech

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (12:21): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The New South Wales Government is pleased to introduce the Criminal Procedure Amendment (Child Sexual Offence Evidence) Bill 2023. The New South Wales Government takes the need to reduce trauma for children who provide evidence in child sexual offence matters very seriously. It is well recognised that children face significant difficulties as complainants and witnesses in these cases due to their young age and the nature of the evidence they must give. Providing this evidence to police and the court can be a highly stressful and traumatic experience. It is vital that these children are supported to give the most complete and accurate evidence they can. As child sexual offences are frequently committed in private, often the only direct evidence of the abuse is the evidence that the child gives about what occurred. Clear evidence is critical for investigations and prosecutions for child sexual offending.

When it was introduced in 2016, the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program was a key initiative aimed at reducing the stress and trauma experienced by child complainants and child prosecution witnesses in sexual offence proceedings. It also aimed to help those witnesses give their best evidence. The program does this through two special measures. First, eligible child complainants and prosecution witnesses can give the whole of their evidence, including cross-examination and re-examination, in prerecorded evidence hearings. This complements other provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 that enable a recording of the child's interview with police to be admitted as the child's evidence-in-chief. Second, witness intermediaries are available to assist with a child's communication needs. Witness intermediaries are available at both the police investigative stage and at the court stage.

Combining prerecorded evidence hearings and witness intermediaries in the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program was a novel approach in Australia. The implementation of these measures also coincided with the appointment of two specialist judges in the New South Wales District Court. The program began as a three-year pilot in the Sydney Downing Centre and Newcastle District Court. Witness intermediaries were also made available in the central metropolitan, south-west metropolitan and Hunter child abuse units. The program was evaluated by the University of New South Wales in 2017 and 2018. The evaluation found strong, widespread support for the special measures in the program. Those measures were seen to reduce stress for children and result in better quality evidence.

In its 2017 *Criminal Justice Report*, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended that all State and Territory governments ensure that legislation and resources are in place to allow for the prerecording of the whole of a witness's evidence in child sexual abuse matters. It also recommended the use of witness intermediaries for these matters at both the police interview and court stages. The Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program and its expansion to every District Court location and police district in New South Wales ensures that these recommendations are implemented in New South Wales. In April 2019 the program transitioned from a pilot to an established program at the Sydney Downing Centre and Newcastle District Court and corresponding child abuse unit locations.

The program has been extended twice by regulation: first, to 30 June 2022 and, most recently, to 30 June 2024. The program will now be expanded to every District Court location and police district in New South Wales. Witness intermediaries became available in all police districts from 1 July 2023. The use of witness intermediaries in the police investigative stage is not governed by legislation, so this was able to be done without amending any Act. The use of witness intermediaries at court and prerecorded evidence hearings are currently governed by schedule 2 [29] to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 and part 10 of the Criminal Procedure Regulation 2017. A District Court practice note also facilitates the operation of the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program. This bill will expand the availability of prerecorded evidence hearings and witness intermediaries to all District

Court locations in New South Wales. It also makes amendments to enhance the operation of these special measures and to ensure that they are available across the State.

Along with the measures in this bill, three new District Court judges will be appointed to support the expansion of the program. This bill and the expansion of the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program across the State is a significant and meaningful step forward towards improving complainant experiences and supporting child complainants and witnesses in child sexual offence proceedings. I turn now to the substance of the bill. Schedule 1 [3] to the bill will omit part 29 in schedule 2 to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. Schedule 1 [2] will insert proposed division 1A into part 5 of chapter 6 of the Criminal Procedure Act, which will contain the provisions governing prerecorded evidence hearings and witness intermediaries. The provisions in new division 1A largely reflect those that were already in place to govern the program.

I do not propose to go through each of these provisions in full, but I will focus on areas where the bill makes changes to improve the operation of the program and facilitate its statewide expansion. The proposed division will remove existing references to a "pilot scheme" as prerecorded evidence hearings and witness intermediaries will be available on a permanent basis. Unlike the current legislation, the proposed division does not apply only to prescribed sexual offence proceedings heard in particular District Court locations; rather, prerecorded evidence hearings and witness intermediaries will be available for child complainants and child prosecution witnesses in any prescribed sexual offence proceedings at any District Court location, no matter where the case is heard.

I turn now to a core component of the bill, which is prerecorded evidence hearings. These hearings are currently governed by schedule 2, part 29, division 2 to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. The relevant provisions will be carried into proposed division 1A, with some changes to facilitate the statewide expansion of the program and to ensure that it is able to operate effectively. A prerecorded evidence hearing is part of a trial, but it takes place before a judge and the parties to the proceedings with no jury present.

The recorded interview with the child, along with any additional oral evidence-in-chief, cross-examination and re-examination that occurs at the prerecorded evidence hearing, is then played before the jury in the trial. Under the current legislation governing the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program, there is a presumption in favour of children under 16 years of age giving evidence via a prerecorded evidence hearing. However, young people aged 16 or 17 may do so only if the court considers it is in the best interests of justice and makes an order allowing them to do so.

Item [2] of schedule 1 to the bill will insert new section 294G (1) into the Criminal Procedure Act. This provides that all child complainants and prosecution witnesses under 18 years of age or who were under 18 when the accused was committed for trial or sentenced are to give evidence via a prerecorded evidence hearing unless the court makes an order to the contrary. This approach recognises that children and young people who are complainants and witnesses in sexual offence cases are inherently vulnerable due to the nature of evidence they must give at a relatively young age. Children under 16 and young people aged 16 or 17 are all likely to benefit from giving evidence in a prerecorded evidence hearing instead of in front of a jury.

Further, schedule 1 [2] will insert new section 294E into the Criminal Procedure Act, which contains definitions that largely reflect the definitions in the existing legislation that governs the program. Importantly, this section will now expand the definition of a witness to specifically include a complainant or prosecution witness who was under 18 when the accused person was committed for trial or sentenced but has since become an adult. This is to ensure that a young person does not become ineligible to give evidence via a prerecorded evidence hearing or with the assistance of a witness intermediary simply because they turned 18 in the period between committal and the prerecorded evidence hearing.

Schedule 1 [2] will also insert new section 294G (1) and (2) into the Criminal Procedure Act. This reflects the current legislation and enables the court to make a contrary order—that is, an order that the child complainant or prosecution witness give evidence in the usual way, but only if the court is satisfied it is appropriate to do so in the interests of justice. New section 294G (3) and (4) prescribe the factors to be considered by the court in determining whether to make a contrary order that the child complainant or prosecution witness give evidence in the usual way. The bill prescribes that the primary factor that must be considered by the court is now only the wishes and circumstances of the child.

The availability of court and other facilities necessary for a prerecorded evidence hearing to take place will be changed by this bill from a primary factor that the court must consider, to a discretionary factor that the court may consider in deciding to make an order. The other discretionary factors that a court may consider remain unchanged. This appropriately ensures that the interests of the child witness will be the primary factor that a court considers over and above other considerations. Under the current legislation governing the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program, a child complainant or child prosecution witness is entitled to give evidence remotely. The

bill clarifies that appearances by all participants in prerecorded evidence hearings, including the accused person and legal practitioners, may be made by audiovisual link, or AVL.

It is not envisaged or intended that participants in prerecorded evidence hearings other than the child complainant or child witness will always appear via AVL or that this will be the standard way to conduct prerecorded evidence hearings. Rather, the bill seeks to provide sufficient flexibility to address the individual needs of cases and to enable prerecorded hearings to occur in a timely way across the State, including in regional areas. A single model for conducting prerecorded evidence hearings would not be able to meet the needs of all matters. Logistical and resource constraints may make it difficult to hold a prerecorded evidence hearing in a timely manner without the occasional use of AVL where necessary. It is in the best interests of the child witness that prerecorded evidence hearings are held as early as possible. Not only does this help to preserve the memories of the child, but it also enables them to complete their evidence as part of the criminal justice process at an early age.

The bill seeks to ensure that there is flexibility for the prerecorded evidence hearing participants to appear remotely or in person. This will be enabled by item [2] of schedule 1 to the bill, which will insert a number of new sections into the Criminal Procedure Act. New section 294E provides that "audiovisual link" has the same meaning as in the Evidence (Audio and Audio Visual Links) Act 1998. New section 294I (1) (b) provides that a child complainant or child prosecution witness is entitled to give evidence via AVL. This provides flexibility for the child to provide evidence remotely from either a location outside the court or from a remote witness room at the court via closed-circuit television facilities. New section 294I (8) provides that it does not matter if, while the prerecorded evidence hearing is conducted, the judicial officer, an Australian legal practitioner acting in the proceedings, the accused person, the witness and the witness intermediary are at different places and appearing by audiovisual link.

New section 294N (1) provides that the evidence of a witness for whom a witness intermediary is appointed may be given while the witness intermediary is at the same place as the witness, or is in the courtroom, or is at a different location and appearing via AVL. This provides flexibility for the witness intermediary to appear from the same location as the child or from another location on rare occasions where necessary. Except for a child complainant and child prosecution witness, who already give evidence via video from outside the courtroom, having participants appearing via AVL is not intended to be the preferred approach. Rather, the availability of AVL for these other participants is meant to be a backup for flexibility, particularly for regional areas and to ensure timeliness.

The bill contains important safeguards to protect the integrity of the proceedings and ensure that the accused person can participate in the proceedings without detriment. Schedule 1 [2] will insert new section 294I (5), which provides that the accused person must be able to see and hear the witness giving evidence by AVL. It also provides that the accused person must be able to communicate with their legal practitioner, including by way of AVL, if they are appearing from separate locations via AVL. New section 294N (1) (c) provides that if the witness intermediary appears via AVL, the witness, the court and legal practitioners acting in the proceedings must be able to see and hear the witness intermediary. Further, new section 294N (2) (a) provides that the court and a legal practitioner acting in the proceedings must be able to communicate with the witness intermediary, including through the use of AVL if the witness intermediary is appearing via AVL.

I now turn to the components of the bill that relate to judicial officers. The bill makes clear that the judge who presides over the prerecorded evidence hearing and the judge who presides over the remainder of the trial may be different. The purpose of this is to give the court the flexibility to meet the individual needs of the case. Schedule 1 [2] will insert new section 294I (7) into the Criminal Procedure Act. This provides that it does not matter whether the judicial officer presiding at the prerecorded evidence hearing is the same as the judicial officer presiding at the proceedings at which the recording is viewed or heard by the court.

Amendments are also proposed to section 164A of the Criminal Procedure Act, which governs the process for when a judge in a trial before a jury dies, becomes ill or is otherwise unable to continue the proceedings. Item [1] of schedule 1 to the bill will insert new section 164A (3A) into the Criminal Procedure Act, which makes it clear that section 164A does not apply to a prerecorded evidence hearing or require the same judge to preside over the prerecorded evidence hearing and the remainder of proceedings.

While it is clearly preferable to maintain continuity of the judicial officer between the prerecorded evidence hearing and the remainder of the trial wherever possible, in some instances the need to facilitate a timely prerecorded evidence hearing to ensure that a child complainant or child prosecution witness is able to give their evidence at an early stage may take priority. To achieve this, it may be necessary for different judges to preside over the prerecorded evidence hearing and the balance of the trial. As the witness' evidence is recorded at the prerecorded evidence hearing and played before the judge presiding over the balance of the trial, this judge will

not be at a significant disadvantage compared to the judge who presided over the prerecorded evidence hearing. They will hear all of the witness' evidence.

I now turn to the other key component of the bill: witness intermediaries. Witness intermediaries assist children with their communication needs and help them to give their best evidence. The use of witness intermediaries at court is currently governed by schedule 2, part 29, division 3 to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. The relevant provisions have been carried over to the bill, with some important changes. Significantly, the bill uses the term "witness intermediaries" instead of "children's champions". The term "witness intermediaries" better reflects the neutrality, independence and function of the role.

Witness intermediaries are not advocates or support persons, though child witnesses are entitled to have support persons attend with them too. Witness intermediaries are officers of the court and their duty is to impartially facilitate communication of, and with, the witness so the witness can give their best evidence. Schedule 1 [2] to the bill will insert proposed new section 294L (1) into the Criminal Procedure Act. This will provide that the role of the witness intermediary is to communicate to the court whether the witness can understand questions put to them, and explain to the court and the person asking questions the best way a witness can be asked questions that the witness can understand. This wording is different to the current legislation and better reflects current practice and the training provided to witness intermediaries.

Another key change made by the bill relates to the appointment of witness intermediaries. The current legislation provides that a person must not be appointed as a witness intermediary, relevantly, if they have assisted the witness in a professional capacity, other than as a witness intermediary. This provision remains in the bill at proposed new section 294M (5) (b). However, schedule 1 [2] to the bill will insert proposed new section 294M (6) (a) into the Criminal Procedure Act. This subsection provides that a court is not prevented from appointing a person as a witness intermediary where the person has assisted the witness in a professional capacity if the court, in the interests of justice and on its own motion or on the application of a party, appoints the person as a witness intermediary. This approach provides more flexibility to the court to accommodate the needs of each particular case.

The bill is to commence on proclamation. This will provide participant agencies in the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program with time to implement these measures across the State. The New South Wales Government will work with agencies and the District Court of New South Wales to settle a commencement date. Schedule 1 [4] to the bill will insert transitional provisions into the Criminal Procedure Act. The effect of these provisions will be that the previous provisions governing the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program will apply to sexual offence proceedings that were commenced in either Newcastle or in the Sydney Downing Centre, either by the filing of a court attendance notice or the presentation of an ex officio indictment, before the commencement of the bill. Commencement of the proceedings may occur either by the filing of the court attendance notice in the Local Court or by the presentation of an ex officio indictment in the District Court. The relevant question is when the proceedings commenced, which must have been prior to commencement of this bill.

The new provisions, contained in proposed new chapter 6, part 5, division 1A of the Criminal Procedure Act, will apply to sexual offence proceedings commenced in Newcastle or in the Sydney Downing Centre courts, either by the filing of a court attendance notice or the presentation of an ex officio indictment, on or after commencement of the bill. This approach will avoid disrupting proceedings that are already in progress in the Sydney Downing Centre and Newcastle courts, that started under the previous provisions, at the time the bill commences. For all other court locations in New South Wales, the new provisions in proposed new chapter 6, part 5, division 1A of the Criminal Procedure Act will apply to sexual offence proceedings commenced, either by the filing of a court attendance notice or the presentation of an ex officio indictment, on or after the commencement of the bill.

The new provisions will also apply to matters commenced by the filing of a court attendance notice or the presentation of an ex officio indictment before the commencement of the bill, but only if the matter had not yet been committed for trial. This would capture matters that were commenced in the Local Court by the filing of a court attendance notice before the commencement of the bill, as long as the accused had not yet been committed for trial. It would also capture matters that were commenced in the District Court by presentation of an ex officio indictment, before the commencement of the bill, without there having been any committal proceedings first. Schedule 1 [2] to the bill will insert proposed new section 294S into the Criminal Procedure Act, which requires a statutory review of the reforms to be undertaken as soon as possible after three years after commencement. This will enable the operation of these special measures to be monitored and assessed.

I am pleased to introduce this bill, which reflects the importance that the New South Wales Government places on improving complainant experiences and reducing trauma for children who provide evidence in child sexual offence matters. Prerecorded evidence hearings and witness intermediaries have been shown to be effective in making the criminal justice process easier for child witnesses. The bill will ensure these special measures are

available for child complainants and prosecution witnesses in all sexual offence cases in New South Wales, no matter where the case is heard. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

PAINTBALL AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 19 September 2023.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (12:47): I continue my interrupted contribution to debate on the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023. The bill clarifies that a paintball marker permit allows for ownership of multiple markers. The bill also requires paintball markers to be transported in a securely locked container or bag, which should be designed to conceal the paintball marker, should not indicate in any way what it contains and should be unable to be readily accessed by an unauthorised person.

The bill empowers the secretary to authorise the use of paintball markers outside of authorised paintball venues—for example, during university research into eye safety—and allows for the Paintball Regulation 2019 to prescribe matters the secretary must consider when deciding whether to approve an application for authorisation. While participant safety remains paramount, the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023 seeks to level the playing field for paintball marker suppliers in New South Wales and their interstate counterparts. These amendments mandate that the Department of Customer Service must be promptly notified by all authorised New South Wales suppliers when a transaction has been executed with an interstate supplier. The transaction must be meticulously recorded in the paintball register ensuring accuracy and transparency. This requirement will enhance safety for consumers and the community by ensuring the paintball register is accurate.

The bill acknowledges licenced paintball marker suppliers from interstate and allows those suppliers to sell to New South Wales consumers only via an authorised New South Wales supplier. This also ensures public safety as it restricts the sale of firearms-related items within New South Wales to those who have already been assessed as appropriate in their own jurisdiction. It extends the Act to support the recognition of equivalent interstate authorisations. Currently, New South Wales consumers can purchase paintball markers from suppliers in other States without going through vetting or approval processes, and interstate suppliers are not required to notify the department when they sell a paintball marker to a consumer in New South Wales.

The Paintball Amendment Bill 2023 is a significant piece of legislation that not only enhances consumer safety within the paintball industry but also fosters a level playing field for businesses across State lines. It reflects the Government's commitment to responsible regulation and safety, while promoting innovation and transparency within the industry. I wholeheartedly endorse the bill, recognising the significant benefits it brings to our community, our economy and our State. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (12:51): I make a contribution to debate on the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023 for a number of reasons. The first is the long involvement of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government and me relating to the many reforms that were undertaken between 2011 and 2023. Paintball, this legislation, the subsequent amendments and the statutory review were all very much victims of global circumstances. One would think, as paintball is an outdoor activity which a few people undertake, why should things be so difficult? Why should global circumstances have caused some of these reforms to take so long? I will go through some of those points.

Rouse Hill Action Paintball was located very close to my premises. I had a personal association there for the past 15 years. The person who ran that facility, which is now located at Yarramundi, was a gentleman by the name of Michael Whybrew. Michael Whybrew was very much the leader for reforms on behalf of Action Paintball. Whilst we knew each other, he came to me once in government in 2011 and said he had some issues which were restricting paintball. Paintball is massive around the world. We think of it being very small. There are around 45 different facilities spread across New South Wales, primarily in rural areas. Across the world it has an enormous audience. Events and tournaments can be seen live streamed via YouTube.

It is not until we have an appreciation of that, that we see what a broad audience it has. It is massive in America and Canada. In many countries paintball is very big. Big boys like to get out and run around a paddock in their khakis and shoot each other with what is now known as a paintball marker. But it is much more than that. It is quite strategic and requires a significant degree of fitness. Now, with the advent of technology such as drones and better cameras, when paintball teams are filmed from height it becomes very exciting to watch. That was my background. I note that recently Michael Whybrew has become ill and I acknowledge him and his contribution to the many reforms that have been made.

When he first came to see me, paintball facilities in New South Wales were having difficulty in being able to purchase their markers, which were previously referred to as paintball guns. They were primarily imported from overseas, and this is where the first incidence of global circumstances affected paintball. Because they were recognised as guns and were listed under the firearms regulation, which fell under police legislation, especially here in New South Wales, the importation of paintball guns or markers was incredibly difficult. It could take anything from six to 12 or 18 months just to import a single piece of equipment, such as a paintball gun, to undertake this activity. Michael Whybrew and I had discussions, and I took up the issue on his behalf.

Police advised me that paintball guns were listed as firearms and that we needed to reform that. That reform took six years, right up until 2018. We were then addressing the issue of whether we would permit the participants of paintball to be as young as 12 years of age, and I am proud to say that that happened. I remember, as a Minister, arguing with people in Cabinet at the time that if 12-year-olds can shoot a normal gun, why the hell would they not be allowed to go out and participate in paintball? Finally, that got through, and I acknowledge one of my colleagues—one of the Nats—who supported me that day. It was a long and lengthy argument because there were people who viewed it as encouraging people to use weapons other than paintball markers, which I do not think has been the case.

Why did it take six years? Police were very, very vigilant. I do not say that as a criticism whatsoever. They were vigilant because the importation of real guns, whether they be made out of steel or plastic, has happened now because we are linked up socially and these weapons can be shipped around the world. Police were very concerned that more dangerous weapons could be imported into the State and the country under the guise of a paintball marker or gun. It took a long time to work together with police to get to a point where they could be satisfied. If everybody remembers that time between 2011 and 2018, there was a much greater focus on the threats of terrorism around the world. When I say that police were vigilant, thank God they were vigilant, because the last thing we wanted to see was illegal weapons that could maim people come into the country. We went through that. Eventually, the paintball markers, as they are known today, moved underneath the Fair Trading Act and that was resolved.

At the same time we had the battle over dropping down the age limit from 18 to 12. That was all encapsulated in the bill. Then, just when we had the legislation and it was great to go outside and play paintball, COVID kicked in. We had this wonderful piece of legislation, which everybody could not wait to go out and embrace, and of course they could not mix together because of the threat of COVID. It was another global incident that affected this particular activity. It has virtually waited until those people could get out on the park and they can undertake to test the legislation. At that particular time, the former Liberal-Nationals Government undertook a statutory review, as it promised it would, although it did take a bit of time. That is a long way of saying that much time was spent by the previous Government and me, and a lot of it was very frustrating. We wanted to allow people to run around the bush in their khakis and fire paintballs at each other; that has happened. The bill is the result of that statutory review. I support those particular reforms.

We believe that things are moving ahead in a positive manner and that paintball will move ahead in a positive manner and will continue to grow. It will grow globally because social media has a huge focus on it. When something is reviewed, the issues can be smoothed out. I fully support the reforms proposed in the bill. I acknowledge previous police Ministers, fair trading Ministers, and even Premiers and Deputy Premiers who I accosted and affronted and lobbied hard just to get paintball to the position it is in today. That is the culmination of a lot of effort and would not have happened without the focus of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. I support the bill.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): It being 1.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the take-note debate on committee reports. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

Committees

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): The question is that the House take note of the report.

Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:01): As Chair: I address the House today as the chair of the Legislation Review Committee for the Fifty-Eighth Parliament. Yesterday the committee tabled its fourth digest of this Parliament. The committee examined nine bills and 19 regulations, commenting on one regulation. The committee's scrutiny function is intended to inform members of both Houses about the potential impact of legislation on personal rights and liberties, and whether they enable the inappropriate use of government or legislative power. I now draw members' attention to some of the key issues raised in the digest.

The Health Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2023 makes amendments to seven different health-related legislation. It is part of the Government's regular monitoring and review of those Acts to make sure they are up to date. The bill amends the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966 to give the health secretary the power to seize and dispose of goods. The proposed amendments allow the secretary to make a written declaration that goods be forfeited and to order their disposal. The proposed amendments exclude any liability for compensation to a person whose goods are forfeited and disposed. The committee acknowledged that the secretary must make reasonable efforts to give notice to the apparent owner of those goods as well as consider any submission from the owner against a forfeiture order. However, the committee noted that the exclusion of a right of compensation is strictly applied and there are no provisions for a person to seek review. The committee therefore referred the matter to the Parliament for its consideration.

The bill also amends the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008 to permit a person who is not an inspector to perform the functions of an inspector. That would enable inspectors and other persons operating with authority under other Acts to seize illegal goods such as illegal tobacco and e-cigarette products containing nicotine. The committee acknowledged that this would empower inspectors under other Acts to seize illegal goods under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act when discovered in a lawful search. However, it noted that the provisions are widely worded. That may broadly expand powers to legally enter premises to search and seize goods and affect an individual's property rights. The committee referred the matter to Parliament for its consideration.

I draw members' attention to the Parliamentary Evidence Amendment (Ministerial Accountability) Bill 2023. The bill seeks to amend the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901 to enable the Clerk to summon Ministers to attend and give evidence before Parliament or a parliamentary committee. The bill would remove an exclusion for members under the Parliamentary Evidence Act from being summonsed under existing powers as a witness to give evidence. The amendments would enable Ministers to be summonsed by the Clerk of either this House or the other place in accordance with the procedures under that Act. The proposed amendments could interfere with longstanding constitutional principles including exclusive cognisance of the Houses to regulate their own internal affairs. Further, if a Minister is summonsed to either House and compelled to give evidence, this may impact upon the constitutional principle of the separation of powers. The committee therefore referred those matters to Parliament for its consideration.

I turn to the regulation the committee reported on. The Tattoo Industry Regulation 2023 remakes and amends the Tattoo Industry Regulation 2013 that was repealed on 1 September 2023. The new regulation provides additional grounds for the refusal of visiting tattooist licences and permits. Under the new regulation, the Commissioner of Police can refuse to issue a permit if the applicant is a close associate of a person who is not a fit and proper person or is a member of a prescribed criminal organisation or was a member within 12 months before making the application. This may infringe on an applicant's freedom of association which protects their right to form and join associations. As the grounds for refusal are broadly worded to include the basis of close associates, the committee referred the matter to Parliament for its consideration. That concludes my remarks. I encourage everyone to read the full digest, which is available on the committee's webpage. I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions to the digest and the hardworking secretariat for their support. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:05): I make a contribution to the take-note debate on the report from the Legislation Review Committee for this week. As always, the committee provides advice to the Government. This week there were nine bills and one regulation. A number of bills went through but I draw the attention of the House to the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (Liverpool Plains Prohibition) Bill 2023. The committee highlighted the removal of the right to compensation. That is particularly tricky when respecting the property rights of individuals and organisations. That is a very difficult one for the Parliament to balance. I refer it to the Minister for their further advice.

Another bill looked at was the Radiation Control Amendment Bill 2023. Seven items in that bill were potentially problematic. First, the absolute liability offence to look at how fault is established could mean that people other than those involved could be caught up and therefore exposed to custodial sentences. That needs further review by this Parliament. Secondly, persons receiving an additional punishment for the same crime could be punished twice for the one action. That requires additional review and the committee passes it to the Parliament for its consideration.

The third issue considered by the committee is the right to the presumption of innocence. That may increase the burden on a defendant when a defendant is defending themselves against two crimes and their defence in the first crime may affect their privilege in the defence of the second crime. That also needs further consideration. Retrospectivity in the bill means these amendments would still allow individuals to be subject to new provisions not existing prior to the amendments at the time of the offending conduct. Those individuals would not have

known that the offences would attract higher penalties. As a result, we ask that the Parliament give further consideration to this item.

There is no comment on the Rural Fires Amendment (Red Fleet) Bill 2023, so it must be a well-written bill from the member for Northern Tablelands. It is certainly one that councils all over regional New South Wales are keeping a close eye on. I thank the secretariat and the committee for their work this week and look forward to the next lot of legislation.

Report noted.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

Bills

PAINTBALL AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (14:32): I support the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023. Today is a significant day in the history of this new term of Parliament because two Opposition members contributed to debate on the bill, instead of just one. A second Opposition member decided to put their shoulder to the wheel and do some work today, which makes perfect sense. I recognise the old school member for Kellyville, who has been in this place for quite some time. He knows what it means to do work. Having said that, I was happily surprised by his extensive knowledge of paintball and the way the industry works. His knowledge potentially is superseded only by the Minister himself. When the Minister made his second reading speech, I was stunned by his depth of knowledge of paintball and the industry. In some ways, it makes perfect sense that the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading brought this amendment bill before the House, and I commend him for it.

It is critical that our laws are consistently updated to meet the needs of our constantly changing world. Further, laws need to be flexible to serve the needs of the people of New South Wales. All members understand that, and it is an important part of our work in this House. I welcome the flexibility that the bill seeks to bring by providing the secretary of the department with the power to authorise the use of a paintball marker outside of an authorised paintball venue, under certain circumstances. Historically, paintball markers have been used inside licensed, registered and insured venues, but there are instances where they may have a use outside those venues. I will speak to those situations in a moment.

The Paintball Act was originally designed to limit the use of paintball markers to authorised paintball venues only. That was to achieve the admirable goal of ensuring that the sport of paintball is conducted in a safe and controlled environment. However, that approach means that the use of paintball markers outside of playing the sport at an authorised venue is currently not allowed. The bill seeks to change that. In the past, paintball markers have been used for research purposes, such as research into paintball safety equipment. Paintball markers have also played a key role in television and movie special effects. Those are two terrific examples of why the Act must be more accommodating of certain uses of paintball markers outside of a game of paintball at a venue.

Section 5 of the bill will give the secretary the power to authorise the use of paintball markers at a place other than an authorised paintball venue. It also provides that the Paintball Regulation may set out the details about applications for authorisations. The details about those aspects of the Paintball Regulation will be worked out in close consultation with key industry stakeholders and the public as part of the regulation remake process. That is what we should expect from a government.

The regulation will ensure that there are appropriate limits on the secretary's authorisation power. The public will be able to rest assured that authorisation will only be given where it is justified and does not compromise consumer safety. Nobody should be under the impression that we will suddenly see paintball markers wandering the streets of our communities. I commend the Government for proposing that the Act be amended to provide for the use of paintball markers in activities that are in the public interest. I have no doubt that this will only serve to benefit the community. I support this commonsense approach to regulating the use of paintball markers, and look forward to seeing this come to fruition in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (14:37): I make a brief contribution to debate on the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023. It will be a relatively short contribution about a specific issue. From the outset, I support the bill and I have indicated my support to the Minister. But one issue has been brought to my attention. Today in their contributions I heard members mention this issue and I have spoken about it with Mike Whybrew, who is the head of the Paintball Association and runs a paintball business on the north-western outskirts of Sydney. There

are paintball operations near Parkes in my electorate, and I have participated in paintball in the past. It is quite an enjoyable activity. Many years ago when I was in the Police Force we had a paintball team building exercise. There is nothing like getting a group of people together and playing paintball. It is a lot of fun. Now the police use paintball-style Simunition handguns for training. It has certainly extended well beyond the average game of paintball.

My concern with the bill, which also was raised by Mike Whybrew, is about the transport of paintball markers, which is contained within section 34. I understand the public safety policy around the proposal for paintball markers to be transported in a certain way. Under new section 34 (1) (b) the bill indicates that those requirements are:

- (b) in a bag or container that—
 - (i) is locked, and
 - (ii) is not able to be readily accessed by an unauthorised person, and
 - (iii) conceals the paintball marker, and
 - (iv) does not indicate that the bag or container contains a paintball marker.

Under the present regime, the requirement is that paintball markers need to be carried in a safe manner, such as in a concealed bag in the car. Under the present law there is no requirement for that container or bag to be locked. That has caused some concern amongst those in the industry. I have asked the Minister to perhaps clarify this specific issue in his address in response. The parliamentary amendment legislative briefing note, which was kindly presented by the Minister's office, indicates:

- requiring markers to be transported in a bag or container that is locked, not able to be readily accessed by an unauthorised person.

That supersedes even the firearms legislation regarding the requirements for transporting firearms, which are no doubt objectively more stringent and rightly so. Clause 149 of the Firearms Regulation 2017 titled, "Requirements for non-commercial transportation of Category A and B firearms"—which is the majority of firearms—requires that:

- (1) A person who transports a firearm to which a category A or category B licence applies and that the person possesses under the authority of a category A, category B or firearms collector licence must convey the firearm in accordance with the following requirements—
 - (a) the firearm must be conveyed in a manner that ensures compliance with section 39 of the Act,
 - (b) the firearm must not be loaded with any ammunition while it is being conveyed,
 - (c) while the firearm is being conveyed in a vehicle it must not be visible from outside the vehicle.

There is no issue relating to those conditions that are outlined in clause 149 of the regulation, but there is nothing about requiring the container or the bag to be locked. I know from my personal experience that bags carrying long arms—and I am assuming paintball markers—are generally not bags that can be locked up. They are not like a luggage bag, which has two zippers that can be connected, locked and secured. They are generally a one-zipper bag and it is very difficult to lock that bag. With the interpretation of clause 148 of the Firearms Regulation, which talks about prohibited firearms and pistols, that requires a locked container and it must be properly secured. There are good reasons for that.

For the sake of having consistent laws, some concerns were raised within the industry about paintball markers. I am not sure if it was brought up during the stakeholder engagement, but a specific issue was raised about transporting a paintball marker in a locked vehicle. If the locked bag is being transported in a locked vehicle, there could be a legal argument at court at a later stage that the vehicle could potentially be defined as a vessel or a container of that paintball marker. It is open to interpretation. I place on record those concerns raised by the industry because the Minister should address them in his response to the second reading debate to provide some clarity around the issue. I believe it has been raised before, so it should not come as a surprise to the Minister or the Minister's staff. Other than that, I do not have any other issues with the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (14:43): I speak in support of the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023. I welcome the findings and recommendations of the review carried out in 2022, which found the Act could be improved to clarify ambiguities, improve consumer safety and establish a level playing field for New South Wales and interstate paintball marker suppliers. I congratulate the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading on introducing the bill to the House and on taking action on this important issue.

Paintball is a sport enjoyed by many New South Wales residents, with 44 paintball businesses across the State and 45 active paintball venue permits, as well as 2,876 active paintball marker permits. That is a clear indication that paintball as a sport has broad appeal and that there is a dedicated market for the industry, ranging

from amateur players to recreational enthusiasts, all the way to professional competitive players. I was speaking with my parliamentary colleagues earlier about how we probably are not enthusiasts like others in the Chamber.

Mr Paul Scully: You are missing out.

Ms DONNA DAVIS: Some of us do not like getting hurt. It is not necessarily our bailiwick, but we acknowledge that it is something that other people really enjoy. Since the introduction of the Act in July 2019, over 3,163 applications have been made for a paintball marker permit. In that time, NSW Fair Trading also received 39 permit applications for international competitors to play paintball in New South Wales. On average, it takes NSW Fair Trading just one day to turn around applications for a paintball marker permit, which is impressive. However, significant safety risks occur if markers are not maintained properly, not outfitted correctly or not safely augmented, and that can cause significant injury. That being said, that is not the norm and the majority of games are executed safely.

Today's bill will ensure that, regardless of skill or regularity, New South Wales residents can participate in this sport with greater safety and confidence that the industry is well regulated. The amendments put forward in the bill will ensure that anyone seeking to run a paintball venue, own or sell paintball markers will have clearer and more comprehensive regulations and frameworks within which to do so. That will streamline the expectations for them, preventing accidental breaches and at the same time will ensure the safety of all players.

To improve consumer and public safety, the bill proposes a number of amendments, including requiring the holder of a paintball marker permit to show their permit prior to entering a paintball venue if they wish to use their own marker; requiring a paintball venue to sight the permit of a paintball marker owner who wants to use their own marker at the venue; applying penalties to venue operators for failing to sight permits; and requiring venue operators to clearly display their venue permit or permit number and registered business name at the venue, on their website or social media platform. The bill also proposes penalties to apply if venues fail to display this information and strengthens the safeguards for when a paintball marker is transported.

The bill makes the law regarding paintball more flexible such as, when appropriate, allowing for the use of paintball markers in activities other than the sport of paintball. At the same time, the bill strengthens consequences for the misuse of paintball markers by introducing wording confirming that a paintball marker may also be "an imitation firearm". In that case, an imitation firearm permit under the Firearms Act 1996 would be required in addition to a paintball marker permit. The bill also inserts notes to confirm that if paintball markers are used to commit an offence they will be treated as firearms for the purposes of the Crimes Act 1900. Those amendments will be welcomed by the broader community and stakeholders.

Industry stakeholders and paintball operators have been closely consulted, and stakeholders are supportive of the bill. Those commonsense solutions are in everyone's best interests—consumers and providers alike. The priority of the Minns Government will always be safety. The bill prioritises safety in a practical way, which will not adversely impact the industry, allowing thousands of residents and visitors to New South Wales to continue enjoying the sport of paintball. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (14:49): I speak in debate on the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023, which seeks to amend the Paintball Act 2018 to make amendments resulting from a review of that Act. The Paintball Act 2018 sets out a modern permit system and regulatory framework for paintball markers and paintball activities. Most of the amendments in the bill are based on the statutory review of the Act, which was completed in 2022. During consultation in the statutory review, stakeholders raised concerns about venue operators being unable to verify consumers' paintball marker permits where consumers wanted to use their own markers. Noting those concerns, the bill proposes new sections 41B and 36B.

I will go into the detail of those sections. New section 41B requires the holder of a paintball marker permit to show their permit before entering an authorised venue if they wish to use their own marker. New section 36B requires venues to not allow a person to use their own markers at the venue unless that person has shown their paintball marker permit to the venue operator or their employee. That gives paintball venue operators the power to allow or disallow people who come into the venue to participate in paintball with their own markers if they cannot show that they own a permit for those markers. The power is important since those venue operators take out insurance on that. New sections 41B and 36B will jointly serve to make sure that a person who wants to use their own paintball marker has the proper permit. They will also ensure that the owner of the paintball marker knows how to use that marker safely and responsibly, since they must complete the required NSW Paintball Marker Safety Training course to apply for a permit.

I now turn to consumers knowing that paintball venues are safely operated. Concerns were also raised that consumers were unable to check the credentials of paintball venues. Proposed section 36A will require venue operators to clearly display their paintball venue permit or permit number and registered business name at the

paintball venue and on their website or social media. That allows people who have taken their children to paintball—like me—to know that the venue that their children are going to is registered and has gone through the required levels of checks and balances, and that it is a safe place for children to experience paintball.

The current requirements for transporting a paintball marker are much weaker than the requirements for storing a paintball marker, which makes no sense. The safety requirements should be more stringent for transporting a marker than for storing it. Given the risks involved in transporting paintball markers, the bill proposes to amend section 34 of the Act to require that a paintball marker be transported in a bag or container that is locked and not able to be readily accessed by an unauthorised person. The bag or container needs to conceal the paintball marker and not indicate that it contains a paintball marker.

The bill also seeks to clarify the number of paintball markers a paintball marker permit holder can purchase and possess. The original intent of the Act when it was introduced in 2018 was for operators and individuals to only need one permit regardless of the number of markers they own. To clarify that provision, the bill proposes to amend section 12 of the Act to specifically allow the holder of a paintball marker permit to purchase and possess one or more paintball markers under a single permit. Similarly, the bill will amend section 13 of the Act to allow the holder of an international paintball competitor permit to have more than one paintball marker under a single permit.

However, the obligation under part 7 of the Act to register each paintball marker remains. That means that the serial number of each paintball marker must still be notified and recorded on the register of paintball markers to ensure that it can be tracked. The register is an important public safety measure. The bill before the House proposes amendments to the Paintball Act 2018 that have been the subject of extensive, targeted and public consultation. The bill upholds consumer safety, prioritises public good and clarifies the legislation in important ways. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (14:54): I support the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023. Paintball is a sport that is enjoyed recreationally and competitively by thousands of people in New South Wales. In fact, there are 41 paintball businesses across New South Wales holding 45 active paintball venue permits. Two of those businesses are located in the electorate of South Coast, with one in Nowra and the other in Ulladulla. The member for Orange gave me the great idea earlier to attend one of those businesses in my electorate for a staff development and bonding day. The Minns Government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of those participating in paintball as well as the venues that house paintball activities.

As of 31 August 2023, there are 2,876 active paintball marker permits registered in New South Wales. Since the introduction of the Act in July 2019, over 3,163 applications have been made for a paintball marker permit. The current Paintball Act sets out a modern permit system and regulatory framework for paintball markers and paintball activities. When the Act was introduced, it removed red tape for paintball businesses and made it easier for people in New South Wales to play paintball in a safe and controlled environment. Following a review of the Paintball Act, the bill proposes amendments that will clarify the Act's operation and improve consumer and public safety while balancing the needs of New South Wales paintball venue operators.

To improve consumer and public safety, the bill proposes a number of amendments including requiring the holder of a paintball marker permit to show their permit prior to entering a paintball venue if they wish to use their own marker, requiring a venue to sight the permit of a paintball marker owner who wants to use their own marker at the venue, introducing penalties on venue operators for failing to sight permits, and requiring venue operators to clearly display their venue permit or permit number and registered business name at the venue and on their website or social media platform. Through the enhanced safety amendments in the bill, the Government is demonstrating that consumer and public safety is, and continues to be, our primary consideration.

The bill also seeks to clarify the operation of the Act for paintball marker permit holders and international competitors. The original intention was to allow people to have more than one paintball marker if they had the required permit, as opposed to permit holders having to obtain a new permit for each subsequent marker they purchased. But the Act contains some ambiguities. The proposed amendments to sections 12 and 13 of the Act will allow the holder of a paintball marker permit or international paintball permit to purchase and possess one or more paintball markers under a single permit.

The bill also inserts notes to confirm that a paintball marker may also be an imitation firearm and, in that case, an imitation firearm permit under the Firearms Act 1996 would be required in addition to a paintball marker permit, and that, if paintball markers are used to commit an offence, they will be treated as firearms for the purposes of the Crimes Act 1900. The Minns Government is demonstrating its commitment to providing commonsense and flexible laws that continue to uphold public safety. The bill introduces new amendments to provide flexibility in the Act. The bill will allow for the use of paintball markers in activities other than the sport

of paintball in appropriate circumstances and will allow the secretary to have the power to authorise the use of paintball markers at a place other than an authorised paintball venue.

Authorisations will only be given where it is appropriate for the public good and in low-risk settings. To ensure that there are appropriate safeguards on this authorisation power, the bill also inserts new section 5 [3] into the Act to allow the Paintball Regulation 2019 to prescribe matters in relation to applications for the secretary's authorisation. The Minns Government is committed to supporting consumers and businesses and to enhancing public safety. The bill proposes amendments that have been the subject of public and targeted consultation with key industry stakeholders. The amendments enhance safety provisions, clarify the operation of the Act and introduce flexibility into the Act, while creating an even playing field for New South Wales and interstate paintball marker suppliers. The bill demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to modern laws that are fit for purpose and improve customer safety. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (15:00): In reply: I thank all members who made contributions to debate on the Paintball Amendment Bill 2023, particularly members representing the electorates of Willoughby, Mount Druitt, Kellyville, Parramatta, South Coast, Camden, Cessnock and Orange. An important role of government is to ensure that legislation remains up to date and fit for purpose. Laws should provide a balance between protecting consumers and allowing industry to innovate and grow. In 2020 the statutory review of the Paintball Act found that it was operating as intended and meeting its objectives; however, further improvements were identified.

The bill makes a number of amendments to the Act, most of which are based on the statutory review. Considerable targeted and public consultation was completed during the development of the bill, and feedback guided the final bill. Industry stakeholders gave their support to the bill. The bill will enhance safety provisions, clarify ambiguities in the Act, introduce flexibility into the Act and create an even playing field for New South Wales and interstate paintball marker suppliers. The bill reflects current community attitudes and expectations on the regulation of paintball markers and paintball venues and activities. I find it a little strange that the shadow Minister gave credit to the Opposition for the bill when, of course, the Government brought the bill before the House. Nonetheless, I welcome the support of the Opposition, as detailed by the member for Kellyville and the shadow Minister.

I welcome also the contribution from the member for Orange. The member and I had a fruitful conversation about the practicalities of locking paintball marker bags during transportation, as is required under the bill. I have had similar discussions with my colleagues in the other place, and I am aware that amendments may be proposed to amend the section of the bill that relates to the transport of paintball markers. Government members are always very happy to have those conversations with our colleagues from this House and the other place. The Government will always look to enact measured and practical legislation.

The member for Orange asked whether a locked vehicle would satisfy the requirements of the proposed amendment to section 34. I have received advice from compliance and enforcement authorities officers at NSW Fair Trading that they would consider that to be compliant with the new requirements. The department will also provide guidance to the public on how to comply with the new requirements, as is the normal practice. As I mentioned in my second reading speech, paintball is indeed a popular sport across New South Wales. From those who occasionally partake to celebrate milestones or have fun with friends, to those who compete regularly, paintball is enjoyed by thousands of people across the State.

The bill demonstrates this Government's continued commitment to meet the needs of industry, ensure consumer safety and provide modern laws that are fit for purpose. I thank officers of NSW Fair Trading who supported the development of the bill, including in consultation with various stakeholders. I thank Warren McAllister, Sarah Low, Jerson Balaton, Elizabeth Tunnecliff and Jenna Dries for their work and commitment to ensuring that the laws governing the paintball industry are well balanced and protect consumers. I thank also the paintball enthusiasts and venue operators who contributed to the statutory review and subsequent consultation on the bill. Their willingness to engage with the department and advocate on behalf of the industry was appreciated. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

CITY OF SYDNEY AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 13 September 2023.

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (15:05): As shadow Minister for Local Government and shadow Minister for Small Business, I contribute to debate on the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023, which the Opposition opposes, along with the repeal of amendments made by the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Act 2014. In the second reading speech to the bill, the Minister described the measures as anti-democratic, yet the essence of democracy is representation. The bill seeks to remove fair representation for a significant stakeholder in the City of Sydney. I would determine that to be anti-democratic. We heard about the difficulties in accuracy and the burden of administration in ensuring the representation of the businesses that are affected. Instead of seeking to assist the bodies in implementing the measures, improving the administrative processes or enhancing the democratic outcomes, the Minister sought to strike that representation entirely.

Furthermore, the Minister insinuated—after several bizarre minutes of lamenting Twitter and *Hansard* references, as well as quoting himself—that the purpose of the Act was to impede Clover Moore's mayoral position, despite her evidently remaining in that position since its implementation. However, I note the timing of the bill. Many other issues could be at the forefront of Labor's priorities concerning local government. The Minister implied that the Act he sought to repeal gave nonresident business owners at least two votes—sometimes more—compared with residents' one vote. It is blatantly incorrect and wrong to make such a claim. Nowhere in the Act is there a provision to allow a single elector multiple votes. Assigning two votes to an elector would be political interference. Australia's election process has a privileged history and is widely desired around the world. Our constituents' confidence in and the legitimacy of election processes is revered, and it should remain so. The Minister would do well not to place that confidence in jeopardy.

The amendments the bill seeks to repeal were designed for non-residential electors to be automatically enrolled, instead of having to formally apply and then be notified that they have been placed on the roll. It is a hallowed doctrine of Australian democracy that all eligible citizens have a fundamental duty to participate in the democratic process. These council ratepayers are required to select their representation within their local government area. Does the Minister, the Premier or any of their colleagues expect the same of their constituents? The Minister said they were "being enrolled against their will and compelled to vote, as is currently the case". The Act details that the same process that applies in Melbourne applies in Sydney: Where there are more than two non-residential owners or occupiers of properties, up to two of those persons are to be enrolled. The amended City of Sydney Act 1988 ensured that businesses were given the means and opportunity to a single opinion on their local government election to better reflect the significant financial contribution and investment they have made in the city.

The amendment gave effect to recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters arising from its inquiry into the 2012 local government election and followed extensive consultation. The committee recommended that the Government introduce the model used by the City of Melbourne for the City of Sydney in all its respects, including deeming provisions and compulsory voting aspects for electors on the non-residential roll. Furthermore, the committee recommended that the Government consider applying this model in other city council areas with significant economic centres, such as Newcastle, Wollongong and Parramatta. When the Act was implemented it sought to achieve that by empowering the Governor to extend the model by regulation. However, the former Government had no intention of expanding the Sydney model to other council areas without learning the lessons that could be learnt from the City of Sydney. The system of local government has evolved over decades, essentially through a series of progressive, incremental reforms. This presents a fresh opportunity to look at the system of local democracy in its entirety.

The Government should be proposing a range of improvements that support the reputation of the local government sector and support community confidence in the integrity of local democracy and governance. If the argument for abolishing evolving legislation is based on ineffective bureaucracy or poor administrative processes, I have grave concerns for the next four years of the Labor Government. Let us talk about the actual process. First of all, contrary to what has been claimed, no person can vote in council elections twice. A property owner can vote, a property occupier can vote, and/or a property lessee can vote. As a property owner, a person will be entitled to vote as a nonresident owner only if they meet the following criteria: either they or their corporation own rateable property, residential or business, excluding utility lots, by themselves or with others in the City of Sydney local area; their enrolled residential address is not in the City of Sydney local government area; they are entitled to vote in Australian elections; and, if they are nominated on behalf of their corporation, they are a current company secretary, director or equivalent of that corporation.

As a property occupier, a person will be entitled to vote as a nonresident occupier, but again only if they meet all of the criteria: either they or their corporation occupies rateable property, residential or business, excluding utility lots, by themselves or with others in the City of Sydney local area; they pay \$4,000 or more a year to occupy the property by themselves or with others; they have occupied the property continuously for the previous three months; their enrolled residential address is not in the City of Sydney local area; they are entitled to vote in all Australian elections; and, if they are nominated on behalf of their corporation, they are a company secretary, director or equivalent of that corporation.

Finally, a nonresident rate-paying lessee may also be entitled to vote if they meet the following criteria: they or their corporation lease rateable property, residential or business, excluding utility lots, alone or with others in the City of Sydney local area; they pay \$4,000 or more a year in lease payments for the property, which includes a contribution of rates, alone or with others; they have leased the property continuously for the previous three months; their enrolled residential address is not in the City of Sydney local area; they are entitled to vote in Australian elections; and, if they are nominated on behalf of their corporation, they are a current company secretary, director or equivalent of that corporation.

Every single one of the electors described contributes to council operations conducted by the City of Sydney and are taxed by the City of Sydney, yet this Government wants to burden them with more administration rather than supporting the council to get the process right. By his own admission, part of the Minister's problem with the administration of the process implemented in accordance with the Act lies with the fact that his wife received a fine for not participating in the council election—a fine that was later redacted. He referred to the bill as correcting a historic wrong. While wives across the State may be envious of the Minister's dedication, businesses across Sydney may disagree. Instead of repealing the bill, why will the Government not choose to show greater support for the council in the administration of the electoral roll? Why will it not encourage greater engagement from constituents in relation to the role of local government?

I discuss the City of Sydney specifically in terms of its previous arrangements prior to the introduction of the amendments that the Government now seeks to repeal. Prior to the amendments, business electors, who contributed 78.5 per cent of the council's revenue, were disenfranchised and disengaged by their council. I understand that in the 2012 elections, only 2.13 per cent of the total electors who voted were non-residential electors. But in his second reading speech on the bill, the Minister cited the difference between the residential electors and the non-residential electors issued Apparent Failure to Vote notices as follows:

At the 2021 City of Sydney election, 47,465 non-residential voters were enrolled to vote ... However, 18,501 of those were issued Apparent Failure to Vote notices by the Electoral Commission following that election. That represented 39 per cent of all non-residential electors for the area. By contrast, 21 per cent of the residential electors for the City of Sydney were issued Apparent Failure to Vote notices.

While 21 per cent of residential electors failed to vote, not even twice as many non-residential electors did the same—an 18-percentage-point difference for just the second time the enacted amendments were able to be implemented. How much of this did COVID affect? How much of this could be rectified through greater engagement with electors or greater education? What about greater accessibility for the electors to vote? What about simple administrative improvements?

The bill gives up on trying to make improvements and accepts the standard of a lack of engagement instead. I ask the House to look back on the council election in 2004, when there were 2,059 non-residential enrolments. By the 2008 election, this number had fallen to just 396. To encourage non-residential electors to enrol for the 2012 election, the council ran an advertising and engagement campaign that resulted in 1,709 enrolments, but only 1,498 of them voted. That is 13 per cent failing to vote who enrolled themselves—less than 1,500 votes for the entire City of Sydney for Australia's largest central business district. It is abysmal. Sydney is a global city.

The current system of enrolment for businesses across the rest of the State is burdensome for those who wish to participate in their local government elections. Too many requirements and too many rules equate to a lack of engagement. The carrot is simply not working. Central to Sydney are many major corporations that have hundreds of staff, and contribute thousands of dollars in rates and millions to our State and national economy, who get a single vote to represent their respective voice. However, they only get a voice if they are already engaged with their local government and sufficiently unburdened with life administration to find the resources to enrol as a non-residential elector every four years. That is because, with the non-residential roll lapsing after each election, they are required to re-enrol at each election.

While the second reading speech on the bill did not provide much detail, we did learn that the emphasis of the burden lies with the administration, data entry and maintenance of the City of Sydney council. This is an organisation that provides information on the non-residential register on its website as follows:

The City knows who owns each rateable property in the local area at any given time. We receive regular updates about property purchases and have access to supplementary data from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. We will make direct contact with eligible property owners to confirm the details we hold, their requirements regarding the 2024 election and to ask for additional information when needed. Property owners do not need to apply to be on the non-residential register as the City will automatically add their details.

We learnt that the City of Sydney spent \$9.7 million to establish a register, and they pay an additional \$1 million per annum to maintain it, without accuracy. The argument continues that this money could be better invested in delivering services and infrastructure to the local community, including business owners. Council should be well placed, better so than the Electoral Commission, to access information necessary to prepare non-residential rolls through automatic enrolment.

The decision to repeal the Act's amendments will weaken Sydney's business input to council at a time when most businesses have not yet recovered from COVID's impact. It will also undermine businesses that are facing more challenges than ever from their council, whether that be the approved use of buildings, banning gas connections, customers' accessibility to buildings and businesses, the cost of car parking, or the collection or lack of collection of businesses' waste. Has the Minister engaged with the businesses directly? Have the constituents and electors of the City of Sydney been engaged, or has the Government met only with public servants and office holders of the City of Sydney? I am aware that there has been little engagement with businesses.

In one breath, the Minister weeps for the element of compulsory voting for non-residential electors. In the next, it is the administration of the vote that is burdensome. These non-residential voters are within the City of Sydney's remit. They are operating in the CBD. They should be contacted and consulted regularly. Again I say that if the Minister thinks it is such a great burden to know one's ratepayers and engage with them, so much so that the New South Wales Government must scrap the policy that requires it, I have grave concerns for the next four years of this Labor Government.

In his second reading speech, the Minister detailed how the amendments the bill proposes to repeal were designed to ensure that potentially hundreds of people per rateable parcel of land, after accounting for rate-paying lessees, owners and occupiers of land, could be voting in a City of Sydney local government election. I agree with the Minister. For each rateable parcel of land within the City of Sydney local government area, there could be hundreds of eligible electors per piece of land, and likely there are. I answer the Minister's question—"What does this look like in practice?"—by directing him to the City of Sydney's *Long Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2031/32*. Within this, he will see that business rates make up over \$173 million of council revenue, compared to \$93 million from residential rates. The plan states:

The City maintains minimum business and residential rates which are applied to property owners where rate in the dollar charge falls below a set amount. This is to ensure that all landowners make a reasonable contribution towards the services and facilities provided, which is particularly relevant given the number of strata property owners with relatively small proportionate land values within the City.

The City's annual rates income represents 44.1% of Income from Continuing Operations (as reflected in the attached schedules of this plan). CBD business rates represent approximately 23.7%, other business rates 9.2% and residential rates 11.2%, of total income from continuing operations. The City's property distribution is not conducive to achieving an equitable unimproved land value-based tax, with 78.0% of residents on minimum rates, reflecting Sydney's high density living.

I urge members of the House to consider the significant contribution to council revenue that Sydney businesses make before passing a bill to limit their opportunity to pass judgement on the performance of council. A council's decisions impact ratepayers and lessees of businesses as much as they impact residential ratepayers. The Minister's argument against the inclusion of these facets fails to consider the important contribution that businesses make to the City of Sydney and that across the State all businesses are already eligible to vote in local elections. The 2014 amendments to the Act aimed to improve awareness and engagement and to increase participation through the automatic enrolment.

While I admit that the picture the Minister painted of the council does not reflect the effortless exercise that was envisioned, it is not a reason to scrap the changes enacted by the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Act 2014 entirely; it is a reason to help them. I call on the Minister to consider the contribution the 2014 amendment has made for ratepaying, nonresident owners and occupiers, who are already entitled to vote in City of Sydney elections and should be participating and engaging with their council.

In closing, I echo that at the last election before the Act was implemented, those who contributed 78.5 per cent of the City of Sydney's ratepayer revenue in 2014 cast only 2.13 per cent of the votes. The amendments this bill proposes to scrap provide a more effective mechanism where there is more densely concentrated business than currently exists across the State to ensure that non-residential electors are enrolled and thereby able to exercise their democratic rights. There should be no taxation without representation.

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (15:22): I speak in support of the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023. It is a great pleasure when I can speak up for democracy in this place. I thank the Minister for Local

Government for bringing this bill forward. I am especially happy that the adults are back in charge and restoring the fundamental democratic principle of one person, one vote to the residents of the City of Sydney. This commonsense bill will do away with the requirement for the City of Sydney Council to automatically enrol non-residential electors and businesses against their will. It will restore a voluntary opt-in vote for nonresidents, as it should be.

The bill will repeal divisions 1, 2 and 4 of part 3 of the City of Sydney Act 1988, which prescribe the special voting rules for non-residential electors in the City of Sydney, and will make other minor consequential amendments. This will subject the City of Sydney to the rules governing voting by non-residential electors prescribed under the Local Government Act 1993, bringing it into harmony with the other 127 local government areas. The law was an unashamed attempt, which has backfired monumentally, to boost the conservative and pro-business vote in the City of Sydney at the expense of the Liberal Party's political opponents. The legislation has never achieved the intended outcome—and thank goodness. I contacted Councillor Linda Scott, a councillor at the City of Sydney, to seek her feedback on this bill. She stated:

This bill will reverse the undemocratic changes made in 2014, when the former Liberal Government granted multiple votes to non-resident business owners, in a blatant attempt to suppress the voting power of the voices of the local residents in the City of Sydney.

Under the previous Coalition Government, the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Act 2014 created a unique voting system specifically for the City of Sydney and it alone. This bill will return democracy and common sense to the residents and businesses of the City of Sydney. Importantly, businesses will still be entitled to register to vote if they choose, as is the case in every other New South Wales local government election. Businesses will no longer be forced to engage in often unwanted political activity.

We can only guess how big businesses like the Commonwealth Bank, Woolworths or McDonalds chose to vote in past City of Sydney elections. If a corporation or joint owners, lessees or occupiers fail to nominate two electors, two electors are automatically enrolled in alphabetical order based on their surnames. In effect, these companies were forced to take a political view, often against their wishes. This was unethical and clearly undemocratic. I suspect these companies just copped the \$55 fine, or \$110 for the two voters. The previous Liberal Government's Act was a blatant attempt to engineer a conservative uprising in the City of Sydney—one which never eventuated, thank goodness. It could also be described as a form of gerrymandering without the boundary changes. The introduction of this bill is another election commitment delivered by the Minns Labor Government. It is a win for democracy and upholds the age-old principle of one vote, one value.

The requirement under the City of Sydney Act for all non-residential electors to be automatically enrolled makes this a costly and administratively onerous exercise. In other local government areas, only eligible non-residential electors that apply are enrolled. It is the council's general manager who is required to keep and maintain the non-residential electoral information register and ensure that it is accurate. This is costly and onerous. It has been an outrageous waste of ratepayers' money. I acknowledge the member for Sydney is in the Chamber. He will know this quite well.

The City of Sydney spent \$9.7 million to establish the register and it costs approximately \$1 million per year to maintain it. The City of Sydney has continually raised concerns about the logistical and operational challenges of maintaining the register and ensuring the information is accurate. After the 2021 council elections, 39 per cent of all non-residential voters were issued with apparent failure to vote notices. Complaints to council also skyrocketed. Many of those were from people unaware they were required to vote. What an absolute debacle for the council. The bill will also dissolve the nonsense that is the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee, a relic committee that has never met. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (15:27): I contribute to debate on the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023. A fundamental principle of democracy is that all members of the community have equal access to the political process. Regardless of how much money someone has or how much tax they pay, their say on polling day should be equal. As previous members have said in their contributions, the principle is one vote, one value. But since 2014 businesses and non-residential ratepayers—that is, nonresidents and property owners—have had twice the number of votes as residents in the City of Sydney elections, with their vote also being compulsory. No other local government is subject to such extraordinary, unfair and shockingly undemocratic voting rules.

I take members back in time to 2014, when these laws were introduced. They were a continuation of the assault on inner-city democracy by the O'Farrell and Baird governments. They used their majority to arrogantly give away public land to a casino in Barangaroo—we know how well that has gone; they have had to close two gaming floors already—to sell off public housing in Millers Point that is now largely empty short-term rentals; to impose the lockout laws, which decimated Sydney's nightlife; and to also remove a democratically elected member from Parliament, my predecessor, which also did not go too well for them because I got elected and we continue to do better in every election and the Liberal Party continues to do worse in every election.

It was not just the laws that passed that showed the arrogance of the Government at the time; it was the denigration and name-calling of inner-city communities that occurred throughout that debate in the Parliament and in the media. Many of my constituents, whether business owners or residents, took great offence to that. Of course, the Coalition was egged on throughout that time by *The Daily Telegraph* and Alan Jones, whose ring they often kissed. Alan wanted to put Clover in a chaff bag with Julia Gillard, as we remember. He wanted to throw them out to sea and he would regularly engage in the most violent and misogynistic attacks on the lord mayor and other female leaders. Yet, it was people like Alan Jones who informed this appalling legislation that we are repealing today in the Chamber. A further example of the Coalition's aggressive arrogance towards the city and its elected representatives during the debate came from Peter Phelps, MLC. During the debate on business voting, this is what he said about me:

... when Clover pulls the strings Alex dances to the tune. Little Alex with his wooden nose, dancing down Macquarie Street, strings being pulled by Clover Moore.

...

... I apologise for that. If he is a puppet, then maybe her hand is in a different location.

That dog-whistling comment said it all about the Coalition's policy focus at that time. Two votes for business was nasty politics at its worst. What the legislation meant is that in the City of Sydney businesses and property owners have greater influence and greater power in the political processes than residents, who as a result are disenfranchised, relegated to a lower class of voter and considered to be less important and less valued by the former Government. The system was clearly open to rorts and manipulation. Unlike residential voters, who are only on a roll for each level of government and update their details once for all three levels of elections, non-residential voters can be on multiple local government rolls, providing opportunities for error and manipulation.

Furthermore, the 2014 laws transferred management of the non-residential roll from the NSW Electoral Commission to the city's general manager. While I have every confidence in the current administration, dedicated independent bodies manage electoral rolls in healthy democracies. One can imagine what could happen by empowering a government to run its own elections. The city spent \$9.7 million to establish the non-residential roll and is spending around a million dollars annually to maintain it in a way that ensures its accuracy and integrity. These funds come at the cost of other council services. Once the changes are scrapped, these funds will be returned to essential government services, like food relief. We still ask ourselves the question: Why were these changes imposed on inner-city communities? Let us also not forget that they were introduced in the Legislative Council by a member of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. He clearly has a vested interest in the City of Sydney and our activities here. It is a party with rural and regional base, and a member known for both doing deals and harbouring a strong dislike for the lord mayor.

The legislative change was supported by the then Government not long after it changed laws to remove the democratically elected member for Sydney—my predecessor, Clover Moore—from this House. The laws were the next step in the then Government's "Get Clover" agenda to also get her out of Town Hall. This is all a good history lesson for members to learn that grudges never form good policy. I listened to the shadow Minister for Local Government. The push did not come from the business community. Many business chambers backed me and the City of Sydney in opposing them and agreed that the change we are effectively repealing today was undemocratic. The business community knows and respects the support it has got from the City of Sydney under the leadership of Clover Moore and the amazing city team.

This has included direct investment in infrastructure, services and events; effective planning that has seen 30,000 development applications approved, worth over \$40 billion and almost doubling the city's population; reduced regulatory barriers to make it easier and more efficient to do business, from free outdoor dining to business-specific concierge services to help navigate red tape; grants for development, promotion, events and capital works; Sydney's Sustainable Office Buildings Plan and leading the Better Buildings Partnership to help the city's towers become sustainable; leading by example to ensure that the city takes a leadership position in economic development initiatives through its own operations; encouraging partnerships with the private and non-government sector to achieve common goals; and advocating for change, particularly where actions are the remit of other levels of government.

Since 2004, under the leadership of Clover Moore, the economy in the City of Sydney local government area has grown by \$64 billion, or 82 per cent. It now exceeds pre-COVID levels at \$141 billion a year as of March 2023, accounting for more than 22 per cent of the entire New South Wales economy. Obviously, these facts got in the way of Borsak and the Coalition's made-up arguments. It is sad to see them repeating them today. Clearly they thought at that time the only way they could remove Lord Mayor Clover Moore was by manipulating election rules and not through fair and accountable elections. That was such a blatant and undemocratic gerrymander, and

it passed the Parliament with the support of a major party. That day and that whole time in history is a strong indictment on this Parliament.

Of course, as we have heard, the legislation was not successful in its aims. By disenfranchising resident voters, the then Government only raised Lord Mayor Clover Moore's already high popularity. Support amongst business communities for stable governments, climate change action, design excellence and social inclusion was also underestimated by the former Government. Clover remains hugely popular, thanks to her progressive grassroots, and her incorruptible, responsible, sustainable and representative approach to governments. As one business leader said to me at the time, "The former Government gave us two votes, and we used them to vote for Clover." But although the sinister aims were not realised, they remain untenable. [*Extension of time*]

I strongly welcome the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023. The bill will restore the non-residential voting rules in the City of Sydney that existed prior to 2014, giving non-residential electors one voluntary vote and transferring management of the non-residential roll to the independent NSW Electoral Commission. The city elections will be realigned with local government elsewhere. With this dark chapter in the inner city's history hopefully soon behind us, I hope the Parliament has learned the lesson that fair rules are fundamental to democracy and that State governments must never use their majority to manipulate and gerrymander local government elections. Everybody has the right to an equal voice in our democracy and to be governed by representatives elected in an unbiased election. I thank the Minister for bringing the bill so quickly to the House and for the consultation he had with stakeholders.

The question for the Coalition is this: Does its arrogance towards and disregard for inner-city voters still exist? Despite knowing the bill will pass, will the Coalition still oppose it? I give the Opposition an invitation to right the wrong done to inner-city residents; to apologise for misrepresenting the views of Sydney's business community, which has continued to thrive under Clover's leadership; and to join the Government, The Greens and me in returning democracy to City of Sydney elections. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (15:39): I make a contribution to debate on the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023 and indicate my support for the bill. The purpose of the bill is to remove the current rules governing non-residential electors voting in the City of Sydney. The proposed changes in the bill will ensure that the same rules apply to residents in the City of Sydney as apply to residents in other local government areas [LGAs] across metropolitan Sydney. The bill will return fairness and democracy to the City of Sydney by removing the rules that favour the votes of businesses over residents in local government elections.

The sections of the City of Sydney Act 1988 the bill seeks to remove came about in 2014. They required the City of Sydney to automatically enrol non-residential electors who presumably lived in other LGAs. Eligible businesses were also given two votes in council elections compared to one for each resident. As a result, businesses that own, lease or occupy rateable land in the City of Sydney can currently nominate two people to vote on their behalf in council elections. That is transparently and fundamentally undemocratic. Reflecting on the campaign that occurred almost 10 years ago when the Act was amended, it is reminiscent of some of the more egregious attempts by Republican politicians in the United States to enact undemocratic and voter disenfranchisement initiatives, like gerrymandering and voter suppression laws.

While I am on the topic of gerrymandering, it seems to be a pattern of the former Government to enact laws at the local government level that try to undemocratically tilt things in favour of their side of politics. I am reminded of the Fit for the Future reforms when a number of councils were merged against their will rather than giving the people of those LGAs a choice. I recall that the new borders for the City of Parramatta were an attempt to ensure that there was a conservative leadership on the City of Parramatta Council. Much like the reforms in 2014, they failed, and the wonderful member for Parramatta was mayor for a couple of terms in Parramatta. Like those reforms, the City of Sydney reforms failed as well. The shadow Minister for Local Government made the argument that the 2014 reform was about increasing the turnout after a drop in the number of votes. I find that hard to believe. I note that the member for Kiama is in the Chamber and he has introduced a private member's bill which effectively seeks to disenfranchise voters through voter ID laws.

Mr Paul Scully: Which he opposed previously.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Exactly. We need to make our minds up. Are we trying to suppress the vote or are we trying to get the vote up? Consistency is not one of the Coalition's strong suits. The amendment understandably led to an increased enrolment of non-residential electors. However, given the number of businesses with a registered address in the CBD, a significant number of non-residential electors enrolled were not exercising their right to vote. In the previous local government elections, 39 per cent of non-residential electors were issued with failure to vote notices. That is quite a decent money earner for the Electoral Commission, but it shows that the reform failed to work.

Mr Gareth Ward: How many super boards are you on?

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Go back to the blowhole.

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

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Unlike other LGAs, enrolled non-residential electors in the City of Sydney are required to vote at council elections, therefore requiring administration and oversight. That cost the City of Sydney ratepayers \$9.7 million to establish as well as \$1 million a year to maintain. As someone who still sits on a council, I know every dollar is vital. It is sad to see money being removed from frontline services like fixing potholes, cutting grass and delivering services to the community. Seeing that money each year effectively going to a terrible reform is costing the people of the City of Sydney. It has also resulted in an increase of fines issued by the Electoral Commission, and that is for no good reason. The 2014 amendment to the City of Sydney Act was a blatant and unashamed attempt by the former Government to promote a pro-business vote in the City of Sydney. It undermined a fundamental principal of modern and free democracies, one vote—help me out, what was it?

Mr Gareth Ward: One value.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: One value. I thank the member for Kiama; he is occasionally useful.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr): Order! The member for Leppington will not call it on.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: It undermined a fundamental principal of modern and free democracies. For that reason, the Minns Labor Government is stepping in to change that. The amendments in the bill will not disenfranchise non-residential electors. While eligible non-residential electors will no longer be automatically enrolled, they can continue to apply to be enrolled on the non-residential roll if they choose to do so. That will put the City of Sydney in line with all the other local government areas in New South Wales.

Ms Karen McKeown: As it should be.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: As it should be. I thank the member for Penrith, who is a big supporter of democracy and fairness for all local government areas across the State. While I am speaking about local government areas, I note that earlier the president of Local Government NSW, Darriea Turley, and the new CEO of Local Government NSW, David Reynolds, were in the gallery. I welcome them. Unfortunately they did not get to see my fabulous contribution to the debate on the bill, but I will cut a video and send it to them.

Mr Paul Scully: I am sure they are watching on the internet.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I am sure they are watching on the internet; that is right. They are big supporters of local government across the State, whether it is the City of Sydney, other metropolitan councils or rural and regional councils. I am proud to sit on the board of the fabulous peak body that is Local Government NSW. It does amazing work, and has worked so much better since the member for Kiama is no longer on it.

Ms Karen McKeown: And the member for Oatley.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: And the member for Oatley. In conclusion, the changes the Government is seeking will make the preparation of non-residential elector rolls more convenient and serviceable, relieving the City of Sydney of a significant administrative burden. It will deliver cost savings for the City of Sydney that can be redirected towards essential services for the local community, like libraries—

Mr Alex Greenwich: Swimming pools.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Swimming pools, active transport corridors, bike paths—

Ms Kobi Shetty: Cycleways.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Cycleways. Alan Jones loves a good cycleway. In essence, the bill will return the City of Sydney to a balanced system. Citizens should have a fair voice in decision-making, and the amendments in the bill will return the City of Sydney to a fairer and more democratic local government area. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (15:47): I make a contribution to debate on the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023. I indicate that I strongly oppose the bill, not just because I chaired the inquiry that led to the introduction of the provisions that the bill seeks to repeal, and not just because I am a City of Sydney ratepayer, but because I believe that the city is the nation's only global city and its representatives should be as diverse as the kaleidoscope of communities that make up the essence and flavour of what is, without dispute, the best city in the world. The City of Sydney is a council like no other in Australia. It is responsible for one-quarter of the State's gross domestic product and around 8 per cent of the nation's GDP. The existing set of rules reflects the diversity

of the city, which includes hardworking small-business people, and the existing rules give effect to a longstanding right to vote by making it easier for people to cast that vote.

I start by dispelling a few myths. The bill has nothing to do with getting Clover. I love Clover. She is a progressive, charismatic, diligent and honest leader who should be an example to others, especially when it comes to city infrastructure and the life and vitality of the city. She is also a mayor who has led from the heart when it comes to homelessness, housing and supporting the most vulnerable. I saw that firsthand during my time in the Families, Communities and Disability Services ministry, and I cannot speak more highly of her efforts in that regard. I support Clover. In fact, I voted for her at the last council elections using my vote that this Government now wants to take away.

Ms Karen McKeown: Did you have a business?

Mr GARETH WARD: No, as a non-residential ratepayer, I have a vote. I listened to the second reading speech by the Minister for Local Government. He said that this legislation needed to be introduced to correct what he called "a reprehensible, undemocratic decision". The problem for the Minister is that I have a very good memory. When he was the mayor of Botany Bay, the member for Heffron destroyed representative proportionality, which is at the heart of our system of local government, by introducing single member wards so that he could totally eradicate voices other than his own and turn his mayoralty into a lifetime peerage.

Mr Paul Scully: He was elected unopposed.

Mr GARETH WARD: As a result, many of Lord Hoenig's elections went uncontested—as the planning Minister rightly points out. To be lectured by Lord Hoenig of Botany Bay about democracy in local government is akin to Hannibal Lector giving a dissertation on vegetarian cuisine. When it come to the member for Heffron as Minister for Local Government talking about amending electoral laws while simultaneously slamming what he terms "undemocratic processes", you know he is on manoeuvres.

I make the axiomatic point that the system of voting in the City of Sydney mirrors the model that exists in the City of Melbourne. In fact, the committee I chaired adopted the recommendations of the Melbourne model. Who introduced the business and non-residential compulsory voting in the City of Melbourne? It was none other than the Australian Labor Party. In introducing the bill, the Minister made the following comment:

At the 2021 City of Sydney election, 47,465 non-residential voters were enrolled to vote—assuming that figure is accurate. However, 18,501 of those were issued Apparent Failure To Vote notices by the Electoral Commission following that election.

That is a quote I believe the shadow Minister also referred to. It is an interesting debating point that this figure still equates to 28,964 non-residential electors being enfranchised to have their say. Non-residential enrolment numbers had fluctuated considerably prior to the 2014 changes. While there were 2,059 enrolments on the non-residential roll ahead of the 2004 elections, that decreased substantially for the 2008 elections. Following efforts to boost numbers, 1,709 people enrolled to vote at the 2012 elections, representing an increase of 331 per cent. Because there has been no consultation on the bill, we are none the wiser of any plans to promote non-residential voting in the city. I suspect there are none because those opposite simply see it as a voting class they cannot capture, and so they will seek to disenfranchise those voters.

Why hasn't there been any consultation on the bill? Those on the left of this Chamber frequently stress the need for consultation when it suits them, but whenever they want to get their way, they just brush aside the views of anyone who may not agree with them. Contrast this with the levels of engagement on offer during the committee process I chaired. The inquiry received 77 submissions, heard from more than 35 witnesses and the Parliament debated the matter when the report was tabled. Contrast that with the bill of the Minister today. There was no consultation, just politics.

The existing arrangements should be retained for a number of reasons. First, there are key differences between the residential and non-residential rolls used in local government elections. Non-residential rolls lapse after the elections for which they were prepared. Residential local government voting rolls, like those for State and Federal elections, are continuously maintained. The other difference is that non-residential rolls only consist of the names of those eligible voters who have applied for inclusion on those rolls.

For electors at a State or Federal election, the onus lies with the elector to carry out their democratic duty. This legislation would wipe from the roll all the existing persons entitled to a non-residential vote and require eligible electors to make a new application to vote, rather than their names automatically appearing on the roll and being constantly updated. If the Minister and the Government had given some consideration to retaining the existing non-residential names on the rolls as they stand and recommended that the non-residential rolls be maintained by the NSW Electoral Commission rather than councils and general managers, the Government would have a much stronger argument. But that is not what the bill does. The bill deliberately disenfranchises local

businesses in the City of Sydney from participating in elections and shows that the Minister and the Government appear to have a dangerous penchant for voluntary voting depending on one's class.

The Minister recognises the franchise exists, but he wants to make it harder for people to vote. At its heart the existing legislation seeks to give effect to longstanding principles that those who run businesses and significantly contribute to local government revenue should get a say in council affairs by being able to vote. This is not a radical concept. It has been a longstanding practice. The existing law gives better effect to the implementation of that principle, and it ended the rort of non-residential voters having to reapply for a vote at each election. Indeed, businesses and non-residential ratepayers contribute more than 70 per cent to the city's revenue. The bill will disenfranchise those contributors.

Just like the City of Sydney, the Melbourne voting system introduced by the former Labor Government in that State has delivered diversity. It does not guarantee victory to any candidate simply because of their political association, and nor has this been the case in the City of Sydney. The system of voting in Sydney and Melbourne for the city council has never locked out a lord mayoral candidate or an Independent or Labor or Liberal candidate for the job. On the contrary, the current lord mayor has overwhelmingly won the city's business vote. Melbourne's longest serving long mayor, the jovial and successful John So, was an Independent. Although, to be fair, as a restaurateur, So could at least read a balance sheet—which is something no-one has ever accused those opposite of being able to do.

Whether John So or Clover Moore, all the existing system in the City of Sydney does is give to a certain group of people who are entitled to vote that vote. It is up to the voters to choose their lord mayor. The current system ensures that candidates and councillors will listen to small businesses in the city and the hardworking and dedicated small business people who make up the overwhelming majority of city revenue. They deserve to have a say. Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting all words after "That" and inserting instead: This bill be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry and report.

The Government has sought to do virtually no consultation. There was talk by previous contributors about not consulting with the business community. That is simply not true. The committee that I chaired heard from many people in small business that want it. Government members would not know because they do not talk to small business because they do not care about small business.

Ms Karen McKeown: I owned one in a past life.

Mr GARETH WARD: In the City of Sydney?

Ms Karen McKeown: No.

Mr GARETH WARD: No. The member would not know because she has not spoken to people. If the Government actually did care, why not refer this through the same process that existed when this was established? The Government wants no review. It will simply disenfranchise literally tens of thousands of voters that are entitled to have a say. If it is the case that I need to re-enrol, that is an option and I will do that.

[A Government member interjected.]

Let's start talking about properties you own. I have them here. If Government members want me to, I will go through the properties of all Labor members and some of the property moguls opposite, particularly in the ministry. If they want me to do that, I will start reading through them. Government members have gone quiet now, because I suspect there are a few people who the Labor councillor on the City of Sydney relies on. They interrupt because they know that they are disenfranchising small business. We know Labor members hate small businesses. They do not want to listen to them. They do not want to acknowledge their existence. This is another example of them cutting out small businesses from having a say in our nation's only global city, one that we all should be proud of. We should celebrate everyone's contribution, particularly the people who make up the majority of the city's revenue.

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (15:57): I support the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023. I commend the Minister for introducing the bill to the House. This is an amendment that is long overdue and will right an undemocratic wrong of the former Liberal-Nationals Government in 2014. A fundamental basis of our democracy is one vote, one value. That is the only political process that is acceptable within Australian values of fairness and egalitarianism. The Australian democratic society is cemented in this principle. This is not something that should be tampered with or twisted for political expediency.

As someone who has served as Lord Mayor of the City of Parramatta and has been an elected representative on councils since 2017, I understand the impact of bad legislation. The forced amalgamations aimed at gerrymandering the City of Parramatta was one such example that was forced on us by the former Government.

Ironically, due to the Liberals' inability to keep their house in order, they ended up shooting themselves in the foot and not even running candidates at the last council election. Therefore, they handed the mayoralty to Labor. We understand both sides of the impact of their legislation, which shot them in the foot. We also know that local government is the closest form of government to the people by whom it is elected to serve and has a direct day-to-day impact on local residents. The due process of local government elections is essential to the health of our democracy, and the potential damage to our broader democracy by the undermining of processes at any level could cause serious harm.

The City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Act 2014 created a unique voting system specifically for the City of Sydney and the City of Sydney alone. The proposed City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023 will return the City of Sydney voting arrangements to harmony with all other New South Wales local government areas. The original Act has many issues; however, two significant issues stand apart from the rest. The first is that the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Act 2014 automatically enrolled non-residential electors. That means that, as with residential electors, eligible non-residential electors are automatically enrolled without having to formally apply. In other local government areas, non-residential electors must apply to be enrolled. Where a corporation is an owner or a lessee or occupier of rateable land, two officers of the corporation are to be automatically enrolled unless nominated by the corporation, thus delivering corporations two votes. That sets a dangerous precedent of deviating from the most basic constants of our democracy.

Private entities should not have more voting rights than the citizens who are a part of them. Doing so enfranchises certain demographics and interests as being higher than others, which is antithetical to the core of our democracy. The impartiality of business is important to our democracy and our economy. The Act over enfranchised those corporations and made it mandatory for them to take a party-political stance when many may have preferred not to. To be clear, there is no wrongdoing from those corporations in relation to the Act. They should never have been put in that position in the first place, which made them unable to remain impartial should they have so chosen.

Non-residential voters are an existing part of local government elections and there is an existing framework for their inclusion. Unlike other local government areas, enrolled non-residential electors in the City of Sydney are required to vote at elections for the council. In other local government areas, voting is not compulsory for non-residential electors. However, the Act singled out the City of Sydney and made significant changes. When large numbers of people are forced into a position where they must vote, despite having no interest or being unaware or simply not bothering to vote, we end up with poor voter turnout. That is why at the last City of Sydney election we saw the astronomical figure of 39 per cent of non-residential voters issued with failure to vote notices, many of whom received fines. That is despite significant investment in awareness campaigns being mounted by the City of Sydney in an attempt to combat that issue and make the most of that unfortunate situation.

The bill imposes significant costs on the City of Sydney. Estimated expenses for the registry of those voters are that it cost \$9.7 million to establish and approximately \$1 million a year to maintain. Those are not insignificant costs for a city council, even one as large as the City of Sydney. Regardless of its affordability, that is still millions of dollars that could be spent on amenities, infrastructure or services. An important piece of context here is that non-residential elector roles are developed and maintained by general managers of councils rather than by the NSW Electoral Commission. That has placed a significant additional administrative burden on the City of Sydney. The time would be better spent compiling only those who wish to vote and devoting the remainder to working for the people of Sydney.

Non-residential voting remains important, particularly in the City of Sydney, where the majority of the city's revenue is produced. As significant contributors who are affected by decisions that are made, their voices are important. However, that should never be weighted ahead of residents. They should not be forced to engage in a process they may not wish to and then fined if they do not. The bill does not disenfranchise City of Sydney non-residential voters because they will still have ample opportunity to apply to be registered. It will simply ensure that they are not forced to vote and that their votes will be fairly weighted. I acknowledge the efforts of Councillor Linda Scott. In her capacity as a City of Sydney councillor, a former Chair of Local Government NSW and the President of the Australian Local Government Association, she has been advocating against this egregious system for some time. Councillor Scott said:

This Labor Bill will restore the voting power of our City of Sydney residents, from Glebe to Rosebery to Woolloomooloo, and ensure business can choose to exercise a vote in City of Sydney elections, instead of being forced to engage in often unwanted political activity.

We still do not know how the Commonwealth Bank, Woolworths or McDonald's chose to vote in past City of Sydney elections. Those companies were forced to take a political view, often against their wishes, which was unethical and undemocratic. The Act introduced by the former Liberal Government was an attempt to engineer a conservative uprising in the City of Sydney. I am glad to see Labor's commitment to returning our city to the

democratic principles of one vote, one value. City residents and businesses will rightly celebrate the changes made by the Minns Labor Government. I also acknowledge other elected councillors and the former shadow Minister, the member for Canterbury, for their support and advocacy for this issue over many years.

The actions in the bill are being proposed in accordance with extensive consultation. That consultation has taken place with all relevant stakeholders, including the City of Sydney, local members of affected areas and businesses, with respondents being largely in favour of the amendments proposed today. I am sure that the three members sitting in the Chamber would have received copious quantities of emails and other correspondence from their local residents and constituents about their concerns with the Act.

The other major component of today's bill is the abolition of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee because it is neither needed nor wanted. City of Sydney strongly opposed its implementation and has called for its removal since it was installed. Its dissolution will streamline the relationship between City of Sydney and Transport for NSW, allowing more effective cooperation and governance. The bill will remove a relic committee that has not met for many years under the Act. The Minns Government understands the importance of local government and takes its relationship seriously. Accordingly, it is only right that we should address the issues in the City of Sydney Act to rectify what was a significant overstep by the former Government and restore normal relations and processes to Sydney. The bill is a win for the City of Sydney and its community, for New South Wales, and for our democracy. I am proud to commend the bill to the House.

Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (16:06): On behalf of The Greens, I make a contribution to debate on the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023. It is fantastic to see the bill before the House. The Greens are pleased to have encouraged and supported the Government to bring about this important reform. I am glad to be speaking alongside the member for Newtown and the member for Sydney, whose electorates, like mine, cross over with the City of Sydney. I commend the Minister, the member for Heffron, for bringing the bill before the House.

Quite simply, the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023 seeks to treat local government elections across the City of Sydney the same as all other local government areas across New South Wales. It will mean that non-residential owners and ratepaying lessees, corporations or occupiers of rateable land—that is, local business representatives in the City of Sydney—will not be automatically enrolled but will be able to apply for enrolment. It also means that, where currently two people may be enrolled and vote on behalf of a business, there will only be one local business representative who may be nominated. The ridiculous situation where non-residential electors are obliged to vote in City of Sydney elections will no longer be the case, aligning with the practice in all other local government areas.

It is clear that the bill is needed to undo the changes to the City of Sydney Act 1988 made in 2014, which created those unique roles for the City of Sydney under the cover of enfranchising ratepaying businesses in the council area. It produced an additional 80,000 voters in the subsequent City of Sydney local government elections. Opponents of the change in 2014 knew that it was an attempt to alter voting rules to change the composition of elected councillors in the City of Sydney. It was clearly part of an agenda to remove Lord Mayor Clover Moore from office and was motivated by political differences.

The Greens were among the opponents to the change in 2014, with the then member for Sydney and the NSW Labor Party, which was in Opposition. The Greens MLC who is now a senator, David Shoebridge, attempted to improve the legislation at the time by proposing amendments to retain business voting rights for one person instead of two and requiring their nomination at least 28 days before the closing of the roll. That outcome is not entirely dissimilar to what is being proposed in the bill today. That change was unsuccessful and we were left with the current situation. To be clear, The Greens believe that only people and not corporations should be able to vote. Back in 2014 my Greens predecessor, Jamie Parker, said:

The Government is using the principle of no taxation without representation, but it thoroughly misunderstands the history of the point. In fact, this is a direct step back to Victorian England when voting rights were based on wealth. The idea of enfranchising money is a seriously retrograde and anti-democratic step. The proposed system will result in an effective gerrymander for political parties that place corporate interests over communities, and the residents of the City of Sydney will lose out. In my electorate more than 10,000 residents who vote in the City of Sydney elections effectively will have their vote halved. I can understand why residents are not happy with that situation.

It is clear that, rather than enfranchising businesses, this law has only served to disenfranchise the residents of the City of Sydney.

Local Government NSW, the peak body representing local councils, also said in 2014 that this type of power is undemocratic and should not be legislated. Giving two votes to businesses is anti-democratic, and I am glad that with this bill we will be able to overturn this undemocratic law that singles out the City of Sydney. It was interesting to hear the member for Kiama speak about his ability to vote twice, as if that somehow justifies the current arrangement. It is not enough to just be in this place; that he should also get two votes in local

government elections is an example of why these voting rights, which are based on wealth, are precisely the wrong way for elections to operate. It demonstrates what is wrong with this system.

The bill will put those 2014 changes to rest and the City of Sydney will be treated in the same way as every other local government area in New South Wales—as it should be. Those changes should never have been made. They were made because the former Liberal-Nationals Government thought that it could rig the system in its favour. Of course, hindsight is a wonderful thing. In 2014 we knew that these special rules for the City of Sydney were a cover for something else—for the Liberal Party, *The Daily Telegraph* and Alan Joyce to get Clover out of office. Back in 2014, when speaking about the government of the day, Jamie Parker also said:

... this ... is all about attacking someone the Government does not like. Many of The Nationals members do not understand that this is about the Liberals wanting the crown of the Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney. They cannot get it because they know that Clover Moore stands in their way. That is why this bill should be opposed. It is undemocratic and it is an attempt to rot the system to gerrymander it so they can win an election that this Government could never win fairly and squarely.

As the Minister for Local Government, and member for Heffron, reminded us in his earlier remarks on the bill, this has well and truly backfired on them because Clover Moore is still there. Unless anyone is trying to oust a long-established and much-respected Sydney lord mayor, there is no good reason for the City of Sydney to be treated differently to any other local government area in New South Wales. In fact, even then, the same rules should apply.

With the passing of the bill, I hope that we will be able to put this idea of giving multiple votes to business interests well and truly behind us. I take the opportunity to thank the Minister for introducing the bill. I also thank City of Sydney councillors Sylvie Ellsmore from The Greens and Linda Scott from Labor for their important and timely work on this issue. I know this bill is the result of many hours of advocacy and that, with the recent change of government, those councillors in particular have taken the opportunity to work with the Government and the crossbench to bring about this important reform and to restore democracy in the City of Sydney.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:12): I make a contribution to debate and speak in support of the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023. The bill aims to amend the existing rules outlined in the City of Sydney Act 1988, in particular, those governing non-residential elector voting. Firstly, I congratulate the Minister for Local Government, and member for Heffron, on bringing the bill before the House. It will correct the undemocratic process put in place by the former Liberal Government, which threw out the concept of one vote, one value in favour of political convenience.

The 2014 amendments raised concerns about the system's impartiality, with some viewing them as an attempt to favour conservative and pro-business interests. That perception of favouritism has led to increased scrutiny and controversy around the non-residential elector franchise. The proposed amendments to the City of Sydney Act are intended to address those concerns and to foster a more equitable and transparent voting system. The key change is the removal of automatic enrolment for non-residential electors. Under the current system, those electors are automatically enrolled, setting them apart from residents in other areas who must actively apply for enrolment. That difference in treatment has raised questions about fairness and transparency.

In 2014 the New South Wales Government granted business owners in the City of Sydney the ability to nominate two people to vote in local council elections, while residents only had one vote. The City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023 aims to reinstate the voting rules that are applied in all other local government areas across New South Wales for non-residential electors, removing unfair weighting and bringing balance to the system. Under the proposed amendments, any eligible non-residential elector can apply to be enrolled, putting them on an equal footing with their residential counterparts across the State. This will ensure where there are multiple nonresident owners, rate-paying lessees or occupiers of a parcel of rateable land, only one person may be nominated for enrolment. This change will ensure that those who want to participate in our city's governance have the opportunity to do so. It will empower citizens, residents and business owners alike to actively engage in the democratic process.

Another significant change brought about by the bill is the end of compulsory voting for non-residential electors. The proposed amendments recognise this principle and align our voting system with the practices in other local government areas. Some might wonder about the impact of these changes on voter turnout. It is important to note that, despite the compulsory voting requirement, a significant number of non-residential electors did not exercise their right to vote in the past. At the 2021 City of Sydney elections, nearly 40 per cent of enrolled non-residential electors failed to vote, while only 21 per cent of residential electors did the same. That suggests that many non-residential electors were either unaware of their obligation to vote or unable to do so due to logistical challenges.

Under the proposed amendments, non-residential electors will have the freedom to decide whether they want to vote or not. This shift toward voluntary voting will ensure that those who do participate are genuinely

engaged and motivated to have their voices heard. Additionally, these changes will alleviate the strain on our electoral system. Currently, the City of Sydney spends a substantial amount—approximately \$1 million per year—to maintain the non-residential elector rolls. The proposed amendments will streamline this process, making it more efficient and cost-effective.

The second major aspect of the bill is the abolition of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee, which was established in 2012. That committee was meant to facilitate coordination between the New South Wales Government and the City of Sydney in matters related to traffic and transport in the CBD. However, it has faced strong opposition from the City of Sydney, which argued that it added an unnecessary layer of approval and could delay critical decisions on transport and traffic management. The proposed amendments will formalise the dissolution of that committee. This step will remove an obstacle to efficient transport decision-making in the Sydney CBD. It is essential to note that Transport for NSW already has other governance arrangements in place to work with the City of Sydney on transport projects impacting the CBD, ensuring that official decisions can be made swiftly and effectively.

The proposed amendments to the City of Sydney Act 1988 mark a significant step toward a more equitable and transparent democratic process for our city. They empower both residents and business owners to actively engage in governance. Simultaneously, they streamline our governance structure by abolishing an inoperative committee, ensuring that decisions affecting our city are made efficiently. These changes reflect our commitment to strengthening democracy, fostering civic engagement and making our governance more efficient. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (16:18): I oppose the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023, which amends the City of Sydney Act to remove special provisions that apply to elections for the council of the City of Sydney, to dissolve the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee and remove provisions relating to the committee, and for related purposes. I have been a little surprised to listen to a number of incumbent and former Labor councillors speak against the legislation, because no doubt they would have experienced in their communities the great disparity that exists between residential voters and business stakeholders when it comes to representation.

In my experience as a mayor, I found that one of the regular complainants or recommenders of suggestions and ideas for the community was our business community. Yet the elected body has no inherent accountability to those business stakeholders because they, of course, do not have a vote. That is wrong. At the outset, I will be clear that I have no issue with the proposed changes to the traffic committee component of the bill. If the City of Sydney has its own plan and agenda for traffic, we should entrust it with that. But I have strong reservations about unwinding the enfranchising of businesses in the City of Sydney, which I note make up the overwhelming majority of ratepayer revenue collected by that council. I do not understand how we can take away their voice when they are responsible for financing so many of the initiatives, programs and agendas of that council and its community.

I was hopeful that, upon the election of a new government, there would be a new vision for the local government sector that would reform many of the financial challenges that exist in councils around the State, particularly after COVID and given the economic climate. But that has not been the case. I was hoping for real and substantial reform to some of the archaic stormwater infrastructure restrictions that currently burden so many councils. Yet that has not been the case. I was hoping for real planning reform that might actually address many of the issues that the Government speaks about each day in this place. Yet that has not been the case. And I was hoping that we might consider removing some of the inherent conflicts of interest that exist when incumbent mayors seek election to higher office, and yet that has not been the focus either.

We are seeing a vision—a vision that is fixated once again on the rear-view mirror. We are going backwards, not forwards, with our reform. That is wrong. The real question that underpins the debate is: What is wrong with enfranchising local businesses, especially in such a strategically significant geographic region as the Sydney CBD? Businesses play such an important role in local communities and are arguably disenfranchised in other local government areas [LGAs] by not having a vote or voice at the table. Some progressive councils might embark upon economic development and business committees and work with business chambers in order to give them that voice, but it is entirely dependent upon the councillors, mayors and staff to take those proactive steps; it is not ingrained in the function of the democratic process. I do not think that is right. Those councillors and mayors are not in any way accountable because those businesses cannot express themselves democratically via the ballot box.

One of the big issues that impacts electoral participation is the eligibility of participants to feature on the electoral roll. That was the purpose of the original legislation: automatically enrolling businesses so they could participate with ease. That is not a foreign concept. It is not unusual in any way. In fact, the Federal Direct Enrolment and Update program that is run by the Australian Electoral Commission sees many young people enrol for the first time provided they meet a series of identification prerequisites. That is a good thing. It encourages more people to be featured on the electoral roll so they can turn up and vote. As those opposite have rightly

articulated, people who do not have a great interest in or focus on the electoral process are as entitled to a vote as everybody else. The program addressed that. So those opposite should not be scared of automatic enrolment. It is a good thing.

Given the global nature of the Sydney CBD, it seems very strange that only a relatively small number of residents who reside in that LGA are able to determine the agenda and direction of a place that is so intrinsically linked to the business activity, employment and economic growth of not just that local community but also of the entire State of New South Wales and, indeed, many global organisations around the world. There is an argument to be made for better enfranchisement of those business stakeholders in more parts of New South Wales, especially where they are of strategic economic benefit to the State. Areas like Parramatta, Wollongong and Newcastle are major hubs where we can do so much more to help businesses.

I fully reject the notion put by those opposite that voting somehow forces businesses to be political. Nobody forces businesses to reveal their vote or participate in any way in the campaign process. They merely cast a secret ballot—a solemn responsibility that we already entrust to all adult citizens regardless of their interests, education level, culture, gender, age or the level of political involvement they choose to have. The Government has also likened the current laws to some sort of gerrymander, and seems to suggest that a business vote somehow equates to a Liberal vote. As the member for Sydney eloquently pointed out, that was not the case in the election of the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore. I cast no aspersions on her for that success. A business vote is not a Liberal vote, but a business vote is a valid voice that should be listened to.

In my view, the real gerrymander is the Government's excising of the Sydney CBD from its housing supply planning reforms. That is a true and genuine gerrymander of a council's voter base because it is an attempt to restrict the number of eligible citizen votes from the Sydney LGA, which will have a far greater consequence for electoral outcomes than enfranchising a few local businesses. That makes a real difference. Let us also be clear—because there has been a lot of misinformation—about who can actually vote and the value of those votes under the current business enfranchisement laws that, even according to the City of Sydney council website, do not result in a consolidation of votes as those opposite would have the public believe. I will go through the three categories of voters. In relation to property owners, the website states:

You may be entitled to vote as a non-resident owner if you meet **all** of the criteria listed.

- You (or your corporation) own rateable property (residential or business, excluding utility lots), by yourself or with others, in the City of Sydney local area.
- Your enrolled residential address is **not** in the City of Sydney local area—

that is an important point to note—

- You are entitled to vote in Australian elections.

What about property occupiers? The City of Sydney's own website states:

You may be entitled to vote as a non-resident occupier if you meet **all** of the criteria listed.

- You (or your corporation) occupy rateable property (residential or business, excluding utility lots) by yourself or with others, in the City of Sydney local area.
- You pay \$4,000 or more a year to occupy the property, by yourself or with others.
- You have occupied the property continuously for the previous 3 months—

so there is some level of involvement in that community—

- Your enrolled residential address is **not** in the City of Sydney local area.
- You are entitled to vote in Australian elections.

That is very fair. Finally, in relation to the ratepaying lessee, the website states:

You may be entitled to vote as a non-resident rate-paying lessee if you meet **all** of the criteria listed.

- You (or your corporation) lease rateable property (residential or business, excluding utility lots), by yourself or with others, in the City of Sydney local area.
- You pay \$4,000 or more a year in lease payments for the property, which includes a contribution to rates, by yourself or with others.
- You have leased the property continuously for the previous 3 months.
- Your enrolled residential address is **not** in the City of Sydney local area.
- You are entitled to vote in Australian elections.

I am disappointed that the Government's first priority when it comes to local government has been to unwind reform rather than institute reform of its own. Local government is—and I speak from personal experience—too important to be cast aside as an afterthought. While I am not hopeful, I strongly encourage the new Government to use its imagination and do something with the extraordinary opportunity that it has been granted to make the local government sector a better place for communities and all stakeholders who reside in their LGAs.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (16:28): Gosh, the member for Ryde will be in opposition for quite a long time. I know that he is new to this place. I do not know whether he is still the Mayor of Ryde. The City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023 is a very important reform. It unwinds the former Government's gerrymander. The day has come. After nearly 10 years, we are righting a wrong. In 2014 I was the shadow Minister for Local Government when Labor vehemently opposed the legislation that the former Government introduced because it was undemocratic. I said:

The word "democracy" comes from the Greek word "demokratia", meaning "the rule of the people". Democracy combines "demos", meaning people, and "kratos", meaning power. I believe in democracy and I do not believe that corporations should have two votes.

That is what I said in 2014 and that is what the Government has advocated for. I am very proud that the Minister for Local Government has introduced this bill to repeal the gerrymandering bill of the former Government, which sought to use its political power and its numbers in this place to get rid of Clover Moore. The Labor Party learned its lesson in 2003-04: We could not merge the South Sydney City Council and the City of Sydney Council. We wanted a potential majority, as the Minister for Local Government explained. Labor learned its lesson, but members opposite have not learned their lesson and that is why they are in opposition.

When in opposition, members must take time to reflect. If they have made mistakes, they must raise those mistakes. Labor made mistakes, and back in 2011-12 I admitted in the other place that we had made them. I said, "We made mistakes here", "We made mistakes there", and "We should have done better." But we took the opportunity to reflect. Opposition members are saying, "Bring it on", "Bring on two votes", and "It is terrible that the Government is introducing the bill," but they should have learned from their mistakes. The member for Ryde was probably in year 11 or 12 in 2014, when the former Government introduced the "Get Clover" bill, the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014 and a couple of others.

After the "Get Clover" bill passed, the former member for Sydney made the decision to resign from her role as an MP and continue on as Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney. She has increased her vote at every single election since then. I am not on the same side of politics as her; over the years we have had a few discussions. I would rather Linda Scott as the mayor of Sydney, but Clover Moore has increased her majority. I remind Opposition members who were not here in 2012 that when she resigned from her position as member for Sydney, thousands of people lined up on Macquarie Street—the line ran for kilometres, all the way to Oxford Street—to come to Parliament House to shake her hand and acknowledge and congratulate her. If that is not proof for those opposite of Clover Moore's popularity, then their heads are stuck in the sand.

The people who came to shake her hand were not from one cohort only. They included young people, old people, LGBTIQI people, ethnic people and religious people. They all came to Parliament, including the Greek mums from back in the seventies who remembered when Clover Moore built them a playground after they had advocated for one.

Ms Jenny Leong: And from Redfern.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: And from Redfern. They all came through. The former Government had not learned its lesson, so it brought in the City of Sydney Amendment (Elections) Bill 2014. Members of that Government thought, "Clover Moore is still there, so let's bring in a bill to allow businesses two votes." What did that do? The result was the same: Clover Moore is still the mayor, so the bill did nothing. The former Government brought in a provision that gave the Minister for Local Government an expanded regulation-making power to direct any council in the State to allow two votes for businesses. Former Minister for Local Government Don Page indicated that he wanted to allow two votes in Parramatta, Wollongong and Newcastle so that if the government of the day did not like a council, it could impose two votes through ministerial direction.

I was offended that the former Government wanted to tamper with democracy in that way. If members in this place support the bill, that legislation will be repealed. In 2014 I put on record the views of ABC election analyst Antony Green from his blog post dated 5 September 2014. I said:

Mr Green is one of Australia's leading experts on electoral matters. He is well versed in electoral history and the intricacies of electoral law. He is the man Australia looks to on election matters and on election night. I call on members and on the community to read his post in full. It details the long history of both sides of politics intervening in the City of Sydney. No member can cast an informed vote without reading Mr Green's post; no member who has read it could in good faith support this bill. Mr Green talks about the reasons given for the writing of the bill.

I then quoted Mr Green, who said:

The logic here is trying to tap into the argument of the American revolution about no taxation without representation. Yet it is distorting this argument into one that says those who pay more taxes should get more votes.

He went on to say:

The two votes idea is completely at odds with Australian history, and with democracy as understood in most western countries. It can only be viewed as a stalking horse for the real intent of the legislation, which is an expansion on the non-resident roll and the introduction of some form of compulsion in business enrolment and voting.

I support small business; I am a massive advocate for small business. As nonresidents, small business owners can apply to become a voter. But Opposition members have not learned from their mistakes. With the support of the crossbench in the upper House, Labor removed a loophole that would have allowed the then Minister for Local Government to extend the undemocratic rules to any local government in the State by regulation. I will quote myself again. In 2014 I said in the other place:

This is a loophole so big that a truck could be driven right through it.

It was a shameless attempt by the previous Government to gerrymander local elections across the State and create potentially favourable conditions for the election of Liberal candidates. I am proud that we were able to remove that part of the 2014 bill because it would have been even more devastating for communities if it had passed. It would have been so shameless and undemocratic to allow the then Minister for Local Government to wield that power. Some of the characters of the former Government in 2011 and 2015 were closely aligned with characters on the councils in the areas I mentioned. I commend the crossbench in the other place, including The Greens, the Shooters and the Independents. They did their job in the house of review.

This bill will bring the rules that govern the City of Sydney elections in line with the rules that govern voting on all other non-residential electors across New South Wales. It will relieve the businesses and the City of Sydney of a considerable burden by removing the automatic enrolment of non-residential electors. I acknowledge the hardworking member for Heffron, and Minister for Local Government, and thank him for introducing the bill. He is very considered. Back in 2014 we both worked very hard to oppose the former Government's bill. We were not in government then—we lost—but today we are repealing that bill and bringing democracy back to the city.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:38): I contribute to debate on the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023, which The Greens support. I also support the contribution to debate made by my Greens colleague the member for Balmain. The purpose of the bill is simple: It seeks to treat local government elections in the City of Sydney the same as elections in all other local government areas across New South Wales. Frankly, that this has not already been the case for nearly a decade is a disgrace. The changes that were made by the then Coalition Government in 2014 were a blatant act of gerrymandering to double the vote of local businesses within the City of Sydney local government area and, in effect, halve the power of votes cast by everyday members of our community.

I acknowledge the Minister for Local Government, and member for Heffron, for bringing this legislation to the Chamber, and acknowledge the fact that the member for Balmain and the member for Sydney are also here for this debate. I recognise that between the four of us, we represent in this place all of the community in the City of Sydney local government area, and note that we are all very supportive of this change being pushed through. In 2014 The Greens made our opposition to this practice of business double voting very clear. As we have heard, it was a politically motivated attempt to remove the lord mayor, Clover Moore, from office and change the composition of elected councillors in the City of Sydney in an attempt by the Liberals to regain control of the keys to Town Hall. In 2023 The Greens welcome this bill and the change it brings. As others have noted, the lord mayor remains very much in office. I note that the Minister for Industrial Relations, who was formerly a shadow Minister for Local Government, acknowledged in her contribution the fact that in 2003 or 2004 the Bob Carr Labor Government made its own attempt to wrangle the keys of Town Hall and learnt its lesson well.

Everyone has shared their local government stories of the time. I was preselected as The Greens candidate for the South Sydney election in 2004, and found myself in the middle of a forced merger between those councils. We saw, once again, a government of the day attempting to intervene in local democracy by changing the way our community voted. I think at the time Labor had the intention of Michael Lee stepping up as the lord mayor of the newly amalgamated South Sydney and City of Sydney councils. We then saw an amazing campaign by a huge number of candidates for lord mayor—I think it was 15 or 16 candidates that put their hand up, including Clover Moore—which was a good lesson for anybody who wants to understand the approach of Lord Mayor Clover Moore in how she does politics.

It is clear that the lord mayor has huge support from the community, and that she does not go after more power unless she is under attack, or democracy is under attack, or her community is under attack. Her step up to the Town Hall at the City of Sydney was very much in response to the attack of the former Carr Labor Government on the local democracy of the former South Sydney Council, which she held so dear. In turn, her desire to grasp

the seat of Sydney, after she was prevented from being able to run for it, was a direct indication of the fact that she will step up and go on the attack if she feels like others are trying to undermine the democratic process.

I say that on the record because, seeing as we have had successive government attempts to undermine this process, it is worthwhile remembering that those of us who do not sit with the major parties may build large community support when we feel that we are under attack from the major parties attempting to undermine our democracy. With this bill, businesses within the City of Sydney local government area will once again be treated the same as non-residential electors across the State. They will no longer be obligated to vote in the City of Sydney elections, and the City of Sydney council will no longer have to spend an enormous amount of ratepayers' money each year in maintaining a register of non-residential business voters.

Between the initial changes to the City of Sydney Act in 2014 and 2021, it is estimated that this maintenance work of the roll has cost ratepayers almost \$13 million. That is an eye-watering sum, and it is not hard to imagine the kinds of community infrastructure it could have been used to deliver instead, such as libraries or public parks or cycleways, just to name a few things. I acknowledge the commitment by the Government to redirect this money into delivering for communities that are suffering from food insecurity.

However, the costs these changes brought for our community cannot be measured in money alone. The impact on our local democracy and the value of the vote of everyday people being halved is difficult to quantify or capture. The principle should be one person, one vote, one value. That is one of the core pillars of our electoral democracy, one that is not currently present in the City of Sydney local government elections and has not been present for the past nine years. In addition to that, it is important to note that The Greens take the position that only people, not corporations or businesses, should be entitled to vote in local government elections. Each vote must be of equal value, and individuals, just because they have the ability to own corporations, businesses or additional property, should not get more votes than other people. This should particularly not be the case in the example mentioned by the member for Kiama of multiple votes in different local council areas.

The bill does not go so far as to eliminate the business vote in the City of Sydney in its entirety, but that certainly is a change that The Greens will continue to push for across our local government areas to make sure that communities and individual people are the ones able to participate in our democracy. Doubling the business vote in the City of Sydney was a brazen example of putting the interests of the business class above those of the community, the likes of which we hope we never see again from any side of politics in this place—although I do not hold out much hope given the contribution of the now Opposition in relation to the bill. It makes my skin crawl hearing words such as "disenfranchised" to describe the business community and phrases such as "the need to ensure a diversity of voices and opinions" when we talk about corporations like McDonald's and Apple being able to vote in elections.

I also note that with local government elections only 12 months away, time is of the essence. It is imperative the bill is passed swiftly to ensure that not one more election within the City of Sydney local government area is held under these anti-democratic laws. For this reason, The Greens have been working collaboratively and consistently with the member for Sydney, the member for Heffron and others to ensure the bill passes. For this reason, we have no interest in playing around with the bill at this stage to address the business voting principle that we hold more strongly and wish to look at as part of a broader review across local government areas.

I call on my colleagues in the other place to ensure that the bill passes in a straightforward way. I note the bizarre interest of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party—I think they were just the Shooters then—in the democracy of the City of Sydney when this legislation went through. The fact that the Shooters were convinced to introduce this legislation in the first place demonstrates the dirty politics going on behind the scenes between the Baird Government and the conservative crossbench in the other place at the time.

As the member for Balmain did in her contribution, I thank and acknowledge City of Sydney councillors Sylvie Ellsmore of The Greens and Linda Scott of Labor, who I know have been in long conversations to ensure that the bill has a smooth and timely passage through this Chamber. I also recognise my crossbench colleague the member for Sydney for his longstanding work and commitment to this issue. The Minister has now left the Chamber, but I acknowledge that there are photos of us rallying in 2015 amongst hundreds of people outside the Town Hall holding "One vote, one value" signs. Lord Mayor Clover Moore was there, along with the former member for Balmain, Jamie Parker; the then shadow Minister for Local Government, Sophie Cotsis; the member for Sydney; Unions NSW—I think it was Mark Lennen; Local Government NSW; and Labor MPs and candidates. We all rallied against the business vote.

It is my pleasure to hear in this Chamber that finally the cries for democracy in our city have returned. I support the bill and recognise that we have so much more to do to ensure that local government is not only respected in this place but also empowered to be able to do important work in our local communities. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (16:48): I oppose the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023 on behalf of the thousands of small business people and thousands of mum-and-dad property investors who have made a substantial and significant investment into the City of Sydney council area by virtue of the cafes or retail businesses they run, and the many people who have invested in a single property to provide short-term accommodation for people visiting this great city. I do not consider them to be anything like the Apples or the McDonald's of the world, and I will not refer to those companies whatsoever. However, in terms of what members have raised in their contributions to this debate about one vote, one value, I do believe that if you have worked hard and invested your hard-earned on behalf of your own personal wealth like I have, you are entitled to a say. I am happy to confess that I own property within the City of Sydney Council area, and that is on behalf of my superannuation for the future. I was not the beneficiary of superannuation when I commenced work. There would be many self-funded retirees like myself who have made that particular investment so as not to be a burden on government when they retire.

The Australian Taxation Office lists 2,200,000 residents of Australia as being investors in property. Seventy per cent of those are owners of only one investment property outside their principal place of residence. If members look across the landscape of the City of Sydney council area, they will note the many hotels: the Hyatt, the Meriton, the Shangri-La, the Mantra and the plethora of others. Small investors will comprise 49 per cent of the ownership of those properties. That is because the owners who develop those hotels then hand them over to others to operate but keep a stake of 50 per cent plus one so that they hold a managing right. However, the rest of the property—nearly 49 per cent—is usually on-sold.

People like myself have invested in those properties. As I said before, such people are working hard and not getting handouts. They are taking on significant risk. The outcomes of their investments for this city are substantial. Members can only imagine the increase to the economy of this city because of that short-term accommodation being available. I can only imagine that the significant contribution that is made, first and foremost, to the City of Sydney by the millions of people who visit this city is made because those people can spend a night, a week or a month here. Basically, they are here churning over their money into the City of Sydney council, making this an extremely large and wealthy council area and, as members have said before, adding significantly to the State domestic product.

What members have stated throughout this debate, which is absolutely factual, is that a business owner or a property investor who owns a property here—like myself, as I have said—can apply to be a non-residential voter in the City of Sydney. The bill put before the Parliament in 2014 removed the onus on businesspeople to jump through hoops to be on the non-residential roll. It gave them that right as property owners and businesspeople who work their backsides off. God knows that the number of small businesses we have lost—the member for Sydney, who is in the chair, would know this better than anyone—over the past couple of years due to COVID would be absolutely huge. I would hate to see those numbers. The pain and suffering that has caused to those people and their families, plus their employers and employees et cetera, is enormous. They make a contribution, and I will proudly stand up day after day and defend those small business people.

Members have often said that small business people are the backbone of this country—and they are. They provide almost 50 per cent of employment in this country through their efforts. When they go down, so do their employees and so do the families of those employees. The knock-on effect is enormous. Yesterday the budget was presented. The overall cost to the budget of COVID alone for the previous Liberal-Nationals Government was something like \$54 billion. Imagine any government having to find that amount of money. A significant amount of that money went to supporting small business people, as it should. As I said before, those people provide employment to 50 per cent of the working population of this country. To wrap up, in its current form the Act gives those people the right to vote. Do they get two votes? Yes, they do. They get to vote where they live and they get to vote where they work and have invested. It almost comes down to the—

Ms Jenny Leong: They don't get to vote where they work unless they own—

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Mr Temporary Speaker, the rude member for Newtown continues to interject when members are on their feet. I always give her the courtesy of keeping quiet while she is on her feet. I would go as far as to say that she is very articulate—

Ms Jenny Leong: Point of order—

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: —and I like to listen to her contributions to debate. But she is incredibly rude—

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich): The member for Newtown rises on a point of order.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: —to interject while I am on my feet.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich): I will hear the point of order. The member for Newtown is entitled to take one.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Perfectly, and that is the way it should be. She should do it more often.

Ms Jenny Leong: I would appreciate it if the member for Kellyville would withdraw the accusation that I am rude. I do not think it is parliamentary language.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: To the point of order: As I have already stated, I sit quietly and listen courteously whenever the member for Newtown is on her feet. She does not extend that same courtesy to me nor to many other members of this House. She is rude in doing so and disobeys the standing orders of this House. I will not withdraw.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich): The member for Newtown has asked the member to withdraw the comment and he has indicated that he will not do so. The member for Kellyville will return to the leave of the bill before the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr Temporary Speaker; I politely decline to withdraw. As I said, I will always stand up and defend those small business people who provide such an enormous input into the economy, especially here in the City of Sydney local government area. I believe the Act is fine in its current form. It removes the onus on those people to request to be on the non-residential roll. It gives them the right, as property owners or small business people, to have a say in their representation in this particular local government area of Sydney. I do not see any problem with that whatsoever.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:57): I contribute to debate on the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023, which I commend wholeheartedly. The purpose of the bill is to remove the rules currently prescribed under the City of Sydney Act 1988 governing non-residential elector voting in the City of Sydney. Currently those rules are weighted very much in favour of businesses over residents and are completely inconsistent with the operation of local government elections across the State.

The bill will repeal divisions 1, 2 and 4 of part 3 of the Act, which prescribe the special voting rights for non-residential electors in the City of Sydney, and make other minor and consequential amendments. It will subject the City of Sydney to the same rules governing voting by non-residential electors that apply in all other local government areas as prescribed under the Local Government Act 1993. The bill also abolishes the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee by repealing part 4 of the Act. The committee is inoperative and dissolving it will remove an unnecessary barrier to transport decision-making in the City of Sydney.

I note that all MPs in this place who represent electorates within the City of Sydney local government area support this bill. That includes Minister Hoenig, as well as the members for the electorates of Balmain, Newtown and Sydney. The former Government was obsessed with making changes to local government rules to benefit themselves and deliver Liberal local government authorities across the State. In 2016, when I was a councillor on the former City of Parramatta Council, I found out in a lift that I was no longer a councillor. A former member—a Liberal MP at the time—told me that it was happening that day. The councillors were not notified. The lord mayor received an email two hours after I had been told in the lift that I was no longer a councillor. This Act and the ridiculous rules that allowed double votes and compulsory voting for businesses was an outrageous attempt to boost the conservative and pro-business vote in the City of Sydney, particularly at the expense of Clover Moore. It was referred to as the "Get Clover" bill.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich): It being 5.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the public interest debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

Public Interest Debate

WATER BUYBACKS

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (17:01): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Recognises that stripping 450 gigalitres of water from the consumptive pool will significantly harm annual cropping and dairy in New South Wales.
- (2) Notes that Federal water Minister, Tanya Plibersek, has trampled on the State rights of New South Wales by tearing up the 2018 intergovernmental agreement on water buybacks.
- (3) Notes that the socio-economic neutrality test operating under this 2018 agreement protects New South Wales rural irrigation communities.
- (4) Demands the Premier stand up to the Federal Government and protect our rural communities and New South Wales State rights.

As we move into drought and our disadvantaged are battling under the burden of food price inflation, the timing of Federal Minister for the Environment and Water Tanya Plibersek's water buybacks could not be worse. It is clear that taking out 450 giganlitres from the consumptive pool will significantly harm annual cropping and dairying in New South Wales. We saw that with water buybacks last time. Indeed, that part of my motion is a clear fact. It sets the stage for illustrating the disaster of the Albanese Government policy on water. In recent weeks Tanya Plibersek has torn up the 2018 intergovernmental agreement.

Sometimes the job of a member of Parliament is difficult indeed. To hear the concerns of so many of my constituents—good, hardworking people who feed this nation and drive our exports—for their future as a result of Minister Plibersek's water buybacks is something that moves me deeply. Tanya Plibersek's trampling on the 2018 intergovernmental agreement is about politics; it is not about the environment. Rural communities that have no record of voting for Labor or The Greens are expendable in the Albanese Government's fight for survival. It is beginning to struggle in the polls and in recent times The Greens have been very clear. They will use the housing crisis to take inner city seats off Labor at the next Federal election. They will target these seats, including those of Tanya Plibersek and Anthony Albanese. Their political future is at stake. Compulsory water buybacks, which they falsely sell as environment measures, are designed to help fight off The Greens taking votes in inner city seats held by Labor.

The Federal Government is ditching the socio-economic neutrality test, which was a keystone of the 2018 intergovernmental agreement. We know that test protected rural communities in New South Wales. No water buybacks from the Commonwealth can occur if the socio-economic effects of such buybacks have a negative impact on communities. It is very simple; it is very effective. It was reached as a consensus between the Commonwealth and the States in 2018. Tanya Plibersek has single-handedly shattered that consensus now. What will the New South Wales Government do in response? Will it take a stand for State rights and reject Tanya Plibersek's outrageous changes to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan? Victoria did it, so why can't New South Wales? We have heard all the excuses—Minister Plibersek can go ahead with the water buybacks, regardless of whether a State agrees or not. Why is Victoria bothering to opt out of the plan? Because it wants to send a clear message to Canberra and to the people of Victoria.

Premier Chris Minns and water Minister Rose Jackson can go along with Federal water Minister Tanya Plibersek's ridiculous plan to starve farmers of water for no proven environmental benefit. They can go along with her ridiculous plan to force up food prices, to lengthen the queues at food banks around Australia—as if they were not long enough already. Premier Minns can go along with Tanya Plibersek's ridiculous water buyback plan and increase the cost of food and fibre for families. If Tanya Plibersek wants to do that, then it cannot be with the agreement of the State Government. That is what Victoria is saying. That is what makes Victoria a strong State and defender of State rights under the great Federation, the Commonwealth of Australia.

This public interest debate calls on the New South Wales Government to take a stand against Canberra like the Victorian Government has done. Sadly, the world is going through a period of food shortages. The war in Ukraine—one of the world's greatest food bowls—is a major contributor to those shortages. Tanya Plibersek will add to that serious problem with her compulsory water buybacks, which will reduce food production in New South Wales. Because, as night follows day, these water buybacks will mean less water for farmers. That will also mean less food on our shelves, higher food prices and more food imports. Anglicare released a report this month which covered food prices and food inflation for Australia's neediest people. The report found that low-income Australians are spending 93 per cent more on their groceries. That is huge. We have all heard stories about hungry children stealing from their classmates' lunch boxes. Water buybacks are looming. That will mean less local food and thus higher prices for food.

The Greens support the principle of compulsory buybacks. I say to them respectfully, and I ask them to listen, that compulsory water buybacks will mean more imported, lower-quality food. It will also mean higher carbon emissions as the food needs to come to our tables from far away. Compulsory water buybacks are supposed to solve many other environmental issues. I call on The Greens NSW to think very carefully about what they are being asked to do by The Greens in Canberra about the water issue in New South Wales. Are they representing the people of New South Wales or are they a delegation from the Federal Parliament that is sitting in both this and the other place? They only need to look to Victoria, which is making a stand for its farmers, its rural communities and its rights as a State under the Federation.

The Minns Government needs to look to Victoria as well. We know that Tanya Plibersek is going to trample on Victoria's rights and attempt to implement the new Murray-Darling Basin Plan whether they like it or not. Premier Daniel Andrews, his water Minister Harriet Shing and the Victorian Government are making a clear and firm statement. These water buybacks will be all Canberra's doing. They are not having a bar of it. They know what it will do to their rural communities, their farmers and the hungry people in their communities. Victoria has sent a clear message: no buybacks. I call on Premier Chris Minns, water Minister Rose Jackson and the current

New South Wales Government to do the same. Do not under any circumstances be involved in this fiasco. Stand up, be counted and speak up. Do not back down!

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (17:08): The Government opposes the motion but not because we want to see buybacks happening. In fact, in answer to a question asked by the member for Murray on 1 August, the Premier said, "I make it clear that the Government does not want and does not support proposals that will have a negative impact on New South Wales regional communities and economies." He also said, "We do not want buybacks used for water recovery". The motion has a number of issues that the Government is unable to support. It needs to be very clear that in trying to work through these issues New South Wales is looking to proactively put forward proposals to the Australian Government, by the end of the process it is going through, on alternative options to deliver 450 gigalitres of water that would reduce the impact of buybacks.

I make clear that the Basin Plan has a number of complex moving parts. It is important to understand that the Commonwealth already has an agreement to undertake buybacks for a number of parts of the plan. It can undertake buybacks for the Bridging the Gap component of the plan and the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism supply and constraint measures, which is 605 gigalitres worth of SDLAM measures. Under the old agreement, the Commonwealth could not use buybacks for the efficiency measures under the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism. That is why at the moment it is very difficult to say that there should be no buybacks at all, because the Commonwealth already has that capacity. It has been pointed out in the House that the Commonwealth has the capacity to undertake buybacks without a State's agreement.

The key issue—and the reason New South Wales needs to negotiate with the Commonwealth—is we need extra time to undertake a number of the really important initiatives in the Basin Plan. We need extra time to deliver the SDLAM measures for both upwater and downwater, as they are known, because they are so far behind. The reason they are so far behind is that previous Federal and State governments were not serious about doing basic things like constraints removal, which was a fundamental part of the SDLAM measures and also one of the measures that was meant to be introduced first in the Basin Plan. Part of the problem is that for a long time governments did not want to address it because there was community opposition to those measures.

In my previous role as CEO of the National Irrigators' Council, I remember visiting the electorate of the member for Murray a number of times—she was probably there—and warning that if we did not pull the finger out, to be colloquial, and get on with implementing some of the SDLAM measures, we would eventually see a Commonwealth government wanting to buy the 450 gigalitres. Unfortunately, that became one of the inevitable axes that the Commonwealth holds over us. It is to satisfy South Australia—the member for Murray is absolutely right about that. In New South Wales, we understood originally that it was going to be up to 450 gigalitres, but apparently South Australians were told it was going to be 450 gigalitres.

We need time to implement the Basin Plan. We need extra time to do some important work like addressing those constraints and looking at alternatives to water recovery for the 450 gigalitres. A number of members have spoken about alternatives. We need to improve the health of the rivers with fish passage. We need to look at temperatures. We need to look at riparian repair along the riverbanks. We need to look at how we can deliver the water more effectively to get the schedule 5 environmental outcomes that the 450 gigalitres is meant to provide. Those are all in South Australia. They cannot be delivered at the moment because the constraints in the system do not allow them to be. But they could possibly be delivered through pumping water or other diversions onto the wetlands they are meant to be protecting.

We need time and flexibility from the Commonwealth to include some of those alternative measures for our river system, because the existing plan essentially set a date that said, "You need to list all the measures you're going to implement and no more will be allowed." One simply cannot operate a plan like that when some of it is not as easy to implement as it originally appeared. We need flexibility from the Commonwealth. We need additional time. We do not want the buybacks but we must continue to work through the issues using that additional time. Therefore, the Government will not be able to support the motion moved by the member for Murray.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (17:13): We just heard from the member for Monaro, who is crab walking away from regional communities and backing the Federal Government. The Government should tell us what the plan is. It is not good enough for it to sit on its hands until the time expires and then start buying back water. The Nationals have opposed buybacks from day one, and we continue to do so. That is because we know the devastating impacts that buybacks will have on those regional communities that rely on safe and secure water access for their livelihoods. The last time the water was bought back over 3,100 full-time jobs were lost in agricultural communities. Once thriving economic hubs have become ghost towns, with high unemployment and empty shopfronts. Those communities have suffered enough. History has shown us that the economic impacts extend well beyond the farm gate. Schools, hospitals, pubs, cafes and hairdressers all suffer once the economic stimulus of the agricultural sector takes a hit from water buybacks.

We also know that buybacks lead to higher water prices, which lead to higher food prices. How on earth can the State Government back the Federal Government in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis? How is Labor so short-sighted that it cannot see that even in its city seats it will be negatively impacted by water buybacks? The Government has said it opposes buybacks but at this stage it is crab walking away and backing the Feds. There were no projects and no dollar figures—nothing—in yesterday's budget. Our communities need certainty. They need to know that the State Government will not sit by and let the Federal Government come in and buy water back from our communities.

The Federal Government is shifting the goalposts when it comes to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and New South Wales must not be complicit in this. The Federal legislation currently being debated in Canberra cannot be any different from what was agreed on by Ministers in 2012. We remember former Federal water Minister Tony Burke saying, "The rule is it can only happen through methods that have no downside, social or economic." That rule still applies: a strict neutrality test on delivery that means no water can be recovered for the environment if there is any negative socio-economic impact. In 2012 the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the Government knew that buybacks would hurt regional communities. What is different today? Absolutely nothing. The only thing that has changed is the Federal Government now wants to keep an election promise to South Australia at the expense of New South Wales communities.

Furthermore, we know that buybacks will only cause more environmental damage. Due to constraints in the rivers, the water simply cannot get where it is intended to go. How senseless is it for the Government to spend billions of dollars buying back water and hurting regional communities, only for that water to hit river constraints and cause flooding and erosion? That will damage the environment, and the problem the Government is trying to fix will get worse by its own hand. The State and Federal governments should consider other options. By working to fix the key degradation drivers hurting rivers like carp, cold-water pollution, fish passages and constraints, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan can be delivered without the need for buybacks.

The New South Wales Labor Government needs to come clean and commit to putting complementary measures in place that provide actual proven benefit to river health. As the former water Minister, I still believe the Murray-Darling Basin Plan can be delivered. New South Wales did the heavy lifting during long periods of drought, significant floods and fires, which all impacted on the work that needed to be done in and around the river systems. Significant progress has been made with sustainable diversion limits and the Basin Plan's centrepiece, which is now in place on the back of over 2,100 gigalitres of water being redirected back to the environment. Ninety-eight per cent of surface water recovery against the Bridging the Gap target has been achieved.

Now is the time to focus on measures that will actually benefit our rivers instead of senselessly buying back water from farmers and destroying our regional communities, all while adding to the cost-of-living crisis. Meanwhile, the member for Monaro keeps crab walking away from regional communities and backing the Federal Government. He should put his money where his mouth is, take action, stop the buybacks and back regional New South Wales.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (17:18): I do not know what to say after that contribution from the member for Tamworth. I will start on a positive note by recognising the member for Murray and her incredibly staunch work around the issue of water. I have spent quite a bit of time talking to her and working with her on this issue. It is no surprise that she brings to the House yet another opportunity for debate and discussion about water. I congratulate her on that. I believe the member for Murray will agree with me that, fundamentally, over the past 10 or 12 years, with Coalition governments in power at both State and Federal levels, not enough has been done in this space. It seems like people have gone out of their way to make sure that nothing changed and nothing got done. That seems to have been the whole approach of the former Federal Government; it was certainly the approach in New South Wales. It deliberately postponed, pushed back, delayed, confused, conflated, misinterpreted and scaremongered every possible water issue.

I will talk about water metering as an example. Telemetry in metering was supposed to be in place in the northern basin in 2019 but got pushed to 2020, then to 2021, then to 2022 and then to 2023. Somewhere in there, it went from a responsibility for farmers to put in place their own metering to a responsibility for taxpayers to pay for it. Then we did not have enough duly qualified people to install the metering. It just conflated at every possible step and the net result is that nothing happened and nothing changed, despite the fact that all four States are signed onto a plan called the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The member for Tamworth stood in this Chamber a couple of weeks ago and said that The Nationals are still committed to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. If they are committed to it, then that means they are still committed to the fact that, because the work has not been done for the past 10 or 12 years, the Federal Government fundamentally now has the power to come in and do buybacks. We do not want that to happen, but we cannot change or be responsible for what happened over the past 12 years. That is done and behind us.

Going forward, we will say clearly to the Federal Government that we do not want buybacks, but to help us prevent that we want to work with the Federal Government. We want to negotiate with it. We want more time and, more importantly for New South Wales, we want the money to come into some of the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism projects. We can work together and convince each other that the program will be good and beneficial and that it will work. We have to keep those lines of communication open because we are committed to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in this State. Words spoken in this Chamber today will not change that.

I have spoken with the member for Murray in the past about the socio-economic neutrality test. While I fundamentally agree with her about that, I do have a slightly different view on some aspects. As I have travelled around the State looking at water issues, I have seen that a whole bunch of changes have happened in our food and fibre industries that have impacted the socio-economics of our regional communities. That includes things like tractors and farm vehicles getting bigger and wider. They are becoming driverless and more efficient. We are getting genetically modified crops that do not require anywhere near the workforce to do the work. We are seeing, essentially, a free market on water, which is already sending water to different parts of the communities. For example, we have nut farmers buying land in the desert and then insisting that the water gets to them. That decimates dairy farms further upstream along the Murray that cannot afford, in a free market, to compete for that water.

There has been massive socio-economic disruption to all of our regional and farming communities, not because of water buybacks—although they were disruptive when used—but because there is so much going on in this space. Water is incredibly complex, and we absolutely need to stay in the conversation. We cannot stand at the lectern and preach nonsense. The member for Murray is passionate and to be commended for moving this particular public interest debate in the House. I am disappointed that we are opposing it, but there are good, sensible reasons for that.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (17:23): I am interested in good, sensible reasons, but the crab walking continues. I appreciate the previous contributions have been made in good faith, but let us talk about what the member for Cessnock said about what has been done over the past 10 or 12 years. It started in 2012-14 with the then Government. I was not in my role then as the effects of all that were felt, but the buying up of large tracts of land and water licences and stripping out and over-extracting from areas has had a massive impact on the community. That is why things have taken time, because everyone is still trying to recover from what everyone tells us is an over-extracted valley. You cannot pretend that you want change when you are not prepared to put the money where the mouth is.

At the moment we know New South Wales is copping about \$700 million for signing up to this new part. We all agree it needs more time. That is what the member for Tamworth was talking about the other day. It needs more time because the plan has not been able to be enacted properly because all the things that we think are important take time to do. Taking water out of a consumptive pool and jamming it into the system does not help the system. What helps the system is better usage of the water within it, and I will talk more about that.

We know that water is one of the most precious assets that we have, particularly in regional areas. It is pretty disappointing that the Minns Labor Government has rolled over and said, "Yes, we do not agree with buybacks but we will take the money to let you do what you might want to do." I do not agree much with the Victorian Labor Government, but in recent times I have to say that maybe I do. The Government there went a bit rogue and said it would not sign up to the plan proposed by Federal Minister Tanya Plibersek because it would be detrimental to Victoria. Funny that.

So Victoria is happy to stand up and say, "No, we will not sign up because we don't think the benefits are there." I guess some of us imagined that maybe the same thing could happen in New South Wales, because we know that buybacks are not an answer. They simply reduce, for all the wrong reasons, the amount of water that is available, resulting in all the wrong outcomes. Funnily enough, the New South Wales Labor Government does not want to upset the overlords, the puppetmasters. We are being told that the Government does not agree with the buybacks but there is nothing it can do about it.

Mr Steve Whan: We want their money and the extra two years.

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS: You want the money, exactly. You are doing it for the money. The member just agreed that the overlords are controlling the Government because it is all about the money. That is pathetic! Obviously, the Victorian Government found another way to stand up for its communities and say it will not do it. Of course, this is not the first time in the past six months that the Government has stuffed up on water policy, to the detriment of regional New South Wales. This is the Government that brought in rules to stop any future privatisation of Sydney Water and Hunter Water—something that we agreed no-one was ever talking about

privatising. But the Government would not provide the same constitutional certainty to regional New South Wales and, in particular, to WaterNSW, which provides services to regional New South Wales.

We have seen confirmation in the budget that none of that was ever going to happen. We have also seen the budget confirm that the Wyangala Dam plan is gone. So there will be no future water security, flood mitigation and drought resilience for areas like Cowra, Forbes, Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo, which have been devastated in the past 12 months. The Premier and the water Minister have both said that those plans did not stack up financially but, again, it comes down to the money for this Government.

What price does the Government put on droughtproofing and flood proofing a regional community? When does it put the lives and livelihoods of an area ahead of a benefit-cost ratio, or when does it put the business case first? It seems like the business case is always first with this mob, which is very disappointing. There are opportunities for the Government to do the right thing. One of those would be to stand up for regional areas of New South Wales and say that the Government agrees that more time is needed and it will do what Victoria has done. It can say, "No, we will not just cop what you are saying now. We will stand up for our New South Wales regions, which are more important to us than bowing down to the puppetmasters in Canberra."

Mr Steve Whan: Puppetmasters?

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS: Yes, puppetmasters. The member has admitted they want the money and will take the money and run. It is very disappointing.

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (17:28): While I did not choose the specific wording of the motion, I do agree with the sentiment. That is especially so in sticking up for New South Wales when it comes to a new request for water to South Australia when the northern basin cannot reliably supply water. In any review of the current Canberra position, one would have to say that this new request was made without context and scientific backing, and it is unlikely to be reliably met by water from the northern basin. The 450 gigalitres without the Basin Plan detail and context is simply a number waiting to be reverse-engineered into a desktop model. It is time to stop that approach. We need the New South Wales Minister to detail the funds soon to be on offer from the Commonwealth under the newly minted agreement that was made prior to the passage of the Commonwealth legislation.

We seem to be crossing bridges before they are constructed, baking a cake without any measurements and building houses from the roof down—members get my drift. Another example of putting the cart before the horse is that we have not seen the integrated quantity and quality model and SOURCE model run numbers on the savings delivered by the Barwon-Darling water sharing plan rule changes in June 2020 and the floodplain harvesting regulation on take compared with the 1912 entitlement. Members might be aware that we had four cracks at floodplain harvesting regulation and then finally it was allowed to stand.

Substantial changes in the amount of water that is taken off the flood plain and put into storage will come about through the implementation of the floodplain harvesting regulation. There will be a substantial reduction in the amount of water. That is just the northern basin; we have not even started on the southern basin. We have made those changes at a State level. The Barwon-Darling water sharing plan included the resumption of flow rule, the individual daily extraction limits or components and the active water rule, which is shepherding environmental water. We have made changes at a State level that will result in more water in our river system, but we have no metrics or quantum on the amount of that water and how much it might count towards the water that South Australia is looking for, without even looking at any other measures to take water out of communities. The changes would exist in draft form. We need to see them and organise ourselves from there once we have the data in front of us.

I acknowledge the former Minister in the Chamber. I worked hard with him to ensure that there was a meaningful low water trigger at Menindee that would result in more water at Menindee more often, which is important for that community. When there is no water, tourism dries up and what little agriculture is left grinds to a halt. The risk is that, in periods of low flows when nothing is coming down the Darling and there is an expectation that the northern basin will provide water, we could see Menindee drained to meet the 450 gigalitres at the South Australian border. I do not want to see that happen.

We need to slow down, work out what is already recovered and make informed decisions from there. I agree that we need more time. There is no doubt about that. We need to see what we can do with the changes that have already been made that are not going to take anything else from communities. Again, I oppose political water and economic water dressed up as environmental water. Let us slow this down. New South Wales must look to its communities first when it comes to requests for water not originally considered in the 2012 plan and the 2013 intergovernmental agreement. We have the opportunity to do something good, if we can take count of the recovered water. That will mean more water in our river, which is an ingredient for river health, alongside complementary measures. More water is what this is all about. Let us see what we have done already.

Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga) (17:32): I make a brief contribution to the public interest debate and thank the member for Murray for moving the important motion. I support her and the work that she is doing. I joined her last week on her protest rally to the office of Ms Plibersek. That experience rammed home the point that this is a significant issue for our communities. It is good to be in the Chamber debating this issue today, with both the member for Murray and The Nationals together on a unity ticket, which does the soul considerable good. I mean that seriously.

I speak personally about the impact of this issue on my region and on food production, and I make a note about rural communities. This issue impacts my electorate. Most of the time in Wagga Wagga we have a battle when it rains. We argue with the irrigators, who want water, because we want less water in the dam so that we do not flood. I have to say more broadly that the prosperity of south-west New South Wales is in no small part due to the prosperity of the irrigation communities of Griffith, Leeton, Coleambally and others in that area. They have toiled endlessly for decades to produce food and wealth for our region. I stand with them because the buybacks as proposed will have a significant impact on their viability. Rural communities should stand together.

I am concerned about the impact on food production, and I have also made that point about the solar factories that are consuming prime agricultural land in Wagga. Irrigation provides more than 90 per cent of Australia's fruit, nuts and grapes; more than 76 per cent of vegetables; 100 per cent of rice; and more than 50 per cent of dairy and sugar. Those are 2018-19 figures. Irrigation farmers in Australia are recognised as world leaders in water efficiency. The Australian Government's own data by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences says that water buybacks have already driven water allocation prices up to \$200 per megalitre in three out of 10 years. That same data estimates that 450 gigalitres of buyback would push that to eight out of 10 years. That means more expensive food and less production. In a world with a continually growing population, those factors should concern us and consumers throughout Australia. This issue has an impact on food production.

The importance of rural communities is also an issue, and I have enunciated that principle on more than one occasion. Rural people matter and rural communities count. Rural New South Wales is not just empty space. We cannot simply construct transmission lines because no-one lives there; people do live there. We should be careful about making decisions that take away people's livelihoods and impact the viability of rural communities. That is why, when the 450 gigalitres was negotiated, there was a socio-economic neutrality test. My understanding is that is what will disappear. The socio-economic neutrality test is a fair way of approaching water distribution because it forces us to not be lazy and take things out of the system and it forces us to think. It forces our scientists and farmers to do what they have been doing for decades now: getting the most out of the land and the water and looking after the environment. Why walk away from that? Yes, it is true that more could have been done in the past 12 years. There is no question about that. But the pressure is on, and a lot has already been achieved.

Finally, there are alternatives. We can expand eligibility to stock and domestic systems and town water efficiencies. We can explore numerous off-farm efficiency projects. There are market solutions. There is recognition of rules-based recovery and partnerships with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. There is the Private Property Wetlands Watering Project and there are expanding fish screening programs. Alternative ideas are out there. The Government has spoken about the alternatives that it thinks can be implemented, and we must look into those. The Government has also spoken about this somehow impeding its capacity to negotiate with the Commonwealth, but the motion actually gives it the power to go to the Commonwealth and demand a better deal. It is in the Government's interest to support it.

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (17:37): In reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Monaro, Tamworth, Cessnock, Wagga Wagga, Barwon and Dubbo for their contributions. This is certainly a vexed issue that must be addressed. There were few contributions from Labor members because they know we are right. The statistics say that to take 450 gigalitres of water and remove it from our consumptive pool will create huge devastation in our communities, not just for the remaining farmers who are priced out of production because, as water gets scarce, our staple products will be priced out and water will go to the highest commodity. I struggle with that. We cannot just rip out orange trees one year when the price is poor—and the price of oranges and grapes is incredibly poor at the moment—and then plant them again the next year when the prices go up, especially when those plants take three or four years to come into full production. The whole premise of this is undermining rural communities. It is undermining the processing, leading to instability in most of our areas.

Successive governments have had years and years to sort this out, and, unfortunately, they have sat on their hands. I agree with the member for Wagga Wagga that this Government has an opportunity to negotiate with the Commonwealth. We only ask it to abide by the law as it is now. Tanya Plibersek is planning to throw out the agreement, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and put in another one to take out the socio-economic neutrality test, which was negotiated in 2018—get rid of that, throw the toys out of the cot and throw us to the wind, and it will throw everyone else to the wind too because prices will increase on the shelves. Foreign food will come in, and

there will be no fresh milk coming from my area. It is incredibly serious. If anyone is prepared to take long life milk from some other country, good on them because that is the reality of where we are going. There will be no dairy and probably no rice production, and we feed 40,000 people a day with our rice. All those staples will be gone. Everyone will be searching for good-quality, clean, green food, and they will not have it. I say to the Government: Please, look at this very carefully and stand up for New South Wales.

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

The House divided.

Ayes38
Noes45
Majority.....7

AYES

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

NOES

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

PAIRS

Amon, R	Chanthivong, A
Cooke, S	Car, P
Davies, T	Crakanthorp, T
Toole, P	Minns, C

Motion negatived.

Bills

CITY OF SYDNEY AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:48): I resume my contribution to debate on the City of Sydney Amendment Bill 2023. It is important that we make these changes to restore the normal democratic principles that apply to local government elections ahead of next year's City of Sydney elections. The previous Government made changes in 2014 that forced nonresident enrollees to vote, many of whom were unaware that that was the case. As a result, a high proportion of those non-residential voters—18,000, or 39 per cent—were issued failure to vote notices by the Electoral Commission. I believe that reflects that many of them did not realise they were required to vote, as nonresident electors in every other council area are not required to vote unless they go out of their way to put themselves on the nonresident roll. That 39 per cent compares with 21 per cent of residential electors who were issued failure to vote notices. It is usually the other way around. Usually, in most councils, nonresident voters go out of their way to get onto the electoral roll and then they vote, because they are extremely engaged with what is going on.

Let us also look at what happened in the City of Sydney under the very strange voting arrangements that were established by the 2014 amendment bill. Under those arrangements, not only were nonresident electors forced to vote, but also where it was the case that a corporation was an owner, lessee or occupier of rateable land, two owners were automatically enrolled rather than one. That meant that business voters were advantaged at the expense of residential voters, who were allowed only one vote per person. It also meant that the City of Sydney's council elections are far more expensive to operate than any of the other ones in the rest of New South Wales. The City of Sydney spent \$9.7 million to establish the register of nonresident enrollees and it costs \$1 million a year to maintain it. The City of Sydney has raised numerous concerns about that over the years. The arrangements maintain an incredibly expensive register of people who never asked to be on the electoral roll for the City of Sydney and who, by the fact that 39 per cent of them did not vote, do not want to vote in the City of Sydney elections.

The 2014 amendment bill is quite bizarre and incredibly undemocratic, but it was also, thankfully, incredibly ineffective in delivering conservative control of the council. Instead, we saw a huge backlash against that amendment and Clover Moore retained her position as the lord mayor. She is very popular, including with many business operators. That is clear from the votes she received. It did not deliver the Liberal Party the huge swathe of votes that it expected—because most people want to see their local government area run effectively and people thought that the City of Sydney was. It created a huge amount of outrage, which enhanced the vote for Clover Moore and her group. Even in subsequent elections, the changes did not deliver the result that was openly intended.

The two councils in my electorate—Parramatta and Cumberland—were also created through Acts of the previous Government to make sure that City of Parramatta elections would return Liberal lord mayors. After the changes in the City of Sydney, the Woodville ward was taken out of the former City of Parramatta council and put into the Cumberland City Council. Now there are two councils side by side with a similar-sized population, but one has a far greater budget because it has Sydney Olympic Park, Silverwater's industrial area and the huge economic powerhouse that is the Parramatta CBD. The other one, Cumberland, which has a very large industrial area towards Wetherill Park and Guildford West in my electorate, has a much smaller rate base because it does not have a big commercial centre. Each year the disparity between the two councils and what they can deliver financially grows.

All that was done to deliver a Liberal lord mayoralty in Parramatta. It has had some Liberal lord mayors since then but, at the moment, because of all the drama in the Liberal Party in the local area, there are not even Liberal councillors in Cumberland City Council and only one elected in the City of Parramatta, who did not actually run on a Liberal ticket. Some of the ones in Cumberland ran as independents but are Liberals. It has been quite good. The member for Parramatta, like me, is a former lord mayor of Parramatta. But the former Government set up the City of Parramatta, as it did with the City of Sydney, to try to create an electoral advantage for the Liberal Party, because it likes to think that CBDs and businesses are all about them. They are all about business and nobody else is interested in that at all. But we all want to see our CBDs thrive, do well and be hives of economic activity. We want people to live and work and enjoy themselves in those areas. That is one of the reasons people have voted to keep the City of Sydney the way it is.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (17:55): This will probably be one of my briefest contributions in this place because I am not a resident of Sydney. But I was in this place and the other place when the Coalition Government at the time passed the legislation well known as the "Get Clover" bill. I also served in this place with the former member for Sydney Clover Moore—your predecessor, Mr Temporary Speaker. I thought she was a very good local member and amazingly managed to balance two very difficult jobs. Changing the way that the City of Sydney elections occurred was a blatant political exercise from the previous Government and incredibly unsuccessful, because it simply did not manage to unseat the lord mayor, which is what it hoped to do. All I wanted to do today was highlight the hypocrisy of the Liberal Party members in this place, who have at great lengths tried to justify why they introduced it. I cannot understand for the life of me why, having been booted out of office,

they come back into the Chamber to try to justify the mistakes they made in government. But here we go; they are doing it anyway.

The ultimate hypocrisy is how they can say that that law should apply to the City of Sydney but not to every other council in New South Wales. I have never seen them in Monaro trying to claim that the Snowy Monaro Regional Council should let all the businesses in Jindabyne have an extra vote because they are part of the economic lifeblood of the area. I have never seen them in any part of country New South Wales trying to justify their view or, indeed, in any other council area of Sydney. It is really just a blatant attempt to justify something that they should acknowledge was a mistake. It was undemocratic and simply unfair. More and more people are living in the City of Sydney as residents. They deserve to have the same right—one vote, one value—that residents in every other area of New South Wales have. I was sitting in my office and watching the Liberal Party members speaking in this debate under the portrait of William Charles Wentworth. They have not gone very far from that man, who made it his life's ambition in this place to try to make sure that a property franchise was the only way somebody could get a vote. The modern Liberal Party has not moved much further.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (17:58): In reply: I thank the member for Goulburn, the member for Penrith, the member for Sydney, the member for Leppington, the member for Kiama, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Ryde, the member for Granville and the member for Monaro for their contributions to debate on this bill. I note some comments made by the member for Kiama in respect of the bill. I observe that no member has been treated more fairly by me than the member for Kiama. He should reflect on that in respect of comments he made either yesterday or today. I say nothing further.

For members opposite who said in their contributions to debate that there was not sufficient consultation, I indicate that, in respect of the bill, the Office of Local Government consulted with Business NSW, Business Sydney, Urban Taskforce Australia, the Property Council of Australia, the Urban Development Institute of Australia NSW and the Committee for Sydney. I personally consulted with every registered political party that contested the past two Sydney local government elections, all the City of Sydney region's MPs—which includes me, but I did not consult myself—the Lord Mayor, the President of the Local Government Association, the director of each major party and every serving councillor on the City of Sydney council.

The only opposition that was expressed came from Business Sydney and a representative of the Liberal Party from the City of Sydney council. Other than that, the proposed change was either universally supported or I received no response. It was certainly supported by Local Government NSW. In effect, the bill corrects a wrong that was instituted some nine years ago, which I was part of. I wish to correct an error I made in my second reading speech, for which I apologise to members of the House. I said in debate on the bill in 2014 that the member for Kiama was in the chair and tried to shut me down. He was not in the chair. In fact, Tommy George was in the chair. But the member for Kiama was in the Chamber and he constantly took points of order on points that I raised, as members of the then Government were motivated to do.

It is not a political statement when I say there is no doubt in anybody's mind that the bill that is to be repealed was stage two of a process to remove Councillor Clover Moore as Lord Mayor of Sydney. As members opposite know, while there might be argy-bargy in the House, there is considerable communication outside the House in respect of a variety of things that occur inside the House. There is no doubt that that was stage two in the motivation to remove Clover Moore. The first motivation was to prevent somebody from being both a councillor and a member of this House, and providing a regulated regime for that to occur. That decision did, in fact, target the then member for Sydney. We know it did. Members opposite told us privately that that was their motivation. To their utter surprise, the member for Sydney resigned from her position in this House and remained the Lord Mayor of Sydney. The House received the benefit of the current member for Sydney, who keeps increasing his majority. So the punishment for removing Michael Yabsley all those years ago is Alex Greenwich.

The Act that was passed in 2014—when Councillor Clover Moore remained as Lord Mayor of Sydney—was the second stage of an attempt to bolster the business vote. It came in part from a recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, which was chaired by the member for Kiama. The committee said the provision was similar to a provision that existed in Melbourne at the time, but it did not tell the House—I told the House—that subsequently, before the House had determined the 2014 amendment, the Victorian Electoral Matters Committee had said the system was not working there. In any event, the motive of that legislation was not for the good government of the City of Sydney; it was designed to achieve a particular political objective that the government of the day, nine years ago, thought it would benefit from.

I hope that the bill draws a line in the sand and sends a message to those who come after us that members of this House and the other place must stop fiddling with the City of Sydney. We must not change the laws, the boundaries or the system of government simply to get control of the City of Sydney. Both major parties are responsible for doing that for at least 100 years, and it is time it stopped. I hope the bill draws a line in the sand. I do not propose the bill to the House because the member for Sydney asked me to. I do not propose the bill to the

House because the Lord Mayor of Sydney asked me to. I do not propose the bill to the House simply because the Liberal Party enacted that first piece of legislation and I opposed it. I propose the bill to the House because it is the right thing to do—to correct a wrong that was done for the wrong motive.

If the bill becomes law, the City of Sydney council will be placed in the same position as the other 127 councils in New South Wales, and so it should. It is important, henceforth, that residents of the City of Sydney have confidence in their electoral process. It is important that people stop receiving fines from the Electoral Commissioner when they do not even know that they are required to vote. It is important that the non-residential roll has integrity. The existing non-residential roll that the City of Sydney had to create at a cost of \$9.7 million, which costs \$1 million a year to maintain, cannot possibly be accurate because it is impossible for the city council's general manager to satisfy themselves of every occupant of every premises within the city council area. That means the roll itself lacks integrity. When it lacks integrity, it is not only because of the results of elections; it is also because fines are imposed on people from a roll that lacks integrity.

Non-residents were fined for not voting when they were registered postal voters in their own council area. They had been receiving ballot papers and voting in council elections and lived a considerable distance from the city council. They did not even know that they were required to vote, yet they received fines—and many of them paid those fines. It is not the fault of the Electoral Commissioner. It is not the fault of the city council. It is the fault of the system. The bill repairs the wrong. I thank members of the House for their contributions to debate on the bill. I particularly thank members of the Office of Local Government, who responded quickly to proceed with the bill. I appreciate their input and professionalism. I commend the bill to the House.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The question is that this bill be now read a second time, to which the member for Kiama has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes33
Noes50
Majority.....17

AYES

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

NOES

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

Hannan, J

Piper, G

NOES

PAIRS

Amon, R	Chanthivong, A
Cooke, S	Car, P
Davies, T	Crakanthorp, T
Toole, P	Minns, C

Amendment negatived.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided.

Ayes50
 Noes33
 Majority.....17

AYES

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

NOES

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

PAIRS

Car, P	Cooke, S
Chanthivong, A	Amon, R
Crakanthorp, T	Davies, T
Minns, C	Toole, P

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (18:19): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

In doing so, I note that I omitted to express my appreciation to the members representing the electorates of Balmain and Newtown for their contributions to the second reading debate. I thank them.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): The question is that this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Community Recognition Statements

FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (18:20): Recently the Fellowship of Australian Writers Blue Mountains celebrated its fiftieth anniversary launch. This organisation has brought the community together to create connections, unleash creativity and share ideas. It has come a long way since its first meeting in 1973, when chaired by Walter Stone. Along the way it has published many amazing books, some of which champion native wildlife, such as *Nifty the Sugar Glider* by Stella Sammon. Over the years the fellowship has also taught and inspired people to write, inviting inspirational and beloved authors such as Emily Rodda, Stephen Measday, Steve Hackett, Elizabeth Herschl, Beverley Earnshaw, Denis Kevans and David Bateson to tutor. Currently the fellowship is coordinated by award-winning leaders Deborah Harris, Pat Allen and Jeanette Temesvary, who have managed to keep the organisation running during COVID-19, giving people a much-needed social and creative outlet during difficult times. The Fellowship of Australian Writers Blue Mountains is an organisation our community is proud to have in its midst. I sincerely congratulate it on its fiftieth anniversary.

LANE COVE FUN RUN

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) (18:21): On a lovely Sunday morning more than 2,000 Lane Cove locals laced up their joggers and warmed up for the annual Lane Cove Fun Run. Organised by volunteers from Lane Cove Public School, this event has become not only a mainstay of the Lane Cove calendar but also an important fundraiser for the community, with close to \$60,000 raised. This money will go a long way for the P&C and other recipient organisations. On behalf of our community I especially thank Lara Wehby, Renee Maxwell and Caleb Taylor for all the time and hard work they have put into this event to make it so successful.

JACOB RANDALL

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (18:22): I meet many young people in Port Stephens whom I admire, and Jacob Randall from Medowie is at the top of the list this month. Jacob is a year 6 student leader at Wirreanda Public School who had been growing his long curls for four years. Three weeks ago, Jacob sat with his resplendent mane in front of the entire school, his schoolmates watching on as his beautiful locks were slowly and carefully shaved off. All of this was to raise awareness and funds for brain cancer research. Jacob never met his great-grandfather, who died of brain cancer in 2003, and he has two young cousins and a close family friend who have been battling brain cancer for a number of years. Jacob said these people in his life are the inspiration for his fundraiser because he hopes a cure can be found so no-one has to go through what they have. Jacob's curls will be donated to Wigs 4 Kids. His tally for the Cure for Brain Cancer fundraiser currently sits at \$4,330 and is still climbing. Well done, Jacob. The Parliament of New South Wales applauds you.

COFFS HARBOUR RUNNING FESTIVAL

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (18:23): The Coffs Harbour Running Festival is a signature community and charity event that continues to grow in popularity. On Sunday 10 September the Coffs Harbour Showground, Coffs Creek and the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden were focal points for the eleventh C.ex Group Coffs Harbour Running Festival, which attracted more than 1,200 runners from the Coffs Coast, across New South Wales and further afield. It was the biggest and best yet, and included the traditional 21.1-kilometre half marathon, 10-kilometre fun run, five-kilometre fun run/walk, a three-kilometre fun run/walk, as well as the 36.1-kilometre challenge. Event director Keelan Birch, on behalf of the Rotary Club of Coffs Harbour, which organises the running festival, revealed more than \$50,000 is being donated to local children's charities as a result of this year's successful staging. The Beachside Radiology Half Marathon for men was won by Isaiah Koopmans, with Shannon Ohara winning the women's event. The Baringa Private Hospital 10-kilometre event was won by Daniel Williams, the Southern Cross University five-kilometre event by Kyle McIntosh, the Key Employment three-kilometre event by Poppy Barclay, and the main event—the 36.1-kilometre Nyami and Jaanybarr of the

Creek—was won by Jacob Blencowe in the men's category and Annabelle Swainston in the women's category. We eagerly await the 2024 festival.

ZIMBABWE ASSOCIATION IN AUSTRALIA GALA DINNER

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:24): On 26 August I joined my colleague from the other place the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, MLC, and the Zimbabwean-Australian community at the Annual Zimbabwe Association in Australia [ZIMAA NSW] gala dinner. The dinner was an opportunity to celebrate Zimbabwean culture and its contribution to the larger cultural fabric of Australia. Events like these are important in retaining cultural heritage when settling into a new home. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of celebration, the passing down of cultural values and practices to future generations and keeping Zimbabwean culture alive and well here in Australia. Those practices were certainly on show with a wonderful performance by the LangDentity language and cultural school. I thank ZIMAA NSW and chairperson Gladys Maseko for hosting the event, and Zimbabwean Ambassador His Excellency J.T. Mhishi for his address to gala attendees. It is through organisations like ZIMAA that active participation and engagement with culture and heritage is continued, further enriching the cultural diversity that defines modern Australia.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): I remind members to please try to stick to the one-minute time limit for community recognition statements.

MARJO HALLOWELL

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (18:25): The esteemed Marjo Hollowell, the 2022 Wollondilly Citizen of the Year, has been honoured with yet another nomination, this time for the Macarthur Volunteer of the Year Award 2023. Last November Ms Hollowell, an accomplished historian and author, released a significant work entitled *Bargo: 200 Years in the Making*. Though she asserts that her motivation for volunteering is not recognition, her dedication is unarguable. She is involved with various initiatives such as the Great Cycle Challenge, Picton Rotary's U Turn the Wheel, Clean Up Australia Day in Bargo and more. Ms Hollowell also participated as an extra in the 2023 film *The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race*. Her grandson's team, awesome kids4kids, has impressively raised over \$25,000 for the Children's Medical Research Institute through the Great Cycle Challenge. Her advice to all is "Volunteering is easy and it is very rewarding". I thank her for her unwavering commitment to the community and wish her the best for the award ceremony on 31 August.

THINK+DO TANK FOUNDATION

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (18:26): On Saturday I had the pleasure of joining the Think+DO Tank Foundation for its tenth anniversary celebration. Ten years ago a group of dedicated individuals came together with the bold idea to promote critical thinking and problem-solving through creative expression. The foundation has since become a creative force, partnering with low-income and marginalised communities in Western Sydney. What began as a multilingual bookshop has now transformed into a community house, offering a free daily program to women, children and the youth of Fairfield. I thank the CEO and founder, Jane Stratton, and the entire Think+DO Tank Foundation team for their effort to provide a space for migrant and refugee women, connecting our community through the sharing of story, place and culture.

GULGONG BULL TERRIERS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:27): I congratulate the Gulgong Bull Terriers on the club's remarkable achievement of winning the 2023 Christie and Hood Castlereagh League first-grade premiership. Undefeated throughout the entire season and celebrating the club's 100th anniversary, the victory is truly historic. It is fantastic to see the Bull Terriers club maintain its unbeaten record and secure the premiership, reminiscent of its 1997 triumph. Some of the players from that victorious 1997 team were there at the club's centenary celebrations, with their relatives now carrying on the tradition in the 2023 side. I give a special shout-out to captain-coach Bradley James and all the players who contributed to the amazing season: Eth Pegus, Tom James, Toby and Duncan O'Leary, Patrick Durrant, Sam and Blake Gorrie, Danial Crane, Jack Hart, Thomas Reddish, David and James Morrison, William and Thomas Hawkins, Kye Alexander, Koby Thurston and Cooper Furney. Their dedication, teamwork and perseverance have brought immense pride to the entire Gulgong community. Well done on an outstanding achievement.

MUSIC SHOALHAVEN

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (18:28): I congratulate Music Shoalhaven on celebrating 75 years of presenting concerts for Shoalhaven audiences. Music Shoalhaven Incorporated was formed as the Nowra Music Club on 17 September 1948 at a meeting in the old CWA Rooms on Berry Street, Nowra. Since 1948 the club has been instrumental in bringing to the Shoalhaven a long list of musicians both vocal and instrumental, including national and international acts. Music Shoalhaven has always been held in high regard within the classical music

world for the hospitality and enthusiasm extended to visiting artists. I mention Audrey Boyd, who was a founding member of Music Shoalhaven and is still a member today. Audrey attended the recent anniversary concert and it was a pleasure to meet her. Thank you to everyone at Music Shoalhaven.

NAMBUCCA VALLEY CARE GROUP

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (18:29): Nambucca Valley Care Group is preparing to celebrate a major milestone next year, with its fiftieth birthday and golden anniversary. Chairwoman Janine Reed, the board of directors and staff members make an amazing impact on aged care in our region and ensure that the elderly get the support they need. The organisation was started in September 1974 by a determined group of local volunteers who saw the need for the Nambucca Valley to have local aged-care services, which it was lacking at the time. Now, 49 years on, Nambucca Valley Care Group is still community owned and operated, providing caring services to our elderly. The group is bringing the community together to celebrate the legacy of the original steering group volunteers, such as Bernard Laverty, Chris Sugden, Olive Smith and Rita McKay, and to give Nambucca Valley Care Group and its residents a great fiftieth birthday celebration. On a personal note, I thank Janine for the guidance she has given me and her continued work and contribution to the Nambucca Valley community.

AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURAL FASHION EXHIBITION

Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (18:30): On 6 August I had the pleasure of participating in the third edition of the Australian Multicultural Fashion Exhibition and the coronation of Miss and Mrs Multicultural Global Australia 2023. It was a splendid event that celebrated diversity and showcased the many vibrant cultures that enrich our nation. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Mr Rox G Molavin and RGeM Promotions and Management for their gracious invitation, which allowed me to be a part of this remarkable occasion. I had the privilege of crowning Miss Multicultural Global Australia 2023. The contestants displayed extraordinary talent, grace and cultural pride, which made it very tough for all the judges to decide. I extend my warmest congratulations to all the contestants. They demonstrated incredible qualities and were all winners in their own ways.

TRIBUTE TO PATRICK PITTAVINO

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (18:31): Today I posthumously acknowledge a much-loved Griffith personality, Patrick Pittavino. Pat was a passionate and spirited innovator. His wealth of knowledge and experience included decades as business chamber executive member; 14 years as a Griffith City Councillor; two years as President of Griffith Post School Options, and years on that committee; two years on Regional Development Australia—Riverina executive; and 20 years on Apex State Executive, district governor and president. He was once even Chairman of the Griffith Taxi Board and State candidate for the Labor Party. This long list of volunteering, community involvement and leadership is just an example of Pat's selfless contribution to Griffith and the western Riverina. He was a dedicated, multi-level communicator and community advocate with a non-judgemental outlook. There are no words that can truly represent this amazing and well-loved gentleman's impact on all of us. Today I am proud to make this community recognition statement posthumously for the great man, Patrick Pittavino.

CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (18:32): On 17 September I had the great honour of attending the twenty-fifth Canterbury-Bankstown Children's Festival to celebrate its amazing success story. The festival featured an array of music and dance for everyone to enjoy. I extend my warmest congratulations to the founder and president, Mr Thuat van Nguyen, OAM, on his dedication to the festival. I also commend the organising committee volunteers, organisations and participants for their tireless efforts in building the children's festival. In the past 25 years the children's festival has successfully staged 39 events across Sydney, including in Bankstown and Canterbury, attracting over 250,000 people from diverse backgrounds and inspiring thousands of volunteers. It is always a beautiful day and a beautiful display of unity and reflection of our national mosaic. I was joined by my colleague the member for Auburn as well as other MPs, the Hon. David Coleman, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, the member for Oatley and Multicultural NSW CEO Joseph La Posta, as well as our local deputy mayor, Rachelle Harika. The festival, with its rich cultural traditions, successfully unites people from different backgrounds to celebrate our shared Australian story.

STAGE ARTZ PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOL

Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (18:33): Today I acknowledge the amazing work of Stage Artz Performing Arts School. I am lucky enough to be a patron, despite not dancing or singing—and I do not even like musical theatre. Since 2001, the Stage Artz Performing Arts School and Stage Artz Theatre Company have combined their talents for an annual family musical production where all profits made are donated to the Children's Hospital at Westmead. I look forward to seeing this year's performance of *Shrek the Musical*. Cast members—

some as young as four—come together each year to give their time and skills to these incredible productions. The largest possible portion of all profits from the ticket sales is donated to the hospital. In total, Stage Artz has raised \$309,000, with the company now recognised by Westmead as an official hospital benefactor. Not only is their incredible talent on display for the communities who enjoy their productions, but also their hard work helps to provide the necessary, often life-saving, care for sick children, as well as support for their families in the hardest of times. I sincerely thank Sam Neaves, her team and the whole ensemble that is Stage Artz, past and present productions. I cannot wait for Saturday night.

PAIGE HADLEY

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:34): Congratulations to the Australian Diamonds, who took the Netball World Cup trophy back into Australia's possession after the Diamonds crushed England 61-45 to be crowned Netball World Cup champions for an unprecedented record-breaking twelfth time. I put on record my congratulations to Penrith local Paige Hadley. Yesterday I had the immense pleasure of congratulating her in person. Paige started playing netball at the age of seven and later became a Penrith District Netball Association junior. Paige has been an inspiration to our 4,000 local netballers. Well done on all her achievements so far.

GOTCHA4LIFE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (18:35): Recently I had the opportunity to take part in the Gotcha4Life 24 Hour Row for mental fitness event held at MacMasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Community clubs and groups from all across Australia signed up for the sixth annual 24-hour row to raise money for mental fitness workshops and resources. Sadly, nine people take their lives every day in Australia due to mental health issues. This community rowing event is an opportunity for everyone to be a part of shaping a mentally fit future for all Australians. I thank club president Alison McNeill and everyone involved at MacMasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club who made this community event happen, alongside everyone who jumped in and rowed for the TeamMacs. I thank them for coaching me through it. I offer further thanks to the many supporters who donated and came along to the event to support the rowers. This year the club beat its 2022 fundraising efforts, raising over \$6,000. That is a massive achievement for a small surf life saving club. I look forward to taking part in next year's row so that we can continue to raise awareness about mental fitness, to inspire and enable others to take action and build their mental fitness so no-one worries alone.

UNION WINTER PROGRAM

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (18:36): I was pleased to join Unions NSW to launch its Union Winter/Summer alumni network alongside secretary Mark Morey and graduates of the program, including the most recent cohort of Union Winter graduates. The program has been running since 2001. Congratulations to the hundreds of young people who have come through, including Clair Matthews, Raul Sugunanathan, Gabriel Beretov, Peter Saunders, Kyan Aitken, Lilah Thurbon, Ethan Powell, Catherine Brenner Gali, Carla Field, Carl Michael Galvez, Michael George, Prisca Lam, Sam Lynch, William Yang, Cheyne Howard, Jonas Butterfield, David Moulder, Daniel Holland, Rose Fitz, Tyassari Kusumaningsih, Isaac Wattenberg and Geoffrey Zhen. Congratulations to them all.

NORTHERN SUBURBS NETBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (18:37): For almost 55 years, the Northern Suburbs Netball Association has been championing the game of netball in my community of Willoughby. On 9 September I was honoured to join the association for its grand final presentation day. I congratulate everyone involved, particularly the winning teams and special award recipients. Their outstanding performance in the annual competition is a credit to their skill and dedication throughout the season. The players and everyone involved are a credit to a thriving association that now includes over 6,000 players across 24 local clubs. The member clubs are a combination of community and school clubs, including Mercy Catholic College from Chatswood and Cammeraygal High School in Crows Nest. I thank the Northern Suburbs Netball Association leaders, including president Glenys Paranihi, staff, coaches, sponsors, parents and players of course, for an amazing season. I appreciate all the time they freely give to invest in and build up netball for our children and local community.

MILPERRA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (18:38): Last night at the Bankstown Sports Club the production team at Milperra Public School hosted an event dedicated to 100 years of Disney. Over 300 people attended the event. The theatre was filled with parents, family, friends and community members, who all gathered in support of the students of Milperra Public School. The night consisted of dances and performances by passionate and talented students from all grades and age groups. Popular themes and songs from Disney favourites, including *Toy Story*, *Aladdin* and *The Lion King* accompanied the many performances. The night was full of excitement and joy.

The children were dedicated to showcasing their dancing and performance skills. They did our community proud and I am happy to recognise their achievements. Thank you to the parents who were willing to contribute and assist with the costumes and props for the night to be successful. I also acknowledge the remarkable staff for their countless hours of planning and facilitating rehearsals. Thank you to Milperra Public School, the children and community helpers for creating a spectacular night.

LUCY LELAEN

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (18:39): I acknowledge Lucy LeLaen for her commitment and dedication to the Mannering Park Amateur Sailing Club and for being awarded the Yasmin Catley Good Sport Award. The award recognises members of clubs who display dedication and commitment to their chosen sport—who show up each week and apply themselves to their team and club. Lucy is a junior female sailor who has proudly represented the Mannering Park Amateur Sailing Club at numerous regattas. She has assisted the club in establishing a junior committee to provide advice on junior amateur sailing programs. She has further been instrumental to the effective operation and administration of the junior committee. I congratulate Lucy. She is a worthy recipient of the Yasmin Catley Good Sport Award. I feel that the future is bright when we have good people like Lucy.

RUSSELL LEA WOMEN'S SOCCER CLUB

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (18:40): On Saturday 16 September I attended Football Canterbury's 2023 Volunteer Recognition Dinner, organised by the Canterbury District Soccer Football Association. I give a big shout-out to Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club, which was announced as the winner of the Bert Harvey Fair Play Award for 2023. The award acknowledges a club in the district with players and volunteers who display and uphold the important values of fairness, teamwork and integrity. I was grateful to present the Bert Harvey Award to club president Mariam Fabia. It was lovely to meet many hardworking volunteers on the night. I sincerely congratulate Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club—the only female club in the district—for this well-deserved recognition. I thank all representatives of the club—the wonderful players, president, committee members, coaches, dedicated volunteers, spectators, family and friends. I am proud of the community spirit and welcoming environment at the club. I wish Russell Lea Women's Soccer Club all the best. I know that I will see some future Matildas in the years to come.

DAVID AND RENATA FINCH

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (18:41): The Finch family from Bishops Bridge have a passion for providing children with a safe, nurturing and secure home.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis): Order! The member for Maitland will be heard in silence.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: David and Renata Finch had four children of their own when they made the decision to become foster parents in 2014. Since then, they have fostered 18 children, including six long-term placements. They were aware of the desperate need for foster carers. Eventually it was not a question of "why?" but of "why not?" They began their journey with short-term fostering. It soon became clear that the real need was for long-term foster parents. Currently, they are a family of 12. Their six long-term foster children range in age from six years to 21 years; however, short-term foster children have also been welcomed. David and Renata advocate strongly for their children, providing not only a physical home but also, more importantly, a happy family environment. Despite many hard times, they have seen their children thrive in responsibility, love for others and personal wellbeing. I thank the Finch family and all foster carers who provide an important service to the community for their hard work, perseverance and love for children.

NORTH SYDNEY BEARS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:43): I acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the North Sydney Bears and stand in this place proudly representing the club's colours. The Bears showcased their resilience in a hard-fought preliminary final at Leichhardt Oval over the weekend and lived up to their status as minor premiers by securing their spot in the upcoming Knock-On Effect NSW Cup grand final. The Bears gave an electrifying performance that had the crowd at Leichhardt in awe after a commanding display in the first half that saw the Bears secure a solid 18-0 lead courtesy of three unanswered tries. Not willing to surrender easily, the Warriors struck back in the second half, narrowing the score to 18-12 after scoring two converted tries. Ultimately, the Bears prevailed, extending their lead to 24-12 and securing their place in the upcoming grand final.

Mr Jihad Dib: Woo hoo!

Ms FELICITY WILSON: I am glad that the member for Lakemba is also a fan. I wish the Bears all the very best as they take on the Bunnies on Sunday afternoon at CommBank Stadium—a wonderful stadium delivered by the former Liberal Government. I wish them good luck. Go, the Bears! Bring back the Bears.

ANDREW FITZSIMONS

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (18:44): This week marks the end of an era at Dapto High School. The most amazing principal a school could ever hope for, the incredibly optimistic Andrew FitzSimons, retires this Friday after nearly 20 years in the role. The vast majority of Mr FitzSimons' illustrious career has been spent changing lives for the better, earning him the respect of not only his students but also the entire Dapto community. Mr FitzSimons' outstanding and unwavering advocacy for the welfare of his students and for environmental sustainability is something to behold. The outpouring of congratulatory messages from current and former students this week would bring a tear to a glass eye. I am looking forward to going to Dapto High School on Friday to make sure that Fitzzy gets the send-off he so richly deserves. If I have my way, the new covered outdoor learning area [COLA] announced in yesterday's budget will be named in his honour. The Andrew FitzSimons COLA has a nice ring to it. On behalf of the entire New South Wales Parliament, I thank Andrew FitzSimons for his service. I hope that he enjoys his well-deserved retirement.

ST MARK'S COPTIC ORTHODOX COLLEGE

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (18:45): On Monday 18 September 2023 I had the privilege of attending St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College in Wattle Grove. The occasion was the official opening of the college's new facilities, which were partially funded by the State Government. The new facilities include a new administration office, classrooms, library, breakout spaces and a play area with synthetic grass. It was great to be a part of this celebration for our local community. I extend my warmest congratulations and thanks to His Grace Bishop Daniel, Head of College Mr Anthony Deans, Father George Nakhil, Remon Metira, architect Shaheer Gobran, Head of Primary Silvia Nada and Nicole Turner for their work to make it such a wonderful event. I had the opportunity to share a story about my childhood doctor, who is a Coptic, and I hope the school continues to produce future doctors and scientists in our community. I wish the school all the best as it continues to embody its school motto of "To Live is Christ".

TASCOTT

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (18:46): I am proud to represent the beautiful Central Coast, and today I share a story about a small suburb named Tascott. In the 1970s it was affectionately referred to as the "Nappy Valley" due to the fast-growing number of new families with young kids. Today Tascott valley is home to a harmonious mixture of new, young families and senior residents. During the isolation period of the pandemic, residents would go to the front of their house or balcony every day at 5.00 p.m. and cooee. The sound would bounce and echo through the valley so that every resident would hear the sound and know they were not alone. There was a great sense of humanity. The community spirit of the beautiful valley does not stop there. During the massive floods last year, the younger residents got sandbags and brought them back to Tascott to place at the front and back of properties of older residents who were affected by the floods. Stories like those warm my heart. I say well done to the suburb of Tascott. It truly exemplifies the spirit of the Central Coast that I am so proud to represent.

THOMAS MCDERMOTT

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (18:47): I extend my heartfelt congratulations and recognition to a sterling talent from Mulgoa, Mr Thomas McDermott. At the Easter show this year, Thomas not only showcased his incredible equestrian skills but emerged triumphant, taking home the ES Playfair Perpetual Trophy for the most successful rider in jumping contests. The commendable achievement is no small feat. Thomas demonstrated his versatility and expertise by riding various horses across different categories, skilfully navigating each horse's unique abilities to garner the highest number of points. Such a victory is a testament to his dedication, talent and profound understanding of the sport. Equestrian pursuits require a delicate balance of strength, agility and a deep connection with one's steed. The accolade that Thomas has secured speaks volumes of his prowess and commitment to the elegant but tough sport. I am immensely proud to have such talent stemming from the Badgerys Creek electorate. I heartily commend Thomas McDermott for his exceptional achievement and wish him all the very best as he no doubt continues to pursue his amazing passion.

MOON FESTIVAL

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (18:48): This year the Mid-Autumn Festival, or Moon Festival, will fall on Friday 29 September. It is one of the most important festivals on the Chinese calendar and is significant for many cultures across East Asia and South-East Asia. It is known as the Moon Festival because, on this day, the moon is full, round and big. The moon's roundness represents the reunion of family and friends. It is a day when we give

thanks, especially for community harmony. This year I had the pleasure of attending a number of events celebrating the Moon Festival. I thank the Asian Australian Women Association [AAWA], especially the founder and president, Elizabeth Wang, for inviting me to join the association for its mid-Autumn celebrations recently. The AAWA is a not-for-profit organisation that advocates for the welfare of Asian Australian women in our local communities. I also thank the Georges River Association and TVB Anywhere for their marvellous Mid-Autumn Festival celebrations in Burwood. I hope the brightness of the moon continues to uplift and inspire all of us. Happy Mid-Autumn Festival! Zhong Qiu Jie Kuai Le! 中秋节快乐!

BOMADERRY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CEREMONY

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (18:49): I congratulate Ivan, Malakye and Taya, who were recognised at the year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student graduation held at the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre in Nowra on 29 August 2023. Their hard work, dedication and perseverance has led to that incredible achievement. I am incredibly proud of their achievements. I also thank the Bomaderry High School staff who supported those local students on their educational journey, particularly the relieving Aboriginal Education Officer, Aunty Margaret, who also had a hand in organising the fantastic event in Nowra. As a former Bomaderry High School student, I know that the future for those students is bright. We should encourage every student to reach their full potential and give them the resources they need to succeed in their public education. I also acknowledge the Bomaderry High School principal, Mr Ian Morris, and the wonderful teachers, staff, volunteers and P&C members at the school. Well done!

CANTERBURY HOSPITAL

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (18:50): I congratulate Canterbury—we finally did it. After 12 long years in Opposition, we finally got funding for the Canterbury Hospital redevelopment in our first Labor budget. I congratulate the wonderful community, the health workers, the nurses, the Health Services Union, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation, the Medical Staff Council and the many thousands who signed our 10,000-signature petition. I thank the ethnic community leaders, the business leaders and the community across the electorate and our neighbouring electorates. This is a great day for our community. Year after year we have asked yet there was zero in the budgets for the hospital. It is only with a Labor government elected to this Parliament that we will finally get our hospital. I congratulate Canterbury.

Private Members' Statements

HOWARTH DRILLING PTY LTD

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (18:51): I speak again about the terrible injustice placed on Howarth Drilling as a result of decisions made by this Parliament. For the benefit of Hansard, this contribution can be titled, "Howarth Drilling Part 3". To recap, in January 2014 both Houses of Parliament were recalled during the summer break to pass two pieces of legislation. One of those pieces of legislation was to rescind, take back or repeal licensing leases for coalmining. Three coalmines, or potential coalmines, were affected at the time, one of which was Doyles Creek mine. At that time, it was owned by NuCoal Mining, which in turn was owned by shareholders. NuCoal was the third company to own that lease, so it was three times removed from any potential source of corruption, wherever it happened in the background. NuCoal engaged a family drilling company called Howarth Drilling to test the ground under the surface by drilling boreholes so that they could see exactly what was down there and where they would be best placed to start their mining operations.

Howarth Drilling was engaged to do that work as a consequence of 25 years of industry involvement. At that stage Howarth Drilling was valued at about \$20 million, but it was very much a mum-and-dad company with third-generation employees. Unfortunately, a decision made in this Parliament suddenly and retrospectively took away that lease. In other contributions I have spoken about the impact on the Howarth family, and last time I also spoke about the massive financial injustice. Today I will talk about the rule of law. In a speech, Barry O'Farrell talked about abrogating the common law. Interestingly, we have free trade agreements with a number of nations, one of which is the United States of America. That agreement was negotiated during 2005.

In those negotiations, the United States had a concern about the structure of our Federation. It was concerned whether negotiations with the Australian Federal Government would extend to the State Government. At the time, during negotiations, the Australian Government assured the United States that it did not need to worry about talking to the States individually because "we are a nation that abides by the rule of law". The United States ultimately signed the free trade agreement under those conditions and assurances. Fast forward to 2014 when the lease was repealed and all the investors from the United States lost their money. Fast forward again to 2015 when the United States trade agreement was under review and the conversation again came up about that particular lease and licence in New South Wales—it turned out that we were not necessarily a State that abided by the rule of law.

The United States reminded the Australian Government about its comment from 10 years ago and surmised, "You misled us." That was a damning indictment on our country.

The United States was not the only affected investor. There were investors from Japan and Korea—there were some really large multinational companies involved in that—and about 3,500 small local investors. Yes, we are talking about some corporate investors at a large industrial scale, but we are also talking about mums and dads. One particular family that had invested their life savings and superannuation et cetera was the Lantry family. The Lantry family have a disabled child who will need to be looked after for the rest of his life. Of course, the NDIS would be a part of that, but the family wanted to do the very best they could by him, so they invested their life savings into the venture.

Little did they know that despite the company that was conducting operations being three times separated from any Minister of this State—little did they know that New South Wales had the ability to come back to a company and say, "We know you have a lease signed by a Minister of the Crown, but we're going to take that back." That was the effect on all of those mum-and-dad investors, that was the effect on Howarth Drilling and that was the effect on NuCoal and all of our international investors. That was a significant moment to have happened in this place and in New South Wales. None of those people are getting any compensation. But the Shenhua company at Liverpool Plains got compensated and when the light rail was going on, the small businesses around here got compensated. The Howarth family is right to ask, "Where is our compensation?"

DR BELINDA KHONG

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (18:56): For many years Dr Belinda Khong has been a dedicated psychologist in Wahroonga. Before her career as a psychologist began, Belinda was a lawyer and senior partner of a law firm she founded in Singapore. She lectured in law at the Department of Estates and Building Management at the National University of Singapore. Belinda moved into the field of psychology when she returned to Australia in 1989. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and a PhD in Psychology from Macquarie University, where she received the Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship for her PhD research. Her PhD dissertation received major awards, including the Macquarie University Dean's commendation and the Sidney M. Jourard Memorial Student Award for outstanding postgraduate student research.

Belinda is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and a fellow of the College of Counselling Psychologists of the Australian Psychological Society. She lectures at the Department of Psychology at Macquarie University on a range of courses, such as personality, adult development, Eastern psychology, mindfulness and spirituality. She has developed and run postgraduate courses on qualitative research and she supervises postgraduate students. Belinda counsels individuals and families on a range of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress management, relationships, communication skills, work-life balance and mindful parenting. She is recognised for her integration of Western and Eastern approaches to psychology and psychotherapy, including her integration of Buddhist teachings.

Recently Belinda ventured into writing children's books that promote positive values and important psychosocial themes for families and children. The series, titled *Lunar New Animal Books for Kids*, offers tales centred around the Lunar New Year and various Chinese zodiac animals. Her first book was published last year, titled *Am I a Tiger? A Mindful Water Tiger Cub's Journey of Love, Friendship, and Self-Discovery*. The book received a glowing endorsement from acclaimed actress Michelle Yeoh, who called it:

... a great book for children, parents, and families who want a heartwarming introduction to the positive values of mindfulness, gratitude, love, and compassion.

Following the success of that book, Dr Khong wrote her second animal zodiac book, titled *Water Rabbit's Mindful Adventures: The Great Race of Animal and Human Friends*. The book contains illustrations by the talented Laura Stitzel. My Chinese zodiac animal is a water rabbit, so I was particularly excited about the launch of that book. It integrates Eastern and Western wisdom, presenting an inspiring narrative filled with illustrations, poems and unique animal characters. It explores themes of resilience, generosity and leadership, which are important lessons to teach our younger generations.

I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the book at Wahroonga Park with my colleagues the member for Davidson, Matt Cross; and the member for Willoughby, Tim James, who formally launched the book. The launch was a beautiful afternoon in the park and a wonderful celebration of the book, with a reading of an excerpt from *Water Rabbit's Mindful Adventures: The Great Race of Animal and Human Friends* by Lynne, Matthew and Nicholas. Many children and adults were in attendance and were excited to hear from Belinda about her newest book.

The book presents the story of how Mei-Mei the water rabbit and her animal friends overcome their differences with humans to create a better community. It instils the importance of working together despite our

differences, which is an important lesson to teach our children. Although the book's positive messages are aimed at children, there are many excellent life lessons to be taught to adults too. Teamwork, cooperation, open-mindedness and personal growth are all important characteristics that we can take on board as adults.

Sue Lynn Tan, the bestselling author of *Daughter of the Moon Goddess*, described the book as "a sweet and uplifting tale for children, with a heartwarming message". I look forward to getting my hands on the third book of the *Lunar New Year Animal Books for Kids* series, *Dragon and Friends' Mindful Adventures*, which will launch in February of 2024. I commend Dr Belinda Khong on her mission to provide parents with such great guides to facilitate conversations about mental health and mindfulness with their children. I thank Belinda for her great contribution to our local community over so many years.

STATE BUDGET AND PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:01): Yesterday's budget had a big heart, delivering much-needed support for families and communities who are doing it tough in a once-in-a-generation cost-of-living crisis. The budget confronts the housing crisis head-on, starts rebuilding the essential services our communities rely on, provides relief from cost-of-living pressures for families and delivers for the families of Port Stephens.

I will start with a project close to my heart. Seventeen years ago I started campaigning for a public high school in Medowie. I know it was 17 years ago because I was nursing my youngest in the meetings, and she is now 17 and about to finish her HSC. Like many at that time, I had hoped that my baby might have been able to attend a local public high school. Since then I have taken the commitment for a public high school in Medowie to four elections—in 2011, 2015, 2019 and most recently this year. In the 2011 election the Liberal-Nationals Government also committed to progressing the project but, after 12 long years of Liberal-Nationals government, nothing had happened. Worse still, in subsequent years members opposite denied it was even needed. It was a broken promise of the most heartless kind and meant another generation of children missed out on attending a local secondary school. They missed out on staying with their mates and staying connected to their community.

Thankfully, with the election of the Minns Labor Government, that is all about to change. After 17 years of personally campaigning, backed by a community that has campaigned for much longer, I could not have been more excited to see these words in yesterday's budget papers: Medowie High School. Fully costed and funded, Medowie High School will become a reality in this term of our Government. Not only is our budget backing the long-awaited Medowie High School, but the high schools in Raymond Terrace will also be benefitting. The Minns Labor Government will be investing in Irrawang High School and Hunter River High School to the tune of \$34 million to deliver much-needed and long-awaited upgrades, so the budget is making a difference for the families of Raymond Terrace, Medowie, the Tilligerry Peninsula and all surrounding towns.

Let us not forget about the teachers. The unfair wages cap imposed by the former Government, insurmountable administrative tasks and temporary positions saw teachers leaving the profession in droves, so our kids were turning up to school and their classes would be collapsed or combined. Predictably, levels of education plummeted under the former Government. To tackle the teacher shortage crisis affecting all of our schools, we are going to the heart of the problem by properly paying and valuing our teachers. As of day one of term 4, New South Wales teachers will go from being amongst the lowest paid in the country to being the highest paid. From new teachers to experienced teachers, they will all see the significant pay rises that they so truly deserve, so they will know that they are truly valued by our Government.

But that is not all. The Government has also made permanent at least 161 local temporary teachers and support staff in schools across Port Stephens. They are just some of the 16,000 teachers statewide who have been made permanent by our Government in just five months. By investing in our teachers, Government members are investing in the education of our kids and in our future. But we are not just focused on schools; there is a lot of work to do to fix the mess we inherited in our health system too. Before the election we committed to having safe staffing levels across our hospitals, and we are delivering. In our budget we are recruiting an extra 1,200 nurses and making another 1,112 nurses' and midwives' positions permanent. On top of all that, we are recruiting an extra 500 paramedics for rural and regional New South Wales.

We are also getting funding out the door to Port Stephens Council to fix our local roads so that our ambos, local motorists and visitors can travel safely. In this budget, Port Stephens Council will see more than \$1.8 million from the Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund, on top of the \$10 million coming to council to fix our local roads under the Regional Roads Fund. Much-needed support is also heading to the local organisations that look after the most vulnerable members of our community, with \$100,000 going to the Yacaaba Centre, Tomaree Neighbourhood Centre, Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services and Caring for Our Port Stephens Youth, which runs the jupiter youth mental health counselling service.

On top of all that, there is \$2 million for Port Stephens Koala Hospital and energy bill relief ahead. With this budget, the Government has started the work of repairing the fiscal mess left by the former Government so it can rebuild the essential services our communities rely on. For more than eight years I have been serving the people of Port Stephens in this place. Now, as a Minister in the Minns Labor Government, it is my honour to be part of a team delivering a budget that is setting up our State for a stronger future.

TIMBER INDUSTRY

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (19:07): A symbiotic relationship rooted in the mid North Coast has come under threat from a sensationalised narrative underpinning our economy and sustainability. That false narrative has unjustly portrayed the timber industry as a villain, incapable of coexisting within our native landscapes. I ask this House: Why is it that when our timber industry and the conservation of our forests are thrown into the public arena, we are forced to pick one or the other? Why is it that to support timber is to become an enemy of the koala, or that promoting healthy koala populations means we have to shut our local industry down? It is time to bring facts back into the discussion—to take off those rose-tinted glasses and realise that it is entirely possible to have both.

There is no reason our age-old industry, family owned and operated, cannot continue supplying the best, most sustainable resource in the world while allowing our flora and fauna to prosper. It is time to put an end to that false narrative and focus on creating a future where both industry and conservation can continue to coexist harmoniously, as they have always done. I understand wanting to keep a promise; after all, actions are worth a thousand words and Labor vowed to bring a Great Koala National Park to fruition, should it be elected. But who voted for it? Who made the decisions? The people of the Clarence Valley? The people of Coffs Harbour? The citizens of Port Macquarie? It certainly was not the people of my community in Oxley. They want a balanced approach. For us to have it all, there needs to be a genuine commitment to consulting and working with locals on the ground in those regions, not forcing political wills from here in Macquarie Street.

Our hardwood timber is some of the best in the world. These products that are made in our region cannot be replicated from softwood plantations and are the backbone of our supply chains to enhance the Aussie way of life. When we think about living sustainably, would we really rather create products from concrete, steel or plastic than from hardwood timber which is natural carbon offset, a carbon store and definitely a better-quality material that will be regrown sustainably through the existing processes? On behalf of my community, I ask every member of this place: Do you live in a house? Do you shop at a grocery store? Or the big one, do you own a mobile phone? Each and every one of us supports mining. What material do they use in mines? Hardwood timber, that sustainable resource that regrows unlike the metals in a phone. Many of us take for granted the things that hardwood timber provides and how reliant we are on it for our everyday lives.

In the last Parliament, the Labor Party led the charge to phase out plastic bags in our supermarkets. Now they are going to force our grocery stores to rely on plastic pallets across their operations because somehow that narrative is being spun as environmentally friendly. Imagine the processing, the chemicals and the legacy. Two million hectares of bustling greenery are managed by the Forestry Corporation of NSW. Of that extensive figure, half is already managed for conservation and between 1 per cent and 2 per cent of the available area is sustainably harvested each year. This forest area regenerates quickly; the regrowth goes into supporting our native wildlife and is the food of choice for our iconic koala.

Rustling in our landscape is misinformation, mistruths and a new danger of its own. I fear that through those whispers New South Wales will flush out family-owned and environmentally conscious timber businesses and instead rely on timber imports from countries that do not have the same standards as our own. It is not the core purpose of the Australian Labor Party to export blue-collared jobs and it is not the core purpose of The Greens to encourage mass clearings of rainforests overseas. We are responsible for the timber we use regardless of where it is from, and we already import over \$2 billion worth of timber. We can have it all in New South Wales. To every member of this Parliament who cares about having a healthy koala population, cares about the timber or cares about our State, I invite them to come to Oxley so I can introduce them to the families on the ground, the people in our community who want to see this done right and want to strike the right balance, environmental and resourceful, to prove that we can have it all.

NSW VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR REGIONAL AWARDS

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:12): I recently attended the 2023 NSW Volunteer of the Year regional award ceremony at the Fairmont Resort in Leura. The event is an initiative of The Centre for Volunteering, the peak body for volunteering in New South Wales, and provides an important opportunity to acknowledge the selfless dedication of those who give so generously of their time in communities across the State. I thank Gemma Rygate and her team for their efforts in organising a great event. I quote Kelly May from the Department of Communities and Justice, who spoke at the event. She said:

All volunteers are united by a common motivation to make a difference.

That drive to make a difference, and the contributions made as a result of it is a testament to the human spirit, your human spirit. It is a valuable commodity, 'a gem' to be cherished.

Because of that drive, you are all 'gems' that help to make your communities great.

But the act of volunteering also gives back, it is not a one-way transaction. It creates friendships, develops skills, builds networks, reduces isolation, strengthens our resilience... generating an energy that sustains us all.

And, along every journey, including a volunteer's journey there are laughs, moments of great joy, moments of frustration, and sometimes tears, and of course challenges.

And it is those challenges experienced along that journey, such as those in recent years that drive innovation, enable creativity, strengthen resolve, and of course make us all stronger and more determined than ever to make a difference.

I thank Kelly for those words. I now recognise those from the Blue Mountains who won awards this year. They each make an incredible contribution to our community. Heather Gwilliam from Mount Riverview was awarded both the 2023 Blue Mountains Adult Volunteer of the Year for her work with Anglicare, as well as the overall Blue Mountains Volunteer of the Year. Those accolades are testament to Heather's devotion to helping others. She led the Nepean-Blue Mountains Anglicare disaster recovery volunteer team, a group of dedicated individuals that supported the Hawkesbury and Nepean communities through four flood events between March and October 2022. They provided food, material support, service referrals and no doubt shoulders to cry on as flood-affected families faced heartbreak and loss.

Heather was at the forefront of sourcing and distributing thousands and thousands of dollars of donated goods, ensuring that supplies made it to those so desperately in need. The work that Heather does, along with the range of services offered by Anglicare more broadly, are a beacon of hope for the vulnerable members of our community—from home care to food and financial assistance, family parenting and youth support to counselling and mediation, and also mental health services and support for carers.

The 2023 Blue Mountains Senior Volunteer of the Year went to Peter Gibson of Winmalee for his work with the Justice Advocacy Service. The work of this organisation is crucial, offering safe and confidential court and police support for those amongst us who face cognitive challenges. Peter has been volunteering with the Justice Advocacy Service since 2019, offering unwavering support to those in need, some of whom otherwise have very little help or guidance and at times may have given up hope altogether. Peter assists without judgement, an admirable quality that illustrates the character of this remarkable man. He is deserving of the award he has received.

The 2023 Blue Mountains Volunteer Team Award went to Valley Heights Steam Tramway team with the Steam Tram and Railway Preservation Co Op Society. The society operates the Valley Heights Steam Tramway, which is the only existing example of a Sydney steam tram operating in Australia. On two Sundays every month, one can take a ride on the steam tram as well as at other times for schools and tour groups. I commend all members of the society who give of their time, providing a fascinating glimpse into history and an opportunity for us all to connect to times past.

To Heather, Peter and the Steam Tramway team and society, I extend the heartfelt gratitude of my community. It takes a very special kind of soul to devote themselves to the betterment of our society. The generosity of spirit displayed by our volunteers is extraordinary and something that I really do believe makes the world a better place. All the volunteers, and many were at the event, who were nominated at the 2023 NSW Volunteer of the Year Regional Awards but did not receive an award on this occasion are still most worthy of acknowledgement and our deepest gratitude. Each and every one of them is a winner in my eyes.

COMMUNITY SWIMMING POOLS

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (19:16): Few issues are guaranteed to get a community up in arms like their local swimming pool closing. Essentially, taking away a community's chlorinated water will result in fire. In the bush, local pools are more than just a place to cool off in the heat of summer. They are meeting places; they help create social cohesion in communities. They provide community connection, employment and recreational opportunities. For some, heading to the pool is the only opportunity for social interaction, to take the family outdoors or to participate in physical activity. The health benefits can include improved mental health, physical health and avoidance in drowning and even a reduction in absenteeism with kids, according to Royal Life Saving. When one is decommissioned, communities out west lose out in a big way.

We almost had that in Walgett recently. The local pool is more than 50 years old. Like many across New South Wales, it was built in the late sixties to early seventies and the filtration and pump equipment is breaking down. The announcement came from the local council that the pool was going to be decommissioned, and to either pay the \$2 million to repair the pool or \$5 million to replace it. In a town that can reach searing

temperatures in summer, it was very unwelcome news and a very tough decision for the council. Unfortunately, many rural public pools face a similar fate as Walgett. According to a Royal Life Saving report *The State of Aquatic Facility Infrastructure in Australia – Rebuilding our Aging Public Swimming Pools*, across the country approximately 40 per cent of public swimming pools will require replacement in the next 10 years. It goes on to say that the problem is an even greater challenge for aging infrastructure within regional areas where 58 per cent of Australian pools are located.

Many of the pools no longer meet Australian standards because of cracked underground pipes, cracks in pool tanks, filtration and circulation issues, and leaking. Most were not built by specialist pool craftsmen. They were made by work teams, often volunteers from local farms, using farm equipment to dig the holes, building the structures with hand-poured concrete, which, as we know, often cracks, shifts and breaks down over time, especially when it is subjected to the extremes of weather and the chemicals used in the pools. They did not have design or plans. They solved problems and came up with solutions as they went along. They did not refer to any government standards. For those reasons they were relatively cheap to build in the post-war era, but they are expensive to replace.

The overall cost to local government to replace degrading public pools will be \$8 billion over the next 10 years. Whilst there are State and Federal funding options, they are hard to secure and many councils end up footing the majority of the bill. We had one rather infamous instance in 2020 where a pool in North Sydney received \$10 million from a Federal funding stream that was designated to regional and remote communities. We cannot see a repeat of that. With these challenges in mind, it is no surprise that many councils make the tough decision to decommission, particularly when some local government areas have more than one pool to repair or replace. In Walgett, a community group was formed which was able to work with council on alternative options to keep the pool open this summer, much to the relief of locals who are faced with rising energy costs to keep the air conditioning on.

I mentioned earlier the community function that many pools play in the towns. They are also essential for safety. Inland waterways have a high incidence of fatal drownings. The rapidly changing conditions and hidden snags make them unpredictable. They can be dangerous places to swim, particularly if you are not a strong swimmer. Plus, there are no lifeguards. The Royal Life Saving Society in its national report on drowning states:

... broad aquatic education programs and partner with other water safety organisations to develop and deliver programs that focus on common activities adults participate in ...

This is because it is not just kids that get caught in dangerous situations in the water. The learn-to-swim and water safety programs offered at local pools helps prepare and somewhat mitigate the risk of drownings in inland lakes, in rivers and in dams. Without pools, these programs cannot operate. It goes without saying that we would see a rising incidence of drowning if more pools close across the State and force these critical programs to close. We need to ensure that our regional and rural pools stay open or that there are alternate options available to communities to meet and cool down. Splash parks are popping up all over the west, which are great projects and provide a lot of relief for our communities, but they are no substitute for a public pool and should not be seen as a replacement. As I said, they are a lot of fun.

Finding new ways of funding this critical infrastructure with public-private partnerships helping to spread the risk and reward is an option that the Royal Life Saving Society has provided. The overall benefit that public swimming pools bring to communities should not be underestimated. The contribution they make to community health and safety is worthy of greater long-term investment and support from all sides of politics. I acknowledge that since I have raised this with the Premier and the Minister for Regional New South Wales as recently as last week the Premier has committed to getting it sorted out so that the people of Walgett will be able to swim in summer.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (19:22): In just a few weeks' time, Australians will be faced with a momentous choice. It is a choice that offers the opportunity to transform our nation for the better, a choice to step closer to resolving a great injustice that lies at the heart of our nation and a choice to move forward as a nation with renewed unity and purpose. On 14 October I will be voting yes to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution by establishing a Voice to Parliament, and I know many other members of Parliament and members of my community in Summer Hill will also vote yes.

Inner West for Yes is a collaboration of inner west residents and organisers coming together to campaign for a successful yes vote in the referendum. Inner West for Yes emerged from the work of the Inner West Council in engaging residents through its civic education program. Over 1,000 residents took part in that program and have since organised countless campaign activities, including holding stalls, letterboxing and doorknocking the

community. They are volunteering their time to connect with voters, to paint banners and to make badges. They are on the phones too, speaking to people well beyond the boundaries of our local community and recognising that a vote for yes represents a nation-building moment.

This past weekend, the good people of Inner West for Yes marched alongside tens of thousands of Sydneysiders from Redfern Park to Victoria Park, walking in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. At Redfern Park, they were joined by politicians of all stripes. The Premier spoke, as did the member for Sydney and the Federal environment Minister, Tanya Plibersek. The Hon. Jacqui Munro spoke, as did Senator Hanson-Young and Lord Mayor of Sydney Clover Moore. I was honoured to walk with fellow members from across the Parliament. It was a moment that spoke to just how much the call for reform resonates across party lines.

We are being asked a simple question: Do Australians want to recognise the first people of our country in our founding document by establishing a Voice to Parliament? The first proposition is recognition. We are the only nation with a colonial history in the world that does not recognise its First Nations people in its Constitution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have occupied Australia for more than 65,000 years; the Constitution is 122 years old. Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an act of respect in acknowledging their enduring connection to land and to country.

Constitutional recognition is also a powerful call to action to end the discrimination and gap in living standards between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that persists in our country. That is why the establishment of a Voice to Parliament is critical. A Voice to Parliament is an advisory body, tasked with giving advice to those in our Government about issues that directly impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is not a dangerous threat to our democracy; it is simply a mechanism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to speak on and advocate policies that impact them. It is nothing more than that.

We have a collective responsibility to engage in this debate fully and respectfully in the coming weeks. A respectful, informed debate responds to the gracious and moving invitation offered by our First Nations people and their leaders who want us to walk together in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. I urge all Australians to read that extraordinary document and to respond positively to its central call: to recognise, to heal and to move forward. That begins with voting yes on 14 October.

SHARK NETS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (19:26): I am incredibly privileged to be the member for Terrigal, which is unquestionably the most beautiful electorate on the Central Coast. It encompasses some incredible bush and beach lands, from one end of the boundary to the other. I have raised our community's concerns many times with regard to shark netting on the Central Coast. I have never wavered from my and my community's position on the issue of shark nets. I was extremely pleased to attend a shark net rally at Terrigal on Sunday 27 August. I thank all those community members who came together on that day to highlight our community's abhorrence and rejection of shark nets on the Central Coast.

We know that shark nets do not work. They are 1937 technology that indiscriminately kills pretty much any form of marine life that is unfortunate enough to swim into them. The stark information that came from the *Shark Meshing (Bather Protection) Program 2022/23 Annual Performance Report*, which the Department of Primary Industries released on 31 July, was confronting, to say the least. The numbers in it are absolutely shocking. The innocent marine life that dies needlessly to provide a false sense of security from shark nets is appalling and it needs to stop.

We are in a unique position on the Central Coast where we had a council that was very willing and able to remove shark nets. In fact, the councillors moved a motion that they wanted to trial the removal of shark nets. The process for that would be for council to ask for expressions of interest. We have 27 smart drumlines on the Central Coast now, most of which are in my electorate, along with the shark nets. We also have three listening stations and drone technology as part of the former Government's more than \$83 million investment into new technology around shark mitigation and education. Our community has accepted that technology. It has been in for over a season. When you think that more than a million people use Central Coast beaches every season, the reality is that it is more dangerous for someone to cross the road than to swim at Terrigal Beach and have an interaction with a shark.

Shark nets provide a false sense of security. People believe that shark nets encompass an entire beach. For those who do not know, a shark net is 150 metres long. It extends from the ocean floor, in most cases, but a shark can swim around it. It can swim along it. It can swim over it. In some cases they can swim under them. It is interesting that there is a misconception that shark nets protect everything, when they literally do not. At Terrigal Beach, for example, there are five 150-metre-long white buoys jutting out between Terrigal and Wamberal. I can

swim out to them, along them, around them and under them. If I can do that, so can a shark. The time has come to remove the nets. I acknowledge the outstanding work done by the wonderful organisations such as Sea Shepherd, Action for Dolphins, Envoy Foundation and Marine Wildlife Rescue Central Coast. All of those organisations attended the rally with me on Sunday. It was great to see the community's overwhelming support to trial the removal of shark nets.

Let me be clear: The survival rate for a marine animal that swims into a shark net is around 37 per cent at best. If a dolphin swims into a shark net, the survival rate is zero. Any dolphin unfortunate enough to swim into a shark net dies. That is the cold, hard reality of it. I wrote to Minister Moriarty in May as soon as I was re-elected to highlight the Government's fantastic opportunity to trial the removal of shark nets on the Central Coast. It needed to add additional drum lines to three more beaches: Lakes Beach in the electorate of the member for Wyong, Killcare Beach in my electorate, and Ocean Beach in the electorate of the member for Gosford. Drum lines at those beaches would enable council to meet its requirement to trial the removal of shark nets. It was a fantastic opportunity.

Sadly, the Minister did not respond positively. She said that the Government would continue another 12 months of trialling to gather data. A report from the Department of Primary Industries shows clear data that shark nets fail biblically. It is sad that the Labor members of the Central Coast who supported removing shark nets prior to the election were nowhere to be seen at all. They did not attend the rally and they have gone quiet. Sadly, they have trotted out the Minister's talking points about requiring more trials. Every dolphin that swims into a shark net and dies in these six months is on their watch. The responsibility now lies with the Government.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (19:31): I congratulate Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School in the suburb of Earlwood in my electorate for celebrating 100 years of Mercy education. From its humble beginnings in a garage back in 1923 with only 23 students enrolled, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School has since grown into a vibrant and inclusive community that is driven by a strong belief that every student is capable of successful learning. Our Lady of Lourdes stands as a true pillar, not only in education but also in its unwavering commitment to the betterment of our community. The school also embodies a spirit of inclusivity and diversity. It welcomes children from all backgrounds and provides them with a safe and nurturing environment to learn and grow.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School is a source of inspiration and aspiration for our children. When they step through its doors, they see that education is valued and that their dreams are within reach. The dedicated, amazing staff and supportive community create an environment where our children can flourish, dream big and believe in themselves. That nurturing atmosphere fosters the leaders, thinkers and change makers of tomorrow. A vibrant school community fosters a sense of belonging. When children feel that they are part of a caring and inclusive community, it bolsters their self-esteem and confidence. They develop a positive self-identity, knowing that they are valued and respected for who they are. That sense of belonging contributes significantly to their overall wellbeing and mental health, providing them with a strong foundation for future success.

The incredible teachers and staff at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School deserve our utmost appreciation. Their dedication, passion and tireless efforts make the wonderful school what it is today. They do not just teach subjects; they inspire and mentor our children, helping them realise their full potential. They are the guiding lights who shape the future leaders, innovators and change makers of our society. I acknowledge principal Margrita Cutrupi for her hard work and dedication to the school community. I also acknowledge the staff, P&C and school community for their dedication and commitment to the wellbeing of students over the past 100 years.

Parents and families are an integral part of the school community. Their support, encouragement and active involvement are vital in shaping the educational journey of their children. A partnership between the school, the families and the community ensures that our students receive the best possible foundation for their futures. Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School is not just a place of learning; it is a place of dreams and aspirations. It is a place where children come to discover their passions, develop their talents and build lifelong friendships. It is a place where character is built and values are instilled. I look forward to continuing to work with the wonderful school and community to ensure the quality education and growth of our young students. Happy birthday to Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School.

STATE BUDGET AND CLARENCE ELECTORATE

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (19:34): Tonight I speak about the Minns Labor Government budget, which was handed down yesterday. In my maiden speech I said that I would acknowledge positive things in my electorate and things that disadvantage my electorate. I thank the health Minister for his continued

confidence and support in the rebuild of Grafton Base Hospital and the \$8.24 million that was announced in the budget yesterday. It has been a long road for that project. As I said earlier, when there are things that benefit my electorate, I am happy to acknowledge them, and I have done that.

Sadly, that is where the good news ends for the hardworking men and women of the Clarence electorate. I am disappointed for the 4,290 eligible seniors in the Richmond Valley and the 10,699 eligible seniors in the Clarence Valley who are now questioning what the Minns Labor Government is going to do to help them stay connected. I fear that the answer is nothing. The Government has just made it harder for seniors to travel in New South Wales. They are not second-class citizens. The seniors in my electorate know that their support has been cut to pay for the \$551 million toll repayments scheme for the city. The seniors who have been hurt by that will not forget, like Deidre, who emailed my office. She said:

The travel card helps a lot of people. I know people who can't drive due to medical reasons e.g. macular degeneration, vertigo, numbness in legs and feet and rely on public transport, Community Transport, taxis and rideshare to go to appointments, do their shopping and socialise.

Without the regional seniors travel card, that connection has been cut. In the bush, we simply do not have the luxury of jumping on the next train, tram or ferry to stay connected. It is harder, but we love where we live. The kids who benefitted from the Active Kids vouchers and the mums and dads who now have to fork out more money for their kids to play sport also feel disenfranchised by the budget. I am not sure that the Government gets it. Kids playing sport is a good investment. We also know that the program was slashed from \$190 million to \$28 million, and that the voucher was reduced from \$100 to \$50, while only available to families on family tax benefit part A. Sadly, the cuts are having a real effect on the people of the Clarence.

The real kicker is the promised flood recovery funding. On 4 April the Premier promised that he had our backs, but yesterday's budget proves that the Government does not. In a bipartisan way, myself, the other four members and the seven mayors from the Northern Rivers region have been calling for and were promised a restart. Sadly, we have not even got a rethink. The Government has not funded the \$700 million shortfall that was promised for tranche 2.

I hope that this place can do better for the people who are sleeping in tents and living away from their homes in pod villages tonight because of the floods. We need to do better to ensure that businesses that are still not opened in places like Broadwater, Woodburn and Coraki get a hand up to reopen and employ people. The budget is not a friend for regional New South Wales. In fact, we have been left worse off in regional New South Wales. We cannot get an electric train into the city. If we miss tonight's XPT, there is not another one for 12 hours. That is how we get around in the bush. That is why we need support.

EMU HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL P&C ASSOCIATION

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:39): It is with delight that I inform the House that Emu Heights Public School P&C, located in the Penrith electorate, has been named at a recent awards night as the P&C Association of the Year. This award category is for the whole of New South Wales, and the competition is fierce. The award was presented by P&C Federation President Yvonne Hilsz. Long-term resident and Emu Heights P&C President Owen Sargeant recently met with me, and he fondly spoke about his long-term involvement with the school, having put his children and his grandchildren through.

Over its 50-year history, the Emu Heights P&C Association has been an integral pillar of our local community. The school opened in 1972 with a student population of just 69. The school has grown to become a modern centre of learning, with outstanding programs and resources. The current enrolment is just over 300 students, with 12 classes. Emu Heights Public School prides itself on the positive family atmosphere and is highly regarded by our local community as a friendly, inclusive and caring school, in which personal excellence is nurtured and valued. The students consistently demonstrate a cooperative, positive approach to learning and to each other, and to embracing cultural diversity.

The integration of STEM education, project-based learning and IT skills are embedded in teaching and learning across the future-focused curriculum. A wide range of student welfare programs support student wellbeing, including Bounce Back!, peer support, leadership opportunities, Kindergarten Buddies, Child Protection, Bike Safety, Life Education and Interrelate. They also offer a wide range of extracurricular activities, particularly in sport and the performing arts areas of dance, music, choir, debating and public speaking, and the annual talent quest. In addition, Education Week celebrations, NAIDOC Day activities, Young Leaders Day, the school vegetable garden and the chess club all ensure a rich tapestry of learning opportunities for the students.

Significant in every program and initiative is the close partnership between the fabulous staff, children, parents, the wider community and other schools in the Nepean learning community. The school's motto is "Happiness by helping", and that is how it operates. Indeed, the day-to-day demonstration of this motto is why the school won the award, building relationships not only within the school but also with the broader community.

The children also assist areas well outside Penrith; for example, they supported East Murwillumbah Public School during its time of need after the floods.

While the Emu Heights school community raises much needed money for the school itself, it also teaches the children the value of caring for others. They vigorously raised and donated considerable funds to the Royce Simmons Foundation for dementia. They have also assisted the homeless in Penrith through donations to Mama Lana's local charity, which supports the homeless and many others. The importance of these relationships will hopefully remain with the children for the rest of their lives in building our future adults. The Emu Heights P&C Association received \$1,000 for its award success and, living up to the school motto "Happiness by helping", elected to donate the whole amount to Mama Lana's. Congratulations to the whole Emu Heights school community on taking out this prestigious award. Every one of them can be very proud.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:43): Today I speak on the status of my private member's bill, the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023, for which I gave a second reading speech in this place on 29 June 2023. Debate on the bill's second reading has been adjourned. That is because I am in talks with the Government, which I hope will see the importance of the bill to the people of New South Wales. We must remember the context in which the bill is being debated. Federal water Minister Tanya Plibersek has torn up the 2018 intergovernmental agreement between the Commonwealth and the States, for grubby political reasons. Minister Plibersek says it is about the environment, but it is really about politics—the politics of the rising Green threat to Labor.

Just this week the Financial Review reported that Tanya Plibersek's electorate was one of those that The Greens are targeting in the next Federal election as part of their inner urban strategy. That is what is behind her single-handed destruction of the 2018 water agreement—a bid to stop votes leaking to The Greens, both in her own electorate and across a number of Federal electorates held by Labor. But my bill is primarily about codifying that 2018 agreement into New South Wales law. The agreement says that water buybacks cannot occur if they have negative socio-economic impacts on communities. My bill is about State's rights, the rights of New South Wales under the Federation, which have been trampled on by the Albanese Government. The Minns Government, I believe, will see sense on this. Victoria already has said that it will not be a party to Tanya Plibersek's single-handed destruction of the 2018 water agreement. I ask the Minns Government to follow suit by supporting the water bill that I currently have before this House.

During debate on the bill, I heard several Government members say that there were constitutional concerns with my bill. They did not specify what those concerns were. In fact, I do not believe that there are any constitutional concerns. The bill has been drafted with expert legal advice to avoid constitutional conflicts. There is no Commonwealth law in force that the bill conflicts with, so it is difficult to see what constitutional concerns the Government speakers were referring to. I repeat that they did not specify any; they just made general statements.

The Government speakers also raised other concerns about reduced allocations under my bill, but that is also not true. It is, with respect, scaremongering. My bill does not prevent willing sellers from selling water. They can sell to the Commonwealth, but there is one proviso: The Commonwealth must prove to the State of New South Wales that there will be no adverse economic impacts. I do not think that that is too much to ask, nor do many other people. All my bill asks is that the 2018 water agreement continue to operate as the framework for water management in the Murray-Darling Basin.

I know that the Premier is a reasonable man. I am in talks with him and his Government, and my aim is to preserve the rights of New South Wales under the Federation, to defend rural communities in this State and to deliver good-quality food at the lowest price to the people of Australia. My bill will not harm the environment. It is Tanya Plibersek's compulsory water buybacks that will cause flooding, riverbank erosion, unnaturally high water flows, poor water quality and general harm to the environment. Let us all be clear about that. I emphasise my water bill will not restrict trade in water. When my bill comes back on for debate, I call on members in this place and in the other place to defend New South Wales and its rights to manage its water as agreed in the 2018 intergovernmental agreement. That can be done by supporting my Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023.

LIBBY RUGE SMILE FUND

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (19:48): Today I recognise an important fund that is close to the hearts of many in my community. In November 2020 the Illawarra was shattered to learn of the loss of one of our own, 19-year-old Libby Ruge, who had her life cut short in deeply tragic circumstances. Libby has been described by many as

someone who was incredibly kind, whether that was through a beaming smile in the hallway or a random act of kindness. To honour her legacy, Libby's parents, Julie Ruge and Julie Harrison, have founded the Libby Ruge Smile Fund. The fund pays tribute to Libby's ambition to study dentistry and her passion for improving people's health and confidence through restoring their smiles. After completing her HSC at the mighty Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts, Libby began working as a dental assistant and was inspired by her colleagues, watching them firsthand transform the lives of those in need through better dental care.

Since taking on my role as Minister for Health, I have been deeply inspired by Libby's passion for helping others and her displays of kindness. Everyone not just in this place but across New South Wales should continue to practise kindness like Libby. The Libby Ruge Smile Fund was founded to provide young people who may be struggling financially with the opportunity to easily access the dental restoration work they need. The fund is dedicated to helping young people regain confidence in their smile, just like Libby did. To help raise awareness and funding for the foundation, her family started the organisation Bee Kind Like Libby in reference to the tattoo of a bee that Libby had on her ankle.

Recently Bee Kind Like Libby inspired the students of her former school, Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts, to honour their classmate in a "Bee Kind" mural. Many local schools, businesses and media outlets have shown an overwhelming amount of support for the fund, which has stemmed from the advocacy of Libby's colleagues at Southern Dental Specialists and Implant Centre, My Dental Team at Shellharbour and Shell Cove Dental. Libby's family have asked me to extend special thanks to Dr Arun, Dr Dinesh and Dr Ahmed for their continued advocacy for the fund and their work furthering Libby's legacy.

The Libby Ruge Smile Fund is hosting its annual spring black tie fundraiser in Wollongong in October, and it will be an amazing opportunity for our community to continue to show support for the fund and for Libby's legacy. All funds raised from the ball will provide young people in need with access to the dental care they deserve. I take this opportunity to thank Libby's family and friends for their advocacy and acknowledge the incredible work of the Libby Ruge Smile Fund. Although Libby is, sadly, no longer with us, she will be remembered for her kindness and her legacy will continue to grow well into the future.

BALGOWLAH BOYS CAMPUS

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (19:51): All members in this place are very passionate about our schools. Sydney has 15 non-selective boys schools. One of them is one of the great success stories of public education. The reason it is a success is a committed principal and an incredibly committed teaching staff. In 2011 only 32 per cent of year 7 and 9 students at Balgowlah Boys Campus achieved a result in the top two bands for NAPLAN reading and numeracy. In 2022 more than 50 per cent of students achieved a result in those bands. For four years the school placed in the top 10 schools, including selective schools, in HSC English based on band six results. However, not only is the school over its enrolment cap by 25 per cent; it is also falling down. You could say that it has achieved rare academic success in spite of its surroundings. After years of incremental improvements, the school has reached the end of its life.

To say the school needs a comprehensive upgrade is an understatement. It is a mishmash of buildings, the central focus of which is a Brutalist style teaching block more akin to a car park than a learning environment. The students, teachers and parents have earned their upgrade. We all appreciate the challenges of getting up to speed with a new portfolio in a new government. The learning curve is steep. I have no doubt that the education Minister has passion for her portfolio. She has a mighty job ahead of her. I first wrote to her on 30 May, asking her to visit the school, to meet to discuss the school and to provide some assurance that the upgrade would still proceed. Some 10 weeks later, I received a reply; however, it did not address the issue at hand. It mentioned the pre-existing maintenance programs that the previous Government had funded. In question time today the Minister said:

... we will build schools. We are making a record investment in new and upgraded schools where they are needed.

I will tell the Minister where an upgraded school is needed: Balgowlah Boys. She purports to be the grand saviour of teachers and schools. So here is an invitation and an opportunity to make good on that rhetoric: Fund the upgrade of Balgowlah Boys. The Minister should come and see it for herself, meet the principal, the teachers and the students, and see how the shining light of a non-selective public boys school can be improved—because they sure have earned it

WETHERILL PARK POLICE STATION

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (19:54): I speak in response to the amended hours of Wetherill Park Police Station, which will now operate from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. as opposed to 24 hours. The bottom line is that I support the decision as it diverts existing police from desk duties to operational roles within the area. Police in the Fairfield area command provide a variety of capabilities to protect us, including general duties, investigations, community engagement, youth liaison, intelligence and so on. The police are mobile in delivering those effects

but they are also assigned to three police stations: Fairfield, Cabramatta and Wetherill Park. Police use the stations as a hub to project their capabilities across our community, but certain police are assigned specifically to station duties so that members of the public can physically attend and be assisted with matters such as the reporting of a crime, advice on criminal and policing matters, obtaining fingerprints for visa and security clearances, and—except for Wetherill Park station—bail reporting.

In terms of Wetherill Park Police Station, two police officers were rostered to perform station duties between the hours of 6.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m., otherwise known as the overnight shift. I have been advised that during two sets of seven overnight shifts in April and May this year a total of 29 members of the public attended the police station to make a non-bail reporting inquiry, equating to an average of approximately two people per night. In light of those numbers, New South Wales police believe it would best serve the public interest to redeploy the two rostered police officer overnight positions at Wetherill Park Police Station to other operational roles within the Fairfield Police Area Command.

The roles could see the officers assigned to proactive operations to target road trauma, street offences, alcohol-related crime, youth crime and property-related crime amongst other crime types—in other words, shifting police from behind a desk to field duties within our local community. I have been assured that the police officers will continue to operate specifically within the Fairfield Police Area Command, inclusive of Wetherill Park and surrounding suburbs. While there are now no police situated at the counters of Wetherill Park station overnight, several mitigation measures have been adopted. Those include a video phone installed at the front of the station that connects to Fairfield Police Station for direct communication with a police officer or, alternatively, to physically deploy police officers to the Wetherill Park station to assist if required.

Nothing beats having police at a station, but I contend that having more police protecting us on our streets is the right call in the current context. Since the new operating hours were adopted, between 7 August to 2 September 2023 an average of approximately one person per night attended the Wetherill Park station to make a non-bail reporting inquiry. That attendance rate reinforces the merits of the amended station hours to bolster operational policing efforts on the streets. Should numbers change drastically in the future, I contend that a review should occur and appropriate staffing measures should be taken. In addition, I have also been engaging with the Government on measures to pave the way for police officers within the Fairfield command to do more operational tasks and less administration through appropriate resourcing and structuring.

Alongside working hard to address police recruitment and retention, the police Minister and her office have been extremely receptive to hearing my views on what is needed to help police do their job safely within Fairfield. I thank her for her ongoing support. I know that the jobs of all police officers are extremely difficult. They put their physical and mental wellbeing on the line for us every shift. I know that having more police on the beat will help them do their jobs and that pay and conditions need to be commensurate with what they do for us. I will do my best to serve them as best I can. I will do my best to ensure that the safety of the people of the Fairfield community is always put first.

STATE BUDGET AND SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (19:58): I congratulate the Minns Labor Government on delivering essential services and infrastructure projects for the South Coast electorate in the budget that was delivered yesterday. This budget represents the first steps in the Government's plan to improve essential services across New South Wales. This budget finally puts my electorate of South Coast back on the map. Leading up to the March election, constituents repeatedly told me that our South Coast schools were overcrowded, run down and in need of significant maintenance, and that our teachers were leaving the profession in droves. I was told that our hospitals had been downgraded in our major growth areas and that our nurses deserved better. I was told that we needed to move on with the East Nowra sub-arterial road and get the Milton Ulladulla bypass route finalised.

I am delighted to inform the House and my constituents that this budget prioritises health, education, transport and essential workers in my region. The Minns Labor Government will invest more than \$1.4 billion over four years in a massive boost to deliver new and upgraded schools in regional New South Wales. In the South Coast electorate that will include upgrades to address overcrowding and improve ageing facilities at the following schools: Vincentia High School, Ulladulla High School, Milton Public School and Ulladulla Public School. The former Shoalhaven Anglican school site will open for public education and the Budawang School will be relocated. We will see a new primary school in Nowra, which will also include a new preschool. I am excited to deliver on my election commitment to improve schools in the Shoalhaven and I look forward to working with the community on how these school infrastructure projects will be rolled out.

The Minns Labor Government has also prioritised spending on regional roads. For the South Coast, this will include \$12 million for planning and early work on the East Nowra sub-arterial road, \$135.6 million for the finalisation of the Jervis Bay intersection upgrade, \$55.2 million to continue the Nowra Bridge project,

\$10 million to finalise the Milton Ulladulla bypass and \$4.6 million for Shoalhaven City Council to help fix local roads. Some \$5 million was also included in the budget for shared user pathways across the electorate, including in Myola, Callala, Dolphin Point, Kioloa, Narrawallee and Old Southern Road, Nowra. I am delighted that the Minns Government is prioritising getting our road networks and shared user pathways on the South Coast back on track by providing funding for these important projects, and also by providing funds to Shoalhaven City Council to fix and build the roads we need to help our growing communities prosper.

The Minns Labor Government will also make good on its healthcare commitments for the South Coast. Funding includes \$438 million for the Shoalhaven hospital redevelopment and \$7.5 million for the Milton Ulladulla Hospital upgrade. The upgrade to Milton Ulladulla Hospital will include a CT scanner, \$1.5 million to upgrade the Community Cancer Services Centre and \$500,000 for a master plan that will include the return of birthing services to the South Coast. I have listened to the constituents of the South Coast and advocated on their behalf. I thank them for putting their trust in me to deliver for the South Coast. This budget is about people and about delivering the essential services we all rely on. I am extremely proud to be part of a government that listens to the community and puts people first.

CANCER SCREENING

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (20:03): Discovering that a loved one is grappling with cancer can be an overwhelming experience. During the initial stages of profound shock and disbelief, uncertainty persists. Nonetheless, we remain resolute for the benefit of those around us. The stark reality is that cancer has touched the lives of nearly all Australians. According to the Cancer Council, almost half of the population will receive a cancer diagnosis before reaching the age of 85. On 16 June I collaborated with cafe Eighteen22 in Punchbowl to host Bankstown's Biggest Morning Tea event, uniting various community groups in my electorate to fundraise for cancer research. Moreover, it provided a platform for my brother, Billy Dib, to share his inspiring journey as a cancer survivor. He also happens to be a constituent of mine—he told me he voted for me once.

As many members know, the story of Billy "The Kid" Dib is that of a fighter. He made a name for himself in the world of professional boxing, holding world championship titles in both the featherweight and super-featherweight divisions. However, in October last year Billy was diagnosed with stomach cancer. He endured months of gruelling chemotherapy treatments. His unwavering spirit and resolve paved the way for a triumphant outcome, and he emerged victorious from his arduous struggle. Indeed, in March this year we received the joyous news that Billy had achieved remission. This announcement served as an immense relief, lifting a tremendous burden from his shoulders and those of our entire family. Billy's story serves as a powerful testament to the significance of advances in medical science and the importance of family support.

The contribution that fundraising makes is invaluable in the search for a cure or better treatment. Indeed, when it comes to cancer we can all play a crucial role in supporting those who are experiencing this awful disease. Recently, I participated in a campaign to encourage people between the ages of 50 and 74 to complete their bowel cancer screening tests. Bowel cancer causes the second highest number of cancer deaths in Australia, but cancer screening could save lives. In my electorate of Bankstown, bowel cancer was the fourth most common cancer diagnosed between 2016 and 2020 and the fourth leading cause of cancer deaths. The statistics show that in my electorate of Bankstown only 35.1 per cent of those who fall into the age group have completed their tests, which means that many people are ignoring this important screening test. Therefore, I am speaking up and encouraging people not to leave the kits in their drawers, but to follow the steps and do it the next time they go to the bathroom. It could save their life.

I am pleased that towards the end of this year the Cancer Council NSW will be holding in-language workshops on cancer screening in our communities, with the aim of making cancer prevention and early detection accessible for culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] communities. The success of the first Bankstown Biggest Morning Tea event could not have happened without the support of our community. I acknowledge Hassan Moussa from RM Gregory Printers; Antoinette Khalil from the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce; Superintendent Adam Johnson from Bankstown Police Area Command; Joe Khoury, OAM, from the local *Future Newspaper*; and CEO John Khoury and Diane Langmack, OAM, from the unbelievably community-spirited Canterbury Bulldogs—or the Bulldogs as they are known in the area—for all the amazing work they do in our community.

I thank also the many local football clubs that came to show their support. Attendees included Joe Khoury, CEO of the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs; Leanne Millar from the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association; and Kylie Keg from Roselands Football Club. Furthermore, I commend Councillor Karl Saleh, Salma Taleb and Bilal Fazli from Riverwood Community Centre, Maria Votano from Greenacre Area Community Centre and Monica Chahoud from the Melkite community. These are some of the many organisations that make up my community. They work for the community and form the bedrock of my home in Bankstown. Moreover,

I express my deep gratitude to Dina Kheir from our local ElKhair Florist, Tim and Michele McCaw from the Lakemba RSL Sub-Branch, and Tony Kazzi from *El Telegraph*.

Words cannot express my appreciation for Hajji Karim Abiad and Naji Harika, who always show up and have an unwavering dedication to community service. Of course, we cannot forget our incredible local schools. I particularly appreciate the attendance of deputy principal Eleni Mavridis-Kontakos from Punchbowl Public School and principal Rene Demos from Wiley Park Public School. I convey my heartfelt appreciation to Inaam Tabbaa, AM, from the Australian National Sports Club, and Mamdouh and Vivian Sukkariah from *The World Observer*. I am grateful to Mayor Bilal El-Hayek from the City of Canterbury Bankstown council, Mustafa Krayem from Al Amanah College and Hun Low from the Chinese Australian Services Society. Finally, I express my profound thanks to the Bankstown Women's Health Centre, particularly to Mariam Mourad and all the other amazing general practitioners, psychologists, health practitioners and workers who offer free and bulk-billed services for women in the Canterbury-Bankstown area.

The Cancer Institute reports that breast screening participation is lower for CALD community members in our area. The participation rate for Aboriginal members of the Canterbury-Bankstown local government area is even lower still. We must do better. I am incredibly grateful to live in a community that will come together to ensure that people get not only their cancer screening but also that support. To everybody who has a loved one or someone else they know who is suffering with cancer, I say the road does get better. All they need is as much support as possible. I thank our health professionals, who hold their patients' hands in their darkest moments.

YASS WATER TREATMENT PLANT

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (20:08): It is imperative that the community of Yass hears about the shortcomings of Labor's budget, particularly its election commitment to deliver the Yass Water Treatment Plant. Yesterday Labor announced that it would keep the former Liberal-Nationals Government's Safe and Secure Water Program, but it has slashed it by more than \$100 million. Labor has taken money out of the program, which could go to supporting the plant, and has not allocated an extra dollar for the project. Labor's budget has not allocated one more dollar to the Yass Water Treatment Plant than the Liberal-Nationals Government allocated to it in last year's budget.

Before I speak further about Labor's smoke-and-mirrors act, which it used to manipulate voters, I seek to ensure that the public is aware of the progress Yass Valley Council and WaterNSW have made to upgrade the water treatment plant. It is essential I provide that context and emphasise my support for the project. A new water treatment plant is essential for the community. The project has my full support, as it will deliver clean water to Yass. It is also my belief, and probably that of the department, the taxpayer and the ratepayer, that the project needs to be delivered efficiently without any concerns about excessive costs, underestimating resources or wasted materials.

The Yass Valley Council announced prior to the 2019 State election that it would need \$10 million to address the issue of unappetising and discoloured water, which is a significant concern for the community. As a candidate at the time, I secured that funding, then as the elected local member I ensured that \$3.7 million was immediately unlocked for improvements to the existing plant to provide a short-term solution. While stage one of the project had already been completed before any further investment was made, council was told it must demonstrate a robust business case, which involved properly evaluating the prospective cost to ratepayers and taxpayers. On paper, this work is now underway, and early indications are that the initial \$10 million estimate will be exceeded by more than 200 per cent. In fact, the first numbers being indicated exceed a value of \$30 million.

Put simply, the former New South Wales Government could not and did not make a funding allocation for the full amount until this work had been completed. Nevertheless, I secured the commitment from the previous water Minister that whatever amount of money the business case demonstrated was required would be made available to Yass Valley Council in full to complete the project. In the presence of the previous Minister in January this year, council staff told me it would take them nine months to complete the final business case, which was paid for by the former Liberal-Nationals Government. Not long after this conversation, the communities saw headlines reporting that the Labor candidate had said it would fund the upgrade. Labor did not know what it was promising money for, so it is no wonder that in yesterday's budget, the Government did not allocate a single cent more than the Liberal-Nationals Government had budgeted previously.

Further to the point of preparing a business case for the water treatment plant, council also has a pipe network problem that is contributing to substandard delivery of clean, clear water. Yass Valley Council conceded that these pipes are also influencing the discolouration of Yass tap water. Again, I have not seen any specific understanding or developed plans and pricing to replace and maintain this pipe network, but Labor still promised to fund it. In its budget yesterday, Labor did not fund it.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:11): I encourage the member for Goulburn to have a conversation with the Minister for Water.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE HOUSING

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (20:11): We have been hearing lately from the Government about its plans to roll out development in the State. The argument of up or out, or whether it should be both, is a simplistic one. It may be fine for upcoming developments, but it does little for outer regions and for greenfield developments. Councils are being asked to do their share, but what exactly is their share? Proposed development in Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands is not being undertaken by private or small owners; it is in huge development areas that were previously zoned as rural and have been recently land banked. These developments are changing the face of our electorate. Sure, the electorate has historically been rural, which is why people move to the area, but the people who have lived there now for decades understand the area has limited services and we are at capacity with the existing population we have.

Meanwhile, there is a housing crisis—a crisis not only of stock but of the price of homes for our young people. Generations ago, it was possible to have a home on a single income, which is a dream long gone for our children. Now we have large development areas, and the developers are bulldozing everything. Trees and even hills are being flattened, and what are we being left with? We are left with houses and roads with pocket parks at best. We are told that population needs to come before the infrastructure will be in place, but people are moving in today. We now have new developments approved right across the electorate even on top of partially completed ones. The infrastructure is either at capacity or it is missing. I challenge anyone to see what a 30-minute travel time to find employment or deliver a child to a high school means to the people of new areas.

People are there now. People are being sold a dream of an affordable house with schools and health facilities, but we cannot even assure them adequate water. Try to have a shower now at Appin, where the water has slowed to a trickle. In Wilton, wastewater is being trucked out as there is no sewage treatment plant. All of this is taking place in the middle of a catchment zone. We are willing to do our share, but only if planning is done differently, and not in a way that creates terrible community outcomes.

While the Government talks about fast planning approvals, to achieve this we need the Ministers and the departments, who are all working in silos, to open their doors and discuss things. We need to plan. We need Ministers to sit together with departments to look at where people are going to live and see what infrastructure is needed. We need lines on maps for things like schools, transport, health care and facilities, and we also need to provide for the community that we already have that we are not currently able to accommodate. Are there possible alternatives? Yes.

While the lack of infrastructure demonstrates the issues with large greenfield developments and the developers that are coming in, what about the people who live on five, 10, 20 or even 100 acres? We talk about infill in the city, but what about those rural people who have been asking for just one or two extra houses? Maybe they want to have their children or elderly parents close by, or even to sell off land to another family wanting to share our beautiful area. There are already roads, even if many need upgrading. We have power and water already, and we have some jobs. Infill would benefit existing villages. It would make some of the primary producers more sustainable. It would have less effect on fauna, which is destroyed by huge developments where all trees are removed, creating a desert. Why can we not have some infill at the peri-urban area?

While I appreciate that the Government has recognised the need for investment in developing Western Sydney and committed to a delivery date of 2026 for the Western Sydney International Airport, there remains an unanswered question about the restrictions of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts—Western Parkland City) 2021. Now that the new airport flight paths have been released and the budget allocations for transport and infrastructure are in place, I see no reason for preventing Wollondilly residents from building secondary dwellings on their properties. Infill housing and secondary dwellings represent an untapped source of housing for people in this time of great need.

Someone living in a house on a 10-acre property should not be restricted from building a granny flat because of the current State environmental planning policy. The restrictions regarding secondary dwellings or small subdivisions by mums and dads need to be lifted, which would give individual residents the same opportunities as those granted to the big developers who are profiting from the restrictions placed unfairly on private small landholders. So where to from here? Why can we not have a round table to discuss how to do planning better and differently? I look forward to working with the Government to fix this mess. Let us think outside the current system that is not delivering a good outcome for the Wollondilly community. We can house more people, but let us do it better.

STATE BUDGET AND MAITLAND ELECTORATE

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (20:16): I thank the Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, for delivering an amazing budget, not only for Maitland but for our entire State. He has announced so many great projects and so many great Labor initiatives that speak to the aspirations of all of our communities in the regions, including the need for proper housing; the need for essential workers, which is critical given we have had long-term workforce shortages; the need to get back on track with the energy road map; and the need to pay down the Liberal-Nationals debt we have been left with.

In contrast to the previous 12 years, where money was just going out the door in all these crazy ways but not actually making a difference across the State, we have seen a very measured approach. The budget has allocated part of the \$334 million regional road fund to Thornton in my electorate, with \$15 million allocated for the duplication of the Thornton rail bridge. Along the border that I share with the member for Upper Hunter there will be \$6 million for Maitland Vale Road and \$2.5 million for Melville Ford Bridge, which is more than was offered under the previous Government. That is a great outcome.

Maitland City Council will get \$1.9 million from our \$390 million Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund. Despite the funny accounting that we saw from those opposite that was mentioned earlier in question time, \$390 million will roll out to regional councils across the State before the end of the year, and it will make a huge difference. We are combining that with the \$280 million that was paid out in January, giving those councils some more time—in fact, they will have four years—to acquit those funds. Those councils that might be smaller in capacity but have very large road networks will now be able to spend that money. I am really proud of that.

I am also really excited about health. Even before I came into this place, I wanted to get Maitland Hospital to being a fully public hospital. Once we got the fully public hospital we wanted it to be fully functional. There is another \$10 million there for final works, in terms of capital infrastructure upgrades. There is \$3 million for a new building for all of our community health and mental health outpatient services, so we have an integrated health precinct there. Of course, there is our election commitment for 500 paramedics for the regions, and we are really looking forward to that being delivered.

Today I met with the health Minister Ryan Park about the state of Maitland Hospital. I am excited that some 1,112 temporary nurses and midwives will become permanent instead of ending their contracts at 30 June 2024, as was going to happen under the former Government. God knows we need more nurses and midwives. Further to that, there will be an additional 1,200 nurses and midwives. I say to the health staff in my electorate's hospital and those in my electorate who are struggling with health that we got a good hearing from the health Minister today. I think we spent in excess of 45 minutes talking with both him and the department, and later with the Minister in his office. There are positive, concrete steps we can take there, and I know the health Minister will take those steps.

I also give a shout-out to the nearly 4,000 public servants in my electorate who will get a pay rise. I know that money will flow into our small businesses, which have just been holding on. We are looking at average mortgage rates going up by \$17,000 a year for families. To have more money coming to our public sector workers will improve our small business outlook. Of course, who can forget the teachers? There are 670 teachers in my electorate and they will all benefit from that pay rise. I had 29 of them in my office the other day, having a chat to me about how they wanted a better deal. I am proud of our Deputy Premier, Prue Car, for her fantastic negotiations with teachers to get that deal set in place. Getting temporary teachers made permanent has been on my radar since I was elected. Now 187 teachers have been converted from temporary to permanent, which is amazing. Some \$3 million was allocated to social housing, which is a really big issue in my electorate—and, of course, we ripped up that wages cap. Good on you, Daniel Mookhey. Good on you, Chris Minns. Good on you, Prue Car.

STATE BUDGET AND WILLOUGHBY ELECTORATE

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (20:21): Yesterday's budget has exposed the Minns Labor Government's lack of vision or any purposeful plan for New South Wales, our communities and our people. Instead, Labor's focus is on playing politics and looking after the unions, which is true to form for NSW Labor. The Minns Labor Government has shown it is not up to the task of managing the State budget, nor of delivering for the people of New South Wales or the Willoughby electorate. That is my focus tonight. Budgets are about choices. From what members have seen, the Minns Labor Government is failing to make the right choices for New South Wales. Hardworking families across Willoughby and this State are not only missing out under Premier Minns but also paying the price for Labor's failures. We deserve better than cuts, broken promises and missed opportunities, all to pay for the demands of Labor's union masters.

Labor had 12 years to prepare for government. It had 12 years to do its policy homework and understand the needs and aspirations of the people of New South Wales, yet there is no vision and no serious positive agenda for the future of our great State. Instead, the people of Willoughby and New South Wales have been handed a budget of cuts, broken promises, wrong priorities and missed opportunities. At this time we need to be easing the increasing pressure faced by families as a result of the worsening cost of living, not making it harder by axing cost-of-living relief programs such as Active Kids or Creative Kids, lifting the cost of public transport and so much more in this budget.

Unfortunately, this is very much a budget of cuts and missed opportunities for the people of Willoughby. We have seen no funding for any alternative to the now-cancelled Beaches Link road tunnel. You cannot just make a multibillion-dollar cut to vital road infrastructure like this without proposing another solution. Labor will need to explain why Willoughby's roads will remain congested and why commuters will remain stuck in traffic. An ill-defined, small Labor review of the road network without any serious funding behind it to implement solutions just does not cut it. It is lazy, neglectful and not good enough. The people of Willoughby lament the lost opportunity here—and we deserve better.

We have seen no funding either for local community facilities such as the Gore Hill indoor sports centre, which is desperately needed to cater our growing area's recreational needs. Such is the strain on existing facilities that local kids can simply miss out if they do not join up to their local sporting club by kindergarten age, as recently reported in the media. At a time when Labor wants this community to take even more population growth, it is short-sighted and intolerable not to commit to boosting infrastructure and facilities. Likewise, we have seen nothing for upgrades to North Sydney Oval to bring needed equity and access to women's sporting facilities.

There is also no new funding for Royal North Shore Hospital and almost a million dollars less funding for Royal North Shore Hospital maintenance. That is a cut. This is one of Sydney's major hospitals and it needs continued investment to ensure it remains a world-class facility that is able to meet our community's healthcare needs. We have seen no confirmed funding specifically for the Cammeray and Northbridge public school upgrades. Whilst it is welcome that some early planning is underway, prior to the election Labor promised \$10 million between those schools to remove demountable classrooms. I will hold Labor to delivering not only that funding but also a more ambitious upgrade to both schools that ensures all the facilities—including school halls, learning spaces and playgrounds—are fit to deliver high-quality educational outcomes for our children.

Disappointingly, we have seen no funding for an upgrade to Chatswood bus interchange. Chatswood is a major strategic transport hub. It needs a bus interchange that befits its vital position at the centre of many bus, train, metro and active transport routes. The Coalition was ready to fund the planning for this essential upgrade. There is no time for delay. It is an upgrade that must happen. Every year the Government delays only makes it more costly and challenging to deliver.

The axing of the popular and convenient Park'nPay app, used right across the Willoughby electorate, brings particular disbelief. What a demonstration that is of this Government's lack of vision and its intent to slash innovation that makes our daily lives easier, particularly for those people living with a disability. Our communities are under attack, too, with the apparent omission of the Community Building Partnership program. This program earlier had bipartisan support, was built up by the Coalition and meant a lot to many people and communities. It has delivered thousands of successful community and grassroots projects across the State and in Willoughby. It benefited from the local input of those who know their communities, their needs and their priorities—unlike, might I say, the self-interested, politically motivated program Labor put out at the election.

There are some positives for Willoughby in this budget, but essentially those are great Liberal initiatives that, thankfully, have been retained, including two new schools: one at the Sydney Metro dive site and the other at Gore Hill. Those schools need to be a priority and construction should be well advanced within this term of government. Overall, the people of Willoughby deserve much better than this Minns Labor Government budget.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:27): I will not address all of the ludicrous comments just made by the member for Willoughby in his private member's statement. However, it does need to be on the record that in June 2022 then Premier Dominic Perrottet put the member's northern beaches tunnel on ice. That needs to be corrected.

BATE BAY SURF LIFESAVING CLUBS

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) (20:27): With the commencement of beach patrol season, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the amazing and dedicated volunteers from the four Bate Bay surf lifesaving clubs who continuously keep our community safe. These four clubs are held in high regard throughout the surf lifesaving community, with North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club and Elouera Surf Life Saving Club being recognised with

the New South Wales Surf Life Saving Rescue of the Year Award for their mass rescue of 40 people swept off a sandbar at North Cronulla on 17 February, the biggest mass rescue many had ever seen.

I turn to the northernmost of these four clubs, Wanda Surf Life Saving Club. Wanda was established in 1946 by a group of returned servicemen. Since then the club has grown to over 900 members, ranging from nippers up to adults, and has made great strides in promoting water safety both locally and across Greater Sydney. The club is particularly proud of its involvement with the Swim Brothers program, through which it delivers bronze medallion and surf rescue certificate training to participants from migrant communities with the intention of them becoming fully qualified volunteer surf lifesavers. This year the program received the Community Education Program of the Year at the Surf Life Saving Sydney Awards of Excellence, highlighting the importance of this groundbreaking program. I take this opportunity to recognise the 2023-24 board of directors. I thank Fiona Sutton, Todd Lester, Mark Sargeant, Kaylene Walker, Anne Caterson, Denny Rowlands, Glenn Bell, Greg Pierce, Lachlan Black, Natalie Buckley, Brett Thatcher, Dean Slater and Lisa Zammit for their tireless efforts in keeping Wanda Beach safe.

Elouera Surf Life Saving Club was founded in 1966, starting as a humble tent at the beach. A key focus of the club is its five-day Tradies Surf Awareness Clinic for children aged seven to 12 to promote water safety. Over the past four decades more than 11,000 children have taken part in the program, with sessions on how to recognise wave types, CPR first aid and personal skin protection, amongst others. With programs such as this, it is no surprise that the club was named winner of the Surf Life Saving Club of the Year category at the Surf Life Saving NSW Awards of Excellence earlier this year, highlighting the high regard the club is held in not just in the Sutherland shire but across Greater Sydney. I recognise the 2023-24 club officials, including incredible president Cameron Simpson, Alyson Scott, Merivale Nesbitt, Andrew Watson, Andrew McKellar, Stephen Urquhart, Tim Benson, Lauren Thomas, Dean Morris, Isaac Byrne, Sam Merchant, Joshua Nicholson, Rebecca Thackray and Ron Hegarty, for their ongoing commitment to Elouera Surf Life Saving Club and to our community.

Continuing our journey south along Bate Bay we come to North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club. Founded in 1925 when local residents became concerned for the safety of swimmers, North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club brings together members in both surf lifesaving and competition. Since its founding, the club's members have performed over 12,370 rescues, with no lives lost within the patrolled beach area. This is a true testament to its ongoing educational programs, such as the inclusive Sea Turtles program for children with disabilities. This year the Sea Turtles won 13 medals at the Surf Life Saving NSW State Titles—an incredible achievement. I recognise 2023-24 club officials Warren Rennie, Geoff Budd, Craig McKinnier, Dave Waugh, Donna Hargreaves, Ben Smollett, Daniel Lawson, Natasha Hargreaves, Jeff Loy, Anita Pryke, Graeme Lanham, Barbara Maythers, Geoff Streater, Barry Schuettrumpf and Kevin MacNamara for their tireless efforts in ensuring that all beachgoers know they are safe, and I look forward to seeing their new clubhouse soon.

To the south, we reach Cronulla Beach. Cronulla is one of the most visited beaches in Sydney and often what people envision when they think of the Sutherland shire. The team at Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club has been a familiar presence at Cronulla Beach since 1907. Cronulla's ability to develop its talent has seen the club produce many State, national and world champions. Throughout its history, Cronulla has won three World Life Saving Championships, encompassing all rescue and surf lifesaving competitions, and has consistently placed in the top 10 clubs at the Australian championships over the past 20 years. The club is also home to the Blue Fins program, which teaches children with disabilities beach safety and water awareness skills.

I recognise 2023-24 club officials Ken English, Brad Turner, Matt Aitken, Scott Phillips, Jana Meresova and Scott Jackson for taking on these leadership roles and for going above and beyond to keep beach users at Cronulla safe. I thank the dedicated volunteers and executive committees at all four Bate Bay surf life saving clubs for their tireless efforts in ensuring the safety of swimmers and beachgoers in the Sutherland shire and making sure that we can all enjoy our beautiful beaches in our local community. Again, I take this opportunity to put on record my thanks for these lifesavers and for their incredible contribution to our local community.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (20:32): I thank the member for Miranda for her private member's statement. Swim Brothers does wonderful work in my area and I commend the partnership they have with Wanda Surf Life Saving Club. A lot of men—particularly those who were born overseas and do not know how to swim—are taught by Swim Brothers, starting from the position of being non-swimmers in pools. With the support of Wanda, a lot of them have now progressed to being able to perform rescues at the beach. It is a fantastic partnership and commendable work.

NORTHERN TABLELANDS CHILDCARE SERVICES

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (20:33): The once dark COVID veil has been lifted and given birth, quite literally, to a population revival in many of our rural and regional centres and communities. Tree changers, professionals who are now unable to afford a house in the big cities, have brought their skills and

their families to our beautiful part of the world in the Northern Tablelands. Along with the economic benefits that these newcomers have brought, they have also placed additional pressure on local service—in particular, early childhood education. Available long day care places in the bush were very rare prior to the pandemic, but now there are simply absolutely none.

It is incredible to get your head around the fact that right now in our region, unless parents book their child into child care when they first fall pregnant, they will absolutely go onto a minimum year-long, 18-month long or, in some cases that I am aware of, two-year long waiting list just for a place in a long day care centre. Those parents are actually the lucky ones. The severity of the childcare place shortage was laid bare in a report last year from Victoria University's Mitchell Institute, which mapped the availability of centre-based day care in 50,000 communities across Australia. The report used the term "childcare desert" to describe a populated area where there are more than three children per childcare place, or less an 0.33 places per child under four.

Based on that definition, the entire Northern Tablelands is not just a desert; it is absolutely barren, with not a skerrick of day care vegetation in site and absolutely zero prospect at the moment of any day care green shoots springing up any time soon. The figures are disastrous for our region. Since this report was released, they have only gotten worse. Armidale, unsurprisingly, has the best access at 0.3785 childcare places per child. But that means that, for every child who has a place in day care, more than three others are waiting to get in. For every one child that is in, there are more than three who are waiting—and some of them will never get a place. It gets progressively worse from there. Moree is 0.36, Inverell is 0.29, Uralla is 0.11 and Glen Innes is 0.16. The Gwydir shire, encompassing the Bingara and Wyallda communities among others, is the worst in Australia; it is zero. There are actually no places—none—in that shire at all. It is an absolute disgrace that a shire of more than 5,000 people has no services at all, no positions. That is a trend we see more and more in the regions.

This hit home with me recently when one of my staff was affected. In fact, she had to resign because there was no possibility to get her youngsters into child care at all. The shortage, combined with the Commonwealth Child Care Subsidy, which supports the cost of long day care, is a disincentive for mothers who want to work more than part time. The rate at which child care is subsidised is based on a household's income and the type of care assessed. Overregulation has also played a key role in many providers in regional and rural areas disappearing. We have seen a 40 per cent reduction in the number of childcare providers. We have regulation reducing the number of providers, and then the subsidies and the way the Commonwealth Government structures them providing a huge disincentive for people to enter the industry and for people trying to access the system.

The model of child care is messy and, instead of working on ways to fix it, successive Federal governments have literally spat the dummy and walked away from the problem. If it is not going to look at it more closely, the Federal Government should simply get out of the way and hand that responsibility and the funding to the States. Why should State and Territory governments not control a child's learning from ABC right through to the HSC? That would be much simpler, much easier to regulate and much easier to fund. Unless we fix long day care, we will not be able to attract people to our regions, and our regions will suffer. We need those services in place. The Federal Government needs to step up to the mark or bugger off, get out of the way and allow the States to run it and fix it.

STATE BUDGET AND HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (20:38): I speak in response to the Minns Labor Government's first budget announced yesterday and reflect on its impact on Hawkesbury. It was with some relief that I noted the Pitt Town Bypass received some funding. But my relief turned to frustration when I learnt that only \$12 million has been set aside for this project. The former Liberal-Nationals Government had allocated \$100 million to complete the project. The route has already been determined, all property has been acquired and the next step is to appoint a contractor to complete the job. What happens when the project is massively underfunded and the Pitt Town Bypass has a shortfall of \$88 million? That is what I am left to ponder. If this Government thinks it can deliver the Pitt Town Bypass for \$12 million, it is sadly mistaken.

It would be cruel for the Minns Labor Government to give the Hawkesbury community false hope if it is not going to provide enough funding to get the job done. I want assurance that this Government is fair dinkum about completing this infrastructure. I will be asking the Minister for Roads when we can expect the contract to be awarded and allocated. This is a missing link for Hawkesbury that residents and businesses in the neighbourhood have been waiting for since the 1950s. I am reminded of local resident Joe who has been pleading to have the bypass built to relieve the 5.30 a.m. compression braking noises from truck-and-dog combinations that can weigh in excess of 60 tonnes when fully loaded.

In his budget speech to this House the Treasurer should have been honest in admitting that the \$100 million he announced for an upgrade to Bells Line of Road between the Blue Mountains and Richmond is not coming from the State budget. That funding was already announced on 18 January 2023 by the Federal Government for

safety upgrades like overtaking lanes and road widening. I was at the announcement; I remember that day very well. There is no additional funding by the Minns Labor Government for any upgrades to the Bells Line of Road, and to take credit for that is completely deceptive.

In its last term of government the Liberal-Nationals announced \$5 billion worth of funding through the WestInvest grants program. The funding was directed to 15 Western Sydney councils for the purpose of providing major community assets. I particularly mention the WestInvest funding that Hawkesbury City Council received, which was almost \$17 million for four projects, including an upgrade to Woodbury Reserve and Fernadell Park and wayfinding signage to bolster tourism. Hawkesbury City Council and The Hills Shire Council received substantial funding for other major infrastructure projects too that they would never have been able to fund themselves, like \$30.3 million for the Richmond Swimming Centre upgrade, \$6.7 million for improvements to the Oasis Aquatic and Leisure Centre in South Windsor, \$23.9 million for upgrades to the North Richmond Community Precinct, \$9.8 million for the redevelopment of Tamplin Field and \$4.7 million to deliver a new cycleway bridge over Rickabys Creek in Windsor.

Autism Spectrum Australia, or Aspect, received funding of \$5 million to build a new autism-specific primary school in Box Hill. How good would that have been? Those projects create local jobs, enhance council and community assets, and make way for a real sense of pride in a project that residents can utilise and enjoy. My fear is that none of the projects will see the light of day. I cannot see them in the budget. Correct me if I am wrong, but Labor has not spruiked them. Prior to the March 2023 State election, Premier Minns gave his word that he would honour the WestInvest funding stream. Where are the WestInvest projects? I hope I am wrong, but the reality is that pay increases for union buddies have come at a cost to families struggling with cost-of-living pressures. Sadly, Active Kids vouchers, Creative Kids vouchers and First Lap vouchers are gone. This budget spruiks toll relief at a cost of \$500 million. This budget is clearly out of touch with reality.

I am a girl from Western Sydney and I could never afford to take a toll road in my early days. I did not earn enough money to afford that luxury. Like thousands of other drivers, I had to leave home half an hour earlier to make up for the extra travel time. I just accepted that. I was a girl from the Western Sydney suburbs and I could not afford them; it was way above my pay grade. It is no different today. So many people cannot afford to take a toll road, like apprentices, students, families on one income, self-funded retirees and pensioners. This is a wake-up call to the Minns Labor Government which clearly thinks it knows it all. I recommend they doorknock some of those folk who will not benefit from toll relief or pay rises but still have to put food on the table, pay the rent, educate their children and just survive every single day.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (20:43): I am quite bewildered by the suggestion that the Minns Labor Government is not listening to the people of Western Sydney about toll roads and the effect they have on the cost of living. The reason we have put in place a toll cap of \$60 a week is because the Liberal-Nationals Government put a toll on Western Sydney by privatising the road. That toll will be there until 2060 and will increase by either 4 per cent a year or the rate of inflation, whichever is higher. That means it will cost people a fortune to get anywhere on toll roads until 2060. That is because of decisions made by the former Government that the member for Hawkesbury was part of. I hope the member for Hawkesbury was opposing those decisions behind the scenes. If she has experienced what it is like to have to leave half an hour earlier because she could not afford to use a toll road, which is a very common experience, then she knows perfectly well how awful it is to make people pay tolls long after a road is paid off—until 2060—and probably long after anybody in this Chamber is still alive. That is insane and wrong. It is good that the Government is capping the tolls.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 20:44 until
Thursday 21 September 2023 at 10:00.**

Written Community Recognition Statements

According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.

THE REFURBISHMENT OF THE OLD PICTON POST OFFICE

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—The refurbishment of the Old Picton Post Office, a cornerstone of our local heritage, marks an innovative leap into the future. Officially opened by Mayor Matt Gould, the building, now a coworking space, has been lovingly restored following flood damage. Supported by both the Australian and NSW Governments, this project not only preserves a historical landmark but also propels our community forward. Upgrades include complete renovation, accessibility enhancements, and a smart access door system. Originally constructed in the late 19th century, the Old Picton Post Office now stands ready to serve in this next phase of its life. The decision to repurpose it aligns with our strategic priorities, aiming to stimulate economic growth, create new jobs, and retain local talent. I extend heartfelt thanks to all involved, and I'm thrilled to witness

the interest already expressed in this revitalized space. Our community is grateful for this incredible transformation.

THE ANNUAL DILLY DOGGY DAY OUT

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—The annual Dilly Doggy Day Out at Picton Sportsground was a delightful gathering for the community and their four-legged friends. Originating in 2018 and returning face-to-face last year, the event saw between 1,500 and 2,000 people enjoying activities like dog yoga led by Raewyn Fernandez, entertainment by Dr. Katrina and the Wonderdogs, and educational sessions on leash-pulling and greyhounds. Dr. Katrina announced prizes for categories like best trick and best lookalike. The day also featured market stalls, free microchipping, face painting, prizes, giveaways, and interactions with dogs up for adoption. All proceeds from ticket sales were graciously donated to the Wollondilly Shire Council Animal Shelter and Goodwill Rescue. Sponsors Bridget's Pet Services and Kylie's K9 Country Retreat were instrumental in making this event possible. I commend everyone involved in organising this enjoyable day for the people and pets of Wollondilly. The continued success of the Dilly Doggy Day Out underscores the importance of community, companionship, and animal welfare in our region.

LAYNE STORRIER 36 HALF-IRONMANS IN 36 CONSECUTIVE DAYS FOR CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—Menangle's Layne Storrer has embarked on a remarkable feat to undertake 36 half-ironmans in 36 consecutive days, aiming to raise funds and awareness for Cystic Fibrosis Australia. This challenge, dubbed Breaking Barriers for Cystic Fibrosis, began on September 1 and will take place in Brisbane. Layne, known as "Layneo Insaneo," has a deeply personal connection to CF through his friend Bradley Dryburgh and is committed to shattering misconceptions about this genetic disorder that affects over 3,600 Australians. Layne's challenge will encompass 68.4 kilometres of swimming, 3,240km of cycling, and 759.6km of running. The endeavor showcases Layne's extraordinary determination, with his mother Allana Storrer stating he is '100 per cent' a go-getter, putting '110 per cent effort' into his goals. Layne's goal is to raise \$100,000, with donations going to life-changing research, improved clinical practice, and the ongoing search for a cure. I commend Layne's remarkable dedication and encourage our community to support this worthy cause by donating at the Cystic Fibrosis Australia website. Layne's efforts not only contribute to CF awareness but inspire us all to push our limits for a greater good.

CASTLE HILL ART SOCIETY AWARDS

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—The Castle Hill Art Society recently held the Annual Art Show and Awards. The Art show is part of the Hills Shire Council Annual Orange Blossom Festival. I attended and viewed the fantastic art on display. I spoke with artists Ellen MacMahon and Bill Bramley. Ellen's watercolour titled; "Look Mum" took out first place in the Watercolour section. Well done to all the 2023 winners. The winners in each category were: Best in Show: Jayne Bowman, "Legend"; Contemporary: Belinda Baynes, "Pink Lemonade Days Again"; Oil Painting: Patrick Ao, "Portrait of Teddy"; Acrylic Painting: Yolanda Seach, "Flying Goddess"; Watercolour: Ellen MacMahon, "Look Mum!"; Pastel and Works on Paper: Colina Grant, "Early Morning Adelong"; and Small Paintings: Nel Davis, "Home". I recognise and thank Birgitta Horst, Jill Bluzmanis and the Castle Hill Art Society for organising another fantastic art show this year.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE, GET READY WEEKEND

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—The NSW Rural Fire Service hosted various events and activities on 16 to 17 September, called 'Get Ready Weekend'. The events provided an opportunity for the community to engage with local Rural Fire Brigades to learn about bush fire risks and plan for the coming bush fire season. In the Castle Hill Electorate, the community is fortunate to have Annangrove, Kenthurst, Glenhaven, Round Corner, The Hills Headquarters, The Hills Catering and The Hills Communications Brigades as well as The Hills Fire Control Centre at Kenthurst. The 'Get Ready' message is important in all areas but is particularly important in bushland areas. Councillor Mitchell Blue, who is the Deputy Mayor of the Hills Shire Council, Chair of The Hills Bushfire Management Committee as well as being a volunteer firefighter presented 'Bushfire Preparedness' to the community at a recent progress association meeting. I visited the Glenhaven Rural Fire Station over the weekend. I commend and praise the tireless efforts of RFS Volunteers for their efforts in keeping our community safe. We need to listen to RFS Volunteers and 'get ready' for the bushfire season. Thank you to our RFS Volunteers.

BONSAI SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC, ANNUAL ORANGE BLOSSOM FESTIVAL DISPLAY

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—The Hills Shire Council Orange Blossom each year includes a large display of exotic and Australian native bonsai trees. Bonsai is the Japanese and East Asian art of growing and training miniature trees in containers. The display is provided by The Bonsai Society of Australia Inc. The Bonsai Society of Australia was Founded in August 1965 by Dorothy and Vita Koreshoff. The society has aims to promote knowledge of and an interest of bonsai and to serve as a national focal point for bonsai fanciers. I attended the

annual display this year and it was great to see so many well-manicured bonsai trees. The display each year is visited by a large contingent of the Hills community. I take time to congratulate the Bonsai Society of Australia Inc for another great display. I recognise and thank the Bonsai Society of Australia Inc President and committee members: Georgina Kretschmar, Ian White, Brian Lawrie, Amanda Beilby, and Adrian Wells. Thank you for the display.

OLD BAR PUBLIC SCHOOL VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I rise today to recognise Old Bar Public School for their commemoration of Vietnam Veterans Day. Veterans and students marched from the surf club to the primary school, where a service was then held. Many special guests shared their stories and memories of the Vietnam War, ensuring that its significance endures. The service concluded with the unveiling of the school's new Vietnam War monument, a symbol of respect and remembrance. Master Chief Jeff Maki from the US Embassy partnered with Old Bar Public School principal, Deb Scanes, to unveil the monument dedicated to the members of the RANHFV and the US Army personnel who served on the US Army's 135th Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam. Thank you, Deb and Old Bar Public School, for your commitment to acknowledging the sacrifices of those who served in the often-forgotten war. Your dedication to preserving the memory of these heroes is truly commendable.

JEANETTE HOLLAND OAM

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I rise today to honour an exceptional community member, Jeanette Holland OAM, who recently celebrated 50 years of service to Taree Quota Club. Jeanette's Quota Club journey began in 1973 when she was invited by two well-dressed ladies, she met at the motel she owned. Since then, Jeanette's leadership within Quota has been remarkable, serving as president, vice president, and leading numerous committees. Her influence extended globally, attending conventions, and contributing to international committees. Jeanette's impact on our local landscape is immeasurable. She championed the All Faiths Chapel at Manning Base Hospital, the Quota's quiet room at Taree library, and hearing loops for the MEC and Ormsby House. She's touched lives through the Manning Counselling Service and the annual elderly ladies' Christmas party. Beyond accolades like the Centenary Medal and Order of Australia Medal, Jeanette's legacy is a community united in care and compassion. Thank you, Jeanette Holland, for your profound impact and contributions to our community.

FORSTER TUNCURRY ATHLETICS CLUB - ZARA RAHMAN AND HUDSON KEEGAN

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I rise to acknowledge the achievements of two outstanding young athletes from the Forster Tuncurry Athletics Club - Zara Rahman and Hudson Keegan, at the NSW Little Athletics Primary Schools Carnival. Zara Rahman, the club's throwing champion, competed in the under-10s female shot put and discus events. Her 21.45-meter discus throw not only earned her a silver medal but also broke a long-standing club record. Zara's fifth-place finish in shot put was equally commendable, given the limited access to a discus circle for training. Hudson Keegan, one of the club's smallest competitors in the under-seven age group, secured a bronze medal in the 100 meters sprint and blazed to victory in the 200-meter event. His achievements in predominantly Sydney-based competitions demonstrate the potential of country athletes. Zara and Hudson, congratulations on your accomplishments, I eagerly anticipate your future endeavours. You remind us that with determination, we can excel, regardless of size or limitations.

ELIZABETH MACARTHUR HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAINS

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—I would like to acknowledge the work of the incredibly hardworking Elizabeth Macarthur High School, school captains from this year, Sanjana Seejith and Cameron Eddie as well as vice-captains Zaine Parker and Jack Nagel. As your term as School Captains comes to an end, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your exemplary leadership and dedication to the Elizabeth Macarthur High School community. Your commitment to serving as a role model and advocate for our students has had made an impact on the whole school community. These students were elected last year to the student leadership team and have all done a terrific job. Being a school captain is a significant achievement and one to not shy away from. Being tasked with the significant extra responsibility of being a part of the student leadership team is a monumental challenge, one that requires a lot of extra time and effort put in. The greater Elizabeth Macarthur High School community is incredibly grateful to Sanjana, Cameron, Zaine and Jack. Again, thank you for your service and congratulations for your time as student leaders.

CAMDEN HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAINS

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—I would like to acknowledge the work of the incredibly hardworking Camden High School, school captains from this year, Samuel Lawrence, James Held, Caitlyn Jones and Angelina Kolevris. As your term as School Captains comes to an end, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your exemplary leadership and dedication to the Camden High School community. Your

commitment to serving as a role model and advocate for our students has had made an impact on the whole school community. These students were elected last year to the student leadership team and have all done a terrific job. Being a school captain is a significant achievement and one to not shy away from. Being tasked with the significant extra responsibility of being a part of the student leadership team is a monumental challenge, one that requires a lot of extra time and effort put in. The greater Camden High School community is incredibly grateful to Samuel, James, Caitlyn and Angelina. Again, thank you for your service and congratulations for your time as student leaders.

ELDERSLIE HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAINS

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—I would like to acknowledge the work of the incredibly hardworking Elderslie High School, school captains from this year, Mia and Jeremiah as well as vice-captains James, Claire, Connor, Kiara, Jackson and Anna. As your term as School Captains come to an end, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your exemplary leadership and dedication to the Elderslie High School community. Your commitment to serving as a role model and advocate for our students has had made an impact on the whole school community. These students were elected last year to the student leadership team and have all done a terrific job. Being a school captain is a significant achievement and one to not shy away from. Being tasked with the significant extra responsibility of being a part of the student leadership team is a monumental challenge, one that requires a lot of extra time and effort put in. The greater Elderslie High School community is incredibly grateful to Mia, Jeremiah, James, Claire, Connor, Kiara, Jackson and Anna. Again, thank you for your service and congratulations for your time as student leaders.

STORY DOGS

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to acknowledge the wonderful work of coordinator Kathy Lark from Clarence Valley Story Dogs. Story Dogs was founded in Australia in 2009 and it has now spread across the nation. Kathy started the program locally in 2020. A program that captures the minds and imaginations of primary school children across the Clarence Valley is also providing them with one of life's most valuable skills – the ability to read. Story Dogs works alongside children at Coutts Crossing Public School, Gillwinga Public School, St Joseph's Primary School South Grafton, Yamba Public School, St James Primary School Yamba, Pacific Valley Christian School, Harwood Public School, and both Lawrence Public School and St Joseph's Public School Maclean will soon be starting the program. The schools select the children that they would like help for, and the children read to the dog one-on-one for 20 minutes, without any peer pressure or judgement and its fun for them, kids can relax around the dog. Thank you to Kathy and to all of the volunteers and their dogs who are making such a difference to these children's lives.

CROWN HOTEL AHA AWARD

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I would like to congratulate Damien Duggan, the head chef at the Crown Hotel in Grafton. The Crown is famous for its food, and that is because of the Hotel's hard-working staff, including Mr. Duggan. Damien has been selected as a finalist for the prestigious AHA NSW Chef of the Year award which is a remarkable achievement and a testament to Damien's exceptional culinary skills and dedication to food. Being chosen as a finalist for the AHA NSW Chef of the Year award is a well-deserved recognition of Damien's talent and hard work. The award is highly regarded across the industry and recognizes the best chefs in New South Wales. It is a competitive category with many talented individuals vying for the top spot. Damien's inclusion as a finalist is a testament to his exceptional skills and the high standards he sets and consistently delivers. I would like to extend my congratulations to Damien, the management, and all the staff at the Crown Hotel for this incredible achievement, good luck.

GRAFTON PRIMARY INDUSTRIES INSTITUTE

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I recently attended the open day at Grafton Primary Industries Institute celebrating more than 120 years of agricultural research at the local facility. More than 1000 visitors attended the free community open day, embracing the opportunity to learn about advances in beef cattle production, animal genetics, and improved crop resilience. Industry experts happily answered questions as guests were taken on guided tours of the fisheries and weed biocontrol departments. Guests also spent time browsing a variety of primary industries information stalls and historical displays while familiarising themselves with the innovative work and countless contributions made by the Grafton Primary Industries Institute throughout its long and proud history. A real treat on the day was to watch Ryley Bennett in action as he delighted the crowd with his spectacular whip cracking skills. A working dog demonstration was also a highlight. All who attended were extremely complimentary of the Grafton Primary Industries Institute for hosting the event, with many confirming it was an informative and entertaining afternoon. I would like to congratulate the team at Grafton Primary Industries Institute, Tom Granlese, Institute Director, Dave Bennett, Farm Manager and Christie Phelps, office administrator on such a successful event.

ALI BOHN - BARHAM

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today, I would like to recognise and commend Ali Bohn for her unwavering dedication to dementia fundraising and awareness for those living with the disease. On the 17th of September, Ali and a dedicated group will collectively walk 500 miles in a day, aiming to generate vital funds and raise awareness for this disease that affects our community deeply. Inspired by the song "500 Miles," Ali turned a simple idea into a powerful advocacy tool, uniting our community in this noble cause. They will begin their journey at Riverside Caravan Park in Barham, symbolizing our community's unity and determination to make a difference for those living with dementia. I extend my heartfelt best wishes to Ali and her team, and I hope that they achieve their 500-mile goal in a day. Their commitment reflects our community's compassion and unity. May Ali's inspiring efforts continue as a beacon of hope, motivating us all to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those battling dementia.

REG FELL - HAY

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Reg Fell of Hay for his efforts in raising money for Hay Can Assist. Known around town as the Can Man, Reg has worked tirelessly to collect cans and bottles and take them to convert into cash donations. Since 2016, Reg has been donating these cash donations to Hay Can Assist. His selfless work has raised an amazing \$88,990 for the branch. Reg's efforts have helped local cancer sufferers receive the treatment and care they need without the worry of financial difficulty. Reg's extraordinary work was recognised and honoured in August at the NSW Volunteer Awards in Wagga. Reg was nominated by the Hay Can Assist branch for raising and donating the funds. Reg is a great asset to the Hay community and his hard work is greatly appreciated. It is my pleasure to honour and congratulate Reg today.

DARBY INGRAM-RAULINI

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I would like to acknowledge Darby Ingram-Raulini, a Wiradjuri and Pacific Islander storyteller. Darby has recently been awarded the 2023 Rooms of Requirement and Western Riverina Arts residency, to produce and promote a podcast called 'Future Ancestors', bringing Wiradjuri histories into the digital age, combining the art of yarning with 21st century technology. Darby hopes that the recorded assets she develops will be a cultural legacy of knowledge and history for future generations. She is hoping to capture a wide range of Wiradjuri voices from all corners of the land. She is in her third year of a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Sociology. Darby started a blog to process her experiences in Griffith, starting an online business to finance it, and with the intention of sharing Wiradjuri language and reminding people to live with care. The blog led to her being offered a position as a cadet journalist with the National indigenous Times. Darby is a remarkable young woman, making a difference in her community.

ABOUT PLUMBING TIME SYDNEY

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I rise to celebrate and acknowledge the commendable achievements of 'About Plumbing Time Sydney'. This family-owned gem, based in Oran Park has recently been distinguished as a finalist for the esteemed 2023 Camden Local Business Awards in the Services and Trade category. 'About Plumbing Time Sydney' exemplifies the values of hard work, dedication and a genuine commitment to serving the community. Their success is not only a testament to their professional expertise but also to the personal touch and passion that only a family-owned business can offer. Achieving such recognition in a competitive field underscores their consistent efforts to excel and set industry standards. As a representative of this community, it fills me with immense pride to see our local businesses, like 'About Plumbing Time Sydney', being celebrated for their outstanding contributions. I extend my warm congratulations to the entire team and family behind 'About Plumbing Time Sydney'. May this recognition be one of many milestones in their journey of continued success and service to our community.

SAM GRANT

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I rise to salute the prodigious talent of Glenmore Park local, Mr. Sam Grant. This cricketing season, Sam's outstanding prowess on the cricket pitch was rightly recognised, and he was crowned the 2022/23 Penrith Cricket Club Men's Player of the Year. An exceptional all-rounder, Sam has consistently showcased versatility and dedication, delivering sterling results for his team both with the bat and ball. Such an accolade is not simply a testament to his skills but also embodies countless hours of practice, commitment, and an unwavering passion for the game. Being acknowledged by one's peers is one of the highest forms of recognition, and to earn this honour speaks volumes about Sam's character, sportsmanship, and his standout performance throughout the season. It's heartening to see local talents like Sam rise to prominence and serve as an inspiration to budding cricketers and sports enthusiasts in our community. I extend my warmest

congratulations to Sam Grant for this well-deserved recognition. May he continue to shine brightly on the field and achieve even greater heights in the seasons to come.

WYONG RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB 50TH ANNIVERSARY

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)—This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Wyong Rugby League Club located in Kanwal. From the club's humble beginnings it took several years to build and consolidate its position in popularity, becoming part of the Wyong Leagues Group who now successfully have ten clubs in regional NSW, with seven located on the Central Coast and employ over 300 people in NSW. The club provides extensive financial support to local sports teams, charities and in addition the Wyong Roos Foundation gives financial support to local charities, focusing on those at risk or facing hardship within the community. Members of the club remained loyal feeling a strong sense of ownership, so the club focused on embracing the positive aspects whilst enhancing the member experience. The club highly pay tribute to the late great Morry Breen, which the main playing field was named after. Regarded by many as the Father of our Club, Morry was a footballer, coach, worker's advocate, social activist, and a committed environmentalist. The invaluable role he played in the establishment of the Club makes it fair to say that if it were not for Morry, this celebration may not be happening.

CENTRAL COAST AERO CLUB

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)—The Central Coast Aero Club is celebrating their 50th anniversary on 21 October hosting a special dinner with General Manager Andrew Smith, club members and aviators at their base Warnervale Airport. The non-profit organisation existed to foster aviation in the community and currently includes a fully-fledged CASA approved Flying School supplementing the existing not-for-profit Club endeavours. Over the years, the club has trained countless Pilots and Engineers, supplying Australia's Airlines, Aeromedical, Charter and Flight Training industries with highly trained professionals. Also experience the Central Coast from up above from the beaches to the hinterland and the lakes and suburbs in between, you'll see the beauty of the region on one of their unique joy flights open to locals and tourist or aboard the aerobatic Citabria plane and experience thrilling loops and rolls in the skies. The organisation hosts numerous events every year for the benefit of the Central Coast community, which has led the organisation to win the prestigious Aero Club of the year award by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority in their annual Wings awards. Congratulations to Central Coast Aero Club for reaching this milestone, this will be a year to recognise amazing accomplishments.

GRAPEVINE COMMUNITY NEWS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

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)—The local Grapevine Community News publication is celebrating 20 years of informing and updating the community with local news across the Central Coast region. The first edition of the Grapevine, known back then as the Rural Grapevine was a basic publication with 12 pages printed in black and white. It was a publication that was not intended to become popular across the rural community, though the second issue of the Rural Grapevine was published with a glossy colour cover which had people commenting "has gone upmarket". Over the years important local topics raised in the publication included Dooralong and Yarramalong Valleys had Sydney Gas and later a South Korean coal mining company arrive to negatively impact the area. The Grapevine was there for the community and to champion their fight for the region. In 2020 the Rural and Village Grapevine publication finally shared a common name, The Grapevine Community News. Soon after in 2021 the Grapevine became digital, launching their online editions each Wednesday keeping the Central Coast up to date. Congratulations to the publisher and author Alan Hayes for reaching this milestone reaching to the people of the community with cutting edge journalism.

TORONTO AND DISTRICTS GARDEN CLUB

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—Lake Macquarie is home to some of the most prized gardens and enthusiastic green thumbs in New South Wales. I recently had the pleasure of joining members of the Toronto and Districts Garden Club when they hosted the 29th annual Garden Club of Australia's convention at Speers Point. Club members under the guidance of President Jennifer Rosewood, Vice President Judith Steele and Secretary Ann Watkins spent months planning and fundraising for this illustrious event, which attracted hundreds of gardening enthusiasts from across Australia. The event marked the start of Lake Macquarie's Living Smart Festival and saw Garden Club of Australia members spend six days exploring a myriad of exceptional gardens across the local area. Over the past 15 years the Toronto and Districts Garden Club has achieved wonderful things. Of course, it offers members the opportunity to access a wealth of cumulative horticultural knowledge, but also

provides a space for likeminded people to meet and form friendships. In fact, the club's motto is "Friendships through Gardens". Congratulations to all the Toronto and Districts Garden Club members involved in hosting this year's convention, it was an exceptional event.

ROISIN KENNEDY

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie)—Obtaining a Queen Scout Award is no easy feat, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic made achieving this accolade even more difficult. I would like to congratulate 18-year-old Roisin Kennedy from 1st Byattunga Scout Group Morisset, who recently gained this prestigious award in the most trying of circumstances. Roisin started working towards her Queen Scout Award three years ago, but contending with numerous lock-downs across New South Wales and inclement weather conditions delayed her ability to finish some of the necessary outdoor group activities. One such example was the Adventurous Journey which had to be put on hold for several months due to severe storms and the subsequent flooding of trails. She also had to complete the Venturer Scout Leadership Course, Initiative Course and was required to lead group activities such as cross-country skiing, knitting Trauma Teddies for the Red Cross and she also participated in Prospero Players The Crucible performance. Congratulations Roisin, on achieving this very well deserved award.

DAPTO PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Dapto Public School, for receiving the Secretary's Award for School Achievement at the Minister's and Secretary's Awards for Excellence which were announced on 5 September 2023. Dapto Public School received the Secretary's Award for School Achievement for its Sustained Improvement in Writing program to improve student outcomes in writing. Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning, Prue Car MP, said she was delighted to highlight the incredible achievements of the public system's outstanding students and teachers. "These awards are a great opportunity to call out the fabulous educators, who every day are making a difference in the lives of children, and the inspiring students demonstrating academic, cultural, sporting and leadership excellence." Minister Car said. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Dapto Public School on this outstanding achievement.

DANNI-ELLE WALL

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Danni-Elle Wall, from Shellharbour Public School, for receiving the Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching at the Minister's and Secretary's Awards for Excellence which were announced on 5 September 2023. Danni-Elle's innovative teaching methods, combined with her genuine care for her students' growth, commitment to Aboriginal education and dedication to fostering a love of learning through the library make her an exceptional educator. Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning, Prue Car MP, said she was delighted to highlight the incredible achievements of the public system's outstanding students and teachers. "These awards are a great opportunity to call out the fabulous educators, who every day are making a difference in the lives of children, and the inspiring students demonstrating academic, cultural, sporting and leadership excellence." Minister Car said. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Danni-Elle and wish her well in her teaching endeavours.

VERONICA LUCKMAN

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Veronica Luckman, from Warilla High School, for receiving the Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching at the Minister's and Secretary's Awards for Excellence which were announced on 5 September 2023. Veronica received this award as she is a highly skilled visual arts teacher who is genuinely committed to ensuring all students access opportunities for learning growth and achievement as well as the continual improvement of her own practice. Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning, Prue Car MP, said she was delighted to highlight the incredible achievements of the public system's outstanding students and teachers. "These awards are a great opportunity to call out the fabulous educators, who every day are making a difference in the lives of children, and the inspiring students demonstrating academic, cultural, sporting and leadership excellence." Minister Car said. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Veronica on this outstanding achievement.

ASHFIELD PIRATES FC

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—I was honoured to recently attend the Presentation Day celebrations for Ashfield Pirates Football Club. In only their eighth year as a club they brought home three premierships and are now home to over five hundred registered players. This year's results reflect the health and strength of this growing club that proudly serves the community of Ashfield. Off the back of the recent trail blazing success of the Matilda's it is great to hear that translating to increased participation in grass roots

football, with the number of girls signing up for the Club increasing significantly. I was so pleased that the great work that the club is doing for the community has been acknowledged by Football Canterbury, awarding the Club the 2022 Volunteer Recognition Award, the "Bert Harvey Fair Play Award". This kind of success and growth is only possible as the result of hard work from many people and I want to acknowledge the work of co-founder and club President Jean Kouriel, the Club Executive Committee, volunteers, members, and parents. I was inspired by the energy in the Club and am thrilled to see soccer go from strength to strength in Ashfield. Congratulations Ashfield Pirates FC!

DISABILITY PRIDE FEST 2023

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—I warmly congratulate the organisers of Disability Pride Fest held on Sunday 17 September at Ashfield Civic Centre. Disability Pride Fest is part of a global movement aiming to see disability as an ordinary part of human diversity. The group are fighting for the right of respect and inclusion, valuing achievement without the need to do so 'despite their disabilities' and reclaiming disability identity. The work of this fantastic volunteer group is so important in addressing the impact of ableism on the disabled community, sharing powerful, positive messages like 'Do not be ashamed of who you are' and 'Disability Pride is a way of thinking'. The inaugural Disability Pride Fest was held in 2021 and since then has only gone from strength to strength. At this year's event attendees enjoyed craft activities and competition, petitions, performances, a panel discussion and more. I congratulate the organisers of this important event, as well as the volunteers and attendees who made the day such a success. I also acknowledge all people with disability in our community and thank you for the invaluable contribution you make to the Inner West.

BOB AND PETE'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)—I was pleased to recently join the founders and current and past team members of Bob and Pete's to celebrate their 40th birthday! Mr Bob Yates and Mr Peter Dawson established their business in 1983 when they couldn't find Parisian level fresh croissants in Sydney so decided to make their own. Starting off delivering fresh butter croissants and pastries to a handful of Sydney corner stores on Sunday mornings the former band managers have built their product offering to now include over five hundred items. They have built a strong reputation based on quality, reliability and convenience and are now one of the leading suppliers to cafes, restaurants, caterers, and retailers across NSW. Bob and Pete's are also setting a great example of being environmentally conscious, using only recyclable cardboard boxes in deliveries since 1983. They are working towards their target of having no single use plastic or Styrofoam used in operations by 2025. They have also set a new standard for the Inner West with their fantastic sky writing message to celebrate their birthday. Congratulations Bob and Pete's and happy 40th birthday!

MARK LOGAN

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—For as long as time, newspapers have been a trusted source of information for locals to keep up to date with the 'goings on' of their region. Mark Logan has been the author of that source of information for Blayney residents for many years and has recently penned his final edition of the paper before retiring to a more leisurely life. A career that spans over three decades began in the dark room of Deniliquin's Pastoral Times and progressed to the Central Western Daily and Blayney Chronicle. In his time Mark has reported on countless community events, asked the tough questions on contentious issues dividing locals and written timely updates in times of natural disaster to keep the community informed. His words and journalism will be sorely missed by the readers of the Blayney Chronicle. The community thanks him for his passion and dedication to the media industry. Mark will now have more time to visit family across NSW and Victoria, enjoy his hobbies and take care of his Bed and Breakfast business.

PERCY RAVENEAU

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—There is no one quite like Percy Raveneau. He is a stalwart member of the Bathurst community and well known around the region for his personality and generosity. Percy is a proud Kamilaroi man and has a clear passion for the welfare of Indigenous community members. As Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer for Chifley Police District he is breaking down barriers, building connections between members of the community and creating positive outcomes for all. Known for his volunteer work at Bathurst PCYC, Percy was recognised for his contributions by winning Citizen of the Month in 2022. Recently Percy organised a NAIDOC Week march walking up the main street of the city to celebrate Bathurst's Indigenous heritage. He was joined by school students, community groups and locals at this growing event. In his own time, Percy loves his sports and spending time with family. Thank you Percy for your dedication to the community you live in, you are bringing out the best in us.

BRENDA LYON

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)—There is a gem amongst the locals in Oberon who has dedicated much of her life for the betterment of the community. Brenda Lyon has served as a Councillor on Oberon Council twice making her mark representing the community on matters that matter to them. She is also part of the Oberon Business and Tourism Association, Oberon U3A and Rotary to name a few organisations she has volunteered for. Brenda has also been a judge for the Oberon Young Woman Ambassador, part of the Oberon Show program and plays an integral role in welcoming new citizens to the region assisting with the process to become a citizen and attending ceremonies with gifts from her own garden. In her spare time, she is an avid gardener with her Brydie Park Garden covering three acres always looking schmick no matter what Oberon weather is thrown her way. Brenda has opened her garden in previous years to share her knowledge on bulbs, rhizomes and corms. There is so much more to this wonderful woman and plenty of behind the scenes work she has done for the community. For that, the Oberon community is grateful.

KEN KEITH OAM

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to acknowledge the contribution of long-time mayor Ken Keith OAM, who has decided to step down after 17 years at the helm of Parkes Shire Council. Mr Keith has been a stalwart of the Parkes council, this month marking 40 years as a councillor. Prior to serving as mayor, Cr Keith spent 17 years as deputy, working with friend and mentor the late Robert Wilson OAM. Cr Keith was elected to Parkes Shire Council in 1983, aged 28. He was engaged and wife Sue has been by his side through 12 council terms. The couple's three sons, James, Max and Douglas have also shared their father with his civic duties and I salute his family for their support. A man credited with creating council stability, Cr Keith worked with two general managers, the late Alan McCormack and Kent Boyd. True to his civic spirit, Cr Keith gave his colleagues prior notice of his intention not to stand at this month's mayoral election and expressed gratitude for their support. Cr Keith is planning to spend more time with his grandchildren and I wish him well and thank him for his service to the Parkes community.

YVONNE (TOOT) KEEGAN

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Mr Speaker, the words 'local legend' are thrown around a lot these days but in the case of Orange's Yvonne Keegan, they ring true. Mrs Keegan, or 'Toot' as she is affectionately known, is a stalwart of Orange's netball community and that was reflected this month (September) when a seating stand at Orange's PCYC was named in her honour. Typically, the only person surprised when the signage was unveiled was Toot herself. Always humble, she described the honour as 'ridiculous'. President, secretary and publicity officer, Toot has been Involved with Orange Netball Association for more than 65 years. As a player, she has been described as 'strong, fast and physical' but it's been her coaching that has endeared her to players, parents and administrators of the sport in Orange. Yes, she could make you cry but she would be the first person to throw her arms around you if that happened. Along with improving their skills, Toot has taught 100s of players resilience and the value of teamwork. Volunteers like Toot are the lifeblood of country sport and I congratulate her on the honour, and I congratulate The Orange Netball Association for bestowing it.

ESTELLA FERRI AND KERRY MADDEN

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—I wish to congratulate Orange's Estella Ferri and Kerry Madden on their outstanding achievement with Australia's teams contesting the dragon boat world championships in Thailand. Selected as captain of the Auroras senior A over 40s women, Ms Ferri guided the team to a haul of three gold medals at the world event. She also competed with distinction in the mixed divisions with three bronze medals. Ms Madden won gold and two bronze medals in her respective over 60s divisions. It's an amazing haul for relative newcomers to the sport, the pair picking up a paddle for the first time five years ago after seeing an ad in the local paper for the Colour City Dragon Boat Club's open day. At the time, neither considered themselves fit. From the moment they picked up a paddle and ventured onto the water at Orange's Lake Canobolas, Estella and Kerry have been hooked and they are now looking ahead to further state and national representation. Dragon boating is a sport on the rise in regional areas with an extremely supportive community, which encourages fitness and friendship. Well done to Estella Ferri and Kerry Madden and the dragon boat community.

KATIE SMITH FROM CHIFLEY COLLEGE DUNHEVED CAMPUS

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)—I would like to recognise Katie Smith, a dedicated teacher at Chifley College Dunheved Campus who received a Certificate of Recognition for her work and dedication to teaching students dance. Katie received this award as part of the Executive Director's Recognition Program for 2023. Katie has supported students in the Pulse Alive, Synergy and Chifley College showcases, while also contributing to the implementation of school house groups at Chifley

College Dunheved Campus. Thank you for your dedication to education and the support you provide to students who have a passion for dance at Chifley College. This is a well-deserved achievement, congratulations Katie!

FIVE RINGS JIU JITSU ACADEMY

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education)—Congratulations to the students at Five Rings Jiu Jitsu Academy, who competed at the Grappling Industries competition. These students have worked tirelessly to prepare for this competition, receiving amazing results at the event. All students competed in a range of events, using a variety of different techniques to perform their best. These young students faced some tough competition, however tried their hardest and made their trainers and community proud. I encourage all students to keep training and working hard to achieve your jiu jitsu goals. I look forward to hearing about your achievements at the next competition!

LEILA SOARES TARAN

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)—I wish to recognise Ms Leila Soares Taran, of my electorate, on her recent award at the 2023 Bishop of Parramatta, Awards for Student Excellence, presented to students who achieve well in their academic, sporting creative vocational or community endeavours. Leila, is a student at St Clare's Catholic High School. She is a valued member of St Claire's Student Leadership Team and volunteers her time to assist her peers. Leila is an exceptional student whose passion for learning has led to her recent recognition and award for student excellence. I congratulate Leila, on this much deserved award and wish her all the best for her future studies.

MATSURI JAPAN FESTIVAL

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—My electorate of Willoughby is proudly home to the largest Japanese community in NSW and on Saturday 9 September I was delighted to join the Japanese community in Chatswood for the annual Matsuri Japan Festival. Organised by the Japan Club of Sydney, the Festival showcases the rich culture of Japan on the streets of Chatswood with Japanese food stalls, traditional arts and crafts workshops, a vibrant kimono stall and stage performances. From traditional tea ceremonies, musical performances, and origami, to delicious culinary delights, it was wonderful to experience all that Japan has to offer. Visitors had the opportunity to learn more about Japanese culture at hands-on cultural workshops for calligraphy, origami paper folding, tea ceremony and flower arrangement. It was my pleasure to mingle with members of the Japanese-Australian community and I thank them for all they contribute to our city and State of NSW. I warmly commend the Japan Club of Sydney for organising and staging such a fantastic community event.

VIVIAN TABLE TENNIS ACADEMY

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—The Vivian Table Tennis Academy is a part of the rich sporting life to be found in the community of Willoughby. On Sunday 10 September, I was honoured to be invited to the Academy at the Willoughby Squash Centre and enjoy some fun games with the local students. Founded by Vivian Tan, a former Olympian who represented Australia at the 2012 Summer Olympics in table tennis, the Academy coaches children in table tennis and seeks to nurture their love of the game. Vivian's Table Tennis Academy prides itself on delivering Olympic standard coaching for children from 5 to 18 years old in the Willoughby and North Shore area. As well as providing weekly classes during school term, the Academy runs school holiday camps jam-packed with sport, recreation and activities to cater to the interests of every child. I commend Vivian for her vision and enterprise in founding this academy to pass on her love of table tennis to the next generation.

CHATSWOOD STAGS PRESENTATION

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—On Sunday 10 September I was proud to attend and participate in the Presentation Day of the Chatswood Junior Ruby Club at Beauchamp Park. On what was a stunning spring day, I was honoured to present awards to the players and club leaders who had done their Club so proud with their efforts for the season. Known fondly as the 'Stags', the Chatswood Junior Rugby Club is one of the oldest junior rugby union clubs in Sydney with a history dating back to 1947. The Stags were born out of the senior club, the Chatswood Rugby Club, with an even longer history from 1912. For over seventy-five years, the Junior Club has provided a recreational outlet for local boys and girls to enjoy and excel at the game of Rugby Union. Thank you to President Nick White and the whole Committee for this and every day you lead this wonderful local club. I congratulate all the Stags players, leaders, coaches, staff and parents for a great 2023 season.

NEWCASTLE CITY AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle)—Newcastle City Australian Football Club, more affectionately known as the Blues, bring joy and excitement to the local AFL fans and supporters each season and this year was no different. The Blues marked their 140-year anniversary with not just one but four grand final wins. Four of five

of the senior teams made it to their grand final, with the Black Diamond Men's Cup, Black Diamond Women's Cup, and Black Diamond Men's Plate teams coming out on top and the Black Diamond Shield side just falling short. Well done. In the junior competitions, the under 13s Girls, under 13s Mixed Swans, under 15s Girls, and under 15s Boys, all reached their grand final. A special congratulations is in order for the under 15 Boys who took home first place medals after an excellent season. Every player and every team has made such a good effort this season. Well done to you all and here's to another 140 years.

PAUL CARTER

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Paul Carter for his performance at the 2023 Australian Surf Life Saving Championships at Scarboro and Trig Island Surf Life Saving Clubs. The Aussies is an annual event where members from the country's 314 surf clubs unite to participate in almost 500 beach and ocean events that mimic surf lifesaving activities. Members of Redhead, Swansea-Belmont, Caves Beach and The Lakes Surf Life Saving Clubs made the trek over to Western Australia for this nine-day event, with their competitors taking part in the Juniors, Masters and Opens competitions. Paul from the Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club competed in the Masters Competition, taking out the silver medal in the 70-74 year Male single ski. Congratulations Paul on a fantastic performance, you are a credit to your club and community.

TULLY ELLIOTT

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter)—Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Tully Elliott for his performance at the 2023 Australian Surf Life Saving Championships at Scarboro and Trig Island Surf Life Saving Clubs. The Aussies is an annual event where members from the country's 314 surf clubs unite to participate in almost 500 beach and ocean events that mimic surf lifesaving activities. Members of Redhead, Swansea-Belmont, Caves Beach and The Lakes Surf Life Saving Clubs made the trek over to Western Australia for this nine-day event, with their competitors taking part in the Juniors, Masters and Opens competitions. Tully from the Redhead Surf Life Saving Club competed took out the gold medal in the under 17 Female Taplin team event and also claimed gold in the under 17 female board relay team event. Congratulations Tully on a fantastic performance, you are a credit to your club and community.

CENTRAL COAST CLUBS RECOGNISED AT SURF LIVE SAVING NSW AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—I am thrilled to recognise Surf Life Saving Central Coast, who have been awarded Branch of The Year 2022/2023 at the Surf Life Saving NSW Awards of Excellence. Surf Life Saving has been part of the Central Coast's DNA for seventy-seven years. With fifteen clubs with more than eight thousand active members, this heroic community organisation has marvellously rescued more than six hundred people and taken more than forty-two thousand preventative actions in the last season alone. Besides saving lives, Surf Life Saving Central Coast has been one of the most trustworthy organisations when it comes to educating the public about beach safety with programs such as Surf Fun Days, Beach Smart Talks, Surf Survival, and more. A further congratulations to Ocean Beach Surf Life Saving Club for their fabulous drowning prevention work, taking home the Innovation Award. A special thanks to program presenters, Peter and Louise Lambeth for their work educating our community. I applaud Surf Life Saving Central Coast's clubs, staff and members for your leadership and bravery.

UMINA BEACH MEN'S SHED MAKES NATIVE BEEHIVES

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—Tonight, with great pleasure, I want to acknowledge Umina Beach Men's Shed for their initiative: constructing native beehives. As the amazing people from this group call it "The Little Shed with A Big Heart", you can start to imagine what they can achieve with such beautiful ideology. This project tackles the destruction and loss of honeybees due to the varroa mite. Mr Vic Brown, Men's Shed secretary shared that there is a real concern regarding pollination levels across the agricultural areas. Many organisations are now looking to Australian native bees to pick up and deliver the pollination levels required. With fantastic skill and knowledge, this wonderful group of men are building hive boxes specially for native bees. Many of them have been dedicated to The Pearl Beach Arboretum, a 5.5-hectare native bushland that is open to the public. Thank you Umina Beach Men's Shed for your countless contributions to our community. I believe your Men's Shed will continue to grow and surprise us with your future projects.

LOUIS TILLY

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I congratulate Louis Tilly on being named Youth Sailor of the Year at the prestigious 2023 NSW/ACT Sailing Awards. Louis's remarkable achievements and dedication to sailing have undeniably earned him this well-deserved recognition. Over the past year, Louis Tilly has exhibited unparalleled talent, securing numerous first and second-place finishes at State, National, and International levels in the WASZP

class, while also representing the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club [RPAYC] in Match Racing. His passion for sailing extends beyond personal success, as he actively contributed to the growth of the WASZP class by initiating and instructing at "Try a WASZP" days at RPAYC. At SailGP Inspire in Sydney, Louis formed a team that won a media award for their efforts promoting sailing on social media. Louis's commitment to encouraging others to enjoy sailing is truly commendable. I commend the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club for its unwavering commitment to nurturing and supporting young sailors like Louis Tilly, and working to foster a vibrant local sailing community. Louis's achievements are a testament to the remarkable talent and potential that can be found within our community, and we look forward to witnessing his continued success.

GOTCHA4LIFE 24 HOUR ROW

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I am deeply honoured to recognize the incredible efforts and impact of the Gotcha4Life 24 Hour Row. This year, the event took place on September 9-10, with more than 65 teams participating, including 37 surf clubs from across Australia, in a remarkable display of community solidarity. 24 Hour Row founders, Mel and Nathan Wellings, exemplified unwavering dedication by overseeing the event at the Avalon Beach SLSC Clubhouse throughout the entire 24-hour period. I commend Nathan Wellings and Matt Mayall's who each rowed a remarkable 50km during the 24-hour period. I also acknowledge Todd and Zach, who manned the 2 am shift, rowing 13.5km and 40km, respectively. Gotcha4Life's overarching goal is to eliminate suicides, and they hope to achieve this by investing funds raised in mental fitness initiatives that cultivate connections, emotional resilience, and significant bonds within the communities they serve. The Row is an important reminder to have conversations about mental health and the positive impact of the event extends far beyond its duration. Thank you to all who participated this year.

AVALON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY – 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I am delighted to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Avalon Beach Historical Society, who recently celebrated their 40th anniversary. Reflecting on the Society's inception in 1983, it is truly tremendous to see how it has flourished over the past four decades. From those 18 dedicated locals who gathered in the Avalon Beach RSL Club to the present-day community of 135 passionate members, the society's journey has been one of unwavering commitment to preserving and sharing the rich history of Avalon Beach. The Society's affiliation with the Royal Australian Historical Society reflects its dedication to historical accuracy and preservation. Each year the club holds several wonderful events for the community including exhibitions, guest speakers, and photographic shows. I acknowledge the outstanding contributions of inaugural Life Member and Patron, John Stone, and thank all those who have served on the Society's committee over the decades. I have no doubt that the Avalon Beach Historical Society will continue to play a pivotal role in preserving our local history for many decades to come. I am pleased that recognition of such a wonderful institution is now preserved in the oldest parliament in our nation.

KAHIBAH VILLAGE FAIR

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—On Sunday 17 September, residents of Kahibah in the Charlestown Electorate—and visitors from around the area—celebrated the Kahibah Village Fair. The day was kicked off by a smoking ceremony performed by elder Uncle Leon. There were plenty of stalls, ranging from food to homemade jewellery to second-hand books. There were pony rides and a petting zoo, featuring some very cute little animals including chickens, goats and a potty calf. A magic show by magician Joel Howlett, life-size puppets by John Deacon, and heritage talks by local historians Ed Tonks and Terry Price were also included. Perhaps the centrepiece of the day was a beautiful performance by the Minimbah dancers from Hunter Sports High School, including a few younger performers. This year marked a special anniversary: the centenary of the Kahibah Post Office. It was my pleasure to present post office owner Scott Evans with an appreciation award on behalf of the Kahibah Village Alliance for his decade of service as an integral part of the Alliance and wider Kahibah community. It was lovely to see everyone and I look forward to the next fair.

RETIRED POLICE OFFICER LUNCHEON 2023

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—Our police officers do such important work keeping our community safe, and it is great to see their contributions recognised by the NSW Police Force even after their retirement. On Thursday 7 September, Acting Superintendent Lisa Jones, Commander of Lake Macquarie Police District and Superintendent Kylie Endemi, Commander of Newcastle City Police District, hosted a luncheon for retired Police Officers at Club Macquarie. Starting with a moment of silence to commemorate officers who have recently passed, the event brought together retired police to remember shared experiences and keep up to date with their comrades. The keynote address was provided by Retired Chief Inspector Andrew 'Andy' Waterman, who was part of Task Force Air—the task force which brought Ivan Milat to justice. Chief Inspector Waterman

was responsible for managing the huge brief of police evidence, and he provided a fascinating insight into his experiences. There was also a demonstration of Highway Patrol Vehicles and MobiPol usage on location for those interested. My thanks to Acting Superintendent Jones, Superintendent Endemi and all those involving in organising the luncheon.

TWENTY-SIXTH NORTHERN MINING AND NSW ENERGY DISTRICT MEMORIAL SERVICE

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—On Sunday 10 September, the 26th Northern Mining and NSW Energy District Memorial Service was marked at the Jim Comerford Memorial Wall in Cessnock. This year's ceremony took on a particular importance, as it fell so soon after the hundredth anniversary of the Hetton Coal Company Ltd Bellbird Mine Disaster, which resulted in the deaths of twenty-one miners. A coronial inquest and Royal Commission were conducted, which were the catalysts for a Bill to establish mines rescue stations being tabled in the NSW Parliament on 13 November 1924. The Mines Rescue Act was assented to in September 1925 and became operational on 31 December that year. Bellbird remains the worst disaster in the history of the northern NSW coalfields, and the names of those lost are among the 1,793 inscribed on the Memorial Wall. It was a beautiful ceremony, starting with opening remarks by Shane Thompson, the District Secretary of the MEU, featuring music by the Mineworkers' Pipe Band and Tara Naysmith, and a keynote address by Federal Member for Hunter, Dan Repacholi MP. A timely reminder that all workers deserve to expect to come home safely from work.

TUQIRI MASON – PROUD GANGALU ATHLETE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today to recognise the extraordinary athletic achievements of young secondary student Tuqiri Mason, who attends Hastings Secondary College, Port Macquarie Campus. At only 15 years of age, Tuqiri broke the school 100m record, set by Olympic sprinter, Adam Miller: a record which had stood for twenty years. Tuqiri flew down the track, barefoot and crossing the finish line with a time of 10.92 seconds. With encouragement and mentoring from Mark Vaughan as well as personal grit and determination, Tuqiri has excelled in all areas of athletics at regional level, with his favoured events being high jump, 100m and 200m sprints. Recently competing in the All-Schools State Championships at Olympic Park in Sydney, Tuqiri added to his accomplishments earning silver in the 100m sprint and jumping 18cm short of the gold in Long Jump. Tuqiri has only just turned 16 and his eyes are firmly set on qualifying for the Nationals in Perth later this year with the Olympics his ultimate goal. I praise Tuqiri for his amazing athletic achievements and the determination and commitment he has shown to train and commit to these endeavours and encourage him to set his sights high for the future.

SAM BLAIN AND GRACE MORRIS – NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE SUCCESS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I recognise sporting sensations Sam Blain and Grace Morris from Port Macquarie for recently taking out National Silver and Gold medals in basketball and cross country. Mackillop College students Sam and Grace are absolute sporting talents dominating on a national level in basketball and cross country over the past month. Sam is a Year 11 student, who recently competed in the NSW Under 16 Boys basketball team at the Under 16 Australian Basketball Championships in Perth. The NSW side knocked out South Australia in an 11-point win, before demolishing the Australian Capital Territory by a 100 point margin. NSW then defeated Queensland by two points and Victoria by 60 points to make the Grand Final, finishing as Runners Up and National Silver Medallists. A fantastic effort! The second of our duo, Grace Morris, competed in Canberra at the 2023 Australian National Cross Country Championships on 26th August. Grace powered her way against the elite track runners in the country, finishing 22 out of 89. In the 1500 metre leg Teams Relay, Grace and her team claimed an impressive gold medal. Congratulations and I wish you both well in your future sporting endeavours.

COLIN TARANTO – NORTH COAST VET TRAINER OF THE YEAR 2023

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I recognise Colin Taranto, NTHA (National Timber and Hardware Association) Trainer - a professional with 38 years' experience in the timber industry. Colin has been awarded the prestigious title of Vocational Education Training [VET] Trainer of the Year in the NSW Training Awards. The NSW Government Training Awards aim to honour exceptional achievements in the vocational and training sector. It recognises trainers and teachers who demonstrate innovation and excellence in providing nationally recognised training to students. Colin possesses a wealth of practical knowledge, including 25 years in frame/ truss and 13 years in technical market development/sales. He has delivered certifications in Timber Frame/Truss Manufacturing, Timber Systems Design at both Cert III and IV levels. Colin finds great satisfaction in nurturing and developing local talent. He shares his broad practical knowledge, expertise and experience with his trainees to help them gain a broader understanding of the industry in which they will work.

He thrives on the interactive nature of training and those students who genuinely desire to learn. I applaud Colin's dedication to his teaching and thank him for his decades of service.

WALLSEND DRESSMAKER CAITLYN ELLIOTT WINS SASSY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—The 2023 Newcastle and Hunter Wedding Awards – The Sassies – were held on September 6 and the Fashion/Wedding Dress Designer Winner was Caitlyn Elliott, owner and designer of Studio C Bridal in Wallsend. The high pressure of the performing arts industry set her up for success as a wedding dress artisan, now Caitlyn creates custom gowns and restores heirloom gowns that make brides feel as incredible as they look. Caitlyn studied theatrical costuming in Adelaide and at NIDA, then work followed at Opera Australia, Bell Shakespeare, on stage musicals, and for award-winning film designers and actors. In 2013, Caitlyn opened her first making space and started working under her own banner, bringing classic beauty to new ideas, and enjoying historic costuming, technical drafting and sewing. Through thoughtful communication, an open mind to nurturing customers' ideas, a meticulous attention to detail and making artworks to reflect her clients' personalities, Caitlyn sees her business as a truly collaborative process. Congratulations, Caitlyn, on the Sassy, the new little one due next year – and on your wedding dress design journey so far. All the best for the future.

FLETCHER FC GRAND FINAL WINNERS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Our local sports have made a strong resurgence following the challenges of the pandemic and extreme weather conditions over the last three years. Participant numbers are increasing and there are wonderful representations of community engagement to be seen around our local playing fields. I wish to praise each and every sporting club, team, player, parent, guardian, spectator, volunteer, referee and organiser for your participation, support and dedication. I am especially proud to recognise the spectacular efforts of all the football teams within the Wallsend Electorate who recently won their Grand Final this season. Congratulations to Fletcher FC, defeating Edgeworth 4- 0 in the Interdistrict AA Saturday B competition. This is particularly worth recognition due to the challenges the club has faced this season with multiple acts of vandalism to their home ground. Well done on your success for this season and all the best wishes for continued success in 2024.

CARDIFF CITY GRAND FINAL WINNER

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Our local sports have made a strong resurgence following the challenges of the pandemic and extreme weather conditions over the last three years. Participant numbers are increasing and there are wonderful representations of community engagement to be seen around our local playing fields. I wish to praise each and every sporting club, team, player, parent, guardian, spectator, volunteer, referee and organiser for your participation, support and dedication. I am especially proud to recognise the spectacular efforts of all the football teams within the Wallsend Electorate who recently won their Grand Final this season. Congratulations to Cardiff City which defeated Lochinvar Rovers FC 6-0 in the Interdistrict AA Friday G competition. Well done on your success for this season and all the best wishes for continued success in 2024.

MEGAN COX

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)—Megan Cox is a highly active and beneficial member of the Sutherland Shire community. The Engadine resident has recently been recognised as a finalist in the Young Inspirational Woman category of the 2023 Rotary Inspirational Women Awards. The award recognises women under 30 who have made a positive impact in their community. Megan regularly volunteers her time to work with a multitude of organisations all for the betterment of her community. She volunteers with Dementia Australia, RUOK?, Cronulla Sharks NRL and NSW education pathways, only to name a few. Even as a child Megan was highly engaged in the local scouts program and has continued to devote much of her personal time to assisting many organisations and charities. We are very fortunate to have Megan as a member of our community. She is an inspiration to not only young women, but to all people of all ages and genders. On behalf of the Sutherland Shire community, I would like to congratulate her on her nomination and to formally recognise the great works she has done for many years.

REVEREND MATA GAVEA HILLIAU

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—Mr Speaker I would like to congratulate Reverend Mata Gavea Hilliau who was appointed the moderator of the Uniting Church NSW and ACT. Rev. Hailliau was the minister at Northern Beaches Uniting Church. She is the first person of Tongan descent to hold the role and the sixth woman to hold the role. As well as moderating the Synod meeting every 18 months, the Moderator speaks on behalf of the Uniting Church and exercises pastoral leadership across the organisation and through its congregations. This is a fantastic outcome and I wish Rev. Hailliau all the best in her new role.

CHARMAINE MARA

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to recognise the hard work and dedication of Dubbo woman Charmaine Mara and the vital role she is playing as the Youth Development Officer at Dubbo Regional Council. Charmaine recently received glowing accolades from a fellow community group for her unwavering commitment to youth activities, social inclusion days and family fun events and has been commended for her ability to make each event exude a sense of community and attract high engagement and attendance. Charmaine's knowledge and commitment to her role is evidenced by the large number of additional community service organisations continually asking to be involved with events she is coordinating and their strong words of encouragement regarding her enthusiasm and thorough planning processes. Thank you, Charmaine, for the energy you are injecting into your role. The success of the youth engagement events you've supported are a testament to your passion for empowering and uplifting young people in our community. Your commitment to their growth and development is inspiring, and we are grateful for the positive impact you've made. Keep up the fantastic work, and may your future endeavours continue to inspire and shape the lives of our youth.

DARRYL AND BLAKE TOWNEY

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to recognise the brave and selfless actions of locals Darryl and Blake Towney. The father and son duo were recently at Dubbo Square shopping centre when the pair heard a man with a knife yelling out threats to shoppers. Shoppers were stunned at what was unfolding in front of their eyes, as others continued about their day just metres from the man. What happened next was nothing short of heroic. Darryl grabbed a highchair to put some distance between himself and the man, speaking to him to try and calm him down. Meanwhile, Blake, a former second rower for the Moruya Sharks in NSW, approached him from behind and pulled off a perfect rugby league tackle to disarm the offender. The ordeal lasted about three minutes from the start of the yelling to the tackle. Undoubtedly their quick thinking and courageous response played a crucial role in preventing potential harm to the public and individual involved.

DUBBO CYCLE CLUB SUCCESS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to recognise the Dubbo Cycle Club's success at the NSW Junior State Road Championships. Emily Hines, Sid Pickering & Cooper Farr donned the club colours and performed admirably against tough competition in a time trial, criterium & road race with several podium finishes achieved. Emily showed true grit grabbing a 6th place in the time trial, narrowly missing a podium spot with a thrilling performance in the criterium and rode with incredibly clever race smarts in the road race. Pedalling against a headwind in the time trial, Sid & Cooper commenced their competition. Pickering secured his fifth state medal, a silver & Farr claimed a solid fifth. Onto the criterium, Sid pushed his legs to the max in an early breakaway with two other riders but was reeled back in by the main field for fifth place and it was Cooper, who with a brilliant sprint to the line, emerged as the State Champ! Finishing with the road race, Cooper asserted his dominance to cross the line well in front to claim a sensational double, and Sid held on to fourth place. Congratulations Dubbo Cycle Club, you make us all proud.

ST ANTHONY'S FEAST DAY MASS

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—Last weekend, I had the privilege of attending the St. Anthony's Italian Feast Day Mass in Marsfield. As always, I was captivated by the rich cultural and religious heritage, and commend the wonderful St Anthony's community for remaining so tight-knit and engaged, even post-COVID. To the President of Our Lady of Grace Fraternity, Vincenzo Murdocca, I pay tribute to the pivotal role you have played in orchestrating this remarkable celebration, and leading such an extraordinary committee of genuinely community minded individuals. The Mass was a beautiful blend of Australian and Italian culture, and reflected the diverse heritage of the devotees. The significance of St. Anthony's Feast Day lies in its role preserving the Italian traditions and stories that make up so much of Ryde's history. Alongside the recently released anthology, 'A One Way Ticket', it is clearly evident that local Italian vibrancy has never been stronger. The Feast Day Mass served as a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural heritage and community bonds. It was a day of unity, faith, and celebration, where people from all walks of life came together to honour their shared heritage and deepen their spiritual connections. Grazie St Anthony's!

ERNA LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVE DINNER

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I recently had the privilege of presenting awards at the Eastwood Ryde Netball Association presentation night. ERNA have achieved some phenomenal results this past year, and it was great to see the hard work and dedication of the players, coaches and umpires recognised and celebrated. These accolades spanned the spectrum of their junior and senior teams, encompassing everything from the Metro league to the summer series, including both men's and women's divisions. I particularly acknowledge the coaches and supporters who were present, and thank Kelly Knowles, Drew Mulvena, Karen Brice, Karen Hester, Nicole

Deguara, Alyce Bertolissio, Allyson Hill, Anita Keelan, Deb Deans-Smith, Nicole Barrett, Donna Davey, James Mulcare, Tarsha Saint and Deb Hanson for their services to netball. Each has played a role in supporting the talent and hard work that has given ERNA its strong reputation over so many years. Attending ERNA's presentation day was a rewarding experience, highlighting the spirit of sportsmanship and camaraderie that this organisation fosters. It was an evening filled with pride and joy as the netball community came together to applaud the accomplishments of their dedicated athletes. Congratulations one and all!

CEDRUS LEBANESE RESTAURANT

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—Last week, Channel 7's Sunrise program made a special visit to Cedrus Lebanese Restaurant in Ryde. Hosting an entire morning of weather crosses, it was a phenomenal opportunity to put one of Ryde's best local businesses on the map. It was a proud moment for our community, and an opportunity for local residents and the broader Lebanese community in particular to come together and support the owners, Joanne and Marcus Sultani. Joanne and Marcus have been in business for many years now, and are well regarded in the local Meadowbank and Ryde community. The duo even went the extra mile, putting on captivating cultural performances and music, demonstrating unique cooking techniques and of course sharing some of their fantastic menu with those in attendance. The morning highlighted the importance of supporting and celebrating local businesses. Together, Cedrus and Sunrise showed us the incredible talent and diversity that our community has to offer. The memory of that day will be cherished by many I am sure, and serves as a reminder of the wonderful treasures we have in Ryde. It is important to always promote and support local businesses, and this experience truly delivered. Congratulations Cedrus!

ALEXANDER FOREMAN

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to congratulate Alexander Foreman who at the young age of 17 years has just represented Australia at the World Aquatics Junior Swimming Championships 2023 held in Netanya, Israel. Juggling HSC studies along with his swimming commitments, Alexander from the Kincumber Pacific Dolphins Swim Club was selected for the Junior Dolphins squad for the World Championships team after his outstanding performance in the 200m backstroke at the Australian Age Swimming Championship held on the Gold Coast in April of this year. As one of 30 athletes selected for the squad, Alexander gave his all, swimming in the 50m, 100m and 200m backstroke as well as the medley relay. After a great personal best in the Men's 200m Backstroke heats, Alexander placed 8th in the final with a time of 2:02.16. Being selected and representing your country on the world stage is a wonderful achievement and I congratulate Alexander on his achievements, hard work and dedication to swimming.

NICK MONTGOMERY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to take this opportunity to thank and farewell Nick Montgomery, the Central Coast Mariners club legend, and A-League Men's Head Coach as he departs to take up the role of Head Coach at Hibernian FC in the Scottish Premiership. First joining the Central Coast Mariners as a player before the 2012/13 season, Nick played a crucial role in helping secure the club its first A-League Championship. As a midfielder Nick went on to play four more seasons with the Mariners, amassing 129 total appearances while also wearing the captain's armband for two years. After hanging up his boots Nick went on to hold various off-field positions, working his way up the ranks including as an A-League Assistant Coach. In 2019 Nick became Head Coach of the Mariners Men's NPL side, where he went on to help produce some of the Mariners' finest footballing talent taking the Mariners to their first Australia Cup Final, AFC Cup and the club's second A-League championship. Concluding his time at the club with two Championships, one as a player and one as a coach is a massive achievement and we farewell and thank Nick for everything he has done.

AUSTRALIAN REPTILE PARK

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I wish to take this opportunity to celebrate the iconic Central Coast Australian Reptile Park, which will be celebrating its 75th birthday during the September school holidays. The Park first opened in 1958 at Wyoming when naturalist Eric Worrell had the idea of combining snake venom production with tourism. Worrell passed away in 1987, but his dream lived on in two passionate employees, John and Robyn Weigel, who financially invested in taking ownership of the Park and continue to run it today alongside fellow Directors Tim Faulkner and Liz Gabriel. In 1996, the Australian Reptile Park relocated from Wyoming to Somersby, moving its 1,000 animals and 26m mascot Ploddy the dinosaur. Driving up from Sydney, Ploddy is a visual landmark that's hard to miss. The Park has been a pioneer in the development of lifesaving antivenom which has helped tens-of-thousands of Australians survive venomous snake and funnel-web spider bites. Winning the prestigious NSW Tourism Award in 2001 for Best Tourism Development, the Australian Reptile Park continues to provide an educational experience that is wrapped in adventure and fun. Congratulations on this milestone, I know our community and visitors from all over the world join you in celebration.

BRUSHING UP ON ART SKILLS

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—Across the district of Canterbury-Bankstown, several buildings have undertaken an incredible transformation with young artists helping enrich community suburbs. These young artists have turned dull walls into vibrant and welcoming spaces with their incredible street art. This incredible initiative is a part of Canterbury-Bankstown Council's 'Better Walls Program' where young people in our community and seasoned street artists work together to create beautiful murals on the walls of the Canterbury-Bankstown community. Lead by several accomplished Sydney artists including Alex Lehours, Goya Torres, Peter Burke, Nico Nicolson and Dan Bianco, the Canterbury-Bankstown Council has brought new light to our amazing community. This initiative also focuses on mental health and community development by enhancing community spaces visually. By allowing young people to be creative and express themselves through street art, this program fosters community spirit that nurtures relationships and brings people together. As Mayor Bilal El-Hayek said, "These murals are more than paint on walls... it's a visual statement of what happens when young minds combine with the expertise of professional artists". The Canterbury-Bankstown community is exceptionally proud of the artworks that have transformed our community into a vibrant and welcoming space.

LITTLE WINGS' AIRCRAFT LAUNCH

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—On the 15 September, I attended Little Wings' Aircraft Launch where I had the opportunity to learn more about the inspirational journeys of sick children who are supported by Little Wings. I also met Isabelle and her mother Crystal from Kempsey and heard about Isabelle's inspirational story with the support of Little Wings; her story is one of many that they have assisted. Little Wings is a non-profit organisation that provides free, professional, safe flight and ground transport services for seriously ill children in rural and regional NSW, ACT and QLD. They strive to ease their journey and help sick children access specialised medical services and treatments that are only available in major cities or towns. They do everything they can to support families by easing the financial burden, emotional strain, and travel fatigue people experience due to the long-distance travel associated with receiving vital medical treatment. Little Wings delivers clinics in partnership with local hospitals, Aboriginal Medical Centres, primary health clinics and Immigration Centres to ensure families can access support in a culturally safe and welcoming environment. I am so proud to have such an amazing and caring organisation within my electorate.

BANKSTOWN PROBUS 40TH MILESTONE

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—In August 2023, Bankstown Probus' longest-serving members, Charles Cooper, and Glenda Shaw, cut the anniversary cake for Probus' 40th milestone. What began in 1983 as a small group of individuals who had just retired but wanted to continue going on adventures and meeting new people, has now turned into a hugely popular social club for men and women in the Bankstown community. Probus provides retirees the opportunity to connect socially, offering a range of activities including trips and outings for members to enjoy. Members of Probus meet on the third Monday of every month to enjoy the company of like-minded fellow retirees, learn new skills, and explore new interests and hobbies. Bankstown members have expressed how Probus has given them an excellent opportunity to get out of the house and get moving as well as being able to meet new people of all backgrounds. It is wonderful to see our Bankstown community members staying active and engaged with like-minded friends, creating cherished memories, and embarking on exciting new ventures. Congratulations to Bankstown Probus on this 40th milestone. It is an incredible achievement to keep a vibrant and energetic environment alive for 40 years.

CWA OF NSW – TOONGABBIE BRANCH 2023 AWARENESS WEEK CAMPAIGN

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to the Country Women's Association [CWA] of NSW – Toongabbie Branch for organising a successful 2023 Awareness Week Campaign, which focused on raising awareness about neurodiversity. This annual Awareness Week provides local branches with the opportunity to engage with their own communities on important issues through advocacy and events. This year's campaign recognises the importance of more support for persons, particularly women, with neurological conditions such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and Tourette syndrome. This is an important issue in our community, particularly with a growing number of young children and adults, who are being diagnosed with neurodivergent conditions such as ADHD. Women in particular face significant issues with diagnosis and access to treatment options, due to lack of research and the high costs associated. As the CWA of NSW – Toongabbie Branch have highlighted in our discussions, there is a need for more awareness surrounding these concerns and the training and retaining health professionals to address this issue, particularly in rural and remote areas. Thank you to Caroline Craig, President, and all members of the CWA of NSW – Toongabbie Branch for raising this issue with me and our local Western Sydney community.

FATHER DAVID CATTERALL

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—I rise to recognise Fr David Catterall, Parish Priest, St Mary MacKillop Oran Park who recently shared an update with the parish community and wider Catholic community, regarding his latest health challenges. Following recent blood tests, scans, and a lung biopsy, Fr David was recently diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer with pulmonary metastases, which will see him undergo a course of chemotherapy over the next 4-5 months. Those who have had the grace-filled opportunity to meet Fr David, know that through his faith, he is a welcoming, spirited, and devoted parish priest, and most importantly, a dear friend to many. During this time, I ask that we pray for Fr David, his family, and the parish community at St Mary MacKillop Church, particularly through the intercession of Servant of God Eileen O'Connor, and St Mary MacKillop who Fr David attributes the positive and welcome outcomes of previous cancer treatments. Fr David, we wish you all the best and look forward to your return. St Mary MacKillop and Servant of God Eileen O'Connor, please pray for the healing of Fr David Catterall.

ARCHBISHOP'S AWARDS FOR STUDENT EXCELLENCE – NATALIA SHEEBO

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to Natalia Sheebo on receiving an Archbishop's Award for Student Excellence on Thursday 7th September 2023, presented by the Rev. Archbishop Anthony Fisher, OP, at St Mary's Cathedral. College Captain at Mary MacKillop Catholic College in Waverly, Natalia leads by example. A practising Catholic at the St Thomas The Apostle Chaldean & Assyrian Catholic Parish, Natalia supervises Holy Communion classes and leads parish youth events. With faith at the forefront, Natalia supports new migrants settling into Australia. She advocates for others, fundraising for Caritas Australia, Catholic Mission and orchestrating initiatives for Refugee Week and Harmony Week. The Bishop of Parramatta Awards celebrate all-rounded excellence, acknowledging the empathy, humility, and service students offer schools and the broader Western Sydney community. The awards recognise Catholic Education's legacy to champion every person for the common good. Thank you, Tony Farley, Executive Director Sydney Catholic Schools, Archbishop Anthony Fisher and the Catholic Education community for facilitating this showcase. Thank you Ms Gilda Pussich, Mary MacKillop Catholic College Principal, and the school community for their dedication to developing compassionate, generous students. Congratulations again, Natalia, on this prestigious Award.

JANINE REED GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Nambucca Valley Care Group is preparing to celebrate a major milestone next year with its 50th Birthday and Golden Anniversary. Chairwoman Janine Reed, the board of directors, and staff members make an amazing impact on aged care in our region and ensure that our elderly get the support that they need. The organisation was started in September of 1974 by a determined group of local volunteers who saw the need for the Nambucca Valley to have local aged care services which it was lacking at the time. Now 49 years on, NVC Group is still community-owned and operated, and it is still providing caring services to our elderly. The group is bringing the community together to celebrate the legacy of the original steering group volunteers such as Bernard Laverty, Chris Sugden, Olive Smith and Rita McKay, and to give NVC group and its residents a great 50th birthday celebration. On a personal note, I would like to thank Janine for the guidance she has given me, and her continual work and contribution to the Nambucca Valley community.

OLD MAL AT CRESCENT HEAD RIDES THE WAVE

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Today, I rise to acknowledge the Crescent Head Malibu Club for hosting what became another successful year of the long-standing 2023 National Old Mal Titles. The Old Mal Titles is a surfing competition that celebrates the classic style of longboard surfing. More than a hundred local and out-of-town competitors descended upon the region to showcase their skills on the traditional style, paying homage to the roots of the sport. It is a nostalgic and exciting event that brings our surfing community closer every year. The event not only enriches our proud surfing culture in Crescent Head through its locals and repeat visitors, but it demonstrates a range of talent from experienced riders in their seventies to the under-18s youth, watching and admiring the esteemed talent on our shores. The Old Mal Titles is a phenomenally run grass-roots event that epitomizes Australian longboard culture and its history within Crescent Head. It was a great achievement from the Malibu Club in preparing a pristine tradition and I congratulate them for their efforts and for keeping the culture alive.

NAMBUCCA ROOSTERS TOP PLAYERS

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—Nambucca Valley is the home to some of the best Rugby League players, and today I rise today congratulate the achievements of two Nambucca Rooster's legends who have snatched up a set of impressive awards in the Group 2 arena. Former Gold Coast Titan's and first-grade player, Tyrone Roberts-Davis and young-gun Toby Batten in the under-18s team have both been awarded the Group 2 Best and Fairest accolade in their respective divisions. The Best and Fairest Award is given to a player who

demonstrates exceptional performance, sportsmanship and displays respectable conduct on and off the field. Tyrone's consistency in this campaign played a significant role in the Nambucca Roosters stop two final series spot. I applaud Tyrone for his dedication to his local community while remaining a positive influence to the team and its up-and-coming players. Toby Batten was a stand-out performer for the under-18s all season and he is congratulated on his remarkable ability and the skill sets he brings as an emerging youth. Toby's focus, leadership and calmness under pressure indicate a bright future ahead in this competitive game. Well done, Nambucca Roosters!

VALE EDWARD (FRANK) HIGGS OAM

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—I wish to pay tribute to Frank Higgs, a much-loved Maitland community member and beloved husband, father, and grandfather. Mr Higgs has served the community of Maitland in many different roles, as head of Maitland Land Office, as Maitland's district surveyor, and as a dedicated and loyal supporter of the Mai-Wel group. At Mai-Wel, Mr Higgs had a significant impact on the lives of people with disabilities in Maitland. His daughter Carolyn reflects that her dad only missed one major Mai-Wel event in his life. His reason, it was his wedding day. Mr Higgs served on the board at Mai-Wel for more than 50 years and held many positions in his time including a decade-long stint as president in the 1970s. He was appointed a life member in 1986. It is due to his great dedication to the community of Maitland, that in 2016 he was presented with the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] for his service to people with disabilities. Mr Higgs is remembered as a resilient, caring, calm, measured and committed man who above all, loved his family. He will be greatly missed. VALE Frank Higgs.

VOLUNTEERS FOR PALLIATIVE CARE, MAITLAND

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Since 1990, Volunteers for Palliative Care have offered free support for end-of-life care patients in Maitland. It is more than just a transport service, volunteers not only get a patient to their appointment, but will also sit and wait with them too. It is this care and dedication that sets Maitland's Volunteers for Palliative Care apart from the rest. The group's volunteers offer companionship, respite for carers, can record life stories like letters and memoirs, transport patients to appointments and connect to other services. Volunteers for Palliative Care takes the time to match their volunteers to the patient, to ensure they are more than just a service provider and more a companion. The organisation is always on the lookout for new volunteers to be able to support patients in the Maitland area. Their volunteer numbers took a hit with COVID and the group are working hard to get back to pre-COVID numbers. I commend the Volunteers of Palliative Care Maitland for their dedication and care to members of the Maitland community.

MAITLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Congratulations to Maitland Christian School on their recent musical production of Aladdin Jr. For over 6 months Maitland Christian School have been planning and preparing their production of Aladdin Jr. It was an open cast, which meant that any student from Years 3 to 11 had the option to join the cast. This meant that the final production ended up with 150 enthusiastic children taking part. This massive production then required the whole community's support. Many local businesses partnered to supply items, including lots of carpets. We saw teachers and parents dedicating countless hours on sets and costumes, including the construction of a real-life magic "flying" carpet. Congratulations to the outstanding stars of the show, Harry Gadsby in Year 11 who played Aladdin, Amelia Newberry in Year 10 and Sophia Causley in Year 9 who shared the role of Jasmin, and Stevie McLuckie in Year 11 who played the Gennie. Stevie recently received an online shout out from the current Gennie of the Broadway production of Aladdin. A special mention also to director Triniti Pobiie, and all the production staff. A big thank you to Maitland Christian School for organising such a successful and collaborative community event.

HAMMONDVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)—I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the remarkable student leadership team at Hammondville Public School on their tenures this year. 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 opportunity to make meaningful contributions to their school community and to cultivate the skills that will mould them into future community 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 Eleanor Burrows and Jacob Murray, as well as Student Leaders Benjamin Clark, Riley Death, Liam Higham, Tamika Paul, Sophie Philpott, Jack Roberts, and Aria Wilson. Under the exceptional guidance of their Principal, Jodie Clark, 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 Hammondville Public's motto, "Truth and Honour", I extend my warmest wishes to these student leaders.

MENAI HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)—I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the remarkable student leadership team at Menai High School on their tenures this year. 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 Noah Mariani and Kaia Dennis, and Vice Captains Savannah Archer, Ethan Butcher, Amber Soo, and Tom Straker. 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 Menai High's motto, "Care and Commitment," I extend my warmest wishes to these student leaders.

LIVERPOOL YOUNG CHAMPIONS AWARD

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)—On Sunday 17 September 2023 I had the pleasure of attending the inaugural Liverpool Young Champions Awards 2023 at the Liverpool Catholic Club. Organised by Rainbow Crossing, ably headed by Brian Laul, the night recognised the achievements of our young people and valuable contribution they have made to the Liverpool community. It was an honour to present a round of awards, along with my fellow state and federal colleagues to celebrate the wonderful occasion. I would like to extend my thanks to Chair Brian Laul for all his work in the South-West and Cr Warren Morrison Chair of the Judging Committee. I would also like to congratulate performers from Spirit of the Islands Dance Company, Stars Within, Alice Peiqiao Xu, Maryana Abdo, Nachle School of Dance and Athenae. It was a wonderful evening and I look forward to next year's event to celebrate more Young Champions!

SYDNEY RUNNING FESTIVAL 2023

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Sunday 17 September 2023 many residents and families from the Davidson electorate ran the Sydney Running Festival along with 17,000 participants. People came from all around Australia and the world. Since the Sydney Olympics in 2000, the Sydney Marathon (42.2km) has taken place. Although I did not run it in 2023, I did run it in 2013, 2015 and 2022. I can personally attest to this amazing event – spanning from under the Sydney Harbour Bridge at Milsons Point, to Pyrmont and all the way to Centennial Park, and finishing at the Sydney Opera House. I am a strong supporter of Sydney to be admitted to the World Marathon Majors, and hold the same status as the famed Tokyo, Boston, London, Berlin, Chicago and New York. I acknowledge the volunteers, St John Ambulance NSW, and the organising committee for another successful Sydney Running festival, double to size of any previous marathon in Australia. Hopefully in the near future we will see the Sydney Running Festival rightfully join the World Marathon Majors. Finally, I want to promote the support of running and athletics. It is a passion for me and thousands of people in NSW.

ST IVES FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL 2023

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Sunday 17 September 2023 the annual St Ives Food and Wine Festival was hosted by the Rotary Club of St Ives. It was a lovely sunny spring day. It is a wonderful day that brings together our community and help local worthwhile charities. In 2023, the Food and Wine Festival raised funds for KNC - the Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre – which provides services to the aged and disabled especially in the Sydney North region. Led by Chief Executive Officer Michelle Bell, I thank her and KNC for their tireless work. On the day I assisted in the judgment of the "Paw Parade". Thank you to all the amazing dogs and their owners. The St Ives Food and Wine Festival would not be possible without the volunteer leadership of Harold Morgan. Thank you, Harold. I am pleased to acknowledge St Ives Rotary executive that includes President Bruce Farnsworth and executive members Barry Barnes, Di Barnes, Rosemary Coucouvinis, Russell Crofts, George Papallo, Greg Rappo, John Steel and John Waterhouse. I look forward to supporting the St Ives Food and Wine Festival for many years to come.

JEWISH HOUSE AND MYBOND SECURE HOUSING INITIATIVE LAUNCH

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Thursday 14th of September 2023, I attended the launch of a new initiative by Jewish House and MyBond. The Davidson electorate has the fourth largest Jewish population in NSW. I am proud to represent this vibrant community. Jewish House and MyBond's collaborative initiative has come together to combat homelessness and offer support for survivors of domestic violence. It will aim to secure private rental accommodation by breaking down financial barriers and getting access to financial assistance comprising 4 weeks rental bonds. It is a four-step process seeking to reduce trauma that comes from homelessness

and rough sleeping, and the stress facing those who are struggling to save the money required to pay a bond and ultimately secure housing. The initiative will require participants to pay just 1 week's rent as an upfront fee, whilst it seems small – it will make a huge difference to their lives. I acknowledge the work Jewish House CEO Rabbi Mendel Kastel OAM and MyBond CEO and Co-Founder Ray Dib for their work and their organisation's work that is done our community and commend their work to help lifting the burden facing so many.

REVESBY RHINOS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)—I would like to recognise Revesby Heights Rhinos Junior Rugby League Football Club for their great contributions to the community in East Hills. Sport and keeping young children active and fit is so important to the community, and really brings everyone from all different backgrounds together. The club trains children from ages five and up, teaching not only physical skills but lifelong lessons, about discipline, commitment, integrity and respect. Founded in 1963, the club has a long tradition of creating excellent rugby league players, who excel both on and off the field. In 2022, the club was awarded Club of the Year in the Canterbury-Bankstown district. I congratulate the club on the success of its recent Gala Day, in Neptune Park. They had several fun activities, such as a DJ, facepainting, sausage sizzle, cake stalls, and raffles. So many members of the community came together to check it out, and of course enjoy the footy as well. I want to thank the Club, President Paul Sawaqed, Vice President Wayne Hunter and Secretary Rita Sellars for their efforts in keeping children active and providing a place for the community to come together.

BEHHA ENTERPRISES INC. (LOCAL OP SHOP REVESBY)

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)—I wish to acknowledge BEHHA Enterprises impact and contribution to many vulnerable people from my electorate of East Hills. BEHHA enterprise, which is managed by Debbie McCarty, is a non-funded, not for profit charity that was established in 1977. Since then, it has been strongly committed to providing supported accommodation services for people with an intellectual disability. BEHHA has four group homes across the Revesby and Padstow area. BEHHA provides facilities and services to develop and assist people with an intellectual disability and to promote their wellbeing. BEHHA supports the rights of people with an intellectual disability to live in the community with self-assurance, self-esteem, and dignity. BEHHA has an OP shop down the street from my electorate office in Revesby. I have found many little treasures to purchase whilst browsing through the shop. All funds raised assist BEHHA in financing its support services for people with an intellectual disability. The OP shop is totally staffed by volunteers, dedicated to contributing and supporting the mission and it is an important business in our community.

UNCLE JOHN DIXON

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)—I would like to recognise Uncle John Dixon who was recently awarded a Principal Network Award for his significant achievement as a community member to public education in NSW. Uncle John is a well-respected Indigenous Elder of Canterbury-Bankstown. He has performed numerous smoking and Welcome to Country ceremonies both for local schools and at community events. He was instrumental in Canterbury-Bankstown Council's celebration of NAIDOC week this year through his storytelling and hosted boomerang workshops where he taught children the art of crafting and throwing boomerangs. I recently hosted a community event where Uncle John was presented this Award by former East Hills MP, Alan Ashton, who taught Uncle John at Picnic Point High back in the early 90s and encouraged his love of history. Uncle John's knowledge of and willingness to share his culture with students, parents and teachers alike has seen him embraced by the whole school community. I commend Uncle John for sharing his journey with the community and teaching us about the beautiful traditions of the Aboriginal people.

YARNACHISTS INSTALLATION RETURNS TO BRETT WHITELEY PLACE

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—The new installation from the North Sydney Yarnachist's has returned to Brett Whiteley Place, with their new project 'Greensleaves: Greening our city'. Members of the North Shore community have spent hundreds of hours knitting and crocheting, with their stunning installation featuring iconic native flora and fauna and even a waterfall. The North Sydney Yarnachists aim for this project is to raise awareness regarding the lack of green space in urban areas, and that by increasing our parkland spaces and bushland reserves all of us can play a role in mitigating the impact of the urban heat effect. I was fortunate enough to join with the North Sydney Yarnachits earlier this week and I want to recognise Debra Phillips and Leona Geeves from the North Sydney Yarnachits for all their efforts in getting this project off the ground. Debra described the group as mostly local, senior women whose purpose is to "not go gently into that good night". Congratulations to the North Sydney Yarnachists for their new installation, and I encourage everyone in North Sydney to head on down and have a look.

HMAS SUB-BASE PLATYPUS REVITALISED

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—The historic HMAS Sub-Base Platypus has been revamped and revitalised for the local North Shore community. The old torpedo factory overlooking Neutral Bay now has a new lease on life thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust who have spent many months carefully preserving the historical aspects of the area, while creating increased open space for the community to enjoy. It was incredibly special to hear from special guest Commander Sandy Coulson (Retd) Royal Australian Navy, who was the first and only female executive officer to serve at HMAS Platypus who shared some remarkable stories of her time there. Between 1988 and 1990 Commander Coulson was effectively in charge of HMAS Platypus under her Commanding Officer and alongside a senior Submarine Commander. The posting was so rare at the time that it was announced in the Federal Parliament by the serving Defense Minister at the time. The site contains an incredible wall filled with the history of the site, detailing the torpedo manufacturing that was used by the Allies in World War II, and in the coming months a new park area will be opened overlooking Neutral Bay.

WADANGGARI PARK OPENS IN ST LEONARDS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Wadanggari Park in St Leonards is now officially open and ready to welcome locals and visitors alike to this innovative new open-air over-rail plaza. We have transformed St Leonards with close to 5,000sqm of increased open space thanks to almost \$5 million in funding by the NSW Liberal Government. We have brought a little New York to the heart of St Leonards, along with new connections to the Crows Nest Metro Station and St Leonards Train Station. Wadanggari means 'Banksia' in the Sydney Indigenous Language and was chosen by the community. This new precinct also includes a new library run by Lane Cove Council that was officially opened last week. I congratulate the work of Lane Cove Council who have brought this vision to reality, and I know that already there has been an influx of locals enjoying the new spaces, and play equipment following Council's community fun day.

GWYDIR COTTON GROWERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL AWARDS

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the Gwydir Cotton Growers Association Annual Awards finalists for the Dryland and Irrigated Cotton award categories. I congratulate nominees for the dryland category: Nick Gillingham and consultant Will Jackman for Wathagar; Ed Seccombe and consultants Jack Stringer and Mike Stone for Telleraga Station; Tom Greentree for Quisisana, along with the winners Lindsay George and consultant Brad Cogan for Livingston Farm. I congratulate nominees for the irrigated category: Paul Regan and consultant Rob Long for Bellevue; Nick Gillingham and consultant Will Jackman for Cudigdool; Dennis Wright and consultant Mike Stone for Moreton Plains; and the winner Allan Moore and consultant Brad Cogan for Bengarang. I applaud the hardworking committee including: Chairman Mick Humphries, Vice Chairs Kim Byrnes and Ed Seccombe, Secretary Lou Gall, Treasurer Zara Lowien and all the committee members. I commend B & W Rural, judges Janelle Montgomery, Stuart McFadyen, Mal Pritchard and Greg Pearce, along with Pheobe's of Moree, Relish of Narrabri and the committee for staging this event and CGA for recognising and paying tribute to those who excel in the cotton industry.

ARMIDALE COMMUNITY OF SCHOOLS GROUP

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I would like to recognise the Armidale Community of Schools [ACOS] group for staging a very successful schools spectacular, 'An Evening with ACOS,' at the Armidale Secondary College. The evening provided an opportunity to showcase student's talents and creativity and included dance, drama, music, verse, along with featuring a combined choir, orchestra and Aboriginal dance. I congratulate the 10 schools involved in the event, including Armidale City Public School, Ben Venue Public School, Kelly's Plains Public School, Martins Gully Public School, Newling Public School, Sandon Public School, Rocky River Public School, Guyra Central School, Uralla Central School and Armidale Secondary College. I commend all involved in the production, families and friends, the wonderful audience, staff and supporters. Special thanks also to Armidale Secondary College for hosting the evening and making this massive production possible.

SWEETIE PIE'S BAKE SHOP, GLEN INNES

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise and congratulate Nicole and Zaylie Hyde, owners of popular Glen Innes bakery Sweetie Pie's Bake Shop, for recently taking out a number of prizes at this year's 34th annual Great Aussie Pie Competition. The couple brought home four gold medals, for their Chilli Mexican pie in the Gourmet Red Meat Category, their Prawn Mornay in the Gourmet Seafood Category and one each for their Vegetable Satay and Vegetable Mornay in the Gourmet Vegetarian Category. They also won silver medals in the Gourmet Poultry, Gourmet Apple, Gourmet Red Meat, Gourmet Seafood and Gourmet Brekkie Categories. Sweetie Pie's took out the major category winning spot in the Vegetarian Category for their

Vegetable Mornay. Since opening the business last year, Nicole and Zaylie have supported local producers and built up a strong following and customer base in the community. Well done Nicole and Zaylie!

THE SHEPHERD CENTRE

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—As Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Hearing Health and Deafness, it was a pleasure to attend The Shepherd Centre's Play@Parliament Kidscape Session held in the NSW Parliament. This was an opportunity to witness and participate in a speech and language development group session with children with a hearing loss (aged 3 to 5 years) and their families. These children are in the final years of learning how to use their hearing devices (cochlear implants, hearing aids or BAHAs). I was able to see firsthand how hard children are working on developing their communications so that they are ready to join their peers at mainstream schools across NSW. I met Teddy, aged 3 and Christopher, aged 5 and their family and it was wonderful to see firsthand the impact of The Shepherd Centre's world class speech and language development and education. I wish to recognise and congratulate Dr Aleisha Davis, CEO and David Brady, Director of Community Engagement, as well as the hardworking staff working at The Shepherd Centre for their work and dedication in supporting children and families with hearing loss. I wish the entire community of The Shepherd Centre all the best.

ALL HALLOWS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I wish to acknowledge students, teachers, families and the school community of All Hallows Catholic Primary School in Five Dock, led by Principal, Mrs Rachel Cashin. I recently attended the All Hallows Commitment Mass and Assembly, which was a significant occasion for the community. It marked the reaffirmation of the school's core Catholic values and serves as a tribute to the rich history of the school. All Hallows is a Presentation School, inspired by the teachings of the guiding patron, the Venerable Nano Nagle, who led with the example of "In deeds, not words". The school's community honours the legacy of Nano Nagle by committing to act with Integrity, Kindness, Respect, and Safety. I recognise and commend All Hallows Catholic Primary School in Five Dock for teaching tomorrow's leaders and instilling students with the core values to be selfless and respectful members of our community. I acknowledge All Hallows Principal Mrs Rachel Cashin for the invitation to attend Commitment Day. It has been wonderful getting to know Mrs Cashin, who is a passionate and dedicated advocate of children's education. I wish the entire All Hallows Primary School community all the very best.

ANZAC RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)—I wish to recognise Professor Victoria Cogger, Director of the ANZAC Research Institute at Concord Hospital. I met Victoria a few months ago when she gave a moving and heartfelt speech as one of the guest speakers at the Women's Leadership Breakfast organised by the Sydney Local Health District. Victoria spoke of her personal challenges and the importance of kindness in our interactions. I recently visited Victoria and her team and toured the ANZAC Research Institute. It is simply a wonderful facility that we can all be proud of. The ANZAC Health and Medical Research Foundation was established in 1995, marking 50 years since the end of World War II, and as a result, the ANZAC Research Institute was constructed. The Institute undertakes medical research activities to improve future health outcomes and medical care for Australians. It is the only major independent biomedical research institute with a primary focus on ageing in the country. I recognise and commend the vital work that Victoria, and her talented team and scientists do each day to make a real difference to the health outcomes of Australians. I wish Victoria all the very best.

MAXINE HAMILTON

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate Maxine Hamilton of Jannali on her recent win at the Book of the Year Awards held by the Children's Book Council of Australia [CBCA]. Established in 1946, the Book of the Year Awards are held annually with the aim of celebrating the contribution of authors and illustrators to Australian literature. At the 2023 awards, Maxine was acknowledged with the prestigious CBCA Early Childhood Book of the Year Award for her incredible illustration of *Where the Lyrebird Lives* by Vikki Conley. This book celebrates the Australian rainforest and the magic of family-time centred around a marvellous lyrebird. By way of background, Maxine is an enthusiastic children's book illustrator with a career that spans over 20 years. Having graduated from the University of New South Wales' College of Fine Arts (now UNSW Art & Design) and studying graphic design at Enmore Design Centre, Maxine now works as a freelance illustrator creating artwork for books including *My Possum Plays The Drums* and *When The Waterhole Dries Up*. I recognise Maxine Hamilton for her incredible talent and passion and for bringing joy to so many children through her artistic prowess.

THE YOUTH PARTNERSHIP VET EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the incredible students from schools in the Miranda electorate on their success at this year's Youth Partnership VET Excellence Awards held in the Parliament of New South Wales. The Youth Partnership was formed to help young people make the successful transition from school to work or further education by coordinating work placements for students studying Vocational Education Training courses as part of their Higher School Certificate. Students nominated for the Youth Partnership VET Excellence Awards are selected for their commitment to their Vocational Education Training coursework, achievements and aspirations within their chosen industry. I commend this year's award recipients. In the Hospitality category, I recognise Emily Leggett, Jordan Barr, Celeste De Carvalho, Angelisa Rynett and Shenaya Pahina. In the Business Services, Retail Services, Information and Digital Technology category, I recognise Alyssa Johnston and Nitya Dogra and finally in the Construction, Automotive, Electrotechnology and Entertainment category, I recognise Ethan Harrigan. I acknowledge the achievements of these wonderful students at the Youth Partnership VET Excellence Awards and extend my best wishes for the future.

WYNDHAM COLLEGE

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)—Mr Speaker, today I speak to congratulate the 51 year 12 students at Wyndham College on completing their schooling journey. These students have worked hard for the past 13 years, going through ups and downs and, importantly, learned vital lessons along the way. As the future of our great state and country, students should be recognised for their diligence, and our Government must ensure that our education system continues to improve so it can provide students with the very best possible grounds for growth. I also want to take this opportunity to specifically congratulate captains Ziah Burns, Tanay Kumar, Amiiity Lownds and Joanne Mghames in your roles as leaders for your school. Being role models for your peers and younger grades is a commendable status, and to be elected to such a post is a remarkable achievement. I thank you for being diligent and earnest young citizens, and I wish you and all other students completing year 12, the very best for your future.

QUAKERS HILL HIGH SCHOOL

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)—Mr Speaker, today I speak to congratulate the 48 year 12 students at Wyndham College on completing their schooling journey. These students have worked hard for the past 13 years, going through ups and downs and, importantly learned vital lessons along the way. As the future of our great state and country, students should be recognised for their diligence, and our Government must ensure that our education system continues to improve so it can provide students with the very best possible grounds for growth. I also want to take this opportunity to specifically congratulate captains Myia Monem and Liam Sammons— and vice captains Heath Rae and Sneha Brahmbhatt in your roles as leaders for your school. Being role models for your peers and younger grades is a commendable status, and to be elected to such a post is a remarkable achievement. I thank you for being diligent and earnest young citizens, and I wish you and all other students completing year 12, the very best for your future.

NORWEST CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)—Mr Speaker, today I speak to congratulate the 201 year 12 students at Norwest Christian College on completing their schooling journey. These students have worked hard for the past 13 years, going through ups, downs and importantly learning vital lessons along the way. As the future of our great state and country, students should be recognised for their diligence, and we in government must ensure that our education system continues to improve so it can provide students with the very best possible grounds for growth. I also want to take this opportunity to specifically congratulate captains Finlaye McCarthy and Jadyn Hewa— and vice captains Annika Meyer and Ryan Mackenzie in your roles as leaders for your school. Being role models for your peers and younger grades is a commendable status, and to be elected to such a post is a remarkable achievement. I thank you for being diligent and earnest young citizens, and I wish you and all other students completing year 12 the best for your future.
