



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday 21 September 2023**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Thursday 21 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 and the budget response today. I also advise members that I have authorised staff of the Leader of the Opposition to photograph and film as required during the Opposition leader's budget reply.

## *Members*

### LEADER OF THE HOUSE

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I advise the House that the member for Heffron will not be here for today's sitting and that I will fill the role of Leader of the House this day.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. Members' congratulations on the Minister's elevation are noted.

## *Bills*

### APPROPRIATION BILL 2023

### APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2023

### TREASURY AND REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

### Second Reading Debate

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the resolution of the House of 12 September 2023, the Leader of the Opposition will now speak on the Appropriation Bill 2023 and cognate bills. I remind all members to extend the usual courtesy to the Leader of the Opposition during his budget reply, which should be delivered without interruptions.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (10:03):** I acknowledge that we meet on the traditional lands of the Gadigal of the Eora nation and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging of the traditional owners of all the lands from which our electorates are represented today. This is a budget of broken promises, dodgy numbers, no vision and lost opportunities. This is a budget that will slash cost-of-living support and essential services. This is a budget that backs union mates ahead of families and households. And this is a budget that takes New South Wales backwards and leaves the people of New South Wales behind. It is a budget of broken promises.

In just six months the Government has broken a string of promises. Its members promised they would roll over the Active Kids program, which was a fundamental cost-of-living support and a way to get kids into physical activity. Instead, they are slashing it by 85 per cent. It is a broken promise hurting 750,000 kids. They promised they would ban secret rent bidding. Instead, realising it was unworkable, they have abandoned any ban. They promised there would be no privatisation. Instead, they are going to sell off public land to prop up this budget. They promised a cashless gaming trial by 1 July. Instead, there is no design and no start date.

They promised there would be no new taxes or increased taxes. Instead, over four years, there is a \$2.7 billion increase in coal royalties, which is a tax on coal production, and new land tax laws to increase the land tax take by \$250 million. They promised they would build the Sydney Metro West. Instead, the Government says that it is still making up its mind on whether to build it at all. Nothing says "same old Labor" like its members' aversion to game-changing infrastructure projects. When they were last in government, they announced 12 railways and delivered none.

They promised no unfunded public sector wage increases. Labor said that abolishing the public sector wage cap and delivering pay rises for its union mates would cost the budget nothing. They were all to be funded from productivity offsets. Yet the Government still has not identified a single productivity improvement. Governments around the world have to maintain economic, social and environmental sustainability. The wage increases we

would all like to see are compatible with economic sustainability when they are underpinned by productivity gains. That is how the Government promised to fund wage rises. That is the promise it has broken. Instead, on the Government's own figures, extra wage rises look like costing over \$7 billion over four years, and they are now locked into the budget indefinitely. The Government has costed the 4.5 per cent wage deal with public sector unions at \$2.6 billion. Then there is the deal with the teachers' union at \$1.4 billion. The Government says it has a further fund of \$3.6 billion for further wage increases. That \$3.6 billion so-called Essential Services Fund that the Government provisioned for future wage increases is a floor, not a ceiling. It is a wink to union mates that there is more to give if they simply ask.

Because this Government cannot stand up to its union masters, we have a budget that risks New South Wales' triple-A credit rating, forgoes opportunities for job-creating and congestion-busting infrastructure, forgoes opportunities for housing affordability measures and forgets families at the height of a cost-of-living crisis. A government that cannot be taken on its word on election promises is a government that cannot be taken on its word on its budget figures. This is a budget of dodgy numbers. It is a budget built on quicksand. It is a budget whose projections are not worth the glossy paper they are printed on.

There is no provision in this budget for the cost of extending Eraring Power Station, despite the Government undermining its own bargaining position and announcing that is what it wants to do. There is no money for toll relief beyond 2025 or for renegotiated toll agreements. There is no detail on how the \$13 billion in reprioritised savings will be achieved. There is wishful thinking on future GST payments from the Commonwealth. And there is the biggest unknown: the real cost of Labor's wages policy. A critical assumption in this budget is the one about employee expense growth. The total cost of the State's wages and superannuation obligations is projected to reach \$55 billion in 2027—equivalent to over 46 per cent of the State's total expense base.

The budget papers make the dodgy assumption that employee expenses can be kept to annual growth of 4.1 per cent. Yet the Government has just done a deal with the teachers' union to grant pay rises of between 8 per cent and 12 per cent for the next year alone. Anyone who thinks that every other union will simply ignore this precedent does not know the union movement. Having let the genie out of the bottle and given pay increases as large as these, without any productivity offsets, how does the Government now explain to other public sector unions covering workers like police officers, firefighters, paramedics and nurses why they are not entitled to just as much? The budget papers themselves undermine the 4.1 per cent assumption. They warn:

As the Government shifts to a more consultative interest-based bargaining arrangement, is it possible that the final budget outcome for 2023-24 deviates from current projections.

Interest-based bargaining is Labor's code for union-controlled wages policy. Employee expenses are the key expenses that governments have to control. If they lose control of them, they lose control of the budget. As we are seeing nationwide, when Federal and State Labor governments lose control of their budgets, we all collectively lose some control in the fight against inflation.

By losing control of wages, this Government loses control of the biggest item of expenditure. These concerns about Labor's dodgy budget assumptions are not just my concern or the Opposition's concern alone; they are being shared by ratings agencies. Moody's has just begun to sound the alarm. Already it has noted the projected annual expenditure growth of 0.8 per cent over the forward years to 2027. It says:

... difficult to achieve given persistent inflation pressures, the recent removal of the wage increase cap and new operating expenditure initiatives.

There is a loss of confidence from the ratings agencies at the first hurdle for this Government and the prospect of a downgrade in our credit rating. Even assuming in the Government's favour that it can keep employee expense growth to 4.1 per cent each year, the budget papers make the dodgy assumption that overall expenses will somehow be kept to 0.8 per cent growth each year. When employee expenses make up almost half of total expenses, it is hard to see how the 0.8 per cent per year projection can be reached unless there are savage cuts elsewhere. *The Australian Financial Review* reports that Moody's analyst John Manning says that the assumption will be difficult to achieve given that Labor has scrapped the cap on public sector wage rises.

This is also a budget cutting cost-of-living support and essential services. Sure, there is toll relief. But the Government gives with one hand and takes with the other hand by discontinuing the Coalition's toll relief program. Sure, there is some energy bill relief. But, unlike the Coalition's proposal, it will only be available to some. In a cost-of-living crisis, flushed with a \$14 billion tax revenue windfall, what does this Government do? It slashes Active Kids and Creative Kids by 85 per cent, it slashes First Lap, it axes the regional seniors travel card, it axes the Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card, and it cuts overall spending on essential services in the core areas of health, education, TAFE, police, and Fire and Rescue.

Let us take health first. Australian Medical Association New South Wales President Dr Michael Boning says:

At a time when the health sector and medical services need an urgent investment of cash, this budget provides almost nothing. Traditionally governments increase health investment, this Government has effectively slashed it, when health inflation is taken into consideration.

This year's budget ... is a 0.87% percentage increase on the ... 2022 – 23 budget.

This paltry increase is negligible and will be overtaken by health inflation, which is expected to increase by at least 5% per year.

It is the people of NSW who will suffer. This means less access to emergency departments, less urgent surgery and non-urgent surgery and it will also place NSW's innovative programs such as the collaborative care projects at risk.

In education, the budget for recurrent spending is up only 0.9 per cent in nominal terms on last year's spending, but inflation is projected at 4.5 per cent. That means a 3.6 per cent real cut in overall education spending. For the NSW Police Force, the budget for recurrent spending is up only 2.7 per cent on last year's spending in nominal terms. With inflation projected at 4.5 per cent, that means a 1.8 per cent real cut in overall police spending. The budgets for recurrent spending on TAFE and Fire and Rescue are down by 0.8 per cent and 0.9 per cent respectively in nominal terms on last year's spending. They are also being cut by over 5.5 per cent in real terms. Across key areas of service delivery, this Government is slashing essential services.

The Government says it has undertaken what it calls a comprehensive expenditure review, identifying \$13 billion in "budget improvement and reprioritisation measures". But the Government has failed to provide a full itemisation of what those budget improvement and reprioritisation measures are. There is an ominous line in the budget papers that the \$13 billion includes what is euphemistically called "a range of agency operational, procurement and corporate efficiencies". That is code for cutting frontline services. We do not know exactly what they will be because the Government refuses to tell us in question time and refuses to disclose it in the budget papers, having cancelled transparency and outcomes statements that the Coalition governments published. But from the bottom line percentages I have just identified, we know that there are going to be cuts in real terms to essential services.

This is a budget of no vision. Budgets are the most important documents that governments put together. They reflect the thinking, the work, the plans, the priorities and the values of a government. The former Coalition Government delivered 12 budgets. They were budgets that took New South Wales from last to first. They were budgets that saw 824,000 additional jobs created in New South Wales. They were budgets that invested in the future, with \$178 billion in infrastructure, including WestConnex, NorthConnex, the Pacific Highway upgrade and the Sydney Metro NorthWest to name a few, with a multitude of new schools and hospitals. They were budgets that left a pipeline of \$116 billion in projects, including city-changing projects like the Sydney Metro City and Southwest and the Metro Western Sydney Airport.

They were budgets that backed families in with cost-of-living relief, support through COVID and assistance with day-to-day costs. They were budgets that supported households and families, with the first major overhaul of stamp duty in 150 years with First Home Buyer Choice, a choice now taken away by Labor. They were budgets that, last year, delivered an historic \$16.5 billion investment over 10 years to improve women's opportunities and child development, including universal pre-kindergarten, boosting accessibility and affordability of child care, and supporting women to return to work. They were budgets that stood shoulder to shoulder with regional communities that did it tough through bushfires, floods, drought and COVID-19. They were budgets that preserved two triple-A credit ratings, despite those challenges. They were budgets that, through prudent and compassionate decision-making, saw New South Wales emerge strongly from the most difficult combination of circumstances in a generation. But what do we have now? We have a budget with no vision and a government with no vision. Labor had 12 years to prepare for government. It did not, and it shows.

The new Government has been at its busiest when it is re-announcing Coalition projects or cutting the ribbons to open them. The vast majority of the Government's health and education infrastructure pre-budget announcements were projects already happening under the Coalition. In transport, the Government is flirting with the idea of cancelling the largest infrastructure project, the Sydney Metro West. It has cancelled nation-building projects in the regions, like the Great Western Highway upgrade. The Government wants to focus, so it says, on housing. We support that focus. We know there is an Australia-wide housing affordability and supply crisis for buyers and renters. New South Wales is not immune from that. We are keen to work constructively with the Government on ways to fix that crisis.

We support announcements like better use of artificial technology and other technology to speed up planning approvals. But there is not much else in this budget towards addressing housing affordability. The Government trumpets a \$2.2 billion housing and infrastructure plan, but let us deconstruct that announcement. Its centrepiece is said to be a \$1.5 billion housing-related infrastructure package. But, in fact, this is a \$1.5 billion tax

on new homes through the Housing and Productivity Contribution. The Government's leading solution for housing affordability is more tax on new homes.

The Housing and Productivity Contribution adds \$12,000 to a new freestanding dwelling and \$10,000 to new apartments in the Greater Sydney area, and a bit less in Newcastle, Wollongong and the Central Coast. The infrastructure is not tied to where building is occurring, so there is no nexus to the development. The contributions from a new house in Penrith could be paying for a bike path in Petersham. The tax is applied at the time a construction certificate is issued rather than at the time of the occupation certificate, adding to the financing burden for industry. Of course, none of this helps the regions.

Another part of the \$2.2 billion plan is \$300 million for Landcom. But this is funding out to 2039-40 for the construction of only 1,049 affordable homes and 3,288 private market homes. That means that, on average, under this package only 88 affordable homes will be delivered each year, with fewer than 300 total homes delivered each year. Then another part of the \$2.2 billion plan is the \$400 million Housing Infrastructure Fund under Restart NSW. This is nothing new. Since 2012 the Coalition Government reserved more than \$1 billion through the Housing Acceleration Fund and nearly \$1 billion under the Accelerated Infrastructure Fund to unlock housing supply.

In addition to its Housing and Infrastructure Plan, the Government claims to have "a focus on directing more money to build social and affordable homes". The New South Wales Government is the beneficiary of \$610 million from the Commonwealth under the Social Housing Accelerator agreement to build new social housing and to upgrade existing stock. But this New South Wales Government has abdicated its own responsibilities. It has cut the infrastructure budget of the key social housing delivery agency, the Land and Housing Corporation, by \$330 million.

The Greater Parramatta and Olympic Park corridor is expected to take 60 per cent of the population growth for the Central River City. If the Government is serious about housing supply in Sydney, it has to end the uncertainty. It has to do what it promised at the election that it would do. It has to commit to building the Sydney Metro West. The Metro West will transport up to 40,000 people per hour. It will double the capacity of the current rail network between Parramatta and Sydney. Former Labor Lord Mayor of Parramatta and former roads Minister David Borger is right to say, "You can't build high-density precincts without high-quality public transport." Let us get on and let us commit to the Sydney Metro West.

The Government could have done so much more to help housing affordability. But this is a budget of lost opportunities. There is a golden opportunity that has been missed to tackle in New South Wales the Australia-wide housing crisis in a meaningful way. The Government expects to receive a \$14 billion tax revenue windfall over the next four years. This year alone, the Government expects tax revenue to increase by 12½ per cent and stamp duty revenue to increase by 21 per cent. But those revenues will not be spent on addressing the housing crisis or making housing more affordable. Instead, they will go towards rewarding union mates and paying for wage increases that the Premier said would not cost one cent but would instead be offset by productivity gains.

The Coalition would not have squandered this opportunity. As a complement to other policies, we would have delivered policies with a bit of vision to tackle housing affordability for buyers and renters. First, we would have looked to keep and expand the First Home Buyer Choice scheme and keep the Government's reduced thresholds and rates of stamp duty, providing our next generation with choice in how they enter the housing market and giving them the best possible chance of realising the Australian dream. Instead, this Government puts ideology before aspiration, scrapping the First Home Buyer Choice scheme and removing choice for young people looking for their first home.

Second, we would have looked to invest windfall stamp duty revenue to complement Commonwealth funding by establishing a community benefit fund of \$2 billion or more to incentivise and to reward local communities that achieve their housing targets, helping renters and buyers—and that includes the regions. Rather than telling communities to "get out of the way", we would engage with local councils and communities to review housing targets, in line with the delivery of 314,000 homes across the State, and a bonus target in line with the delivery of 378,000 homes from 2024 to 2029. The fund would be available to local councils that meet their targets in order to fund the improvement of public open spaces through new and improved walking and cycle paths, parks, trails, boardwalks, lookouts, foreshores, riverbanks, play spaces, civic plazas and outdoor event spaces. The fund could also be used to upgrade local sporting facilities and community recreational facilities. This would provide a carrot that our communities need to support the delivery of more homes.

Third, to encourage empty-nesters to downsize and to free up appropriate housing supply for younger families, we would have looked to introduce a stamp duty exemption—with appropriate thresholds—for downsizing older buyers. This would encourage seniors to downsize to a smaller property and help them find more suitable accommodation, reducing affordability pressures by making more suitable homes available to meet

the needs of younger families. Over 1.4 million people in New South Wales occupy a three- or four-bedroom home on their own or as couples without children; nearly three-quarters of them are over 55 years old. We have an opportunity for one generation to support another. These are some policies that would tackle supply, improve housing affordability and reduce the stress on rents. Going ahead, we will consult with interested parties on the feasibility of designing future policies like these. But, for the moment, these are lost opportunities. The Government has instead squandered windfall revenue on wage increases that should have been made sustainable through productivity improvements.

There are other lost opportunities. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition invested \$484 million in the 2021-22 budget in the single biggest investment in tackling domestic and family violence in the State's history. Meanwhile, despite massive revenue windfalls, it appears that this budget only manages to find \$39.1 million in new funding for the sector. The gender equality statement states that the escalation in domestic and family violence, acknowledged in the Government's Gender Equality Budget Statement, will cost the State \$3.3 billion between 2020 and 2025.

In government, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition signed the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. It was an historic new agreement, built upon the principles of working in partnership and joint decision-making. Indigenous disadvantage remains our State's and our nation's greatest public policy failure. We committed \$716 million to Closing the Gap initiatives—in health, education, the environment and housing. It was a clear commitment to deliver practical outcomes and improvements for Aboriginal people. This year's budget papers are opaque, but there appears to be no new money for Closing the Gap.

To conclude, this is a budget of missed opportunities from a government lacking vision. This is a budget built on broken promises. This is a budget of dodgy assumptions that cannot be trusted. This is a budget that puts Labor mates ahead of hardworking households and families. This is a budget that looks after The Star but forgets Western Sydney. It is a budget that fails New South Wales. New South Wales deserves better, and we all know that our government can do so much better. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition will continue to hold this arrogant Government to account. We will deliver a vision to keep New South Wales strong and prosperous. We will continue to stand up for families, households, seniors and small businesses, from the cities to the regions. Our first priority will always be the people of New South Wales, not Labor's union mates. That is what we stand for, and that is what we will fight for.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that these bills be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Third Reading**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I move:

That these bills be now read a third time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Budget*

### **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS 2023-2024**

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (10:29):** I move:

That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and Related Papers for 2023-2024.

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the resolution of the House of 12 September 2023, I set down debate on the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2023-2024 as an order of the day for a later time.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

### *Bills*

### **ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (VOTER ID AND ELECTRONIC MARK OFF) BILL 2023**

#### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Gareth Ward, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (10:45):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

All members in this place are members of Parliament by virtue of our democratic system. People have fought and died for the right to vote and for the right to elect the government of their choosing. First, the right to vote was a battle for the most privileged—and I see the portrait of William Charles Wentworth behind me, who was responsible, of course, for that first franchise. Then came the expansion of the franchise to those who were less privileged, followed by women and Aboriginal people.

All these fights have been about recognising the right of citizens to have a say. If we respect that right, we must defend it. That includes defending our democracy against those who would seek to defraud or pervert its course. The NSW Electoral Commission acknowledged that in the 2019 State election. It said, "More than 2000 people may have attended multiple polling places on election day." That fact should have caused outrage to anyone who cares about our democracy. Instead, it was met with silence. One voter who votes more than once is one too many. The modest amendments I propose speak directly to the objects of my bill, which ensure that the electoral system in New South Wales is characterised by accessibility, integrity and fairness.

The arguments in support of the bill are no different from those one might proffer in support of the installation of CCTV: The bill dissuades those from doing the wrong thing, captures evidence of those who do, and seeks to protect the democratic process, which should be respected and defended. The bill proposes that electors be required to show a valid form of identification when they vote, and that the NSW Electoral Commission be required to electronically mark off electors on a digital roll. At the outset, I emphasise to members of the House that the identification component of the bill is complementary to the electronic component. Both make the democratic processes on voting day more efficient and legitimate, and promote trust in those processes.

The Electoral Commission is a strong supporter of innovation in election delivery. Although iVote was put on hold at the last election, it is important that members of the Chamber support it. As chair of the iVote inquiry, I sincerely hope that voting pathway returns. The bill I propose contains very humble and basic amendments for a State that should consider itself a leader in technology, entrepreneurship, digital governance and democracy. While we say we are innovative leaders, we are laggards come election day. Voter fraud is unacceptable, and the fact there are very few safeguards should concern any citizen who cares about the value of their vote and the protection of democratic outcomes. Put another way, we should want the best voting system possible, while reducing associated costs. We should also acknowledge the recommendations from the reports of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters into the conduct of the 2013, 2016 and 2019 Federal elections. Such checks and requirements have been part of democratic processes internationally for some time. Estonians have been able to vote online since 2005 and log on with a digital ID card. India, the largest democracy in the world, uses the Aadhaar card and biometric-based digital voter identification.

We already have Service NSW and digital identification that can be utilised on election day. The argument once advanced that vulnerable groups do not have ID is outdated and conservative. It is frankly demeaning to suggest that just because a person may be vulnerable, they are less likely to have ID. These amendments should not be difficult to implement and, if they are planned now, could be delivered for the next State election. The second component of the amendment, producing identification in conjunction with an electronic roll, would immediately identify a person attempting to vote more than once in real time and without the need for producing and reviewing paper rolls. At the very least, we should be attempting to reduce waste; in this modern age, there is simply no need or excuse for paper rolls.

Before turning to the bill, I speak briefly on the reports and recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in October 2020. Recommendation 8 stated:

That the NSW Electoral Commission review the reliability of the electronic mark-off system before the next NSW State election and make any necessary changes.

The then Government accepted this recommendation and responded as follows:

The Government appreciates the importance of having a reliable and secure roll mark-off system during an election. In preparation for the 2021 local government elections, the NSW Electoral Commission has already carried out infrastructure upgrades to provide a more robust electronic mark-off system. The NSW Electoral Commission advises that it intends to undertake further infrastructure upgrades before the next State general election, subject to the availability of adequate resources. The NSW Electoral Commission anticipates that these upgrades need to be extensive.

Recommendation 9 stated:

That at every polling place in NSW that uses electronic mark-off for State elections, the NSW Electoral Commission implements a back-up system, such as a paper roll, to cover potential breakdowns of the electronic mark-off system.

Accepted by the Government, it responded:

The Government supports measures to ensure the continued accessibility of voting in the event of disruptions to electronic mark-off systems. The Government will ask the NSW Electoral Commission to consider appropriate back-up systems which could be implemented in the event of disruption to the electronic mark-off system. The NSW Electoral Commission advises that it will be providing paper rolls to each early voting venue as a back-up measure for the 2021 local government elections. The NSW Electoral Commission is also currently enhancing security features on voting centre laptops to allow for a back-up roll to be loaded on each laptop.

The Government accepted, accepted in part or accepted in principle 44 of the 54 recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. I introduce this amendment to the Electoral Act at an appropriate time, with the next election far enough away to ensure our voting system is properly protected and strengthened. These simple safeguards will make it harder for people to disrespect and disrupt the democratic process by contaminating it with an invalid vote.

A legitimate vote should not be outweighed by someone doing the wrong thing. I reiterate that just because this is not a major concern on current observations around such things as voter fraud, this is not an excuse to ignore the opportunities to protect our system of democracy. Why not implement safeguards to prevent disruption to our safe, fair and respected democratic process? The problem of identification will become simpler as we move to more digital platforms in all aspects of life. We make no objection when presenting identification to collect a parcel, visit a club, or sign in to a device by way of two-factor authentication. This component is necessary to ensure integrity in the modern age.

We should of course make exceptions for anyone that may be disenfranchised and cater to them at the polling booth. I am always open to hearing how the bill could be improved to meet any challenges that can be identified. I encourage members to read the report by Dr Damon Muller contained in the Federal Bills Digest No 34, 2021-22 entitled *Electoral Legislation Amendment (Assurance of Senate Counting) Bill 2021 and accompanying Bills*. Dr Muller observed that the Federal Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters presented various arguments for and against voter identification requirements but ultimately concluded that the arguments against were adequately countered. Dr Muller wrote:

The three main arguments traditionally prosecuted against the use of voter identification are:

- voter turnout will be affected;
- voters will be disenfranchised; and
- increased administrative burden.

In the Australian context, these arguments are easily refuted:

- compulsory voting ensures a high voter turnout;
- declaration votes are provided for voters who fail to present identification; and
- administrative burden will potentially be lessened by reduced issuing officer error and fewer occasions of multiple vote checks to be actioned.

The report went on to discuss electronic certified lists [ECLs]. Members may be more familiar with the term "electronic mark-offs". Dr Muller wrote:

ECLs allow for real-time look-up of a person's enrolment on an electronic database and electronic mark-off of their name, with the mark-off being synced to all other networked ECLs when connected by mobile internet. Most importantly, if a person tries to vote multiple times in the one name with identification, or multiple times without identification, then the use of an ECL or the identification requirements, will ensure they are required to make a declaration vote, with the result that their ballot papers do not automatically enter the count without verification or investigation.

I turn to the provisions of the bill. Schedule 1.1 [2] inserts a requirement for an election official to ask each person claiming to vote in an election to show the official a current identification document to establish the person's identity.

Schedule 1.1 [1] inserts a definition of identification document. For clarity, this is a driver licence, a photo card, a proof of age card issued by Australia Post, a Medicare card, a pensioner concession card, a Department of Veterans' Affairs entitlement card or other entitlement card issued by the Commonwealth or a State government, a student identity card issued by an educational institution, an Australian passport or other form of Australian Government identification. "Photo card" has the same meaning as in the Photo Card Act 2005. There is a very clear and wide schedule of opportunities for people to have some form of identification. Schedule 1.1 [3] provides that an election official must reject a person's claim to vote in an election if the person fails or refuses to show the official a current identification document to establish the person's identity.

As per division 9 of the Electoral Act, anyone who wishes to cast a vote or is contesting their right to vote in a particular division can cast a declaration vote. Schedule 1.1 [4] provides that an election official must not ask a silent elector to produce a current identification document to establish the person's identity. Schedule 1.1 [5] provides that an election official must ask an elector applying to vote as an absent voter to show the official a

current identification document to establish the person's identity. The election official must reject the elector's application to vote as an absent voter if the elector fails or refuses to show the official a current identification document. Schedule 1.1 [6] provides that an election official must not ask an absent silent elector to produce a current identification document to establish the person's identity. Schedule 1.1 [7] provides that a person must show an election official a current identification document before making certain declarations under the Electoral Act.

Schedule 1.2 [1] provides that an authorised roll of electors for a district must be in both an electronic and printed form determined by the Electoral Commissioner. Schedule 1.2 [2] provides that a copy of the electronic authorised roll must be kept on a networked computer system approved by the Electoral Commissioner that enables an election official to record that a ballot paper has been given to a person. Schedule 1.2 [3] provides that an election official must use the electronic authorised roll kept on the approved networked computer system to record that a person has received a ballot paper. Schedule 1.2 [4] provides that if an election official is unable to use the electronic authorised roll, the official must record a mark, in the way approved by the Electoral Commissioner, on a printed authorised roll to show that a person has received a ballot paper.

I find it remarkable that in 2023 we do not have an electronic roll for New South Wales elections. Noting my earlier observation that the Electoral Commission in a recent statement confirmed it "remains a strong supporter of innovation in election delivery", we must legislate this requirement and enable this change. This complements the requirement for voters to prove who they are, and enables the Electoral Commission to protect the democratic process and the integrity and efficiency of elections. An electronic format of the roll will allow the commission to review any anomalies in real time.

Of course, there are blockchain technologies, geotagging check-ins, storage and security concerns. I leave this to the experts, but I put it to the House that it is our job to ensure we eliminate voter fraud and make voting more efficient. When you look at the history of our State and our nation, we should be proud of our democracy. We are an example to the world of how to conduct elections and transfer power. Simply accepting the system as it is without challenge or asking whether we can do better would be disappointing. I believe this bill will assist in that. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Members*

**MEMBER FOR BEGA**

**MEMBER FOR LEPPINGTON**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH COAST**

**MEMBER FOR GOULBURN**

**MEMBER FOR MYALL LAKES**

**MEMBER FOR EPPING**

**The SPEAKER:** I give a special shout-out to members representing the electorates of Bega, Leppington, South Coast, Goulburn and Myall Lakes, all of whom have upcoming birthdays. I hope they have wonderful birthdays. I make special mention of the member for Myall Lakes. I had the pleasure of meeting her husband, Ben, and daughter Lucy. They have joined us in the gallery today.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Mr Speaker, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that it is also former Premier Perrottet's birthday today.

**The SPEAKER:** The Perrottet household is the household of birthdays. I congratulate you, Dom.

*Visitors*

**VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a warm welcome to the Chamber to the Hon. Craig Crawford, MP, Queensland Minister for Child Safety, and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services. I also welcome another guest from Queensland, Deidre Mulkerin, Director-General, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability. I welcome them to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. I also welcome guests of the member for Upper Hunter, year 11 legal studies students and teachers from St Joseph's High School, Aberdeen. I welcome guests of the member for Macquarie Fields, year 11 legal studies students and teacher from Sarah Redfern High School. They are seated up in the Cooper gallery.

I acknowledge guests of the member for Wollondilly, Brenda and Arabella Petersen. I welcome the guest of the member for Gosford, Dr Julian Huppert, former member of the Parliament of the United Kingdom for the constituency of Cambridge. The member for Lismore has brought to my attention that Mr Glen Crump, deputy chair of the Moree Sports Health Arts and Education Academy, also joins us in the gallery for question time. Finally, I acknowledge my guests, Sharon and Harrison Wardburgess and Barry and Terry Johnston.

*Members*

**REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Mr RYAN PARK:** On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I advise the House that today the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces will answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Local Government, and the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism will answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion.

*Question Time*

**STAR CASINO TAX RELIEF**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:06):** My question is directed to the Minister for Small Business. Annual payroll tax revenue will increase by over \$3 billion per annum by 2027. Why, in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, is the Minister's Government giving tax relief to The Star and not to small businesses?

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (11:06):** This morning it was great to observe the Leader of the Opposition deliver budget reply mark 2 after we had Alister Henskens deliver the budget reply on Tuesday morning.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** Point of order—

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

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** The Minister is being quite disrespectful and is not referring to members by their correct title.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. The Minister will refer to the member by his proper title.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** Some 80 per cent of small businesses do not pay payroll tax; let us get that clear. We have been at the forefront of engaging with small business since we have got into government. Unfortunately, the mob opposite had that portfolio orphaned for a very long time. It was a game of musical chairs with the Small Business portfolio. We are getting on with the job of representing small business.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** How many of them?

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** We have funded \$45 million in this budget to develop a business bureau to properly look after the small business community.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Where is it? You haven't set it up.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** We are creating a relationship with small business through a small business charter because we know how to represent small business.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** For 12 years none of those members opposite did anything for the small business community. They have not got licence to get up and talk about small business. I have represented small businesses for 30 years. I know what they need. None of those opposite have ever had an understanding of what to do with small business. They changed their small business Minister every three months!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order and allow the Minister to answer the question.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** We will not apologise for protecting jobs and keeping people in jobs, unlike those opposite. They do not care about people needing jobs. They have got no idea.

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

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** All they could complain about this morning is people getting a fair go with their pay packets. They make you sick. It is absolutely sickening.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Only you listening, mate. It's not about small business.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER:** Small business is in your head, mate. It is very small. That is your problem.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will come to order. Members will take a deep breath and calm down. In the interests of full transparency and so no-one is unaware, I confirm that the member for Miranda is on one call to order and the member for Goulburn is on one call to order.

#### STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (11:10):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the New South Wales Government's 2023-2024 budget has been received by regional New South Wales?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:10):** I am happy to advise the House that news.com.au said that the big winners in the New South Wales budget were the \$3.8 billion being spent on health by the New South Wales Government and the \$1.4 billion into education in regional New South Wales.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The *Australian Financial Review* said the big winners in the New South Wales budget were regional New South Wales. *The Daily Telegraph* said the big winners in the New South Wales budget were farmers and primary producers, with \$80 million to protect them from imported fire ants. It said the big losers in the New South Wales budget were feral pigs, because we put \$18 million into eradicating them. We did receive a lot of bipartisan support from unusual quarters. I will read some of the quotes. One person, a prominent country personality, said, "I'm really pleased and am more than a little relieved to see the hard work pay off." He added this is really "good news" for the region. Who was that? It was the member for Northern Tablelands. Good on you, mate. Speak your truth to power. There is another one here.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Another prominent regional community member said to his community, referring to water infrastructure, that he was really pleased to see "that the projects that we worked so hard on leading up to the election have been locked away and they have been honoured". That is interesting. That was the member for Tamworth over there. Good on you, Kevin. It keeps coming for more regional communities. This might shock members. This is a quote:

The budget has been handed down today—

and our area—

... has received a reasonable share. I welcome the continued funding of \$57.9 million to support the upgrades at our schools and TAFE.

That is the member for Tweed. Good on you, mate. It keeps going. They are a very honest group. I am not sure we were that honest when we were in opposition. The member for Cootamundra said she was "relieved to see vital funding commitments for the Cootamundra electorate being honoured".

I am happy to report to the House that on the basis of all of that, there is now no need for the National Party in New South Wales. We can wrap it up. Regional communities, taxpayers and cameramen everywhere will be thrilled with that announcement. I have to tell members that there has been one party pooper who has come to the table. That is, of course, the Leader of the National Party, who has been practising some Dugaldnomics. Dugaldnomics, he called it. He said that he was outraged because the road budget was just— [*Extension of time*]

He was shocked that there was only \$46 million for regional roads in the next 12-month period, wilfully ignoring that the New South Wales Government is committing \$670 million for regional transport. And is it any wonder that this once great and proud party is in its death throes? There is no other way of looking at it. I think the Leader of the National Party is aware of this. He commented on it in the past. He said he thinks that the National Party has lost its way a little bit. This was a moment of candour on 2GB from May. He said, "First of all, the way to get it back on track is to use proper market research, not just polling, literally—"

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

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

**Mr Alister Henskens:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I think the Premier has lost his way. The question was about how the budget has been received. It is not some question about the existential future of the National Party. It is about the budget and how it has been received.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He said, "First of all, it's about getting proper market research, not just polling, literally proper market research. "

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** He goes on to say, "I mean, if Qantas is failing, they find out why, right? We need to do the same thing." He is using Qantas as an example of how to get popular again. Alan Joyce is going to come back and give him tips.

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

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. Government members will come to order.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. If Government members want to have a crack in a full-on debate, let's do it. We have been trying to do that about a lot of things, so let's do it. Go on. Come on. Come on, Ryano.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo is seeking to have a substantive debate. There is no point of order.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I am happy with question time. I think this is going good—no need for a debate. There has been chronic underinvestment in regional New South Wales for 12 long years. We have happily turned it around. Judging by the reaction from National Party members, they agree with us. I make the point that the National Party has a lot of improvement to make before it is as popular as Qantas.

#### STATE BUDGET AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (11:16):** My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning. Appendix A5 of *Budget Paper No. 01* lists new policy measures. I refer to page A5-14, in particular. Given the budget papers there refer to "Universal preschool re-profiling"—

**Ms Anna Watson:** Too long.

**Mrs TINA AYYAD:** —is the Minister reducing expenditure on universal preschool in the budget?

**The SPEAKER:** The Deputy Premier has indicated that she is prepared to answer the question. She understands the question. I call the Minister.

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:17):** I am more than happy to answer the question. The answer is no. As I keep saying, it is no. I understand that there is an attempt on the Opposition side to find a smoking gun that does not exist. It is almost salivating about a cut that does not exist. How many times can we say this in black and white, in very clear, plain English for those opposite—

**Mr Ryan Park:** Draw it.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** As the Minister for Health says—

**Mr Ryan Park:** Draw it in crayon.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** —I will draw it. We are not cutting universal preschool or the fund that we supported when we were in opposition. Let us make it clear: We have made a significant investment in the future of our State and that begins with the littlest learners in early childhood education and care. It starts from the early years. I make this point very clear by saying it slowly: A total of \$5 billion over 10 years in the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund—that is what was in there. We have allocated \$5.7 billion over 10 years for universal preschool access—that is the answer to the member's question. Affordable preschool funding is \$1.6 billion over four years—I think members opposite had \$1.3 billion, so that is an increase. Start Strong is being funded; Brighter Beginnings is being funded. We have allocated \$265 million to the workforce, and we are ensuring that we plan for the future workforce needs of the early childhood sector.

I am not sure where this is coming from, but those opposite—the previous Government—are attempting to run a scare campaign because they believe something has happened in early childhood education and care that has not. It is a scare campaign of the worst type. We are talking about parents of little children. Governments across the country are trying to invest in universal preschool not only to get women, in particular, back to work but also to make sure that the valuable transition from preschool to kindergarten occurs. That early intervention is so important. Those opposite are salivating over a complete falsehood. I know that the former Minister in the other place is getting very excited and very exercised about something that seems to have been made up. I remind the people of New South Wales and the House that those opposite had 12 years to do this. At the very last moment,

they said, "I think we might build 500 preschools." The Government has committed to this in the budget, as I keep saying.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** Point of order—

**Ms PRUE CAR:** It is in the budget. The answer is no. I have answered the question. I do not know how I can be any clearer.

**The SPEAKER:** I still need to hear the point of order. However, the Minister's time has expired, so it is a moot point. The answer is concluded.

#### STATE BUDGET AND WESTERN SYDNEY

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (11:21):** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney. Can the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is delivering for Western Sydney?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:21):** I certainly can answer the great question—now that was a question—asked by the great member for Riverstone. What a budget it was for my friends in Western Sydney. After 12 years of neglect, this budget rebuilds essential services. After 12 years of wage suppression, this budget restores the wages of frontline workers in Western Sydney. After the former Government suppressed wages, this Government is investing in scrapping the wages cap, giving pay rises to essential workers and investing in the essential services that the people of Western Sydney rely on.

I was stunned to hear the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite talking about inflation this week. It is news to the Government that they suddenly care about inflation. Those opposite did not seem to care about inflation when they were suppressing the wages of the workers in Western Sydney. Let me explain the great windfall for the people of Western Sydney in this year's budget. The Government has delivered \$3 billion for new and upgraded hospitals in Western Sydney, including some hospitals that have never been upgraded. That includes the time that those opposite were in government.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Tell us about Fairfield.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** There is \$550 million for Fairfield Hospital—the first major redevelopment since it opened. The Government is proud of that. Well done to south-western Sydney MPs for their advocacy. There is \$350 million for Canterbury Hospital—the first major redevelopment of that hospital since 1998.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** There is an additional \$400 million for Rouse Hill Hospital, which those opposite announced and announced, while hundreds of thousands of people were moving into areas like Riverstone and Londonderry without the hospital that was promised. The Government has also made significant inroads to assist with the cost-of-living pressures that the people of Western Sydney are facing right now. Those opposite, when in government, made Sydney one of the most tolled cities in the world. The communities in Western Sydney feel it the most. Seventeen of the top 20 postcodes are in Western Sydney. Some families in Western Sydney are paying \$6,000 in tolls. The budget finally provides relief.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Hawkesbury and those opposite have absolutely no credibility talking about tolls. They sentenced the people of Western Sydney to debt.

**Mr Warren Kirby:** I seek an extension of time. Western Sydney has been neglected for a very long time.

**The SPEAKER:** The explanation is not necessary, but I appreciate the member's sentiment. I grant an additional two minutes.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** The member for Riverstone is very passionate about this issue. Those opposite sentenced the people of Western Sydney to tolls for decades and decades. On top of giving immediate relief to the families of Western Sydney, there is finally a government in New South Wales that is investing in and doing the serious structural work. Members in the Chamber have heard me talk ad nauseam this week about the record investment in Western Sydney schools.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This is a novel idea: building schools in new areas where people actually live.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** We are talking about the communities of Leppington, Gregory Hills, Gledswood Hills, Jordan Springs, Marsden Park, Tallawong and Schofields, which people and young families are moving to. The Government is finally building the schools that those opposite promised. People have been waiting. It is like the Loch Ness monster; it is talked about a lot, but it is never actually seen. The community in Marsden Park has not seen the high school that those opposite promised.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Those opposite might think it is funny, but it is not funny for the families of Gregory Hills. It is not funny. Their disdain for hardworking families is shown in their response to this every single time. Those opposite had schools stuck in planning limbo while communities moved in. People rustled together their savings to build their dream homes, but those opposite did not build the infrastructure that everyone is entitled to. Finally, those communities have a government that is building that infrastructure. They have voted for a new government that is building it.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** You are riding on the coat-tails.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Just because you say it, it does not make it true. Those opposite had 12 long years, and they did nothing.

### BURRINJUCK DAM

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (11:26):** My question is directed to the Premier. Funds that were to be allocated to Wyangala Dam could now be diverted to raising the wall at Burrinjuck Dam, which would increase its storage capacity. Does the Premier agree that it would fix many—not all, but many—of the current and future water issues we are facing, as well as significantly increase clean hydro energy production?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:27):** I thank the member for Murray for her question. The Government is developing its long-term regional water plans at the moment. It is important, particularly with the Bureau of Meteorology's recent declaration that we are heading into an El Niño weather pattern, which raises the stakes for regional communities. I confirm that the Government is investigating enlarging the capacity of the Burrinjuck Dam, whether that means an additional wall further downstream or increasing the height of the Burrinjuck Dam wall. That is under active consideration. The Government will speak to the local community and take feedback about that throughout 2024. The results of that consultation should be released by the end of next year. Again, it is critically important for that part of south-west New South Wales.

In relation to the second part of the question about pumped hydro, the Government believes it is important. The costs are large, and we have been unable to get private capital alone to invest in storage capacity. That is why there is a fund at the Federal level specifically to partner with the private sector to get the commercial case up and running. There is a similar need in New South Wales, for one reason only: When the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing, you need dispatchable power distributed to the east coast energy grid. Pumped hydro is part of that solution, so the Government has committed \$1 billion through the Energy Security Corporation. The Government genuinely believes that is money well spent for the power bills of the people of New South Wales.

### STATE BUDGET AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (11:28):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister update the House on how the first budget of the Minns Labor Government is increasing women's access to essential health care?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:29):** I thank the member for an important question. I acknowledge the member for Blue Mountains for her work in opposition on this important policy that we have now committed to and funded in the budget. I know the sector is proud of it. I say well done to the member. How good is the budget? I think on a second reading it gets better. It is amazing. Last night I listened to a podcast and had Mookhey in my ear rolling out the numbers. Then, all of a sudden, Alister came in. It was a bit weird and unusual. It was a bit crazy.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the point of order?

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** Members opposite are being disrespectful once again. They need to stop referring to members of this place by their names.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. The Minister will refer to members by their correct titles.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** My sincere apologies, Mr Speaker. What an absolutely incredible budget it was.

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

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I have been impressed by intelligent people like the member for Albury. Look at him now, reading the budget. He knows how good it is. The Premier has already gone through the list of people who are endorsing it; it is incredible and phenomenal. In terms of women's health services, the budget hits the mark. For the first time since the 1980s we will provide \$34 million to 20 women's health services across New South Wales. Last week, the member for Summer Hill, the Minister for Women, the member for Balmain and I visited the Leichhardt Women's Community Health Service. It was the first of its kind in Australia, opening in 1974 with a contribution of about \$30,000 at the time. Now we are delivering services to the most vulnerable women in each of our communities across New South Wales.

I am extremely proud of this announcement. I am extremely proud of the work that my colleague the Minister for Women has done to have a strong partnership with women's health services. I ask new MPs to please make sure they take the time to get to know them. Every single one of us who has done so knows about the work they are doing for women escaping domestic violence, women with mental health issues, women with disability, and women with drug and alcohol addiction. They care for some of the most vulnerable women in our community. In this budget we have said to them that we back them. For the first time since the 1980s, we have record funding for women's health centres. [*Extension of time*]

When I was in Penrith with the local member and the Deputy Premier to announce this commitment during the campaign, women said it was "game changing". It is game changing not just for the centres themselves but for each of us also. It is game changing for the communities that we love and represent, and for the most vulnerable people in them. I have spoken to Sally Stevenson, with whom the member for Shellharbour and the member for Wollongong have worked closely. She has been a tireless advocate for this in the Illawarra. I have also visited centres in Wagga Wagga and Bathurst.

We are also making an investment in sexual assault nurse examiners, who work in an area not often talked about. We are doubling their number because when, largely, women go through the most harrowing of experiences they need sensitive and holistic care delivered quickly. This is an investment to double the number of examiners so that when women experience their very worst of days, they will have a highly trained nurse and health worker to carry out that important examination. We are also investing in McGrath Breast Care Nurses. For the first time in a long time, we will make sure that those nurses are accessible to every single woman across New South Wales. When one in seven women suffer that awful diagnosis of breast cancer, we want to make sure that they get the support they need. This is a great budget for women and for the people of New South Wales. I look forward to talking more about it.

#### STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL ROADS

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (11:34):** My question is directed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Yesterday—

**The SPEAKER:** Members will cease interjecting. The member for Rockdale will come to order.

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** Yesterday—

**Mr Steve Whan:** He's about to say, "Yesterday I made a mistake."

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS:** That's what I think the Minister might say, yes. Yesterday, in relation to the Regional Roads Fund, the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads said:

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.

*Budget Paper No. 03* on page 1-5 clearly states, "\$46.6 million over four years for the Regional Roads Fund". I ask the Minister whether she is correct or the budget paper is correct.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (11:35):** I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question—it is good to see he has taken the time to read the budget paper. Members opposite are going to go into little micro bits of it. The problem is that members on the other side of the Chamber—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Terrigal to order for the second time. I can see where this is going. I will be profligate with my calls to order during this answer—I have heaps in reserve. Opposition members will calm down. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The problem for the member for Dubbo is that he is spruiking what he thinks is the bad news of the budget, which is the fact that we are putting \$390 million out the door.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the point of order?

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** The question is very simple. The Minister was asked whether she is correct or the budget paper is correct.

**The SPEAKER:** It is a simple question, but the member for Coffs Harbour knows that even a simple question is not answered in those terms. The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. The Minister will be heard in silence. At this point I cannot rule that she is not being directly relevant to the question. The Minister will continue her answer.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The Leader of The Nationals is quoting me in response to his—

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I had to get on the phone this morning to talk to the Mayor of Narromine and explain to him that when the Leader of The Nationals went to the *Daily Liberal* yesterday—

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

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** My point of order is under Standing Order 73. If the Minister wants to have a substantive debate, I am happy to do that.

[*A Government member interjected.*]

This was your favourite one!

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will come to order. I direct the member for Dubbo to leave the Chamber under Standing Order 249A until the conclusion of question time.

[*Pursuant to standing order the member for Dubbo left the Chamber at 11:38.*]

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I had to call the Mayor of Narromine this morning to say that they are getting money in the budget, contrary to what the member for Dubbo had been spruiking in the media. It was clearly articulated in the statement by the member for Barwon that Narromine was getting \$4.2 million. The Leader of The Nationals has such a hide to come in here and say that. There were no questions about regional New South Wales in the budget and there was no real attention to detail. We gave them extra time to do it.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: The Minister has made profligate remarks. Page 1-5 of *Budget Paper No. 03* says, "\$46.6 million over four years for the Regional Roads Fund".

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the point of order.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Yesterday, the Minister said it was \$46 million this year. The question is simple. Is the Minister correct—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. The point of order relates to direct relevance. The Minister is still being directly relevant.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Once again, the member is confused. The \$334 million is over four years. That is in the budget in black and white. The \$46.6 million is in the budget. We have the \$334 million fund. I do not know what is so difficult to understand about that.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: The Minister just quoted "\$46.6 million" directly from the budget but neglected to read "over four years for the Regional Road Fund". Is the Minister misleading the House? She just read it. She has a highlighter. I can see it. Read the whole highlighted part!

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Coffs Harbour to order for the second time. I call the member for Goulburn to order for the second time.

#### STATE BUDGET AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:41):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Government is delivering major infrastructure without privatising government assets?

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:41):** I thank the member for Parramatta for the question. She understands that we can deliver public transport infrastructure for the people of Western Sydney and the State without selling off vital public assets. That is what we will do. Members opposite were obsessed with privatisation, but the people of New South Wales had their say at the last election and they said loudly and clearly that they have had a gutful of it. Those opposite were absolutely obsessed with it. They would have sold anything that was not nailed down and then they would have sold the nails as well. They sold off our electricity assets and left the people of New South Wales with higher electricity prices, ageing assets and no energy policy.

They sold off hundreds of public housing properties, letting the waiting list blow out for those most in need across New South Wales. They sold off our roads. They made our city the most tolled city on the planet, and they left the families of Western Sydney at the mercy of a monopoly toll operator. They sold off our bus services, driving hundreds of drivers out of the profession and leaving passengers stranded on the side of the road. They were champing at the bit to sell Sydney Water, and we know that that is exactly what they would have done. If they were left to their own devices, they would have sold the Harbour Bridge. They would have sold everything. They said that privatisation was the golden key. Remember that one? What did the golden key unlock? It unlocked higher electricity prices, less housing for those who need it most, higher tolls and less reliable bus services. That is what those opposite stood for.

Members on this side of the House are proving them wrong. It is absolutely clear in our budget that there are different ways to do things. That is what the people of New South Wales want. Our Government's budget has shown that we can protect public assets and build the public transport infrastructure that the people of our State need and deserve. The Government is investing \$72.3 billion for new and improved public transport infrastructure without privatising a single public asset. We are investing an additional \$1 billion in the Sydney Metro City and Southwest to get that project back on track after the delays and cost blowouts under those opposite. They left us a mess. [*Extension of time*]

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Those opposite promised the Sydney to Bankstown conversion time and again, but never came up with a plan to deliver it. In fact, we know that they were going to cancel it. What did we do? We found the money to invest to make sure that passengers of south-west Sydney get the service they were promised. What are we doing? We are investing in essential public transport links to the new Western Sydney airport, which will transform Western Sydney and deliver the jobs and skills that the people of Western Sydney need.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** We are investing \$302.7 million to start work on the Western Sydney airport rapid bus network, which will connect the communities of Penrith, Liverpool and Campbelltown to the future Western Sydney airport. We are making sure that, when the first planes land in 2026, there will be a metro service from St Marys and bus services from south-west Sydney to deliver the workforce to run that 24/7 airport.

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

**Ms JO HAYLEN:** Those opposite were never able to do that. Unlike those opposite, we are investing in delivering the second stage of the Parramatta Light Rail, which is an essential service. We are making an additional \$200 million down payment to expedite that essential project. Let us remember that those opposite promised that project again and again. In fact, they announced it 17 times. But, in six years, they did not even put a shovel in the ground. We are getting on with that essential project for Western Sydney. In this term of government, we will begin construction on the second stage of the Parramatta Light Rail. That is possible because we are committed to delivering essential public transport services without privatisation for the people of New South Wales.

### REGIONAL SENIORS TRAVEL CARD

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (11:46):** My question is directed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. On Tuesday the Minister for Regional New South Wales in the other place said that questions about the regional seniors travel card are a matter for the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to respond to. Does she need to fact-check anything with the Premier or is she good?

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Myall Lakes will resume her seat. I will hear the point of order from the acting Leader of the House.

**Mr Ryan Park:** It is question time, not multiple-question time. The member asked a question, and we will provide an answer.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON:** I am asking it right now.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Myall Lakes will resume her seat. I do not want to have her removed from the Chamber when her daughter Lucy is in the gallery. The Minister heard the question.

**Mrs Tina Ayyad:** She hasn't concluded her question.

**The SPEAKER:** We heard the question.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON:** The Minister was distracted, so I was just asking whether she was ready to answer the question. Her back was to me.

**The SPEAKER:** I assumed the member for Myall Lakes had asked her question. She will begin again.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON:** The Minister for Regional New South Wales in the other place said that questions about the regional seniors travel card are a matter for the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to respond to. Will the Minister confirm for the 330,000 seniors who have received a regional seniors travel card this year that the program has been axed in the budget?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (11:48):** I apologise for holding up the House. I wanted to talk to the Premier about the magical incantations that Opposition members are using to interpret the budget papers. It is really hard. We have to work out how they are misinterpreting it before we can answer the question. I thank the member for Myall Lakes for the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Coffs Harbour to order for the third time. I call the member for Goulburn to order for the third time.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is good to hear that those opposite are finally getting it right. I am the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. The regional seniors travel card is in my portfolio and it is appropriate that they should ask me about those programs. Great; bring it on. I am excited.

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Government is about choices. It is about prioritising safety—in this portfolio, most of all. The member for Port Macquarie brought a petition to this place, which we will debate later today. I will give the House a bit of a spoiler alert. While giving notice of a motion today, the member mentioned the 24,000 people—

**Mrs Tanya Thompson:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. I can think of a couple of points of order on this one. I will hear the point of order from the member for Myall Lakes.

**Mrs Tanya Thompson:** I will cut straight to Standing Order 129. The Minister has not been directly relevant at all. I have asked about the regional seniors travel card, which she has not addressed at all. Will it be cut in the budget? I am not asking about the member for Port Macquarie.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Myall Lakes. That was not the best point of order to take. I do not uphold the point of order.

**Mr Gurmesh Singh:** Point of order: The Minister is foreshadowing debate later in the day. I ask her to return to the leave of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** That is not the best one either. I do not uphold the point of order. The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. I am not here to coach the Opposition on how to take points of order. The Minister will resume her answer.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Going directly to the question, we cannot cut what is not there. That is the problem. Those opposite did not fund the regional seniors travel card in the budget last year. They did not make a commitment at the election. There was no money for it there. Talk to the ex-Treasurer. There was no money.

**Ms Eleni Petinos:** Point of order: The Minister is not directly answering the question. I found Labor's budget burn book, and the regional seniors travel card is actually at the end.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Miranda will resume her seat. There is no point of order. I call the member for Miranda to order for the second time.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** Mr Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I bring to your attention that this is the third day in a row that Opposition members—particularly members of the National Party—have resorted to the tactic of asking a question of this Minister, in particular, and then haranguing her with four, five or six points of order during a three-minute response. They are reducing question time to a farce.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Attorney General for his advice. As Speaker, I must hear points of order. Members are entitled to take points of order. That has been the rule for the 16-plus years that I have been in this House. One member has been removed from the Chamber today and a number of members are on three calls to order. I am applying the rules as best I can. I assure members that the Minister is answering the question very well. I do not speak to the content of her answer, but she is answering the question. I will hear points of order when I think one may be relevant. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. I appreciate it. Going back to the question, we cannot cut something that is not there. If it is not in the budget, if it is not in the election commitment that those opposite made when they were in government, we cannot cut it. That is not a cut. We are prioritising safety. Those opposite are happy to put their hands up for infrastructure upgrades. They are happy to put their hands up for new roads and for better services. But, as we heard from the member for Wagga Wagga the other day, they still want to go out to their electorates and say to regional seniors, "Here is \$250 and two tanks of petrol. Don't worry about the damage you're going to do to your axle. Don't worry when your car goes into a pothole the size of a trench", because they will not maintain the roads.

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

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That is the problem. Public funds should be used for the best public value. Giving out \$250 to all your mates to get their votes and to say, "Don't vote for an Independent because The Nationals will give you two tanks of petrol this year", is outrageous. [*Time expired.*]

**The SPEAKER:** I hate to do this, but I call the member for Port Macquarie to order for the third time.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** What did I say?

**The SPEAKER:** It is not about what the member said. She will cease interjecting.

#### STATE BUDGET AND HOUSING

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (11:53):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government's first budget is addressing the housing crisis and delivering relief for more first home buyers?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:54):** Opposition members are a bit excited today. I am sure they will be listening intently to the answer to this question, because most of them never have met a housing proposal that they did not want to oppose. They should go out to Penrith and see the brilliant, high-class development of Thornton. It is a great example of quality housing, delivered by who? Landcom, the Government's own property developer. It is close to transport hubs—in this case, Penrith station—and includes diverse housing, community facilities, public art and water features. It is very similar to the type of proposal that the Leader of the Opposition opposed in his own electorate of Cronulla, despite pretending to support housing near transport links.

The Minns Government is using the special dividend that has been sitting in a bank account for years, after the previous Government got Landcom to sell off all its land assets because it was preparing Landcom to be sold. That was the ultimate game of those opposite, because privatisation is in their DNA. They cannot help themselves. They see a public asset and go, "Let's sell it!" That is their approach. I know the Opposition leader has been very interested in Landcom in the past couple of days, since the budget was announced. He has been doing some maths, trying to work out how it would work. I have heard the Deputy Premier say how education standards have slipped in this country but, jeez, I did not realise that they had fallen so far. The Opposition leader claimed that only 88 houses a year will be delivered by Landcom. In fact, over the period of the housing accord, more than 20,000 homes will be delivered by Landcom. Before the Opposition leader takes his shoes and socks off to do the maths, I will do it for him. That works out to be nearly 3,400 each year. He is out by about 4,000 per cent.

**Mr Chris Minns:** He's trying.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I acknowledge that interjection from the Premier; he is trying. What he cannot do is match our commitment to confronting the housing crisis that we inherited from the previous Government. He cannot match our \$1 billion in stamp duty relief for first home buyers. He cannot match our faster planning pathways program, which will strengthen the oversight of the Building Commissioner, assess government-owned

sites for suitability of housing and introduce artificial intelligence—I know he supported artificial intelligence, which is good. [*Extension of time*]

I guess he has to support artificial intelligence; it is the key member of his tactics group. An interesting thing in the budget reply speech was the support for councils. I found that really interesting because we already have a fund to support councils: \$1 billion to support councils that are taking housing. Guess what? In June, when members opposite got a chance to vote for it, what did they do? They voted against it. They voted against it because they want to continue their commitment to not delivering infrastructure that supports housing. They are dedicated to not having schools, hospitals, parks, roads and the like delivered when housing comes along. They voted against it, and now they are supporting it. Take the member for Oatley. He supported one housing development, and then voted against it. They are all over the place.

Members opposite cannot be trusted when it comes to housing. They left us in a housing crisis, and we are doing our best to confront that with infrastructure contributions reform, stamp duty reform and rental reform and by making sure that we will build more homes using the Government's own property developer. Today we saw the profligate spending of members opposite continue when, once again, the Leader of the Opposition committed to keeping his forever tax on the family home as well as our stamp duty concessions. That is another \$700 million, on top of the \$30 billion in new commitments that they had already made. How will they pay for it? They will pay for it through more privatisation, the reintroduction of a cap on the wages of essential workers and even more debt than ever before, because that is how they roll.

### STATE BUDGET AND WESTINVEST

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (11:59):** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, representing the Treasurer in the other place. The Government's comprehensive expenditure review identified \$13 billion in budget improvements and reprioritisation measures over five years, including unallocated funding from WestInvest. Prior to the election, the Coalition announced projects to fully allocate the \$5 billion fund to transformational projects in Western Sydney. Which WestInvest projects has the Government cut?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:59):** I thank the member for his question. It is nice that members opposite have actually asked one on the detail of the budget.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** It was right at this time yesterday that they had run out of questions on the budget. They were asking about switchboard contracts in schools. That was another fake news story they tried out. And what was the other one?

**Mr Chris Minns:** The chairman's lounge.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** The chairman's lounge. That is it. They were worried about the chairman's lounge.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** On budget day.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Yes, absolutely.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Twenty-four hours after the budget was delivered, they do not have a budget question left in them. But, yes, we absolutely did do a comprehensive expenditure review. What did we find through that? We found money that could be redirected to other places. We found wasteful spending that should have been redirected to other places. We found \$745 million out of politicians' pay and senior executive pay. We cut consultant and labour hire, saving \$537 million. The member for Winston Hills is right. We did find \$13 billion worth of savings. We redirected them to rebuilding essential services, confronting the housing crisis, getting the renewable energy road map back on track and paying down Liberal Party debt. We have cut down the growth of debt by \$14.8 billion.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order: My point of order is direct relevance under Standing Order 129. The Minister was asked a specific question about WestInvest. He is rambling all over the place. What is the Government cutting from WestInvest?

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition. The Minister is close to being directly relevant.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** That does not quite make it relevant.

**The SPEAKER:** I will interpret for the member for Terrigal. The Minister has not answered the question directly, but he is prefacing his answer. The Minister will be directly relevant to the question regarding WestInvest.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** We have done nothing to WestInvest that is different from what we took to the election and what people voted for. We have done nothing to anything that is different from what we took to the election and what people voted for. Why? It is because we are a government that keeps our election commitments, and we will continue to keep those election commitments. The comprehensive expenditure review was an important part of delivering on those election commitments.

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

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** It was an important part of making sure that we can fund essential services into the future and an important part of making sure that we are not paying bondholders but instead paying workers. I know members opposite do not like it, because they have not met a worker whose pay they did not want to cut. They have not met a worker whom they would not want to lock out of housing. But we are doing the opposite.

#### STATE BUDGET AND BUILDING INDUSTRY

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:02):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, and Minister for Building. Will the Minister update the House on what the Minns Labor Government is doing to bring confidence back to the building sector in New South Wales?

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:03):** I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question. His electorate neighbours my electorate to the south. He knows the importance of building in his electorate and mine as well. We have experienced, and will be experiencing, significant growth in building construction as more houses come into our communities. He has been a strong advocate for people in his community to ensure that buildings in his electorate—and in all electorates across New South Wales—are built to a high-quality standard. The Minns Labor Government is absolutely focused on addressing the dual challenges of the housing crisis we have inherited—that is, building more and quality homes. That puts trust and confidence back into the sector to ensure continued investment and gives people confidence in making the biggest investment of their lifetime not only financially but—as we all know—emotionally as well. As people buy their houses or their units, it is so important to ensure that we get trust and confidence back into the sector.

Our recent budget is a real testament to bringing back the trust and confidence. A \$24 million investment will help implement our election commitment to establish the NSW Building Commission, ensuring that it is primed to make an immediate impact when it is established by the end of the year. A portion of the \$24 million will be allocated to boosting data tracking and digital initiatives. We collect a lot of data. That is actually really important because the data that is collected needs to be better used as well. It means better monitoring of bad actors in the building sector, allowing the Building Commissioner to better target his proactive investigations into worksites and before works are completed. It is a proactive way of doing better risk profiling, a more efficient way of using our resources to better target those who are doing the wrong thing, and a much more effective way of doing regulation in the twenty-first century.

Our reforms will deliver a single building regulator, providing a one-stop shop for building complaints and sending a clear signal that there is a tough cop on the beat. An essential part of the initiative is the Building Commission's dedicated workforce. You cannot do things if you do not have a proper workforce. The new Building Commission will have a dedicated team of over 400 professionals, led by Building Commissioner David Chandler. The Building Commission will not only target dodgy builders but, more importantly, also improve the quality of the building sector to turn the ship around, to restore confidence and integrity, and to make people confident when buying.

**Mr Greg Warren:** I seek further information about the hard work that the Minister has been doing.

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

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** I thank the member for Campbelltown. The Building Commissioner will help good builders become better builders, improving their skills and capabilities. The pressing housing challenges in New South Wales are evident for all to see. We need more houses to alleviate the mounting pressure in the housing and rental space so that we can continue to attract and retain the younger generation, making our economy and communities stronger. But we are not just looking at the numbers. We cannot have more homes built at the expense of quality and standards. Creating a first-time, standalone Building Commission not only ensures stronger oversight of the industry but also allows Fair Trading to zero in on its fundamental mission of consumer protection. That includes extending the Building Commissioner's powers to class 1 dwellings so that home owners will also benefit from the reforms.

Beyond that, we are also introducing decennial liability insurance. A DLI, as it is known, is a 10-year latent defect liability insurance that covers defects in common areas of multistorey apartments even if builders are no longer in business. That means the insurance stays with the building, not the builder, giving owners and the industry greater protection and greater confidence to ensure that we turn this ship around, because housing, as we know, is such an important challenge and we need reform that makes a significant difference that also works with the market. In addition, we will introduce a plain English building Act to make it easier for industry to meet its obligations—a one-stop shop for licensing, regulation and oversight to make it a much more effective and comprehensive reform. In essence, our budget for housing and the building space is more than just a financial plan; it is a blueprint for a more robust and effective protection system for consumers, putting trust and confidence back into a sector that means so much to so many people to make our economy and communities better.

### NSW POLICE FORCE

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (12:08):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Police across our State do a fantastic job keeping us safe. However, it is very worrying that there is a shortage of 1,423 police officers. How will the Minister make it easier for recruits with financial or family responsibilities to become police officers, and how will she reduce the barriers for new recruits studying at the police academy in Goulburn?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (12:08):** I thank the member for Barwon for the question and acknowledge his long-held support for the NSW Police Force across his electorate. He is well regarded by the police for his constant advocacy and respect for them. Our essential workers, including police, work tirelessly, day and night, to respond to a wide range of complex public safety issues in our community. Unfortunately, members opposite left our Police Force with hundreds of vacant positions. As we heard from the member for Barwon, as of this week there are 1,423 vacancies across New South Wales. No doubt some of those vacancies are in the dozens of stations in the member for Barwon's electorate. I think there are 26 stations. Is that correct?

**Mr Roy Butler:** Forty-three.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Sorry, I only went halfway. We must look very closely at the reason for those vacancies in our Police Force. I say to the member for Barwon that I am deeply committed to improving that because we must; we do not have a choice. We must boost recruitment and increase retention. That is a critical part of the equation. Otherwise we will continue to see a disastrous deterioration in police numbers, as we saw under the previous Government. The member raised a very important question about the recruitment process for police. It is very tough to spend time away from home. That is the commitment one makes when one signs up to the Police Force and heads to the academy. As I am sure the member would be aware, currently there are quite generous incentives in place to support recruits financially to attend the academy. Those incentives provide means-tested measures of up to \$10,000 at the top end.

Recruits can begin to earn a salary of over \$80,000 working as a probationary constable on the front line while they are halfway through their training and formal studies. But we know it is not enough—the proof is in the pudding—especially with stagnating wages and the increasing cost of housing and cost of living. I have heard the member for Barwon; we have spoken about that. I know how genuine he is on the matter, which is why I want to ensure that he is part of the solution with Labor. I recognise that taking four months out of one's life to study at the academy is challenging for some. The Government is grateful— [*Extension of time*]

As the member for Barwon well knows, the Police Association is very aware of and concerned about this issue. Recently, Kevin Morton rightly said, "We need to show people what a fantastic career policing can be." The Police Association knows, as do we, that we have the country's best Police Force. We must promote that. We must encourage people and tell people what a wonderful career they can have. The opportunities are almost endless. One could have 20 different careers with the NSW Police Force. I want to ensure that the NSW Police Force is representative of our community more broadly: We must have more women, more diversity and more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The NSW Police Force must look like our community so that it can represent our community.

We must think about how to incentivise people to join the NSW Police Force and evaluate whether the way we are doing it provides the best outcome for our officers. Everything must be on the table. I look forward to working with the member for Barwon on that. I am pleased to report that I am working with the NSW Police Force and the New South Wales Police Association to look at innovative measures to ensure that we are recruiting and retaining the appropriate numbers of officers for the NSW Police Force because they keep us safe on a day-to-day basis. They are the people we call every time there is an issue or concern. They are the people we must respect. We must ensure that they have long, fulfilling careers. I look forward to working further on this issue

with the member for Barwon—and with other members if they would like to. Many Opposition members sit on my couch and tell me how wonderful their police are. Get on board and stick up for the cops in New South Wales.

### **KOALA HABITAT PROTECTION**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (12:14):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice, representing the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House on what the Minns Labor Government is doing to help protect koalas?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (12:14):** I have a very short amount of time, but I ask that members "bear" with me—thank you very much. The Minns Labor Government is the bearer of very good news for our koalas. Under the budget we have committed \$171 million over four years to bring koalas back from the brink. Some \$80 million over four years will go to the Great Koala National Park, \$48.2 million will go towards establishing the Georges River Koala National Park, \$26.7 million will go to fund the completion of three koala-friendly crossings, \$7.3 million will go to transfer wildlife corridors in Woronora Heights and \$9.7 million will fund koala hospitals. The member for Heathcote is eminently "koalafied" to ask her question. We know she is a champion for koalas. Today she will get her very own Caramello Koala.

**The SPEAKER:** I assume there will be time for stand-up comedy from the Minister later on.

### **COAL ROYALTIES**

**Mr RYAN PARK:** By leave: Pursuant to Standing Order 131 (7), I table a written response from the Premier to a question asked of him by the member for Kiama during question time on 14 September 2023.

#### *Announcements*

### **WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY**

**The SPEAKER (12:15):** On behalf of the member for Shellharbour and Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Dementia, I inform members that today is World Alzheimer's Day. All MPs and their staff are invited to experience in virtual reality what it is like to live with dementia at a drop-in session hosted by Dementia Australia in the Macquarie Room until 3.00 p.m.

#### *Committees*

### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

#### **Inquiry**

**Mr GREG WARREN:** As Chair: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety has resolved to conduct an inquiry into electric and hybrid vehicle batteries, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

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

#### **Chair and Deputy Chair**

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with Standing Order 282 (2), I advise the House that on 20 September 2023 the Hon. Peter Primrose, MLC, was elected chair and the Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC, was elected deputy chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

#### *Business of the House*

### **BUSINESS LAPSED**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that, in accordance with Standing Order 105, general business notices of motion (general notices) Nos 270 to 299 will lapse tomorrow.

I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

#### *Motions*

### **GLENDALE TAFE**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (14:30):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that Glendale TAFE provides vital skills training and education for hundreds of graduates every year.

- (2) Notes the expanded training opportunities for TAFE students thanks to the recent investment from the Government.
- (3) Thanks the Premier for this funding boost and looks forward to the implementation of benefits to Glendale TAFE.

Glendale TAFE is a wonderful institution. TAFE is the cornerstone of the vocational education system in our State, but it has been undermined, particularly in the last three terms of the conservative former Government. Staff, students and teachers were subjected to savage funding cuts and job losses, fees skyrocketed, and unworkable administrative systems were foisted upon campuses time and again. TAFE was facing a death by a thousand cuts as more and more vocational education was shifted to private providers. Some were dodgy and others were fly-by-night operations; many of them were just not up to scratch.

From 2012 to 2022 there was a 45 per cent decrease in TAFE teachers, and 15 per cent of permanent teachers have been replaced by casuals since 2015. TAFE enrolment numbers have decreased by 28 per cent since 2012. The drop in apprenticeship and traineeship commencements since 2011 is even worse. But the most damning statistic of all is that TAFE completions are down by two-thirds since 2012. TAFE staff have lost out, TAFE teachers have lost out and, most importantly, students and communities have lost out. A local lady named Cindy told me on social media that it is "totally disgusting what our TAFE system has become", while Max said, "The last Government cut TAFE to the bone."

Neither Cindy nor Max could have known how bad the situation really was. After the election, we learnt that the previous Government left TAFE with a funding shortfall of almost \$200 million, which could mean campus closures, courses being cut, job losses and, worst of all, questions about how to maintain the safety of teachers and students. Emily summed it up very well when she wrote to me and said:

Constant casual work and no guarantee year to year on if you will work. Or last minute courses cancelling. Hours and hours of unpaid work preparing, mentoring and supporting students. Big reasons I won't teach again. I went to TAFE in the 90's in Sydney to study, it was fantastic ... hope they can reverse the damage that has been caused.

The Minns Government is committed to repairing TAFE, starting with a comprehensive review of the vocational education system to determine the full impact of cuts and establish a path to rebuilding TAFE. We want a path to be rebuilt as soon as possible. The Government was elected to return TAFE to where it belongs: at the heart of the State's vocational education system. We will keep TAFE campuses in public hands, hire an additional 1,000 apprentices and trainees across the New South Wales Government by 2026, guarantee a minimum of 70 per cent of the skills budget will go to TAFE, and establish a manufacturing centre of excellence in the Hunter alongside centres of excellence in Western Sydney and in the Illawarra.

The Commonwealth is partnering with the Minns Government to invest \$319 million as part of a 12-month skills agreement, which will deliver up to 120,000 fee-free places in TAFE and vocational education courses in 2023. It is an important step forward to help build our local skills base and address rising cost-of-living pressures. A student studying a Diploma of Building and Construction will save up to \$8,220. A student studying a Diploma of Information Technology (Cyber Security) will save up to \$4,060. A student studying a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care will save up to \$4,970. A student studying a certificate III in Electrotechnology (Electrician) will save up to \$3,960. We are making a start. It is the kind of start I want to see more of.

TAFE means a lot to my family personally. As part of a working-class family, my brother and older sister left school at 15. My brother was an apprentice bricklayer. He got his start at TAFE. He then did his clerk of works training and became a TAFE teacher up the coast in Coffs Harbour, then in Singleton. Then he became the head bricklaying teacher at Newcastle TAFE. He was so interested in and good at the industrial arts that he became the welding skills manager in New South Wales, and he loved that. He designed programs for all the competitions, which was wonderful. TAFE gave my brother the kind of start you just do not get elsewhere. In conclusion, we are making a start. I want to see much more of it. TAFE is fundamentally important to our education system, and I ask that the Opposition support the motion because it is sensible and it is about our future.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (14:37):** I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. I thank the member for her advocacy and work on behalf of her community. I speak firstly about the TAFE campus in the electorate of the member for Wallsend, which has a real sense of community spirit and a commitment to supporting the vulnerable, as demonstrated by its recent involvement in the Hunter Homeless Connect Day and R U OK? Day. I acknowledge the staff and students at Glendale TAFE. The member stated that TAFE is the cornerstone of vocational education and training in New South Wales. I acknowledge the challenges that TAFE campuses right across Australia have been through. This is in part a result of Gillard-era reforms of the early 2010s of which the member would be well aware. Those reforms led to significant changes across the TAFE sector, to the point where the last year of the Liberal-Nationals Government saw record investment of \$2.1 billion in TAFE.

That is where I call out the member for Wallsend. She spoke of talking to people like Cindy. I think it is important for her to go back to Cindy and talk about NSW Labor's budget handed down this week. Page 5-11

of *Budget Paper No. 02 – Agency Financial Statements* sees a cut to total opex for TAFE NSW of 0.8 per cent. Members will note a cut to TAFE NSW revenue of 7.8 per cent. Employee expenses receive a 0.1 per cent increase when the budget papers note at page 5-6 that employee expenses are projected to grow by an average of 4.1 per cent per annum over the forward estimates. Members will see that capex by NSW Labor has been cut by 13.3 per cent.

I encourage the member for Wallsend to tell people like Cindy about what those opposite are doing around Smart and Skilled VET concessions. Again, that has been cut from \$213 million in the last budget to \$165 million in this budget. That is a cut of 22.2 per cent. The member rightly talks about the opportunities that we give to people by allowing them to upskill but at the same time NSW Labor is cutting concession opportunities for people to be upskilled. The budget papers indicate a decrease in land and building of \$47.6 million on the balance sheet, as well as decreases in total and net assets. The member spoke about the Government's promise of 1,000 apprentices. Again, let us look into that. The funding for that promise in this budget is based on wage growth for those apprentices of 3 per cent this year, 2.5 per cent next year and 2.5 per cent the following year. This funding will not stack up based on the current Government's wage policy.

The member also spoke about the centres of excellence. Regarding her Government's own promise, the Parliamentary Budget Office noted that there was no infrastructure associated with those centres of excellence. That was backed up in the budget this week: no infrastructure associated with the claim of three centres of excellence. One has to ask whether Labor's promise of centres of excellence for manufacturing is just manufactured. At the end of the day, members speak about opportunity. Labor members speak about rebuilding TAFE at the same time as Labor is actually cutting TAFE. Those opposite talk about a rebuild yet they cut the opex and cut the revenue. They keep employee expenses at close to zero when they know their own wage policy in the budget talks of at least 4.1 per cent.

**Ms Anna Watson:** What about the dodgy providers? Mums and dads pay \$25,000 for an assistant in nursing.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Shellharbour. She can look at the history of the role of private registered training organisations as part of the Gillard reforms. There needs to be significant reform across the nation.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Government members will come to order.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** Labor members are obviously upset. But they need to go back and ask their own Minister and their own Government why they are cutting the opex, the revenue and the staff. When members opposite say how important it is that they are rebuilding, they need to go back to their communities and admit they are cutting the TAFE budget. They say one thing and they do another. They ought to be truthful with their communities and give them the budget papers. This information is in their own budget—cut, cut, cut. Those opposite talk about rebuilding, but they are delivering cuts. What a falsehood. They should be ashamed of themselves. They talk up TAFE while making cuts to it.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (14:44):** I am always happy to speak about TAFE. It is an incredible New South Wales institution. I note the comments of the member for Wallsend about Glendale TAFE and her advocacy for its importance to the local community. In my electorate of Heathcote I have the wonderful Loftus TAFE. Recently I met its passionate staff and saw the terrific infrastructure. TAFE is really close to my heart. I am a beneficiary of TAFE. I enjoyed school and thought it was fun, but when I undertook some subjects at TAFE that I was really passionate about—industrial relations and personal management—I started my career. I know from many conversations I have had with locals that TAFE not only changes people's lives but also saves people's lives.

I remember a young man I met when doorknocking who told me he had been at a turning point in his life, a low time. The choice he made to undertake study at TAFE actually saved his life. He turned his life around and he now has a great, secure job. Another told me of the studying he undertook at TAFE to be a chef. When I asked him, "Mate, where are you working now?" he replied, "New York". I have also spoken to many who have undertaken studies at university and then go to TAFE for more practical experience. TAFE gives young people a chance to enter the workforce and lay the foundations for a long and successful career, especially through the VET courses in years 11 and 12. TAFE also provides mature students with a pathway from one career to another. Most importantly, it is a place where both vital occupation and life skills are learned.

I am proud to be part of the Minns Government, which is determined to restore TAFE to the great educational institution it once was, especially at a time when we have skilled trade shortages. I inform the member for Albury that under the Minns Government 2023-24 budget an additional \$111.8 million has been added to

TAFE's operational budget. That is in complete contrast to how the previous Government viewed TAFE. Over 12 years those opposite caused an incredible amount of damage to TAFE.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The member for Albury will cease interjecting.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART:** Those opposite sacked staff in both teacher and support admin roles. They shut down campuses scattered throughout the State and left ghost towns behind. They cut English classes, Aboriginal services and support services for students with disabilities. They made the cruellest decisions. Young ones wanted to take up an opportunity to study and gain qualifications for employment. From 2012 to 2022, there was a 45 per cent decrease in the number of TAFE teachers. Enrolments also dropped by 28 per cent from 2012. Since 2011, the number of apprenticeships and traineeship commencements has plummeted by 33 per cent whilst TAFE completions have declined by 67 per cent. In other words, the only thing that increased during this period was the casualisation of teachers. There was a 15 per cent drop in permanent teachers. That is the former Government's only legacy regarding TAFE. It is despicable, disgusting and absolutely disheartening to so many, particularly the next generation.

The Minns Government's investment in TAFE has saved the iconic institution. It is another mess of many that we need to repair—and that is a fact. At a time when we are facing a housing crisis and in the middle of skills shortages, investment in TAFE is a priority for our Government. In closing, I note a media release today that highlighted the 1,000 new apprentices and trainees that will result from a \$93.5 million investment. This program will be for New South Wales Government departments. Training Services NSW will work alongside TAFE NSW. I congratulate our Government on its great work for TAFE.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (14:48):** It is with pride that I speak in debate on this motion as the TAFE Minister who delivered the largest ever budget in TAFE's history, and it is with huge regret that I note the Labor budget has actually made cuts to the TAFE budget. After those opposite criticised the Coalition's policies for 12 years with regard to TAFE, it is absolutely appalling and hypocritical that the first Minns Labor budget cuts the TAFE budget in the way it does.

**Mr Edmond Atalla:** You guys decimated TAFE.

**Ms Anna Watson:** You privatised it.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** I hear the interjections across the Chamber, but the fact of the matter is that the TAFE budget has been cut and there has been an attack on apprenticeships and TAFE under this budget. Regional apprentice travel cards have been cut. The operational budget for TAFE has been cut. Just yesterday, Minister Rose Jackson said on radio that the Government was looking at TAFE assets in order to augment housing within New South Wales.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** That should send a shiver down the spine of everyone who cares about TAFE, because this Labor Government will take land from TAFE, repurpose it and take it away from providing skills and training. What do we have in New South Wales at the moment? We have a shortage of labour and skills that are needed for our economy. What is the response of Labor to that? After the Coalition delivered a record budget for TAFE last year, the response of this Government to a lack of skilled workers is to cut the TAFE budget. As the member for Albury said in his excellent contribution, the promises of three centres of excellence have not been backed up in the budget. I note the Coalition's proud record in terms of the institutes of applied technology, the way in which—

[A Government member interjected.]

You have had your chance. Just let me have my chance.

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

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS:** The Coalition has a proud record of repurposing the whole future of technical education in this State with our institutes of applied technology. I have had the privilege of visiting many TAFE campuses in the State. I give a shout-out to the TAFE teachers. We came up with nation-leading policies to make it easier for people to become TAFE teachers.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The member for Shellharbour will cease interjecting or she will be called to order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** As I visited the campuses, many TAFE teachers thanked us for investing in the training of new TAFE teachers. Many TAFE teachers love TAFE. Government members would not know that; they just want to shout across the Chamber when I am making my contribution. Teachers love TAFE and they

want to make sure there are new TAFE teachers. Our policies provided great opportunities to repurpose and retrain TAFE teachers to make TAFE better. This budget cuts funds to TAFE. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (14:53):** I am glad that the clock ran out and put an end to that Orwellian speech from the member for Wahroonga. The former Government did stand for a couple of things around TAFE. One was sacking staff; another was loading up the students with debt. I will get to both of those things. The member for Wahroonga spoke about visiting TAFE campuses and being thanked by staff. There would not have been too many staff left. In 2011, when those opposite came into government, there were 15,000 permanent staff members. It sacked 7,000 of them, leaving only 8,000. Compared to the original 15,000, that is a significant number. I am not sure who was thanking the former Minister. Perhaps he can provide us with a short list of who they were, because I am sure it would be a short list.

With regard to the budgets introduced by the previous Government, the former Minister wanted to talk about record budgets that were apparently provided. I will tell members about the structural form of those budgets. They were built on student debt. Forty per cent of the TAFE budget, as constructed by those opposite over a 12-year period, was from student debt. If those opposite want to talk about a record budget of \$2 billion, I will put on the record that \$1 billion of that was being carried by the students.

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

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** The former Government set up some of the lowest paid workers to leave their training with \$1 billion in debt every year. That was its gift to TAFE, its gift to the people of New South Wales, its gift to the students and to the people who are trying to find a pathway forward for their career. That is what it stood for: Sack the teachers and load up the students with debt. That is what it did to TAFE. For those opposite to stand in the Chamber and say they did anything different to that is an absolute lie and a fabrication. The books and the budgets speak to all of this. The community spoke by not participating.

Those opposite want to pretend that they are in no way, shape or form responsible for the skills shortages that we have in 2023. Who was at the helm of TAFE for the past 12 years? How can they stand in the Chamber and say, "There is a skills shortage in 2023. We were in government for 12 years, but we're not responsible. It wasn't us!" For goodness sake, of course it was them. They were in control of the budget. They were in control of TAFE. They were in control of engaging students in TAFE—or, in their case, repelling them. Students do not want to go into an environment where they will be forced to take on debt and then risk carrying the debt forward after they complete their studies. Not only that, but when TAFE campuses are shut down, students are forced to travel to get to TAFE. The former Government put in place a barrier to participation that encouraged people not to access TAFE. The entire time I have been speaking, the former Minister for TAFE, fragile jaw and all, has been trying to interject because he cannot handle the truth. He knows that he is responsible and his Orwellian speech is proof that the glass jaw is flapping but nobody is listening.

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

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (14:57):** Today we come together to acknowledge the Government's transformative policy change that has the potential to deliver so many benefits to learners experiencing disadvantage. I start today with a story that to me epitomises what TAFE can do. Picture a young lady who, at 16, decides that she would like to leave school to pursue a professional dance career. She studies at a specialised dance school, where she suffers a career-ending injury. Her decision to take on a professional dance career ends 12 months after it started. She comes back home to her family dejected and completely unwilling to go back into a school system that she had walked away from.

She was able to sign up to Liverpool TAFE to undertake a certificate III, then consequently a certificate IV. She described Liverpool TAFE as "the twilight zone". She studied in a business room where literally no-one was seen during the day. She discovered, after some research, that it had formerly been an institution and she felt it perhaps could even have been haunted because there were so few people there. She attended every week, completed her certificate III and certificate IV and then attained early entry to study law at Western Sydney University. That is what TAFE does. The removal of the cap on needs-based loadings represents a significant stride towards fostering inclusivity and boosting training completion rates, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disabilities and the long-term unemployed. For far too long, those groups have faced unique barriers to education and training, hindering their ability to fully participate in and benefit from the opportunities that education can provide.

As a former teacher, I know that teachers are the first to admit that schools are not for everybody. TAFE has long been, or was, the institution that captured those students who were not able to attend school every day. They may have had family to care for. Over the past 12 years, that has been stripped away bit by bit so that now there are TAFEs with some students, very few teachers and empty classrooms. One of the primary ways that the

policy change improves training completion rates is by acknowledging the diverse needs of those groups. Students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, students with disabilities and the long-term unemployed often require additional support, resources and tailored strategies to successfully complete their training. By removing the cap on needs-based loadings, the potential is unlocked for training providers to allocate the necessary resources to address those needs comprehensively and support our most needy students.

Moreover, the policy change encourages training providers to develop specialised programs that cater to the unique learning styles and requirements of those students. By facilitating a more inclusive and adaptable learning environment, we create pathways that not only lead to completion but also, and more importantly, empower those individuals to contribute actively to their communities and the broader society. For anyone who is listening at home, that means that those individuals become active members of the economy. That is something I would have thought those opposite would respect. In conclusion, the removal of the cap on needs-based loadings is a step forward in the journey towards a more equitable and accessible education and training landscape.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA:** I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (15:01):** In reply: Given that it is such an important topic, I am disappointed that the member for Mount Druitt was not allowed to speak and promote the wonderful institution that is TAFE, which this Government intends to improve. I thank the member for Albury, the member for Heathcote, the member for Wahroonga, the member for Cessnock and the member for Camden for their contributions. I apologise to the member for Mount Druitt because he missed out on the opportunity to speak. I know that he wanted to speak about TAFE. I acknowledge that the member for Albury made some wonderful and interesting comments. He spoke about things that are happening at Glendale TAFE, which is wonderful. He said that TAFE is the cornerstone of VET, which I agree with. That is really important. We need to acknowledge all of the good things that TAFE does.

The member for Heathcote talked about being a beneficiary of TAFE and said that it kicked off her career, which is lovely. She talked about the wonderful opportunities that TAFE provided for a young chef who is now working in New York and the practical experience that TAFE gives people. That is important as well, because there was a period where academic intelligence was the only kind of intelligence and education that seemed to be important. That is not the case. There are many smart people who excel at manufacturing and other types of skills, and their skills should never be underestimated. That is where TAFE comes in. The member for Heathcote mentioned that one of the greatest legacies of the former Liberal Government is the increase in the casualisation of TAFE jobs, which is sad to hear.

The member for Wahroonga made some interesting comments. He commented that TAFE teachers love TAFE, which I agree with. They certainly do. It must have been devastating for them to see their jobs casualised over the past 12 years and to see students not get the opportunity to study. The member for Cessnock, who also has a wonderful TAFE facility in his area, talked about three or four things that the former Liberal Government left as its legacy. Those opposite loaded students up with a great deal of debt. Those students were often the poorest people in our community. The former Government sacked staff, built its money from student debt and closed TAFE campuses. That is the legacy of 12 years of a Liberal Government. Those opposite sacked, closed and loaded up the poorest students with debt.

The member for Camden told some interesting stories. I loved hearing the story of the student who went to Liverpool and was given a new lease on life. I know what the member was talking about when she mentioned the "twilight zone". Glendale TAFE has felt like that over the past couple of years, compared to my first experiences at Glendale when Labor was in government. Times have changed. That is another legacy of the former Liberal Government: the twilight zones that became of our TAFE facilities. The Government intends to rebuild TAFE. It is starting with 1,000 more jobs and apprenticeships. It will get there. The Government will make TAFE the wonderful facility it was up until 12 years ago. I urge everyone to support the motion and support TAFE.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### COUNTRY UNIVERSITIES CENTRE

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:06):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the valuable work performed in New South Wales by the Country Universities Centre [CUC] and its network of 11 community owned and operated centres across regional New South Wales.

- (2) Congratulates CUC on its commitment to providing equitable access to higher education for regional people without the need to leave their community.
- (3) Notes that in 2022, 1,239 CUC students across New South Wales studied 861 unique degrees provided by over 40 different Australian universities.
- (4) Calls upon the Government to ensure that it maintains its financial support for this educational centre that is so critical for the residents and students of regional New South Wales.

It is hard not to be impressed by the Country Universities Centre [CUC] model. I have had the privilege and opportunity to have several touchpoints with the CUC. Most recently, I visited the Griffith campus a couple of months ago. I was struck by the well-designed, welcoming campus as well as the support given to teachers and students by the staff there, including the centre manager, Shiron, and her team. I met a student named Abbey. She is from Rankins Springs and is studying her second degree. She told me about how having a CUC in Griffith has allowed her and her family to remain and participate in the community whilst, at the same time, allowing her to further her career, knowledge and experience through a university degree.

The CUC model brings university education close to home, with graduates in turn going on to support their communities. Each centre is run by a local skills-based volunteer board, so the focus is very much on what local students need and how a high-level education can come to them rather than compel them to leave their town, farms and factories in order to get an education and fill the jobs that their communities require. Last year I was in Deniliquin for its community meeting. Deniliquin is moving to establish a CUC alongside the local TAFE. It is a growing movement. I was having a conversation with the member for Cessnock earlier, and we were talking about how it would be good to see a CUC campus in Cessnock as well.

The New South Wales Government has a longstanding partnership with the Country Universities Centre, as part of the Liberal-Nationals' commitment to training and tertiary education for not just Sydney but also regional and rural areas of New South Wales. This commitment has supported the 11 community-owned and operated centres across regional New South Wales that provide equitable access to higher education for regional people without them needing to leave their community. That support has enabled CUCs to put down roots in regional communities across the State, providing valuable opportunities for more regional people to access higher education.

I have seen the metrics associated with the CUC model borne out in the local campus at Broken Hill. Early this year I had a chat with CUC Far West and the ABC in Broken Hill. That CUC averages around 150 to 180 students each semester. One impressive metric is that over 90 per cent of its graduates remain in the community to take up work opportunities. Another important metric is that over 50 per cent of students are the first in their family to gain a tertiary qualification. These are impressive and important metrics. When talking to the member for Cessnock, I mentioned the importance of getting these educational opportunities into communities where that support has not been previously.

Across the CUC network 57 per cent of students come from low socio-economic backgrounds, compared with 18 per cent in other New South Wales universities. Some 78.8 per cent of CUC students are women, 19.8 per cent are men and 1.5 per cent are non-binary. Eight per cent of CUC students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, compared with 2.27 per cent in other New South Wales universities. As I mentioned, 48 per cent of students across the CUC network around Broken Hill are the first in their family to study at university. In addition, 62 per cent are 25 years of age or older and 5.4 per cent have a disability.

The current relationship with the New South Wales Government expired on 30 June, and I understand that CUCs have been in conversation with the Government. The Commonwealth Government announced in July a \$66.9 million investment to double the number of regional university study hubs across Australia. This is reflected in and supports the *Australian Universities Accord Interim Report*, which was issued that month. I note Minister Clare's words about the importance of accessibility when it comes to higher education. The Commonwealth funding is renewed for the existing centres until 2026 for cohort two and until 2027 for cohort one. Country Universities Centre Acting CEO Chris Ronan described this announcement as a watershed moment for higher education in the regions. He said, "The current Universities Accord provides an opportunity to redesign Australian higher education." He noted that he was delighted with the accord panel and the Australian Government recognising the impact that CUCs and local communities can have on the sector to ensure educational equity, no matter where students live.

Our training institutions must undergo necessary scrutiny and evaluation so they deliver on their promise. I acknowledge that the Government is currently doing a review and they are funded up until the end of the review later this year. We know that the State gets immense value out of the CUC initiative. I acknowledge the work of Chris Ronan and all of the staff at CUCs. I call upon the New South Wales Government to bring stability and funding security to the Country Universities Centre so that it can continue to thrive and deliver skilled workers for regional New South Wales and be of benefit to students, employers and communities.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:13):** I am delighted to contribute to debate on the motion regarding the Country Universities Centre, which provides a wide range of courses and is valued for the high level of education it brings to rural and regional New South Wales. I thank the member for Albury for bringing the motion and giving us an opportunity to talk about the important role that the centres play in our education system and, more importantly, in the lives of people who would otherwise not have access to the higher education system. I acknowledge all of the executives, including everyone involved with the Country Universities Centre. We know that the centres provide regional skills development leading to educational and economic benefits in supporting regional and rural higher education students to pursue their studies while remaining in their local communities.

Many who live in rural and regional New South Wales know that students need to travel away from their home, families and communities to get their education. I was born in Dubbo in 1973 and this was the case for many of the people I grew up with. They headed off, commonly to the University of Newcastle. Some even had to go to Orange to do their HSC before it was more broadly available. Of course, things are different now, but it is a symbolic representation of the challenges that regional New South Wales communities confront. The first Country Universities Centre started in Cooma, located in the electorate of Monaro.

We have to be honest with ourselves and say that much of the inequality and disadvantage that exists in our State is in rural and regional areas. Supporting these centres provides students with opportunities to study near their homes and families and in their communities. It also provides them with the opportunities that higher education brings, and CUCs are located in areas that are accessible to people from around the regions. Regional students are underrepresented in higher education and face unique barriers and challenges to study compared with their metropolitan counterparts. That is the reality for people who live in the bush and in regional New South Wales. My colleagues and I know that, and the Ministers know that. That is why the member for Monaro will talk further about funding for this important program and university centres.

In the past, rural and regional students faced difficult choices such as whether to leave home to study somewhere else. That is not an easy task. Not only are they leaving their homes, but many of them will go to an unfamiliar place where they have no family and do not know anyone. It is expensive for them and it adds to the cost of their education. The fundamental economics of the centres really do make sense. I am pleased leaving home is no longer the only option available for regional higher education students, thanks to Country Universities Centres operating now in a range of communities.

Country Universities Centres provide higher education facilities and services to regional students free of charge, again providing opportunities for students. They provide study spaces, breakout areas, video conferencing and computer facilities, and high-speed internet access. They also provide administrative and academic skills support services, such as developing writing and research skills and managing university administration processes. Student support services, including pastoral support for those students who want it, assist them through the journey of their study and what they ultimately are trying to achieve. They can get study advice and help to access university student services.

From humble beginnings in 2013, when the first centre was established in Cooma, the Country Universities Centre network has expanded to 10 centres across the State a decade later, with an eleventh centre opening soon in Mudgee—my old stomping ground of 17 years. The success of the Country Universities Centre model has seen the program expand interstate, with new centres in Queensland and Victoria. That substantiates the success of the centres and the opportunities they provide for our families, particularly our young people and students in rural and regional New South Wales.

This State has always been a strong supporter of the Country Universities Centre program, and that has continued under this Government. We are maintaining operational funding to centres in the 2023-24 financial year. Like I said, the member for Monaro will speak more about that. Since 2017, when New South Wales began funding the program, Country Universities Centre has supported 3,540 students in their higher education studies, which is remarkable and speaks volumes about the value of the program and what it provides to young people and students across rural and regional New South Wales. I thank the member for Albury for moving the motion.

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (15:20):** The Country Universities Centre [CUC] model was designed in 2013 and developed by regional people for regional people to provide their communities with rightful access to higher education. It is a not-for-profit organisation empowering regional and remote rural communities. I thank the member for Albury for moving the motion. Over 40 Australian universities are in partnership with Country Universities Centre to make sure that regional students are not disadvantaged due to their postcode.

The CUC offers significant cost savings for many regional and remote students when compared to relocating and accessing a distant campus. Students do not have to leave their jobs or move away, and they do not need a reliable car to drive for hours on end like those who move or commute to university. Regional and rural communities deserve quality opportunities to pursue their dreams at home, without their students having to move

away from their families, homes, support, social networks and employment. Each centre is owned, governed and driven by its local community through an independent board of directors. I thank the many volunteers who do that particularly important job.

The Country Universities Centre in Goulburn was the second distance learning facility opened in 2018, one of five centres launched in the 2018-19 academic years to support students in rural and regional New South Wales. The majority of degrees being undertaken are in health, through nursing, and education, through teaching, from which graduates quickly find their way into the workforce. Over 40 different degrees were studied through 20 different providers at the Goulburn CUC alone. So successful is the Country Universities Centre model that an additional 14 centres have been opened across the country since it was established in March 2018. We know that since the CUC opened in 2018, it has supported 584 students and their families in our community to pursue higher education goals. More than 50 students have graduated while using the centre. After a 23 per cent growth in the number of university students in the Goulburn Mulwaree local government area, they are considering moving it to a bigger facility.

In semester 1 of 2023 the Goulburn CUC witnessed a surge in new registration and students utilising the free facility and services. Of great significance and interest is that 52 per cent of students enrolled are the first in their families to study. The top areas of study are in the much-needed areas of education and health. That is a significant statistic, which goes to the importance of the facilities in regional areas. It is important to highlight the significant impact of the dedicated staff support. Many of us remember being asked as a child, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and eagerly answering, "A teacher," "An engineer," or "A scientist." Some of us are still being asked that question.

The CUC is transforming lives and creating opportunities for students who may have otherwise faced barriers to higher education. The positive outcomes extend beyond the individual. As students undertake and complete their studies, they contribute to lifting the entire skilled workforce in our region with their acquired knowledge, expertise, drive, growth, innovation and prosperity. The CUC is a worthwhile program to fund. I thank the Government for its support in acknowledging that.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (15:24):** The Country Universities Centre, or CUC, has immense value for communities, businesses and governments in regional New South Wales. In fact, the Country Universities Centre located at Ulladulla in my electorate has over 100 registered students studying at 30 different universities and higher education providers. We know that the CUC supports teachers, nurses and other critical, highly educated regional workers of tomorrow. At the Ulladulla centre, the top three disciplines being studied are education, health, and social work and community services.

The benefit of the CUC for communities is clear. Many of the students that rely on CUC support to graduate go on to fill local labour shortages. It is local businesses and communities that reap the economic benefit of retaining talent in the regions. When somebody studies in a regional area, they make connections and are more likely to stay in that region. That is critical for workforce retention in regional areas. That was highlighted in the 2023 CUC student experience survey, in which 95 per cent of students said that the CUC has made it easier to stay, study and work in their respective communities.

The CUC model is a real benefit for the South Coast region. Regional and rural communities deserve quality opportunities to pursue their dreams without the need to relocate. The CUC creates dedicated learning and study spaces that have been designed for regional people by regional people. It supports the aspirations of local people and works together to build and strengthen community. The CUC in Ulladulla is governed by a board whose membership consists of local people. The CUC was established in Ulladulla as a community with no university presence and a bachelor's degree attainment rate far below the national, State, and regional, rural and remote average. The CUC plays a role in regional development and the provision of skills to both the public and private sectors. It means that local teaching positions are filled reliably and with continuity. It means that local schools have teachers that understand the needs of their students. It means that those local teachers are invested in their communities and are committed for the long term, and the same goes for local medical professionals and local hospitals.

However, a key challenge that the CUC faces is that the more its centres and services are utilised, the more resourcing pressure it faces because all the services that it provides are free. It provides free wellbeing, technology, administrative and academic support in a well-equipped study space. A sustainable funding model between all levels of government, with local industry and community support, will be important in the near future. Robust cross-agency consultation will be essential to determine a sustainable future funding model. This Government looks forward to its continued work with the CUC to ensure that existing centres are set up for success and continue to positively impact regional students, communities and businesses for years to come.

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (15:28):** I make a contribution to debate on the Country Universities Centre [CUC] motion. I will bring it back to my area and the Macleay Valley. I wish that there was a CUC when I was at university. I had been in Newcastle for three years and in my fourth year I decided to return to the Macleay Valley to build my home. What could go wrong? Imagine having to travel back and forth and to practical experience all around the State. Last year 250 students were registered at the Macleay CUC. That is 250 students who did not have to travel away. They could contribute to our economy, work in part-time jobs and help out at the local nursing home as a carer if they were studying to be registered nurses. These guys are contributing to our society. The member for Albury mentioned that 90 per cent of graduates of CUC Far West are working in the regions once qualified, and exactly the same statistic is coming out of the Macleay Valley. That means 90 per cent of the people who study there are contributing to our health or our legal system or are agronomists. They are all people that we desperately need in the regions.

The statistics I have show that 1,240 students—I think the member for Albury mentioned 1,239—studied in Country University Centres in New South Wales last year. How important is it that 90 per cent of them are working in the regions. We have such a shortage of teachers, police, ambulance staff, health professionals and physiotherapists. I cannot get a physiotherapist to come to Kempsey to work. We really need these graduates working in our regions. Nelson Mandela said, "It is not beyond our power to create a world in which all children have access to a good education." Members in this place hold the ability to nourish our regional minds to achieve everything they may believe is out of reach.

Country Universities Centres started as an idea to drive accessibility for communities missing out. Now, one decade on, there are 11 centres. We must continue upholding this legacy. We must support the invaluable work and strength of CUC. We must be an answer to the dreams so many of our aspiring youth have. We must drive those dreams and enable our youth to complete them. What if I said that 48 per cent of Country Universities Centres students are the first in their families to study at university? CUC piloted a UniFuture program for our year 12 students, changing the attitudes of our youth to study in the regions. We already know they are struggling to stay interested and motivated for school. A staggering 95 per cent of enrolled students indicated that the centre helped improve their overall study patterns and results.

We all know that there is no parity of access to education, as mentioned by the member for South Coast. It is not always fair. Life is not fair. There is an education disparity between our regional and city-based centres. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, people living in a major city were more likely to have a bachelor's degree than those living in regional areas. This right now is an opportunity for our students to be more than just a lower statistic and to have a chance for a degree while still being part of contributing personnel in our community. I would like to share a personal story about what CUC has done for one of my employees. As I mentioned before, I could not get staff for my physiotherapy business in regional New South Wales. [*Extension of time*]

Naomi came to me from India. She has worked for me for seven years, with a work ethic that no-one has ever seen. She is buzzing around and racing around. She is continuing her education and upskilling all the time. She is saying yes to travelling out to a lady whose house is out in the bush and who could not get out of her house. She is saying yes to everything. She has upskilled. She has worked within our system. She was so driven that she wanted to undertake the first physiotherapy-based in-clinic PhD ever performed at Kempsey. She is a new mum. She is working for me, providing many hours of physiotherapy service that we may not have got, and she is starting her PhD. Just last week she told me that she would have given up if it was not for CUC. It was a very timely conversation.

Regional success is about investing in resource distribution, teacher support, infrastructure and collaborative efforts. We can ensure that every student, regardless of their geographical location, has the opportunity to receive a quality education. The mission that the CUC has always striven for is to allow country students to be the drivers of change by supporting tertiary education. That brings opportunity, professionalism and a fair go to our regions. I urge Premier Minns to support the Country Universities Centres so as to not limit regional creativity. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (15:33):** I thank the member for Clancy for moving the motion. I also thank the member for Oxley for his contribution. I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting paragraph (4) and inserting instead:

- (4) Congratulates the Government on ensuring the maintenance of financial support for these educational centres that is so critical for the residents and students of regional New South Wales after they were left in limbo by the former Government.

This has been a good debate. The Country Universities Centres are important for our regions. As we have heard earlier in the debate, the centres started in Cooma. In 2011, when I was the local member, I was pushing to get a university campus in the area.

**Mr Rory Amon:** How did that go?

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Well, the Government changed, and it was not progressed. The community then took action into its own hands. In 2013 Snowy Hydro and the local council got together and funded the establishment of the first Country Universities Centre. For five years, the centre operated without funding, and then in 2017, to its credit, the former Government provided some funding. As we have heard, those centres have since expanded to another nine locations across country New South Wales. They make an absolutely fabulous contribution to our country communities.

Dean Lynch, the chair of the State body and a former mayor of Cooma, is someone I have known for a very long time. He currently works for Snowy 2.0. He and the staff of the Country Universities Centre buttonholed me as soon as I arrived at the Cooma Show this year as the newly reselected candidate for Monaro and said, "Our funding is about to run out. We really want you—if you win government—to provide additional funding." I am thrilled to say that the Government got that request. Country Universities Centres asked for \$1.31 million for 2023-24 to continue operating, and that is what the Government is allocating. I am really pleased that that has happened. Along with many other country MPs, I will be lobbying to make sure that becomes a longer term commitment over time.

Like the member for Goulburn, the Cooma CUC is now saying, "This is too small. We need to expand." It has a fabulous facility—which, incidentally, Snowy Hydro gifted to it, which was terrific—but it wants to expand as well. It is doing some absolutely fantastic work. I was at the seventieth anniversary of the Cooma North Public School the other day, and representatives of the Cooma CUC were there. Earlier in the year, the centre had run a colouring competition, "I Want To Be", for kids to draw a picture of what they wanted to do with the rest of their lives. There is now a book of the best of those drawings. It is a fabulous little publication of kids' pictures of their future careers.

I was told that one of the reasons that the CUC ran the competition is because it wants to engage the kids at primary school so that they understand that this resource is there and that they see tertiary education as being part of their future education, not something that is unusual when they get to it. The CUC does some really exciting work. I too have seen the Griffith CUC, which was mentioned before. It is a beautiful facility, only recently finished. I congratulate everyone who was involved in getting that beautiful-looking facility built. I saw it while walking past it to the swimming pool when I was there on my previous board, and I look forward to having a look inside it at some stage.

I certainly agree with every member who has spoken today about the value of these centres and about the value of overcoming the barriers of distance for country kids—and, indeed, adults—wanting to go to university. CUC offers an all-round support to all those students—not just access to education through its facilities but also support as they go through that journey. It is very positive. I urge the House to support the amendment and then the motion as amended.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (15:38):** In reply: I take the opportunity to thank members who have spoken in this debate: the members representing the electorates of Campbelltown, Goulburn, South Coast, Oxley and Monaro. I thank each member for their contribution and for sharing across the Chamber an appreciation of the value of the Country Universities Centres [CUC] model and its importance in our communities. I thank the member for Campbelltown, in particular, for speaking about the member's own personal experience of being raised in Dubbo, the impact of being a regional student and having to travel for higher education, the difficult choices that that means for young people, in particular, in our communities and the fact that the CUCs provide an option.

I reflect on the words of the member for Goulburn, "by regional people, for regional people", and on the way that the CUCs empower rural and regional communities. An important aspect that the member for Goulburn touched on is the fact that, consistently in the CUC model, a number of the students are the first in their family to be obtaining a higher education qualification. I thank the member for South Coast for her contribution, in particular her words around the immense value that the CUC provides not just for the students but also for the community and, in turn, government. An important metric that she drew on is the retention of graduates by the community.

As I mentioned, Broken Hill is a really good example of that. Over 90 per cent of students are staying in that community to work. I thank her, too, for her points around the challenges of the significant free support that is provided and the need for a sustainable future funding model and setting CUC up for success. I thank the member for Oxley for his contribution around his experiences, particularly that story of Naomi, a student in his electorate who, as a mum, would not have been able to stay in the community whilst obtaining a PhD without the CUC. It is sad that, when there has been such good debate, the member for Monaro politicises the issue. It is really unfortunate. It is that puffed-up chest, cockiness and hubris that we get from the Government. It is the arrogance of the Government.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** It being 3.40 p.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for Government business.

### UKRAINE CONFLICT

#### Debate resumed from 14 September 2023.

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (15:41):** Two days ago Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the annual meeting of the United Nations [UN] General Assembly. He had arrived in New York a day earlier and travelled straight from the airport to the Staten Island University Hospital. He had come to visit the Ukrainian soldiers being treated in the hospital and to honour them with a medal. Each soldier had undergone an amputation as a result of wounds received during the war. The image of President Zelensky with those soldiers provides a clear reminder of the human cost of this terrible conflict.

When President Zelensky spoke from the floor in New York, he was speaking to more than just 193 delegates; he was speaking to the billions of people around the world who stand with the people of Ukraine in their fight to win their country back from Russian invaders. He spoke of his desire for peace, urging countries that have remained neutral to support the Ukrainian peace proposal. President Zelensky said Russia was using the invasion to weaponise Ukraine itself, starting with food, energy and the deportation of thousands of Ukraine children. He said:

When hatred is weaponized against one nation, it never stops there ... the goal of the present war against Ukraine is to turn our land, our people, our resources into a weapon against you – against the international rules-based order.

On Tuesday President Biden also spoke of the threat Russian aggression posed to all nations. He asked:

If we allow Ukraine to be carved up, is the independence of any nation secure?

President Zelensky's speech to the UN reminds us just how long the people of Ukraine have had to endure the horror of the war. A year ago President Zelensky first addressed the UN General Assembly via video link to warn the world about Russia's abhorrent conduct in his country. His words are as relevant today as they were a year ago. He said:

A crime has been committed against Ukraine, and we demand just punishment.

The crime was committed against our state borders. The crime was committed against the lives of our people. The crime was committed against the dignity of our women and men.

The crime was committed against the values that make you and me a community of the United Nations.

Today is our Parliament's chance to denounce Russia's conduct in pursuing this illegal war. The invasion of Ukraine began more than 500 days ago on 24 February 2022. Every day since, Russian aggression has been met by the bravery of the Ukrainian people, determined to drive the invaders out of their country. Since the war began, the conduct of the Russian military forces has been deplorable. United Nations investigators tasked with reviewing suspected war crimes in Ukraine found extensive evidence of Russian atrocities against both military and civilian targets. The impact of the war can be felt in every country, including Australia. Australia has granted more than 10,000 visas to Ukrainian nationals since the war began. More than 1,500 Ukrainian citizens have arrived in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government, through Multicultural NSW, continues to meet regularly with members of that community. We are keen to understand their needs and ensure they have every support they need to flourish.

I echo the words of the Premier when I say they are most welcome in New South Wales. I was pleased to join the Premier in meeting Mr Daniel Wolody and Mr Andrew Mencinsky, the president and vice-president of the Ukrainian Council of NSW. It was an opportunity for the New South Wales Government to confirm our support for the Ukrainian community in the State. I commend the Ukrainian Council of NSW for the work it continues to do helping Ukrainian citizens displaced by the conflict. Let me conclude by echoing the words of both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition: I condemn Russia's illegal, immoral and unprovoked war. As the Minister for Multiculturalism, I offer my continuing support to those displaced by the war in Ukraine. I will continue to stand with the people of Ukraine in their fight to liberate their country.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (15:46):** I am pleased to join with members of this House, including the Premier, the Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, in speaking to this motion. In August 2013 I visited Ukraine. For the entire trip I was in awe. A beautiful country that once hid behind the Soviet Union's brutal iron curtain, Ukraine has a rich history, culture and religion. Ukrainians are generous and patriotic. My fondest memory is sitting freely in Kyiv's Independence Square, which is appropriately named, sipping on a local Ukrainian beer as the busy city moved around me. The ultimate symbol of freedom in that square, of course, was the golden arches of the McDonald's.

I thank the member for Granville, who only a few hours ago reminded me of this important motion, which I am now pleased to speak to. When I visited Ukraine in 2013, apart from visiting Kyiv, I visited the Chernobyl exclusion zone. I will share that story another day. But the Ukraine I visited in 2013 is different to today's Ukraine. Today marks the 575th day of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. On 24 February 2022 Russia entered Ukraine from Russia, Crimea and Belarus. Ukrainian President Zelensky addressed the United Nations Security Council this week and said the war has given them "pain, losses and struggle". It is estimated that Ukraine has about 500,000 troops while Russia has more than 1.3 million. It is estimated that Ukraine has suffered over 70,000 deaths and between 100,000 and 120,000 wounded.

Warfare gives us reason to pause and reflect upon the world in which we live today. I was born in the 1980s. My childhood was in the 1990s at the end of the Cold War. The threat of global communism was defeated. The global hope of liberalism was ignited. Countries all around the world embraced liberalism by signing free trade agreements and embracing multilateral bodies like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the G20. The concept of war was unimaginable. The events of September 11 in 2001 impacted the freedom of all. Since then, over the past 22 years we have experienced an ever-changing world: terrorism, global financial crises and, most recently, a pandemic. There has also been, during that time, an expansion of Russia led by its authoritarian leader. The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. Under Putin, in 2014 Russia invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine. Later that year Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was shot down over the Russia-Ukraine border, killing all 298 passengers and crew, 38 of whom called Australia home. The then Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, said:

I'm going to be saying to Mr Putin: Australians were murdered and they were murdered by Russian-backed rebels using Russian supplied equipment.

Australia must continue to work multilaterally with its allies. One example is the wonderful gathering of the Quad countries, including Australia, India, Japan and the United States. My good friend the former Minister for Foreign Affairs and former Senator, Marise Payne, hosted the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in early 2022, which she said reaffirmed "support for the principles of openness, the protection of natural sovereignty, and the observance of rules and fair play". Those principles are more important than ever. Australia must continue its special relationship with the United States.

In 2021 we marked the 70-year anniversary of our formal security relationship with the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security [ANZUS] Treaty, and in 2021 we signed the new Australia, United Kingdom and United States [AUKUS] treaty, which focuses on military capabilities. Both the United States and the United Kingdom share values that support democracy, enterprise, freedom of association and the rule of law. Finally, Australia must impose every trade, economic and diplomatic lever it has—and I believe it has—to stand up against Russian actions on the sovereign and independent country of Ukraine.

To the 1,500 Ukrainian nationals who have arrived since 23 February 2022, I say a very big welcome. I pay tribute to the Ukrainian Council of NSW for its work. As the Leader of the Liberal Party, Mark Speakman, often says, Australia as a country is based on three pillars: our Indigenous heritage; our European heritage; and, of course, our multicultural heritage. Before I finish, I acknowledge a dear friend of mine, Peter Shmigel, who is a Ukrainian patriot and may be known to many members of this House. Earlier this year, after 12 months of war, he said:

As the son of Ukrainian political refugees from World War II, and as a writer who has been to Ukraine twice in the past 12 months to cover the war, what have I learnt? While I see myself as a humane and compassionate person, I must confess this is the year I've learnt to hate.

But he concluded with hope. He said:

I asked a very progressive Ukrainian friend, the leader of a health think tank, whether he feels similarly. His answer: "Hatred is proportionate to this aggression. But we can't take false haven in our hatred. Because hatred must be followed by justice. And justice requires victory." After 12 months of the horror of Russia's war on Ukraine, I hope for that victory. I grow tired of the question: when will it end? It can only end when Ukraine wins.

I thank Peter Shmigel for sharing that in the newspaper. Australia must continue to work with its allies to stand up to Putin. We must support the sovereignty of Ukraine.

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (15:52):** I am pleased to stand with the people of Ukraine. As many members of the Chamber would be aware, Auburn has the largest Ukrainian population in Australia. The invasion by Russia and subsequent destruction of the area has had a devastating effect on our community. The war did not begin in February 2022. As the member for Davidson pointed out, it began in February 2014 with the invasion of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. In mid-2014 Russia began supplying proxies in two of Ukraine's eastern provinces, providing manpower, funding and material, before beginning a very violent armed conflict with the Ukrainian Government. By early 2022 more than 14,000 civilians had been killed or wounded as a result of the Russian intervention in eastern Ukraine.

We also saw the terrible shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, which had devastating effects across many countries. On 24 February 2022 Russia escalated its war against Ukraine by launching a full-scale invasion of the country on several fronts, in what has become the largest conventional military attack on a sovereign State in Europe since World War II. While Russia made six tangible gains in the early weeks of the invasion, it underestimated the grit and determination of the Ukrainian people as well as their combat capabilities. By the end of 2022 Ukrainian forces had regained all the territories in the north and north-east and had made some advances in the east and south. But what has this invasion laid waste to? This invasion has created Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. As of 6 September 2023 some 6.2 million Ukrainian refugees were recorded globally, and 5.09 million people were internally displaced as of June 2023. As of 27 August 2023 more than 26,700 civilian casualties have been recorded. The invasion of Ukraine remains one of the two largest displacement crises worldwide—the other being the conflict in Syria.

Ukraine is a significant supplier of food commodities for the world. However, according to a 2023 analysis at least 17.6 million people are estimated to be in need of multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance due to the war, including over 11 million people who are in need of food security and livelihood interventions. The Ukrainian people continue to fiercely resist Russia's full-scale invasion, which has targeted civilian and critical infrastructure including energy, to try to break the Ukrainian will. Many of us know of the constant blackouts and lack of water in Ukrainian cities. Everyone would be aware of the Nova Kakhovka Dam that was blown up and the devastating floods that wreaked havoc across the region, sweeping away towns, farmlands and people.

Many members in this House would have attended the screening of the film *Mariupol. Unlost Hope*, which provides a visual explanation of the devastation. That movie opened the Ukrainian Film Festival. Mariupol is a beautiful seaside port and it was a happy town, though it is not unused to conflict as it is close to the border. But it has suffered complete devastation; it was wiped out. People were attacked in art galleries and conference centres, hospitals were bombed, pregnant women who were in labour were dragged out of hospitals, children died and families were split apart. It was absolutely traumatic. The problem for our community was that the destruction, death and the inability to know where one's family was located happened at the height of the COVID lockdown. That has been devastating.

Ukrainians have shown their fighting spirit against Russia and so has our local community, which has rallied together to provide significant support to the thousands of Ukrainian refugees who have come to Australia on visas. In particular I thank the St Andrew's Ukrainian Church, the Ukrainian Youth Association at Lidcombe, the Ukrainian Council of NSW, the Ukrainian Association of Sydney, the Ukrainian Women's Association and the Ukrainian mental health professionals who have come from Ukraine to offer counselling and services to people in Australia. I thank all the Australian companies that have come to the aid of refugees. I put on record my thanks to companies that have agreed to not deal with, provide services to or trade with Russia. We know the one thing that really works is economic sanctions. We must hit them in their hip pocket. Putin will not stop. We must continue to supply the ammunition and infrastructure that Ukraine needs to win the war. Russia, which has unleashed this devastation across Ukraine, must pay a price. We pass on our thanks to the hundreds of companies that have decided not to trade with Russia and to those that have come to the aid of Ukrainian refugees.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** It being 4.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the petitions take-note debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Petitions*

#### **HOUSTON MITCHELL DRIVE AND PACIFIC HIGHWAY INTERSECTION**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The House will now consider the paper petition signed by 10,000 or more persons and lodged by the member for Port Macquarie regarding the design and construction of an overpass at the intersection of Houston Mitchell Drive and the Pacific Highway.

The question is that the House take note of the petition.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:01):** The petition that I tabled on 22 August with 16,268 signatures calls on the Government to require design works to begin immediately for an overpass at the intersection of Houston Mitchell Drive and the Pacific Highway, and that construction be undertaken as soon as planning is complete. I acknowledge first and foremost every single person who signed the petition and responded so quickly to the call from the Bonny Hills Progress Association to get behind the very important issue of the overpass. When the petition was launched on 21 June at a public meeting, a target of 10,000 signatures was set so that we could debate it in this House. In just 30 days, it reached 10,000 signatures. What an amazing effort. I thank all of the people who signed the petition. It got well over 16,000 signatures in the end.

I acknowledge the very hardworking and dedicated members of the Bonny Hills Progress Association, including president Roger Barlow, who I had the absolute pleasure of working alongside in his role in the progress

association for many years. Vice-president Kathy Reagan also deserves a special mention, because she not only is the vice-president of the association but also took on the leadership role for the Houston Mitchell Drive subcommittee. Kathy's passion, determination and advocacy to see an overpass for the intersection is both impressive and admirable. I also thank secretary Tony Robinson; treasurer Paul Polewski; publicity officer Pamela Barlow; committee member Bill Howell, whom I have also had the pleasure of working with for many years; and other committee members Ian Simpson, John Drinan, Paul Galland and Ross Smith.

I also acknowledge Transport for NSW regional director Anna Zycki. She has worked with me and my community for many years to address improvements at this intersection and on many other road projects, such as the upgrade of the King Creek Road and Oxley Highway intersection. I was proud to be a part of the former Government that completed the duplication of the Pacific Highway from Hexham to the Queensland border in 2020. That Government then immediately turned its attention to creating safer and smoother journeys along the highway with upgrades to intersections such as Houston Mitchell Drive.

It made a commitment of \$2.9 million delivered under the Safer Roads Program, which started in September 2021. That funding included the construction of acceleration and deceleration lanes on the Pacific Highway for southbound motorists turning left onto and left off Houston Mitchell Drive, the widening of the road shoulders and the installation of safety barriers. While the former Government responded to calls from residents to make the intersection safer, ultimately the solution that will maximise safety for motorists and other road users at this intersection is a grade-separated overpass.

With the change in Government in March this year, I immediately wrote to the new Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. I acknowledge that the Minister is in the Chamber for this debate. I wrote to her for two reasons: to congratulate her on her new role and to invite her to visit the Port Macquarie electorate to see firsthand the ongoing concerns in relation to a number of State-owned roads, including Houston Mitchell Drive and the Oxley Highway. I thank the Minister, who responded to my invitation promptly and was one of the first Ministers to come to my electorate following the election. She took the time to meet with the progress association representatives onsite at the intersection at Houston Mitchell Drive, and she listened to their concerns. I think they did an incredible job of presenting to her the concerns of the community more broadly.

I made it very clear at the time that I would continue to work closely with the Minister and with Transport for NSW to ensure that this issue remained front and centre on the Government's agenda. I am really pleased that we have the opportunity today, thanks to those 16,000-plus petitioners, to consider this issue in the House. I note that the response to the petition from the Minister is due next week on 26 September. We are all hopeful that she will be sharing that written response with us today. We are also hopeful that she will have some good news for those petitioners, for the progress association and for the broader community.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (16:04):** I sincerely thank the member for Port Macquarie and the more than 16,000 passionate road safety enthusiasts for bringing this important petition to this place. I know the Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills areas very well. It is a beautiful part of the world. I know how hard it is to get even a few thousand signatures for a petition, so I congratulate the community on a fantastic effort. I acknowledge the pain and suffering of the families, friends and colleagues of those injured or killed in tragic accidents at this intersection over many years. As a regional MP for over 12 years, I share their enthusiasm and their frustrations regarding road safety along our beautiful coast. Just like the member for Port Macquarie, I have seen many members of my community of Shellharbour suffer from serious accidents on our roads. My enthusiasm for road safety was one of the main reasons I was so keen to put my hand up to be the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Transport and Roads assisting Minister Aitchison in our Government's efforts to provide a safe road network for all of our regional communities, including Port Macquarie.

No matter which side of the House we sit on, road safety is a priority for each and every one of us in this place. I can assure the petitioners that this Government is committed to improving the road network to reduce risks that motorists right across regional New South Wales face day in and day out. I know the petitioners are not here today, so I ask the member to pass that on. Intersections such as the T-intersection joining Houston Mitchell Drive with the Pacific Highway are unfortunately common across our road network. We must strive to continually improve such busy intersections. I know that the previous Government undertook upgrades, including a reduction in the speed limit, improvements to the layout and new safety barriers, as well as new turning and acceleration lanes. Minister Aitchison is investigating further improvements to the intersection, and I am thankful for the hard work being undertaken by Transport for NSW staff on this issue. I too lend my support to those Transport for NSW staff. They are incredible people, and I publicly acknowledge their hard work.

As Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Transport and Roads, I can assure the petitioners that the Minister's office and departmental staff are working tirelessly on matters of road safety. It is a priority of this Government to look at road safety right across regional New South Wales. Whilst the residents of Lake Cathie

and Bonny Hills will no doubt be thankful once this intersection is made even safer, it is the welfare of the people that will never know of the hard work undertaken by the petitioners that must drive us all.

We must do this for the young family travelling to Port Macquarie for a well-earned holiday in the 2030s, who will never know that this petition has saved their lives. We must do this for the plumber from Sydney, soon to retire to Bonny Hills, whose life it will save in the mid-2040s. We must do this for the hardworking member of Parliament who will retire to Lake Cathie following the fifth term of this Labor Government, whose life will be saved by the petitioners' hard work—I had to throw that one in. The people this petition will save will never be able to give thanks to the petitioners, so, on behalf of all of them, I say thank you to each and every person who signed this petition.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:08):** I acknowledge the great work that has been done by the Bonny Hills Progress Association. Being a regional MP, I know that progress associations are at the heart of our communities. For the Bonny Hills Progress Association to come together and garner 16,268 signatures in less than 30 days is an absolute testament to that community's resilience, but also their drive to make their region safer. The member for Port Macquarie and I are so proud that we were members of the former Government, which oversaw record investment in regional roads across New South Wales. The Central Coast has received almost a billion dollars' worth of State road infrastructure in the time I have had the pleasure of serving as the member for Terrigal. That has made those regional roads safer for everybody. Whether people are travelling for holidays or commuting for work, it is important that our regional roads receive this ongoing investment. Sydney extends well past the borders, and we have to make sure that people can travel safely.

I commend the member for Port Macquarie, whose tireless efforts, both in the previous Government and now in opposition, will no doubt ensure that this project is delivered. I am pleased to note that the Minister is in the Chamber for this debate. It is important that the Government realises these roads can never be neglected. I have also had the pleasure of working with regional director Anna Zycki; she was my regional roads director and I have spoken about her in this Chamber many times. Because of Anna and her team, thousands of people make it home safely. That cannot be undersold. The great work that Transport for NSW teams do for regional roads is nothing short of spectacular. It is important that the new Minns Labor Government continues to focus on delivering record investment in regional roads right across New South Wales, especially in areas like Houston Mitchell Drive. I have had the pleasure of visiting the Port Macquarie electorate a number of times and have seen firsthand not only the beauty of the region but also the danger associated with those roads.

By the way, I noticed in the budget papers in the Central Coast section that the Minister has provided \$47 million for the upgrade of the intersection of the Pacific Highway and roads connecting to Harrington and Coopersnook. For the benefit of the Minister, that is actually in the Port Macquarie electorate and not on the Central Coast. But we are happy to take that \$47 million as well. I have an intersection at the corner of Wards Hill Road and Empire Bay Drive that needs a traffic study and there is no money in the budget for it. That \$47 million figure has been printed twice in the budget papers and we will be happy to take some of it. Obviously if the State Government cannot contribute the \$1.2 million for the traffic study, I will call on the Federal Government to provide it. Those studies ensure that roads are delivered on time and on budget to provide the best outcomes in regional communities for locals, travellers and visitors alike.

Again, I thank the committee—President Roger Barlow, Cathy Reagan, Bill, Ian, John, Paul and Ross—for its tireless efforts. Tony and Paul have done a great job. To collect almost 16½ thousand signatures in 30 days in a regional area is nothing short of incredible, and they should be commended. It also shows how passionately the community feels about our road projects. Whether it be the Houston Mitchell Drive Pacific Highway overpass, the Wards Hill Road and Empire Bay Drive intersection or a multitude of other regional roads—which I am sure the member for Upper Hunter will talk about in his contribution—it is important that regional roads receive funding for planning, which makes sure that the shovels hit the ground in the most efficient and effective way.

We have seen regional road upgrades delivered incredibly efficiently from one end of New South Wales to the other. I hope and pray that this new Government will do exactly as the former Government did. More than a billion dollars' worth of State road infrastructure has turned some of the worst roads on the Central Coast into the best roads in New South Wales. Members on this side of the House are particularly proud of that, and we should be. It is what our community demands of us as State members of Parliament. It expects that State roads will get the attention and treatment they deserve.

I again congratulate the incredible team at Transport for NSW. The staff engagement with our communities on our behalf helps come up with the best options, whether it be the Houston Mitchell Drive overpass, a potential roundabout or whatever the turn options might be at Wards Hill Road and Empire Bay Drive. It is community-driven feedback. I have seen it happen before in my electorate as well, at an intersection at Kincumber. There were three rounds of community consultation. The outstanding team at Transport for NSW worked with the community and we got the best possible outcome for our region. But changes like these are also led by an

incredible community, as we see with the 16,268 signatures collected by the Bonny Hills Progress Association. I congratulate it and say well done.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (16:13):** I too speak in debate on the petition with more than 10,000 signatures tabled by the member for Port Macquarie regarding the proposed overpass at Houston Mitchell Drive and the Pacific Highway. I put on record the admiration I have for the member for Port Macquarie. She is one of my favourites in this place—and has been for some time. But I will move on! All members acknowledge the effort that goes into putting together a petition like this. It is a hard slog and a lot of work. It is a lot of putting yourself in front of people and asking them to assist. Asking for help is a real challenge for many of us, but the Bonny Hills Progress Association has done it in incredible time. I tip my hat to everybody involved with the petition.

Obviously, I am familiar with the intersection because I travel up and down the coast a fair bit. A little further south—I do not want to steal the thunder of the member for Upper Hunter—are Bucketts Way, Medowey Road and the intersection that spears off towards Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens. They are all difficult intersections, where cars fly up or down the dual carriageway at 110 kilometres per hour—and that is those of us who stick to the speed limit. Other cars and sometimes even trucks—which I cannot quite explain—go past and you see those intersections and think, "I wouldn't like to be turning across that road with cars going that fast." I recognise and understand that there have been some improvements to that particular intersection in the short term, such as turning lanes and accelerating lanes. As I understand it, there has also been a slight amendment to the speed limit around the intersection. It has come down from 110 kilometres per hour to 100 kilometres per hour for southbound drivers, who will potentially be on the dangerous approach. These are small, short-term fixes we can make around the edges of a problem that will ultimately need a longer-term solution.

However, there are competing interests and projects. I mentioned a couple of intersections a little further to the south of this one. It is absolutely not for me to say which is more or less important and dangerous. That is for road engineers and Transport for NSW. There are budgetary questions and constraints and that sort of stuff. As local members, our job is to advocate for local concerns in our patch. Again, I commend the member for Port Macquarie for doing that brilliantly in her community and in this Chamber this afternoon. It is fantastic. A lot of work needs to be done. We should always strive up-front to have zero deaths on our roads. We will probably never get there, but we should try to head in that direction. Over past decades, New South Wales roads have been improving. The trip north now is nothing like it used to be: travelling on winding, single-lane roads—often in darkness—with potholes. In 2023 the Pacific Highway, northbound and southbound, is much better than it was in 1993 or 1973. We continue that work.

When a loved one is lost on a road, it is incredibly sad not just for the family but also for friends and the whole community. I certainly hope that between now and whatever improvements come at Houston Mitchell Drive there are no further accidents and absolutely no deaths. I hope there is no more tragedy there. This is important work and an important question to put to Parliament. I commend the member for Port Macquarie for doing exactly that.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (16:18):** I thank the people of the Port Macquarie Hastings Council area, particularly those in Bonny Hills and Lake Cathie, and of course the Bonny Hills Progress Association for bringing this petition to the House. I know the area quite well. I must admit that I am quite partial to popping into the Lake Cathie Tavern and enjoying its hospitality in many different ways. It is a great spot and a beautiful area with beautiful people. They are good regional people who just want their fair share when it comes to local infrastructure. That fight has been taken up by the good member for Port Macquarie. All members thank her for her work on behalf of those people, which we see in this House. I also acknowledge the lived experience of those who have been involved in accidents—at this junction and many other intersections—that resulted in loss of life or terrible injuries. I acknowledge the massive hurt that has caused to many families. If they are listening today, our heart goes out to them, because road safety is a priority for every member in this House.

The area where the Houston Mitchell Drive and Pacific Highway intersection is located has seen incredible growth, particularly with the over fifties. They love that area. In fact, I think someone on the other side of the Chamber might be ready to go there—perhaps not yet. During COVID large numbers of people moved to the coast. The area continues to grow and it has huge potential for further growth. If we want to address housing in regional areas we have to continue to invest in supporting infrastructure. The Pacific Highway is a huge piece of infrastructure. I remember travelling up the old highway with my two brothers in a Ford Cortina with vinyl seats and no air conditioning—it was a tough trip. That huge piece of north-south infrastructure has made a big difference, opened up economic opportunities and tourism. But the job does not finish there. We must have continuous improvement going forward, particularly in the area of safety.

Houston Mitchell Drive and Pacific Highway is a very difficult intersection, but there are challenges around safety at several intersections on this highway where cars turn on to a very fast road from a standing start—

Medowie Road intersection; Myall Way intersection into Hawks Nest; Failford Road into Forster; Harrington Road crossing; and Bucketts Way intersection, which is in the electorate of Port Stephens. The link between Gloucester and the Pacific Highway is another intersection in desperate need of an overpass. I have experienced myself how difficult it is to pull out at this particular intersection, especially in the middle of school holidays when the traffic is heavy, pulling a horse float with a semitrailer behind. There is pressure with a car coming this way and you have to go that way. In fact, that is probably replicated all along the Pacific Highway. The traffic on Bucketts Way is getting heavier and heavier. Gloucester as a mining town is coming to the end, but as an industrial town with other different manufacturing industries it is getting busier and busier.

We see the benefits of overpasses. Very soon the Golden Highway and New England connection will open. That \$100 million project will deliver a huge transformation in road safety at that junction. It is very similar to this intersection on the Pacific Highway—very busy, a lot of accidents. That will open in the next few months and we are very excited about that. I acknowledge the work that has been done by Transport for NSW on the planning to date on these intersections. Some work has happened already in the short term, but I think we can do more in the short-term space. The long-term solution will never change and overpasses will be required. The work goes on. I thank the people of Port Macquarie Hastings Council area for bringing the petition and I pledge my support as well.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (16:23):** I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing this petition. I also thank the members of the Bonny Hills Progress Association who I met with when I was the shadow Minister in opposition. I remember meeting with them at "The Donut" at Port Macquarie and they shared their frustration that the work had not been done on that intersection. I also acknowledge the hurt and pain of families and friends of all those who have been injured or killed in car crashes at that location and across the State. Road fatality statistics are always sobering. Currently the road toll for New South Wales is 260 people. That is 260 too many. At this site 17 crashes have resulted in 20 fatalities over the past 10 years. It is definitely an intersection that needs more work, and that should have happened much earlier. But we are where we are.

The petition calls on the New South Wales Government to review this intersection. I am pleased to report that in accordance with the wishes of the petitioners, and after meeting with the member, Transport for NSW—Anna Zycki does amazing work—and the community, we asked Transport for NSW to do exactly that. The crash data they have tells us that the right-hand turning movements, both in and out of the intersection, are the key conflict points. The right-hand turning movements are responsible for the majority of crashes, including the most recent fatality. The removal of right-hand turning movements will require the construction of an alternative turning facility, such as a U-turn bay.

I acknowledge that some safety upgrades have already occurred. I thank the member for Cessnock for his contribution. He referred to some reductions in speed. In June this year we collected further data about traffic movements at the intersection to fully understand them. That confirmed traffic volumes of 20,000 vehicles a day, which are reasonably split between north and south movement. Traffic generally travels just under the speed limit of 110 kilometres an hour north and 100 kilometres an hour south. That data will help inform our decision-making. Road safety is the highest priority for the Government. I note that the member for Port Macquarie gave notice of a motion about 24,000 people with the regional seniors travel card; a commitment that over four years equated to \$24 million. That would have been a really good start in planning money for this. The Government will continue to prioritise real funding every year for safety.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:26):** In reply: Before I thank those members who spoke on the petition this afternoon, I acknowledge firstly how sad we all were to learn of the death of Mr Ian Parker. He was a well-known local. On 2 May this year Ian was involved in a two-car collision at the Houston Mitchell Drive intersection. It was certainly a very stark reminder to us all of the challenging conditions at that intersection. I know that his family and friends will continue to grieve their loss. Transport for NSW responded immediately with work beginning on 22 May to install further warning signs on the Pacific Highway at Lake Innes on approach to the Houston Mitchell Drive intersection. Transport for NSW also advised it would install two vehicle-activated solar powered signs, each about 150 metres from the intersection. As the Minister alluded to, it also conducted some routine traffic surveys at the intersection. It is important to understand what is actually happening on the highway at that point.

I thank the members representing the electorates of Shellharbour, Terrigal, Cessnock—I feel pressured now to say he is one of my favourite members in the House—and Upper Hunter for their contributions. I thank the Minister for her contribution today and for assuring us that she continues to look at what safety measures we can take in the short term. I stress again that what the petitioners are asking for is planning money. They understand that an overpass is an enormous cost to the Government and, as the member for Cessnock said, there are

intersections up and down the highway that need work. They are asking for some planning money and I urge the Minister to consider that in the months ahead.

**Petition noted.**

*Community Recognition Statements*

**FATUSAMA FUAMATU**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (16:29):** I recognise the achievement of Fatusama Fuamatu at the 2023 NSW Training Awards. Fatusama was nominated as a finalist in the School Based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year award. Fatusama moved to Australia from Samoa four years ago and took up barbering to support his family back home while studying at Eagle Vale High School, where he is now vice-captain, in my electorate. Mastering the art of barbering through our fantastic TAFE system, Fatusama has applied his skill for good, volunteering to give haircuts to his peers to raise money for school improvements and his school formal. His story is one of resilience and drive to leave a positive mark. I congratulate Fatusama on his recognition at this year's training awards and his positive impact on the community. He serves as a positive example to young people everywhere.

**NICOLE HILDER**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:30):** I congratulate Nicole Hilder, the P&C president of Terrigal Public School, on recently being awarded the Secretaries Award for Parent Volunteer of the Year by the NSW Department of Education. Nicole received the award for her outstanding contributions to the school as P&C president over six years. I have had many occasions to witness firsthand the amazing work and varied roles that Nicole has taken on, including supporting her team of volunteer parents to run successful Terrigal Family Fun Fairs and other fundraising events, presenting at school assemblies, sitting on job selection panels and contributing to school policies, procedures and plans. Nicole is involved with Terrigal High School, as well as working at a full-time job. She is cherished by many fellow parents at Terrigal Public School for being a great friend. Terrigal Public School is extremely lucky to have such a hardworking parent at the school, and our community is lucky to have volunteers like Nicole and the rest of the P&C working towards a better world for their children.

**GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY GIANTS**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (16:31):** The Greater Western Sydney [GWS] Giants' team song goes:

Well there's a big, big sound  
From the West of the town  
It's the sound of the mighty GIANTS

You feel the ground a-shaking  
The other teams are quaking  
In their boots before the GIANTS

As the 2023 Toyota AFL Grand Final approaches, I am extremely proud that it will be the Greater Western Sydney Giants taking to the field against Collingwood at the MCG on Wurundjeri Country in this week's preliminary final. They are the team for us in Western Sydney, and their home at Sydney Olympic Park is in the Parramatta electorate. If this final is anything like last week, it will be a thriller and, hopefully, GWS will triumph over the one AFL team that everyone loves to hate. Under the captaincy of AFL warrior Toby Greene, as well as the careful coaching of Adam Kingsley and the entire coaching team, we have high hopes for the Giants. I wish GWS the best of luck for this Friday night and congratulate them on a fantastic season so far. The song continues:

We're the Greater Western Sydney GIANTS  
We're the biggest and the best

And we will never surrender  
We'll fight until the end  
We're greater than the rest

**KENNETH LOXTON WEEKS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (16:32):** This evening I offer a birthday shout-out to Mr Kenneth Loxton Weeks, who turns 110 years old on 5 October. He was born in Grafton in 1913 in his grandparents' home and has called Grafton home for 110 years. He went to Carrs Creek School and then Grafton High School, where he cut the 100th anniversary cake in 2012 as the oldest living student. Ken married Jean of Swan Creek and they had two sons. I cannot believe I am saying this, but before World War II he was a road construction worker and petrol station operator. After World War II, he opened a radio and electrical sales and repair business. I say happy birthday to Ken. I hope that he enjoys his special 110th birthday with his many family and friends.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Happy birthday, Ken.

#### **PAL BUDDHIST SCHOOL**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (16:33):** Just last week, the first and only Buddhist secular school in New South Wales marked its tenth anniversary. With humble beginnings in Canley Vale, Pal Buddhist School has evolved into one of the State's leading secular schools. At the core of the college is the Dhamma they study side by side. Rooted in the Buddha's teachings, Pal Buddhist School offers a unique and holistic learning experience. Its mission is to nurture the growth of future leaders that are full of wisdom, morality and diligence. Co-curricular activities like The Right Livelihood, a program that encourages students to prepare meals for their parents and teachers, are a testament to this commitment. I acknowledge the tireless efforts of the founding principal, Mr Panha Pal. I also thank and congratulate the current principal, Ms Helen Lam, the entire staff, current and former students, and their families for all their contributions.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I welcome visitors to the gallery. I welcome Leonie Sheedy from the Care Leavers Australasia Network. My mum knows Leonie through her great work with women and men who were raised in orphanages around New South Wales and Australia, like my mum was. I thank her for her work.

#### **KORIN KOUTSOMIHALIS**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:34):** Tonight the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Soul Fit community and Korin Koutsomihalis from Gerringong. Last week Soul Fit was named the local, State and national winner for great service and change in the health and exercise sector. It was named the winner of the local Illawarra Business Awards for Outstanding Fitness Services. Korin recently went to Melbourne for the national AUSactive awards and was awarded the New South Wales Personal Trainer of the Year award. Korin also received the Roll of Honour award for her excellent work advocating for better health and fitness outcomes. Those awards are worthy recognition of Korin's teamwork approach and steadfast commitment to her local community. Korin has clients with Parkinson's disease, rare heart conditions and visual impairments, as well as older Australians. I congratulate Soul Fit and Korin Koutsomihalis from Gerringong. She is an outstanding leader in her field and genuinely cares for her community. Her passion, enthusiasm and dedication have been rightfully rewarded.

#### **FIVE VILLAGES COMMUNITY GARDEN**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (16:35):** I recognise and acknowledge the official launch of the Five Villages Community Garden, located at Manyana on the South Coast. The idea for a community garden began as a way for the community to support and facilitate healing from the trauma of the 2019-20 bushfires. It allows the community to come together and share collective knowledge about food security and sustainable gardening, and share locally produced food. Their mission statement says, "More than anything, we want to bring people together using the power of nature to inspire, heal and make people happy." I was fortunate to attend the official launch of the Yulunga Reserve communal garden in early September. I congratulate the community on a job well done.

#### **RED CROSS CASTLE HILL BRANCH**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (16:36):** I inform the House that the Red Cross Castle Hill branch has won the Red Cross Chairman's Shield Metropolitan. The Red Cross Chairman's Shield Metropolitan is awarded to the branch in the Sydney metropolitan area that has raised the most funds for the annual Red Cross Calling held each year. The Castle Hill branch raises additional funds through market stalls, usually at Dural and Winston Hills malls, and other various activities such as Bunnings sausage sizzles and raffles. The branch has been in operation for 34 years, having opened in 1989. To date, the branch has raised an amazing \$1,166,954 through fundraisers. The branch previously won the shield in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2017, 2018, 2019 and now 2023. I recognise and thank the following members of the branch: Keith and Maureen Cole, Lorraine Williams, Cylene Whiteley, Betty Clare, Beth Redpath, Ann Coupland, Jilly Warren, Sue Buxton, Milanka Zlater, Gay Glenny, Rhonda Slender, Elaine Quinn, Liz Cater, George Wehbe, Bev Coe, Jeannie Biscoe, Sheila Edwards and Donna Fraser. I thank the members of the Castle Hill branch and recognise them for their service to the community.

#### **WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS FC**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (16:37):** On 29 August I joined my friends and colleagues at Marconi Stadium for the round of 16 clash between Western Sydney Wanderers FC and Adelaide United FC. It was a great pleasure to be with a number of local soccer fans, including Guy Zangari, former member for Fairfield, the member for Liverpool, and constituents and fans from across New South Wales. The Western Sydney Wanderers FC's journey

to the quarter finals of the Australia Cup was nothing short of thrilling. The outcome was simply remarkable—a resounding 5-1 victory for Western Sydney Wanderers FC. As passionate fans, we were fortunate to witness the thrilling match firsthand in the comfort of our local soccer field, Marconi Stadium, in Bossley Park. The excitement was intense, and it was an unforgettable experience for all of us. I thank the organising committee and Club Marconi for hosting and planning the outstanding event.

#### GLOUCESTER MOUNTAIN MAN

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (16:38):** It is with great pride that I update the House on the return of the Gloucester Mountain Man Tri Challenge on Sunday 10 September. Gloucester Mountain Man celebrated 30 years of this endurance event after an enforced three-year breather—two years for COVID and then last year's flood in the Barrington River. The Tri Challenge is made up of 24 kilometres of biking from Bucketts Road to Rocky Crossing, 11 kilometres of kayak paddling along the Barrington River and then 10 kilometres of running from the village of Barrington to the finish in Gloucester. More than 100 starters, including Nathan Stewart, completed the challenge in just under two hours and 50 minutes. Catherine Atkinson was the first woman home. The local winners were Brett Radford for individual male; Erica Coombe for individual female; Thomas Coombe for junior individual; Tom and Kim Haschek and Deb Sheely for the team category; and Xavier Soupidis, Tom Maggs and Sam Collie for the junior team category. I congratulate all involved and especially the volunteers who helped.

#### EAST HILLS GIRLS TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (16:39):** On 2 September East Hills Girls Technology High School celebrated its seventieth anniversary jubilee at the Revesby Workers Club. It was a wonderful evening with many students, teachers and volunteers, past and present, in attendance. Many came from interstate to celebrate 70 years of rich history. The school was established in 1953 and is the only specialist technology high school for girls in New South Wales. With more than 800 students, it is linguistically and culturally diverse and reflects the multicultural diversity of my electorate. The school provides students with a quality education, inspiring young girls to contribute to their community as informed, caring citizens. This is reflected by the school's motto "Honour before Reward". I thank the organising committee and staff who made this a memorable evening. Special mention goes to support teacher Mrs Mason, who, to mark this milestone, crafted a beautiful lateral rug featuring the school's crest. The stunning piece will be displayed at the school with pride.

#### FRESHWATER SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (16:40):** I am incredibly grateful to the wonderful team at Freshwater Surf Life Saving Club for the invitation to be their club patron. Being able to represent and support this great local surf club is one of the greatest privileges of the job. Freshwater is a terrific club, steeped in history, with members who go above and beyond for our local community and have been doing so since 1908. I look forward to working with the club in the years ahead as it does its important work of keeping the community safe and providing a place that can be described as the beating heart of Freshwater.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** I acknowledge the beautiful nod that I received from the member for Manly. It was lovely and made my day.

#### GOSFORD REGIONAL GALLERY

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (16:41):** I love art because it unites people from across different cultures, backgrounds and belief systems. Tonight I have the pleasure of introducing members to the marvellous Gosford Regional Gallery, an iconic destination on the Central Coast. The gallery is holding the prestigious Gosford Art Prize 2023, which has been one of the most exciting events in our region since the early 1970s. This year, with a prize pool of over \$28,000 to be won, the program has attracted close to 1,000 entries from all over Australia, 40 per cent of them from the Central Coast. I congratulate this year's winner, Remy Faint, on his artwork *Egress*. The 2023 finalists' artworks will be exhibited at the gallery until 5 November, and I encourage everyone to visit and get ready to be amazed by our talented Australian artists. Gosford Regional Gallery is undeniably an important social and cultural hub for our Central Coast residents and tourists. I congratulate the staff, members and volunteers of the Gosford Regional Gallery on continuously making it an iconic destination in our community.

#### TRIBUTE TO GRAEME HOOPER

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (16:42):** I acknowledge the recent passing of a person who was not only my friend but also a friend to many people throughout Lake Macquarie, Graeme Hooper. Affectionately known as Hoops, Graeme was a big man with a big heart, and he dedicated his life to the Lake Macquarie community. Graeme was with Lake Macquarie City Council as a business development manager for many years and in that role was always seeking to help others. Most notably, he committed himself to the betterment of the

community through his other family, Rotary International, an organisation to which he dedicated nearly 50 years of his life. Earlier this year Graeme also took on the role of finance director for ShelterBox Australia, another charitable group that he and his wife, Sue, were passionate about. Graeme lived his life to the fullest since retirement as he and Sue travelled all over the world together while working tirelessly in their senior Rotary roles. My wife, Lyn, and I send our sincere condolences to Sue, as well as to Graeme's children Brendan and Allison, daughter-in-law Fiona, grandchildren Abigail and Angus, sister Karin and brother-in-law Adrian, and all of his friends who will miss him terribly.

#### **RIVERSTONE HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (16:43):** I congratulate 34 year 12 students from Riverstone High School, the school I attended, on completing their schooling journey. These students have worked hard for the past 13 years, experiencing ups and downs and learning vital life lessons along the way. They are the future of our great State. They should be recognised for their diligence and their personal growth. I specifically congratulate outgoing captains Sher Jahan and Faolaina Ta'ape, as well as outgoing vice-captains Natasha Noble and Ridisha Shrestha on their service to the school community over the past year. Being such role models for their peers is commendable, and to be elected to their positions is a remarkable achievement. I also congratulate newly elected captains Alexander Billett and Naaki Mangu, as well as newly elected vice-captains Almez Kaddour and Tiannah Powell. I thank them for being upstanding young citizens intent on making a positive contribution to our community. I wish them and all other students completing year 12 the very best for the future.

#### **SUSAN WYNNE**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (16:44):** Tonight I pay special tribute to Woollahra mayor Susan Wynne, who is handing over the mayoral chains after four years in the role and 15 years in total on council, which is pretty impressive. Anyone who knows Susan will agree she has brought incredible energy and passion to that role. She is a strong leader, runs a tight meeting and knows how to get things done. Importantly, Susan's engaging personality has endeared her to our community, whether it is our local clubs, businesses, arts organisations, sporting or cultural groups. Susan says one of her favourite parts of the job has been welcoming new Australians through citizenship ceremonies. She has run 64 of them, making 1,408 people Aussies over the past four years. Susan led council through COVID. She has championed environmental sustainability. She has promoted mental health, and so much more. There is too much to fit into this speech but, on behalf of our community, I thank Susan and hope she enjoys the next chapter.

#### **NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (16:45):** Looking after the Royal National Park, the second oldest national park in the world, and the Heathcote National Park is no easy feat. It takes a team of dedicated and passionate people who have a genuine love of our native flora and fauna. I have had the pleasure of liaising with several members of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. They include Brendon, Jai and Anita from the Royal Area, Greater Sydney Branch, and Graham Bush from the Illawarra Highlands Area, South Coast Branch. Many of those team members have volunteered their time to attend a number of forums and round tables that I have held and will hold in the coming weeks. They were not obliged to attend; they did it because they genuinely care about their community and want to engage with them. We are so fortunate to have so much national park land in the Heathcote electorate. Preserving, protecting and promoting that bushland is a big task but one I know the entire National Parks and Wildlife Service team is up to. I thank them for all of their hard work and efforts.

#### **HASTINGS SECONDARY COLLEGE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (16:46):** I am excited to report to the House the successful students from Hastings Secondary College, Port Macquarie Campus, who were selected to compete in the NSW Combined High Schools Secondary Association athletics championship held in early September. A team of 24 students from Hastings Secondary College recently travelled to Sydney Olympic Park to test their skills and talents against a cohort of elite sporting champions in New South Wales. Representing the college were Frida Aaso, Bodhi Buckley, Nate Castelli, Jessica Dun, Drew de Silva, Jaidyn Erdelyi, Oliver Godson, Indianna Hardisty, Eva Harris, Maisie Horner, Joe Horton, Grace Kelly, Eddie Maslen, Reggie Maslen, Tuqiri Mason, Cameron McLean-Prosser, Sarah Mitchell, Oskar Morris, Jack Rumble, Les Smith, Jack Stace, Thea Thomas, Corey Tinning and Georgia White. The championships showcase the sporting abilities of students in a range of events including high jump, javelin, shot-put, long jump and running and dash metre events. I commend each and every student for working incredibly hard to achieve selection at the athletic championships. Competing at State level makes them all winners regardless of the result. I say to them to keep pursuing their goals.

### SURF LIFE SAVING NSW AWARDS

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (16:47):** At the recent NSW Surf Life Saving Awards of Excellence, surf lifesavers from the Illawarra branch were among the recipients being recognised for their dedication to keeping people safe on our beaches. Four of the recipients came from my own club, Bellambi Surf Life Saving Club. I am not sure that there has ever been a similar number from one club before at an awards of excellence for the State. The recipients from Bellambi were the Bellambi Surf Life Saving Club call-out team for Services Team of the Year, Jackie Percy for Trainer of the Year, Brody Robertson for Youth Surf Lifesaver of the Year and Halle Bone for Youth Volunteer of the Year. I am incredibly proud to be involved at Bellambi Surf Life Saving with them. They are dedicated lifesavers and fantastic people. Others from the Illawarra who received awards of excellence were Glenn Beveridge from the Wollongong City Surf Life Saving Club for Coach of the Year, Brigid Collaery from Coalcliff Surf Life Saving Club for Volunteer of the Year and Rachele Balez from Scarborough Wombarra Surf Life Saving Club Patrol Captain of the Year. We produce some great lifesavers in the Illawarra and their efforts have been fittingly recognised.

### KEELY BENNETT

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (16:48):** Today I bring to the attention of the House the work of Keely Bennett. Keely has been the ethics coordinator for Orange Grove Public School since 2015, and taught ethics between 2018 and 2022. Throughout that time Keely has worked to grow ethics education and understanding at the school, supporting countless ethics teachers and enabling children to develop empathy, respect and understanding. Keely has continued on as coordinator this year despite both of her children graduating from Orange Grove Public School and heading off to high school. I thank Keely for her dedication and valued contribution.

### WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (16:49):** On Saturday 16 September 2023 it was a pleasure to attend the World Day of Migrants and Refugees event organised by the Jesuit Refugee Service at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Seven Hills. World Day of Migrants and Refugees is an occasion to express concern for vulnerable people and pray for their safety in adversity. It is an occasion to celebrate our global community and migrant opportunities in New South Wales. I thank Bishop Vincent Long and Blacktown City Council Mayor Tony Bleasdale, OAM, for their thought-provoking keynote speeches. I also thank Maryam, a recent refugee from Iran, and Mayurakethan Sabaarathnam for sharing their powerful stories. We are fortunate in Western Sydney to have diverse migrant and refugee communities sharing their rich culture, history and activism. I thank Catholic Care Western Sydney, House of Welcome, the Community Migrant Resource Centre, Vinnies and especially the Jesuit Refugee Service for the event. The support of those organisations is crucial to granting agency, freedom and welcome to migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum in our community.

### ST AMBROSE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne) (16:50):** Recently I had the pleasure to welcome year 5 and year 6 students from St Ambrose Catholic Primary School on an excursion to the Parliament of New South Wales. I was greeted by many enthusiastic students, buzzing with curiosity and excitement. I commend the students for the respectful way they represented their school and for their eagerness to learn more about the Parliament. It was a pleasure to see students engage in a mock parliament. The big smiles on their faces told me that it was a highlight of their day. They impressed me with their knowledge of the Parliament and the role it plays in our community. The involvement and willingness of the students to engage was evidence that the dedicated staff at the school, led by Principal Linda McFadden, have cultivated a positive learning environment. I thank St Ambrose and give a big shout-out to year 5 and year 6 students. I wish them all the best. I am sure I will see some of them in the Chamber soon.

### CLOVELLY ESKIMOS

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:51):** A massive shout-out goes to the Clovelly Eskimos, which smashed the forty-sixth annual winter swimming championships, bringing home a treasure trove of medals. Ron Hardie claimed gold in the men's over-75s; Michael Barnes secured another gold; John Keevers walked away with silver in the men's over-65s; Carolyn Martin and Philomenia Pettit won silver and bronze in the women's over-60s; Jo Emery and Blair Chapman won bronze in the women's over-55s and men's over-40s; Sally Wood won gold and Kimmy Rashleigh won silver in the women's over-30s; and, not to be outdone, Sally clinched silver while Kimmy smashed out a bronze in the women's open event as well. But the victories did not stop there. In the relay events, gold winners in the ladies 30-and-over squad were Sally, Kimmy, Kim and Sarah, while the open ladies—Lydia, Kimmy, Sally, Nicole, Kelsey and Kim—secured bronze. Chris, John, Steve, Michael, Mark and

John won bronze in the over-60s men's race. Last but not least, the ladies over-60s relay team, consisting of Caroline, Philomenia, Carolyn and Jo, left spectators awestruck with a record-breaking win at the championships.

#### NORTHERN BEACHES PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (16:53):** I recently had the opportunity to act as an adjudicator for the Northern Beaches Public Speaking Competition, hosted by St Rose Catholic Primary School in Collaroy Plateau. After attending the competition, it was clear that there is immense talent on the northern beaches. Some members in this place, including me, could learn a thing or two from those young women and men. The competition featured a brilliant line-up of primary school participants, each representing their respective schools with eloquence and passion. I applaud the following students for their outstanding contributions: April and Frankie from Sacred Heart Mona Vale; Olivia and Luke, who was the winner, from Our Lady of Good Counsel Forestville; Oliver and Mitchell from St Joseph's Narrabeen; Eliza and Mabel from St Rose Catholic Primary School; Rose and Sophie from St Martin's Primary School Davidson; and Zara and Ariana from Maria Regina Catholic School. Most of the participants were young women. Their dedication to honing their public speaking skills and their courage in stepping onto the stage is truly commendable. I am sure they all have very bright futures ahead of them.

#### AUBURN ELECTORATE CHILEAN COMMUNITY

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (16:54):** The Auburn electorate has a significant community of Chileans who came to Australia following the military overthrow of the Allende Government. This year marks 50 years since that violent overthrow of the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile. Allende's government was transforming Chile; however, in September 1973 the Chilean coup d'etat unleashed a wave of terror and bloodshed upon the people of Chile. The Pinochet military dictatorship that followed resulted in at least 4,000 deaths or disappearances, 40,000 people tortured and over 150,000 cases of political detention. It has rightly been described as a politicicide. Some 30,000 Chileans were forced into exile with their passports marked "L - never to return". Pinochet unleashed a caravan of death upon the Chilean people. The most horrific torture was unleashed, particularly on women, who they singled out for the worst humiliations. Thousands of the missing have never been found and, 50 years on, their families have no answers about their fate. President Gabriel Boric has authorised a new national search plan as part of the fiftieth anniversary of the military coup in an attempt to give families some answers.

#### ANNIE COOKE

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (16:55):** Congratulations are in order for one of Wollondilly's inspiring residents, Annie Cooke, who competed fiercely in the World Aquatics Masters Championships in Japan. Despite being in the upper echelon of her age group—74 to 79 years—Annie has proved that age is but a number. With grit and grace, she swam her way to seventh place globally in the 200-metre backstroke event, making her community back home incredibly proud. Annie represented Campbelltown Collegians at the world-class event, demonstrating her years of experience and dedication to the sport. Annie did not just showcase her prowess in the 200-metre backstroke. She also battled it out in the 50-metre and 100-metre backstroke and the 50-metre freestyle and 50-metre butterfly, showing a remarkable versatility in her skill set. Annie's commendable performance underlines her lifelong commitment to swimming. This impressive feat by Annie is a reminder that age is no barrier to accomplishing extraordinary things. Well done to Annie for her remarkable achievement. We are all so proud.

#### WADANGGARI PARK

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (16:56):** On behalf of Minister Paul Scully I attended the opening of Wadanggari Park, undertaken by wonderful mayor Andrew Zbik and the innovative general manager Craig Wrightson. The 4,750 square metres of open space features a lawn bridging a railway line, a plaza, passive nooks and a regional scale adventure playground. The design features best practice in landscape urban design and safety, and is seamlessly connected to Mall 88. The JQZ quality development includes the new St Leonards Library, retail shops, public toilets and a 300-space public basement car park. The Pacific Highway pedestrian underpass has been upgraded to improve lighting and safety and an elevator has been installed for direct access to the park. Lane Cove library was opened by the mayor and John Vallance, the State librarian, and has amazing technology and meeting spaces. I was joined by the member for North Shore and my predecessor portfolio Minister, Anthony Roberts. I congratulate Lane Cove Council for its forward thinking and innovative planning.

#### HAWKESBURY ART PRIZE EXHIBITION

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:57):** I acknowledge the 2023 Hawkesbury Art Prize exhibition held at the Purple Noon Gallery, Freemans Reach. On Saturday 2 September I had the honour of attending the biannual exhibition and awarding the local Hawkesbury Art Prize to Libby Hyatt for her entry *Sunlight balances shadows*, which was highly commended. Catherine Barry and her submission, *Alume*,

took out first prize. Catherine is from Brisbane, and it was great to see many other entries from around the country. One-third of the finalist collections were sold, and this year's proceeds were given to the National Art School in Sydney. I thank judges Angus Fisher, Julie Brackenreg and Linda Gregoriou for their contributions, and Purple Noon Gallery for putting on an excellent exhibition. I also congratulate the 2023 Hawkesbury Art Prize finalists.

#### MITCHELL MCINNES

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (16:58):** I recognise the fundraising efforts of Mitchell McInnes of Taren Point ahead of his upcoming charity run to raise funds for We Are Mobilise. We Are Mobilise is an incredible charitable organisation that provides care to those experiencing homelessness and works to create a world where no-one needs to sleep on the street. Mitch, a regular marathon runner, is hoping to raise \$5,000 for this important cause on 6 October by running around Tempe Recreational Park for 24 hours straight, stopping only for toilet breaks and slowing down to a walk for something to eat. Importantly, the run on 6 October will not be Mitch's first charitable run. Mitch has previously run 365 kilometres in 30 days to raise over \$6,000 for the McGrath Foundation to provide breast care nurses in communities across Australia for women and men experiencing breast cancer. It was this previous fundraising effort and Mitch's love of running events that inspired him to keep running for a purpose. I commend Mitch for his efforts in raising funds for this important cause and wish him all the best for the day.

#### EPPING BOYS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (16:59):** I acknowledge the election of the Epping Boys High School executive leadership team for the 2023-24 academic year. Each of these young men brings unique qualities to their role and, I am sure, will leave the school an even better place for their term of leadership. The new captain, Justin, is known for his determination and commitment. He embodies the values of leadership and unity, and he will undoubtedly guide the school on a path to success. Vice-captain Caleb is recognised for his dedication and teamwork. His passion for the school community and ability to inspire others will play a crucial role in the upcoming year. Leading as head prefect is Ryan, a visionary leader with a transformative outlook. His strategic thinking and inclusive approach are expected to have a positive impact on the school's future. These three individuals are set to make a lasting impression as they lead Epping Boys High School into the new academic year. Their leadership qualities and dedication to the school community will be invaluable assets in shaping a successful year ahead. I wish them every success and look forward to working with them for the betterment of Epping Boys High School and the broader Ryde community.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### STATE BUDGET AND PITTWATER ELECTORATE

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (17:00):** Last week I spoke in this place about the needs of my community. I outlined some critical projects for people in Pittwater, many of which had been budgeted for by the previous Liberal Government for the coming years. Since March, I have engaged with the Government in good faith, writing to Ministers about local projects and advocating for Pittwater. Despite the countless "reviews" and evasive answers I have received in response to my advocacy—if I have received any response at all—I had been optimistic that this Government would be empathetic to the needs of my community and that it would honour its promise to govern for all of New South Wales. Unfortunately, this past Tuesday, when this Government's first budget was handed down, its true intentions became clear. This Government has decided to play postcode politics, allocating funding to electorates held or winnable by Labor, and my community is paying the price.

Labor completely disregarded Pittwater in its budget, slashing up to \$430 million in funding from existing projects—with no new funding. It is disappointing to see the Government punishing Pittwater for not voting for it. It is clear that Labor does not care about Pittwater. Labor's budget ripped away funding from Mona Vale Road West. The last Government included \$340 million to widen Mona Vale Road from the Baha'i Temple to Kimbriki Tip. The \$250 million upgrade of the eastern section is almost complete, and land has been cleared for the western section. This year alone, there have been at least eight crashes on Mona Vale Road in Pittwater—some near deadly. On many of those occasions the road was closed for hours, causing chaos and congestion across the entire northern beaches road network. By ripping away the immediate funding for this project, Labor is putting lives at risk.

The Labor Government promised to match the Liberal Government's Wakehurst Parkway commitment. It promised a total of \$106 million, including the \$18.1 million already provided by the Liberal Government to the local council, the \$75 million already budgeted by the Liberal Government and \$13 million for further flood mitigation works. When budget day rolled around on Tuesday, Labor had budgeted just \$4.9 million of its promised \$88 million and nothing over the forward estimates. Last year the Wakehurst Parkway was closed 16 times due to flooding. This road is a critical link to essential services for the Pittwater community. The Labor

Government must do more than issue press releases and harp on about its commitments, which do not exist. It must put the money for the parkway in the budget and in the forward estimates.

Last week the Labor Government announced that it would be closing the Narrabeen Ambulance Station. Local paramedics were blindsided by this news. Labor announced this closure on the back of an announcement that a new ambulance station would be built at Dee Why. When we look at the budget, we see project after project for new ambulance stations. But guess what? There is not one for Dee Why. There is not one cent for a Dee Why ambulance station. Labor has not provided any clarity on how services will be redistributed once it closes Narrabeen Ambulance Station. It is essential that service levels for Pittwater are maintained.

The plan as we know it is to move paramedic services from Narrabeen to Dee Why. The problem with that—and a government with knowledge of on-the-ground issues would know this—is there are no intensive care paramedics north of Narrabeen. If we move the intensive care paramedics to Dee Why, there will be no intensive paramedic coverage from Dee Why to Palm Beach. A further problem is that Mona Vale Ambulance Station has no night-shift paramedic services. Avalon has one paramedic team on around the clock and when that team is called away there is simply no provision for any emergency services for the people of Pittwater. Once again, we see that Labor is playing postcode politics with people's lives.

Fortunately, it is not all bad news. A look at the Labor Government's *Mapping the Budget* reveals a single cause for celebration in Pittwater. Thanks to an impressive community campaign and the prior work of the former Government, Labor has budgeted \$26 million for essential upgrades and maintenance works at Narrabeen Sports High School and Narrabeen North Public School. In total, there is \$59.6 million for both projects to complete all necessary works.

**Mr Stephen Bali:** Fifty-nine?

**Mr RORY AMON:** I note that my friend opposite is questioning the funding of such important projects, which is a shame. Notwithstanding the Premier being unable to properly name suburbs in my electorate, I will continue to hold the Government to account and advocate for the needs of my community, even when this Government will not.

### COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:05):** As the member for Prospect, Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and a member of the legal profession, I recognise the essential role that community legal centres play in the electorate of Prospect, throughout Western Sydney and, indeed, across New South Wales. Community legal centres are integral to a fair and equitable justice system. Independent and non-profit, community legal centres offer affordable, culturally considerate and accessible legal services for our community. Specialist and generalist community legal centres drive representative solutions, increase confidence in the legal process, provide advice, assist communities in need and help people develop skills to be their own advocates.

The electorate of Prospect is home to the Toongabbie Legal Centre. The centre provides free legal advice, referrals, community education seminars and law reform advocacy. It is a vital community partner. I thank principal solicitor Susai Benjamin, OAM, and the dedicated team at Toongabbie Legal Centre for supporting our community. The Western Sydney Community Legal Centre, based in Parramatta, offers holistic legal and social programs to support the diverse needs of our Western Sydney communities. The centre provides a focused, multicultural legal service, giving free information, referrals, representation and community education to migrants, refugees, people seeking asylum, and culturally and linguistically diverse people. The centre also provides the Cumberland Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, which assists women experiencing domestic or family violence to access free information, referrals, court support and safety planning.

The centre also offers an Aboriginal access program, rental assistance, a safe place for supervised child handovers and many more vital community supports. I thank Helen Bouropoulos, the board chair, CEO John Hallam and the hardworking Western Sydney Community Legal Centre team for their pursuit of justice for all members of the Western Sydney community. The Western Sydney University Justice Clinic offers casework, law reform, health justice outreach clinics, community education, access-to-justice programs and community legal service. The clinic makes submissions regarding access to justice and international conventions, such as submissions to the United Nations Human Rights Council and to the Parliament of New South Wales. I thank Jenni Whelan, Director of Clinical Legal Education, and practitioners, volunteers and students for supporting equitable legal outcomes.

The Refugee Advice and Casework Service offers a public voice for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum. The service provides legal support for the Afghan crisis response, judicial review, family reunion, and stateless and unaccompanied children. It also provides a clinic for refugees. Nominated for *Lawyers Weekly* law firm of the year, the service is an example of the high standard of the legal service offered by community

legal centres. I offer my congratulations and thank principal solicitor Sarah Dale, the senior supervising solicitors—Arif Hussein, Alison Ryan and Ben Lumsdaine—solicitors, staff and volunteers for their dedication to achieving justice and dignity for people seeking asylum.

The first free legal service in Australia, the Aboriginal Legal Service, opened in Redfern in 1970. It delivers quality, culturally appropriate legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities. Its Parramatta office assists with criminal law, child protection, family law, housing, fines and deaths in custody. The ALS, as it is called, strives for social justice and equality, giving clients agency to design, deliver and lead through legal support. I thank CEO Karly Warner, principal solicitor Louise Coady and the ALS team for their ongoing dedication.

For over 40 years, Women's Legal Service NSW has pioneered a voice for women and promoted access to justice. It provides specialist legal services relating to domestic violence, sexual assault, family law, discrimination, victim support, child protection and human rights. Women's Legal Service NSW fosters social change to redress inequalities that women experience through legal advice, community education and policy reform. I thank CEO Katrina Ironside and the solicitors, coordinators and volunteers for their commitment to justice for women. I thank all the dedicated legal practitioners, executives, operations and administrative staff, and volunteers working tirelessly to provide hope, agency and just legal outcomes for our Western Sydney communities.

### LAKE MACQUARIE ELECTORATE POLICING

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (17:10):** Over the past few days there was much discussion in this House about public sector wage rises, safe staffing levels for nurses and midwives, and additional paramedics for regional New South Wales. Those are all very worthy initiatives in the New South Wales budget, and I applaud the Government for its commitment to addressing the staffing issues affecting our public sector workforces—though one area that did not get as much attention in the budget was police resourcing, which is a significant issue in Lake Macquarie. The Lake Macquarie electorate falls under the Lake Macquarie Police District. It is the same command that covers much of Swansea, the electorate of our police Minister, so I know that the Minister is well aware of the issues I am speaking about today. Indeed, the Minister and I have discussed policing issues very recently. She empathetically answered a question from the member for Barwon on the broader issue in question time today.

But over the past few months my office has been made aware of an increasing number of crime-related issues in the Lake Macquarie electorate. Some common themes have emerged, including theft, antisocial behaviour, inappropriate use of motorbikes and scooters, and malicious damage. The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research quarterly update for June 2023 was released this week. The update, particularly the comparison of crime rates in the Lake Macquarie local government area over the past two years, supports my community's concerns. In Lake Macquarie the recorded number of break and enters of dwellings is up 16.5 per cent between July 2021 and June 2023. Motor vehicle theft is up 28.1 per cent. Stealing from retail stores is up 28.5 per cent and stealing from persons is up 80 per cent.

Two police stations in my electorate are within the Lake Macquarie Police District: Toronto and Morisset. The current Morisset Police Station was opened in October 2016 with much fanfare. It was celebrated as a state-of-the-art police station that could accommodate general duties police with meal rooms, meeting facilities and improved canine facilities for dog units. Initially the station was open to the public from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Since its opening date, I have been campaigning for an ongoing 24/7 police presence at Morisset Police Station. In the five years between 2016 and 2021 there has been an 18 per cent increase in the populations of postcodes 2264 and 2265, which include Morisset and its surrounding suburbs. Yet I was shocked to find out recently that, instead of police resourcing being increased at Morisset, the doors of the station are no longer open to the public, with no general duties officers based there.

While the growing population of Lake Macquarie presents a compelling argument to extend police services in the southern Lake Macquarie area, the opposite is occurring. I am very concerned that the rising crime rates around the area correlate with the reduction in the police presence in Morisset. The Lake Macquarie Police District has also been plagued in recent years by too high a turnover of area commanders. Notwithstanding the quality of those who have taken the helm, the short stays make it hard for me and other members to discuss concerns directly with the local area management. I do not in any way criticise the hard work of the officers of the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command. They do an extraordinary job and are no doubt doing the best they can with the resources they have.

Police officers on any given day can witness the very worst of humanity; no doubt that takes its toll. In 2022 there were eight police suicides in New South Wales alone. I acknowledge the work the NSW Police Force is undertaking to support the mental health needs of its workforce. But clearly significant staffing issues are affecting

the force. I note that this week *The Daily Telegraph*—I do not normally quote it—reported on police staffing shortages in the NSW Police Force. There are more than 1,350 vacancies in the force, not factoring in vacancies caused by leave. The Police Association of New South Wales has also reported an increasing number of officers exiting the force in recent years due to being medically unfit.

I recognise that the Government has inherited this issue and that it believes addressing public sector wages will help to recruit and retain public sector workers. But the issue is clearly starting to have a serious effect on New South Wales communities. With particular reference to my community, fewer police are on the ground. I believe one obvious step to address the rising crime rates is to ensure that the doors of Morisset Police Station reopen to the community as soon as possible. The police numbers allocated in the area are reflective of the current population and are not even close to addressing the very significant growth in the greater Morisset area.

### PASSFIELD PARK SCHOOL

**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) (17:15):** One of the great joys of my job is seeing community campaigns deliver real outcomes for the people in my local community. For me, the redevelopment of Passfield Park School in Minto was a long time in the making. I get great pleasure as I drive to and from the electorate office and home and see the work of the community in that brand spanking new community school. The new Passfield Park School was the result of a consistent and concerted community campaign by the school and the broader community to deliver a quality education space for children with disability and additional needs.

I acknowledge my colleague the Federal member for Macarthur, Dr Mike Freeland. He and I have long been supporters of Passfield Park School and its journey for a fair go. Many people over many years joined forces to campaign for equity and dignity for the students of Passfield Park School, and I thank everyone involved in the journey. The transformation of the school is truly remarkable and one of the most rewarding community campaigns I have ever been involved with since being elected as the local member. Every time I visit Passfield Park School I am reminded of the power of community campaigns to change lives for the better. Years of neglect and inaction by the former Government meant that the school's infrastructure was in an appalling state that we would not expect for a school and which the school community did not deserve.

A rallying cry from the school and the wider community drove long-lasting change. The school was redeveloped into a modern, inclusive learning space, giving young people with disability and special needs access to the quality learning environment that they so rightly deserve. The modern outdoor play spaces, the state-of-the-art learning areas and Passfield Park School's brand-new library bring me a great deal of joy. The library is a welcome addition to Passfield. I was pleased to visit the school for the opening of that beautiful new learning space last month. A stunning mural adorns the library's walls, featuring many great storybook characters and themes.

There are many people to thank for their wonderful efforts in delivering that fine project. First, I thank the dedicated teaching and administration staff of the school, particularly Principal Wendy Low for her ongoing dedication and commitment to quality education for her kids. Wendy is passionate about her students, the families and the community, which wholeheartedly supports the school. Secondly, I thank all the mums, dads and carers who have given their time and energy generously to make Passfield Park School a wonderful community asset. Passfield is one big family. It is that level of support and encouragement for each other that helps young people thrive. Thirdly, I thank Passfield Park Kids Incorporated, the charity associated with the school, which has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of students at every stage.

Finally, I thank the Rotary Club of Ingleburn for its ongoing support of Passfield Park School. The club donated 2,000 books for the school's new library and earned itself an award for best community project for its "Books to Change Lives" project. Gail Taylor and Beth Godwin were instrumental in driving an army of volunteers who gave generously of their days and nights to cover books. So strong are the school's community ties that I am told some former staff members returned to the school to lend a hand in establishing the new library. It really was a collective effort. The new library is a space that students and staff will no doubt cherish for many years to come. I say thank you to other groups and individuals for their kind donations and contributions in support of the school's new library, including the Silver Coin Project, local authors Adrienne Bradney Smith and Toby Horvath, Wave Learning, Dymocks Charity, QBD Books and, last but certainly not least, the on-the-ground team of Di Smith, Nicole Wells and Chris Ayres.

It is often said that if you open a book, you open your mind. What started as a jumble of mess in an overcrowded storeroom full of resources and another empty room is now a stunning library. It is a place for kids to open their imaginations and be enriched by literature. It is a space for reading, relaxation, learning and growth for the children of Passfield Park School. I am confident that the students and staff at the school will enjoy the

fabulous new library and all it has to offer. I cannot wait to see what the next chapter has in store for this wonderful local school, its students and the wider school community.

### FORSTER PUBLIC HOSPITAL

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Before I call the member for Myall Lakes, I acknowledge the presence of her husband, Ben, in the gallery. I thank all of our spouses, friends and family for the important role they play in supporting us in this place.

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (17:20):** It is with great disappointment and a very heavy heart that I raise a matter of grave significance that affects the entire Myall Lakes community. Forster public hospital was envisioned as a modern, purpose-built facility, poised to provide a 24-hour emergency department and inpatient and outpatient care. It was an answer to the cries of our residents who have faced the challenges of inadequate healthcare services for far too long. In the 2022-23 budget the Coalition Government allocated \$20 million towards the construction of Forster public hospital. That allocation was a commitment to improving healthcare services in our region. It was a commitment that my predecessor, the late Stephen Bromhead, worked tirelessly to secure, and it is his legacy. However, I am devastated and angered that the 2023-24 budget revealed that the Labor Government has pulled the vital funding that was designated for Forster public hospital.

That funding was not merely a financial figure; it was a lifeline for our residents, an opportunity to alleviate the immense pressure on the Manning Base Hospital and a promise of enhanced healthcare services for our region. Why would we need a public hospital in Forster when we have a hospital in Taree? We must consider that some areas in the Great Lakes—like Coomba Park, for example—are 40 minutes away from Forster, and then an extra 30 minutes from Taree. So when an ambulance is dispatched to Coomba Park it takes 40 minutes to reach there, another 40 minutes to return to Forster and an additional half an hour to reach Taree. That is almost two hours before someone can seek urgent medical care. That is the type of delay we are dealing with.

Let us also consider the Great Lakes area, a popular tourist destination, which normally has a permanent population of 33,000, but surges during peak tourist season to around 100,000 and has more than 600,000 visitors per year. Up to 5,000 people from Forster alone are presenting at Manning Base Hospital each year, causing undue strain and delays in providing essential medical care. The need for a public hospital in Forster is evident to everyone who has witnessed the alarming ambulance ramping outside Manning Base Hospital's doors. Just like my predecessor, I have been persistent in my commitment to Forster public hospital. When I was preselected, improved health for the Myall Lakes was at the top of my list. I listened to community members, I met with medical clinicians, and I took their concerns straight to the former Minister for Regional Health, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor. In February this year, alongside Stephen Bromhead, I was so proud to announce the preferred site and that Forster public hospital was scheduled to be delivered to the community by 2025.

A few short months ago in June I met with the Minister for Health, Ryan Park. During that meeting, he gave me clear assurances that funding for Forster hospital was secure. But, evidently, that was not true. This new Labor Government has claimed that it is undertaking to rebuild the health system by providing health infrastructure for communities across New South Wales, by embracing urgent care to relieve pressure on our hospitals, and by boosting and supporting the health workforce, which will, in turn, improve patient outcomes. But by scrapping funding for Forster public hospital, this Government is ignoring the pleas of the doctors and nurses from the Manning; the paramedics, who are under immense pressure; and the patients and community members, who are calling for this public hospital to go ahead.

The Myall Lakes electorate—my electorate—has one of the oldest demographics in New South Wales. It is not that the people want another hospital; quite simply, they need another hospital. My commitment to Forster public hospital remains strong. The people of Myall Lakes certainly deserve better than this, and I will continue to fight for the reallocation of the \$20 million and the healthcare services that our community desperately needs. Our community deserves to see the promises made by the previous Government come to fruition. Our community deserves Forster public hospital.

### STATE BUDGET AND THE ILLAWARRA

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (17:25):** Over the past decade the previous Government had a tendency to overlook the Illawarra. I note a couple of projects have made a difference, but after former Liberal Ministers tried to claim that their budgets looked after the Illawarra more than previous Labor budgets had, I went through the figures. That analysis showed that, in fact, more than 50¢ in every dollar that was spent by the then Liberal Government went to projects that were conceived, planned or started by the previous Labor Government. That changed with this budget. The Illawarra was not ignored by the Minns Labor Government. A whopping \$2.2 billion worth of commitments to health, transport and education for the Illawarra-Shoalhaven were contained in Tuesday's budget.

The Minns Government is using the budget to invest in essential services and infrastructure in the Illawarra to meet the growing needs of our communities. Importantly, it starts to deliver on a number of election commitments. Wollongong Hospital has been under pressure for some time. I have made that no secret. It has experienced some of the longest emergency department [ED] waiting times in the State. Some of those pressures will start to be addressed through the Government's plans for safe staffing levels. The budget puts in place funding for nursing staff that the previous Government did not fund beyond June next year. Now, as a result of the budget, 60 of them will stay in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District. Our memorandum of understanding with the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association to implement safe staffing levels of one to three in the ED and one to four on the floor means more nursing staff are on the way.

Other health workers will also benefit from the Government's \$3.6 billion Essential Services Fund. Hospital cleaners, security guards and other staff will see an increase in their share of the tax savings returned to them under salary packaging arrangements, and there is more to come. While Wollongong Hospital is run by dedicated staff, good equipment helps to diagnose and treat patients more quickly and effectively. That is why the Government is delivering on its election commitment to provide \$7.85 million to fund a new CT scanner and MRI machine, \$2 million to improve cancer patient care and a further \$12 million to fund the design and planning for the next major redevelopment of the hospital. That work will be done alongside important work to be undertaken by the Department of Planning and Environment on the Metro Wollongong Health Precinct Strategy, which will look at the planning needed to better integrate the Wollongong Hospital, the areas around it, including the specialist services, as well as the transport links and the CBD.

That will set in train a massive change not only to the way that health services are delivered in Wollongong but also to how parts of central Wollongong are better integrated as a city. Added to that, funds will be provided for the new Warrawong Community Health Centre, which is expected to be submitted for planning approval later this year, with a view to getting construction underway early next year. That will be an exciting addition to Wollongong's southern suburbs, and I am pleased after having lobbied for it for such a long time. The budget also contained funds for a couple of exciting road projects, including \$277.8 million over four years to commence the construction of the interchange to replace the existing intersection at the M1 Princes Motorway and Mount Ousley Road, more commonly known as the Mount Ousley interchange project. Thousands of vehicles, both trucks and passenger vehicles, will benefit from that improvement to safety.

Importantly, work will begin this year on the planning of additional entry and exit ramps at Dapto, which should have been completed long ago. It is a long-awaited project for residents of Dapto. They look forward to seeing the options. The budget also contained additional funds for a project I have long advocated for locally: the upgrade of Picton Road. This is a long-term project, but I am pleased that a further \$9.3 million has been committed to progress this important link with the growing population of Sydney's south-west. That population is already travelling to Wollongong for its beaches and university, and I hope it will increasingly be travelling to Wollongong for employment in the future. As the Minns Government gets the renewable energy road map back on track, it is important to make sure the renewable energy sector has a skilled workforce at the ready.

The member for Cunningham, Alison Byrnes, was able to secure \$2.5 million for a renewable energy training centre at Wollongong TAFE, and I am pleased to see that the centre will be delivered through this budget. Families in the Illawarra will also benefit from the 130 cost-of-living measures in the budget worth \$8.2 billion. Those include stamp duty relief for first home buyers, energy bill relief for seniors and families, and the \$500 preschool fee relief for three-year-olds in eligible long day care settings. The Minns Government's \$2.2 billion Housing and Infrastructure Plan will help to deliver more homes by supporting the delivery of the roads, water, sewerage and other enabling infrastructure that is needed to build those homes.

We have inherited some difficult decisions that had to be made. We are paying down debt. We are getting things back on track. We are rebuilding essential services. We are confronting the housing crisis. We are getting the renewable energy road map back on track. This budget will pay dividends long into the future as this Government focuses on fulfilling its commitments without privatising more assets or implementing an unfair salary cap.

### **SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (17:30):** The need for affordable and secure housing in Sydney is more important than ever. Despite widespread understanding of this fact, new developments are being approved that prioritise developer profits ahead of community need. Disappointingly, none of the 1,200 new units slated for Blackwattle Bay are set aside for public housing. Similarly, while the Bays West Place Strategy contains a provision for 30 per cent affordable housing in stage two of the development, it makes no mention of public housing. Given the ongoing housing crisis, and the current Government's pre-election commitment regarding minimum affordable housing requirements for developments on public land, this is incredibly disappointing. Prior

to the election, the Government committed to guaranteeing 30 per cent affordable, social and universal housing on unused public land. It is vital that this commitment is honoured.

The housing crisis in our community is only set to worsen. In the 12 months to August of this year alone, we saw an additional 1,000 people added to the priority waitlist for public and community housing. This list has doubled in less than a decade. Right now over 57,000 vulnerable families and individuals are waiting for a safe, secure and affordable place to call home. In my community in the inner west, vulnerable families are facing wait times of 10-plus years for homes with two or more bedrooms. As of February this year, 1,639 families were on the inner west waitlist. That is unacceptable. We should not accept a system that leaves vulnerable people waiting a decade for a secure and affordable place to call home. We know the implications. People are sleeping in tents in the park and in cars, or are couch surfing for years. That is why we need public land to be set aside for public housing and a legislated 30 per cent affordable housing mandate for all new developments, not just developments on public land.

The impact of the failure to provide more public housing is clear. By way of example, I share the following story sent to me by Hands Off Glebe, which is a local public housing advocacy group:

An 80 plus year old lady is having to put up her 45-year-old son in her housing department flat because he and his family were evicted from his private rental. He can't live with his father-in-law, so his wife and two children live several suburbs away. The resultant stress on the family is taking its toll. The two sets of elderly parents have to cope with the generation below while the mother and father are separated not by argument but by accommodation. These stories are legion throughout NSW [and it's] time for a change in thinking.

Heartbreaking stories like this, of families kept apart because they are unable to find affordable and secure housing together, are far too common. It is not good enough. That is why I call on the Government to honour its pre-election commitment. It is vital that we amend the Blackwattle Bay Precinct Strategy to prioritise public housing. The Bays West Place Strategy should also be updated to include clear commitments to provide public housing as a priority. Social housing on its own is not enough.

I also encourage the Government to look ahead for future opportunities to develop public housing on public land. The former WestConnex construction site at Mallett Street in Camperdown presents one such opportunity. Now that this public land is no longer being used, I call on the Government to make an immediate and significant investment in new public housing on the former construction site. The only way to address the housing crisis and get more vulnerable people into safe, secure and affordable homes is to take concrete action. It is one thing to try to build our way out of this housing crisis, but unless we are making those properties genuinely affordable it will still leave those most in need without a roof over their heads. We have a clear opportunity in the inner west with the Blackwattle Bay and Bays West developments and with the newly available public land at the old WestConnex construction site. The Government needs to seize the opportunity if it wants to fix the housing crisis. Public housing on public land must be the priority.

### RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (17:34):** For 12 long years the Riverstone electorate and the township of Riverstone in particular has languished as a result of neglect and inaction. The needs of its residents have been pushed aside and its potential ignored. However, as the Minns Labor Government steps up to address longstanding issues and invest in the future of this vibrant community, new hope has arrived. Despite the community's active advocacy led by the North West Business Chamber, the electorate was allowed to deteriorate under the former Government, its population increasing daily but lacking essential community facilities. While serving as the vice-president of the chamber, I saw the need for someone to take up Riverstone's cause. We approached our State representative to voice our concerns about the trajectory the former Government was taking, but quickly realised it was futile. In fact, after several tokenistic meetings in this place with Ministers who forgot the reason we were there the minute we left their offices, I realised our only hope was a change in government.

The member for Blacktown, Stephen Bali, also recognised the challenges we faced and joined the fight, becoming the emeritus member for Riverstone, echoing our needs and sentiments. We found support in the member for Londonderry, now the Deputy Premier, Prue Car. Being neighbouring electorates to Riverstone, Blacktown and Londonderry shared many of the same issues. From transport and roads to education and health care, a lack of investment in critical infrastructure was crippling our community. In addition to investment, we needed a strategy and a leader. The member for Kogarah, now the Premier, Chris Minns, took particular interest in the lack of liveability being delivered to the people of the North West Growth Area. Collectively, those Labor members could see that our area had been forgotten and worked with us to deliver for our community. Along the way, I changed from being a concerned business owner to a community advocate, before finally becoming a member of Parliament in this new Government. Together, we have delivered.

I wholeheartedly applaud the Treasurer, Daniel Mookhey, and the Minister for Finance, Courtney Houssos, for their acknowledgement of the urgent issues facing my constituency and their proactive efforts to steer its growth. After 12 years of neglect we now have funding for the thrice-promised but never delivered Rouse Hill Hospital, one of the most glaring examples of the former Government's neglect. Just this morning our Government faced allegations from the member for Kellyville of causing delays in the Rouse Hill Hospital project. The member for Kellyville was a member of the former Government that promised to deliver it for over a decade at three different elections.

Despite a staged media event involving soil-turning during the election campaign, the detail showed that the former Government was not intending to deliver a hospital but rather a glorified day surgery facility. Further, it was not planning to fund it. Under the leadership of the Minns Government, this vital project is going ahead, and Rouse Hill is receiving a hospital suitable for the needs of the people of the north-west. The budget has been increased from \$300 million to \$700 million, and construction can finally begin, fully funded. The Government's commitment to the healthcare needs of my electorate is further complemented by the budget's \$120 million funding of additional beds across the Western Sydney Local Health District at Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals.

The infrastructure deficit in Riverstone does not end there. A lack of investment in local schools has created a situation where almost every public school in my electorate is over capacity, some by more than double. Education is the foundation of any prosperous community, and Riverstone, boasting one of the State's largest youth populations, is no different. Recognising the area's expansion, the Minns Government is committing to enhancing educational infrastructure by establishing 100 new schools, including three new schools in my electorate. Two new primary schools in Tallawong and Nirimba Fields and a new high school in Schofields/Tallawong will cater to the needs of the children in my electorate. Those new schools complement funding for upgrades to three more.

Traffic congestion has also long been a problem for Riverstone residents. Commuters have spent countless hours on congested side streets trying to navigate through inadequate road infrastructure. As a business owner, I lost many customers due to traffic and a lack of accessibility. At long last, the budget provides relief. Funding for crucial road upgrades around the electorate, particularly Richmond Road, Bandon Road and Garfield Road East represents a significant transformative move. These projects will alleviate traffic congestion, significantly enhance safety for all road users and allow commuters to spend less time in gridlock so they can spend more time with their families. Moreover, these upgrades will improve connectivity to businesses and the community.

The Riverstone electorate is finally receiving the attention it deserves after 12 years of neglect and inaction. The Minns Labor Government's commitment to fulfilling promises, investing in education and addressing critical infrastructure issues is a beacon of hope for this vibrant community. The long-awaited Rouse Hill Hospital, the establishment of three new schools and the funding for essential road upgrades are tangible signs of progress that will benefit residents for future generations. As this resurgence continues, Riverstone's potential is boundless and the future is brighter than ever.

#### DAVIDSON ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (17:40):** An all-time favourite movie trilogy is *Back to the Future*. Members may recall the scene of the flying DeLorean car with Doc Brown telling Marty McFly, "Roads? Where we're going, we don't need roads." The scene captures our imagination and the hope for a better future. However, while we wait for flying cars and hoverboards, building infrastructure must be a priority for all governments and is of importance to the people of the Davidson electorate. The former New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government understood this. Over 12 years, infrastructure investment increased from \$62.6 billion in 2011 to \$116.6 billion in 2022. New South Wales is now home to the largest infrastructure pipeline in Australia. Some 176 schools and 180 hospitals and health facilities were built or renovated. In the Davidson electorate they included the Lindfield Learning Village, Killara High School, Ku-ring-gai High School, St Ives High School and the amazing new Northern Beaches Hospital. Railway stations were also upgraded at Pymble, Killara and Roseville, making sure that every station in the Davidson electorate is easily accessible.

Bold projects were undertaken under the previous Government, such as Sydney Metro Northwest, the Pacific Highway upgrade, the CBD and South East Light Rail, WestConnex, Parramatta Stadium, the New South Wales Art Gallery—and the list goes on. To deliver this pipeline, hard economic decisions were made. Asset recycling allowed New South Wales to build and renovate infrastructure whilst keeping its triple-A credit rating. It also grew the New South Wales asset balance sheet by \$140 billion over a decade. Even Victorian Labor under Premier Daniel Andrews embraced asset recycling. Since coming to office in March, the New South Wales Labor Government led by Premier Chris Minns shows a lack of energy and enthusiasm for building infrastructure. There is no infrastructure Minister and there is no commitment to build Sydney Metro West. The Government has

shelved the business cases for metro lines from Parramatta to the Western Sydney Airport and from Bankstown to Glenfield. The Beaches Link has also been cancelled—the Labor axe has swung.

It appears that Labor is literally going back to the future when it comes to infrastructure. When last in office from 1995 to 2011, Labor promised 12 new rail lines and only delivered half a rail line. It also cancelled the Rozelle metro, costing taxpayers half a billion dollars with not a single track laid. Investing in infrastructure is not just about bold projects. Local communities in Davidson need support, such as sporting clubs, school P&Cs, not-for-profit organisations and councils. Since 2009, the Community Building Partnership program has invested almost \$400 million in New South Wales for over 18,000 projects. As all members of this House know, it is a life-changing community program. Before the budget I called on the Minns Labor Government to do three things for starters. The first was to continue the record infrastructure funding started by the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals by investing more than \$116.6 billion over the next four years. With a growing population and more demand for housing and services, we cannot turn off the infrastructure pipeline. We need to keep building. Sadly, the infrastructure budget was cut by \$100 million.

The second thing I asked the Government to do was to fully commit to Sydney Metro West. This is a transformational project for Western Sydney and inner west commuters, who need world-class public transport. Sadly, there has been no commitment to metro west. Clearly, the ultimate goal for the metro is to have all the lines link up so we have a huge orbital around the Sydney metropolitan area. Finally, our Davidson community needs support as we face the rising cost of living. The Community Building Partnership needs to be renewed, with grants finalised before Christmas to provide certainty. I looked forward with hope to the Government renewing the Community Building Partnership, but sadly it did not appear in the budget papers. The people of New South Wales need to know that when it comes to infrastructure investment, there is hope for a better future. We cannot go back to the future under Labor.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:44):** Global warming has led to higher summer temperatures across Sydney over the past 30 years. However, data analysis by researchers at the University of Technology Sydney shows that very hot summer days are becoming much more common in Western Sydney than in coastal Sydney. These hotter summers are also getting longer. Although January and February are usually the warmest months, this now extends from December to March. Just this week we have had a string of days with temperatures reaching 30 to 35 degrees Celsius, the first total fire ban across the State in three years and a formal declaration that we are in an El Niño cycle. Summers are expanding and winters shrinking across subtropical and temperate Australia. Furthermore, very hot days have become more common over the past 30 years in Western Sydney but not near the coast. The difference in maximum temperatures between the regions can be as much as 10 degrees Celsius.

Temperature data from 1962 to 2021 shows that one in 10 days in summer reached temperatures of 35.4 degrees Celsius or more in Western Sydney. That is a full five degrees hotter than near the coast, where one in 10 days exceeded 30 degrees Celsius. One in 20 days reached 37.8 degrees Celsius or more in the west; the equivalent figure near the coast was 33 degrees Celsius. Despite the importance of rising temperatures in Sydney, particularly in Western Sydney, there has been little focus on some of the factors that are driving this change. Western Sydney is home to more than 2.5 million people. Economic development and a fast-growing population have led to higher concentrations of buildings and man-made surfaces, which absorb and retain more heat. Known as the urban heat island effect, this compounds the impacts of climate change.

Development on this scale also presents complex challenges for policy planning and resource management. Identifying the climate drivers that most influence maximum temperatures is crucial for Sydney's planning. It matters to infrastructure development, health and socio-economic wellbeing, particularly in Western Sydney. Two-thirds of Sydney's population growth by 2036 is projected to be in Western Sydney. By then, an estimated 3.5 million residents will be exposed to more extreme summer heat. The escalating climate crisis is widening Sydney's health and socio-economic divide. Western Sydney has higher unemployment and a larger proportion of lower income families than the rest of the city. Some of Sydney's hottest schools have no trees and barely any shade to provide refuge for students and teachers in soaring temperatures. Researchers from Western Sydney University used data to rank the 100 hottest schools and found that over 10 per cent of them were located in three suburbs: Liverpool, Merrylands and Granville.

Heat has a significant impact on learning. Research has found that each increase of half a degree Celsius over a school year reduced performance in final exams by 1 per cent. Air conditioning corrects all the damaging effects. However, air conditioning classrooms and schools was a flashpoint for debate, promises and inaction under the former New South Wales Government. Prior to the 2019 election, the former Government took just months to approve 900 schools for air conditioning but then took almost three years to reject the vast majority of schools that applied in the second round of the Cooler Classrooms Program. Schools in areas where the average

annual temperature was more than 30 degrees Celsius automatically qualified for the program, although some with lower average temperatures were also approved in the first round of applications. However, this did not include several schools in Liverpool whose applications were rejected despite average temperatures reaching close to 30 degrees Celsius.

As I have spoken with schools and community organisations around Liverpool, it has become obvious that south-west Sydney has been systematically ignored for school infrastructure funding over the past decade. Whether it is air conditioning or building schools and classrooms to cater for our fast-growing population, it is heartbreaking that our children missed out, due to either political design or incompetence. That is why I am glad that the first Labor budget in 12 years seeks to redress this. Our communities deserve resources and infrastructure based on need rather than political expedience. I commend the Minns Labor Government for ensuring that young people in south-west Sydney communities are the ones who will benefit into the future.

*Bills*

**APPROPRIATION BILL 2023**

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2023**

**Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of messages from the Legislative Council returning the bills without amendment.

**TREASURY AND REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

**Returned**

**The SPEAKER:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.

**Consideration in Detail**

**Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.**

*Schedule of amendments referred to in message of an earlier hour*

No. 1 **GRNS No. 1 [c2023-082B]**

Page 10, Schedule 2, line 5. Omit "(a) and".

No. 2 **GRNS No. 2 [c2023-082B]**

Page 10, Schedule 2, lines 6–10. Omit all words on the lines.

No. 3 **GRNS No. 3 [c2023-082B]**

Page 10, Schedule 2, line 11. Omit "(c)". Insert instead "(b)".

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (17:49):** I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:49):** The Opposition does not oppose the amendments.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

**SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK AUTHORITY AMENDMENT (HILL ROAD UPGRADE) BILL 2023**

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

**CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

**EXPLOSIVES AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

**Assent**

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

*Private Members' Statements***EASTERN CREEK INCINERATOR**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (17:51):** I advise the House that council lawyers have indicated the energy from waste incineration proposal for Eastern Creek has finally been defeated. In 2014 The Next Generation [TNG] by DADI Group first proposed a facility that would incinerate 1.1 million tonnes of residual waste. The group of companies that grew out of the Dial A Dump empire, which was a skip bin operator with many infractions from environmental breaches, expanded to purchase a massive pit in Eastern Creek to continue its skip bin dumping of rubbish. The proprietors somehow stumbled across energy from waste incinerator technology, used extensively in Europe and Japan, and thought it was a good idea to have it here. The company went from skip bin collector and rubbish dumper to becoming one of the world's largest operators of a highly technical, environmentally challenging incineration process. What could go wrong with such a transformation?

In 2017 in my then mayoral role and accompanied by council officer Vanessa Parkes, I met with several members of the Legislative Council, including the Hon. Penny Sharpe, the Hon. John Graham, Mr Paul Green and the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, to discuss the need to have a public inquiry into waste management, particularly in relation to energy from waste technology as the planning and environmental standards were out of date. The inquiry's terms of reference were drawn up in 2017 and the inquiry tabled its report on 28 March 2018. The former Government responded to the recommendations on 17 September 2018. I note that recommendation 20 of the committee stated:

That, subject to the current assessment process being conducted by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, the NSW Government not approve the energy from waste facility proposed by The Next Generation at Eastern Creek.

The Minister at the time, Gabrielle Upton, MP, noted the recommendation and stated on 19 July 2018 that the Independent Planning Commission refused development consent for the project. A further five years has passed and the appeal process, plus changes in environmental regulations, have resulted in the project finally being defeated, in a great win for local residents. Unfortunately, due to the lack of appropriate regulations and laws, plus the bloody-mindedness of the proprietors with deep financial pockets, this resulted in several court cases being launched and continued unnecessarily, creating stress in the community.

I was elected to this place on 14 October 2017 and by 12 April 2018 I delivered the second reading speech to my private member's bill, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Moratorium and Restrictions on Recovering Energy from Waste) Bill 2018. Unfortunately, the bill was voted down by the Liberal-Nationals Government at the time. The Government did face some internal opposition to their do-nothing approach and I thank the then member for Mulgoa, and now member for the renamed electorate of Badgerys Creek, Tanya Davies, for her tenacity in lobbying her colleagues. On many occasions we approached together the various Ministers responsible for the regulations and laws for the incinerator waste processing plant.

The Government finally listened and announced a new regulation, the Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Amendment (Thermal Energy from Waste) Regulation 2022. This restricted the possibility of incineration of waste to just four precincts: West Lithgow Precinct, Parkes Activation Precinct, Richmond Valley Regional Jobs Precinct and Southern Goulburn-Mulwaree Precinct. I understand that many of those precincts are fighting against proposed incineration plants. I congratulate Michael Pilbrow, Ursula Stephens and many others in the area who are standing against the proposal in Goulburn. I welcome branches of the Country Women's Association adopting resolutions to advocate for the newly elected New South Wales Government to rescind the decision to establish waste-to-energy incinerators, and instead immediately introduce technology and waste reduction programs that use methods that minimise greenhouse gas emissions in the Richmond Valley.

I thank the community in the Blacktown City area for their staunch outspokenness against the proposal. Over the years many community meetings were held, with large numbers of people in attendance. Petitions were prepared, Government Ministers were written to and quality submissions were presented during the various development application assessment processes. I particularly mention Kerrie Bradbury, who, as a local mum and a community volunteer at the football club and school P&C, was an outspoken critic of the project, despite getting legal threats from the proponents. Many other people were involved, including Maya Uluc, Colin Bosworth, Leah Llaga, Alicia Schloeffel, Kim Vernon and Martin O'Reilly. I thank my parliamentary colleagues the member for Mount Druitt and the member for Prospect for their support, and also our Federal parliamentary colleagues the member for McMahon and the member for Chifley, who fought hard against the proposal. I also thank Councillor Carol Israel from Blacktown City Council and council officers Glennys James and many others. I thank everyone for their participation.

## BI+ VISIBILITY DAY

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:56):** Bi+ Visibility Day is celebrated on 23 September and is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the unique experiences of bi+ people around the world. Bi+ Visibility Day honours the many contributions that bi+ people have made and continue to make to our communities. Bi+ is an umbrella term used to describe people who are attracted to more than one gender, in any way, to any degree. The term bi+ can include, though is not limited to, bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, omnisexual, queer, fluid and multi-gender attracted. Some bi+ people use more than one label to describe themselves; some use no label at all. Although many bi+ people live happy, joyous lives, they also experience high rates of poor health outcomes across a number of areas. Health outcomes are even worse for bi+ people who experience additional discrimination from racism, transphobia or ableism.

Private Lives 3, Australia's largest study of LGBTIQ+ people's health and wellbeing, found that nearly one quarter, or 22.1 per cent, of bisexual people and one-third, or 34 per cent, of pansexual people reported having experienced homelessness at some stage; 79.7 per cent of bisexual and 88.4 per cent of pansexual people reported having seriously considered suicide; half of pansexual people and almost half of bisexual people had experienced verbal violence from an intimate partner; and one-third of pansexual and almost one-quarter of bisexual people reported they had experienced physical violence from an intimate partner. As for family violence, 53.6 per cent of pansexual people and 46.5 per cent of bisexual people reported having experienced verbal abuse from a family member. Unfortunately, I could continue to list other disparities. These shocking health outcomes are not because of who bi+ people are, but because of ongoing stigma and discrimination.

Bi+ people's experiences are distinct from their gay and lesbian counterparts. While bi+ people can experience homophobia and transphobia, they also experience biphobia and bi+ erasure, even among LGBTIQ+ organisations, community and peers. Many bi+ people are told that they are not queer enough or that they are actually straight. Too often, bi+ people are told to "pick a side", that they are "greedy" or that their sexuality does not exist. Those prevailing attitudes are present in all aspects of life, both in the mainstream and from within LGBTIQ+ communities.

The research and stories from bi+ people are clear: Bi+ people have been left behind. But there is much we can do to turn things around. New South Wales is the only jurisdiction that does not provide civil protections from discrimination for bi+ people. My equality bill will provide that protection, and any rewrite of anti-discrimination laws will need to include bi+ people. All LGBTIQ+ responses and policies need to address bi+ people and their experiences to work towards improving their health and wellbeing and ensure that they feel supported and included. The lack of awareness and understanding impacts heavily on the health care that bi+ people receive, which creates challenges in getting appropriate and targeted care. It is something that the *NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022-2027* recognised, naming bi+ people as a priority population. Much is still needed to translate this into meaningful change.

In 2020 the Sydney Bi+ Network's community-needs survey found that the majority of respondents did not feel included in LGBTIQ+ communities. In Private Lives 3, only half of bisexual respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel they are part of the Australian LGBTI community, which emphasises the need for bi+-specific spaces. We know that bi+ spaces and services save lives, and they should be supported alongside LGBTIQ+ organisations and community groups. I acknowledge the work of bi+ advocates and activists who keep bi+ people's experiences and needs on the agenda. They provide critical community support to help shape a better future for bi+ people. Many bi+ community-led organisations and community groups in Australia, like the Sydney Bi+ Network—which I recently met with—are volunteer run and have little to no funding. Imagine what they could achieve with the support of the New South Wales Government. Bi+ people exist, and they need to be affirmed and treated with dignity and respect. I call on members to join me this Bi+ Visibility Day and into the future to improve recognition, inclusion and outcomes for bi+ people.

## WYONG ELECTORATE SMALL BUSINESSES

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (18:01):** The Central Coast, especially Wyong, is a great place to work, live and play. Tonight I talk about three niche businesses that are demonstrating great innovation and growing opportunities for local jobs and the wider economy of New South Wales, because they are involved in exporting their innovative products. The three businesses, 4id Solutions, Fibre Arts Shed and Mr Black, operate out of small facilities in the Wyong electorate. They are hidden away, but they are doing incredible work. The business 4id Solutions manufactures small labels, tags and wristbands using radio frequency identification, known as RFID, which is contactless technology that services clients all over the world. The business 4id Solutions is currently focusing on developing its system to be able to use information for anti-counterfeit and regulatory product compliance, taking RFID to the next stage.

It was interesting to visit the 4id Solutions facility and see the amazing things the business is doing. It makes incredibly small microchips that are made into flat labels and put on the front of packaging. They can be used to make sure products are sent to the right place and to monitor temperature. They can offer a whole range of data and information just by holding a dedicated mobile device nearby. Bruce and Kathy Hegan, the owners and managing directors, are making sure that they stay at the cutting edge of this exciting industry and are coming up with applications that are world-class and leading in innovation. They have just signed a strategic partnership with a Taiwanese company to develop chips for the company to integrate into its labelling. I look forward to watching the growth of 4id Solutions. I met Bruce and Kathy around the time I was first elected in 2007. The member for Swansea and I visited their new facility in North Wyong, and we were able to see the huge growth of the company, which is employing more local people. It is an exciting story.

Fibre Arts Shed is located in Jilliby. It operates a mini woollen mill and fibre arts and crafts supply website. The business is completely online and turns waste fibre into yarn that can then be re-used. It takes fibre that is thrown away and would usually become landfill, cleans it up and puts it into machines that wind it back into yarn. It is then sent off to another local company to be dyed and coloured. The product that Fibre Arts Shed does not sell itself is sent to another local company to be sold. Clare and Paul run the business from a garage at the back of their house, and the machines are incredible. Clare and Paul are both self-taught and have two sons who are cricket mad. They work with woolgrowers and alpaca breeders to make sure the wool is 100 per cent Australian. Clare does the retail side and Paul is the mill manager. He has taught himself to weave and loves to work with natural, locally sourced fibres.

The third company is Mr Black. The distillery makes cold brew coffee liqueur. It sources the beans, roasts them onsite and then mixes them with alcohol to make an amazing product that is particularly in demand in the United States. The product is exported overseas and also sold locally through many outlets. I was intrigued to see the process the company goes through, which it does onsite in North Wyong. Mr Black is getting ahead in its industry. As I said, the United States absolutely loves it. Those are three exciting businesses in the Wyong electorate. There are many more. It goes to show that, with support, businesses in regional New South Wales can be the best in the world.

### **BEROWRA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (18:06):** Berowra Rural Fire Brigade is the oldest, largest and most respected volunteer organisation in the district. Since being formed, no houses have been lost to bushfire in the Berowra district. That is an extraordinary effort as most homes in Berowra are built on top of ridges, where they are at most risk from bushfire, and the area is entirely surrounded by bushland. In 1939 bushfires in the district were particularly bad. A fire started at Berowra Waters and burnt for three days, finally ending in Asquith. Each ridge in the Berowra area was threatened as it blazed southwards. Each time, properties were saved by desperate residents urgently back-burning around homes and quickly extinguishing spot fires. It was recognised that Berowra had been very lucky to avoid major damage.

In December 1941 another bushfire event threatened Berowra. It consisted of two separate but simultaneous blazes. One fire came up the valley from behind Arcadia Crescent, and a second fire, believed to be started from sparks from a locomotive, came via the Gully Road area. The Crabtree family escaped, but their house was destroyed. The prolonged drought and repeated bushfire threats gave Berowra residents a strong incentive to work with the Hornsby council and initiate the formation of a local brigade. The Berowra District Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade was formed on 24 October 1943 under the supervision of the Hornsby council. The first elected officer bearers were Captain Bill Gainsford, Senior Deputy Wally Payne, Secretary Jim Butler and President Stan Johns.

In its first few years, the Berowra brigade responded to many fires. With very few telephones connected in the 1940s, the former army air-raid siren was transferred to the brigade. Whenever there was an incident, the siren sounded and was heard across the entire village. Volunteers gathered, ready for their instructions from Captain Gainsford, who was marvellous in leading the early brigade. Roy Corrigan was well known in the district. He owned a local bus company and was active in the Catholic Church, amongst other organisations. He served as the brigade's president between 1949 and 1971. Roy promoted the brigade's profile, which helped provide a steady stream of new members. In the early years, protective clothing was non-existent and firefighting equipment was rudimentary. An inventory in 1946 consisted of eight shovels, 15 rakes, six knapsacks, eight axes, two canvas waterbags, six hurricane lights, eight brush hooks and two garden hoses. This was complemented with green-leaved tree branches and hessian sacks that were soaked in water prior to being used.

The brigade's first vehicle was a converted army ambulance with a galvanised iron water tank in the back, and the station consisted of a member's garage for the truck. Berowra often had terrible problems with regular access to water, which was very dangerous during bad bushfire conditions. In 1953, 50 firefighters on the Pacific Highway about a mile from Berowra were severely hindered by a lack of water as Berowra had run dry and they

were fortunate to escape unscathed. The need to fight bushfires was one of the main convincing arguments to have Berowra's water supply upgraded, and the second reservoir was added in 1960.

Land was purchased in High Street for the brigade in 1949, which comprised mainly volunteer labour. A fibro fire shed was constructed in 1952. The station was rebuilt by the Hornsby council in 1969. In the mid-1960s a new method of protecting properties from bushfire was introduced. Former brigade captain Jim Hatfield pegged out a number of areas in the bushland valleys below residential areas. These were eventually cleared and levelled by volunteers to allow vehicle access, and it became the fire trail network we know today. The network allows firefighters to get ahead of the approaching bushfire with a controlled burn or be positioned between houses and the bushfire when it was safe to do so.

In 1964 a fire spotting tower was erected at the Barnetts lookout. This was dismantled in October 1994 when the surrounding trees grew to a height that obstructed views. A replacement tower was finally erected at the old tollgates in 2000. The brigade eventually outgrew its High Street site, and a new station was required. This was established at Berowra Oval. I was proudly part of the team that helped gain the funding for it in August 2018. It provided the brigade with space for a new and additional truck, which could not fit into the old station. It also allowed the brigade to expand its membership.

Protecting property and keeping residents safe from bushfire is not achieved by luck and not just done by fighting bushfires when they inevitably flare up. It is achieved by RFS volunteers through a lot of hard work behind the scenes. The work is done all year around, year after year and, even though it is performed by volunteers, it is always undertaken professionally and to the highest standard. I wish the Berowra Rural Fire Service volunteers, both past and present, a happy eightieth anniversary and thank them all for their valuable service to our community. I acknowledge a number of key people, particularly president Mal Desmarchelier, deputy captain James Baird, president Graham Tabain, vice-president Bruce Cameron, secretary Rhonda Porter and treasurer Aidan Smith. I thank them all for what they do.

#### **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE**

**Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (18:11):** Today I will talk about the upcoming referendum on the Voice to Parliament. Many people in the Auburn electorate have been concerned about the details and having information about what it will mean for them and for the Indigenous people of Australia. In this Parliament, and in the run-up to the election, the Minns Government announced a multi-faith-based council. It is essentially there to give advice to the Government and for the Government to come back to it to seek advice. Essentially, the mechanism that will be put in place under the referendum will be the same process as we have seen in New South Wales—that is, there will be an advisory body that will give advice to the Government and from whom the Government can seek advice. There are only two key differences here. One is that the body will be an elected representative body, elected by the Indigenous people of this country and the Torres Strait Islands. The other difference is that it will be enshrined in our Constitution.

The reason we want to enshrine it in the Constitution, and we are asking people to vote yes, is that often bodies that are set up by one government are removed by subsequent governments. If the Voice is put into the Constitution, then there will be an ongoing process through which the Indigenous people of Australia can be heard. It would be a voice that nearly everybody else has and even this Government, in the last process, has put a voice in through the multi-faith-based councils. Of course, there are always different opinions. I listened closely to Warren Mundine on *Insiders*. I have a lot of respect for Warren, and I have known the Mundine family for a long time. There has been a long association between our families. I thought that a lot of Warren's arguments supported more of a yes case, but Warren did express his strong understanding of the problems that existed in the past and the need to move forward to find solutions. This is all about moving forward to find solutions.

I knew Warren's dad very well. Roy was his name, but he is known locally as Fardy. Roy assisted in the construction of the Darwin to Alice Springs road. He sat on top of the graders and watched the Japanese fighter planes come in. He had to apply for, and received, an exemption certificate, which made him exempt from laws applying to Aborigines so he could continue to work and drink at the pub with workmates. He carried what he called his dog licence every day of his life until he died, and it was buried with him. You only have to go back one generation, to Fardy Mundine, to find out exactly how Aboriginal people were treated in this country.

He was arrested in Coffs Harbour at one stage because he did not have his papers, and he was held there until someone found the job supervisor to come down so he could be released. On his earlier jobs, he worked 16 hours a day, seven days a week without an award because they were not entitled to the awards. They were paid less. No bank would give him a loan, so in the 1950s, Fardy and his wife, Dolly, had to go to a moneylender to get their home. They were charged 13 per cent interest for their home loan—twice what anyone else in the country was being charged and simply because he was Aboriginal. This happened one generation back.

My grandfather, Ben, grew up on the St Clair Mission in Singleton. I was very young when he died; I was 11. But granddad always used to drag my brother to Jimmy Carruthers' juice shop in town because granddad and all of his brothers were boxers. He said he suffered terribly from insecurity and a lack of confidence and was absolutely convinced that this was about his Aboriginal heritage. Back in those days, people would never speak about their Aboriginal heritage because it meant they could not get a bank loan, they had to have a licence to work, and they were treated differently. We only have to go back one generation to find that these things happened.

My great-grandmother was born on the Glennies Creek station. During the 1950s floods, I am told granddad was so worried in Singleton when the Upper Hunter flooded because my great-grandmother was living on a humpy on the banks of the river, and everyone assumed she had been washed away. All this referendum is giving us is a constitutional right for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to have an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. It is one that we give everybody. It is not a big deal, but it is something they deserve. I urge everybody to vote yes.

### TRIBUTE TO IAN KENNEDY

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (18:17):** It is with great sadness that I say that our long-time friend Ian Kennedy tragically passed away on Friday 11 August after a road crossing accident in Padstow. He was 71 years old. I attended his funeral at the Woronora Memorial Park in Sutherland, where more than 100 mourners gathered to pay tribute to Ian and honour a life dedicated to community and service. Ian joined the Padstow branch of the Labor Party in 1985. He would have been eligible for life membership in two years. Life membership is awarded to active and dedicated members with 40 years of continuous membership. Ian's mum, Mary, was also a longstanding Labor member of the Padstow branch, so his family commitment to the party was strong.

Ian was a delegate to the Banks Federal Electorate Council and the East Hills State Electorate Council for most of the years of his membership. Ian rarely missed a meeting for all those years, even through his illness. He was staunch and committed. He served as Padstow branch vice-president from 2013 to 2020 and for many years he was the president of the Bankstown City Council Australian Labour Party local government committee. The Labor Party in a sense was his local family. It gave him a place where he could both contribute to our community and enjoy the friendships that longstanding membership brings. He was, of course, a regular volunteer for election days, letterboxing and attending street stalls. He did canvassing for Daryl Melham, the former Labor member for Banks; Alan Ashton, former Labor member for East Hills; and Councillor Linda Downey, former mayor of Bankstown City Council.

Ian was also a longstanding member of the Revesby Workers' Club. He joined in December 1982 and had continuous membership for over 40 years. He contested an election to the board of directors in 2006 and he received 416 votes. While he was not successful, he got over one-third of the votes cast. Ian was a true believer in the Revesby Workers' Club's labour and working-class foundation and history. He was a member of other service clubs, like the Lions Club, Bass Hill RSL, Panania Diggers, the Masons, and also sporting groups like the Georges River Softball Association. There was hardly a group he was not in.

Ian was a humble man who was active in many facets of the community and was always willing to help. At his funeral, it was widely commented by several people that they did not know the full extent of Ian's involvement in other community organisations. Ian was an umpire and executive member of the softball club for years. He was a passionate advocate for his club and would grill the councillors about what was happening for the local softball competition and ground upgrades at Kelso Park. In 2010 Ian received a certificate of recognition at Bankstown City Council's Australia Day awards ceremony for his contribution to the community and volunteer work.

Ian had many friends outside the Australian Labor Party, many of whom were in attendance at his funeral. Ian was also a dedicated trade unionist in his employment within the New South Wales railway system. He was concerned about the increasing privatisation of the railways, the decline in services to passengers and the corners being cut that threatened the safety of workers on the tracks. That was another area where Ian would let us know what was happening at the grassroots level, which often contradicted what the senior bureaucrats were saying. Ian also worked locally, delivering Chinese food and pizzas for many years to the Padstow community. He loved meeting people and having a chat with them.

I met Ian about 12 years ago at a Labor Party meeting. He worked hard on my campaign and was happy with the outcome. He would often drop by my office for a chat and to keep me abreast of community issues. He was an enthusiastic book and article reader and he had a real passion for history, especially for Australians in war service in World War I and the Boer War. Ian was also a keen football and soccer fan. He would have been looking forward to the Women's World Cup and the success of the Matildas. While attending a funeral is a sad occasion, Ian's funeral was a celebration of his life and service to the community. It was an excellent opportunity to think

about what he meant to us in the labour movement. Ian will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by so many members of our Canterbury-Bankstown community and his wider family members.

### STATE BUDGET AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (18:21):** We are in the midst of the worst housing crisis in generations and the cost of living is climbing at an alarming rate, with no signs of slowing. The number of rough sleepers across the State increased by 34 per cent between 2022 and 2023, the cost of groceries rose by 8 per cent during the same period, and too many people statewide are living pay cheque to pay cheque. In the suburb of Newtown, the heart of the electorate that I represent in this place, 81 per cent of people are living in financial stress. This budget was a critical opportunity for Labor to step up with an ambitious plan matching the scale and severity of the crisis gripping our communities. Instead, a budget was delivered that shies away from the once-in-a-lifetime challenges we are now facing. We were offered a tepid, more-of-the-same budget, with the barest amount of tinkering around the edges in the face of the crisis.

What will it take for the Labor Government to realise that, after 12 long years, it is no longer in opposition and it now has the power to step up? The time for implementing ambitious change has to be now. It is mind-blowing that, in a housing affordability crisis that is worsening by the day, this Labor Government has failed to offer any viable alternatives to the status quo that is crushing our communities. In its pre-budget submission, Homelessness NSW called for \$400 million to fast-track the provision of much-needed social housing stock. Like The Greens, it wants to see social housing restored to a significant percentage of the total housing stock in New South Wales, not the vanishingly small minority it is today. But Labor is committing just over half of that amount—\$224 million—to its total Essential Housing Package, which only includes \$70 million to deliver social and affordable homes across the State. The inadequacy of that funding, while there are over 51,000 approved applications on the social housing waitlist, is staggering.

Before the budget, Shelter NSW outlined the need for a \$500 million investment in repairing and maintaining existing social housing stock, which we know is effectively undergoing demolition by neglect across New South Wales. Last year's budget estimates hearings revealed that just over 3,100 public housing homes are sitting empty in this State and undergoing maintenance to bring them back up to a habitable standard. The Minns Labor Government should prioritise getting those 3,100 public dwellings back up to scratch and filling them as the highest priority. Instead, only \$35 million has been committed for critical social housing maintenance. That amount will not come close to addressing the backlog left by the private maintenance contractors, who spend more than \$1 million of public money every day, completing work to a shoddy standard, if at all.

With such a dire statewide shortage of public housing, we know that thousands are suffering in an overheated rental market with no signs of cooling. Renters have been at the top of State and Federal political agendas for months. What does this budget deliver for renters? It delivers nothing in the way of immediate relief. This Government will spend \$615 million to cap tolls but will not act to cap rents, a move that would not cost them a single cent. Much has been made about the \$300 million injection of funding for Landcom to deliver new supply, but that new supply will not be delivered until the 2039-40 financial year and will only comprise 4,697 homes, of which only 30 per cent will be so-called affordable, which is to say, with rents not based on income, able to be privatised in 15 years and potentially run by a for-profit company.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* crunched the numbers and found that, in a practical sense, that means only 300 new dwellings—only 90 of which will be affordable—will be delivered by Landcom every year between now and 2039. To call that merely "disappointing" would be an understatement. Our communities deserve more and better than what this budget offers them. The solutions are there and the stakeholders and experts are making it clear what is needed but, shamefully, the political will is lacking. The Greens will continue to stand up in this place and in the community to push this Government to act when it comes to delivering for renters, public housing tenants, homelessness advocates and all housing justice activists who are pushing for the needed changes. Everyone has the right to a safe, secure, affordable and accessible place to call home.

#### *Bills*

### RADIATION CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL 2023

#### First Reading

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

**MINING AMENDMENT (MINERAL CLAIMS—OPAL) BILL 2023****First Reading**

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

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I order that the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour.

*Private Members' Statements***STATE BUDGET AND PARRAMATTA ELECTORATE**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (18:27):** I have not been able to wipe the smile off my face this week because the New South Wales budget has delivered investment and initiatives with something for everyone across the Parramatta electorate. It is a budget filled with hope for those doing it tough with cost-of-living pressures. It is a budget based on an economic plan that will build new schools, deliver school upgrades and deliver the funds to plan for even more schools to accommodate our booming population. It is a budget based on ensuring that the basics are placed at the heart of decision-making and funding. Ask anyone on Church Street or Betty Cuthbert Avenue in Ermington what the fundamental State issue is and they would say it is the delivery and funding of basic essential services. That requires an investment in our frontline workers, including our nurses, paramedics, healthcare workers, police officers, firefighters and prison guards. That investment is front and centre of this budget, ending the unfair wages with a 4.5 per cent pay rise for over 400,000 public sector employees—the biggest pay rise in a decade.

Our teachers will be the highest paid in the country, which is the beginning of the Minns Labor Government's long-term plan to address the chronic teacher shortage and lift education outcomes for the future of our State. That is incredibly important in the Parramatta electorate, where the vertical suburbs of Melrose Park, Wentworth Point and Carter Street Precinct are among the fastest growing in Australia. I welcome the wonderful commitment in this budget to build new high schools in Melrose Park and Wentworth Point, a new primary school at Carter Street, stage two of Wentworth Point Public School—which we said for over a decade should have been built at the same time as stage one—and a school upgrade at Dundas Public School. It is one thing to build the bricks and mortar, but we need the teachers in the classroom and this Government is committed to delivering both for the families and future of Parramatta.

Learning does not start at big school. The funding of \$64 million in the budget over two years to provide \$500 in fee relief per child per year for parents of three-year-olds in long day care preschool programs will ensure our littlest learners are prepared for big school, while also easing the financial burden for parents across Parramatta. Providing universal access to preschool is the right thing to do to support the future of New South Wales, and the smile on my dial is even wider with the knowledge that this budget is funding two new preschools, located with primary schools at Carter Street and Melrose Park. My friends Ivy and Thompson live in a new apartment building in the Carter Street precinct. Just last week I attended their gender reveal party for their first baby. The exciting news is it is a boy. The icing on the cake is that by the time this new baby boy is ready for preschool, a new preschool will be built by the Minns Labor Government just down the end of their street, alongside a brand-new primary school.

Housing affordability is another key issue for the Parramatta electorate, with those living in rental properties experiencing unprecedented rent hikes in an increasingly tighter rental market. Thousands across my electorate will receive extra protection from the appointment of NSW Rental Commissioner Trina Jones, who will work to make renting fairer, more affordable and more secure. That goes hand in hand with the implementation of a portable rental bonds scheme to ease financial pressure and protection from unfair evictions by creating reasonable grounds for ending a lease. With Dogs in Parliament Day on 23 September, it is great to celebrate our commitment to making it easier for renters to have pets in their homes.

My smile is even wider as the 2023 budget delivers \$200 million to expedite the Parramatta Light Rail stage two planning processes, and construction will begin in this term of Parliament. Parramatta Light Rail stage two is a vital transport link that will connect the Parramatta CBD to Sydney Olympic Park via Camellia, Rydalmere, Ermington, Melrose Park and Wentworth Point. The 10-kilometre extension will include 14 new light rail stops, providing residents with a long-awaited public transport link, supporting future housing growth and serving a population expected to be close to 280,000 by 2041. But wait, there is more: \$140 million to upgrade Hill Road, \$43 million for seven new Australian-made Parramatta river-class ferries, \$40 million to upgrade Riverside Theatres to a lyric theatre, and the first funding increase to Cumberland Women's Health Centre in over 30 years. Rest assured that when word gets out across Parramatta about the great New South Wales budget there will be many more smiling, happy faces.

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (18:32):** In just a few weeks on Saturday 14 October, Australia will be asked to vote on a very simple but important question: whether we will support an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. This referendum will be a pivotal moment in our journey towards reconciliation with our Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters. As I have previously said in this place, I believe that we need to work in partnership with our First Nation peoples, their communities and their organisations so that we can truly move forward in reconciliation but also make strong investments into their communities working towards a truly equal society.

The Voice to Parliament is a concept of profound importance, not only for Indigenous Australians but also for our entire nation. It represents a crucial and long overdue step towards addressing historical injustices, empowering Indigenous communities and fostering reconciliation across our diverse country. The Voice is a step towards healing the wounds of the past, closing the gap of inequality and building a more inclusive and equitable Australia for all her people. It is also about recognising the oldest continuing culture in the world in our country's founding document, the Constitution. That means recognising more than 65,000 years of Indigenous culture in Australia's 122-year-old Constitution.

The Voice has been developed over decades and through dialogues between Indigenous communities, and in 2017 they presented us, the Australian people, with the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. Those communities and those individuals are asking for a seat at the table, and they are asking us for a voice. We know in this place that when we listen to people on the matters that affect them, we get better results, and that is what the Voice to Parliament aims to do. It is an advisory body that will provide advice to the government of the day on the matters that affect them. We know that we are still not meeting the Closing the Gap targets. We know that we need a new way of doing things better. We must acknowledge the deep-seated inequalities that continue to plague our Indigenous communities. Disparities in health, education, employment, infant mortality, domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse demand our immediate attention.

If the Australian people do not vote in favour of this Voice to Parliament, then the biggest danger for us is that nothing changes. The danger for Australia is a continuation of the status quo. On almost all economic and social measures, there is a massive gap between Indigenous Australians and all other Australians. By consulting with Indigenous Australians, we know that we can work together to help close those gaps. I will give a couple of examples of the economic and social gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, some of which are really profound to me. One example is infant mortality. Indigenous infant deaths are 1.8 times higher than other Australians; that is almost twice as many babies who die from Indigenous births. Nearly half of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live at or below the poverty line. What about housing? One in five Indigenous families are living in accommodation that does not have a kitchen or sanitation. Imagine if that was your life. The Aboriginal suicide rate is almost 2½ times higher than other Australians, and an Indigenous boy is currently more likely to go to prison than to university. If we do not act, the biggest danger for us is that none of this will change.

The Voice to Parliament embodies the principles of self-determination and empowerment. It respects the right of our Indigenous communities to have a say on the matters that directly affect them. The Voice to Parliament will be a mechanism in which those issues can be brought to the forefront of our national agenda, ensuring that Indigenous communities have direct access to our elected representatives, enabling them to make the case for changes and the support that is needed to address those challenges. We know that this is not a partisan issue. Many supporters from many parties are all standing together to say yes. It enjoys broad support from all sides of politics because it transcends politics. It is about reconciliation and acknowledging the rightful place of our First Nation peoples in the story of Australia.

As a Liberal, it is incredibly important to me that we listen to people who are most affected by the decisions we make as politicians. It is a core tenet of Liberal philosophy that individuals can take on responsibility for their own outcomes. Our Indigenous brothers and sisters have asked us for this change. It is a humble, safe and modest change to our Constitution. They have asked us for the opportunity to take ownership and control of their own lives. We Liberals say that individuals are best placed to make decisions for themselves to resolve the challenges that they face and to strive for the best outcomes and opportunities that they can have. Many people in my community ask me what my position is. I will be voting yes on 14 October. I invite everyone to join me in saying yes. The Voice to Parliament is not merely a political initiative; it is a moral imperative. If not now, then when?

## DISASTER READINESS

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:37):** The Australian Red Cross has just released a report that provides evidence that has found, for the first time, that preparing for a disaster has a positive impact on recovery. We often say that at a local level, at a colloquial level, but it has done some research and it states that it now has the evidence for it, which is important to know. The lead author from Red Cross, National Resilience Adviser

John Richardson, states that the more prepared people feel, the lower their stress levels are at the time and, tellingly, the better their recovery is after an emergency. It is a fact that the level of preparedness for natural disasters in Australia has been historically low at both agency and household levels. Despite campaigns to get ready, have a plan or be prepared, we all know that in many areas there was very little preparedness. When that happens, it takes people longer to recover at a practical level as well as at an emotional or psychological level.

In my home area of the Northern Rivers the trauma and stress are palpable and evident some 18 months on from the floods of 28 February 2022. It is no different on the South Coast and in other areas where there were fires, floods and other sources of trauma. I will share some findings from the report because it is important to put them on the record. It is important that we make a good account for the people who were in the vortex of those natural disasters. It is clear that we will see an increase in both the intensity and frequency of disasters. We have experienced that in my area. The report had seven key findings. They include:

- Six months after a disaster more than three in five people had not recovered.
- The more prepared people felt they were, the less stressed they were at the time of the disaster. And the more people were stressed, the worse their State of recovery was, even ten years after their disaster.

These are life-changing events, but 10 years later is a long time to still be feeling the impacts. The findings continue:

- Those on low incomes were over-represented among those who said they had not yet recovered (67% compared to 56%).

I would suggest that it could be even higher in some areas. They go on:

- The research also highlights the importance of family and friends, with around 70 percent of people saying they sought support from these people, regardless of whether they'd recovered.
- A greater proportion of those who had not yet recovered required government assistance, did not get any preparedness education and if they did it was more often through friends ... relative to those who had recovered at the time of the survey.
- The source of preparedness advice mattered to people's feelings of being in control and confidence in the decisions made during the disaster. ...

That is really important because if people are left feeling helpless, it takes a toll on them. In the Northern Rivers it is taking time for people to recover. It also took time to prepare for the rescues. At an agency level—at every level—rescue preparedness was not there. Some 3,000 phone calls went unanswered. That is a lot. People were saying goodbye to their loved ones while they were on roofs or in ceilings. There was an absolute lack of preparedness. That has really impacted our community's recovery. The recommendations include:

- An increased focus on preparing for the long-term impacts of a disaster in preparedness programs—

They must coalesce, according to what I have observed must happen—

- More tailored approaches to preparedness ...
- Ensuring that preparedness programs focuses on psychological preparedness during and after ...
- More research to further investigate which actions support a better recovery.

#### PORT MACQUARIE RSL SUB-BRANCH CENTENARY

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (18:42):** I acknowledge the centenary celebration of the Port Macquarie RSL Sub-Branch, which was held last Saturday evening to mark 100 years of service and commitment to our local veterans and their families. The momentous occasion was showcased by the Port Macquarie RSL Sub-Branch on Saturday night at the Panthers Port Macquarie auditorium to recognise a rich history of support and camaraderie with veterans and their families, which started in 1923. To commemorate such an achievement in the life of the sub-branch, a regimental dinner was coordinated by the members that honoured a sacred military tradition of comradeship among senior and junior officers.

Facilitating the night's proceedings was president of the RSL sub-branch Jason Gill, a former special forces communication specialist who served on deployment in Afghanistan in 2001. Corporal Gill welcomed a packed auditorium of dignitaries, military personnel, ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen and their families, legatees, distinguished guests and the sensational Port Macquarie Wauchope RSL Pipes and Drums, who are now regular performers at formal RSL events and commemorative services. Special dignitary and President of RSL NSW, Ray James, OAM, congratulated members on reaching 100 years and acknowledged the institution, which is founded on one core principle: One RSL—working together, delivering locally.

RSL NSW supports more than 320 sub-branches and chapters in New South Wales. It is largely operated by veteran volunteers from all conflicts and is focused on supporting their mates. I thank president Ray James for taking time out of his busy schedule to visit Port Macquarie and recognise a much-loved and cherished organisation in our region. It is pertinent that I pay respect to all who have served and all who made the ultimate

sacrifice in military conflicts from World War I to Iraq and Afghanistan, including those on deployment in peacekeeping missions. No-one can truly comprehend the struggles and hardships they faced to ensure our freedom, which many people still take for granted today.

I express my heartfelt appreciation to those who have served and acknowledge the significant impact that service has on families. I extend my immense gratitude to the involvement of loved ones, which is by no means small. During the proceedings President Gill captured a timeline of the sub-branch, from its small beginnings of approximately 12 blokes in a local hall, to where we are today, as one of the biggest sub-branches in the State, with over 350 members who call Panthers Port Macquarie home. Those 12 diggers I mentioned were World War I veterans. On their return home from active military service, their first act was to establish a memorial for the fallen. That was completed and dedicated on 30 March 1921, two years prior to the charter of the Port Macquarie RSL Sub-Branch.

An officer's rank by title was renamed "digger" as it was preferred by the members. When Australia committed one million soldiers in World War II, the sub-branch grew. By 1947, less than two years after the war, the members had acquired their own RSL club in Short Street, the centre of Port Macquarie, which included a number of properties for affordable housing. The sub-branch saw the need for aged care, so it built Le Hamel Village. The sub-branch was also credited with bringing touch football to Port Macquarie through its ownership of Tuffins Lane Playing Fields. Other activities in the life of the community included the RSL youth club, which was run successfully from the local hall that was owned and operated by the sub-branch. One can only presume that the youth club and touch football complemented each other until the Tuffins Lane land was sold. In 1993 the sub-branch made the very difficult decision to sell the original club following the assessment of substantial renovation work that was required to keep the existing building.

The painstaking decision was made to sell the club and purchase what is now Panthers Port Macquarie. To mark such a significant milestone, 11,000-odd members marched from Short Street to Settlement City. It was my pleasure to take part in the celebrations on Saturday night and to see that the sub-branch is still as alive as it was for those 12 original Aussie diggers in 1923. From small things, big things certainly do grow. I congratulate the committee, which includes president Jason Gill, vice president Brian Lewis, secretary Gary Spencer, treasurer Rob Bruce, wellbeing officer Robyn Davis, pensions officer Paul Brady, patron Ken Morris and committee members Gary Spencer, Paul Davey, Fred Evens and John Hughes. They put on a beautiful and fitting evening in respect and dedication to members past and present. I thank our valiant heroes sincerely for the vital work they undertake each and every day to improve the lives of our veterans and their families. Lest we forget.

#### **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE TO PARLIAMENT**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) (18:47):** As other members have done, I note that the Voice referendum is coming up soon. I urge people in the Monaro electorate to vote yes in the referendum. Aunty Matilda House is an incredibly well-respected Elder from the Ngambri nation in our area. While talking to a recent forum she said, "Think about how your children and grandchildren will grow up with mine." In that simple way she summarised the long-term thinking that people must do to ensure equality. Children who come from Indigenous backgrounds must have the same opportunities in life and the same chances of reaching their potential. At the moment, they are falling through the gaps.

The Voice is a very simple proposal; it does not threaten anything that any Australian has. It is an advisory Voice to the Parliament. The Parliament does not have to accept the recommendations of the Voice, but it should consider them. Most people of goodwill think that is an entirely reasonable and rational thing to do. It has been disappointing to hear the myths that have been put out by opponents of the Voice. I have heard people in our area say that the Voice will mean Aboriginals will take their land, that Indigenous people get too much or that they will change the flag. All those things are outright lies. There is no chance the Voice can do that.

Unfortunately, it reminds me of the same debate we had in the 1990s after the Mabo case, when the Federal Parliament was considering land rights legislation. We heard the same sorts of people saying Aboriginal people would be taking people's backyards. That did not happen. The process of land claims has been very calm. It has been very long, but it has certainly never alienated anyone or taken anyone's private property. It is really important that we dispel some of the myths, like the myth I unfortunately heard repeated by a former deputy Prime Minister on radio recently. He was spreading the myth that the Uluru Statement is more than just one page. He was talking about the records of all the conversations that were happening, suggesting that that was the agenda. The Uluru Statement is one page. It is simple and beautiful. It is about what the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia want to see. It is about their ambition for an Australia that recognises them as the First Peoples of this nation, and it gives them a modest voice to be listened to by the Australian Parliament.

Recently on the radio I also heard an argument from the same former deputy Prime Minister that I have heard from other people: There are 11 Indigenous people in the Federal Parliament, so they've already got a voice.

It is a bit like saying that as a 59-year-old white bloke representing Monaro I only represent the white men of Monaro. That is ridiculous. A person who is of Indigenous origin, like the wonderful Linda Burney, who I served with in this place and who is an inspiration to all of us, represents their electorate as a whole. Linda Burney has done some amazing things in the Indigenous sphere in her responsibility as a Minister, but she is the representative for Barton. All of those Indigenous representatives have a responsibility, as we all do, to represent their whole electorates. The Voice is about allowing people who are often voiceless to be heard. It is about allowing them to tell us how to better use the funds that are available for Indigenous programs, how to target those gaps, and how to ensure that the educational disadvantages are overcome—all in a way that is totally non-threatening to anybody else in Australia.

The positive thing about the Voice in the Monaro electorate is that many amazing people from all walks of life have been out and about in the community campaigning, turning up to community events, doorknocking, phoning, canvassing and trying to explain to people why they should back this. My message to people in Monaro when they look at the Voice is this: If you do not know, find out. Ask a couple of questions. There is no other area where a constituent would let their lack of knowledge determine their decision. In this case, acquiring a bit of knowledge will make people understand that this is a just way to give a voice to the Indigenous people of Australia and to recognise their prior ownership, while ensuring that they have a say in overcoming the disadvantage that has historically affected them.

### OATLEY ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:52):** I again voice the ongoing concerns and frustrations of my community about the operation of our local bus services by U-Go Mobility. Over the past month we have started to see somewhat of an improvement, which can be attributed to our continued fight as a community to ensure that we get the services we deserve. There are now 75 fewer cancellations daily compared to a month ago. We have also seen 18 school services change to being temporarily operated by Transit Systems to provide reliability, as well as the 452, 453, 953 and 954 services. From Monday 24 September, the M92 will be split into two new routes: the 960 from Sutherland to Bankstown and the 920 from Bankstown to Parramatta. We have been advised that this change will significantly improve journey reliability for the community and redirect drivers to complete other routes.

In my most recent briefing with Transport for NSW it was confirmed that an extensive driver recruitment and retention strategy is underway. This is beginning to show success, with a significant number of applications received and dozens of drivers now in training to cover routes across our community. Disappointingly, though, we have been provided with advice that our services will not return to normal until early 2024. This is not good enough. I again put on record that since U-Go Mobility began operating on 1 July this year my community has been subjected to cuts, delays and significant disruption to the network. My community have not forgotten that U-Go Mobility left our students stranded in the mornings and afternoons. It left some of our most vulnerable people out in the sun for hours in the middle of the day or alone in the cold at night waiting for a bus—that never showed up—to take them home. We never faced those issues under the previous private operator, Punchbowl Bus Company. The services it provided for 75 years were safe and reliable. It was a company our community had trusted for generations.

Over the past two months I have received hundreds of emails and phone calls from community members, and I thank every one of them for contacting me and my office. As I mentioned earlier, the feedback I have received was all fed back to Transport for NSW and U-Go Mobility, which has led to the recent improvements. In particular, we have seen the slow but controlled rollout of signage to advise our less tech-savvy commuters that the timetable has changed and to call 131 500 for the latest information. I have also distributed printed copies of the amended timetables to some of our elderly residents in the community. It was unfortunate that the timetables at each bus stop had not been updated and were providing misleading advice to people about upcoming services that did not exist.

I have been told that a review by Transport for NSW into what went wrong is currently underway. The community deserves answers once this review is finalised. I have said this before and I will say it again: The contract that U-Go Mobility signed at the beginning of 2023 provided it with several months to become familiar with the area, routes, frequency of services and the number of staff that would be required to manage those services. Prior to the changeover I raised many of the concerns we are now experiencing. My parliamentary colleagues and I were reassured by U-Go Mobility and Transport for NSW that it would be a seamless transition. It has been anything but seamless. Whilst less frequent, I still receive reports of drivers not going in the right direction, missing stops people need to get off at and students showing up to school late because of service delays. It is truly disappointing that instances like these are still occurring. My community deserves better from this Government. I will continue to advocate on behalf of every single person in my community, and I will not stop

until we have the level of service and reliability provided under Punchbowl Bus Company. We want our buses back.

### RYDE ELECTORATE SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS WINNERS

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (18:58):** I have spoken in this House several times about the importance of supporting small and family businesses, and it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge each and every one of the businesses in my electorate of Ryde who were finalists in their respective Northern Districts Local Business Awards categories for 2023. The awards were held last month at The Epping Club, and it was encouraging to see such a strong turnout, which signalled a rebuilding of the Ryde business community following the COVID-19 pandemic.

For each of the award categories, I pay tribute to the award winners and acknowledge each business for the success that they have achieved over the past year. In the automotive services category, I acknowledge Alex's Window Tinting, Basha Autohaus, Terry Ryan Automotive Services, and Ultra Tune North Ryde. In the bakery/cake business category, I acknowledge Baker's Delight at Macquarie Centre and Sergio's Cake Shop at Top Ryde City. I acknowledge the winner of the beauty services category, Australian Skin Clinics at Top Ryde, as well as Bianca Calvi Makeup, CH Sydney Lashes, LashesbyMey, and MaddyXO Beauty. In the cafe category, I acknowledge Brit's Kitchen, Chantilly's Coffee Lounge at Macquarie Centre, Hattrick Cafe, K Cafe Flavours of Vietnam, and The Missing Piece Cafe. In the dental services category, I acknowledge Macquarie Park Dentist, Meadowbank Family Dental, and North Ryde Dentistry at Macquarie Park.

In the early childhood centre category, I acknowledge Bangalow Preschool, Imaginations Preschool, and the Kids Club at Macquarie Park. In the education service category, I pay tribute to Bonobo Education; Justfootball Academy, the winner of the category; and Miracle Maker Tutoring and Education Planning. There was only one business from Ryde in the fast food/takeaway category, and I congratulate the Banquet Turkish Street Food. In the fitness services category, I pay tribute to Hwarang Taekwondo West Ryde, Sky J Pilates, Teambros Fitness Club at West Ryde—a former winner of this division—and The Fitness Edge Health and Aquatic Centre.

There was only one business from Ryde in the florist division, Blossom House Florist. I congratulate it on its success. Businesses in the fruit and vegetable shop category were Eastwood Village Superfresh; Panetta Mercato at Macquarie Centre—the winner of the category and also the Business of the Year, which I have acknowledged previously in this place; and The Growers at Top Ryde. I congratulate them. In the health improvement services category, I acknowledge Care Rehab; Meadowbank Physio – The Movement Mill, to whom I give a shout-out for helping me with my back a week or so ago; Myphysio West Ryde; My Health Pantry; Ryde District Podiatry; Tensegrity at Eastwood; West Ryde Physiotherapy, the winner of the category; and Wise Specialist Emergency Clinic, which I acknowledge also hosted the Macquarie Business Chamber of Commerce just a few weeks ago.

In the hotel, bottle shop and bar category, I acknowledge Club Eastwood, Midway Cellars and the Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club. In the performing arts category, I acknowledge Katcha Music, KLD Performing Arts, Stepside Studios and the winner, The Edge Dance Centre. In the pet care category, I pay tribute to Petbarn at West Ryde, and The Pawprofessionals. In the pharmacy category, I congratulate Midway Family Pharmacy, Naim Pharmacy, winners Pharmacy 4 Less at Top Ryde, and the Star Discount Pharmacy. In the professional services category, I acknowledge ACE Optical Eastwood, Asa Studio, Goal Financial Services, Hunt & Hunt Lawyers at North Ryde, Jamesons Strata Management at Ryde, LickYourPhone Media, Solid Solar Services and WEN Architects. In the real estate category, I acknowledge BSR – Buying Selling Renting – @realty, Melrose Estate Agents Ryde and Ray White Meadowbank.

In the restaurant category, I acknowledge Mezza Via Midway Shopping Centre and Verace Pizzeria. In the service and trade category, I acknowledge Another Level Cleaning, Grove Spark, Macquarie Locksmiths, Opal Carpentry, Removalist at Your Door, Service Heroes Pty Ltd and Washmart. In the sole operator category, I acknowledge Anthony Sherman Landscaping Gardening and Maintenance, Mortgage Better, The Garage Photo Studio and Virtual Associate Services.

In the specialised business category, I acknowledge Auzwide Enterprises Northern Districts, Estate Mate Concierge, Luxe Oceania, Magical Kids Entertainment, My Tiny Universe Photography and Tiny Tots Event Hire. Finally, in the specialised retail business category, I pay tribute to Good Games Top Ryde, the winner of their division, Helloworld Top Ryde, North Ryde Delicatessen, RM Williams Macquarie and Xclusive Mobile Phones Top Ryde. I sincerely congratulate all those businesses on their success. There are over 10,000 local businesses in Ryde. As such, the achievements of these businesses are particularly notable. I look forward to continuing to work with them throughout the course of the year and congratulate them on their success.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 19:02 until  
Tuesday 10 October 2023 at 12:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

**According to Standing Order 108A, the following written community recognition statements were submitted.**

**LINDSAY GETHING**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise today to recognise author Lindsay Gething on the publication of her book titled 'Early days in Black Head and Hallidays Point: Stories of residents and visitors.' Lindsay Gething, a Black Head resident for four years, devoted two years to the publication, focusing on Black Head and Hallidays Point history from 1927 to 2000. Her work spotlights the narratives of long-term residents and visitors, interweaving their accounts with historical records and photos. Beyond its historical content, the book unveils a sense of community that mirrors the natural beauty of the region. Lindsay Gething's effort not only captures history but also the essence of our connections. Over 90 individuals, including Mayor Claire Pontin and historian Peter Ryall, gathered at the Black Head Surf Lifesaving Club for the books launch in September. "Early Days in Black Head and Hallidays Point" is a lasting tribute to community spirit and unity. It will inspire future generations to cherish the region's beauty and the bonds that tie us together. I extend my gratitude to Lindsay Gething for this valuable contribution to our community.

**RAINBOW WARRIORS FC**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise today to recognise The Rainbow Warriors Football Club who recently celebrated a successful season. This club focuses on football for players with special needs, they saw 74 registered players this year, their highest number to date. President Matty Zarb termed the season "incredible," and this positive trajectory was attributed to community support, dedicated volunteers, and generous sponsors, alleviating financial burdens on families. A notable gala day saw collaboration with four other clubs, creating enthusiasm among players and supporters. The Rainbow Warriors accommodated players across four age groups, promoting camaraderie and ownership within each group. Beyond the field, the club planned engaging summer activities, such as a sponsored train ride, to keep players and families connected. The Rainbow Warriors intend to continue aligning with Football Mid North Coast competitions next year, further promoting inclusivity. Their year finished in a presentation attended by more than 200 individuals. The Rainbow Warriors Football Club is celebrated for their unity, inclusivity, and community engagement. Thank you for your ongoing dedication Matty!

**MID NORTH COAST RACING ASSOCIATION PREMIERSHIP WINNERS**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I rise to congratulate the 2022 / 2023 Premiership Winners of the Mid North Coast Racing Association awards which were presented at the XXXX Gold Cup at Forster Tuncurry Jockey Club. These awards recognise the top competitors in our region and highlight the skill and dedication of our local racing community. Leading Apprentice was awarded to Zac Wadick with 24 wins this also saw Zac placed third for Leading Jockey. Zac was well ahead of his rivals with 2nd place shared between Dylan Gibbons, Jasper Franklin and Cejay Graham all on 9. Leading Jockey was awarded to Aaron Bullock with 49 Wins. A fantastic effort from Aaron who was followed by Ben Looker 2nd with 32.5 wins. Leading Trainer was awarded to Kris Lees with 36 Wins. Other placings were Paul Shailer on 22 and Wayne Wilkes on 17. Horse of the Year was awarded to Sir Ravanelli who was trained by Terry Evans. Sir Ravanelli raced 11 times in NSW for 3 wins & prizemoney of \$158,300 with the win in the MNCRA Country Championship Qualifier the highlight of the season. Congratulations to all the recipients.

**MOUNT ANNAN HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAINS**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—I would like to acknowledge the work of the incredibly hardworking Mount Annan High School, school captains from this year, Ebony-Rose Mangion and Nikolai Paki as well as Vice-Captains, Mehakpreet Kaur, Aaron Setu, Lara Kutez and Nicolas Davies. 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 Mount Annan High School community. Your commitment to serving as role models 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 Mount Annan High School community is incredibly grateful to Ebony, Nikolai, Mehakpreet, Aaron, Lara and Nicolas. Again, thank you for your service and congratulations for your time as student leaders.

### MAGDALENE CATHOLIC COLLEGE SCHOOL CAPTAINS

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—I would like to acknowledge the work of the incredibly hardworking Magdalene Catholic College, school captains from this year, Timothy Wilson and Lily Sincek as well as vice-captains Stella Ryan and Marcus Attard. 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 Magdalene Catholic College 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 Magdalene Catholic College community is incredibly grateful to Timothy, Lily, Stella and Marcus. Again, thank you for your service and congratulations for your time as student leaders.

### MANLY SURF CLUB

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I notify the House that recently I visited a lesser known surf club in my electorate, that of Manly Surf Club (not to be confused with the more well-known Manly Life Saving Club). The Club itself was established in 1907 and for history buffs was the second surf club in Australia after Bondi and was the first on the Northern Beaches. Unlike most other surf clubs, Manly Surf Club own the land on which the club operates out of. Over the years it was incorporated into the structure of new buildings and is now housed as part of Peppers Manly Beach opposite South Steyne. The club was only involved with lifesaving activities in its early years. Nowadays its paramount purpose is the ability for its members to be able to house their belongings whilst also enjoying the adjacent surf! I would like to congratulate the members of Manly Surf Club for their continued commitment to this unique surf club located on what I believe to be the best beach in Australia!

### TOM KEMP SHIELD WINNERS

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I extend a huge congratulations to the Under 16's rugby league team from West Wyalong High School for their history making win of the Tom Kemp Shield. The Under 16' West Wyalong High School team recently travelled to Molong to compete against Narromine High School in the grand final of the Tom Kemp Shield. According to their Coach, Brad Lees, "the boys played an incredible game" and came away with a 48 to 18 victory. Not only did the team win the competition but they also made record breaking history for their school. Being the first West Wyalong High School team to win this competition. The team is comprised of; Captain, Woody Ambrose, Bradley Ackland, Brady Blackstock, Callan Blackstock, Flynn Bryant, Jake Burns, Hayden Collins, Kayne Crowe, Vince Dionela, Charlie Dodds, Lucas Matthews, Will Meacham, Logan Pettit, Charlie Sutton, Hayden Taylor, Sam Tulloch, Will Tulloch and Mitchell Whyte. A huge congratulations once again to the team. Their determination and commitment to the sport they love was evident in their victory. Well done boys.

### RECOGNITION FOR TINA NARSAMMA

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Temora local Tina Narsamma was recently awarded the 2023 Vocational Student of the Year for the Riverina NSW Region at the recent NSW Training Awards. This recognition has come within weeks of Tina being awarded the Health, Wellbeing and Community Services Student of the Year at TAFE NSW Excellence Awards. These are both well-deserved accolades in recognising Tina's academic achievements and positive work ethic. Tina is a proud Wiradjuri woman, working at Temora Hospital as an assistant-in-nursing. She is also undertaking studies at Temora TAFE to become an enrolled nurse with her studies also including Certificate III in Individual Support. This is a significant achievement for Tina, a mother of five who has proved you can be rewarded for your determination, drive, and a passion in helping others; whilst juggling home life, work and studies. Well done, Tina, you're a wonderful role model and I wish you much success in your nursing career.

### BEAU BAILEY RACING

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Beau Bailey from Grenfell is already making his mark on the track after recently competing in the 2023 FIM Speedway Youth World Championships in Sweden. Racing against 32 boys in his class of 13 – 16 years on 250cc bikes, Beau was one of 16 finalists where he came away in 9th position. Mentored and coached by Craig Boyce, Beau understands that riding at this level is so much more than just sitting in the rider's seat. It's also about ensuring the equipment you have is fit for purpose and safe, spending many hours on bike maintenance. Upon returning to home soil Beau has again been tearing up the track, finishing 2nd at the Speedway Solo Series Round 3 in Tamworth. I wish Beau all the best as he now sets his sights on the FIM Speedway Youth World Championship to be held in Tamworth later this year. What an amazing effort Beau. Congratulations to you and your support team!

### HILLS KELLYVILLE ANNUAL WRITING COMPETITION

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—Hills Kellyville Annual Writing Competition I was delighted to attend the 2023 Annual Writing Competition Awards held on 18 September 2023 at the Castle Hill RSL Club. The Hills Kellyville Rotary Club launched the Writing Competition for Year 6 students in 2005 to celebrate Rotary International's Centenary of Service to humanity. The title of this year's narrative was "The Bushfire started to spread closer to our home. It is too dangerous to stay any longer." The schools represented in this year's competition included schools from the Castle Hill, Kellyville, and Winston Hills electorates. The competition recognises individual student winners as well as the overall school winner. I congratulate the individual winners, April Williams from St. Michaels Public School, 3rd place; Kaitlyn Yu from Excelsior Public School, 2nd place, and Ruyi Yang from Matthew Pearce Public School, 1st place. I congratulate the winning schools: St. Michaels Public School, 3rd place, Matthew Pearce Public School, 2nd Place and Excelsior Public School, 1st place. I recognise and thank the Hills-Kellyville Rotary Club for continuing this incredible competition over many years. I also thank the club President Ian Pascoe and the contribution of the competition Judges for their service, Sheila Krishnan and Michael Richardson.

### NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP DAY 2023

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—Last Sunday I attended the Hills Shire Council National Citizenship Day. National Citizenship Day was first established in 2001. National Citizenship Day allows all Australians to consider the meaning of Australian citizenship and their responsibilities and privileges as citizens. I was pleased to be able attend the ceremony with Hills Shire Council Mayor Dr. Peter Gangemi and Deputy Mayor Councillor Mitchell Blue to welcome 237 new citizens. The new citizens came to Australia from more than 36 countries including India, China, Iran, Pakistan, South Africa, Egypt and the United Kingdom. Mr Tushar Bind and his family were one of the families who became citizens over the weekend. Mr Bind said, "We chose to become Australian citizens because we have seen and experienced that Australia truly lives to its values of helpfulness, freedom, respect and fairness." I recognise and congratulate the new citizens who became citizens at each ceremony which was held on National Citizenship Day.

### THOMAS REEVE

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping)**—Professor Thomas Reeve AC CBE was a giant in the field of medicine and a celebrated member of my community of Epping until his passing last month on 20 August aged 99. Thomas was an Emeritus Professor in Surgery of the University of Sydney and had a long involvement in cancer practise from 1947 onwards. During his illustrious life he held many posts in a variety of organisations including being a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons from 1967; Chairman of Surgery at The University of Sydney from 1982-1988; and Chairman of the Northern Sydney Health Area from 1988-1996. Following his retirement, Thomas served as President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and was appointed Executive Officer of the Australian Cancer Society (now Cancer Council Australia). In 2019, in recognition of his service to the field of Oncology/Surgery in his roles and practise, Royal North Shore Hospital opened the Tom Reeve Academic Surgical Clinic. Thomas lived in Beecroft with his late wife Mary Jo, a local beloved naturalist. He was a celebrated Beecroft resident and is fondly remembered by members of the Beecroft Rotary and Civic Trust. May he rest in peace.

### JENNIFER LEWIS

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Epping)**—I wish to pay tribute to the memory of Jennifer Lewis who passed away just last week on 15 September. She and her husband Ivan were residents in Beecroft for over 60 years and lived in a house next to Beecroft Reserve. Jenny was best known for her work caring for local bushlands in the Beecroft and Cheltenham areas. She was a founding member of the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators. In 1987, she began recording native plant species in her backyard and not before too long had covered a 7-hectare reserve and recorded over 350 plant species. She was forever a passionate bush regeneration enthusiast. On many occasions she would take groups of volunteers to de-weed bushland and served on the Bushland Management Advisory Committee for Hornsby Council for 11 years. From that, she helped establish the Hornsby Herbarium after a successful lobbying campaign. She will be remembered above all for her generosity, and as a font of knowledge of all things green. May she rest in peace.

### BLOOMS THE CHEMIST - SHELLHARBOUR

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Blooms the Chemist, at Stockland Shellharbour, for winning the Outstanding Pharmacy category at the Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards ceremony held on 13 September 2023. The Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards are a gala evening that the local business community look forward to and a chance to celebrate successes and reflect on business achievements. The Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards are only possible with the support

of Presenting Partner, Commonwealth Bank and support partners, Stockland Shellharbour, BxNetworking, White Key Marketing and Cornerstone. Being a finalist at the Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards is an enormous achievement and is a great reflection of the effort of the business community therefore to win a category is exceptional. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Blooms the Chemist on this outstanding achievement.

#### **BOOST JUICE SHELLHARBOUR**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Boost Juice, at Stockland Shellharbour, for winning the Outstanding Fast-Food/Takeaway category at the Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards ceremony held on 13 September 2023. The Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards are a gala evening that the local business community look forward to and a chance to celebrate successes and reflect on business achievements. The Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards are only possible with the support of Presenting Partner, Commonwealth Bank and support partners, Stockland Shellharbour, BxNetworking, White Key Marketing and Cornerstone. Being a finalist at the Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards is an enormous achievement and is a great reflection of the effort of the business community therefore to win a category is exceptional. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Boost Juice on this outstanding achievement.

#### **PANDORA SHELLHARBOUR**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Pandora, at Stockland Shellharbour, for winning the Outstanding Jewellery Store category at the Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards ceremony held on 13 September 2023. The Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards are a gala evening that the local business community look forward to and a chance to celebrate successes and reflect on business achievements. The Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards are only possible with the support of Presenting Partner, Commonwealth Bank and support partners, Stockland Shellharbour, BxNetworking, White Key Marketing and Cornerstone. Being a finalist at the Illawarra and South Coast Local Business Awards is an enormous achievement and is a great reflection of the effort of the business community therefore to win a category is exceptional. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Pandora on this outstanding achievement.

#### **ANDY BLANCHFIELD**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Andy Blanchfield from Norah Head who was an absolute stand out in the first event of the NSW based Woolworths Surfer Groms Comp Series, held on September 2-3 at Kiama. Andy scored the highest two wave heat total of day one scoring 13.40 and winning the U12 Boys final with a combination heat total of 10.10. Other Central Coast surfers that competed were Ruby Blanchfield of Norah Head coming fourth in the U10 Girls, Clive Morriss of Avoca Beach coming fourth in the U10 Boys, Coco Hamano of Terrigal coming fourth in the U12 Girls and Talia Tebb of Avoca Beach coming first in the U14 Girls. The Surfer Groms Comps are a fun and friendly introduction to surf competition and the only Australian event series catering for the increasing number of the country's 'micro-groms', with boys and girls preparing to compete in Under-8, Under-10, Under-12 and Under-14 divisions. Goodluck to Andy in upcoming competitions.

#### **RUBY BLANCHFIELD**

**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)**—Ruby Blanchfield from Norah Head competed in the NSW based Woolworths Surfer Groms Comp Series, held on September 2-3 at Kiama. Over the 2 day first event Ruby received fourth place in the U10 Girls comp. Other Central Coast surfers that competed are Andy Blanchfield of Norah Head coming first in the U12 Boys, Clive Morriss of Avoca Beach coming fourth in the U10 Boys, Coco Hamano of Terrigal coming fourth in the U12 Girls and Talia Tebb of Avoca Beach coming first in the U14 Girls. The Surfer Groms Comps are a fun and friendly introduction to surf competition and the only Australian event series catering for the increasing number of the country's 'micro-groms', with boys and girls preparing to compete in Under-8, Under-10, Under-12 and Under-14 divisions. I congratulate Ruby and wish her all the best in upcoming surfing events.

#### **YARRAMALONG VALLEY SCARECROW COMPETITION**

**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 famous Yarramalong Valley Scarecrow Competition is back and currently running until 24th September 2023. The new organiser Yarramalong School Community Centre will be supported by Central Coast Council,

Stone Real Estate and Yarramalong Farm Supplies. It is worth the road trip through the valleys which attracts visitors from near and far to see the creations and amusing stories from the creative residents with their scarecrows on the roadside. The scarecrow competition is part of Yarramalong's annual Spring Festival, which began in 2008 to raise funds for community groups and attract visits to the Central Coast's northern hinterlands. Good luck to the residents in all 3 categories to be won Humorous, Traditional, and Topical.

#### **JAMES GRIFFITH**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Congratulations to Kulnura Rural Fire Service Brigade Member, James Griffith, on his recent accomplishment in the 2023 Rural Fire Service Youth Awards. As a committed member of the Kulnura Rural Fire Brigade, James' work has been recognised, receiving the "Young Volunteer of the Year '16-25 years" award. He has displayed commitment and teamwork across a number of areas including his participation in the Kulnura Brigade, being actively involved in the community and even being elected to leadership roles. James is also one of the youngest active Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus operators on the Central Coast, gaining this at 17 whilst still in school! The Rural Fire Brigade have had a tough few years and competent, tireless and compassionate volunteers like James do a mighty job in the community. Congratulations, James, on this fantastic achievement and the amazing work you do in the community.

#### **YOUTH COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I want to say a big well done to Joshua Judd and Lachlan Middlemiss who both received a Youth Community Service Award from Her Excellency the Governor of NSW as the Patron of The Order of Australia Association NSW Branch. Joshua and Lachlan were among the 26 students who received the awards, receiving a trophy and certificate of commendation from Her Excellency. Joshua was awarded the award for completing more than 100 hours of community service every year from 2018 to 2023 whilst completing his studies. Helping at Coast Shelter and Macmasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club. Lachlan is the Vice-Captain of his school and leads the Student Prefect Team. He is on the NSW Regional Youth Taskforce, a recipient of the Premier's ANZAC Memorial Scholarship and a member of his school's Reconciliation Action Plan Committee for First Nations people. Both Lachlan and Joshua are two exceptional Central Coast Locals that I am proud to represent!

#### **THE FRANTASTICS**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Today I'd like to recognise the heartfelt and generous work of the local Central Coast Choir, the Frantastics. Started by the charismatic Fran Kendell in 2006 at St Patrick's Hall in East Gosford, the Frantastics are known for not only their fun and joyful singing, but also for their regular donations to local charities. Through their annual concert on 14 August, the Frantastics raised \$500 for Elsie's Retreat – a dedicated in-patient palliative care unit at Gosford Hospital. The donation was made in loving memory of much-loved, former choir member Peter Whiteman. This a beautiful reminder that every dollar goes a long way and the fact that the community are doing their little bit and turning their passion into helping raise money for those less fortunate in the community warms my heart. Thank you to everyone who is involved in the Frantastics for your generosity and for bringing joy and entertainment to our community.

#### **SAM TIMBS SHINES AT SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I rise today to celebrate the outstanding achievements of Picton High School student, Sam Timbs, who recently showcased his musical talents at the Sydney Opera House. Sam, a multi-talented musician who plays both clarinet and baritone saxophone, was part of the esteemed Festival of Choral Music 2023. His love for the clarinet began in year 4 and has since flourished, earning him an invitation to the festival in his second year with the Sydney Symphonic Winds band, where he serves as a section leader. Brandon Madern, head teacher of creative and performing arts at Picton High School, commended Sam's dedication, stating, "Sam's talent and hard work have truly shone, and it's fantastic that he's representing us on such a prominent stage." Sam's achievements make not only his school but our entire community proud. As his music teacher, Madern expressed immense pride in Sam's accomplishments and affirmed that he is a valued member of the Picton High School Concert Band. Through his musical prowess, Sam sets a high bar for aspiring young musicians in our community.

#### **A RESOUNDING SUCCESS FOR ILLUMINATE WOLLONDILLY FESTIVAL OF ART AND LIGHT**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I wish to shine a spotlight on the Illuminate Wollondilly Festival of Art and Light, an extraordinary community event that took place over the weekend of September 15 at the Hume Oval Sportsground and the Picton Botanic Gardens. This event was not just a feast for the senses, but also a boon for local talent and creativity. Curated by Patrick Nellestein of River Road Creative Academy, the festival brought together nearly 30 musicians from various local groups, including the Youth Music and Creative Arts Group, the Dilly Choir, and the Wollondilly Men's Music Cave. River Road itself offered both art and music

demonstrations, enriching our community's cultural landscape. From carnival rides to art displays, from lantern parades to fireworks, the festival was an awe-inspiring showcase of what Wollondilly has to offer. I'm particularly pleased to note that these community programs are accessible for locals, thanks to support from Wollondilly Shire Council, Community Links, and the NSW Government. The festival concluded with a riveting performance by the country rock band Southbound xo, capping off a spectacular weekend of community spirit, artistic expression, and cultural enrichment.

#### **GEOFF DURYEA OF COROWA NOMINATED FOR SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT CATEGORY – SIMON NIVISON AWARD**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Geoff Duryea of Corowa for his contributions and journey of 55 years in the equine world. Geoff has been nominated on behalf of Corowa Race Club for the Special Achievement Category-Simon Nivison Award. The winner will be announced at this year's Racing NSW Country Conference this upcoming Friday. Geoff's deep connection with horses began at a very young age, where he spent countless hours observing behaviours and acquiring valuable knowledge of horses. He embarked on an apprenticeship at 15 years of age. His commitment and excellence propelled him to a career as a jockey, riding numerous winners in Melbourne, including the unforgettable triumph of guiding Red Hope to victory in the 1973 Melbourne Cup. His success did not stop there, as he transitioned into the role of a trainer, achieving many further milestones along the way. Geoff - as one of the most respected horsemen in the industry and as you enter a well-deserved retirement with your wife Maureen, I extend my gratitude for your contributions over the years as a trainer, horseman and mentor.

#### **ONE BRICK AT A TIME - BRICKLAYING APPRENTICE KAYLA YOUNG**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to year 12 student Kayla Young of Murray High school who has received a Silver Medal in the VETiS Bricklaying division at the National WorldSkills Championships held in Melbourne this August 2023. At only 17 years of age, while juggling her HSC commitments, Kayla has taken on a school-based apprenticeship with Doughty's Bricklaying for two days a week. Her pursuit of excellence not only addresses the need for skilled professionals within the bricklaying domain, it also stands as a model for others who are considering a skills based career for themselves. Well done Kayla for your efforts as you navigate the dual paths of completing your HSC and vocational training, breaking down barriers while building walls.

#### **SIENNA TOOHEY - ALBURY HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Sienna Toohey, a student at Albury High School, who has found great success at the School Sport Australia Swimming Championships held this August. Sienna won gold in all three breaststroke events and helped lead the NSW team to victory in the 4x50m medley relay. Sienna's prowess in the pool continued with a silver medal in the 200m individual medley followed by bronze in the freestyle relay event. Sienna's performances are drawing attention from state and national swimming coaches. I would also like to make special mention of Wayne Gould of the Albury Swimming Club for his role in supporting Sienna's achievements. Sienna, your commitment and sportsmanship have led you to success in the pool and I wish you all the best with your sport and studies.

#### **TANYA CAVIC**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to recognise and acknowledge the incredible work of prolific volunteer, Ms Tanya Cavic. Ms Cavic has been giving up her time and energy to volunteer at the Kogarah Storehouse for more than 5 years. The Kogarah Storehouse is a community based, public benevolent institution that strives to empower people to handle life's struggles by providing relevant and tangible support. Ms Cavic is primarily involved with the organisation's food parcel program. Tanya and her fellow volunteers organise and deliver free parcels of food for families and individuals who are struggling to make ends meet. Without the selfless efforts of volunteers like Tanya, many of our most vulnerable community members would most likely go hungry. The fact that Ms Cavic sacrificed her health and wellbeing to continue delivering food parcels during the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies her unwavering dedication and commitment to serving her local community. It is such an honour to be able to recognise Tanya's selfless hard work serving the vulnerable people of the St George community for many years. I wish to sincerely thank Ms Cavic for the wonderful work she does to support our community, for which we are extremely grateful.

#### **SANDRA LEE**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to recognise and acknowledge the incredible work of prolific volunteer, Ms Sandra Lee. Ms Lee has been giving up her time and energy to volunteer at the Kogarah Storehouse for more than 5 years. The Kogarah Storehouse is a community based, public benevolent institution that strives to empower people to handle life's struggles by providing relevant and tangible support.

Ms Lee is primarily involved with the organisation's food parcels program. Sandra and her fellow volunteers organise and deliver free parcels of food for families and individuals who are struggling to make ends meet. Without the selfless efforts of volunteers like Sandra, many of our most vulnerable community members would most likely go hungry. The fact that Ms Lee sacrificed her health and wellbeing to continue delivering food parcels during the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies her unwavering dedication and commitment to serving her local community. It is such an honour to be able to recognise Sandra's selfless hard work serving the vulnerable people of the St George community for many years. I wish to sincerely thank Ms Lee for the wonderful work she does to support our community, for which we are extremely grateful.

#### **CHERYL MALING**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to celebrate and acknowledge the wonderful work of prolific volunteer, Ms Cheryl Maling. Ms Maling has been giving up her time and energy to volunteer at the Kogarah Storehouse for more than 5 years. The Kogarah Storehouse is a community based, public benevolent institution that strives to empower people to handle life's struggles by providing relevant and tangible support. Ms Maling is primarily involved with the organisation's food parcels program. Cheryl and her fellow volunteers organise and deliver free parcels of food for families and individuals who are struggling to make ends meet. Without the selfless efforts of volunteers like Cheryl, many of our most vulnerable community members would most likely go hungry. The fact that Ms Maling sacrificed her health and wellbeing to continue delivering food parcels during the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies her unwavering dedication and commitment to serving her local community. It is such an honour to be able to recognise Cheryl's selfless hard work serving the vulnerable people of the St George community for many years. I wish to sincerely thank Ms Maling for the wonderful work she does to support our community, for which we are extremely grateful.

#### **MR STEVE EDMONDS**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Mr Steve Edmonds, the Principal at the Crescent School in Goulburn. The Crescent School provides a specialised setting to meet the needs of children and young people aged between four and eighteen years, who have a range of intellectual disability, complex health care needs, mental health conditions and /or behavioural support needs. Mr Edmonds has openly demonstrated his personal attributes, skills, knowledge, and experience to openly engage and meet the needs of the students. Mr Edmonds has also exhibited a high level of emotional intelligence, professionalism, and an exemplary level of leadership aptitude to establish and maintain a committed and specialised staff group. Mr Edmonds is highly respected by the school community and the many other service providers that work in unison to meet the needs of the highly complex nature and presentation of student needs. Mr Edmonds provides an unfailing steadfast approach to his role to provide every opportunity for students to achieve a range of activities of daily living, connection, enjoyment, learning and ongoing development. I sincerely commend Mr Edmonds and congratulate his inspirational leadership and sincere and open approach to the school and broader community.

#### **MS DANNIELLE JOHNS**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise Ms Danielle Johns. Danielle is a sole worker, contracted to support vulnerable families with parenting programs, information, referral, advocacy, and a weekly Supported Playgroup. Danielle is well known for going above and beyond her contracted work, recognising the devastating effects of drought, bush fires, COVID, and landslides and floods that these have all had on local communities. Danielle has gathered donations locally and provided take home packs of craft projects, sensory recipes, and do-it-yourself toys. Danielle has worked collaboratively with the Wingecarribee Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer to work with local families in playgroups and women's yarnning circle. Danielle has established an electronic monthly "Little Explorers Newsletter" to local families, which included fun songs, craft ideas, games, educational flyers, and information on up-to-date topics which were affecting families, such as COVID news or flood assistance. Danielle has demonstrated her ability to work collaboratively and show her gratitude by holding three events that were held specifically to thank local volunteers for their help with Home Start. Danielle is a powerhouse of ideas, energy and exceptionally community spirited, which has undoubtedly assisted many within the local community and for this I sincerely thank Danielle.

#### **ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL CROOKWELL**

**Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)**—I rise today to recognise St Mary's Primary School Crookwell. St Mary's Primary School was established upon the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in 1903. The Parish based school provides classes for Kindergarten to Year 6 children. The local Crookwell Shire was established in 1906. St Mary's School Hall was built in 1911, with the school being an example Federation ecclesiastical style architecture and is of heritage significance for its association with Catholic education in Crookwell. The Mercy values of Excellence, Compassion, Justice, Respect and Service, remain fundamental to St Mary's Primary School, which strive to provide a learning environment of happiness, safety and nurturing to the needs of the children

within Christian values which affirm the dignity and worth of each member of the school community. St Mary's Primary School is very proudly celebrating the 120th Anniversary of Catholic Education in Crookwell in October with a dinner dance at the Crookwell Services Club. I congratulate St Mary's Primary School on their longevity and their continuum to provide our children with a holistic learning and development environment, to support their growth of life-long skills and knowledge.

#### HUNTER SPORTS HIGH RUGBY LEAGUE

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—On Tuesday 12 September, teams from Hunter Sports High took to Baddeley Oval in Cessnock for the Grand Final of both Buckley Shield and University Shield competitions against Westfields. It has been some time since Hunter Sports High won these premierships: the last time they took home the Buckley Shield was in 2005, and they last claimed the University Shield in 2006. In a first for Hunter Sports High, they won both shields on the same day! In the Buckley Shield final, Hunters Sports defeated Westfields Sports High 24 to 22. They claimed the University Shield with a romping 30 to 10 win. Outstanding performance awards in the Buckley Shield went to Tukia Fotu-Moala for best and fairest in the grand final, while Liam Martin was named player of the tournament. Best and fairest of the University Shield grand final went to Demiah Ainuu, while Beau Slade was named player of the tournament. Congratulations to both sides on their extraordinary wins, and to all the players, coaches and supporters. Great work!

#### HUNTER SPORTS HIGH KNIGHTS PLAYERS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—The Newcastle Knights have had an incredible season—and two former students, Phoenix Crossland and Mat Croker, of Hunter Sports High have been part of it. Twenty-three year old Phoenix, who was born in New Zealand before moving to Newcastle with his family, played junior rugby league for the Erina Eagles before being signed by the Knights. He made his debut for the Knights in round 16 of the 2019 NRL season. He plays as a hooker, halfback or five-eighth and, over the course of the 2023 season, has appeared for the Knights twenty-two times, made six tries and earned twenty-four points for the club. Twenty-four year old Mat Croker is a native of Nahiab on the Mid-North Coast, and played for the Taree City Bulls and Taree Panthers before joining the Knights in 2021. He made his debut against Parramatta in 2021—but the less said about the outcome of that game, the better! He plays as a prop and, over the course of the 2023 season, has played twenty-three games, and made four tries for a total of sixteen points. Congratulations to Phoenix and Mat.

#### OLYMPIC PATHWAY SCHOOL

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—As of 11 September, Hunter Sports High School is an official Australian Olympic Pathway School! Australian Olympic Pathway School status is available to schools who have an established elite athlete development sport program including Olympic sports. To be recognised as an Australian Olympic Pathway School, a school must meet strict criteria at the discretion of the Australian Olympic Committee. Students at the Olympic Pathway Schools are given access to high-quality sport training environments, sports academies, accredited coaches, support services such as wellbeing, nutrition and more, as well as crucial formal pathways through to high performance teams with sports bodies. In 2032, when Brisbane hosts Australia's next Olympic Games, it is remarkable to think that some of those sportspeople could be training at Hunter Sports High right now. Seeing those Olympic rings at the school gates will be an ongoing inspiration to this enormously talented cohort. Congratulations to the school, and to principal Rachel Byrne, who accepted the official plaque from the Australian Olympic Committee's James Edwards.

#### HELEANA SORIANO

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)**—I wish to recognise Ms Heleana Soriano, 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. Heleana, who is a resident of my electorate, is a student at St Agnes Catholic High School. She is President of the Student Representative Council and an exemplary student whose determination for learning has led to her recent recognition and award for student excellence. I congratulate Heleana, on this much deserved achievement and wish her all the best in her future studies.

#### VERA TCHADOVITCH FROM CASTLEREAGH PUBLIC SCHOOL

**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 Vera Tchadovitch, an office assistant at Castlereagh Public School for her commitment to the students

and school community for the past 20 years. Vera is a much-loved member of Castlereagh Public School, who works tirelessly to support the staff and students. Last week, the staff at Castlereagh Public School had the opportunity to present Vera with a certificate, recognising her dedication to the school over the past 20 years. What an amazing achievement for Vera and Castlereagh Public School. Congratulations Vera, thank you for your dedication to the education of students and for all the hard work you do.

#### **COOPER FROM THE LONDONDERRY PONY CLUB**

**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 Cooper from the Londonderry Pony Club, who has been selected to represent Pony Club NSW in the Senior Mounted Games Team. Cooper, alongside other selected riders in NSW will represent our state at this year's Pony Club Australia National Championships 2023. Over the years, Cooper has become dedicated to the sport, aspiring to continuously improve and represent NSW. I know the Londonderry Pony Club, your local community and I am very proud of your achievements and look forward to cheering you on at the National Championship. This is a great opportunity that will only help you develop as a rider. Best of luck Cooper!

#### **MARRICKVILLE LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Happy 100th birthday to the Marrickville District Lawn Tennis Association! Established in 1923 the Association is one of Sydney's oldest and few remaining grass court complexes, with six grass and two synthetic courts. I was pleased to be able to join Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Mayor Darcy Byrne, Club President Peter Sutherland, and many members recently, to celebrate the centenary of this iconic local group. Together, we were able to celebrate 100 fantastic years and to honour the many volunteers and players who have supported the club over the years, including the great Greg Gibson. A recent renovation means the facilities are looking brand new with updated floorboards, lighting, and ceiling fans. The new memorabilia wall provides a fantastic reminder of the long history of the Association. The facilities are great for a get together with friends or a place for a special occasion celebration. They have even played host to a magazine shoot earlier this year. I encourage everyone to check out the great facilities on offer and help them celebrate their centenary. Congratulations Marrickville District Lawn Tennis Association on reaching this historic milestone!

#### **INNER WEST COUNCIL – BAY RUN PATHWAY AND LIGHTING UPGRADE**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—Congratulations to the community members who have campaigned for lighting and other improvements to make the Bay Run safe for everyone. On 9 September, I was fortunate to be able to join Mayor Darcy Byrne, Deputy Mayor Philippa Scott and the Member for Balmain, Kobi Shetty, and many excited locals to help cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony of the new Bay Run Pathway and Lighting Upgrade. This five-million-dollar upgrade represents another link in the GreenWay environmental corridor connecting the Cooks River at Earlwood to the Parramatta River at Iron Cove. The Lilyfield Road Bridge has been transformed with wide separated cycling and walking paths, new gardens, places to sit and picnic and even some new exercise equipment. The upgrade also includes a bicycle service station and a water bubbler. It means one of Sydney's best walks is even better! I look forward to seeing all the picturesque Instagram moments as everyone gets out to enjoy the new facilities and stay active enjoying our very own iconic Bay Run.

#### **ONE PENNY RED AND VERNON'S BAR CLOSING**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—It is with equal parts sadness and gratitude that I today acknowledge Ms Nina Alidenes, Mr David Murphy and Mr RJ Lines and all the team at One Penny Red and Vernon's Bar who have announced that they will be closing their iconic Summer Hill restaurant and bar at the end of this year. Revitalising the old Summer Hill Post Office site, One Penny Red and Vernon's Bar opened in 2014 and immediately became an Inner West community favourite. Their venue has been the scene of so many great catch ups with friends, special family celebrations and even weddings. The winner of countless local and national awards One Penny Red and Vernon's Bar contributed so much to the vibrant, diverse, and growing Inner West hospitality community. I encourage everyone to get down to enjoy the outstanding food, wine, and hospitality at One Penny Red and Vernon's Bar before their last service in December. Congratulations Nina, David, RJ and team and thanks for all the delicious memories!

#### **PETER PICKEN**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I recently had the privilege of meeting Peter Picken, a remarkable centenarian, who celebrated his 100th birthday. Born a century ago, Peter's life has involved thousands of stories, with one mainstay being his lifetime of service to Qantas - a career he relished, and that brought with it an abundance of experience, and of course, travel. As I sat down with Peter, the first thing that struck me was that he

didn't look a day over 80 - a testament to his youthful outlook on life! He shared stories that spanned decades, from his early years growing up in a world very different from today's, to the many adventures he embarked upon in more recent years. Peter's 100th birthday is an incredible achievement and I am so grateful to his family and the staff at Baptist Care for allowing me to be part of the occasion. His experiences have not only shaped him but also serve as a living history lesson for others. It was an honour to celebrate this milestone with him, and I am grateful for the opportunity to witness the living legacy of a man who has reached the incredible age of 100. Happy birthday Peter!

#### **GANESH PUJA**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—Last weekend, Ryde marked a historic milestone as it celebrated Ganesh Puja for the very first time in its history. This auspicious occasion was made possible through the remarkable efforts of Deepak Chauhan and Mayank Pahwa, the visionary architects behind the Indians in Shepherds Bay Community. Ganesh Puja, a cherished Hindu festival, signifies the removal of obstacles and the beginning of new journeys. The vibrant and diverse Indian community in Shepherds Bay and across Ryde came together to celebrate this joyous event with utmost enthusiasm and devotion. Deepak and Mayank, with their unwavering dedication and creative expertise, transformed a simple idea into a grand reality. The celebration was a testament to their commitment to promoting cultural diversity and harmony in Ryde. Families and friends from various backgrounds joined hands to partake in this unique cultural experience. The celebration of Ganesh Puja in Ryde is a testament to the power of community, cultural exchange, and the extraordinary contributions of individuals like Deepak and Mayank. It not only enriches the tapestry of our multicultural city but also paves the way for future celebrations that embrace the beauty of diversity. I look forward to attending an even bigger celebration next year!

#### **SWAP AWARDS**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—The Sustainable Waste 2 Art Prize [SWAP] has celebrated outstanding individuals who have showcased their creativity and commitment to environmental causes. Two remarkable talents in my electorate have been recognized for their contributions to this award. In the Functional category, the runner-up, Xiang Chen, stunned audiences with their project "Waste Down." Chen's work brilliantly upcycled waste materials into functional art, exemplifying the essence of sustainability. Through their creation, they sent a powerful message about the transformative potential of waste materials, inspiring others to rethink their approach to consumption. In the Open category (18+ years), Jo Rijke emerged as the winner with their striking piece, "Varieties of Sardines." Rijke's artwork not only displayed artistic brilliance but also conveyed a poignant environmental message. Their ability to breathe life into discarded materials and capture the essence of sustainability left a lasting impact on the audience. Rijke's work serves as a testament to the power of art as a medium for raising awareness about critical environmental issues. These two exceptional individuals have demonstrated that art and sustainability can go hand in hand, setting a high standard for creativity and environmental consciousness in the City of Ryde.

#### **PETER RAFFERTY**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—Peter Rafferty has been a diligent member of the Illawarra community, having always been at the forefront of local community support opportunities. The Thirroul resident has been a Wombarra Scarborough Lifesaver and a volunteer driving instructor for refugees, alongside his career as an engineer and swimming teacher. Peter volunteers his time to teach refugees and asylum seekers how to swim safely in the ocean pool at Woonona. He equips those who have come to this beautiful country from all over the world, with the tools necessary to enjoy our oceans. Teaching those who may never have been near a large body of water, the skills that many Australians take for granted. He passes on the knowledge of swimming between the flags, how to keep yourself afloat and the dangers of rips and deep water. Peter's efforts help those who have come to our country to live a better life, to enjoy the natural beauty of this land in a safe and sustainable manner. Peter is actively engaged in the betterment of the local community and I would like to congratulate him for his stalwart and sustained support for those who need it most."

#### **THIRROUL VILLAGE COMMUNITY**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—33 years ago a group of like minded Thirroul residents banded together out of a love for their town. The chairperson, Don Gray, a long time resident of the suburb, was concerned the 'town was looking rather tatty'. Rather than simply complain about the issue, they took action. Since that first meeting the Thirroul Village Committee has continued to advocate for the betterment of the Northern Illawarra township. Anyone that has been to a Thirroul Village Committee meeting would know just how passionate the local residents are about their town. The committee has taken a stand against a number of issues that would have impacted their town. Of course, one of the most notable issues was the development of the Thirroul Plaza. The development would have resulted in almost 100 apartments in the middle of the township and was strongly opposed by many locals. Ultimately the development was rejected and was a big win for the committee and the

suburb of Thirroul. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those who have been involved with the Thirroul Community Village over the past 33 years.

#### **RICHARD GRIMMOND – TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, AUTHOR, HISTORIAN**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I'm pleased to have the opportunity to recognise a true pillar of our local community - longstanding resident, Mr Richard Grimmond. At the remarkable age of 96, Richard is still an active participant in the local Lions Club, Rotary Club and is one of the Foundation Members of the Port Macquarie Historical Society. His passion for Australian history gave rise to Richard penning and publishing two historical novels which detail the early period of Australia's colonisation: "Harriet's Boy" and "I Went with John Oxley." Recently, Richard visited the Port Macquarie Campus of the Hastings Secondary College for a walk down memory lane. He was proud to have been the first teacher at the school, and later promoted to Principal of the school which was then known as Port Macquarie High School. Richard taught Technology and Applied Sciences. The stately Norfolk Pines that stand along Pacific Drive adjacent to the school, were planted by Richard and the then school captain. They make a commanding statement flanking Oxley Oval and as a backdrop to the popular Oxley Beach. I congratulate Richard for his inspirational leadership and for his ongoing commitment to our community.

#### **LACHLAN RECK – BEST YOUTH FILM AWARD**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Congratulations to 17-year-old Lachlan Reck on receiving a High Honour at the Far South Film Festival 2023. Lachlan is a student from St Columba Anglican School Port Macquarie. As part of his High School Certificate major works, Lachlan submitted a short film titled "Mother of Sorrow" into the Far South Film Festival, winning the JD Shaw – Author and Screenworks Best Youth Film Award on 19th August. Shot in New Zealand, Lachlan produced a horror film about a woman experiencing the grief of a family member on an isolated property. Lachlan wrote, directed and produced this award-winning production and casted his mother and sister as the main characters in the film. Supporting behind the scenes was his father, making the production a cost-effective, family affair. Writing and directing a horror film has allowed Lachlan to explore the art of storytelling through human emotion and cinematography. This was Lachlan's second horror film to receive an award, the previous being when he was in Year 8 through the Nextwave Film Festival. Lachlan is hoping to pursue a career in the filmmaking industry and I wish him well in his future endeavours. Congratulations Lachlan on a wonderful achievement!

#### **TARA MITCHELL – TALENTED REFEREE YOUTH SQUAD**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I recognise 16-year-old Tara Mitchell, a Year 11 student from Port Macquarie's Mackillop College. Tara was selected to attend the prestigious NSW Talented Referee Youth Squad (TRYs) program through NSW Touch Football. In February this year, Tara travelled to Dubbo to attend the Junior State Cup (Northern Conference) and there achieved her Level Three referee badge. Tara was further rewarded for her skilled performance, being appointed as one of the three referees for the Under 10 Girls' Grand Final. She was presented with a referee's medallion as a reminder of this memorable event. To further hone her skills, Tara will officiate at the National Youth Championships on the Sunshine Coast in September before she travels to Mudgee for the NSW Country Championships in October. The TRYs program aims to grow and enhance the skills of talented young referees like Tara, encouraging them and giving them the confidence and ability to officiate and control high level sporting events. I congratulate and commend Tara on her commitment to sport, her admirable skills and hope that she follows through to officiate in even more prestigious sporting matches in the future.

#### **KOREAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM - THOMAS HASSALL**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On Friday 14 July World Cup fever came to Leppington with the arrival of the Korean Republic Womens team, the Tigers of Asia. The team were based for a couple of days at Thomas Hassall Anglican College at Middleton Grange in my electorate. The stay commenced with a welcome ceremony which I was privileged to attend along with College Principal Ross Whelan. Congratulations to Principal Ross Whelan and everyone at the school for organising such a professional and world class operation for the Korean team. The grounds were in exceptional condition, putting them on par with anything we are likely to see through the tournament. Credit to grounds keeper Jason Swan, Coach Sonny Makko and the team. Thank you to all the staff and players from Korean Team including captain Kim Hye-ri and coach Colin Bell. The stay left such an impact that following the visit, many from Leppington, myself included, have adopted the Koreans as their second favourite team after the Matildas.

#### **ZEST**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—In late June I attended the annual Zest awards, hosted by Western Sydney Community Forum. The Zest awards is the premier event for the community sector in greater

Western Sydney and it was a night full of great food and entertainers from across the region. Zest showcases the vital work of the community sector and shines a light on the passionate, dedicated and often unsung heroes in our region. It is not just about recognising and acknowledging those who put their time aside to aid their community, but the individuals or groups that are nominated for these awards are automatically considered for the ZEST partnering for impact grant valued at \$5000 to support their work. I congratulate all nominees and winners for their expertise, dedication and hard work in all they have accomplished. A big thank you and congratulations to CEO Billie Sankovic and the whole Western Sydney Community Forum team for putting on a fantastic event to celebrate our community sector each and every year.

#### **SERBIAN FOLK FESTIVAL**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington)**—On 11 August I had the pleasure of attending the 35th Serbian folkloric Festival at Bonnyrigg Sports Club. The festival is a mix of traditional dance, food and celebration of the Serbian culture. The Serbian community is a long cherished and integral part of South West Sydney. The festival or "Bonno Fest" as it is colloquially known, has been running for 35 years, having been launched by the Serbian Cultural Youth Group. I want to thank the Serbian community for the opportunity to attend and speak at their festival. With a big shout out to the amazing performances by the Serbian cultural dance groups. I would also like to acknowledge Bonnyrigg Sports Club and President Cedomir Jescic and Ambassador of Serbia Rade Stefanovic for their attendance and strong support for the Serbian diaspora. I also want to thank all the volunteers and sponsors who dedicated their time to make the Festival the success it is each and every year.

#### **GLENMORE PARK BRUMBIES**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I rise to acknowledge and commend the Glenmore Park Brumbies for their triumphant annual Sportsman's Lunch. This event was graced with the presence of esteemed guest speakers and celebrated retired NRL players – Nathan Hindmarsh, Mark Geyer, and Bryan Fletcher – whose contributions greatly added to the occasion. The Brumbies, with their unwavering commitment and the support of our community, managed to raise a commendable amount exceeding \$30,000. Such a feat not only underscores the dedication of all involved but also highlights the significant, positive impact that this club continues to have on our community. Local sports clubs like the Glenmore Park Brumbies represent much more than the matches played on the field. They symbolise unity, forging lasting friendships, bringing families together and building a vibrant community. The strength and spirit of the Brumbies shine brightly and events such as the Sportsman's Lunch only serve to solidify the vital role they play in our community's fabric. I extend my hearty congratulations to the Brumbies and everyone who contributed to the success of the event.

#### **ANTHONY AND SUZIE SHAKIR**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I rise to shine a spotlight on an innovative and delightful enterprise that has sprung up in the Oran Park community – "Gelato Shak". Founded by the enterprising duo, Anthony and Suzie Shakir, this isn't just your regular ice-cream van. It marries the charm of a kombi van with the delectable allure of gelato, serving joy on wheels. Gelato Shak has its genesis in a deep-seated love for gelato and a vision to add value to special occasions, be it birthdays or other significant events. The inception of this small business is a testament to the spirit of our local entrepreneurs who harbour dreams and then muster the courage to bring them to fruition. I eagerly await the day when I can relish their locally renowned gelato, and perhaps share a scoop or two with my constituents. It fills me with immense pride to witness small family businesses, such as Gelato Shak, not only take root but thrive and fuel their passion. Such endeavours enrich our local culture and foster community ties. To Anthony, Suzie, and the Gelato Shak family, I say - keep churning out the goodness.

#### **BYRON CLIMA**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I proudly acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding achievements of a local Oran Park business, Sydney Drafting Concepts and Design, owned by the commendable Byron Clima. This esteemed business has recently secured the prestigious 2023 Wollondilly Local Business Award, a testament to their unwavering commitment to excellence and service in our community. The accolade follows their previous recognition as the winner of the 2022 Camden Local Business Award. Moreover, their nomination as a finalist for the Australian Small Business Champion Awards speaks volumes about their dedication and prowess in their field. This sequence of accomplishments is not just a win for Sydney Drafting Concepts and Design but showcases the very best of what our electorate of Badgerys Creek brings to the fore. I heartily congratulate Byron Clima and his team for setting such a sterling example for local businesses in our community. In recognition of their endeavours, I celebrate Sydney Drafting Concepts and Design and commend their invaluable contribution to the Badgerys Creek electorate.

## BEACH 2 BEACH

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to participate in the annual Beach 2 Beach charity fun run and festival. This year thousands of participants ran the 13km route from Dee Why Beach to the ideal finish line – Newport Beach in Pittwater. It was great fun to start the 6km leg of the run at Rat Park in Warriewood. Thank you to the Rotary Club of Warringah for your efforts organising the run. These events provide an important opportunity for our community to come together, raise funds for charities and enjoy the beauty of the Northern Beaches. This year, the run raised much needed funds for Life Education, Sydney Northern Beaches Surf Life Saving, Sanfilippo Children's Foundation, the Be Centre, Northern Beaches Community Cancer Charity, Community Northern Beaches, Stewart House and the Women's Resilience Centre. Thank you to the Women's Resilience Centre for letting me join your team! I also wish to acknowledge the contributions of the Upper Northern Beaches Rotary Club - the finish line festival at Newport Beach, featuring live music and an extremely successful sausage sizzle, would not have been possible without them.

## EMMA DIETERS – NORTHERN BEACHES PARA SURFER BOARDRIDERS CLUB

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I wish to acknowledge Avalon Beach local, Emma Dieters, for inspiring our community with her resilience and love of surfing. Emma's journey took an unexpected turn when a bulging disc in her neck led to an incomplete quadriplegic diagnosis. Despite her surgery in 2021 not going as planned, Emma was determined to keep surfing. With Para surfer Sam Bloom's encouragement, Emma ventured into competitive surfing, becoming a beacon of resilience and inspiration for our community. But Emma's contributions extend beyond personal achievements. Following her own experiences Emma developed a desire to help other individuals with physical challenges to embrace the joys of surfing. Together with three fellow local para surfers, Emma founded the Northern Beaches Para Surfer Boardriders Club, now boasting 12 members and the support of various local organisations. The Club aspires to foster grassroots talent and promote local competitions. Their recent success in the Australian Titles, with Emma coming first in the prone non-assist category, is testament to their dedication. Emma's journey continues as she represents Australia in the World Para Surfing Championships in California in November. Good luck, Emma, our community is behind you.

## BAYVIEW CHURCH POINT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I wish to acknowledge the Bayview Church Point Residents Association, for their outstanding advocacy on behalf of their local community. Since 1907, this dedicated organisation has worked tirelessly to enhance the quality of life for residents in their beautiful corner of the world. The BCPR have been actively engaging with my office since March of this year, ensuring our team is across all the issues impacting residents in these areas. BCPR is an embodiment of community spirit, providing opportunities for neighbours to come together and connect. From road safety, to preserving local heritage, the BCPR do an amazing job communicating and representing the diverse range of topics that are important to the residents they serve. Thank you to President, Peter Blanchard, for your leadership. Residents Associations are so important to fostering a welcoming and productive local community. Thank you to Secretary, Jenny Rosen, Vice President, Stephen Todd, Treasurer, David Shields, Committee, Phil Thew and Rob Legg-Bagg, and Public Officer, Margaret Makin for your efforts. BCPR are extremely efficient and professional. I look forward to continuing to work with them in the times ahead to achieve positive outcomes for Bayview and Church Point community.

## CATHERINE MCAULEY, WESTMEAD - MERCY DAY MASS AND LEADERSHIP INDUCTION

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Thank you to Catherine McAuley Catholic College for welcoming me to Mercy Day Mass and Student Leader Induction, on Friday 1st September 2023 in Westmead. Catherine McAuley Catholic College teaches young women to actively participate in a dynamic world as autonomous lifelong learners. The College is dedicated to equipping their students with skills to be adaptable, discerning, and articulate individuals. I thank Rev. Father Walter Fogarty for a thought-provoking homily, reflecting on inclusively supporting our diverse community along their faith journeys. Thank you as well to the students of Catherine McAuley for their tribute to the Mercy charism. It was a poignant reminder to live according to the values of justice, excellence, integrity, courage, compassion and hospitality that form the Sisters of Mercy legacy. Congratulations to College Captains Alyssa Aoun and Lea Zeydan and all the Student Leaders at Catherine McAuley Catholic College. I wish the new Student Leaders all the best in their appointments and congratulate the 2023 Student Leaders for the excellent stewardship of their school. I thank Principal Ms Mary Refalo and the Catherine McAuley College community for their commitment to education in our community.

## CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE AUSTRALIA NSW INC. – STATE CONFERENCE

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Thank you to the Catholic Women's League Australia – NSW Incorporation for welcoming me to the 2023 State Conference in Terrigal on Monday 18th September. The

Catholic Women's League – NSW Inc. is an NGO that supports Catholic women in their faith journeys and fulfils their mission of evangelisation to work for human development. A member of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations, they work together with 5 million women in more than 60 countries to promote the participation and co-responsibility of Catholic women in society. Through Catholic Social Teachings, the Catholic Women's League fosters spiritual, intellectual, and social development, whilst ensuring Catholic women are involved in discussions which shape our society. The Conference urged us to "go forth with joy and courage." The Catholic Women's League plays an important advocate for their member's beliefs and values. It was wonderful to speak at the Conference and share ways to amplify the League's message to Parliament. Thank you to Chaplain Father Greg Morgan, President Michelle Pedersen, the State Executive and all the faithful members of the CWLA of NSW for your dedication to supporting the voice of Catholic women in our communities.

#### **SMITHFIELD RSL SUB-BRANCH – BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Thank you to the Smithfield RSL Sub-Branch for a moving Battle for Australia Commemoration on Wednesday 6th September 2023. On the first Wednesday of September each year, we commemorate the Battle for Australia. We honour the bravery of those who served in the defence of the Australian mainland in sea, land and air battles in the Coral Sea, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific. The Battle for Australia was a series of battles fought by the ANZACS against the Japanese in WWII, including the Battle of the Coral Sea, Milne Bay and the Kokoda Trail Campaign. We pay tribute to the sacrifices made by the thousands of brave Australian army, navy and air force personnel and their families to protect our freedom, democracy & sovereignty. WWII ended on 15 August 1945, but Australia will never forget its significant role in shaping our nation. Thank you to Bill Cruwys OAM, President, and the dedicated members of the Smithfield RSL Sub-Branch for such a thoughtful commemoration. Thank you as well to Mrs Janice Crosio AM MBE, and members of the Merrylands RSL Sub-Branch for being part of this occasion. Lest we forget.

#### **LIFELINE WALK**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I recently had the pleasure of joining Lifeline Hunter Central Coast on their "Out of the Shadows" walk for World Suicide Prevention Day. Over 10 million Australians know someone who has been impacted by suicide and 1 in 2 young people are impacted by suicide by the time they turn 25. It was great to see so many people take part and join together as a community to show support and remember family, friends and loved ones. We can all make a difference by having that conversation with friends and family and reminding them that they're not alone and that there are always people and services to help. Events such as the "Out of the Shadows" walk help promote stigma reduction, encourage help seeking, and honour the memories of those lost to suicide, those who have survived suicide attempts, and those who bear the weight of grief. Thank you, Lifeline Hunter and Central Coast, for organising this walk and for all that you do to support those in need in our community.

#### **RURAL FIRE SERVICE – GET READY WEEKEND**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Last weekend RFS stations and their members all across NSW hosted community events for GET READY Weekend ahead of the official start of the NSW bushfire danger period on October 1. These community events are a great opportunity to educate and encourage residents and landowners to plan and prepare for the coming bushfire season. It was great to spend the day visiting some of my own local RFS Get Ready Day events across my electorate and along with my community learn more about fire awareness. I would like to thank Erina Rural Fire Brigade, Copacabana Rural Fire Brigade, MacMasters Beach Brigade and Matcham Holgate Rural Fire Brigade for hosting these important community awareness events and for having me along.

#### **JUVENILE DIABETES RESEARCH FUND (JDRF) ONE WALK CENTRAL COAST**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I recently had the pleasure of joining Margaret Sheridan who hosted the Central Coast JDRF walk and my community on a walk to raise funds to help find a cure for Type 1 Diabetes and its complications through the support of medical research. There's over 1500 young people with diabetes on the Central Coast and it was fantastic to see so much community support for this event as JDRF work to get Type 1 to Type None. This annual walk, which is back bigger and better after a forced break due to COVID is a great opportunity for our community to connect and show support for family, friends and loved ones living with Type 1 diabetes. Events such as the JDRF One Walk, promote awareness, reduce stigma, and raise much needed funds to continue medical research into finding a cure. Thank you, Margaret and the team at JDRF Central Coast and for all the sponsors, businesses and individuals who supported this wonderful community event.

#### **GLOUCESTER HIGH SCHOOL PARLI-FLICKS 2023 FINALIST**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I am looking forward to welcoming Gloucester High School to Parliament for the Parli-Flicks Award Night in October. Congratulations Mitchell Davies, Alicia Martin and

Isabel Jeffreys on being chosen as a finalist in the 2023 NSW Parliament Short Film Awards. Mitchell, Alicia and Isabel's entry is in contention for the Best Regional category. Gloucester High's entry will provide the students take on this year's Parli-Flicks 'Celebrating Democracy' theme contemplating why the voting age in Australia should, or shouldn't, be lowered from 18. I'm keen to learn more about the production following Rick Kernick's front-page story on the school's entry in the Gloucester Advocate on Wednesday 9 August. I want to acknowledge Gloucester High drama teacher Renee Berger for her mentorship of the 20 Year 9 students who combined to be part of this team effort. The overall Parli-Flicks winner chosen from the finalists by the judging panel will receive the \$250 prize and a trophy for their school. I wish Gloucester High School all the best and look forward to meeting you on 11 October.

#### **HUNTER VALLEY WINE SHOW - UPPER HUNTER ELECTORATE WINNERS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—I want to acknowledge a family-owned wine producer from my Upper Hunter electorate, who scooped the pool at this year's Hunter Valley Wine Show. Congratulations, Andrew and Lisa Margan and their family on your four trophies at the wine show awards luncheon held at Pokolbin on September 1st. They include the Doug Seabrook Memorial Trophy Best Red Wine of the Show, Hector Tulloch Memorial Trophy Best Shiraz, Len Evans Trophy Best Single Vineyard Red Wine and James Busby Memorial Trophy Best Three-Year-Old and Older Shiraz. Margan's 2019 Fordwich Hill Shiraz delivering the wine family from Broke what they are calling the "biggest result for a red wine in our history." I also acknowledge another trophy recipient and constituents, Shaun and Liz Silkman, rewarded with the Ed Jouault Memorial Trophy Best One-Year-Old Semillon for their Silkman Wines 2022 Reserve Semillon. Like Hunter Valley wine, the wine show has a long history including the Australian Army hosting the judging for almost 45 years at Singleton's Lone Pine Barracks, which is a wonderful collaboration with the wine industry. And, congratulations Lambs Valley Wines on the bronze medal from your first awards submission.

#### **ST CATHERINE'S SINGLETON - PAUL KELLY CUP STATE CHAMPIONS**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Congratulations to the under-12 girls team from St Catherine's College, Singleton on winning the State Champion title in AFL NSW/ACT's prestigious Paul Kelly Cup. St Catherine's had a day to remember on 29 August when they played in the final series at Sydney's Olympic Park. The Singleton girls came out firing to win their opening pool game against St Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, Kiama 36-1. Round two, concluded in a 28-1 victory over St Gregory's College, Gregory Hills. But, Henschke Catholic Primary School, Wagga Wagga held St Catherine's to a 13-all draw in round three. Singleton regained confidence in the semi-final edging out Terrigal Public School 4-1. In the grand final, St Catherine's College was on target scoring four of their five goals in the first-half to beat Henschke Primary, 32-19. Adding to the excitement of securing a State Championship, Singleton's Quinn Neyland was recognised with the players' award being named Best on Ground.

#### **VAN NGUYEN (MINH)**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, as this year marks 50 years since the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, I take a moment to recount the story of Orange Returned Services League member Mr Van Nguyen. Minh, as he is now known, was one of 194 orphaned Vietnamese children brought to Australia as part of Operation Babylift, staged by the Australian and American Air Forces in 1975. The operation was challenging, the population of South Vietnam was fleeing an advancing force and thousands of children were displaced in the chaos. Emphasising the dire situation, operation Babylift was struck by tragedy when one of two American Galaxys involved crashed and exploded, killing most on board. Minh, who never knew his parents and had battled polio, was evacuated onboard a Hercules out of Saigon. Shortly after, he was living with a foster family in Cargo, near Orange. Keen to give back, Minh joined navel cadets at 14 before going on to serve in the Royal Australian Navy for eight years and he remains a firm affiliate of the RSL. Minh is now a proud Aussie and is grateful for the opportunity that opened that day in 1975.

#### **NIKITA CAMPBELL (DEAF RUGBY)**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise the inspiring achievement in sevens rugby union by my constituent Nikita Campbell. A member of the mighty Orange Emus Rugby Union Club, Ms Campbell recently returned from Cordoba in Argentina where she represented Australia in the Deaf Rugby Sevens World Cup. Seven nations took part in the women's tournament along with a Barbarians side and the Australian girls held their own, finishing with a bronze medal. Ms Campbell's national representation was well-deserved. Emus clubmates describe her as a mainstay of their women's program where her hearing impairment has been embraced by teammates. At home in the front row, Ms Campbell has racked up 100 games in the myrtle green. Emus were also heavily involved in helping her raise the necessary funding to make the trip to South America. Ms Campbell was born with a hearing impairment and uses hearing aids while playing for Emus but as a member of the national

side had to adjust her play as hearing devices are not allowed on field. She says that taught her the value of trusting teammates. I congratulate Ms Campbell on her World Cup bronze and wish her well in her rugby future.

#### **MANILDRA'S WOODBRIDGE CUP DOUBLE**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate Manildra Rhinos on winning a premiership double in the Woodbridge Cup rugby league competition. The Woodbridge Cup is run by the NSW Country Rugby League and encompasses the smaller senior clubs in the Central West and includes women's League Tag. This year the mighty Rhinos won the mens and womens premierships in one of the club's best years since its establishment in the 70s. To claim the 2023 Cup, the Rhinos thrilled a home crowd at Jack Huxley Oval to beat Trundle Boomers 18-16 while the Rhinettes won the club's first League Tag title over the Cargo Blue Heelers in another nail-biter, 10-6. The Rhinos' win reversed the qualifying semi-final result with the Boomers first into the finale. A feature for Rhinos was halfback Will Petrie's 40 metre dash to the try line for an 18-12 lead while Trundle fought back to 18-16 but a 78th-minute conversion attempt was waved away, giving the Rhinos the win. The win also earned the club back-to-back Woodbridge Cups after beating Oberon Tigers in 2022. The club was also minor premiers those years.

#### **JACK BEGG**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Bathurst local Jack Begg has taken out the honour of the evening at the Bathurst Carillon Business Awards held recently. Jack was awarded Outstanding Young Business Leader for 2023. Having worked for local disability support service Vivability for over two years now, Jack has cemented himself as a valuable member of the finance team. Moving from the disability education sector to an accountant Jack is able to draw on a combination of financial knowledge and practical disability support experience to ensure financial operations best align with what the organisation and its clients need. Jack's surprise at winning the award showcases his humble personality and dedication to the job. He said his favourite part of the job was the people he works with and the clients he supports. Congratulations Jack on a well-deserved accolade, the work he does on a daily basis is positively contributing to the Bathurst community and having a meaningful impact on the lives of those around him.

#### **TOM HOOPER**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Bathurst born Tom Hooper is doing his hometown proud representing Australia as a member of the Wallabies team for the upcoming World Cup. Hooper has also played as a Brumbie showcasing his rugby union talent on a state-wide scale and now takes his skills to an international level. Having overcome a shoulder reconstruction and serious foot injury, Hooper has worked hard to earn selection in the Wallabies squad for the World Cup. At only 22 years of age Tom Hooper has become an inspiration to aspiring rugby players across the Central West who will be watching the rising star take on the best in the world to bring home the trophy for Australia. Hooper will be able to check off playing in the World Cup off his bucket list soon enough when bumper crowds come together to support their nation's players. Congratulations to Tom for his dedication to his craft, passion for the game and carving the way for an incredible career.

#### **NATHAN AND TROY CAMPBELL - GRIFFITH**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to recognise Nathan and Troy Campbell of Griffith for their outstanding efforts to raise money for the Cure 4 Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. The father-son duo took part in the 20th year of the Great Escape Oz Car Rally, covering 8000 kilometres from Griffith, NSW to Karumba in North Queensland. Their week-long journey in Troy's 1996 Toyota Hilux raised an amazing \$17,000 for the Cystic Fibrosis charity. The pair were awarded first in NSW, first in their class C 1984 to 1993 category, and announced the second highest fundraiser. They came second overall and took home the all-round sportsman and mateship award. In Troy's 15th year participating in the charity rally, Nathan joined for his first year making it a great bonding experience for the two. Congratulations, Troy and Nathan, on raising an astonishing amount for the charity.

#### **SOUTHERN RIVERINA WELLBEING COLLABORATIVE - FINLEY**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to commend the remarkable efforts of the Southern Riverina Wellbeing Collaborative for their consistent dedication and commitment to mental health awareness and suicide prevention in our community. For the second consecutive year, the Collaborative brought together community members from various local towns to participate the Finley Walk Fundraiser. Participants completed up to five laps of Finley Lake, covering approximately 9km, symbolizing the nine Australians lost to suicide every day and raising \$340.45 in support of Lifeline. The Collaborative's commitment extends beyond this event, offering free mental health first aid training, informative speakers, forums, and initiatives that foster community connections. Their dedication, in partnership with organizations like Lifeline Australia, Headspace National, and NSW Health, underscores their pivotal role in promoting mental wellbeing and safety. Together,

they remind us of the strength that comes from unity and compassion, inspiring us all to prioritize mental health awareness and support.

### **STEVE LONGWORTH**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Steve Longworth, a highly regarded member of the Hay community. Tennis became his passion while at school, both playing and coaching. He came to Hay in 1973 as a maths teacher and became actively involved with the tennis club. The club officials were responsible for organising tournaments, a time-consuming task needing a team. Developing a strong interest in computing in the early days and after obtaining a computer degree in the 1980s, he wrote a program called Computer Assisted Tournaments (CAT), which was one of the first computer run programs in the world. The program was sold to many people and organisations around the world, and he travelled extensively for 20 years for the International Tennis Federation, running tournaments. Steve still resides in Hay and plays tennis in the local competitions, while organising tournaments remotely. He believes there are strong social benefits and opportunities for families to join in and compete.

### **GRAFTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SPRING GALA BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—It was wonderful to see local businesses shine at the Spring Gala Business Awards hosted by the Grafton Chamber of Commerce. The event recognised outstanding businesses and individuals who are part of a vibrant local business community. A popular winner on the night was local hair salon DiMattia and Co which took home four awards from five nominations – Business Excellence, Retail Revolutionary, Social Butterfly and Strength to Strength. Owner Kerrie DiMattia's passion for her craft is evident by the volume of clients through the door and the atmosphere it emits. Kerrie has mentored over 25 local apprentices since opening in 2004. She is entrenched in her local community and in her spare time wears the hat of President of the Grafton United Hospital Auxiliary. Other winners were: Grafton Jacaranda Festival - Pay It Forward Award; Brewhouse Group - The Visionary Award; Skye Park Pet Resort and Day Spa - Members Choice Award, and; Crown Hotel - Taste of the Town Award. There has never been a more critical time than now to shop local. With Christmas ahead of us I encourage everyone to buy local and keep local jobs and businesses flourishing.

### **RICHMOND VALLEY BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—It was wonderful to see so many local businesses shine at the Richmond Valley Business Awards recently hosted by the Casino Chamber of Commerce. The gala event recognised outstanding businesses and individuals who are part of a vibrant local business community. The winners are: Southview Orchard - Excellence in Agriculture & Primary Industries; Apracs P/L - Excellence in Trade, Construction & Manufacturing; Casino Travel Shoppe - Excellence in Retail and Personal Services; Casino RSM - Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion; Summerland Credit Union - Excellence in Sustainability; HART Services - Outstanding Community Organisation; Casino Beef Week - Outstanding Visitor Experience; Wild Soul Bakehouse - Outstanding Start-up; Casino RSM - Employer of Choice (open); Courtney Gill, Summerland Credit Union - Outstanding Employee; Jackson Whitney, JW Media - Outstanding Young Business Leader; Jeff Gibbs, Northern Rivers Times - Outstanding Business Leader; On Point Bus Hire - Excellence in Micro Business; Casino Travel Shoppe - Excellence in Small Business, and; Casino RSM Club - Business of the Year. There has never been a more critical time than now to shop local. With Christmas ahead of us I encourage everyone to buy local and keep local jobs and businesses flourishing.

### **NATIONAL WORLDSKILLS COMPETITION**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I congratulate several locals from across the Clarence and Richmond valleys who recently competed at the National WorldSkills competition in Melbourne, the largest vocational education and excellence competition in the nation. Winners were Dylan Cleaver from Forbes Smash Repairs in Grafton and Ryan Fahey from Casino Plumbing who both won gold, while Lestatt Hammond from Glenreagh Bakery took out a silver medal and Ashton Pullen a Year 11 student in construction at McAuley Catholic College won bronze. I'd also like to acknowledge other competitors from across my electorate who competed in the competition – Libby Wyatt from Heads Hair Studio in Casino, Tim Hall from Forbes Smash Repairs in Grafton and Regan Howard, a Year 11 student in construction at McAuley Catholic College. All competitors should be applauded for showcasing their exceptional skills in their chosen trade. To even qualify for this competition is an amazing achievement itself.

### **FOUR SAINTS, CASTLECRAG**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—For more than six years Four Saints Espresso and Kitchen faithfully served the Castlecrag community. So, it was with much sadness on 10 September that this much-loved local café served its last coffee. I was pleased to be there on the day and experience the great community atmosphere with

locals turning out to not just to say farewell but to celebrate the many years of memories. Thank you Morry and Roya, staff and family for all your work in keeping Castlecrag fed and for the many great conversations. Four Saints was based in the Quadrangle Shopping Centre that has now been closed for redevelopment. Whilst it's not by choice that they leave, we hope the opportunity arises to return one day. It is not easy running a small business, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, yet Four Saints succeeded by staying authentic and forging a strong connection with its community. The Castlecrag community and I wish Morry and Roya all the best for the future and look forward to seeing them again soon.

#### **NSW JUSTICES ASSOC. INC.**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Our Justices of the Peace provide a significant and selfless community service to people across NSW who routinely require official documents to be witnessed and certified. JPs have been proudly serving our NSW communities since 1911 with professionalism, commitment, fairness, respect and equality. As the representative body for our JPs, the NSW Justices Association does great work to train, support and resource Justices of the Peace in NSW, keeping them informed and advising them on their duties. I was honoured to be present at the NSW Justices Association's advisory meeting in Chatswood on Saturday 16 September. Particular thanks to President, Dr John Brodie JP, and Vice President, Meryl Kane JP. It was my joy to personally thank the Association and recognise the work they do on behalf of our JPs. I am honoured to be the Patron of the North Shore Branch of the NSW Justices Association and I am proud to have been a JP since 1997.

#### **TASTES OF NAREMBURN**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—It was my delight to join the community of Naremburn for its annual Tastes of Naremburn street fair. The fair sees the transformation of Naremburn shopping village into a community space full of food, music, fun and friendly interactions between Naremburn neighbours and local businesses. With market stalls, live music, great food and wares from local Naremburn businesses, plus a jumping castle and face painting, there's something for everyone. The Tastes of Naremburn is a free, volunteer-run event delivered by the Naremburn Progress Association with the support of Willoughby City Council. Last year's event attracted over 1,000 locals, and this year's event was similarly received warmly by locals. I would like to thank the Naremburn Progress Association for all its planning and hard work in making this community event a success. I would also like to thank the stall holders for their dedication and contribution to the fair. It was my pleasure to meet with them and sample their great food, goods and services which gave full flavour to the Tastes of Naremburn.

#### **VALE DR SAMBHU MUKHERJEE**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I wish to acknowledge the life, work and dedication of Rutherford GP Dr Sambhu Mukherjee, who passed away earlier this year at the age of 91. Dr Mukherjee founded Rutherford Medical Centre in 1972 and was a GP for more than 40 years before retiring in 2014. He and his wife Bani were married for 61 years. They were proud parents of two boys Suva and Suvendu, and loving grandparents to Sudeep. Dr Mukherjee was raised in a village near Kolkata India, and attended Kolkata Medical College where he trained as a GP and respiratory physician. Dr Mukherjee and Dr Sanjoy Chatterjee, who he met at medical school, came to Maitland and founded their practice in Telarah before moving to its current location at Rutherford. Many of Dr Mukherjee's patients were generational; he often treated grandparents, parents and children of the same family. These patients have expressed that Dr Mukherjee was a great doctor who would go out of his way to help, working day and night and on public holidays as well as offering home visits. VALE Dr Mukherjee.

#### **HARRISON NICHOLS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to Hunter Valley Grammar School Year 11 student Harrison Nichols, whose team finished fourth in the PR3 four event at the World Rowing Championships in Serbia this month. Harrison was the youngest member of the Australian Rowing team at the World titles. With this fourth-place finish, Harrison and his teammates Susannah Lutze, Jessica Gallagher, Thomas Birtwhistle and veteran cox Teesaan Koo, booked their boat's spot in the Paris 2024 Paralympics. Harrison's focus for the next six months will be on securing his seat in the boat at the Games. Just 12 months ago, Harrison had reconstructive surgery to his left foot which had been severely damaged when run over by a lawn mower when he was a child. Harrison earned his place in the boat with an outstanding performance in the PR3 single sculls at the Australian Rowing Championships. At the World Championships, following a disappointing heat, Harrison and his team won their place into the final with an impressive sub-seven-minute time in the repechage round, a major team goal. Congratulations Harrison and I wish you well in your preparations for the Paris Paralympics.

### CHARLOTTE WILKS

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I wish to acknowledge Charlotte Wilks for her strength, perseverance, and determination in overcoming personal challenges over the last few years. In June 2021, after months of suffering from an undiagnosed illness Charlotte, 16 at the time, was found passed out in her room, paralysed. Charlotte was admitted to the local emergency department and a neurologist later diagnosed Functional Neurological Disorder, which is also known as FND. FND is a disabling and highly distressing neurological disorder which effects the functioning of the nervous system and how the brain and body sends and receives signals. Since being diagnosed Charlotte has had a long hard road to recover both mentally and emotionally. Charlotte's physical recovery has also involved retraining her brain to enable her to walk. Charlotte has this month graduated high school and is preparing to undertake this year's HSC exams. Charlotte has become an avid advocate for FND awareness by sharing her story and advocating for research. I wish to congratulate and recognise Charlotte for graduating from high school throughout these challenges and advocating for FND awareness.

### MICHAEL WENDEN LEISURE CENTRE OPEN DAY

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Last week I attended the Michael Wenden Leisure Centre open day in Miller. Michael Wenden Leisure Centre crucially provides affordable health, fitness and leisure opportunities for residents. The centre's staff also work hard to deliver a variety of programs and services. For this reason, it was nice to see the community come out to Michael Wenden for this year's open day. There were a variety of fun activities for residents to enjoy, including a petting zoo, group fitness, stadium games, a barbecue, face painting and fun giveaways. I also note the presence of many of our community groups, namely Western Sydney MRC, the Australian Relief Organisation and Rainbow Club. As we the weather warm up, it was nice to see to covers come off the outdoor pool and the other water features become open for use. I extend my congratulations on a successful open day, and I hope to see Liverpool City Council further support to these crucial community amenities.

### LIVERPOOL CHAMPION AWARDS

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—Last weekend I attended the Liverpool Young Champions Awards, an excellent initiative that recognises the achievements Liverpool residents aged 19 and under. The event platforms our standout young people in over 20 categories, including community service, the arts, sports, employment, and technology. Several areas also include categories for young people with special needs. The evening featured an array of exciting performances, and it was great to see Liverpool's emerging talents recognised. I note the achievements of our own Miller Technology High School and the wonderful Maryam Abdo who took out the Champion of Champions award. I also acknowledge the tremendous contribution of the event organisers, Rainbow Crossing, who for years have positively impacted the south-west Sydney area by means of various arts-based projects, including the local champions awards, the Good Morning Macarthur publication, and an array of small business networking events. I congratulate all the award winners, Rainbow Crossing and event sponsors on a successful evening.

### ADULT SCOUT ACHIEVEMENTS

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)**—For over 100 years, Scouts have had a pronounced presence in Australia and have helped countless young people develop skills and an appreciation for the outdoors. Through their local scout groups, young scouts are given the opportunity to take part in an extraordinary variety of outdoor activities, from traditional skills such as bushcraft and camping to more extreme challenges such as abseiling, rafting, canoeing, canyoning, rock climbing, sailing, and flying. The leadership development, community service opportunities and environmental initiatives equip them with skills applicable to their careers and beyond. However, these activities would not be possible without the support of adult scout leaders, who sacrifice their time to provide training, support, and mentorship and take time out of their schedules to plan events and activities for their local groups. I recognise the long-term service and support to Scouts from adult supporters in the Liverpool and Hoxton Park districts, with Kim Budge, Richard Jones and Bryan Binskin, having been recently awarded the Silver Wattle, Meritorious Service Award and Special Service Award. I congratulate Liverpool's adult instructors on their service, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact the work of Scouts has on our community.

### WOLLONDILLY BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION'S NIGHT OF TRIUMPH

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I would like to recognise the exceptional achievements celebrated at the Wollondilly Basketball Association Inc Razorbacks' presentation night, held last Month at the Wilton. With an impressive turnout of 350 attendees, the event was a reflection of the community's support for local basketball talent. Sophie Connor, just 12 years old, was honoured as "Rep of the Year." A player in the under-148 southern

junior league team, Sophie was also selected for the Basketball NSW Talented Athletes program. Her achievements didn't stop there; representing the Razorback zone and the South Western Sydney Primary School Sports Association team, with whom she travelled to Tamworth. The president of the association, Mick Hendricks, proudly stated that this season was the most successful in the group's history. Additional highlights include the under-16 boys southern junior league team, who claimed the title of division three champions. Looking ahead, a new girls' representative pathway program has launched, backed by She Hoops. This effort aims to provide more opportunities for young talent, exemplified by the upcoming session with basketball star Lauren Jackson on September 5. It's inspiring to see our local sports community go from strength to strength.

#### **RIVERWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE – SPRING FESTIVAL 2023**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On Saturday 16 September 2023, Riverwood Community Centre held their annual Spring Festival at Salt Pan Creek Parklands. More than 6000 residents and visitors came together to enjoy the beautiful day, which was filled with market stalls, food, rides, face painting, and culturally diverse live music performances and dancing throughout the day. This year's theme of 'Harmony and Diversity' reflected our community's ability to come together and celebrate our diversity. Riverwood Community Centre has been at the heart of the local community for more than 40 years, providing a range of valuable and high-quality programs for individuals, families, and community groups in a caring and inclusive environment. The Riverwood Community Centre's Spring Festival provides the local community an opportunity to welcome the Spring season and celebrate our diverse and thriving community as well as showcasing the creativity among our talented community members. This wonderful Spring Festival brings our community together and provides a platform for cultural exchange and celebration. I would like to acknowledge Councillor Saleh OAM, staff, volunteers, sponsors and local community groups who worked tirelessly to showcase their organisations, hobbies and performances and put such an amazing celebration together.

#### **BROOKE CARPENTER-PRESTIGIOUS TEACHING AWARD**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to Ms Brooke Carpenter, a teacher at Bankstown Girls High School, for being honoured with a prestigious teaching award at the Department of Education's Metropolitan South and Southwest awards ceremony. Ms Carpenter, an exceptional music teacher, has been recognised as the deserving recipient of the 'Classroom Teacher' award for the Bankstown Network. That is quite an achievement. This prestigious award recognises Ms Carpenter's teaching abilities as truly extraordinary as she imparts invaluable life lessons within her classroom. Her dedication goes above and beyond, as she consistently supports her students in developing resilience and overcoming challenges throughout their academic journey. Winning this prestigious Classroom Teacher award serves as a testament to her exceptional abilities and her unwavering passion for guiding her students towards achieving their goals. The award also acknowledges Ms Carpenter's dedication in putting her students' needs at the forefront. She consistently goes the extra mile to assist them in attaining the goals they have set for themselves. It is through these exceptional skills and dedication that she has received this accolade. Congratulations, again, to Ms Carpenter on receiving this prestigious award.

#### **CHERYNE EL HAWAT**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Cheryne El Hawat, the Chief Operations Officer of AusRelief, has successfully achieved the Committee for Sydney think tank's 'Emerging Leader Award' at the Sydney Awards in August 2023. This award acknowledges her unwavering commitment to advocacy and recognises her strategic leadership in addressing direct impacts of social issues like poverty, malnutrition, homelessness due to domestic violence, and access to simple health care. Cheryne's more refined outlook on abolishing social issues within vulnerable communities has inspired other young women to join the organisation to give back. The former Malek Fahd Islamic School student has been commended for advocacy for humanitarian aid towards impoverished villages and refugee camps in third-world countries. Over the past five years, the former criminal defence lawyer started as a legal committee volunteer at AusRelief, as her interest in humanitarian aid effectively developed into becoming the new Chief Operational Officer. Today, she manages the AusRelief Australian and Cambodian offices and oversees programs across ten different countries. I am so incredibly proud to have witnessed the growth of the young female leaders in our community, and the everlasting impact they have on our humanitarian crisis on both a national and international scale.

#### **BISHOP OF PARRAMATTA EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—On 7th September Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen of the Parramatta Diocese hosted the Bishop of Parramatta Awards for Student Excellence Awards at St Patrick's

Cathedral. These awards serve to celebrate exceptional students from the catholic schools located within the diocese. Congratulations to all award recipients. Several of these schools are located within the Parramatta electorate and I would like to make a special mention of the students in receipt of awards from these schools: Mariana Rebaza of Catherine McAuley, Westmead; Charline Kayrouz of the Maronite College of the Holy Family, Parramatta; Kevin Drozario of Parramatta Marist High School, Westmead; Sara-Maree Wakim of St Patrick's Marist College, Dundas; and, Katherine Baker of Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta. I congratulate each of these students on their fantastic achievements. They have demonstrated an impressive dedication to their studies and exemplary conduct within their schools. It is clear that these remarkable students are just beginning their educational and professional journey with the work ethic, dedication and commitment they have shown clearly demonstrating they will go far and contribute much to our state. I wish each award recipient across the Diocese a bright and fulfilling future.

#### **KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL MAYORAL ELECTION**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Tuesday 19th of September 2023, Ku-ring-gai Council elected a new Mayor that will lead our community until next September. Councillor Sam Ngai from Roseville Ward was elected Mayor, and Councillor Christine Kay from St Ives Ward was elected Deputy Mayor. I thank outgoing Mayor Councillor Jeff Pettett from Commenera Ward and outgoing Deputy Mayor Barbara Ward from Gordon Ward for their work over the last two years as we rebuilt after the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge all councillors: Councillor Greg Taylor from Commenera Ward, Councillor Simon Lennon from Gordon Ward, Councillor Alec Taylor from Roseville Ward, Councillor Martin Smith from St Ives Ward, and Councillor Cedric Spencer and Councillor Kim Wheatley from Wahroonga Ward for their ongoing service. Ku-ring-gai Council is one of two councils that make up our Davidson electorate community that includes four of the five wards. I look forward to working with all councillors for the remainder of their term to the September 2024 elections.

#### **LINDFIELD KILLARA CATHOLIC PARISH'S TABLE TALK ON THE VOICE**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Sunday 17th of September 2023, the Lindfield Killara Catholic Parish held a 'Table Talk' at Holy Family School on the upcoming referendum on 14 October 2023 on the question of "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice." It was an important event, aimed to raise awareness in our community. It promoted respecting, learning and listening to each other through meaningful discussion. I joined a panel alongside Brad Jones and Annette Spencer. As a panellist, my simple message was for everyone to know as much information as they can before they vote. I acknowledge all those who attended, as well as Lindfield-Killara Catholic Parish ACT for Justice led by Fran Grant. I look forward to attending more local events in the coming months and years.

#### **DR BELINDA KHONG**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I pay tribute to Davidson electorate constituent, psychologist and author Dr Belinda Khong. On Saturday 9 September 2023, I attended the book launch of Belinda's latest book in Wahroonga Park with the local community, including my parliamentary colleagues the Member for Wahroonga Alistair Henskens SC MP and the Member for Willoughby Tim James MP. Belinda's latest book, 'Water Rabbit's Mindful Adventures', is her second book in the series based around Lunar New Year. It is a story about a water rabbit named Mei-Mei and their adventures with other animals. Belinda writes on the important themes of leadership, cooperation, charity, friendship and harnessing creativity to overcome conflict. These are important for teaching children life lessons, and about Lunar New Year. Belinda's first book, published in 2022, was about the Year of the Tiger, and in 2024 Belinda will release her third book about the Year of the Dragon. I am looking forward to seeing Belinda's literary contributions flourish over the zodiac cycle.

#### **HILLCREST TENNIS CLUB**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—The Hillcrest Tennis Club, a club known for its compassion and friendliness, is celebrating their 85th anniversary this year. It's a place where everyone is welcome to hit the court and have a serve. Based in Mayfield, Hillcrest was established in 1938 by the sheet steel manufacturer, Lysaght, as an enjoyable activity for their workers during rest hours. It has since been supporting the wider Newcastle community, from the young to the old with members aged 10 to 86, with a range of experience. Hillcrest is currently coaching a number of upcoming tennis stars who are reaching great heights within the NSW tennis community. In May, Sachin Shankar took home a victory in the under 11s tournament at the Regional State League. Well done Sachin and his coaches. Thank you to Club President Elva Osbourne for your undying commitment to Hillcrest Tennis Club over the last 35 years. It is because of you and the other volunteers that we are celebrating this milestone. Let's win the set and get to 100 years in 2038.

### LIVERPOOL ACTION GROUP

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I recently had the opportunity to meet with the Liverpool Action Group, also known as LAG, to hear the great work they are doing to enhance parks and green spaces throughout my community. I would like to give a special recognition to Robert story, the treasurer of LAG, and Ian Bailey the secretary. Together they bring a wealth of experience and expertise to LAG that enable them to support the community and deliver better green spaces for us to share. The Liverpool Action Group volunteer their time to maintain the Liverpool section of the Georges River, where feral woody weeds, like Lantana, have inundated hectares of river-side woodland and scrub to the point where the bush can no longer regenerate naturally without immediate restoration works. The Georges River is without doubt Liverpool's greatest natural asset and I would like to thank Robert, Ian and the rest of the LAG team for the work they do to protect it for the community to enjoy.

### OUR COMMUNITY KITCHEN

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to recognise Our Community Kitchen, a grass-roots community that has operated for over four years at Bigge Park, Liverpool. They are a group of local volunteers who make meals for the homeless, vulnerable, and other people who are in difficult circumstances. Every month, the group sets up tables to give out hot meals, drinks, fruits and desserts. The group also provide regular hygiene items to those who need it most, giving the vulnerable dignity in their time of need. Most of Our Community Kitchen's clients come from the Liverpool LGA, and I would like to congratulate Judith Crowley, Lindy Leslie, and the rest of the committee team for all of their work. I look forward to working with them into the future and to further support their cause.

### PERCY VIJ

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to recognise Percy Vij of Centrum Printing, based locally in my electorate of Chipping Norton. Before migrating to Australia, Percy managed a printing company in India, which equipped him with the requisite skills as he migrated to Australia in 1994. Percy started his Australian career at Centrum Printing Group as a trainee and rose to the top in 2000. As Managing Director and Owner, Percy has guided Centrum to become one the leading experts in printing and packaging in Australia. As one of many Australian migrant success stories, Percy's guidance, vision entrepreneurial spirit is a beacon that many should follow. I recently had the opportunity to tour the Centrum headquarters with Leader of the Opposition Mark Speakman SC MP and Percy, and quite simply, what they do is incredible. They have one the largest printing presses anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere, and can print anything from a flyer to point of service stand in a supermarket! Percy is one of many similar stories found in South-West Sydney, and I look forward to watching him and Centrum go from strength to strength.

### JESMOND FC 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 Jesmond FC for its win against South Wallsend JSC 3-0 in the Interdistrict O/35 (Friday) K division Grand Final. Well done on your success for this season and all the best wishes continued success in 2024.

### LAMBTON JAFFAS UNDER 18 C 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 Lambton Jaffas Under 18C which defeated Hamilton Azzurri 4-3. Well done on your success for this season and all the best wishes for continued success in 2024.

### MINMI SC 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 Minmi SC Interdistrict AA Friday C which defeated Uni Mens FC 4-2. Congratulations also to the Minmi SC Under 13 Girls (Sat) which defeated Thornton JFC 4-0. Well done on your success for this season and all the best wishes for continued success in 2024.

#### **SHALIMAR PARK MERINO STUD**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I would like to recognise the achievements of the Shalimar Park Stud from Walcha, on their win at the Australian Sheep and Wool Show held at Bendigo. The stud was awarded Grand Champion Fleece with their ultra fine merino fleece beating 343 entries from 114 other exhibitors competing for the ultimate prize. I congratulate Shalimar Park Stud Principal Alison van Eyk, along with family members, Des, Jane and Jack Carlon, who are also heavily involved in the family run operation. The winning fleece had a micron of 16.3, weight of 7.3kg and scored 95.78 out of 100 points, reflecting the stud's epitome of what they are striving to produce. I commend the Shalimar Park Merino Stud for not only winning this prestigious award, but also for their valuable contribution to the fine wool industry and to Australian Agriculture.

#### **RECOGNITION OF LOCK ROGERS**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of Lock Rogers who was recently inducted into the Australian Wagyu Hall of Fame in recognition of his contribution to the breed. He received the honour at the Australian Wagyu Association Annual Conference, which was held in Sydney earlier this year. I congratulate Lock on his work as a Wagyu breeder, building one of the leading Angus herds in the country. He began his Wagyu journey nearly 30 years ago when entering the F1 Angus/Wagyu market and today he sells around 100 bulls a year across Australia, from Tasmania to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Over the last three decades Lock has introduced countless people to F1 Wagyu, has had a huge influence on its growth in the New England region and is a mentor to countless operators in the industry. I commend Mr Rogers for his contribution to Wagyu breeding and for building one of the leading Angus herds in the country. Lock is a leader and great ambassador of the cattle industry in Australia.

#### **FIVE GENERATIONS AND STILL GOING STRONG**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I would like to recognise the outstanding achievements of the Walker family from Coolatai, who have owned and operated Coolatai Station since 1890, with siblings Stewart and Angela Stewart being the 5th generation at the helm. I congratulate Stewart and Angela for carrying on the legacy of this iconic family, for their resilience, endurance and commitment to farming. Stewart and Angela have also diversified their operation, taking on the local pub – the lifeblood of this little community. I commend Stewart and Angela and their families for their long standing and valuable contribution to the Coolatai community, as well as to Australian Agriculture.

#### **MICHELLE LEONARD**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to congratulate founder of Moorambilla Voices, Michelle Leonard OAM for being named runner-up in the National 2023 AgriFutures Rural Women's Award. This is Australia's leading award in acknowledging and supporting the critical role women play in rural and regional businesses, industries, and communities. Having earlier won the NSW division of this award, Michelle represented NSW at the national event in Canberra in front of over 500 government officials, industry representatives, members of the award's alumni, other state finalists and their families. Michelle has inspired over 42,000 young people in remote and regional locations and has a passion for creating opportunities for everyone to learn, sing and read music. Taking inspiration from her childhood in Western NSW where there were enormous amounts of live music every week and opportunities to immerse yourself into a sensory melting pot, Michelle wants to create opportunities like that again. She is well on her way to that goal, sparking creativity and engaging regional youth with music & dance while encouraging resilience and a sense of joy. Congratulations again Michelle, your passion for driving lasting change with our regional youth is an inspiration for us all.

#### **RSL 78'S**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to congratulate the RSL 78's for their recent victory, taking home the 2023 Dubbo District Football Association's first grade women's title. A win that has been 5 years in the making, the 78's took on the defending premiers Macquarie United and managed to come away with a 2-1 win, a result that not too many people expected having been the runners up to United the past four seasons. Both sides played an exciting game with neither adding to the scoreboard before halftime. The second half saw a flurry of action and the intensity lift with RSL scoring the first goal, and then following with a second. A rogue own goal saw Macquarie add to the scoreboard with less than 10 minutes remaining, but a strong defence from

RSL negated the option for Macquarie to force the game into extra time. As full time blew, the 78's players ran onto the field, and in an iconic celebration, covered coach Steffen Frandsen in water! Congratulations to the entire team and coaching staff of the RSL 78's. Your hard work has paid off. Well done on your victory and best of luck for next season!

#### **RUTH HANDO**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to Congratulate Ruth Hando of Narromine Country Women's Association for receiving the Neta Dewhurst Poetry prize at the CWA Far Western Group Cultural, International, Agricultural, and Environmental Day! The annual cultural day organised by the Country Women's Association Far West Group is a significant and highly anticipated event for the communities it serves, bringing together people from various regions including Wanaaring, Enngonia, Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Nymagee, Hermidale, Nyngan, Trangie, and Warren. The Neta Dewhurst Poetry Award, which honours the late Neta Dewhurst, is a beautiful way to celebrate poetry and creativity. This year's theme, "The Waterhole," allowed for diverse interpretations, and Ruth's poem evidently stood out as the best entry. It's even more impressive to learn that Ruth has been a part of this competition in the past. The discovery of an anthology featuring Ruth Hando's poem titled "The Old Bush Dance" from previous competitions adds another layer of pride and history to her achievement. Indeed, Ruth's win is a testament to her skill and dedication to the art of poetry, and I'm sure her community is immensely proud of her accomplishments. Well done, Ruth!

#### **SYDNEY SWANS AFLW KICK OFF SEASON**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I want to congratulate the Sydney Swans AFLW team for their fantastic season opener at North Sydney Oval against the Giants, claiming a historical win fifty-one to forty-six. North Sydney Oval was absolutely buzzing with thousands of locals turning up to support the girls and cheer the Swans home to victory. It was incredibly encouraging to see so many young girls and boys cheering on this fantastic team on a brilliant Sunday afternoon. I acknowledge Brooke Lochland, Bridie Kennedy, Sarah Ford, Paige Sheppard, Chloe Molloy, Ruby Sargent-Wilson, Ally Morphett, Alice Mitchell, Lucy McEvoy, Cynthia Hamilton, Bella Smith, Ella Heads, Alana Woodward, Maddy Collier, Paris McCarthy, Aliesha Newman, Jennifer Higgins, Montana Ham, Rebecca Privitelli, Brenna Tarrant, Lisa Steane, Aimee Whelan, Eliza Vale, Julie O'Sullivan, Sofia Hurley, Kiara Beesley, Lauren Szigeti, Tanya Kennedy, Alexia Hamilton, Laura Gardiner, Hayley Bullas, Kate Reynolds, Montana Beruldsen, and Jaide Anthony. Good luck girls for the season ahead, bring it home for the red and white, go Swans.

#### **MOSMAN NETBALL CLUB FINISHES SEASON ON INCREDIBLE HIGH**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I congratulate Mosman Netball Club on an impressive netball season for 2023. The club has nineteen teams secure a spot in the finals with an incredibly impressive eleven teams making it to the grand finals. I especially congratulate the six teams who took away the winners trophies. Mosman Netball Club is a well-loved local club whose origins stem from a group of local mums and girls wanting to play netball in the 1980's. Throughout the years Mosman Netball has grown to well over six hundred members and is the largest community netball club in Australia. Not only have they undertaken an incredible season, but from all reports everyone had fun, tried their absolute best and made long lasting friendships with their team mates. I congratulate Mosman Netball on an incredible season, and I look forward to seeing them enjoying another successful season next year. Well done girls, and go Whales.

#### **CARINGBAH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate Caringbah High School for being the first selective high school to reach the NSW State Open Knock-out football finals, with the added accolade of being the competition winners. Typically, the school is recognised for its academia, but with its new Open Boys soccer team it is making another impression. The school defeated the Northern Beaches Secondary College (NBSC Freshwater) 1-0 at Seymour Shaw on Wednesday 23 August. The school's previous best performance was in the quarter finals with its Open Girls team back in 2019, where the players faced a team which included World Cup hero Mary Fowler. The winning team comprised players Lachlan Allen, Michael Panas, Milo Toman, Max Martinich, Noah Ovens, Peter Verbic, Ethan Byrne, Alex Dorfman Knijnik, Ewan Drummond, Judah Liu, Lachlan Maher, Captain of the team Thomas McLachlan, George Michael, Andreas Panas, Nicholas Plakias and Samuel Schembri, with Coach Jake Warner and Assistant Coach Stefan Sender. Congratulations to the team again for representing Caringbah High School and making history.

#### **RUBY OSBORNE**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate Year 8 Student Ruby Osborne of The Jannali High School on her Canal to Creek prize winning artwork titled 'Women'. The Canal to Creek Prize, which is run by Transurban, invites High School students in years 7 to 10 to create their own artwork, inspired by the 21 signature

pieces that form the 'Canal to Creek' between St Peters and Beverly Hills. The theme for the Canal to Creek Prize was 'Connections' and asked students to consider connections to earth, culture, history, movement, and environment. Ruby's entry depicts the faces of five women from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. The message that the artwork seeks to get across is that while at first glance these women appear to look different, they are all connected through the universal experience of being human. The eye-catching oil painting submitted by Ruby saw her take home third place and win a \$150 art supply voucher which I am sure will be put to great use. I congratulate Ruby on her success at the Canal to Creek Prize and extend my best wishes for her future artistic endeavours.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE POLICE AREA COMMAND NATIONAL POLICE MEDALS**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge our outstanding police officers recognised with National Service Medals at the Sutherland Shire Police Area Command Medals and Awards Presentation Ceremony on 29 August 2023. Amongst the many awards presented on the day was the National Police Service Medal which recognises the special status of police officers in protecting the community and the National Medal for long and diligent service to protecting the community in the enforcement of law. Furthermore, the National Emergency Medal was also presented to several officers in recognition of sustained and significant service to the NSW Police Force. I commend our police officers that were recognised. I acknowledge the recipients of the National Police Service Medal and the National Medal namely, Shane Amor, Jayden Brooks, Katherine Dodd, Rennae Nicholson, Jason Paull and Emily Mackay. I also acknowledge Gary Ford for receiving the Second Clasp to the National Medal and National Emergency Medal recipients, Anthony Cooke and Jacob Heagney. I was pleased to join our police officers to celebrate their exceptional achievements and again take this opportunity to formally thank them for their ongoing service to keep our community safe.

#### **COLLEEN FOSTER**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge Colleen Foster, the owner and operator of Wilsons Family Shoe Store (Wilsons Shoes) in Jannali. Colleen established Wilsons shoes in 1979, following in the footsteps of her father and his seven brothers who had shoe stores and factories across Sydney also going by the name of Wilsons Shoes. Since then, Wilsons Shoes has gone on to develop a reputation within the Jannali community as the go to for all things footwear including shoes, shine pads, shoe polish and more. Customers entering the Railway Crescent store are welcomed by Silver the rocking horse who has been ridden by generations of children purchasing their new shoes. Colleen's very first customer to enter the store was a man looking for a pair size nine gym boots for a chimpanzee that went on to play Wally Walpamur in the 1980's Walpamur Paints television commercials. Having served thousands of customers over the last 44 years, Wilsons Shoes will sadly close in December providing Colleen and her husband with the opportunity to retire and travel throughout Australia. I congratulate Colleen on the success of Wilsons Family Shoe Store and wish her an enjoyable and well-deserved retirement.

#### **FASHION FRENZY SYDNEY**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—This weekend Fashion Frenzy Sydney is visiting the electorate of East Hills! Hosted at the Revesby Workers Club, this event is the ultimate thrifting experience, with all proceeds going towards the organisation 'Dress for Success'. Dress for Success is an incredible initiative, empowering women to achieve economic independence by giving them career skills and a stunning wardrobe update, getting them ready to get into the workplace. The Fashion Frenzy is also a fantastic opportunity to say no to fast-fashion and shop sustainably and guilt-free. I encourage locals to attend, to support this wonderful initiative, and I can't wait for everyone to be looking fabulous in the next few weeks with their new-found clothes.

#### **LITTLE WINGS**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I would like to take this opportunity to commend the organisation "Little Wings" and their recent addition, the Beechcraft Baron aircraft. Little Wings is a fantastic organisation, providing flights and transport to sick children and their families so they can receive the medical care they need. In regional and rural communities it can be incredibly costly and difficult to access medical care, so Little Wings steps up and provides that service. On average they undertake 21 missions a day, and this new plane will help them fly an extra 800 flights each year. I was incredibly grateful to be at the launch of the new aircraft, and commend everyone involved with Little Wings on their selfless dedication to helping the community.

#### **MEN'S SHED EAST HILLS**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I acknowledge the great contribution of the East Hills Men's Shed to our community. Earlier this month the group celebrated men's shed week. The President of the Shed, Brian Barrett, has done a fabulous job offering a place for men to spend meaningful time together and serving the community across the East Hills electorate. The Men's Shed is a proactive community contributor. They host

fundraising barbecues, support local schools and help out the elderly at nursing homes with maintenance work. The Men's Shed offers all activities from engineering tasks to woodwork, stained glass to leather work and model-making projects. It is a lot of fun and unites the men to work on their own personal projects. The Men's Shed is a place to feel welcome. From retirees to men referred by the hospital who may be overcoming depression or other mental illness, it's about encouraging men to come together and tinker around or develop a skill and share a cuppa. Thank you to the East Hills Men's Shed for all the work you do for our community.

#### **SARAH TOGATUKI**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoynne)**—On Tuesday 19 September, the Wests Tigers held the inaugural NRLW Awards Night. I wish to sincerely congratulate NRLW player, Sarah Togatuki who was named Wests Tigers Player of the Year. The powerhouse prop was also chosen by her teammates as Players' Player in 2023. Sarah is a highly respected athlete, as a consistent performer for the club's first season in the NRLW. She gained selection for New South Wales in this year's two-game Women's State of Origin series. I wish to sincerely congratulate Sarah Togatuki on this wonderful achievement. She is an inspiration for young women who love the game of NRL. I also wish to acknowledge the Wests Tigers, led by CEO Justin Pascoe for investing in women's sport and for supporting the growing and thriving NRLW. The Wests Tigers are creating opportunities for local women to excel and succeed and to grow their love of sport.

#### **ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoynne)**—Recently, I had the pleasure to welcome Year 6 students from St Mary's Catholic Primary School Concord to NSW Parliament. I was greeted by many enthusiastic students, buzzing with curiosity and excitement. I would like to commend the students for the respectful way they represented their school and the eagerness they had to learn more about the NSW Parliament. St Mary's is my old primary school and it was a pleasure to see students engaging in a mock parliament. The big smiles on the student's faces told me that it was a highlight for them. The students impressed me with their knowledge of the NSW Parliament and the role it plays in our communities. The involvement and willingness of the students to engage was evidence that the dedicated staff at the school, led by Principal Elizabeth Pisano have cultivated a positive learning environment. I acknowledge Year 6 teachers, Kathryn Odbert and Jessica An for organising this excursion. Thank you, St Mary's, for visiting me in Parliament and I wish you all the very best. I have no doubt that there are future community leaders in the St Mary's Year 6 cohort.

#### **WESTS TIGERS NRLW AWARDS NIGHT**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoynne)**—On Tuesday 19 September, the Wests Tigers held the inaugural NRLW Awards Night. I wish to sincerely congratulate the following NRLW players: NRLW Players' Player – Sarah Togatuki; NRLW Rookie of the Year – Eliza Siilata; NRLW Player of the Year – Sarah Togatuki; NSW Women's Premiership Players' Player – Ebony Prior; NSW Women's Premiership Player of the Year – Christian Pio; Tarsha Gale Cup Players' Player – Claire Kennedy; Tarsha Gale Cup Player of the Year – Jae Patu; Lisa Fiaola Cup Players' Player – Lucyannah Luamanu; Lisa Fiaola Cup Player of the Year – Angel Schaafhausen-Mino; Wests Tigers Women of the Year – Danielle Sherd. I congratulate all award recipients on this well-deserved recognition of their dedication, talent and love of NRLW. They are all inspirations for young women who dream of playing sport professionally. I wish them all the very best.

#### **FAREWELLING COLIN FARQUHARSON**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—We're bidding farewell to an exceptional doctor who has dedicated more than 3 decades of service to our Macleay Valley community. Dr Colin Farquharson is hanging up the tools after an invaluable career catering to our region's health. Dr. Farquharson has been a valued teacher to medical students and aspiring young doctors, while also a strong advocate for rural medicine. Graduating at the age of 32, Colin has tirelessly worked to provide quality care to our community in different areas, from delivering many children at Kempsey Hospital to working as the local General Practitioner, to practicing in a variety of environments including our Mid North Coast Correctional Centre. His passion for rural medicine and his commitment to delivering babies has made a lasting impact on our community. Dr. Farquharson was awarded 2017 Rural Doctor of the Year, and this alone is just one accolade through a lifetime of achievements. We are grateful for every single contribution Colin has made to bettering our everyday lives. He has been a staple in our region, and a pillar of strength for many families. We wish him a happy and fulfilled retirement.

#### **KEMPSEY SOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOL POLYGOT PROGRAM**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Kempsey South Public School inscribes its name in history by being the first school to implement a ground-breaking program. I rise today, to acknowledge the Polyglot Theatre Program, an initiative taking the national stage. This program showcases the school's creativity and celebrates its rich cultural heritage and deep connection to their First Nations country. Students from kindergarten to year six

narrated, performed, and constructed puppets to tell a story about the praying mantis welcoming dogs, snakes, bandicoots, and magpies into their community. Kempsey South Public is creating an environment that celebrates diversity and encourages understanding. The program fosters creativity, and curiosity and promotes a sense of belonging, all while being able to freely explore and promote themselves. These marvellous creations from the Polygot Theatre Program will be on display for other schools involved in the program to see – right across Australia. It brings enormous recognition to Kempsey South Public School and especially the Dunghutti country, stories and community. Well done to all involved in building this initiative from grassroots into our school, and to the delightful students who participated.

#### **DUO RUN THE DISTANCE FOR MENTAL HEALTH RECOGNITION**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—Max Sandstorm and Jack Mitchell have put a new meaning 'to going the distance' after creating an inspiring mission in the name of mental health. These two young men embarked on a long-distance run, in honour of their dear friend Eden Buckingham who lost his life to suicide in 2022. Their journey from Newcastle to the Gold Coast over 14 days is not only physically demanding but also carries a powerful message. By dedicating time and effort to this worthy cause, they are shining a light on the importance of mental health and showing support for those who may be struggling, while collecting donations for Beyond Blue. Jack and Max are an inspiration to others. With unwavering determination, they are tackling head-on a gruelling challenge which will no doubt create a ripple of positive change into our region. It's time to cheer them on as they tackle what road lies ahead. Well done, boys! This is a tough bid and you're doing the community proud.

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