

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 11 October 2023

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

The Speaker read the prayer and acknowledgement of country.

Announcements

DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS MONTH EVENT

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge the wonderful event held in the Strangers' dining room last night for Down Syndrome Awareness Month. I acknowledge the Minister, and member for Port Stephens. It was really well done and important. I put on record it was a very good job.

[*Notices of motions given.*]

Bills

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Jihad Dib, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (10:18): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill contains a range of proposals to amend the State's key emergency management legislation, being: the Fire and Rescue NSW Act 1989; the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022; the NSW Reconstruction Authority Regulation 2023; the Rural Fires Act 1997; and the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. The bill makes minor changes to improve the administration of emergency services and the management of emergencies in New South Wales. While minor, these changes will improve the ability for our emergency services and supporting organisations to protect the community. These amendments reduce bureaucracy, remove ambiguity and promote consistency across legislation to drive better service delivery before, during and after emergencies and disasters.

Schedule 1 amends the Fire and Rescue NSW Act 1989 to provide that the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW, in exercising the commissioner's functions, is subject to the control and direction of the Minister for Emergency Services. This change will make the Fire and Rescue NSW Act 1989 consistent with section 11 of the Rural Fires Act 1997; section 10 of the State Emergency Service Act 1989; section 10 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989; and section 9 of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022. This change does not impact the relationship between the Minister and the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW but rather it brings consistency between the emergency services, the NSW Reconstruction Authority, and the statutory positions of the State Emergency Operations Controller and the State Emergency Recovery Controller. The change also improves certainty of responsibilities, which is vital during emergencies and disasters.

Schedules 2 and 3 amend the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022 and the NSW Reconstruction Authority Regulation 2023 respectively. The changes to the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act and regulation will ensure the authority can issue directions to local councils in the exercise of certain functions that are prescribed in the regulation. Relevantly, the regulation at clause 5 (b) refers to carrying out development under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021. The language in the current Act allows for an interpretation that excludes the authority from issuing directions to local councils to take certain actions as prescribed by the regulations, and this amendment corrects this. These changes ensure clarity in the statute and consistency with the NSW Reconstruction Authority's remit to reduce the impact of disasters and to build back better after disasters occur.

Schedule 4 provides for a number of amendments to the Rural Fires Act 1997. The changes remove unnecessary administrative burdens as well as improving safety for NSW Rural Fire Service volunteers and the community. This includes amending section 7A of the Rural Fires Act 1997 to provide that unless the Minister for Emergency Services appoints someone else then the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner is the local authority for the purposes of the Rural Fires Act 1997 for land within the Western Division that is not within a local government area. Local authorities have key powers relating to the administration of rural fire brigades and bushfire prevention. This ensures that there is always a local authority for the purposes of the Rural Fires Act 1997 and that, where appropriate, the commissioner may delegate the position or functions of the position to a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

The bill also amends section 27 of the Rural Fires Act 1997 to provide that the RFS is only required to seek permission to close a street or public place to traffic under section 24 where the street or public place is related to the provision of rail services. This addresses what appears to be an unintended consequence of previous legislative changes, as historically the obligation to seek permission was restricted to lands managed by rail authorities. This change reduces confusion and delay in emergencies when the RFS is unsure of the appropriate roads authority. The RFS will still be required to notify Transport for NSW as soon as practicable after closing the street or public place. The bill also amends section 62 of the Rural Fires Act 1997 to remove the requirement to make bushfire management plans available in a printed format. These plans have become increasingly detailed and are most appropriately viewed in a digital format. The bill amends the Act to require the Rural Fire Service to make plans available on the NSW Rural Fire Service website or other New South Wales government website decided by the Rural Fire Service Commissioner.

The bill also amends section 89 (2) (b) of the Rural Fires Act 1997 to require applicants for fire permits to confirm that all necessary approvals, consents or other authorities under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 have been obtained before an appropriate authority may issue a fire permit. This ensures that the burden of ensuring that all relevant environmental and planning approvals have been obtained falls on the person seeking the permit rather than the authorised officer. Schedule 5 amends the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, or the SERM Act, to strengthen governance arrangements and promote administrative and operational efficiency around emergency and rescue arrangements.

The bill amends the definition of "functional area" at section 3 to clarify that additional functional areas may be included in the State Emergency Management Plan, or the EMPLAN. Functional areas are a category of services involved in the prevention of, preparation for, response to, or recovery from an emergency. They include, for example, health, transport and welfare services. The ability to incorporate additional functional areas into the EMPLAN will allow the emergency management arrangements to adapt over time to include additional functional areas and reflect shifts in government service delivery.

The bill also amends section 28 to permit the Minister to appoint representatives from relevant organisations to the local emergency management committee. For example, the Minister would be able to appoint a representative of a local Aboriginal land council to a local emergency management committee to improve the decision-making process. This is similar to the power the Minister already possesses at section 22 (2) (d) to appoint representatives of organisations to regional emergency management committees. The bill makes changes to part 3 to clarify that rescue units may comprise persons from, and be managed or controlled by, more than one agency or non-government agency. This will ensure there is no legislative barrier to the formation of multi-agency rescue units. This is an especially important change that will provide more options to provide rescue service delivery, particularly in regional and remote locations.

The bill amends section 60D to empower the Minister to make orders to protect volunteers from victimisation by their employers. The change will enable the Minister to issue an employment protection order for a period of up to 14 days. The change reflects the need for a "middle ground" between a Premier's order—which may be unlimited in duration—and the 48-hour "authorised officer" order, authorised officers being the commissioners of the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service. The bill also repeals section 60 as the provision is no longer used. The Government has and will continue to fund non-government emergency services organisations like VRA Rescue NSW through separate arrangements.

The bill makes a series of practical changes that, while minor, will provide real and tangible benefits for emergency and rescue service workers by clarifying legal ambiguities, streamlining administrative and operational processes, and strengthening existing governance arrangements. I acknowledge the shadow Minister for Emergency Services is in the Chamber. I thank him for being here and I look forward to providing him with a briefing. I also acknowledge and thank all the contributors for the background research in preparation of the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2023**Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from 10 October 2023.**

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (10:28): I resume my contribution on behalf of The Greens on the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. Yesterday I outlined that The Greens support a number of amendments in the bill relating to a range of measures that would provide further protection to workers.

However, I raised concerns about one element of the bill that we did not support, which was in relation to section 243 of the Act and the provision that would allow police to take on the role of SafeWork inspectors and further empower them to target food delivery riders. We know that food delivery riders are a vulnerable cohort of workers who are left shamefully exposed by our current work health and safety framework.

We have talked about the tragic loss of life as a result of desperate food delivery riders riding in unsafe ways. They do this not because they want to risk their lives but because they do not get paid by the hour or the week. They do not have a weekly salary that allows them to decide how much rent they pay. They take risks because they get paid per delivery, and they are riding in a way that is incredibly risky to them on busy Sydney streets. As the cost-of-living crisis continues to crush our communities, more and more young people are turning to this dangerous, unregulated line of work simply in order to survive. Pandemic-related lockdowns showed us how essential delivery riders are, and yet they are paid per delivery, not by the hour. This means that they are incentivised to ride quickly and unsafely—sometimes recklessly—in order to make a living wage, pay their rent, buy food for themselves and their family and pay for critical things like medicine and other supports.

I urge the Minister to consider a Greens amendment that will be moved in the other House to seek to remove this additional power for police. The last thing that desperate food delivery riders need is police issuing them with a fine for not wearing personal protective equipment when they are taking risks because they are in desperate financial situations. We need to do more to protect workers. We need to recognise the desperate situations that they are in and the exploitation that the companies profiting from this desperation are engaged in. That does not mean giving police powers to issue fines to people who are vulnerable in our community. To improve safety for delivery riders, we should implement urgent measures such as paying them an hourly rate. Instead of creating pointless pathways for more policing, we should be taking genuine steps to give food delivery riders the same rights and safety at work as others, including giving them a minimum wage, guaranteed sick leave, super contributions and access to workers compensation schemes.

The solution is not to empower police to fine riders when they are in a desperate situation. All of the urgent measures I have outlined are things the State Government could do to improve safety for food delivery riders. I urge the Minister and the Government to listen to the concerns that The Greens and others have raised and support our amendment in the other place. When dealing with work health and safety laws it is absolutely critical that we strengthen safety and rights for all workers and not leave some of the most vulnerable workers at risk.

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (10:32): I make a brief contribution to debate on the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. Work health and safety [WHS] is a paramount concern for governments, businesses, and workers alike. Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of employees is a fundamental obligation that underpins the functioning of any society. I am in full support of the amendments proposed to the Work Health and Safety Act, which are set to enhance and clarify certain aspects of the law. This is especially pertinent for the Riverstone electorate, where more and more houses are being built in a short amount of time, many with granite benchtops. It is crucial that worksites adhere to all WHS standards. There have been too many accidents, sometimes fatal, which have changed the lives of people and their families forever. The bill's proposed amendments will go a long way to ensuring safer workplaces, which will mean that people building our homes and other infrastructure can return safely to their families.

A key amendment seeks to clarify section 162 of the WHS Act in relation to directions given to inspectors. This change is a direct response to recommendations made by the NSW Ombudsman's investigation into actions taken by SafeWork NSW inspectors at Blue Mountains City Council workplaces. The investigation identified instances where notices were issued under dictation, which was contrary to the law. The proposed amendment aims to remove ambiguity by explicitly stating that section 162 does not permit an inspector to be directed to issue a notice in circumstances where he or she does not personally hold the reasonable belief required by the relevant statutory provision. This clarification ensures that compliance actions are taken based on genuine beliefs and not external pressures or influences, ultimately upholding the integrity of the WHS framework.

It is worth noting that the New South Wales Government has taken the Ombudsman's recommendations seriously. Ten out of the 11 recommendations made under the Ombudsman Act have been fully addressed and implemented. These recommendations encompass a range of improvements, from public apologies and ex gratia

payments to developing and implementing policies on the application of WHS and conducting comprehensive training for inspectors. Recommendation 5, which pertains to the amendment of section 162, is part of this comprehensive approach to address the concerns raised by the Ombudsman. By working diligently to implement these recommendations, New South Wales demonstrates its commitment to improving the WHS framework for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The Department of Customer Service has actively engaged with various government agencies in the drafting of the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill. This collaborative approach has ensured that the proposed changes will be thoroughly examined and understood, minimising potential negative impacts on the operations of these agencies, especially with regard to WHS functions. Key government agencies such as the Department of Communities and Justice and the Resources Regulator have been consulted to provide their insights and recommendations. These consultations demonstrate a commitment to achieving a balanced and well-informed approach to work health and safety reforms.

The establishment of a silica worker register is another commendable step in enhancing workplace safety. Silicosis is a respiratory disease caused by exposure to silica dust and poses a significant health risk to workers in certain industries. The register will serve as a valuable tool for monitoring the health of workers exposed to silica dust during their employment. Importantly, the register will not be publicly available, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of workers' health information. Access to the data will be restricted to authorised entities, including SafeWork NSW, icare and prescribed government agencies. This initiative underscores the Government's commitment to protecting the health and wellbeing of workers.

Amendments to clarify regulation-making powers related to public registers, and the approval or authorisation of training providers and courses and their associated fees, are necessary to streamline processes. These changes address ambiguities and ensure that the legislative framework aligns with modern needs. Transferring certain provisions from the Work Health and Safety Regulation to the WHS Act reflects a more appropriate allocation of regulatory authority. These amendments seek to provide greater clarity and efficiency in regulatory processes, ultimately benefiting businesses and organisations that interact with the work health and safety framework.

Imputation of conduct to a body corporate is another critical amendment that aligns with community expectations. Holding companies accountable for their WHS duties, particularly in cases where intention, knowledge or recklessness are involved, is a step towards ensuring equal accountability between individuals and corporate entities. This change reinforces the principle that businesses, like individuals, should be held accountable for meeting their WHS obligations. It is a positive step towards building public confidence in the enforcement of WHS regulations and fostering a culture of safety.

The proposed changes relating to codes of practice aim to reduce administrative burdens while maintaining transparency. Minor technical or grammatical amendments to codes of practice often necessitate extensive consultation, which can be both time consuming and costly. By exempting minor editorial changes from rigorous consultation processes and eliminating the outdated requirement for newspaper advertisements, the Government is embracing modern communication methods and reducing unnecessary costs.

This change is pragmatic and responsive to the evolving needs of businesses and stakeholders. In New South Wales, SafeWork NSW serves as the work health and safety regulator and the Resources Regulator oversees safety in mines and petroleum sites. These regulators play a vital role in promoting and enforcing compliance with work health and safety regulations. SafeWork NSW operates with a vision of healthy, safe and productive working lives. Its approach to compliance and enforcement is multifaceted, taking into account the level of risk, public interest and due diligence efforts. This approach is not only supportive of businesses but also aims to foster a cooperative and consultative relationship with duty holders.

Concerns about the potential impact on small businesses have been considered in the context of these amendments. While there are provisions to increase penalties for noncompliance with WHS regulations, these changes are designed to enhance safety and reduce long-term costs. The establishment of a silica worker register, streamlined consultation processes and improved regulation-making powers are measures that ultimately benefit small businesses by enhancing safety, reducing administrative burdens and ensuring efficient regulatory processes. At the heart of these amendments lies a common goal: to ensure safer workplaces for all workers in New South Wales. Workplace accidents and health-related issues can have severe consequences for individuals and businesses alike, not to mention the families of those who have been affected.

By implementing these changes, the Government is taking proactive steps to minimise risks, protect worker health and reduce the economic burden of workplace accidents. The process of amending WHS legislation is a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, the Government must create a regulatory environment that safeguards workers and promotes welfare. On the other hand, it must avoid imposing undue burdens on businesses, especially

small and medium enterprises. The proposed amendments aim to strike a balance by improving the effectiveness of WHS regulations while minimising unnecessary bureaucracy. Businesses, regardless of their size, benefit from clear and efficient regulatory frameworks. In this regard, these amendments are a step in the right direction.

Another area where small businesses stand to benefit is streamlined consultation processes. Minor technical amendments to codes of practice, such as fixing typographical errors or updating references, will no longer require extensive tripartite consultation. This change reduces the administrative burden on businesses and lowers associated costs. Moreover, eliminating the requirement for newspaper advertisements when amending codes of practice is cost-effective. Small businesses often operate on tight budgets, and any reduction in compliance costs is welcome. The Government's focus on modern communication methods aligns with the digital age, making it easier for small businesses to access information.

Clarity on work health and safety regulations is essential for all businesses but it can be especially beneficial for small businesses, which may lack dedicated legal or compliance departments, making it crucial for them to understand their obligations clearly. The amendments to clarify section 162 and other regulatory provisions provide a level of certainty that can be particularly valuable for small businesses. When business owners and managers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, they can implement safety measures more effectively, reducing the risk of accidents and injuries. [*Extension of time*]

In conclusion, the proposed amendments to the WHS Act are a positive step forward in ensuring safer, more efficient workplaces. These changes address longstanding issues, clarify regulations and improve the overall effectiveness of the work health and safety framework. The Government has considered the impact on small businesses and taken measures to minimise any adverse effects. The establishment of a silica worker register, streamlined consultation processes and regulatory clarity all work together to create an environment where businesses can thrive while prioritising the safety and wellbeing of their workers. By supporting these amendments, we are not only advancing workplace safety but also fostering a culture of responsibility and accountability. As a result, we can look forward to a future where every worker in New South Wales can go to work knowing they are protected and valued. Moreover, they can be confident they will return home to their families at the end of their work day. I congratulate the Minister on the amendments. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (10:44): I make a brief contribution to debate on the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. I refer particularly to division 2A in regard to prohibited asbestos notices. From the outset, I state that I agree with everything that has been said. On behalf of every worker, I support any amendments that improve the safety of workplaces. As the previous member stated correctly, every person who enters a place of work should feel safe in that environment and be assured that they can return home safely to their families each night. That is a gold standard that may not happen, but the bill's amendments to these work health and safety Acts to tighten up compliance with fines et cetera will help get to that point. Division 2A of the bill relates to prohibited asbestos notices. New section 197A addresses definitions of asbestos, new section 197B addresses the issuing of prohibited asbestos notices and new section 197C addresses the contents of the notices. The division pertains to the dangerous types of asbestos that can be encountered in workplaces, compliance and the punishment that can be applied if people do not adhere to appropriate asbestos notices and what is involved in them.

I am speaking in this debate because of what happened at Castle Hill High School, which was in my former electorate of Castle Hill, for which I was a member for so long. Unfortunately, the high school is not in my new electorate of Kellyville. However, many students and parents in the electorate still attend the school. While in government in 2016 I was very critical of the education department, so I will not be a hypocrite and now blame the government of the day. The role the department played in the safety of the over 1,200 students, staff and teachers who attended the high school—and it may be many more than that now; it is one of the largest high schools in New South Wales—was deplorable. Three of the most dangerous forms of asbestos on the planet, as listed in new section 197A—brown amosite asbestos, white chrysotile asbestos and blue crocidolite asbestos—were found following tests, the results of which were suppressed and only came to light around 18 months ago.

When I was told I immediately advised the Minister, who then advised the Department of Education. I said that I wanted some answers over the next two to three days and that if I did not get satisfactory answers, I would go immediately to the media because my community deserved to know what had been discovered at the school. Every person—especially some of the most vulnerable in our State, our children—has the right to know when they walk into a school that they are in a safe environment. Above all else they should know that.

However, that is not the case. That school still presents a risk to thousands of students each and every day.

If we look at that time frame between 2016 and 2023, a full cohort of students from years 7 to 12 have been educated through that school. I have spoken with parents of some of those students who had particular

diseases, some of those being cancerous diseases. We believe those students may have been exposed to risk from that particular asbestos whilst they attended the school because those parents were never notified that there was a risk of asbestos, which is absolutely and utterly deplorable. In saying that, as it has already been pointed out, it is my understanding that in 2019-20—please do not hold me to those dates, but I believe it is now three years ago—the regulator, SafeWork NSW, undertook to do a report with regard to the asbestos that was present and was found in Castle Hill High School.

I can only imagine how SafeWork NSW would move with the speed of sound whenever there was a problem in relation to scaffolding or unsafe practices in work sites across the State. But to think that now three years or more have passed since asbestos was positively identified—and continues to be positively identified—in a high school where many thousands of students and staff are present each and every day and SafeWork NSW is still yet to hand down its findings of that report is equally deplorable. The Department of Education has said, "No problems with Castle Hill High School. We have the matter in hand. Those thousands of students and staff and parents can walk into that schoolroom every day." Every month more asbestos is being discovered at that school. That is an unsafe work area.

I do not know what we would do with 1,200 students. That would be a huge problem, but education is one thing; the safety and health of students, families, staff, teachers et cetera must take precedence over education in these circumstances. What will happen down the track when students and staff and people start contracting different types of diseases—mesothelioma, lung disease et cetera—in the future, having attended that school? They will not have any recourse because nobody will step up and say what needs to be said. Yes, work is being undertaken. There has always been work undertaken, sealing off areas of exposure to asbestos, but every month more asbestos is found in that high school.

I will not be a hypocrite and blame the government of the day, but I will blame the Department of Education. The Department of Education presides over the assets, and its assets are its schools. The department is responsible for ensuring that those assets, those schools, provide a safe environment for students, teachers and staff to walk into each and every day, and it is failing to do that. On top of that, SafeWork NSW has taken three years to hand down a report, and that is completely and utterly unacceptable.

It does not help the safety and the health of all of those people that I have mentioned going to Castle Hill High School, but I will continue to raise at every opportunity I get, on behalf of the parents at that school, the deplorable situation that exists: one, that the most dangerous types of asbestos known on this earth are present at Castle Hill High School; two, that a report that found the school to be positive with asbestos in 2016 was covered up and only identified 18 months ago, and I made it public once it was identified to me that that report had been undertaken; and, three, that SafeWork NSW, the regulator of safety in workplaces in this State, undertook to do a report three years ago, and we have still not seen the findings of that report. Each and every one of those particular areas has been a huge failure. The only ones that are suffering are the thousands of students, staff and teachers who have to walk into Castle Hill High School on a daily basis.

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (10:54): I speak in support of the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. As the Minister has noted, the amendments put forward are small. However, they will have an immense impact in further enhancing protection for workers, particularly in relation to asbestos and silica. As the House would be aware, no substance has had more of a detrimental impact on workers in Australia than asbestos. Between the 1940s and the mid-1980s, asbestos-containing building materials were commonly used in Australia. During the post-war housing construction boom, asbestos could be found in floor tiles, wall sheetings, roofing, cement pipes and even brake pads. It was viewed at the time as a versatile building material that was resistant to high temperatures and as an effective insulator. In fact, Australia had one of the highest rates of asbestos use per capita.

Even as asbestos building materials expanded throughout Australia and the world from the 1940s, a growing body of medical and scientific research drew ominous connections between asbestos materials and cancer. My electorate of East Hills has many houses built with asbestos—the old fibro three-bedroom home. It is an area where many working-class people were affected by the terrible disease of mesothelioma. The fight against this disease is of special significance to me as Pat Rogan, popular Revesby Workers' Club president and longstanding and much-loved former member for East Hills, contracted the disease from his time working in an environment exposed to asbestos before he entered Parliament. Sadly, Pat Rogan passed away in February 2015. We cannot forget the far-reaching effects of this horrible disease—for example, the cases of wives of workers exposed to asbestos, from washing their husbands' work clothes, also being diagnosed with mesothelioma.

On 31 December 2003 the use and manufacture of asbestos materials was banned throughout Australia. However, there are some instances where this prohibited asbestos continues to be imported into Australia and found in workplaces across New South Wales. The bill addresses those circumstances. Please note that this

provision of the bill relates to asbestos found to be used since 2004, after the ban was introduced, as after this date any asbestos or asbestos-containing material detected in any product is prohibited or illegal.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. As we approach question time, I remind members to enter the Chamber and take their seats quietly. It is very unsettling for the member with the call when there is a lot of noise in the Chamber. The member for East Hills has the call.

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON: Safe Work Australia has noted that the bill will allow a regulator to issue a prohibited asbestos notice, directing a relevant person to take certain measures in relation to asbestos and the workplace. This means that a notice will be issued in all cases where prohibited asbestos is found to ensure the risks that it poses are promptly addressed. It puts beyond doubt that the person conducting a business or undertaking who is issued the notice must remove the prohibited asbestos. This is an important but necessary change for the safety of our workplaces.

We now have a new scourge on our society. As this House would be aware, since 2017 silicosis cases have been on the rise in New South Wales. This rise in cases has been linked to work on engineered stone, which is a popular product for kitchen benchtops with a high silica content, and poor workplace practices, leading to silica dust being breathed in by workers. This dust causes damage to an exposed worker's lungs, with potentially fatal consequences. Silicosis is a long-latency disease, with the latent period from exposure to development of the disease being from one to 10 years. However, some cases of accelerated silicosis can be developed over a period as short as three to five years.

I am glad that this Government is focused on taking further action to address the scourge of silicosis in the workplace. As part of its election commitment taken to the people of New South Wales in March this year, the Government has sought to implement further reforms to tackle this risk.

The Government has committed to a suite of policy proposals to tackle silicosis, both standalone and as part of a national process. I interrupt my contribution for a moment to acknowledge the East Hills Boys High School students from my electorate who have just arrived in the gallery. I am contributing to debate on a very important bill for work safety in New South Wales.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): It being 11.00 a.m., in accordance with the standing and sessional orders debate is interrupted for question time and the routine of business. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

Visitors

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I extend a warm welcome to guests of the member for Fairfield, students and staff of Verona School in his electorate. Those guests would be very proud of the way in which their member has presented himself today. His tie is a little bit loose, but he is looking great. He is my favourite backbench hipster. I welcome to the Chamber guests of the member for Drummoyne, members of Breakfast Point Men's Shed. I also welcome Gerard Martin, former member for Bathurst. It is good to see you, Gerard; I know you never thought you would see this. I also welcome guests of the member for Wyong, directors and junior directors of Bendigo Bank. I acknowledge and welcome guests of the member for East Hills, the East Hills Boys High School leadership team. I also acknowledge guests of the member for Kellyville: Susan and Robert Cliff, Karin Murton and Martin Drenovac. Members will be surprised to hear that I also welcome my own guests, members of Toronto Macquarie Ladies Probus.

Mr Steve Whan: Is there anyone left?

The SPEAKER: Mate, we are going around twice. Finally, I welcome to the Chamber staff from the Department of Customer Service, seated up there in the northern gallery, who are participating in training conducted by the Parliamentary Education team. They are doing a wonderful job for the people of New South Wales.

Announcements

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

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

MEMBERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The SPEAKER: I advise members that the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, AM, will present at our members' development session today. The session will focus on the obligations of those in public office, corrupt conduct in New South Wales and particular risks

experienced by members. It will also cover previous investigations by the commission involving elected officials. I encourage members and staff to attend at 1.00 p.m. today in the Macquarie Room. A light lunch will be provided. I am sure members will enjoy the opportunity to meet Mr Hatzistergos.

Mr Clayton Barr: Especially the Liberal Party.

The SPEAKER: The member for Cessnock will come to order. He is being way too boisterous today. I am getting in early because he escaped me yesterday.

Committees

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROTECTING LOCAL WATER UTILITIES FROM PRIVATISATION

Messages

The SPEAKER: I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council agreeing with the Legislative Assembly's message of 10 October 2023 that the reporting date of the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation be extended from 30 November 2023 to 29 March 2024.

Question Time

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:07): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Yesterday the Minister said she had no role in police operational matters. Despite taking that position, did she personally tell any Jewish community leader on Monday that Jewish citizens should stay out of the city?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:08): I did answer this question yesterday, but I will answer it again today. I begin by saying, as I have said, that I condemn the vicious terrorist attacks on innocent Israelis. I am sickened, like most people, by the murderous savagery unleashed on those communities. I had several conversations with the Jewish Board of Deputies on Sunday and Monday. They expressed their concerns for the safety of the Jewish community at the Opera House as a result of the rally planned there and asked me to stop it. As Minister, I have zero role in operational policing decisions—and nor should I.

These decisions are for the police commanders on the ground. That is why I told the community representative that he needed to speak to the police commander in charge, and I requested that somebody contact him immediately. Shortly after, the Jewish Board of Deputies confirmed that it had had that conversation with senior police. Police commanders formed the judgment that the best option was to manage the rally. Their priority was to control a large and volatile crowd, to prevent conflict and violence, and to protect the community broadly. Police advised me that the Jewish Board of Deputies asked them what they should advise their community. I understand that they were told that there was a large crowd building, it was volatile and it could—

Mr Mark Speakman: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order. They will not prejudice the point of order or my ruling on it. The Clerk will stop the clock. I do not need assistance from Opposition members. All members will come to order.

Mr Mark Speakman: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. I was not asking the Minister about whatever decisions the police may or may not have made or what the police were saying. I asked a simple question about what she personally said to any Jewish community leader. That is the question.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be directly relevant.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: That advice was given in good faith. It was offered in the interest of protecting the safety and the welfare of that community. It saddens me that what was meant to be a peaceful and solemn vigil by the Jewish community could not occur. The Sydney Jewish community should not feel unsafe in this city.

Mr Matt Kean: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Minister has concluded her answer. There is no point of order.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (11:11): My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier outline how the Minns Labor Government is improving housing in New South Wales?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:12): That is an important question from the member for East Hills, and it affects everybody in New South Wales. We are determined to get it right. If we look at the growth in the New South Wales economy and in ensuring that we keep our best and brightest and that young people, in particular, can be part of the State's future, all roads lead to better housing outcomes in metropolitan Sydney and in the regions. It is worth reporting on the mess that was left by the previous Government. Processing times for development applications were 69 days on average, which is long, in July 2021 and blew out to 116 days by March 2023. That is 116 days on average to get a "no". Many of those applications were lodged and mums and dads, property developers, builders and carpenters in New South Wales were expecting quick answers. But the answer was not coming from the previous Government. The private capital was reorganising itself and going to different jurisdictions.

The Department of Planning estimated 900,000 additional dwellings by 2041, but we were nowhere near those housing completions. In fact, New South Wales was responsible for about 48,000 housing completions in a 12-month period. In Victoria, the number was 58,000. New South Wales was 10,000 less than Victoria, notwithstanding the fact that we have greater housing pressures in the New South Wales economy. We have a higher median house price, a larger population and a larger projected increase in population. Yet we were coming last on the eastern seaboard in housing completions. The planning Minister and the housing Minister have announced a suite of measures to turn that around. We are excited to announce that developers that have 15 per cent social housing for major developments will receive a 30 per cent increase in height and floor space ratio if they complete that dwelling.

That is important. We want to encourage responsible developers and builders in New South Wales and say, "If you're prepared to provide social housing to the marketplace, we will let you build more." We will also give Landcom self-assessment powers so that it does not get caught in the rigmarole of the planning system and we can get better outcomes for land releases and infill development in New South Wales. We have established a housing target of 30 per cent when we develop government land. We took that policy to the election. The Government has substantial holdings, and a lot of them are on transport infrastructure. It is important to have that in the State. [*Extension of time*]

We have also said that we need more density in Sydney. We do not believe it is acceptable for the City of Sydney to say, "No residential development closer to the heart of the CBD, only commercial." The truth of the matter is that London, New York and Paris do not say, "No more residential developments in our cities. We're full." Areas closer to the CBD have existing infrastructure in place, whether it is heavy rail networks, metros or access to hospitals. But there is a conspicuous opponent of these plans, and that is the member for Vacluse. An article in *The Daily Telegraph*—

The SPEAKER: Government members will cease assisting the Premier.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: —is entitled, "Not in my back yard.' MP battles apartments plan". I am not even being political. This is a direct quote. The article states:

Liberal frontbencher Kellie Sloane—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Alister Henskens: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question asked the Premier to outline how the Minns Labor Government is improving housing. It has nothing to do with the member for Vacluse.

The SPEAKER: I agree that the answer is a departure from direct relevance, but that test has already been met. The Premier has the call.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: The article states:

Liberal frontbencher Kelly Sloane is opposing a plan to turn a derelict service station into a supermarket and boutique apartment block ...

In the article, she says:

"I went to the election promising the electorate I would support retaining the character of our communities."

She is talking about a derelict servo. It is so important that we protect derelict service stations, particularly in the eastern suburbs. I report to the House how many apartments were planned—14. But not in her backyard. That says everything members need to know about the Liberal Party's plans for development in our city.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Premier has completed his answer.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (11:17): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. The Minister and her Government did nothing to prevent a mob from descending on the Opera House, with disgraceful antisemitic scenes, and yet on Monday Mark Spiro was arrested at Town Hall trying to unfurl an Israeli flag and made to leave the city for 24 hours. Mark Spiro is in the gallery today, and he wants an apology. Will the Minister give Mark Spiro an apology?

Ms Robyn Preston: What are you laughing at? It's not funny.

Mr Alister Henskens: Why is it funny?

The SPEAKER: The member for Wahroonga will cease interjecting. The member for Hawkesbury will cease interjecting. It is a very serious matter. The expression on a member's face does not detract from the importance of the matter. Members are not aware of the circumstances. All members will cease interjecting and allow the Minister to answer this serious question on a serious matter.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:18): Yesterday Assistant Commissioner Cook answered this question. He said that the police removed that gentleman from a conflictual protest for his own safety.

Ms Kellie Sloane: Point of order: direct relevance.

The SPEAKER: The Minister has completed her answer. The member for Wahroonga will come to order. Opposition frontbench members will come to order. I will hear further from the member for Vaucluse.

Ms Kellie Sloane: The Minister did not answer the question. I would like an extension of time so that she can answer that question.

The SPEAKER: No. The member for Vaucluse will resume her seat. Opposition members will come to order.

TEACHER WAGES

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (11:20): My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Minns Labor Government's historic wages deal for teachers will support our hardworking teachers and their families?

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:20): I certainly will update the House and the incredible member for Wallsend, who is a former teacher. I update the House on the historic wage deal for our hardworking teachers, which was opposed by the Opposition, and what it will do to value our hardworking teachers. I especially shout out to the boys from East Hills Boys High School upstairs in the gallery and their hardworking teachers that have brought them here today, led by a wonderful educational leader, Mr Paul Abboud. I believe he is the principal at East Hills Boys High School.

I also give a shout-out to the year 12 boys at East Hills, who are amongst the 70,000 students beginning their HSC today. They sat their first test, English paper number one, just before 10 o'clock. All the students across the 2,200 schools in New South Wales have arrived at that point because of the hard work, commitment and dedication of the wonderful teachers of New South Wales. That is why this Government is so proud to have delivered the biggest pay rise to teachers in a generation, which took effect from Monday. That means in the next pay packet in a couple of weeks teachers will be getting a once-in-a-generation increase. That means that beginning teachers will be getting an increase of more than \$10,000 to \$85,000 and top-of-the-scale teachers will also be getting a very large pay increase to keep them in the system. We know we face a chronic teacher shortage, and the most important thing we can do to start with is to value our teachers so we start actually retaining our wonderful education experts in our classrooms.

Mr Warren Kirby: Fixing problems.

Ms PRUE CAR: Actually fixing problems, as the member for Riverstone rightly says.

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

Ms PRUE CAR: No, Mr Speaker, he is assisting me very well.

The SPEAKER: No, he is not. He is out of order.

Ms PRUE CAR: We are a good team. We are delivering this historic pay rise because for this Government nothing is more important than the education outcomes of our students, because they are the future. Each and every thing we are doing in education is about those education outcomes. Whether it is delivering this historic pay rise, whether it is banning mobile phones in classrooms, at recess and at lunch, they are going to see the benefits of it when they are concentrating on what their wonderful, well-paid teachers are going to be saying in the classroom. [*Extension of time*]

I also acknowledge something that we do not acknowledge enough, and that is that all the teachers we are proud to have given a significant pay rise to also have families and are experiencing the cost-of-living crisis that everyone in New South Wales is experiencing as well. What we have delivered will significantly go towards addressing the gender pay gap in this State because 78 per cent of schoolteachers are women. This will make a big impact to reducing the suppression of wages of women in the State of New South Wales. Time and again, when given the opportunity, those opposite consistently opposed this historic pay deal for our teachers. The member for Vacluse recently said that it was a bad choice. The Government thinks it is the only choice and the best choice for the future of our State. As recently as a fortnight ago the previous Minister and now shadow Minister for Education and Early Learning said on radio:

What I'm a bit concerned about is that it's very politically popular—
yes, that is for a reason—

but it's the overall impact that it has.

I will tell the Opposition what the impact is.

Mr Warren Kirby: Positive.

Ms PRUE CAR: Very positive. The impact is valuing teachers. The impact will be attracting young people into teaching. The impact will be stopping teachers from leaving our system. The actual real-life impact that is driving each and every one of us and drives me every day as Minister is it will be better results for our students, because they will have teachers that stay in the classroom committed to helping those boys upstairs in the gallery and all our students across New South Wales achieve the very best they can, to their ultimate potential, because they are valued by a government, finally.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (11:25): My question is directed to the Premier. Speaking to the Government's ministries seems like a game of pass the parcel, as it did in the past. I speak to Planning, which passes queries about growth areas and delivery to Education, which passes the bus service provision to Transport. In areas of growth we have no infrastructure and this is not sustainable. What are the Premier's plans to break down the silos between the government departments?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:26): I am not going to pass that question off. It is a fair enough question. I make clear that in the first instance my door is always open to members of Parliament, particularly from fast-growing Western Sydney communities. That includes the member for Wollondilly. If there are concerns about budget allocations, ensuring that government departments are talking with one another and that there is infrastructure for fast-growing parts of Sydney, I would expect the member for Wollondilly to be knocking down my door. It is my responsibility to meet members and look at those issues.

The Government has committed \$109 million over four years for the Picton Road upgrade. That is funded by the State and Commonwealth governments. The Government has committed \$12 million this year for stage two of the Bowral and District Hospital redevelopment—that includes a state-of-the-art inpatient centre in the old administration building—and additional health services in Macarthur and Campbelltown, which is in that region. I know that region is probably shared by health services in Wollongong, the Bowral district and the Southern Highlands as well as the Macarthur region.

The Government is committed to putting infrastructure in that community. We believe it is important. The plans for fast-growing Western Sydney communities involve enabling infrastructure that keeps pace with growing housing needs. That is particularly important when it comes to infrastructure charges. I know the Minister for Planning executed and delivered changes to enabling infrastructure, particularly for Western Sydney, precisely to allow for infrastructure, and it was opposed by those opposite.

I appreciate that people come into this House and demand their area deserves and needs its fair share of infrastructure, but that is not going to happen unless we can identify sustainable ways of paying for it. The Government has done that with those infrastructure charges. Those opposite have opposed all of those revenue measures while at the same time demanding massive increases in new spending in their areas and opposing any kind of urban consolidation. We have the absurd situation where the member for Vacluse is attempting to

preserve derelict car parks and derelict service stations because that is the unique character of the member's electorate.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. The Premier has drifted completely away from relevance to the question that was asked. We are in Vacluse now.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The Premier will continue.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I do not want to canvass the Speaker's ruling, but part of infrastructure in fast-growing communities is having an even or fair spread of population growth.

Mrs Judy Hannan: I seek further information on the silos.

The SPEAKER: I grant an extension of two minutes.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: With respect to the member, it is question time, not answer time. I make the point that these enabling works are important. We need to make sure the infrastructure is rolling.

The SPEAKER: Opposition members will cease interjecting or I will place them on calls to order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I make it clear that the Government has a balanced plan when it comes to urban growth in New South Wales and Sydney in particular. That does not involve lumping fast-growing Western Sydney communities with everybody's obligation to take more housing. That is as essential as the infrastructure questions for fast-growing communities because if we just say that Sydney is going to grow every other week, with another street on the western fringe of Sydney, where is the infrastructure money going to come from? The repeated refusal of the Liberal Party to accept even its fair share of infrastructure, the party of the nimby, is shocking when we consider the next generation of young Australians who want to have their say.

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order—

Mr Paul Scully: Just 14 apartments in Vacluse.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: As the planning Minister has just pointed out 14 apartments are now verboten. That is outrageous. Even for the community of Vacluse—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Dubbo rises on a point of order.

Mr CHRIS MINNS: —this is completely unsustainable in a modern city. We need to do better.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. I will hear the member's point of order. We will adhere to the standing orders.

Mr Dugald Saunders: The member for Wollondilly asked for more information about the silos. The Premier has not at any point discussed breaking down the silos. The member has a right to hear about that.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Dubbo for acting on behalf of the member for Wollondilly, but she is quite capable of dealing with the matter herself. I am satisfied that the Premier is answering the question. I call the member for Goulburn to order for the first time. Has the Premier concluded his answer?

Mr CHRIS MINNS: I have finished.

RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (11:31): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister please inform the House of how the Minns Labor Government is improving health and wellbeing outcomes for people living in rural and regional communities?

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:32): I thank the member for her fantastic question. A number of significant developments are happening in the Shoalhaven, including a very exciting one around Birthing on Country that is going to take place down there. That is a very exciting initiative that I know the member is a tremendous advocate for. I will talk about two parts of the challenging puzzle that is improving health care in regional, rural and remote New South Wales. The first part is how we strengthen the governance, and the second part is how we roll out the initiatives that will make a big difference to the lives of people across rural, remote and regional New South Wales.

Firstly, in terms of governance, we have a parliamentary committee that a number of members in this place are involved in, which is chaired by the member for Wagga Wagga. That committee is working through the implementation of the 44 recommendations of the landmark inquiry into regional and rural healthcare services that Labor initiated when in opposition. That work is now underway. Recently we established the Regional Health

Ministerial Advisory Panel, chaired by Dr Richard Colbran from the Rural Doctors Network. The panel consists of 10 members from a variety of different backgrounds, specialities and expertise, and is designed to focus on providing advice to Government about where there are gaps, challenges and improvements that need to be made. Initially, it will focus on three critical areas that are very important to me and the Government, but, more importantly, they are critical to regional, remote and rural New South Wales.

The first one is around workforce. I want it to look at the incentives: What are we doing right? What are we doing well? How can do better in terms of both the attraction and retention of rural and regional medical and allied healthcare staff? That will be a big focus on how we solve this extremely challenging puzzle. I want it to focus also on Aboriginal health care. One of the recommendations and some of the evidence that we heard in the regional health inquiry around Aboriginal health care was nothing short of appalling. We have big gaps and big challenges. Our Government is determined—and I hope governments after us take this up as well—to continue to try to close the gap in relation to Aboriginal health care and the outcomes they get compared with the rest of the population. Finally, we want to embed those 44 recommendations from the regional and rural health inquiry into normal practice in health care in New South Wales so they do not stand out separately but are a part of good clinical practice going forward. [*Extension of time*]

In addition to strengthening governance, we are rolling out specific initiatives that will make a difference to the lives of people living in regional, remote and rural New South Wales. The first is the 500 additional paramedics that we will roll out over the course of this term of Parliament. That is one of the most significant investments in emergency personnel in the history of NSW Ambulance, and it is targeted at the bush. It is targeted at closing those gaps that we heard of when people spoke to us about the emergency care gaps, particularly when paramedics have to travel long distances to other incidents and essentially leave many towns unstaffed. We hope that will make a big difference to the lives of people in regional, rural and remote communities across the State.

We are rolling out the Rural Allied Health Educator Program, which is designed with seven additional educators and which will create a pipeline of 100 allied healthcare staff. These are people such as speech and occupational therapists. The program is designed to train, retain and recruit staff in regional and rural New South Wales. It is designed to close some of those allied healthcare gaps that exist across regional and rural allied health care. Finally, we are bringing the very best expertise from our large tertiary hospitals, such as Royal North Shore, into our rural-based hospitals through virtual reality training, particularly around strokes, so that people in small regional hospitals can identify someone with a stroke and provide treatment as quickly as possible. I look forward to working with members across the political divide to update this House on how we are delivering better outcomes for the people of rural, regional and remote New South Wales.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (11:37): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Yesterday in the House the Minister refused to apologise to the Jewish community for failing to prevent the mob from descending on the Opera House. Today the Premier apologised. We know that Jewish community leaders pleaded with the Minister to keep protesters away from the Opera House. If she will not apologise to Mr Spiro—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: We are far enough into the question that it is not unreasonable for the Leader of the House to take a point of order.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Standing Order 128 (1) and (2) (a) state:

- (1) Questions cannot be debated.
- (2) Questions should not contain—
 - (a) statements of facts or names of persons unless they are strictly necessary to render the question intelligible and can be authenticated;

Questions cannot contain argument or inference. If the member for Davidson has a question for the Minister, he should ask a question and not make irrelevant statements.

Mr Alister Henskens: To the point of order: The Speaker has a copy of the question. The member for Davidson was starting to get to the question. The question required those statements of fact to make it intelligible. It is entirely within the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: The member for Davidson will get to the nub of the question.

Mr MATT CROSS: Yesterday in the House, the Minister refused to apologise to the Jewish community for failing to prevent the mob descending on the Opera House. Today the Premier apologised. If the Minister will not apologise—

The SPEAKER: The member for Davidson will stop there. That is not the question I have before me. The question that has been provided to me does not contain the additional words. The member will get to the nub of the question.

Mr MATT CROSS: If the Minister will not apologise to Mr Spiro, will she at least now apologise to the Jewish community?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:39): My responsibility is to keep law and order in New South Wales as the police Minister.

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

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: As the Premier said, he has broader responsibilities to ensure the safety of multicultural communities in New South Wales and especially the Jewish community, who deserve to feel safe in this community. Of course I apologise to anyone if they feel unsafe.

RAIL REPAIR PLAN

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:40): My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister provide an update on the Rail Repair Plan and the recent T3 closures?

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport) (11:40): I thank the member for Parramatta for her long advocacy for more reliable public transport for her community. As members know, the Minns Labor Government is embarking on one of the largest programs of rail maintenance ever undertaken in our State's history: our Rail Repair Plan. It is something we had to do. In fact, the independent review into Sydney Trains, led by Carolyn Walsh, found that the former Liberal Government left us a train network that is in a mess. That report clearly showed the network was not resilient and not reliable.

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

Ms JO HAYLEN: We saw breakdown after breakdown, with passengers left stranded again and again. However, we know that this work is not easy. We know maintenance and trackwork on weekends is inconvenient to passengers. We are doing our best to minimise that inconvenience and make sure that passengers have the information they need to plan their journeys. As I have said in this House on a number of occasions, we are committed to ensuring that our public transport system delivers on our promise. The people of our State expect better, more reliable services, and our Government is working to deliver that. It is a very big and old rail network, and it carries over one million people every day. Our Rail Repair Plan is key to catching up on the critical maintenance left to us by the former Government.

Just four months since we launched our Rail Repair Plan, which is a 12-month program of work, we have already passed the halfway mark. We are 10 weeks ahead of schedule. We have already removed 61 per cent of the targeted high-priority defects left to us by members opposite. That means we have already removed 1,170 of the 1,916 identified defects.

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

Ms JO HAYLEN: The comparison is that in an ordinary year, only 600 would be removed. We have removed almost double that amount. We have done 447 kilometres of track grinding. We have removed 64 speed restrictions, which is like removing potholes, making our trains run quicker. The good news is we have already seen some early positive results for passengers. Last month Sydney Trains on-time performance running exceeded our target of 92 per cent. That is the first time since May 2022 that we have met our on-time running target, which is great news for passengers. It means that our work on our rail network is working. [*Extension of time*]

Our Rail Repair Plan is not the only area where we have seen major progress. The T3 Bankstown line just reopened after a two-week closure over the school holidays for significant work in preparation for the conversion of the line to metro services. Let us remember, this is a project we rescued through our review plan, and we have a clear plan to deliver it. We know members opposite were going to cancel it. But over the two weeks of holidays, we have seen over 500 workers in that rail corridor. We have done critical track upgrades and installed security fencing and cabling. We are upgrading the platforms for metro conversion. We have also completed critical accessibility, which means more lifts for stations along that line. We have also put in new infrastructure, like the pedestrian bridge between the inner west rail line and the heavy rail line, which that community has been calling for for many years.

The good news is that by converting the T3 Bankstown line we will see capacity increase across our entire train network. It will take pressure off the City Circle and, over time, we will see timetable improvements for many of our services across our rail network, not just for those residents of the inner west and the south-west. We acknowledge there is disruption with maintenance and trackwork. We thank passengers for their patience, but it is working.

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

Ms JO HAYLEN: We are making our trains more reliable and rebuilding public trust in public transport.

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

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (11:45): My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. If the Premier is capable today of ruling out a pro-Hamas rally going ahead this Sunday, why was the Minister incapable of doing or saying anything at all to stop Monday's rally and the mob descent on the Opera House?

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:46): As the Premier has said, the lighting of the Opera House was meant to create an opportunity to allow people to reflect on the recent atrocities in Israel. I want to reiterate this: We absolutely need to make sure that the Jewish community feels safe in New South Wales. That is something we all want.

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

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The New South Wales Government shares the regret that Monday night's Opera House event was not able to be an opportunity for—

Mr Dugald Saunders: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The Premier has directly ruled out a possible protest. Why can the Minister not do the same? It is a direct question.

The SPEAKER: I understand the point of order. I will not rule in favour of the point of order because the Minister has plenty of time to reach that threshold. The Minister will continue her answer.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I reiterate my previous comments that decision-making around public gatherings and demonstrations should be left to the NSW Police Force, who have extensive experience in mass gatherings and public safety. The police are not there to make political or moral judgements.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Members will come to order. The Clerk will stop the clock. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Gurmesh Singh: My point of order is under Standing Order 129 again. If the Premier is capable of ruling out the rally, why is the Minister incapable of doing the same?

The SPEAKER: I heard the question, as did the Minister. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will continue her answer, and she will be directly relevant. The member for Wahroonga will cease interjecting.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: The police made it clear that if people plan to attend an unauthorised protest—

The SPEAKER: The member for Dubbo will cease interjecting.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: —and they want to cause fear, harm or commit criminal offences, they will face arrest.

Mr Matt Kean: Point of order—

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I have finished, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Minister has concluded her answer.

REGIONAL ROADS

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (11:48): My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Will the Minister please update the House on what the Minns Labor Government is doing to improve regional roads?

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (11:49): I thank the member for Shellharbour. I feel like I should just go back to where I was before I was so rudely interrupted

on 20 September—I think I was up to Dungog. I went to Edward River Council and told it about its \$4 million investment. For those members opposite who cannot remember what happened in the budget because it is a bit of a painful subject for them, we put a bucketload of money into regional roads. That is the thing that councils have asked us for.

The SPEAKER: Opposition members, including the Leader of the Opposition, will come to order.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Councils that had been calling for assistance from the former Government now have \$390 million in new money.

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

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: We extended the \$280 million that those opposite gave them. For the benefit of the House I will table the list of all the councils that are getting money.

Mr Jihad Dib: List them.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I will not start because I only got up to "D" last time. There are too many. What is better than that? Let us look at the response. *The Forbes and Parkes Phoenix* reads, "Millions More for Councils to Fund Local Road Repair Blitz". That is great.

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

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: An NRMA press release states, "NRMA welcomes continued roads investment in NSW state budget".

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

Mrs Wendy Tuckerman: Point of order: I request that the Minister be relevant. What about the lack of funding for the betterment of regional roads?

The SPEAKER: The member for Goulburn will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I am talking about things that are in the public domain. I am so glad the member has foreshadowed that. But I cannot talk about that right now; standing orders prevent me. But I urge the member to ask me a question about it tomorrow, because I will give her the answer she wants. Regional Cities NSW published a press release, "RCNSW welcomes first budget from new Minns Government".

Mr Gurmesh Singh: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The Minister will resume her seat. The member for Coffs Harbour rises on a point of order. Opposition members will come to order.

Mr Gurmesh Singh: If the Minister is going to use props, maybe she could produce the budget papers and learn how to read them.

The SPEAKER: I do not consider what I saw to be props.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I am just referring to documents, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I accept that they are documents.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: They are. If we are going to talk about budgets, we should also talk about commitments that have been made in the past. I point to this little number with the donuts. I remind the House of the first two years of the former Government's 10-year billion-dollar program. In the third year, it became less than 10 per cent of that billion dollars. What has the Government done? Some \$390 million is going out the door this year. Of the \$334 million investment, something in the order of \$50 million will go out the door. The problem members on the other side of the House have is they cannot read the budget papers. I take this opportunity to welcome back the member for Bathurst because, under his watch, we would never have seen this travesty of budget honesty. We also have Barilaro 2.0 on that side of the Chamber.

Ms Anna Watson: Mr Speaker—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: I note that the member for Shellharbour has risen to request an extension of time. I will hear the point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business first. I think I know what it will be about.

Mr Alister Henskens: It is actually a new one. It is Standing Order 74. The Minister is being deliberately quarrelsome in the way she is delivering her answer.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Et tu, Brute?

The SPEAKER: Yes, the Minister is being a little quarrelsome. She will rein it in to help maintain decorum in the House. I call the member for Shellharbour.

Ms Anna Watson: I am sure all members in the House would like to hear more good news from the Minister. I seek further information.

The SPEAKER: I am certain they would. I grant the Minister an additional two minutes.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: While I have the conch, Mr Speaker, I ask you to be really clear that I should be heard in silence. Because there are some important things to talk about. We on this side of the House are very concerned about regional roads and the condition they are in. We have been taking that seriously. It has been really disturbing for me to see the member for Dubbo. I do not know when he last got advice from the former member for Monaro about how to run the Opposition, but—

Mr Alister Henskens: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock.

Mr Alister Henskens: Mr Speaker, you ruled in favour of my previous point of order under Standing Order 74. The quarrel is continuing. If the Minister wishes to attack the member for Dubbo, she should do it by substantive motion under Standing Order 73.

The SPEAKER: I would agree if I considered the Minister's comments to be an attack. I do not believe she has crossed that threshold. I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister has addressed the issue raised in my previous ruling regarding Standing Order 74. The Minister will continue her answer.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: It belies a bit of hypocrisy on the other side of the House, I have to say. Because in budget week the member for Miranda referenced *Mean Girls* as the Liberals' new policy towards the budget in the regions. She stood up in the Chamber with her little arts and craft project and opened the book.

Ms Eleni Petinos: Point of order—

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: Then we had "Clueless"—if we are going to reference 1990s cult flicks—over there.

Ms Eleni Petinos: Come on!

The SPEAKER: The member for Miranda will not be baited by the Minister and respond in that manner. I am happy to hear her point of order.

Ms Eleni Petinos: If the Minister has something to say about another member in this place, she can do it by way of substantive motion. Her comments were by no means appropriate.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Miranda. I uphold the point of order. The Minister will be more considered in her answer.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I will definitely do that. But the member for Miranda cannot deny that she tried to use a *Mean Girls* stunt that backfired because "Clueless" over there could not get it there.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order: The Minister is deliberately flouting your ruling, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I concur. The Minister has flouted my ruling. Her time has expired so her answer has concluded.

MINISTER FOR POLICE AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:56): My question is directed to the Premier. Given the police Minister's catalogue of failures, including the aftermath of the Clare Nowland tragic tasing, a domestic violence report gathering dust on her desk, a sharp rise in gangland crime on Sydney's streets and her failures in the past week, does the Premier have confidence in his police Minister?

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

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

Mr Ron Hoenig: The question of the Leader of the Opposition infringes Standing Order 128. It contains assertions made out to be statements of fact beyond what is required. It certainly contains inference, argument and

imputation in respect of the Minister. It is not permissible in that form. The Opposition leader is more than amply qualified to ask a question that does not infringe the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will rephrase his question in a way that does not infringe the standing orders.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: If the truth hurts the Government, I will rephrase the question.

The SPEAKER: That is not the way to do it. I will give the Leader of the Opposition one more chance to rephrase his question.

Ms Jo Haylen: You are very generous, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I am.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Given the police Minister's performance since her appointment, does the Premier still have confidence in her?

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:58): Of course I do. There is a lot going on in New South Wales at the moment. There is a lot going on around the world. Obviously, it is important that our institutions meet that challenge. But the last thing we need—and I think I speak on behalf of most members of the House—is political posturing from the Leader of the Opposition.

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VIOLENCE, ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (11:59): My question is addressed to the Minister for Disability Inclusion. Will the Minister update the House on the final report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People With Disability?

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (11:59): I thank the member for Gosford for her question. The member is not only the most amazing Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion but also a force of nature when it comes to advocacy and representation for people with disability. On Thursday 28 September the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People With Disability handed its final report to the Governor-General, marking the end of a 4½-year journey to give voice to people with disability and their loved ones. The royal commission heard from roughly 10,000 people across the country. There were 8,000 submissions, 1,800 private sessions, more than 800 witnesses, 32 public hearings and seven commissioners. It was a significant piece of work, which has produced a final report with 12 volumes, 5,000 pages and, importantly, 222 recommendations for governments to consider carefully and respond to.

The royal commission has opened the eyes of the nation to the entrenched challenges facing people with disability every day of their lives. It has brought the attention of the nation to the stories of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, too often at the hands of people who are meant to help and whom they trust. Witnesses shared harrowing stories of sexual abuse, neglect, poverty, discrimination and exclusion. Those heartbreaking stories of suffering have been heard by the royal commission and they have been heard by this Government. We are grateful to every person with disability, their families and advocates who bravely shared their stories and added their voice to this important report. For many, it was not easy. But only through their courage and determination are we able to understand the depth of the issues that people with disability face in our country.

This is a seminal point in the history of our nation and our State. Now we must begin the work of not just hearing but acting—acting to ensure that our communities are inclusive, accessible, safe and supportive for everyone. We must act to ensure the voices of people with disability are ingrained in everything we do and that their rights are upheld. The Minns Government will be honouring everyone's contribution to the royal commission by carefully and methodically considering each of the 222 recommendations. Of course, that will take some time. We have already kicked into action. The country's disability Ministers will soon meet to discuss the findings of the royal commission and set out a pathway for governments to work together collaboratively to respond to the recommendations. I have also convened a forum of disability stakeholders on Monday 23 October. [*Extension of time*]

There will be peak organisations, advocacy groups, support groups, government agencies, disability service providers and, most importantly, people with disability, who will discuss their initial thoughts on the royal commission's final report. Our Government has also created a cross-agency taskforce that will help develop our formal response to the royal commission's recommendations, led by the Department of Communities and Justice. The taskforce includes the Ministry of Health and the Department of Education. We are also working hand in hand with the Commonwealth Government. Last night it was an honour to host the Federal Minister for the

National Disability Insurance Scheme, Bill Shorten, who helped us celebrate Down Syndrome Awareness Month, alongside the Premier and many members. I thank everyone who took the time to join us in the joyous celebration we had here last night.

To address the issues arising from the royal commission and to make the difference we must make, we all have a role to play. All levels of government and across all of our communities, working together we must create an inclusive society where people with disability live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. We must create a society where human rights are protected and where people live with dignity, equality and respect so they can fulfil their potential. This is a task that our Government takes very seriously. The royal commission has unveiled thousands of harrowing, heartbreaking stories that cannot and will not be ignored. As a government, we will honour those contributions by harnessing them to help lay the foundations for a more inclusive society for all. If I may seek the indulgence of the House for a moment, I wish all the HSC students who are right now sitting their final exam good luck. If everyone could channel their literacy skills and send them out across the State, my daughter is one who will be very grateful.

CABBAGE TREE ISLAND ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (12:04): My question is directed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty. In the 2022 floods the Cabbage Tree Island community were displaced from their traditional lands, lost their homes and school, and have been living in temporary accommodation for 19 months. The 27 families were promised by the former Government they could return to their homes and school, but the Government has rescinded that commitment. When will the Minister visit with the families to hear in their voice the devastating impacts of the past few years?

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) (12:05): I thank the member for Ballina for her question. It is an important issue and I acknowledge her strong advocacy and commitment as the local member, as I do all members from the Northern Rivers region. As the House will know, the widespread and devastating floods that occurred in New South Wales during February and March 2022 were unprecedented. The scale of damage, destruction and displacement in the impacted regions was unlike any previous emergency event in Australia. Cabbage Tree Island was significantly impacted by the floods that caused severe damage to 25 homes and six community buildings, displacing approximately 220 residents. The floods required a total evacuation of all residents, who have been placed in temporary pod village accommodation, managed by Uniting Care, until the Cabbage Tree Island community is re-established.

Cabbage Tree Island has not been occupied since the floods due to safety concerns. I acknowledge the hurt to the Aboriginal community on being displaced from this land and the need for healing. These are extremely difficult circumstances. I am committed to work with the relevant areas of government to ensure that the views of local people are heard. The Government is continuing to work with the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council in supporting the Cabbage Tree Island community through their recovery. The Deputy Secretary of Aboriginal Affairs has visited Cabbage Tree Island since the floods and had a number of meetings with the land council, which I am updated on regularly. I am informed that a community meeting was held on 28 August 2023 for Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council to present all available and necessary information for members to make an informed decision about their future. I understand there is a further meeting scheduled for 23 October to continue to discuss options available to the community.

We are actively organising to visit the community and for me to meet personally with them. This is a difficult situation, as are the politics in the area, as the member knows. We are making sure that when I visit it is in a sensitive way so I can help the issue and not be a problem. Aboriginal communities across the Northern Rivers were deeply impacted by these terrible events and part of our response needs to acknowledge the role of healing as part of the process. This is not just about land; this is a spiritual connection to country that cannot be quantified. *[Extension of time]*

When I visit Aboriginal communities I want to make sure that I can make a positive difference. I am taking advice from the department about when is the best time for that to happen. I have expressed my frustration that I have not been able to visit before now. I passed that on again this morning and asked that we speed up facilitation of my visit. We acknowledge that the meeting on 23 October is important and some decisions from community need to be made.

I have made a personal commitment to the member that I will be there, and I will keep that commitment. But I want to make sure that I do not cause problems, and that, when I go, it is a positive thing that will benefit the community.

STRATA LAWS

Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (12:09): My question is addressed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is taking action to improve the lives of people living in strata communities?

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) (12:09): I thank the member for Coogee for her question. I know how important this is to her community, given the number of residents in her electorate who live in strata communities. Her strong advocacy is much appreciated. This Government has a clear plan to increase housing supply. Part of that supply is around urban consolidation for people to live in medium- to high-density housing. We are confronting the housing challenges we have inherited, but we are certainly not going to wait any longer to ensure that people living in strata communities are governed by strata laws that are modern, contemporary and up to date. Unlike the previous Government, we are not going to let the 2021 statutory review gather dust. We will introduce legislation on this front to ensure that we continue to address the complexities and challenges for communities living in strata.

Firstly, the Government has fulfilled its election commitment to appoint a strata commissioner. Mr John Minns—the second most popular Minns in New South Wales; I am told he is no relation to the Premier—has been appointed as the Property Services Commissioner. He will be a strong advocate responsible for the oversight of this important and growing sector. At its core, the role of commissioner will be to help improve day-to-day living for residents and owners in strata schemes. The commissioner's appointment demonstrates this Government's authentic and sincere commitment to strata sector reform and its commitment to confronting the challenges that arise as more and more people in our communities live in strata arrangements.

Secondly, a crucial part of our Government's plan to increase housing supply is to make sure that the rules governing strata are up to date. We have inherited a significant housing supply shortfall, which is putting pressure on rental and housing affordability. We are working hard to build more homes. There are more now than 85,000 strata schemes in New South Wales compared with just 50,000 in 1996. An average of 1,000 strata schemes have been registered every single year over the past decade. Given the Government's housing agenda, more and more strata schemes will come onto the system in coming years. As that happens, we want to make sure that quantity and quality go hand in hand. Setting up and establishing the NSW Building Commission will ensure that we build strata complexes that are of a high quality. This is critical because a house is the biggest investment 99 per cent of us will make. [*Extension of time*]

We are reforming our strata laws to make sure that quantity and quality of supply go hand in hand. Thirdly, the former Government neglected people living in strata by failing to progress the 2021 statutory review of strata laws, but we will not make the same mistake. The urgency is too great. Complexes are in high demand. We will reform the laws and make sure the rules governing strata keep pace with the number of strata schemes. The statutory review made 139 recommendations, none of which were progressed by the former Government. We will make progress. The Government has acted quickly and will introduce a bill this week.

I point out the core parts of the legislation. The bill closes loopholes in the strata collective sale and renewal process. This will end a situation where owners who want to sell are taken advantage of by rogue developers. The bill gets rid of fees and bonds as a condition of having pets, because owners already pay levies to fund those things. The bill ensures that repairs over \$30,000 are subject to a competitive process to ensure that strata owners get fair, high-quality quotes. Finally, the bill will allow Fair Trading to step in when owners corporations become dysfunctional. But this is only the start. Next year more legislation is planned to further improve protections for owners and lift the accountability of developers, agents and strata managers.

The previous Government ignored the needs of people living in strata. We will not make the same mistake. We have appointed a Property Services Commissioner who will be a driver for change and reform. We have an ambitious agenda to increase both the quality and quantity of housing supply, and we are committed to ensuring that we have robust and fairer laws to benefit people living in strata.

Personal Explanation

UNPARLIAMENTARY REMARKS

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:14): By leave: I address an unparliamentary remark made by a member opposite during a question from the member for Gosford to the Minister for Disability Inclusion. During question time, the member for Gosford asked the Minister for Disability Inclusion a question in relation to her portfolio. At the conclusion of the question, a member remarked, "Here she is, the Minister for bugger-all." I consider that to be a gross insult to the House. I believe the member showed contempt for the House. Most of

all, it is offensive to the very people that the Minister of the Crown is privileged to represent. I ask the member who made the remark to own up to it and apologise. Mr Speaker, I also request that you investigate this matter. I am happy to give you the recording of it if needed.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Campbelltown. I will leave it to any member who knows more about or is responsible for the comment to approach me if they wish, to raise the matter within the Chamber as a personal explanation or to withdraw the comment.

Petitions

PETITIONS RECEIVED

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

NSW Ambulance and Paramedics

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly legislate to ensure that New South Wales paramedics receive professional recognition and that NSW Ambulance is properly resourced, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

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

Bills

REVENUE, MINING AND ENERGY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

First Reading

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

Second Reading Speech

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (12:19): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Revenue, Mining and Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 amends a number of Acts and regulations as a result of the Mining and Energy Division of the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union withdrawing from the CFMMEU and becoming a standalone union called the Mining and Energy Union. The bill will address an anomaly in one of the duty exemption provisions and ensure that the Mining and Energy Union can continue to exercise functions under various Acts. At present, certain Acts assign functions to the CFMMEU but it is the Mining and Energy Division which in practice performs these functions. As such, it is necessary to update these references.

The bill amends the Duties Act 1997 to extend an existing duty exemption for property transfers associated with the amalgamation of employee or employer organisations to apply to the withdrawal of such organisations from an amalgamation. It also clarifies that the exemption applies to trusts holding property on behalf of such organisations. There is no sound policy rationale that an exemption for duty for registered employee or employer organisations only applies to amalgamations but not withdrawals from amalgamations. Similar exemptions already exist for the amalgamation and de-amalgamation of registered clubs. The proposed amendment aligns the exemption for registered employee and employer organisations with the exemption applying to registered clubs. Although this provision has been revealed by this case, it will apply for future de-amalgamations of a union or employer organisations.

The bill amends the Coal Industry Act 2001 to refer to the Mining and Energy Union instead of the "CFMMEU". These provisions relate to the company approved by the Minister to perform certain functions in the coal industry relating to mine safety. The bill amends the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 to refer to the Mining and Energy Union instead of the CFMMEU (Mining and Energy Division). This provision relates to union representation on the NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board. The bill amends the Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013 to refer to the Mining and Energy Union instead of the CFMMEU (Mining and Energy Division). These provisions relate to the nomination of an industry safety and health representative and service of documents on an industry safety and health representative. Finally, the bill amends the Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Regulation 2022 to refer to the Mining and Energy Union instead of the CFMMEU (Mining and Energy Division).

Mr Clayton Barr: Hear, hear!

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: These provisions relate to representation on the Mine Safety Advisory Council and the Mining and Petroleum Competence Board. I note the enthusiastic interjection from the member for

Cessnock, given that many of the interactions of these bodies take place in and around, and contend with, his electorate. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

DEFAMATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

First Reading

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

Second Reading Speech

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (12:26): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Defamation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill enacts substantial reforms to Australia's uniform defamation laws: the Model Defamation Provisions. The reforms were developed through a stage two review of the Model Defamation Provisions and agreed on a majority basis by the Standing Council of Attorneys-General. By way of background, in November 2004 attorneys-general agreed to enact model provisions in recognition of the need for uniform defamation law in Australia. All States and Territories subsequently enacted the original Model Defamation Provisions through legislation. In New South Wales that is the Defamation Act 2005.

All States and Territories are parties to the Model Defamation Provisions Intergovernmental Agreement, which, relevantly, establishes the Model Defamation Law Working Party. The working party is required, amongst other things, to report to the Standing Council of Attorneys-General on proposals to amend the Model Defamation Provisions. In 2018 the then Council of Attorneys-General reconvened the Model Defamation Law Working Party to review the Model Defamation Provisions. New South Wales led the stage one review of the Model Defamation Provisions, which was completed in July 2020. The stage one amendments were enacted in New South Wales by the Defamation Amendment Act 2020.

During the review, attorneys-general agreed that a second reform process should be undertaken to address other issues. The stage two review of the Model Defamation Provisions has two parts. Part A, led by New South Wales, addressed the question of digital intermediary liability for the publication of third-party content. Part B, led by Victoria, considered whether absolute privilege should be extended to cover reports of conduct such as sexual harassment and sexual assault to police and other complaints-handling bodies. The stage two review involved detailed policy analysis and included two rounds of public consultation.

First, a discussion paper was released in April 2021, almost 50 written submissions were received, and four stakeholder round tables were held in September and early October 2021. Following this, exposure draft amendments to the Model Defamation Provisions and accompanying policy papers were released in August 2022.

Thirty-six written submissions were received in response to the part A exposure draft amendments and a large round table was held to discuss stakeholder views. Nineteen written submissions were received in response to the part B exposure draft amendments. The Model Defamation Law Working Party carefully considered all of the stakeholder feedback received throughout the stage two review. While there was a broad range of different stakeholder views, the thoughtful and constructive feedback we received was instrumental in the development and refinement of the reforms. I extend my thanks to all stakeholders for their close engagement and contributions to the review.

Throughout the stage two review, New South Wales sought advice from the New South Wales defamation expert panel, which includes the Hon. Chief Justice Lucy McCallum of the ACT Supreme Court; the Hon. Justice John Sackar of the Supreme Court of New South Wales; Judge Judith Gibson of the District Court of New South Wales; Michael Sexton, SC, the New South Wales Solicitor General; and Professor David Rolph of the University of Sydney Law School. The panel also previously included Sandy Dawson, SC, who very sadly passed away in 2022. I acknowledge the significant contributions that Mr Dawson made to both the stage one and stage two reviews of the Model Defamation Provisions. I also thank the New South Wales defamation expert panel for its generous and invaluable contributions to the reform process.

Victoria also sought advice from an expert reference group of academics and senior counsel. On 22 September 2023 the Standing Council of Attorneys-General approved, by majority, the final amendments for part A and part B of the stage two review of the Model Defamation Provisions, subject to some jurisdictions' Cabinet processes, where necessary. I expect that all jurisdictions will enact all of the reforms, except for South Australia, which was in the minority. South Australia has approved aspects of the part A reforms but not all. South Australia has approved the part B reforms.

Uniformity remains a key objective of the Model Defamation Provisions. We are pressing ahead with all of the reforms in New South Wales because there is an urgent need to enact the digital intermediary amendments to provide clarity and clear guidance in this space. These reforms are necessary to address the status and liability of forum administrators, following the High Court decision in the case of *Fairfax Media Publications Pty Ltd & Ors v Voller* [2021] HCA 27. In *Voller*, the forum administrators were media companies hosting public pages on Facebook, but forum administrators may also include individuals or small organisations. The state of defamation law as it applies to forum administrators currently is not acceptable. The centrepiece of the part A reforms is a new defence that is designed to make the law clearer and more certain for all digital intermediaries, and forum administrators in particular.

At the Standing Council of Attorneys-General meeting on 22 September it was also agreed that, firstly, jurisdictions in the majority will use their best endeavours to enact part A and part B amendments to the Model Defamation Provisions for commencement on 1 July 2024 and, secondly, there should be a review of the stage one and stage two amendments to the Model Defamation Provisions that begins no later than three years after the commencement of the stage two amendments in all implementing States and Territories. This bill will enact the amendments in New South Wales.

The amendments to the Model Defamation Provisions and this bill were prepared by Mr John Ledda of Parliamentary Counsel's Office. Mr Ledda also drafted the original Model Defamation Provisions and the stage one amendments. I thank Mr Ledda for this impressive body of work and for his contribution to defamation law in Australia. I should take this opportunity, on behalf of all members in this place, to once again reiterate our very great thanks to Parliamentary Counsel's Office in New South Wales, which has always done terrific work.

I will outline the policy rationale and details of the part A digital intermediary amendments first. After that I will turn to the part B absolute privilege amendments. With respect to part A, defamation law has developed over hundreds of years. For the most part, this has happened well before the internet existed. In the formative years of the development of defamation law, publishing was generally a professional activity subject to editorial standards and pre-moderation. Up until quite recently, most high-profile defamation cases involved prominent public figures suing mainstream media companies. But now, in the modern era of online communications, anyone with an internet connection has the ability to publish to the world at large, with no checks and balance in place to moderate the content they publish. This is made possible by the digital intermediaries that play various roles in the publication process for user-generated or third-party content.

Digital intermediaries range from internet service providers to internet content hosts, social media platforms, search engines and review websites, to name just a few. The potential scenarios involving digital intermediaries are endless but, to give an example of their prevalence and varied involvement in the publication of material, take the situation where an original author creates content and publishes it on a webpage. The internet content host of the webpage on which the material is published is a digital intermediary. The social media platform where the content is then shared is also a digital intermediary, as is the search engine that references the content of the original webpage in search results. Under the common law, the test for publication in defamation is very broad. Essentially, anyone who contributes to any extent to the publication of a defamatory matter is a publisher. This means that nearly all digital intermediaries are likely to be considered publishers of third-party content for the purposes of defamation law.

There have been a number of cases in recent years that have considered the issue of digital intermediary liability for third-party content. They have all demonstrated the complex questions that arise and the potential for long and costly disputes. Stakeholders and legal experts have raised concerns that the current state of Australian defamation law in this area is unclear and inconsistent. The *Voller* case that I mentioned earlier is of particular note. In *Voller*, a majority of the High Court held that several media companies were publishers of comments posted on their public Facebook pages by third-party users responding to news stories they had posted.

Since the *Voller* decision, there have been calls for law reform to address the position of forum administrators such as the media companies in that case. The subsequent County Court of Victoria decision in *Zuchowski v Howe* [2022] VCC 1604 demonstrates that this issue also has the capacity to impact private individuals. The court found the defendant, a volunteer administrator of a public Facebook page, to be a primary publisher of defamatory third-party comments made in response to content that he had posted. Forum administrators are included in the definition of "digital intermediary" for the purpose of our reforms. This is one of the key issues the reforms seek to address.

At the heart of defamation law is the need to achieve a balance between two important but competing interests: firstly, the protection of a person's reputation; and secondly, freedom of expression. While this has never been an easy task, it is far more difficult now given the complexity and proliferation of online publications. The digital intermediary amendments in the bill are a pragmatic set of reforms that respond to the full spectrum of digital intermediary functions. The changes are intended to strike a better balance between protecting reputations

and not unreasonably limiting freedom of expression in the various circumstances where third parties publish defamatory matter via digital intermediaries.

In summary, there are six key reforms: one, a conditional exemption from defamation liability for conduit, caching and storage services, and for search engines in relation to organic search results; two, updates to the mandatory requirements for an offer to make amends for online publications; three, a requirement for courts to consider balancing factors when making preliminary discovery orders against digital intermediaries; four, a new innocent dissemination defence for digital intermediaries, subject to a simple complaints process; five, a specific power for courts to make non-party orders against digital intermediaries to prevent access to defamatory matter online; and six, expanded electronic means by which notices can be served.

I now turn to the detail of the proposed digital intermediary amendments. Schedule 1 [1] to the bill adds new defined terms to the existing section 4 definitions of the Defamation Act 2005. The new defined terms are fundamental to the operation of the digital intermediary amendments in the bill. I will explain some of the new defined terms later as I outline the substantive amendment provisions to which they relate. However, some of terms apply broadly across the amendment provisions so I will cover those now, starting with the term "digital intermediary". First, I note that a lot of policy thinking, consultation and refinement sits behind this definition. Digital intermediary, in the context of the publication of digital matter, is defined to mean:

... a person, other than an author, originator or poster of the matter, who provides or administers the online service by means of which the matter is published.

A note makes clear that there may be more than one digital intermediary in relation to the publication of the same digital matter. "Online service" essentially means any service provided to a person to enable them to use the internet. This includes using the internet to do a range of things, such as sending or receiving content, searching for content, sharing content and interacting with other people. Some examples of an online service are included in a note to the definition to emphasise the range of services covered by the definition. An "online service" specifically includes a forum created or administered by a person using a facility provided by an internet-based social media platform that enables users to share content or interact with other users about a topic.

The term "digital intermediary" is intended to apply broadly. It was developed to cover the full spectrum of functions considered by the stage two review of the Model Defamation Provisions. It deliberately includes forum administrators. It is also intended to cover any new or emerging functions, given the pace at which technology in this area evolves. Another important aspect of the definition of 'digital intermediary' is the exclusions. The definition specifically excludes the author, originator or poster of the matter because they are not intermediaries. "Poster" is defined to mean a person who uses the online service to communicate the matter to one or more other persons. The terms "author" and "originator" are not defined. Both terms are used in the existing innocent dissemination offence at section 32.

For the purpose of the digital intermediary amendments, firstly, "author" is intended to cover circumstances such as when a person who writes a defamatory statement is not the person who posts it. Secondly, "originator" is intended to include anyone who plays a role in creating the content. Often they may also be the poster, but in some circumstances they may not—for example, where a person edits and endorses a statement that is drafted and posted by another person. Finally, the term "digital matter" is defined to mean "matter published in electronic form by means of an online service". This is not intended to affect or limit the meaning of "matter" in the Act. It is only intended to cover a subset of matter, being digital matter.

The bill inserts a new section 4A into the Defamation Act to make clear that an example or note at the foot of a provision forms part of the Act. Proposed new section 4A also confirms that an example in the Act is not exhaustive. It may extend, but does not limit, the meaning of the provision to which it relates. New section 4A is important because examples are used extensively in this bill to illustrate the intended application of the amendments.

I now turn to parts of the bill relating to exemptions from liability for digital intermediaries. Schedule 1 [3] to the bill inserts new division 2A into the Defamation Act. This includes two conditional statutory exemptions from defamation liability that apply to narrow classes of digital intermediaries. In the development of defamation law it has been argued that certain traditional intermediaries, such as telephone lines and postal services, are so passive in the publication process that they are not publishers; indeed, they are mere conduits. The stage two review considered if there are equal passive digital intermediary functions that should have statutory protection from defamation liability for third-party content. The stage two review concluded that there is a very small group of digital intermediary functions that meet this criteria.

As a result, schedule 1 [3] establishes a conditional exemption from defamation liability for three specific digital intermediary functions. Firstly, a caching service that stores content temporarily to make onward transmission more efficient will be exempted. For example, this includes files commonly downloaded from a

website temporarily and automatically stored to speed up the download time. Secondly, a conduit service whose principal function is to enable users to connect with the internet, send data or receive data will be exempted. This includes internet service providers and email service providers. Thirdly, a storage service whose principal function is to enable users to store content remotely will be exempted. An example is a cloud service provider that enables users to store photos for later retrieval. Proposed new section 10B defines "caching service", "conduit service" and "storage service" and includes examples to illustrate what each definition is intended to cover.

The policy rationale for this narrow exemption from liability is to recognise the passive role that these digital intermediaries play in the publication process. This does not substantially change the law. These digital intermediaries are generally not the subject of defamation claims and are unlikely to be considered publishers under the Commonwealth test. The intention is to provide clarity and certainty. The exemption would apply irrespective of whether the digital intermediary knew, or ought reasonably to have known, the digital matter was defamatory. Given the breadth of this protection, the exemption only applies very narrowly, and a set of conditions are included to ensure that if an intermediary plays a more active role in a publication—for example, by editing the content—that would make the intermediary ineligible.

The conditions that apply to the exemption are listed at proposed new section 10C (1) (c). Even where a digital intermediary meets the definition of caching, conduit or storage service, if it played a more active role in relation to the digital matter in question, such as editing or promoting, the exemption would not apply. The stage two review of the Model Defamation Provisions also included careful considerations of the functions performed by search engine providers. Ultimately, it was concluded that a conditional exemption from defamation liability from search engine providers in relation to organic search results is appropriate.

The policy rationale behind this conclusion is that, firstly, in performing the standard functions, search engine providers have no interest in the content. They simply use an automated process to provide users with access to third-party content. Secondly, search engine providers are unable to remove content from the internet and can only block access to identified URLs from their search engine. Thirdly, unlike, for example, a social media platform, a search engine provider does not have any relationship with the original author. Fourthly, search engines provide significant public benefit and operate on a massive scale. The exemption for search engine providers applies regardless of whether the search engine provider knew, or ought reasonably to have known, the digital matter was defamatory.

Given the strength of the protection, the exemption has been designed to apply very narrowly. Firstly, proposed new section 10D (1) provides that the exemption only applies to the publication of digital matter comprised of search results or the publication of digital matter to which the search results provide a hyperlink. "Search result" is defined in proposed new section 10B. It means a result generated by a search engine that is limited to identifying a webpage on which content is located by reference to one or more of: the title of the webpage, a hyperlink to the webpage, or an extract or an image from the webpage.

Secondly, proposed new section 10D (1) confines the exemption to publications where the search engine provider's role was limited to providing an automated process for the user to generate the results. An example of a publication that would not be covered by the exemption due to these limitations is an autocomplete suggestion for search terms. Another example is an answer composed by artificial intelligence, such as Bing Chat, in response to a question input by a user. Thirdly, proposed new section 10D (2) provides that sponsored search results are not covered by the exemption.

The new court power to make orders against non-party digital intermediaries provides for a safeguard where defamatory matter may have been published, even where digital intermediaries qualify for a statutory exemption from liability. The bill will insert new section 39A into the Defamation Act, providing the court with the power to order a digital intermediary that is not a party to proceedings to remove or disable access to defamatory matter online in certain circumstances. The new court power would apply to all digital intermediaries, including those that qualify for the statutory exemptions, meaning that even if a digital intermediary is exempt from liability it will still be possible for orders to be made that the digital intermediary remove access to defamatory material in some circumstances. I will go into further detail about this amendment as I speak about remedies introduced by the bill.

The bill provides an early determination process for the digital intermediary exemptions. This is at proposed new section 10E, which provides that the judicial officer in defamation proceedings is to determine whether an exemption is established as soon as practicable before the trial starts, unless the judicial officer is satisfied that there are good reasons to postpone the determination to a later state of the proceedings. New section 10E (2) (a) provides a non-exhaustive list of matters that are relevant to this decision. The purpose of the early determination process is to support the policy intent behind the statutory exemptions—namely, to recognise that the role of these digital intermediaries in the publication process is such that they should not be subject to defamation claims. Ideally, the early determination process will mean that time and costs are not expended

unnecessarily. The savings and transitional provisions in relation to the statutory exemptions are the same as those for the new innocent dissemination defence. I will briefly outline the intended operation when I speak about the new defence.

One of the objects of the Defamation Act 2005 is to promote speedy and non-litigious methods of dispute resolution. Part 3 of the Act establishes a procedure to enable parties to settle disputes without the need for expensive litigation by encouraging a publisher to make a reasonable offer to make amends to the aggrieved person. If the aggrieved person does not accept an offer that was reasonable in all the circumstances, the publisher may rely on their offer to make amends as a defence in any subsequent defamation action against them, in accordance with the terms of the Act.

Section 15 of the Act sets out a number of elements a reasonable offer to make amends must and may include. I will refer to these requirements as the mandatory and discretionary elements of an offer to make amends. The bill includes two proposed amendments to section 15 of the Act. The first is a minor amendment to one of the discretionary elements of an offer to make amends. Section 15 (1A) (b) currently provides that, if the defamatory matter in question has been "published on a website or any other electronically accessible location", an offer to make amends may include "an offer to remove the matter from the website or location". That was added as part of the stage one amendments to accommodate online publications.

The bill amends section 15 (1A) (b) to provide that, if the matter is digital matter, an offer to make amends may include an "offer to take access prevention steps in relation to the matter". This amendment broadens the provision by allowing a publisher to offer to remove, block, disable or otherwise prevent access to a matter, and is consistent with wording used in the bill. A more significant amendment is proposed in relation to two of the mandatory elements of an offer to make amends.

These existing mandatory elements are, firstly, section 15 (1) (d), which provides, relevantly, that an offer to make amends must include "an offer to publish, or join in publishing, a reasonable correction of, or clarification of or additional information about, the matter in question"; and, secondly, section 15 (1) (e), which provides that an offer to make amends must include, "if material containing the matter has been given to someone else by the publisher or with the publisher's knowledge, an offer to take, or join in taking, reasonable steps to tell the other person that the matter is or may be defamatory of the complainant".

These mandatory elements were not originally designed with digital intermediaries for online publications in mind. They make sense for traditional publications, such as hard copy newspapers, that do not remain readily accessible at the click of a button. If the publisher of a newspaper receives a concerns notice about a defamatory statement in a particular edition, they could then offer to publish a correction in a subsequent edition, presumably reaching largely the same audience. However, a digital intermediary may not be able to do these things. For example, a search engine would not be able to publish a reasonable correction for a search result. Also, when defamatory matter is published online, it often stays there. Added to this concern is the ease and speed at which it can be further disseminated to a wider audience. It is understandable then that, for many plaintiffs, their central concern is simply to have the matter removed.

The bill inserts new section 15 (1B), which updates the operation of these two mandatory elements for digital matter. It provides that, if the matter in question is digital matter, an offer to take access prevention steps may be made instead of or in addition to either or both of the offers mentioned in paragraphs 15 (1) (d) and (e). The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that there is an appropriate avenue for offering to make amends in circumstances where it is not possible or meaningful for online publishers to publish a correction or clarification. It also reflects the kind of remedy that many plaintiffs are seeking in relation to online publications. An important safeguard is that, under the existing section 18, if the defendant seeks to rely on the offer to make amends defence, the court must be satisfied that, in all the circumstances, the offer was reasonable. The offer to make amends changes will apply to offers made after the commencement of the amendments. That is even where the matter is published before the commencement.

Many originators who post defamatory material online do so using a pseudonym. In order to commence defamation proceedings, the plaintiff must identify and locate the originator. In some recent cases, particularly in the Federal Court, plaintiffs have obtained preliminary discovery orders requiring a digital intermediary to disclose information concerning the originator's identity. Australian courts already can and do consider proportionality, privacy and the risk of abuse of process in exercising the discretion to make preliminary discovery orders. However, there may still be a risk that such orders are abused or have a chilling effect.

Proposed new section 23A provides that, before making an order for preliminary discovery, the court must take into account the objects of the Act and any privacy, safety or other public interest considerations.

This does not provide a new avenue to seek preliminary discovery; it simply applies this requirement over the general rules. While courts already have the discretion to consider these factors, there is value in making consideration of these factors mandatory. This will promote consistency across jurisdictions. It is also in the interests of protecting domestic violence victims and other vulnerable members of society. For example, a person who has published matter online using a pseudonym may fear for their safety. A bad actor could seek a preliminary discovery order on the basis that they want to commence defamation proceedings against the person when the real motive is to find out the person's current location or other contact details.

Proposed new section 23A would ensure the court takes into account privacy and safety considerations before making a preliminary discovery order requiring a digital intermediary to disclose any identifying information it holds about the person. The savings and transitional provisions for proposed new section 23A are the same as for the power of the court to make non-party orders. I will briefly outline their intended operation when I speak about the power to make non-party orders in a moment.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): It being 1.00 p.m., business is interrupted for orders of the day (committee reports).

Committees

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

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

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (13:01): As Chair: It is with great pleasure that I address the House today as the chair of the Legislation Review Committee. The committee tabled its fifth digest of the Parliament yesterday. The committee examined six bills and four regulations, commenting on one regulation. As members may be aware, the committee has the important role of reviewing all bills introduced in Parliament and all regulations subject to disallowance against a set of issues set out in the Legislation Review Act 1987. The committee's scrutiny of legislation is intended to inform members of both Houses and the community about the potential impact of legislation on personal rights and liberties and whether they enable the inappropriate use of government or legislative power.

I draw members' attention to some of the key issues raised in the digest. The Criminal Procedure Amendment (Child Sexual Offence Evidence) Bill 2023 seeks to establish a scheme allowing a child involved in court proceedings relating to a sexual offence in the District Court to give evidence in a prerecorded evidence hearing in the absence of the jury. The provisions largely mirror a pilot program that has been in place from 2016. The accused would be required to cross-examine the witness at the prerecorded hearing before the proper criminal trial. There are also provisions for recalling a witness that has given prerecorded evidence with leave of the court. The committee noted that prerecording evidence may impact on an accused's right to a fair trial and could cause delays. However, the committee recognised that the bill is intended to reduce stress and trauma for vulnerable witnesses and that it largely continues a pilot program that has been running in New South Wales since 2016. In the circumstance, the committee made no further comment.

I now draw the House's attention to the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2023. This private member's bill aims to change voting laws to provide that voters must show evidence of their identity to vote. It also seeks to change the system for marking off voting, providing that election officials must use an electronic authorised roll on a computer system. The committee noted that by requiring a person to produce identification documents in order to vote, the bill may infringe on a person's access to voting. This may impact on a person's right to vote and participate in public elections. The committee acknowledged that the amendments are intended to protect the integrity of the election process. However, the committee noted that everyone is constitutionally obligated to vote in each election and can be fined for failing to do so. By potentially limiting access to voting, a person may be at greater risk of committing an electoral offence. For those reasons, the committee has referred this matter to Parliament for its consideration.

I now turn to a regulation that the committee reported on. The Court Security and Surveillance Devices Amendment (Body-Worn Recording Devices) Regulation 2023 creates a trial to permit sheriff's officers to use body-worn recording devices, including while in court. The regulation also permits the transmission and distribution of recordings of court proceedings in certain circumstances. The trial would commence on 1 December 2023 and end on 30 November 2024. The committee considered that this regulation may infringe on a person's privacy rights by permitting the broad use of body-worn recording devices. The committee acknowledged that the regulations are time limited and associated with a trial period. It also recognised that there is public interest in deterring violence towards officers in the course of their duties. However, the committee noted that there did not appear to be provisions in the regulations or parent Act limiting how recordings by body-worn

devices may be stored or how they may be used. For those reasons, the committee has referred the matter to Parliament for its consideration.

That concludes my remarks. I encourage everyone to read the full digests, which are available on the committee's webpage. I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions to the digest and the secretariat for their very hard work and support. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (13:05): I contribute to the take-note debate on the Legislation Review Committee's fifth digest. I implore members to explore it in detail because it makes very interesting reading. This month the committee looked at six bills and four regulations for the fifth digest. We considered the rights and liberties of the public, which are important when making legislation in Parliament. The committee discussed the Criminal Procedure Amendment (Child Sexual Offence Evidence) Bill 2023, which is about prerecorded evidence. Anything that makes difficult and sensitive court cases easier needs to be considered and supported, but we must protect the right to a fair trial. We know the bill is based on a good pilot program. Getting the balance right is important, and I think the bill does that. I look forward to the Minister's response in that regard.

Turning to the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2023, we all have the democratic right to vote and we are very protective of that right. But we must get the balance right. We do not want rotting of the system. While we should ask for more evidence about who on the authorised roll is voting, that may infringe on personal rights. We are trying to balance the rights and liberties of the public while maintaining the strength of our democratic principles.

Finally, the Court Security and Surveillance Devices Amendment (Body-Worn Recording Devices) Regulation 2023 is an important move to protect our police as much as the public. However, we acknowledge that it steps into the space of making sure people have the right to a fair trial and we do not end up with illegal evidence. The regulation is about strengthening the ability of police to gather evidence in difficult and complicated cases. The NSW Police Force has an important and difficult job. I think police support the regulation. We will continue to make sure the regulations suit the technology of today and the policing of tomorrow. I thank the committee for its work on the digest. I thank the secretariat, which does a lot of work checking the bills and which has an incredible turnaround time to produce the digests.

Sometimes the pressure that is put on the secretariat to assess bills and turn around reports so the committee can form an opinion is enormous. I commend the report to the House and implore all members to read it.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (13:09): I will not take too much of House's time. I simply address the Electoral Amendment (Voter ID and Electronic Mark Off) Bill 2023, which is my private member's bill. I thank the Legislation Review Committee for its comments and reflections on the legislation. I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his comments specifically in relation to the bill. It is about getting the balance right. I acknowledge the argument with respect to limiting franchise when providing additional safeguards in our electoral system. Many of those arguments that the committee respectfully reflected on are outdated in the context of how easy it is to access identification, particularly through our mobile phones.

When we reflect on the evidence provided by the Electoral Commission on the 2019 State election, we find that more than 2,200 people voted more than once. It is appropriate that we safeguard our electoral system with very simple amendments such as requiring electronic mark-off at each polling booth—that is not a new recommendation; it is a recommendation that has been made by several electoral matters committees over the years—and requiring some form of identification. I ask members to turn their minds to the detail in the bill. The list of identification is very broad, and deliberately so, in order to not disadvantage people, as was inferred by the committee. With all due respect to the committee—and as a former member of the committee, I appreciate the work it does—we need to look at some of the evidence.

We must look also at some of the jurisdictional arguments from countries such as the largest democracy in the world, India, which is moving to this form of electoral safeguard. I do not think it is above the wit and wisdom of our State to safeguard our votes, particularly when the Electoral Commission is talking about improving access to voting. While I appreciated the committee's arguments, some of them may have had currency many years ago and I respectfully argue that it is probably not the case today. I hope that the Government, in considering the bill, will have regard to the very sensible place it comes from. I genuinely believe it is a sensible amending bill. We can be leaders in this State in safeguarding our democracy.

I do not think people should be able to vote multiple times. I think also that, where the technology exists, we should use it. It is not a difficult amending bill to embrace. In fact, I think this reform should have happened many years ago. Whilst I thank the committee for its comments, I simply ask the committee and members of the House to turn their minds to the existing evidence and some of the things that are being done in other countries.

The opportunity is there for us to be a leader in safeguarding our outcomes to make sure that a voter's intention at the ballot box is reflected in the inevitable result.

Report noted.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li): The debate on committee reports having concluded, I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

Announcements

PUBLIC INTEREST DEBATE

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I inform members that the member for Bathurst has amended the public interest debate motion. The revised version was circulated to members and staff at 2.05 p.m. today.

Bills

DEFAMATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Speech

Business resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Attorney General) (14:31): The most significant reform in the Defamation Amendment Bill 2023 is the introduction of a new innocent dissemination defence for digital intermediaries. The purpose of the new defence is to recognise that digital intermediaries should not be liable for defamatory content where they are merely a subordinate distributor and lack actual knowledge of the content in question. Put simply, once the digital intermediary has received a written complaint about a publication, it must take reasonable steps, if available, to remove or otherwise prevent access to the matter within seven days in order to be able to rely on the defence.

The new defence has been designed to avoid the problems that have been identified with the application of the existing section 32 innocent dissemination defence to digital intermediaries. The new defence provides that the plaintiff must have given the digital intermediary a written complaint containing certain basic information to put the digital intermediary on notice. The defence gives a clear time frame in which action needs to be taken to rely on the defence, and the defence is available to digital intermediaries that moderate and remove content that may be defamatory or breach their terms of service—so that the defence protects "good behaviour".

I briefly outline the key elements of the defence. The onus is on the defendant to prove these elements. First of all, the defendant must establish that they were a "digital intermediary" in relation to the publication. As I mentioned earlier, this means if the defendant was the author, originator or poster of the digital matter, they cannot rely on the defence. As I have also explained, "digital intermediary" is an umbrella term covering a wide range of functions. Some obvious examples of digital intermediaries that may choose to avail themselves of this defence include social media platforms, knowledge-sharing platforms and review websites. Importantly, the definition of "digital intermediary" includes forum administrators. This means that an individual or organisation holding a discussion forum on an online platform would be able to rely on this defence. In fact, it has been specifically designed with forum administrators in mind.

Some digital intermediaries, including forum administrators, exercise "good behaviour" by monitoring for and removing unlawful content. There is a risk that this means the digital intermediary could be considered to be an originator because it plays a more direct and "active" role in relation to the content. This would make it ineligible for the defence. New section 31A (5) makes clear that where a digital intermediary monitors for or removes unlawful content, it would still meet the definition of a "digital intermediary".

The second element of the defence at new section 31A (1) (b) is that at the time of the publication the defendant must have had an "accessible complaints mechanism" for the plaintiff to use. This requirement is not at all onerous. "Accessible complaints mechanism" is defined to mean an easily accessible address, location or other mechanism for the plaintiff to complain about the publication. This could be an online form, direct messaging or email address. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that only those digital intermediaries who are able to be contacted, and have a complaint raised with them, can avail themselves of this defence. A digital intermediary cannot avoid liability by being difficult to contact.

If a plaintiff gives the defendant a written complaint in accordance with new section 31A, reasonable access prevention steps must be taken within seven days in order for the defence to apply. It is important to emphasise that if the plaintiff has not given the defendant a written complaint, the defence would apply without the need to

take reasonable access prevention steps. New section 31A (3) stipulates the requirements for a written complaint to be made. They are not onerous and are intended to be accessible to ordinary people.

The complaint must contain sufficient information to enable a reasonable person to be made aware of the plaintiff's name, the matter and where it can be located, and that the plaintiff considers the matter to be defamatory. Also, the complaint must be given using the defendant's accessible complaints mechanism or in another way permitted by the Act. If the plaintiff gives a written complaint satisfying these requirements, the defendant must prove that reasonable access prevention steps, if available, were taken. Those steps must have been taken before the complaint was given or within seven days after the complaint was given. "Access prevention step" means a step, firstly, to remove the matter, or, secondly, to block, disable or otherwise prevent access, whether by some or all persons, to the matter.

New section 31A (1) (c) recognises that reasonable access prevention steps might not be available to a digital intermediary in every situation. For example, reasonable access prevention steps would not be available to a person administering a forum on a social media platform that does not allow the administrator to delete or hide forum members' posts. A digital intermediary's failure to take reasonable access prevention steps where none were available will not deny the digital intermediary access to the defence.

New section 31A (4) provides that the defence is defeated if the defendant was motivated by malice in establishing or providing the online service by which the digital matter was published. The onus is on the plaintiff to prove malice. This provision is intended to cover circumstances where the digital intermediary created, provided or administered the forum or platform on which the matter was published with an improper motive.

The savings and transitional provisions provide that generally both the new defence and the statutory exemptions will apply to matter published after the amendments commence. This is subject to one exception where the same or substantially the same matter is published both before and after commencement. Where there are multiple publications of that nature, the existing law will continue to apply to matter published within 12 months of the first publication.

Courts in defamation proceedings generally only grant orders against defendants that are a party to the proceedings. However, in some circumstances, even if a plaintiff has obtained a judgement in their favour against an originator, it may be difficult to enforce a remedy, for example, where the originator is unable to remove content because the content has "gone viral"—so to speak—or simply refuses to do so. In those circumstances, despite not being party to the proceedings, digital intermediaries may be in a good position to assist. New section 39A would explicitly empower a court to make an order against a digital intermediary who is not a party to the proceedings to take access prevention steps or other steps the court considers necessary to prevent or limit the continued publication or republication of the matter. That would apply in circumstances where the court has granted interim or final judgement for the plaintiff in an action for defamation, for example, against the originator.

The court could make an order against any digital intermediary even if it were eligible for one of the statutory exemptions. The court would not be allowed to make an order unless the digital intermediary has been given an opportunity to be heard about whether it is appropriate for the order to be made. That would allow the non-party digital intermediary to make submissions to the court, for example, as to its capacity to take specific access prevention steps and the effectiveness of specific access prevention steps in limiting the republication of the matter. However, the court could make a temporary order without giving the non-party digital intermediary an opportunity to be heard if the court considers it necessary for the order to be made expeditiously. The exception, set out in new section 39A (5), allows for urgent ex parte relief.

The amendments relating to preliminary discovery orders and orders against non-party digital intermediaries generally apply to orders made after the commencement of the amendments. However, the existing law continues to apply to a variation or revocation of an order made before commencement. Section 44 of the Act provides for the means by which a person may serve a notice or document for the purposes of the Act. A concerns notice is an example of a document covered by section 44. The only means of electronic communication currently allowed in the Act is email. That does not reflect the nature of modern online communication, particularly via digital intermediaries. The bill amends section 44 to allow a document to be served by sending it by messaging or other electronic communication in addition to being able to send it by email.

Another problem with section 44 as it is currently drafted is the requirement that the email address be "specified" by the recipient for service. On one view, the term "specify" requires express words from the recipient that the email address may be used for service. The proposed amendments to section 44 would address that by allowing a document to be served to an electronic address "indicated" by the recipient for service. It is intended to capture conduct that might reasonably be interpreted as permitting service at the address. The proposed amendments seek to balance expanding the means of service and it being likely the document will come to the

attention of the recipient. The proposed amendments have been designed with the service of complaints under the new defence for digital intermediaries under new section 31A specifically in mind. However, they would apply equally to concerns notices. The amendments will apply to notices served after the commencement of the amendments.

I now turn to the stage two review part B reforms agreed by the Standing Council of Attorneys-General. This is in relation to absolute privilege. I first extend my thanks to our Victorian colleagues for all their hard work leading the part B reforms. The original impetus behind part B was a concern that the potential threat of defamation proceedings may deter victim-survivors from coming forward to police or other complaints-handling bodies about conduct such as sexual harassment and sexual assault. I note that the Minister for Women, who takes great interest in such matters, is with us in the Chamber at the moment. Absolute privilege would address any chilling effect because it provides a complete defence that cannot be defeated in any circumstance.

While reports to police and other complaints-handling bodies would be protected by the existing qualified privilege defence, the victim-survivor would still need to establish that the defence applies. The qualified privilege defence can be defeated if the plaintiff proves that the defendant was "actuated by malice" in making the publication. In cases of that nature, it is likely that the plaintiff would be asserting that the person who made the complaint is deliberately lying, which would constitute malice. So the potential threat of defamation proceedings remains. Absolute privilege is the strongest possible protection from defamation liability. The rationale behind absolute privilege against defamation claims is that certain communications are deemed more important than a plaintiff's right to protect their reputation and should be protected.

The Model Defamation Provisions already provide absolute privilege in a number of specific circumstances, for example, to matter published in the course of proceedings of a parliamentary body, Australian court or tribunal. There are two components to the part B reforms agreed by the Standing Council of Attorneys-General: firstly, an amendment to extend absolute privilege to matter published to police; and, secondly, guiding principles to be used by jurisdictions to determine whether to extend absolute privilege to matter published to a complaints-handling body for the purposes of part B. Those guiding principles were published together with the communique for the 22 September Standing Council of Attorneys-General meeting.

The bill enacts the amendment agreed by all jurisdictions to extend absolute privilege to matter published to police. Members of the public may be surprised to know that a report made to police is not currently protected by the absolute privilege defence. We know that victim-survivors already face many barriers that may prevent or hinder them in making a complaint to police. We must take action to remove those types of barriers where possible. The amendment will remove one such barrier. The reform is also consistent with the approach developed under the common law of the United Kingdom that complaints to police are protected by absolute privilege. Importantly, there are safeguards against malicious reporting. It is an offence to give a false or misleading statement to police.

I will now turn to the detail of the absolute privilege amendments. Section 27 (1) of the Act provides that it is a defence to the publication of defamatory matter if the defendant proves that it was published on an occasion of absolute privilege. Section 27 (2) provides a non-exhaustive list of occasions of absolute privilege. The bill inserts new section 27 (2) (b1), which provides that a matter is published on an occasion of absolute privilege where the matter is published to a person who, at the time of the publication, is an "official" of a police force or service of an Australian jurisdiction acting in an official capacity. New section 27 (3) defines "official". It includes officers, employees and members of staff of the police force or service. The definition of "official" also includes another person engaged to act for or on behalf of the police force or service. It is intended to cover, for example, police officers of other jurisdictions and contractors. The amendment will apply to matter published after the amendments commence.

As I mentioned, the second component of the part B reforms will involve jurisdictions referring to the published guiding principles to extend absolute privilege to matter published to some complaints-handling bodies. It is using an existing mechanism in the Model Defamation Provisions that allows jurisdictions to extend absolute privilege to matter published by a person or body in any circumstances specified in schedule 1 to the Act. Complaints-handling bodies are specific to each jurisdiction, so this work will be done individually. However, the guiding principles will promote a consistent approach. The guiding principles set out the types of complaint-handling bodies that are within the scope of the part B reforms.

They also provide guidance on the kind of safeguards that would be sufficient to protect against the making of false and misleading reports. New South Wales has already extended absolute privilege to a wide range of circumstances under schedule 1 to the Act. Some are within the scope of the part B reforms—such as matters arising under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. The New South Wales Government will consider any additional circumstances that should be covered in schedule 1 to the Act in accordance with the guiding principles for part B.

In conclusion, all of the amendments in the bill are the end result of a significant reform process. They address complex issues presented to us in this age of digital communications. The fundamental principles of defamation law prevail but the part A changes to the Act are designed to ensure certainty and clarity for both plaintiffs and digital intermediaries. The absolute privilege amendments recognise that where there are barriers preventing victim-survivors from coming forward to police, they should be eliminated. Overall, these reforms will give the Act the tools and dexterity it needs to strike the right balance between protecting reputations and freedom of expression in the context of the very modern challenges now faced by defamation law. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (14:51): I continue my contribution to debate on the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. I am glad that the Government is focused on taking further action to address the scourge of silicosis in the workplace as part of its election commitments taken to the people of New South Wales in March this year. The Government has sought to implement further reforms to tackle the risk and has committed to a suite of policy proposals to tackle silicosis, both standalone and as part of a national process. The bill will action a component of one of those election commitments, that of health screening and tracking at-risk workers. Firstly, new section 273A will enable SafeWork NSW to establish a silica worker register and require persons conducting a business or undertaking to act in accordance with the regulations.

The second component of the new division, new section 273B, will ensure that the register is not publicly available to enable the information contained in the register to be shared with SafeWork NSW, icare and any other government sector agency as prescribed in the regulations. These amendments ensure there are sufficient regulation-making powers in the Work Health and Safety Act to establish such a register, with further work and consultation with our stakeholders to be undertaken when developing work health and safety regulations in the future. This amendment creates the framework required to implement this election commitment. It will further protect workers from the dangers proposed by silicosis. Through these amendments the bill will both enhance the regulator's ability to take action concerning prohibited asbestos as well as establish a silica worker register. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (14:53): I speak in support of the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. The Government is amending the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to implement outstanding recommendations from the 2018 review of the model work health and safety [WHS] laws, to reflect the recent amendments made to work health and safety. In 2017 independent reviewer Ms Marie Boland was engaged by Safe Work Australia to undertake the 2018 review. In 2020 New South Wales expedited 12 of the recommendations from the review ahead of the national process, and enacted legislation in New South Wales to prevent workplace deaths, streamline investigations and clarify the WHS laws. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to amend the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* ... to incorporate amendments made to the Model Work, Health and Safety Act ... relating to the following—
 - (i) penalty amounts,
 - (ii) liability of bodies corporate for the conduct of officers, employees and agents,
 - (iii) the powers and responsibilities of inspectors,
 - (iv) prohibited asbestos notices,
 - (v) prohibiting a person from taking out insurance for penalties imposed under the Act,
- (b) to amend the Act to make provision for the establishment of a register to monitor the health of workers exposed to silica dust,
- (c) to amend the *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017* to incorporate increased penalty amounts in line with penalty increases incorporated in the *Model Work Health and Safety Regulations* ...

These proposed amendments to the New South Wales legislation will better align with the updated Model Work Health and Safety Act and, where applicable, will ensure the policy intent of the model laws have been captured in New South Wales. In 2018 the Boland review recommended that the penalty levels in the Model Work Health and Safety Act be amended to reflect increases in the consumer price index [CPI] and in the value of penalty units in participating jurisdictions since 2011, and reviewing the increased penalty levels as part of future reviews of the Model Work Health and Safety Act and Model Work Health and Safety Regulations to ensure the levels

remain effective and appropriate. New South Wales increased its work health and safety penalties in June 2020, and they have been indexed each year to align with CPI increases.

The most recent increase occurred on 1 July 2023. This amendment aligns the CPI increase to the model Act, enabling the nationally consistent approach to indexing. The New South Wales amendment increase for the maximum penalties will bring New South Wales in line with the equivalent increase in the penalty amount in the model Act and regulations to achieve consistency among the jurisdictions that have adopted the Model Work Health and Safety Laws. This alignment between the model penalty increases will not be as major an increase for New South Wales as it will be for other jurisdictions that have not increased their penalties in the past 12 years.

In relation to the category 1 offence penalty increase, in March 2023 work health and safety Ministers agreed to significantly increase the penalties for a category 1 offence—the highest offence in the Act, targeted at serious injury, illness and death. This offence is key to and will strengthen the deterrent power of the Act. It is consistent with the risk-based preventative framework and is in line with community expectations. This key increase change in the case of an offence committed by an individual as a person conducting a business or undertaking, or as an officer of a PCBU, is an increase in the maximum penalty from \$798,000 to \$2.168 million and an increase in the maximum imprisonment time from five years to 10 years.

For body corporates, the maximum penalty will increase from \$3.9 million to \$10.4 million. For an individual, for a category 1 offence the maximum penalty will increase from \$399,000 to \$1.04 million. These new penalty provisions will commence on 1 July 2024 to align with the existing indexing process. The penalties apply to maximum court-imposed penalty amounts. That commencement date will also provide time for the work health and safety regulators to advise their stakeholders of the upcoming changes.

The additional amendment to the prohibited insurance provision, section 272A, means that the Work Health and Safety Act will align with the model provisions, providing that if proceedings are brought against a person for a contravention of the provision, the evidential burden is on the person to show they had a reasonable excuse for entering into the contract or arrangement.

The new section 272A (3) ensures that a person cannot rely on a contract or agreement that has been entered into contrary to section 272A (1). The amendment makes the legal status of such contracts or arrangements clear, leaving no doubt as to its meaning and legal interpretation.

Item 18 of schedule 1 inserts a new provision, division 2A—Prohibited Asbestos Notices. This amendment defines "prohibited asbestos" as asbestos or asbestos containing material that has been illegally fixed or installed in a workplace on or after 31 December 2003. On 31 December 2003, an Australia-wide ban on the manufacture, use and importation of asbestos came into effect. Since that date it has been illegal to import or use asbestos in Australian workplaces, which is for very good reason—I am sure we all know somebody who has suffered from mesothelioma. Despite the ban, asbestos that has been manufactured, fixed or installed since 31 December 2003 is still being found in Australian workplaces. Unfortunately, in many countries, despite the known threat to human health, asbestos is still used in the manufacture of products, and, despite the ban, these asbestos products make their way into the Australian supply chain and ultimately into New South Wales workplaces.

The amendment aligns with the model work health and safety legislation and ensures that work health and safety regulators have the appropriate powers to deal with prohibited asbestos. It means that a notice must be issued in all cases where prohibited asbestos is found, to ensure that the risks posed are promptly addressed. It puts beyond doubt who is being issued the notice and who must safely manage and remove the prohibited asbestos. The Government has also committed to a suite of policy proposals to tackle silicosis. This includes a commitment to establish a register for workers exposed to silica dust while at work, a circumstance that has become extremely apparent over recent years. It is envisaged that the register will inform health screening and enable epidemiological research and tracking for workers exposed to silica dust at work. The establishment of a silica worker register is aimed at improving the monitoring of the health of workers exposed to silica dust.

While the impact of regulatory changes can vary depending on the specific circumstances of each small business, it is not anticipated that the proposed reforms will significantly affect small businesses. In fact, it is expected that these changes will ultimately result in reduced costs to small business through reductions in the cost of workers compensation premiums. This framework will enable the appropriate government agency to monitor these workers to ensure that they are able to access appropriate health screening, as well as enabling monitoring of their condition over time.

In proposing these amendments to the Act, the department has consulted with several government stakeholders to understand the impacts the proposed amendments may have and find ways to mitigate those issues, specifically those that impact the ability of the department's operational staff to carry out their work health and safety functions. Amendments in the proposed bill will address ambiguities and clarify regulation-making powers

in relation to public registers, and in relation to the approval or authorisation of training providers and courses and their associated fees. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (15:03): I am proud to speak on the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. The right of a worker to attend their workplace and go home safely to their loved ones after each shift is what motivated me to stand up and organise workers in unions. It motivates me to this day, knowing that there were 40 workplace fatalities in New South Wales in 2022. I think of those who have gone before us and their families, and I speak out of respect for and in memory of them. The Minns Government has introduced this bill with the aim of amending the Act to make provision for the establishment of a register to monitor the health of workers exposed to silica dust, as well as amending the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 to incorporate penalty amounts in line with penalty increases incorporated in the model work health and safety regulations.

Ensuring a safe work environment for everyone throughout the electorate of Heathcote and the State is of critical importance to the New South Wales Government. These amendments will implement some of the outstanding recommendations that stemmed from the Boland review of the model work health and safety laws. As the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety, previously said, these "miscellaneous amendments address ambiguity, clarify intent and remove superseded or obsolete requirements". Furthermore, the amendments will establish a silica worker register, which was a key election promise of the Minns Government.

The number of workplace deaths and serious incidents should send a shiver down the spine of every resident throughout our State. In the first 7½ months of 2023, there were 39 workplace deaths. In 2021 and 2022, there were also more than 51,000 serious injury or illness claims. These statistics are frightening. The bill will mean that those who have a duty of care to others in the workplace are punished for reckless behaviour or gross negligence that results in a serious injury, illness or fatality, especially when it comes to our youth— apprentices or trainees who are following the instructions of their PCBU, meaning a person conducting a business or undertaking.

Furthermore, the maximum financial penalty for a category 1 offence that is committed by an individual as a PCBU or as an officer of a PCBU will increase from \$798,383 to over \$2 million. The maximum custodial sentence will also increase from five years to 10 years. The maximum fine for a body corporate that commits a category 1 offence will also increase from \$3,992,492 to over \$10 million, whilst the maximum fine for an individual will increase from \$399,479 to \$1,041,992. These increases will send a strong message that reckless behaviour and gross negligence will not be tolerated. Workers' rights and lives matter, and shortcuts are never acceptable by any boss or their representative.

Clause 184U of the regulation requires food deliver riders to receive mandatory safety training and have personal protective equipment provided by their employer and, importantly, to be able to produce proof to a police officer of the completed training. That is a crucial reform, because lives have been lost in this sector. The amendment will now provide an extra layer of protection for these workers in a sector that has had fatalities. The rise in food delivery services like Uber Eats and Menulog means that more and more riders are required to meet customer demand. The amendment draws a clear line in the sand for delivery platforms in terms of their responsibilities and duty of care to food delivery riders.

Another important aspect of this bill is the establishment of a silica work register. Since 2017 the number of cases of silicosis has risen, with many cases linked to work on engineered stone, which is often used in kitchen benchtops. It is the new asbestosis. The dust causes irreparable damage to the lungs, with often fatal consequences. It is an horrific condition. The register will not be publicly accessible but will be able to be viewed by icare, SafeWork NSW and other relevant government agencies. The register will allow authorities to track cases of respirable crystalline silica and other high-risk industries.

In summary, the amendments will ensure a safer workplace for many residents and workers throughout New South Wales and help their families by putting dodgy bosses on notice. I congratulate the Minister for Industrial Relations, and the Minister for Work Health and Safety, on her great work on this bill. We must do all we can to keep each and every worker safe in their workplace and ensure they return home to their loved ones. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (15:09): I support the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023. I commend the Minister for proceeding with these amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to implement outstanding recommendations from the 2018 review of the model work health and safety laws so that they reflect the recent amendments made to the model WHS laws. As members would be aware, Safe Work Australia is the Australian Government's statutory body responsible for the development of national policy relating to work health and safety and workers compensation. The 2018 review of the model WHS laws was the result of

an independent review by Ms Marie Boland and initiated by Safe Work Australia. Safe Work Australia has responsibility for implementation of the review recommendations, including updating the model WHS legislation in line with the review's recommendations.

In 2020 New South Wales expedited 12 of the recommendations from the review ahead of the national process and enacted legislation in New South Wales to prevent workplace deaths, streamline investigations and clarify the WHS laws. These proposed amendments to the New South Wales legislation will better align with the updated model Work Health and Safety Act, where applicable, to ensure the policy intent of the model laws have been captured in New South Wales. It may appear that New South Wales is only implementing some of the model amendments, when, in actual fact, New South Wales has already implemented many of these amendments. Safe Work Australia has been progressively publishing amendments to the model Work Health and Safety Act since April 2022, with the latest amendment being on 27 July this year. In addition to the amendments relating to the 2018 review, New South Wales is also proposing to adopt the prohibited asbestos amendments, which were included in the model laws in 2019. This will ensure that if prohibited asbestos is found in a workplace, the WHS regulators have appropriate powers to ensure the asbestos is safely managed and removed. This change will ensure that prohibited asbestos is permanently removed, negating the possibility of further asbestos exposure.

While this provision only relates to asbestos or asbestos-containing material that has been installed after 31 December 2003, those who have lived in my electorate of Parramatta for many generations are, unfortunately, way too familiar with the dangers of asbestos. To this day our suburbs are plagued with asbestos dumping grounds decades after the event, as well as the legacy of the former James Hardie asbestos product manufacturing site in Camellia. Every day thousands of Sydneysiders travel over the Parramatta River via the Bernie Banton Bridge, named in honour of Bernie Banton, AM, who was the public face for asbestos disease sufferers, their loved ones and the wider community. Bernie fought to gain compensation for all present and future sufferers exposed to James Hardie asbestos, all while fighting his own personal battle for mesothelioma compensation, which he secured only days before his passing.

The bill defines "prohibited asbestos" as asbestos or asbestos-containing material that has been illegally fixed or installed in a workplace on or after 31 December 2003, when an Australia-wide ban on the manufacture, use and importation of asbestos came into effect. Since then it has been illegal to import or use asbestos in Australian workplaces. However, despite the ban, asbestos that has been manufactured, fixed or installed since that date is still being found in Australian workplaces. Unfortunately, in many countries, despite the known threat to human health, asbestos is still used in the manufacture of products. Despite the ban, asbestos products still make their way into the Australian supply chain and, ultimately, into New South Wales workplaces. Examples of products containing asbestos imported into Australia between 2020 and 2023 are surprising. They include used mower parts; new tractor parts; vehicles; motor vehicle parts, including new after-market parts; gaskets; marble slabs; terrazzo slabs; building products; bulk raw materials; agricultural equipment; construction equipment parts; laboratory equipment; and mineral specimens. That is evidence of how widely spread asbestos is across all of our industries.

Some 455 asbestos tests were conducted at the border as recently as the period July 2022 to March 2023. Chrysotile asbestos was detected 43 times, with one unknown. To say this is disappointing is an understatement. Existing provisions for improvement notices and prohibition notices already cover many cases where prohibited asbestos is identified within a workplace. However, there was some uncertainty about whether the conditions for those notices meant that some cases could only be addressed through commencing and achieving a successful prosecution. Clause 18 of schedule 1 inserts a new provision: division 2A, prohibited asbestos notices. This division will provide compliance powers that allow the WHS regulator to issue a prohibited asbestos notice, directing a relevant person to take certain measures in relation to asbestos at the workplace. This amendment aligns with the model WHS legislation and ensures that WHS regulators have the appropriate powers to deal with prohibited asbestos. It means that a notice must be issued in all cases where prohibited asbestos is found to ensure that the risks posed are promptly addressed. It puts beyond doubt that the person conducting a business or undertaking who is issued the notice must safely manage and remove the prohibited asbestos that has been installed illegally since 31 December 2003.

I am proud to be a member of a Government that is focused on taking further action to address the scourge of silicosis in the workplace. As part of Labor's election commitments taken to the people of New South Wales in March this year, the Government has sought to implement further reforms to tackle this risk. It has committed to a suite of policy proposals to tackle silicosis, both standalone and as part of a national process. The bill will action a component of one of those election commitments: health screening and tracking at-risk workers. New section 273A will enable SafeWork NSW to establish a silica worker register and require persons conducting a business or undertaking to act in accordance with the regulations. The second component of division 1A, new section 273B, will ensure that the register is not publicly available and enable the information contained in the register to be shared with SafeWork NSW, icare and any other government sector agency, as prescribed in the regulations.

These amendments will ensure that there are sufficient regulation-making powers in the Work Health and Safety Act to establish such a register, with further work and consultation with stakeholders to be undertaken when developing WHS regulations in the future. They will also create the framework required to implement this important election commitment.

Through the bill, the Government seeks to ensure that WHS legislation continues to be fit for purpose, workers are protected from the risks associated with a modern workplace, and penalties for noncompliance are appropriate and in step with community expectation. Importantly, it also seeks to ensure it is as consistent as possible with the overarching WHS national framework. Placing workers at the centre of our legislative agenda is something this Government is committed to. I commend the Minister for prioritising the bill as, put simply, it will save lives. I acknowledge the stakeholders who have been engaged throughout the consultation, drafting and testing of the bill—in particular, the unions and the business sector. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:18): I speak in debate on the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023, which will continue to implement the outstanding recommendations from the 2018 review of the model work health and safety laws. Importantly, the bill will introduce amendments regarding the management of prohibited asbestos and establish a silica worker register, which is crucially important and fulfils Labor's election commitment to continue to act to protect the workers of New South Wales against the deadly scourge of silicosis.

The amendments in the bill are small. However, their impact is significant and meaningful. The establishment of a silica worker register is particularly critical in moving forward with stronger legislation to protect our workers. I thank Minister Cotsis and Minister Graham in the other place for their fast action and for the fantastic work they did in opposition to move the bill to the point it is at now.

Following widespread use across our community, asbestos and silica have had an unquestionably devastating impact on our community. Our communities, including the people of the Gosford electorate, are scattered with the terrible impacts of asbestosis, silicosis and other related diseases, resulting in terrible suffering and ending our loved ones' lives all too soon.

I especially thank the member for The Entrance for the work that he does every year in recognising people who have been killed at work and for his work on our memorial on the Central Coast. I give a special shout-out to Maree Stokes, who is the Vice President of the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia, for her passionate and continued commitment to supporting families who suffer from silicosis and asbestosis. I have spoken with community members across the Gosford electorate who have had their lives devastated by this deadly disease that is silicosis.

One of those people I had the pleasure of meeting was beautiful Sefton Willis, who is an incredibly talented stonemason, at the opening of our Anzac memorial at Pearl Beach on Anzac Day this year. Sefton was incredibly unwell with silicosis, and I am really glad that he was able to attend that special occasion with his son and one of his employees from his stonemasonry business. They know all too well how important it is to be safe at work. I have called Sefton's phone, and I am not sure if he is still with us now. This is important legislation so that we do not have another story like that one.

Stronger legislation is vital to protecting our community, and the bill acts on that critical need. No-one who has read the reports or spoken with the community about the impacts of silicosis can remain unaffected by people's stories. It is dangerous, and it needs to be registered and regulated as such. Furthering protections for our workers, the bill clearly shows the New South Wales Government's serious focus on enhancing safety for our community. While the data previously showed a decline, with 48 fatalities from asbestos in 2022, this year to date we have seen 37 so far, so the numbers are still far too high. Improving the Work Health and Safety Act is critical to ensure that work health and safety regulators can carry out their role with the utmost ability to address any issues of compliance and enforcement.

Everyone deserves to be kept safe at work. Everyone has the right to go to work each day, knowing that they will come home safe, with no long-term impacts on their wellbeing due to their work. Our Government is committed to ensuring that the workers of New South Wales can be sure of this right. I also commend the work and leadership of Minister Cotsis and Minister Graham in the gig economy space, protecting people working in the gig economy and calling out the management and the owners of those gig economy employers who are doing the wrong thing and not providing the adequate training in support of their workforce. A significant number of deaths have caused pain to communities. The families of many of those workers who were killed at work are not in Australia. I cannot begin to imagine how hard that is and how important the comfort, connection and provision of support shown by members of our Government would have been in supporting those families. I am thankful for that on behalf of the extended families overseas who have been impacted.

The bill will further strengthen protections for our workers, including significantly increasing the penalties under category 1 of work health and safety legislation; providing the work health and safety regulator with the power to issue a notice where prohibited asbestos is found in a workplace to manage and remove the prohibited asbestos—I would imagine that should be in place already; establish a silica worker register to monitor the health of workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica dust, run by SafeWork NSW; streamline compliance and enforcement activities, enabling New South Wales police officers to issue penalty notices in relation to food delivery requirements; and clarifying companies' accountability for meeting their work health and safety duties. It is a fundamental right to be safe in your workplace, and the bill makes that clear. The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that the workers of New South Wales can be sure of that right. I commend the Minister for bringing the bill to the House.

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (15:23): In reply: I am proud of all members who spoke in debate on the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2023, including those opposite.

[A Government member interjected.]

That was a good question—they did, in fact. This is an important bill. The Government is committed to ensuring that workers in New South Wales have healthy, safe and productive working lives. No priority is more important for the Minns Government than the safety of workers at work. The reforms in the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill will contribute to that priority by addressing critical issues in our work health and safety laws that were identified at a national level through the 2018 review of the model work health and safety laws.

As members have heard, the bill seeks to amend the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 to implement some of the remaining outstanding recommendations of the 2018 Boland review of the model work health and safety law; increase penalties for breaches of the Work Health and Safety Act; make miscellaneous amendments to address ambiguities; clarify intent; remove superseded or obsolete requirements; set up the framework to allow the Government to deliver on one of its key election commitments for silica, which is to establish the silica worker register in the future to monitor the health of workers exposed to silica dust; and ensure that there are sufficient regulation-making powers under the Work Health and Safety Act. It is vital that these reforms take effect in New South Wales workplaces as soon as possible to prevent workers from being exposed to dangerous and unacceptable risks to their health and safety.

The proposed amendments will provide strong incentives for persons conducting a business or undertaking [PCBUs] and workers to comply with the law, specifically by strengthening the deterrent power of the Work Health and Safety Act by: clarifying that an officer may commit a category 1 offence under section 31; increasing the penalties within the work health and safety legislation, including a significant increase to the category 1 offence; providing the work health and safety regulator with the power to issue a notice to a PCBU where prohibited asbestos is found in a workplace to manage and remove that prohibited asbestos; allowing for the imputation of liability of bodies corporate for the conduct of officers and agents; and prohibiting a person from taking out insurance for penalties imposed under the Work Health and Safety Act, ensuring food delivery riders are as safe as possible when they are on the road.

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

I now comment on issues raised during the debate. I acknowledge all the contributions made to the debate. I appreciate the consideration and the thoughtfulness of every member who spoke, particularly my colleagues who advocated strongly on this during their election campaigns, some of whom are new members. I acknowledge that this is an important issue that they raised during their campaigns. All of my colleagues who contributed to this debate have been long-term advocates for safety at work. I acknowledge and thank the member for Wahroonga from the Opposition, who talked about the design of the silica worker register, canvassed in the bill, which will be made through subsequent regulation. I acknowledge that some changes were made under the former Government because of fatalities. Unfortunately, we will know towards the end of the year that not enough was done under the former Government.

Currently, the McDougall review is underway. We will await that important review and what the judge has to say. But there are a number of gaps.

I acknowledge that in his contribution the member for Wahroonga raised some issues around the silica register. I know that those opposite have concerns and we will brief them about this matter. Every member in this place cares a lot about the issue of workers contracting silicosis. Stakeholder consultation is critical to ensuring that the new register works for all. Its design should be informed by the contributions of workers, community, unions and experts, but also the businesses who employ those who work with silica dust.

The member for Newtown is passionate about work health and safety. I agree with her that protecting our food delivery riders, who work in the most vulnerable part of the gig economy, is critical. However, I believe the changes in the bill in relation to food delivery drivers are proportionate and necessary. The existing food delivery regulation came into effect on 1 January 2023. When the former Government made that regulation it was intended to reflect the policy position, arising out of the food delivery rider safety joint task force, that police and SafeWork inspectors would play a compliance role in ensuring the safety of food delivery riders. This compliance role included giving police the ability to issue notices to riders for not wearing high-visibility personal protective equipment [PPE]. Due to poor drafting of the original regulation, that policy position was not achieved. We are now seeking to rectify this error.

Currently there are 338 SafeWork field inspectors in New South Wales. Those inspectors are the only authorised officers capable of enforcing compliance with section 184U offences under the regulation. Considering the scale of the food delivery industry in our major metro areas and comparing the personnel available to SafeWork with the number of police officers, it is common sense to authorise police to enforce compliance and issue penalty notices under this section. Allowing police to issue penalty notices to riders for not wearing PPE is akin to allowing police to issue penalties to food delivery riders for not wearing a bike helmet.

I make this clear: I listened intently to what the member for Newtown said in her contribution and I know that she is passionate in her views. I have also spoken to upper House members of The Greens about this issue and I know there are concerns. I take those concerns very seriously. I have sought advice and double- and triple-checked the information. This bill is about safety. It is not controversial or contentious, and it is not about punishing food industry delivery riders. I have heard the arguments about those riders; many of them are my constituents so I have heard them clearly. This is about awareness, education and keeping those riders safe. However, it also about making sure the platforms are following the rules and providing the training, the education and the PPE, which our inspectors on the road must check.

As I mentioned in my second reading speech, over the weekend we issued a statement about a food platform that has given 1,000 of its riders no training or education—which is the law—and has not provided them with PPE. We are going to be heavy handed with those platforms because they have to follow the rules and protect those riders. I have made that clear, and those platforms have been penalised. I acknowledge the hard work of our SafeWork inspectors. But the bill makes sure that the police are able to issue warnings and check to make sure that riders are carrying accreditation, have received the proper training and are wearing PPE.

The bill is about ensuring the safety of food delivery riders when they are on the road undertaking what has become one of the most dangerous occupations in the modern workplace. Penalties are a key tool used to deter unsafe behaviours, especially those that expose workers and others to the risk of death or serious illness or injury. It is essential that the deterrents stipulated in the Act and regulation sufficiently discourage unsafe behaviour. I talk to food delivery riders in my electorate. It is their third or fourth job. They are working hard. They have to pay the rent and help their kids—I get it. But they are being governed by a platform algorithm and running from one job to the other. In opposition, we advocated strongly for those workers, who work in unprotected conditions. They do not have workers compensation or employee status and they are dictated to by these platforms with algorithms. We want workers to have fair conditions and pay and be free from danger.

I am informed by SafeWork that if one platform's riders consistently fail to wear PPE then SafeWork will take compliance action against that provider. This occurred as recently as 24 August 2023, when SafeWork issued five provisional improvement notices against a delivery platform in Sydney whose riders were consistently not wearing high-visibility PPE as required by the regulation and had not undergone mandatory safety training. I am informed that at present 93 per cent of food delivery riders comply with the requirement to wear hi-vis; we need to get that compliance rate to 100 per cent. It is a simple thing that all members agree with.

I take the safety of food delivery riders extremely seriously. This part of the bill aims to improve safety—nothing else. Members should forget about penalties; it is about safety and talking to the riders. As I said, it is about our inspectors—and our police officers, if this bill is passed by Parliament—speaking to the riders. It is about making sure that the platforms provide the riders with training, education and PPE. The bill aims to make sure that we support the provision of a safe working environment. As foreshadowed during the election campaign, the Minns Government has a comprehensive agenda to further the rights of workers in the gig economy. We will have much more to say on that issue.

I acknowledge the Treasurer, who is passionate about this area of public policy. He was one of the first in New South Wales, alongside the Transport Workers' Union, to identify the large gaps in public policy. He also worked very hard with crossbench members in the upper House on a number of committees. We will have more to say about that soon. I acknowledge the contribution from the member for Kellyville about legacy asbestos. The section that we introduced is about illegally installed asbestos, but I heard the member for Kellyville, and I take the issues he has raised seriously. Asbestos was made illegal in Australia. Illegally installed asbestos is asbestos that has been manufactured, fixed or installed since 31 December 2003. But it is still found in Australian workplaces.

Existing provisions for improvement notices and prohibition notices already cover many cases where prohibited asbestos is identified. However, there was some uncertainty that the conditions for those notices meant that some cases could only be addressed through prosecution. Therefore, schedule 1 [18] to the bill inserts new division 2A—prohibited asbestos notices. This division will provide compliance powers allowing the work health and safety regulator to issue a prohibited asbestos notice, directing a relevant person to take certain measures in relation to asbestos in the workplace.

This amendment aligns with the model work health and safety legislation and ensures that work health and safety regulators have the appropriate powers to deal with prohibited asbestos. It means that a notice must be issued in all cases where prohibited asbestos is found to ensure that the risks it poses are promptly addressed. It puts beyond doubt that the person conducting a business or undertaking who issued the notice must remove the prohibited asbestos. Legacy asbestos and its removal from workplaces, which the member for Kellyville raised in his contribution, is dealt with separately under SafeWork's *Code of Practice: How to safely remove asbestos*. I heard the member's frustration about the issue at Castle Hill High School, and I know that an investigation has been ongoing. I have sought further advice, and I will speak to the member about it.

I thank the hardworking member for Mount Druitt. He is a passionate and strong advocate for work health and safety. He spoke in a considered manner about the deterrent power that increasing penalties under the Work Health and Safety Act will have, and about the other critical reforms in the bill. He has been representing Greater Western Sydney not only as the member for Mount Druitt and Parliamentary Secretary but also as a former local government representative. He has worked diligently with various authorities and community groups over the years to advocate strongly for asbestos safety and for strengthening work health and safety for building and construction workers. I acknowledge his strong advocacy.

I also acknowledge the contribution, activism and consideration of the new member for Riverstone. I learnt a few things from him. He spoke about the changes to section 162 of the Work Health and Safety Act that will ensure that inspectors must have a reasonable belief before issuing a notice. That is important because there was an ombudsman report. This new provision is to make sure that inspectors make their decisions. It is important that we make that known and that it is strong in the Act. The changes in the bill will have work health and safety benefits for small business and other stakeholders. I acknowledge the member for Riverstone.

I also acknowledge the new member for East Hills. She spoke about former member Pat Rogan and his strong advocacy in this area. As a new member in this place, the member for East Hills was considerate and thoughtful. There are a lot of asbestos issues in the member's electorate. I know that it is a concern for her and for her community leaders. She spoke strongly about prohibiting a person from taking out insurance for penalties imposed by the Work Health and Safety Act. The member for East Hills raised that issue with me and feels very strongly about it. I hate to say it, but people have been taking out insurance for penalties. The bill will prohibit that.

I acknowledge the new member for South Coast and thank her, particularly as a regional member. She is a strong advocate for workers' rights and also for work health and safety. She spoke about the importance of the Boland review and about the model changes being implemented in the bill and what that means for her community and regional New South Wales. I acknowledge her thoughtful contribution and her hard work in representing her community. She advocates for her small business community as well as the working people from the South Coast.

I also acknowledge the member for Heathcote, another new member. I have known her for over 25 years and she has advocated for the rights and conditions of working people, particularly during those critical battles in the late 90s and early 2000s, when we were learning about the ravages of asbestos. The member for Heathcote was advocating for her community, putting forward important solutions and bringing everyone together on this issue. This was an issue back then and it still is now. There has been a lot of law reform, but we still have a way to go. The member for Heathcote has played a pivotal role. Her contribution about the silica register and implementing the outstanding recommendations of the Boland review was important.

I acknowledge the new member for Parramatta and her longstanding and strong interest in the area of work health and safety. As she pointed out, this is an issue in her community.

Last year I attended the Holroyd Brickworks in the member for Granville's electorate with the Federal member for Parramatta and the Mayor of Cumberland City Council, Lisa Lake, for a memorial on the International Day of Mourning. I met with a number of families. It is devastating to see the plaques dedicated to people who have lost their lives due to asbestos and dust diseases. As the former mayor of Parramatta, the member for Parramatta was a strong advocate in representing her community, particularly the families of people who worked in factories 30 to 50 years ago and contracted mesothelioma. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Parramatta.

I also acknowledge the contribution of the member for Gosford. I acknowledge her hard work. She is an outstanding member, who brings to Parliament great honour and—I will use a Greek word—*philotimo*. *Philotimo* has no transliteration but it means someone who has a hand of friendship and honour. It is a person who cares about people. The member for Gosford gave a wonderful, considerate contribution about her concerns for gig workers, particularly those on the Central Coast, which is a regional—but very advanced and wonderful—community. My colleagues on the Central Coast may not like me calling it a regional community.

All members who represent the Central Coast have been very strong advocates for reforms to gig work. The member for Gosford supports protection for workers and was a very strong advocate in opposition, working with the Treasurer and the Hon. John Graham, the Minister for Roads. She has an important interest in the issue as the Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Community, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion. She is constantly at the forefront of making sure that people with a disability have access not only to work but also to work health and safety protections. She constantly ensures equal access and opportunity.

I thank everybody. It has been a very long road to having the new Minns Government put forward this bill to strengthen the work health and safety regulator's efforts to reduce workplace fatalities and injuries and embed the health and safety landscape in New South Wales workplaces. That is an issue I know all members in this House agree is of critical importance. The Government thanks everyone, including the Injured Workers Support Network, the small business community and the unions. I shout out to the health and safety representatives who are at the forefront of this issue. Those who do not have protections cop a barrage from middle management because they are bringing forward the issues of risk and concern around people's health and safety at work.

Every single member, including those in the Opposition, said that they want to make sure people get to work and come home safely to their family and friends. I also acknowledge my hardworking staff who have diligently been working day and night. I thank the officials from SafeWork NSW who are in the Chamber today. I thank the SafeWork NSW inspectors for their hard work. The Government has more work to do in this area. We will bring forward more reforms. I acknowledge everybody who contributed to debate. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Ms SOPHIE COTSIS: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

WASTE RECYCLING AND PROCESSING CORPORATION (AUTHORISED TRANSACTION) AMENDMENT BILL 2023

First Reading

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Stephen Kamper, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading Speech

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport) (15:56): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce this bill to amend the Waste Recycling and Processing Corporation (Authorised Transaction) Act 2010. The amendments will establish the Waste Assets Management Corporation as a centralised government entity to hold and manage legacy contaminated land and provide specialist contracting and consulting services to other agencies. To understand the Government's reasons for introducing the bill, it is necessary that I briefly outline the problems posed by contaminated land for the Government.

Past commercial and industrial operations undertaken by the New South Wales Government have resulted in the contamination of numerous sites across New South Wales. Similarly, the New South Wales Government has taken responsibility for, or had involvement in, sites in need of remediation as a last resort where the non-government polluter, for a range of reasons, is unable or unwilling to remediate the site to allow an alternative use or to ensure public safety. Examples of sites where the New South Wales Government has had to step in include the former Pasmenco smelter at Lake Macquarie; the former waste oil refinery at Kyle St, Rutherford; and the former uranium refinery on Nelson Parade, Hunters Hill.

Contaminated land has harmful health, environmental, social and economic impacts. There are instances of those impacts occurring both in Greater Sydney and rural and regional New South Wales. It brings with it serious reputational and financial issues, as well as the risk of costly, high-profile litigation. The current system of contaminated land management by New South Wales government agencies is a piecemeal approach that risks suboptimal outcomes and cost inefficiencies. For example, the costs for remedial work can be unnecessarily high when well-meaning but inexperienced public sector employees engage with environmental contractors and consultants who, when unchecked, may over-budget or over-scope a project.

This may also result in delays to remedial works due to quotes being higher than the available budget.

The bill aims to ensure that legacy contaminated land that is either already in government ownership or is being transferred to government from the private sector is held by a sole agency with experienced staff and specialist systems in place to undertake safe and efficient remediation and rehabilitation programs. To explain the Waste Assets Management Corporation's expertise, it is worth explaining how it came to be and how it is comprised. In 2010 the government-owned Waste Service Network was sold to SITA—now Veolia—under the Waste Recycling and Processing Corporation (Authorised Transaction) Act 2010. The Waste Assets Management Corporation [WAMC] was formed under this Act to hold and manage any Waste Service Network assets transferred to it under the Act.

In brief, those assets consisted of nine putrescible landfills located within the Sydney Basin, which were not included in the sale to SITA. The landfills that were transferred to the Waste Assets Management Corporation were in various states of operation or rehabilitation and require constant, diligent management to manage the environmental risks posed by landfill gas and leachate production and to rehabilitate the landfill sites for future beneficial use. Section 7 of the Act establishes the WAMC Landfill Rehabilitation Fund, which contains transaction proceeds, with the goal of covering all outstanding Waste Assets Management Corporation landfill liabilities at the completion of the transaction.

Current Waste Assets Management Corporation landfill liabilities are forecast to run until 2050. To cover those liabilities, the rehabilitation fund was established at approximately \$45 million. The Waste Assets Management Corporation initially managed and operated two functioning putrescible landfills, located at Belrose and Eastern Creek. The Belrose landfill reached capacity and was closed in 2014, and the Eastern Creek landfill reached capacity in 2017 and is currently subject to landscaping and rehabilitation works. At the closure of the Eastern Creek landfill, the Waste Assets Management Corporation's focus switched from landfill operation to rehabilitation works.

Waste Assets Management Corporation staff are technical specialists with significant experience in operation, management and rehabilitation of landfills, with specialist skills in areas such as chemical engineering, soil science, water and gas monitoring, work health and safety, and plant operation. Currently, staff operate several leachate treatment plants, which utilise biological reactors to treat contaminants within leachate. An average of 250,000 litres of leachate is treated per week. Staff also maintain landfill gas extraction systems, which extract methane from the landfill cells. That is used to generate electricity, which is exported to the national electricity grid, providing a renewable energy source that powers in excess of 6,000 homes.

The Waste Assets Management Corporation team also includes civil earthworks machine operators, who work with plant and equipment such as excavators, bobcats and dump trucks. The Waste Assets Management Corporation operates an internal management system for both work health and safety and environmental controls, and there are annual external and internal audits of the system. As part of this system, the Waste Assets Management Corporation holds current certifications in ISO 14001:2015 for environmental management and ISO 45001:2018 for occupational health and safety. These systems and certifications equate to what would be expected of any private sector remediation contractor. The Waste Assets Management Corporation has developed these independently and has demonstrated accountability in both the environmental and work health and safety fields since its inception over 10 years ago.

The expertise that the Waste Assets Management Corporation has developed in landfill management is directly transferrable to contaminated land management and remediation. This was recognised by the NSW Environment Protection Authority and the then planning department in 2018 when they sought an agency

to manage the former Pasmenco smelter containment cell in perpetuity. Once identified, the Waste Assets Management Corporation became actively engaged in the process of developing a long-term management plan for the site and drafting the Lake Macquarie Smelter Site (Perpetual Care of Land) Bill 2019. The Waste Assets Management Corporation was then appointed by the planning department to take on the long-term ownership and management of a waste containment cell created during the closure of the Kurri Kurri smelter, which was transferred to the New South Wales Government under a voluntary planning agreement due to being the most suitable organisation within the Government to do so.

This bill will ensure that the New South Wales Government has a centralised and appropriately resourced and skilled agency for the ownership and management of contaminated land. I turn now to the provisions of the bill. In summary, the bill seeks to create the ability for the Waste Assets Management Corporation to accept the transfer of contaminated land requiring specialist management or remediation, but only where adequate funding accompanies the transfer; and to act as contractors or consultants to assist in remediation of contaminated land that is owned by the New South Wales Government or government agencies. Key concepts used in this bill are defined and will be set out in schedule 1 [1] to the Act.

First, contaminated land that may be considered for transfer to the Waste Assets Management Corporation is taken to include both land subject to contamination, as described in the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997, and land which may be subject to a licence or notice under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. This definition is not limited to "significantly contaminated land", which is required to be regulated by the Environment Protection Authority, but includes land that is licenced by the Environment Protection Authority and on which potentially contaminating activities are undertaken, such as landfill or industrial operations, where contamination is likely but has not been confirmed.

Examples include the Eastern Creek waste management centre, which is a former landfill managed by the Waste Assets Management Corporation and is subject to an environmental protection licence issued by the Environment Protection Authority, but is not considered contaminated land; and the Truegain waste oil refinery, which held an environmental protection licence and was vacated by the owner, leaving over 100 above-ground tanks full of waste oils, but no evidence of soil or groundwater contamination. New section 3B outlines the proposed new functions of the Waste Assets Management Corporation to acquire, control and manage contaminated land.

New section 3B (1) (b) ensures that the Waste Assets Management Corporation may carry out development for a purpose for the benefit of the State on land managed or owned by the Waste Assets Management Corporation. This reflects the intended role of the Waste Assets Management Corporation in undertaking rehabilitation works on sites that transfer a landfill or contaminated site into a beneficial use for residents of New South Wales. Past examples of the Waste Assets Management Corporation's work in this space includes the sporting facilities and golf course at Barden Ridge in the Sutherland shire. These fields were developed by the Waste Assets Management Corporation over a closed landfill in 2012 and are a huge benefit to local residents as it has created large areas of usable green space over a former municipal landfill.

The Bare Creek Bike Park is a mountain bike park that was developed by the Waste Assets Management Corporation in 2020 over the closed Belrose landfill. This mountain bike park was then transferred to the Northern Beaches Council for care and maintenance and is considered a world-class mountain bike facility. Planned future development opportunities include a 50-megawatt solar farm at the closed Castlereagh liquid waste landfill and a large-scale battery installation planned for the Belrose landfill site. These proposed sustainable energy projects will provide much-needed supply and stability to the New South Wales electricity grid, within close proximity to power users, while also transforming closed landfills to uses that are visible to and appreciated by the local community.

Schedule 1 [3] to the bill inserts new part 1A division 2, which outlines the process for the transfer of land to and from the Waste Assets Management Corporation.

The process includes identification of subject land by the Waste Assets Management Corporation, negotiation with the relevant agency and consent from the responsible Ministers and the Treasurer. There is no intention that the Waste Assets Management Corporation would have power to vest land from an agency without their consent. The process is found in various other Acts, including the Lake Macquarie Smelter Site (Perpetual Care of Land) Act 2019, the Western Sydney Parklands Act 2006, the Place Management NSW Act 1998, the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008, the Forestry Act, the Electricity Network Assets (Authorised Transactions) Act 2015, and the Water NSW Act 2014.

In any instance where land was to be transferred to the Waste Assets Management Corporation, an agreement would be reached with the transferor as to both the funding required for remediation of the site and the long-term use of the site. The intention is not for agencies to dispose of impacted land to the Waste Assets

Management Corporation without a suitable funding source identified and agreed to with the Waste Assets Management Corporation. Where funding has not been identified, discussions between Treasury, the proposed transferor and the Waste Assets Management Corporation would be held to develop a workable strategy for the land. Where remediated land is no longer required by the Waste Assets Management Corporation, consideration will be given to various options, including suitability for use of the land by another agency, use of the land for housing, use of the land as a public open space, or sale of the land to the private sector. In each instance, the viability of the proposed options would be considered after a robust consultation process with possible landowning agencies and Treasury.

Finally, the proposed change of name of the Act from the Waste Recycling and Processing Corporation (Authorised Transaction) Act to the Waste Asset Management Corporation Act is a natural evolution of the Act as the primary purpose moves away from the initial sale of WSN Environmental Solutions to the private sector to the establishment of a New South Wales government agency focused on management and remediation of contaminated land. The New South Wales Government is committed to the safe and efficient management of legacy contaminated land. If poorly managed, the cost to human health, the environment and the State budget will be significant. In establishing the Waste Assets Management Corporation as a government agency focused on managing the most problematic contaminated land in New South Wales, the bill demonstrates the commitment of the Government to provide a much-needed pathway to clean up the dirty legacy of historical industrial activity. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

MOTOR DEALERS AND REPAIRERS AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 10 October 2023.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (16:13): I support the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023. The bill represents a significant step in modernising and streamlining the automotive industry in New South Wales that benefits industry stakeholders, consumers and the broader economy. The primary purpose of the bill is to amend the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 and builds upon the recommendations of the 2020 statutory review. These amendments are intended to ensure that the legislative framework governing motor dealers and repairers aligns with the evolving dynamics of the automotive sector and operates as intended by the Parliament.

The reforms encompass a wide range of areas. I highlight some of the key changes proposed in the bill. One of the most significant reforms introduced by the bill is the establishment of a legislative online sales framework to permit and regulate online sales of motor vehicles by motor dealers. As the automotive industry undergoes rapid transformation and consumers increasingly turn to digital platforms for their purchases, this legislation will ensure that New South Wales remains at the forefront of this shift. It empowers motor dealers to embrace online sales and adapt to the changing preferences of consumers. By introducing provisions for online sales, we address the needs and demands of the modern market while safeguarding the interests of both buyers and sellers.

Making record keeping more streamlined is another important change brought by the bill. That amendment deals with the replacement of the requirement for motor dealers, recyclers and repairers to maintain separate registers for specific matters with a more general requirement to keep certain records related to their business. This modification streamlines administrative processes, reduces red tape for industry stakeholders and enhances efficiency. It also paves the way for more digital and automated record keeping, which aligns with the modernisation of the automotive sector.

Odometer tampering is a grave issue that affects consumers' trust and poses risks to their safety. The bill makes it an offence for anyone to possess a device capable of rendering the odometer of a motor vehicle inoperative or inaccurate. This deterrent measure is crucial in protecting consumers from fraudulent practices. Odometer accuracy is not just about transparency, it also impacts the timing of safety checks and repairs, which ensures the safety of those on the road.

The cashless transactions and recycling amendment will prevent the theft and illegal disposal of stolen vehicles and parts. The bill introduces provisions to promote cashless transactions within the motor vehicle recycling sector. Motor vehicle recyclers will be prohibited from buying motor vehicles or parts with cash or in-kind transactions. This change enhances traceability and auditability in the scrap metal industry, strengthening consumer protections.

Consumer protection is at the heart of these reforms. The bill enhances existing disciplinary provisions, empowering the secretary to take more effective action against misconduct within the industry. Monetary penalties for certain offences will be introduced and provide a balanced approach between harsh measures, like licence cancellations, and lenient actions, such as penalty notices. These penalties will serve as deterrents and ensure fair practices within the sector.

The automotive industry is a cornerstone of the New South Wales economy and contributes over \$37 billion to the Australian economy. Our State leads in the number of registered vehicles, individuals employed and enterprises involved in the sector. The world of vehicles is rapidly changing, with digital sales, emerging technologies and new market entrants reshaping the landscape. It is our responsibility to ensure that our legislative framework evolves in tandem with these changes. The bill is a testament to our commitment to provide a robust statutory foundation that will foster a thriving automotive sector in New South Wales. We have consulted extensively with industry stakeholders, consumers and government agencies to craft these reforms. The automotive industry has long called for modernisation, and the bill is our response to that call.

In conclusion, the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023 represents a forward-looking approach to regulating the automotive industry in New South Wales. It empowers industry stakeholders, protects consumers and ensures that our State remains a leader in vehicle sales. As we embrace the opportunities and challenges of the digital age, we stand ready to secure a brighter future for all those involved in this vital sector. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:19): I am pleased to lead for the Opposition in debate on the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023. The Liberals and The Nationals welcome Labor's bipartisan support for the Coalition's comprehensive reform agenda to keep the regulatory framework for motor vehicle dealers, repairers and recyclers fit for purpose. The reforms are overwhelmingly sensible, keeping the law responsive and relevant in an increasingly online world and strengthening protections for consumers whilst reducing onerous regulatory red tape for businesses. The Liberals and The Nationals are indeed pleased to be backing the bill.

The provisions in the bill are the product of extensive engagement and a comprehensive consultation process with industry, consumers, the public and the community more broadly conducted by the former Coalition Government. The bill had as its genesis the statutory review into the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 initiated in 2019 under former Minister Anderson. The review was required to ensure that the Act's objectives remained valid and that its provisions remained the most appropriate way to achieve those objectives. The review found that the regulatory framework was largely appropriate but identified several improvements that would benefit the industry and consumers. It made 17 recommendations, of which 11 are being implemented by the bill. I understand that the other recommendations will be considered by the Government during a future regulation remake. I look forward to a thorough consultative process to inform those regulations.

It is important to get the regulatory framework right for motor traders and repairers and working effectively for everyone across our great State. There are nearly seven million registered vehicles on New South Wales roads. Over six million people have a licence and there are 1.7 vehicles for every private dwelling in our State. The automotive sector contributes \$37 billion to the national economy and employs almost 400,000 people. Most of that is in New South Wales. Motor vehicles are entwined in our daily lives and most of us will utilise the services of a motor vehicle dealer or repairer on some regular basis. Market and consumer preferences have profoundly shifted over the past decade as we become increasingly an online economy and community. The law must keep up. It is welcome, therefore, that the bill permits and then regulates the end-to-end online sale of vehicles by dealers. So many of us are used to buying and selling goods online that it was perhaps an anachronism that online car sales by dealers were not regulated in this way sooner.

Currently the Act requires dealers to sell a vehicle from a "notified premises". The bill extends such a "notified premises" to also include an online website. It contains provisions regulating online dealer licensing, vehicle inspections and deposits. The Opposition welcomes that framework, which was developed by the former Government with extensive input from industry and consumers. Of course, a physical location where vehicles are stored will still need to be nominated by an online seller to ensure the integrity of compliance checks and to ensure that consumer inspections will still be available. There are also sensible reforms to ease the regulatory burden for dealers and repairers, many of which are small, family-owned and operated businesses across New South Wales.

The bill replaces existing recordkeeping requirements for dealers, recyclers and repairers to maintain separate registers with a more general requirement to keep certain records. Record keeping is important to maintain integrity and to uphold standards but should not unduly burden smaller, family-owned enterprises with red tape. The bill increases consumer protections and allows rectification orders to be made so that the Act's dealer guarantees better align with consumer guarantees under the Australian Consumer Law. The review found, and stakeholders have noted, that it is confusing for all in the market that two separate protection frameworks exist: the Australian Consumer Law and the dealer guarantees. Aligning those is welcome and will reduce confusion,

and introducing the power to issue rectification orders provides an important mechanism to protect consumers. The Opposition calls on the Government to explore further opportunity for alignment between dealer guarantees and consumer guarantees.

Motor vehicles have unfortunately too often been the target of theft and other criminal activity such as the trade of parts or the rebirthing of stolen or written-off vehicles. The community has been clear that strong measures need to be in place to stamp that out. The bill creates the offence of possessing a device capable of rendering the odometer of a motor vehicle inoperative or inaccurate. Beyond the legitimate defences provided for in the bill, there is no need for anyone to have those devices. It also harmonises the Act with the Scrap Metal Industry Act 2016 to close a loophole that was allowing cash transactions in some instances. Reform to the scrap metal industry was carried out in 2016 by the Liberals and The Nationals, whereby cashless transactions were introduced to enhance the paper trail and discourage illegal activity. The Coalition supports the move to preserve the intent of that reform.

I put on record my thanks to the many stakeholders across the industry that have contributed to consultation and the drafting of the bill, including the Motor Traders' Association of New South Wales, the Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers, the Caravan and Camping Industry Association, the Australian Automotive Dealer Association, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, the Insurance Council of Australia, CHOICE, Legal Aid NSW and the Consumer Action Law Centre. Those stakeholders have been instrumental in identifying issues and advising on improvements. That includes the removal from the draft bill of the requirement for dealers to collect defective vehicles from consumers and the Coalition's April 2022 announcement that the online selling of vehicles would include both new and used vehicles.

Stakeholders are asking for further reform and the statutory review has identified further areas for consideration. The Opposition will await the regulation remake and the chance to consider the Government's responses to the review's other recommendations. That includes addressing the need to distinguish between motor vehicle repair licences for light and, importantly, heavy vehicles. I thank the former Coalition better regulation and fair trading Ministers—the member for Tamworth, the member for Miranda and Victor Dominello—as well as the hardworking departmental staff for their work on the reforms. I acknowledge too the work of the current Minister. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (16:27): I make a brief contribution in support of the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023. In doing so, I note that manufacturing, particularly automotive manufacturing, has been a large employer of many in the Liverpool area. I also note that the automotive business in New South Wales is the biggest of its kind in Australia, with a total value of more than \$37 billion. It is a key employer and important for the wellbeing of the people of New South Wales, with most people generally buying and repairing a motor vehicle at some point in their life. The bill will continue to put New South Wales dealers in pole position to meet the growing demand for vehicles in the community. Changing consumer preferences for digital sales, the consistent emergence of new technologies and new manufacturers such as Tesla entering the market mean that we need to continue to adapt our laws to ensure they are fit for purpose.

The Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023 implements the key reforms recommended in the statutory review of the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 that was completed in 2020. It is greatly disappointing, though, that industry and stakeholders have waited three years for legislative change to bring the automotive industry into the twenty-first century whilst enhancing consumer protections.

The bill demonstrates the New South Wales Government's commitment to modernising New South Wales laws so they support a vibrant automotive industry as it continues to grow into the future. In contrast, the Minns Government has taken action on this within the first six months of its first term. New South Wales also leads the nation in new vehicle purchases, with 31 per cent of the one million purchases nationwide made by consumers in this State. That puts New South Wales ahead of Victoria and Queensland, which account for 26 per cent and 22 per cent respectively of new vehicle purchases. According to the Australian Automotive Dealer Association there are 971 franchised new car dealerships in New South Wales, employing 19,648 people, with a total economic contribution of \$4.63 billion to the State. It is incumbent on us in this place to ensure that the most up-to-date legislative and regulatory framework for such a significant contributor to our State's economy is in place.

The bill will implement consumer safeguards for online sales to ensure that equivalent protections for consumers who buy motor vehicles from physical vehicle dealers are available to consumers who buy motor vehicles online. These safeguards include new section 66B, which will require online dealers to provide the same information on their website that is given to consumers when they visit a traditional physical dealership. This information includes the condition of the vehicle, such as the odometer reading and past damage to the vehicle. It also includes new section 66C, which gives consumers an opportunity to conduct a reasonable examination of the vehicle, and new section 66D, which sets out the requirements around maximum deposit for online vehicle sales to ensure that consumers only pay fair deposit amounts.

Furthermore, the New South Wales Government is committed to reducing the administrative burden on businesses so that they can focus on the important things, such as how to grow and employ more people. For example, the keeping of registers as required by section 100 of the Act only duplicates the existing records of businesses and creates unnecessary administration. The bill proposes registers no longer be kept. Instead, new section 100 will allow the secretary of the department to publish a notice on the NSW Fair Trading website to specify what records motor dealers, motor recyclers and motor vehicle repairers must keep. This will allow industry to take advantage of the digital innovations available and use the most efficient systems to maintain the records that they need. New section 100 will also allow the Government to better work with industry to ensure that records about the acquisition and disposal of certain parts currently contained in the regulation are updated when needed more quickly to reflect new technologies entering the marketplace, such as new electric vehicles.

However, any robust legislative framework must support compliance and enforcement to address misconduct in the industry, knowing well that the majority of people in the industry do the right thing. The bill proposes amendments that will support NSW Fair Trading to address and reduce misconduct in the industry more effectively. These amendments include increasing the maximum penalty for odometer tampering from 200 penalty units to 500 penalty units, which is an increase from a fine of \$22,000 up to \$55,000; making it an offence to have an odometer tampering device unless a person is a motor vehicle repairer who lawfully repairs or replaces the odometer of motor vehicles as part of their repairer business; expanding the list of prohibited persons; and expanding the disciplinary action available under the Act. Clause 99A of the bill will also make it an offence for motor vehicle recyclers to buy a motor vehicle or motor vehicle parts with cash, by cheque payable to cash, or in kind with goods or services. This will mitigate criminals being able to pass on stolen parts for cash payments and ensure that transaction records are kept.

Over the past few months people have contacted my office who have purchased vehicles online, but upon visiting Service NSW to transfer the registration have been unable to for an array of reasons not specified during the sale, such as previous unpaid debt. Given that used car sales amount to roughly 50 per cent of total car sales, with 42 per cent of used cars being sold through private arrangements, odometer tampering poses a huge risk of damage to members of our community. In an area like Liverpool, second-hand vehicle sales, including those that come after modifications and repairs, are a notable feature of our local economy. For example, in 2021 private vehicle sales on Gumtree in the Liverpool area alone accounted for 3 per cent of all listings nationally. This is especially considerable given Sydney on its own accounts for 20 per cent of all used cars listed on Gumtree.

Western Sydney households are roughly 6 per cent more likely to own more than two motor vehicles, for a wide variety of reasons but especially because of the historically poor public transport infrastructure in our fast-growing regions. In conclusion, the Minns Government is delivering much needed reforms in the bill to support the automotive industry in New South Wales. The bill is well balanced and will deliver positive benefits for motor dealers, repairers and recyclers, whilst ensuring that we protect consumers within our community in a range of different ways. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (16:35): I make a contribution to debate on the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023. As someone who has had a lifetime of experience as a heavy vehicle motor repairer I do not make these comments lightly, but I advise the House that whilst I support all the amendments proposed in the current bill, it is lacking in one very important area, and that is the area around the compliance of repairers' licences. I speak specifically about motor vehicle repairers—who may have been referred to in the past as panelbeaters—who repair light vehicles, which under the Road Transport Act are vehicles up to 4.5 tonnes, and repairers who repair vehicles over 4.5 tonnes, who would be defined as heavy vehicle repairers. The current bill, which makes amendments to the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 is framed in a way that puts NSW Fair Trading in breach of its own legislation. I have to check—and I am happy to table it for the record, without bragging—that I still have my tradesman qualification and ticket on me to confirm that I do have a background of 22 years—a lifetime—of involvement with heavy vehicles.

As a fully qualified heavy vehicle repairer I point out why I make the comment that NSW Fair Trading is in breach of its own legislation. For the benefit of the Parliament I table what is known as a Heavy Vehicle Certificate of Compliance. This is a form that is issued by Transport, Roads and Maritime Services, Transport for NSW—whatever the heading may be now. This is a specific form that is required for the repairer of a heavy vehicle to complete once a heavy vehicle is repaired. The vehicle may have been written off, had serious damage, or been sold through an auction as a written-off vehicle or a repairable write-off. This form must be completed by a suitably qualified repairer. Under "Declaration" on the back of the form, it states:

- (iv) The vehicle specified in this certificate has been repaired by and inspected for certification by a person who holds the relevant qualifications set out in clause 36 of the Motor Dealers and Repairers Regulation 2014 (NSW) for the classes of repair work set out in clause 34 of that regulation or an interstate licensed repairer under a corresponding law.

That clearly defines that the person who has undertaken to do the repair of the heavy vehicle and who is therefore signing the form as the repairer must be suitably qualified to undertake the repair. That is all. Everybody gets that; everybody understands that.

Unfortunately, at the moment there is no classification of repairers. There is no distinction between a light vehicle repairer and a heavy vehicle repairer, and that is where the anomaly exists. It would be wonderful if the bill—if the Minister were to make a slight amendment—made a clear distinction between those two classifications of licences. The Road Transport Act specifies the two classes of licence that are required. As I said, there are light vehicle repairers, who repair vehicles up to 4.5 tonnes, and heavy vehicle repairers, who repair vehicles over 4.5 tonnes. Section 98 (1) of the Road Transport Act states:

A licensed repairer may issue, in a form approved by Transport for NSW, a light vehicle certificate of compliance in relation to a light vehicle if—

- (a) the repairer's licence is of a class that authorises the repairer to repair the type of vehicle, and the type of vehicle damage, the subject of certification, and
- (b) the licensed repairer is satisfied that the standard of repairs, and the repair methods used, are in accordance with the requirements adopted by or set out in the statutory rules.

Under paragraph (b), a note states:

Section 12 of the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013 makes it an offence for a person to carry on the business of a motor vehicle repairer unless the person is the holder of a motor vehicle repairer's licence. Section 15 of that Act also makes it an offence for a motor vehicle repairer, in the course of business, to enter into an agreement for any repair work to be done by another person who is not the holder of a motor vehicle repairer's licence.

The crux of the matter is the safety of vehicles on our roads. Currently, NSW Fair Trading will accept a heavy vehicle certificate of compliance that is filled out and signed by a business that only does light vehicle work, not heavy vehicle work. It is very easy to check which business is which, because there is a vast difference between the equipment used in the repair of light vehicles, which can be carried out in very small premises, and that of a repairer who is repairing heavy vehicles. Because we currently have only the one classification of licence and because those licences are not defined as they should be under the Road Transport Act and the Fair Trading Act, NSW Fair Trading can accept a light vehicle certificate of compliance for the repair of heavy vehicles.

If a light vehicle repairer is doing work on behalf of a heavy vehicle repairer and signs and submits the form to Fair Trading, Fair Trading is in breach for not checking whether or not that repairer has the qualifications to undertake that work. The fact is Fair Trading can easily do that by visiting the business and having a look at what the business does. But that makes it difficult for Fair Trading. We need to have two classifications of licences. We need a light vehicle repair licence and a heavy vehicle repair licence. Then, ultimately, if Fair Trading sees that a heavy vehicle certificate of compliance has been sent to it and the licence is not compliant with the work that has been carried out, it can be picked up straightaway. The important thing is returning vehicles to the road in a safe condition. The fact remains that light vehicle repairers do not undertake the work that a heavy vehicle repair shop does.

I will pick out some brief examples. If a heavy vehicle is involved in a major accident, it is incumbent upon the heavy vehicle repairer to remove the steering box of that vehicle. They are required to send that away to ensure that it gets fully inspected and tested prior to it being refitted after the accident and the vehicle being returned to the road. The second thing is to repair any axles that may be twisted or bent. I seek an extension of time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): I grant an extension. Before the member for Kellyville continues, I address the earlier comment he made about tabling a document. The member is welcome to lay the document upon the table of the House for everyone's benefit.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I will include my tradesman's certificate, if members want to check that. The third component of heavy vehicles that would be checked is the stub axles. I explain for the benefit of the House that stub axles are what hold on the big front wheels of a heavy vehicle. Members might imagine that if a heavy vehicle is travelling down the road and the stub axles are faulty or broken, a horrific accident could occur, and we all know the carnage caused by heavy vehicle accidents. But herein lies the rub. During the inspections of just those three components that I have spoken about, and particularly the inspection of stub axles, dye testing is undertaken to ensure there is not minute cracking.

Why do I make these points? If, say, a heavy vehicle has been involved in an accident, and the owner has received their money from the insurance company, and the insurance company then sells that heavy vehicle through an auction, it is currently the case that unscrupulous people might buy that vehicle, repair it to a cosmetic standard such that the vehicle looks perfectly fine, then on-sell the vehicle without undertaking those mandatory checks. If that vehicle, which has already had an accident and has been returned to the road, was then to have another accident, there is no way to know, unless a person checked its repair history, whether those mandatory

inspections and tests were undertaken. There is no way to know whether the parts failed in the first accident or the second accident, possibly causing massive repercussions for other vehicles on the road. It is a safety issue.

There is also currently the issue of rebirthing vehicles, which we had previously in the light vehicle industry. I commend the previous Labor Government, which amended this Act in 2010 to bring in the Written-Off Vehicle Register [WOVR]. That amendment made it an offence to repair vehicles that were known as statutory write-offs. What used to happen in the past is that vehicles that were so damaged they were unrepairable were sold through auctions. An unscrupulous purchaser would then steal a car that was the same make and model, and they would rebirth the stolen vehicle with the identification tags of the purchased vehicle. They would then sell the car. That is what allowed the stolen vehicle industry to flourish up to that point in time.

Once the WOVR was introduced, the criminal element was reduced by an enormous amount. However, it then moved into the heavy vehicle industry area and Transport for NSW has since seen a high incidence of these types of stolen vehicles return to our roads. The criminal element is capitalising on an area where there is currently no regulation. Regulation is required to fix this and ensure that a heavy vehicle certificate of compliance is only signed by a repairer who is qualified to do the work. Requiring two areas of compliance and licensing might be considered very difficult, but if the bill passes the awarding of the classification of repairer could be grandfathered immediately to people working in heavy vehicle repair shops. There are not many of them; they are few and far between. Light vehicle repairers could be left where they are and heavy vehicle repairers and their businesses could have those rights grandfathered and continue to repair heavy vehicles.

Apprentices currently working in the industry in light vehicle repair shops would ultimately receive a light vehicle qualification once they finish their studies and new apprentices entering heavy vehicle areas would receive a heavy vehicle qualification, which would probably cover both light and heavy vehicle qualifications in the future. It is not an onerous change but it is necessary. Certainly from a non-legislative perspective, it could be a very easy change. I understand that our very capable shadow Minister has had discussions with the Minister's office. I believe it intends to make the change through regulation, but I ask the Minister to consider simple amendments to the bill. I ask the Minister to take that on board—I have even written them up. I thank the House. This is an important aspect that needs to be fixed posthaste.

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (16:51): I support the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023. The New South Wales automotive industry is the biggest in the country and the cornerstone of the State's economy, with a total value exceeding \$37 billion. It is a significant contributor to employment and plays a fundamental role in the lives of New South Wales residents every day. This is particularly true for residents in my electorate. Analysis of car ownership in 2021 indicates that around two-thirds of households across the Riverstone electorate had access to two or more vehicles, compared with just over half across the broader Blacktown local government area.

In a State where new vehicle purchases account for 31 per cent of national sales, it is crucial to maintain a robust legal framework to support industry growth and consumer protection. The much-needed reforms in the bill will propel the automotive industry into the twenty-first century while enhancing safeguards that will benefit my electorate enormously. Riverstone is a rapidly growing area. Consequently, the demand for cars is also increasing. With a substantial population of young families, migrants and those already in the market for vehicles, the bill works towards protecting the rights of consumers. The current economic climate is conducive to malicious individuals seeking to exploit those groups who cannot fork out large sums to purchase a vehicle and, hence, will be looking for savvy deals. Whether reducing language barriers or desperate situations, the bill goes a long way to bolster the integrity of the New South Wales automotive industry by implementing the proposed safeguards.

New South Wales is indisputably the leader of new vehicle purchases in Australia, representing 31 per cent of the nation's total, placing it ahead of Victoria, on 26 per cent, and Queensland, on 22 per cent. According to the Australian Automotive Dealer Association, there are 971 franchised new car dealerships in New South Wales, employing 19,648 people and contributing a staggering \$4.63 billion to the State's economy. Those statistics underscore the significance of the automotive industry in New South Wales and demonstrate why it deserves a legislative framework adaptable to its evolving needs. The bill recognises the shifting dynamics of consumer preferences, particularly in the increasing demand for digital sales channels. It responds to this trend by permitting the end-to-end online sale of motor vehicles. This change is accomplished by expanding the definition of a "notified premises" to include websites, aligning legislation with the modern digital landscape.

Critically, the bill ensures that consumer protection remains intact. It introduces specific requirements for online motor dealers to guarantee that consumers receive the same level of protection in online dealerships as they do in physical dealerships. For example, online dealers must provide the same information on their websites as would be given to consumers visiting a traditional dealership. That includes critical details about the vehicle's condition, such as the odometer readings and past damage. Consumers will be allowed to conduct a reasonable examination of the vehicle, preserving their right to assess the product before they purchase. The bill also

introduces requirements around maximum deposits for online vehicle sales to ensure that consumers are not subjected to excessive up-front costs.

The bill affirms the Government's commitment to ease the administrative burdens that businesses face. Section 100 of the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act currently requires that motor dealers, recyclers and repairers maintain registers—a process seen as duplicative and cumbersome by industry stakeholders. The proposed changes in the bill eliminate the need for these registers and empower the secretary of the department to specify recordkeeping requirements on the Fair Trading website. This shift to a more digital and flexible approach reduces the administrative redundancy and enables businesses to harness digital innovations efficiently. Moreover, it ensures that records are updated promptly to accommodate emerging technologies in the marketplace, such as electric vehicles, thereby promoting efficiency and transparency.

While most individuals and businesses in the automotive industry operate ethically, the bill is essential to address and reduce misconduct effectively, because there are rogue traders out there. The bill introduces amendments that strengthen the hand of NSW Fair Trading in dealing with misconduct, including significantly raising the maximum penalty for odometer tampering, clearly conveying that such fraudulent activities will not be tolerated. Under the bill, the maximum penalty escalates from 200 penalty units to 500 penalty units, which is the equivalent to a jump of \$22,000 to \$55,000. Possessing an odometer-tampering device becomes an offence unless the individual is a motor vehicle repairer legitimately involved in repairing or replacing odometers as part of their business.

The bill also expands the list of prohibited persons in the industry, safeguarding consumers against potential misconduct. It introduces an expansion of disciplinary actions available under the Act, providing regulators with the tools necessary to address violations effectively. New section 99A prohibits motor vehicle recyclers from buying vehicles or parts with cash, cheques payable to money or in-kind transactions. These measures mitigate the risk of exchanging stolen parts for cash payments and allow for the maintenance of proper transactional records. The bill represents a well-balanced approach to modernising the New South Wales automotive industry. By embracing online sales, reducing administrative burdens and enhancing compliance and enforcement measures, it meets the demands of a rapidly changing market and reinforces consumer protections.

The bill is in the best interests of both industry stakeholders and consumers. It ensures that consumers have access to critical information when purchasing vehicles online, streamlines administrative processes for businesses and bolsters efforts to curb misconduct in the industry. The automotive industry in New South Wales is not just a vital economic sector; it is woven into the very fabric of our society. With a total value surpassing \$37 billion, the industry plays a pivotal role in driving the State's economy, providing employment opportunities and serving the daily needs of countless New South Wales residents.

Indeed, before coming to this House, I spent many years photographing and working inside the automotive industry, and I have seen firsthand how many people it employs and how those people depend on this industry for their ongoing economic advantage. It is an industry that touches the lives of nearly every citizen at some point, whether they are purchasing a new vehicle or maintaining an existing one. While the New South Wales automotive industry significantly contributes to our economy, it is also in a state of flux. The ever-evolving landscape of technology, shifting consumer preferences and the emergence of new technology such as electric vehicles necessitate evaluating our existing legislation to ensure it remains pertinent and supportive of the industry's growth. For years, stakeholders within the automotive sector have called for legislative reform. They understand the damaging effect that nefarious actors in this field play on legitimate dealers. However, despite those persistent calls, the previous Government failed to take any meaningful action.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): It being 5.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the public interest debate.

Public Interest Debate

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (17:00): I move:

That this House:

- (1) Condemns the use of racial epithets and the burning of the Israeli flag by protesters at the Sydney Opera House forecourt on 9 October 2023.
- (2) Affirms that antisemitism, racial vilification and hate speech have no place in New South Wales.
- (3) Acknowledges the Premier's apology to the Jewish community for his Government's failure to provide the Jewish community at the Opera House with "a place and a space for that community to come together to commemorate the horrific scenes that we've seen in Israel".

- (4) Condemns the police Minister for failing to take any action to provide the Jewish community at the Opera House with "a place and a space for that community to come together to commemorate the horrific scenes that we've seen in Israel".

I begin by sharing my condolences and sincere sympathies for Jewish communities, who have been affected by illegal protests taking place here in Australia, as well as those communities suffering from the scenes of conflict that we have seen from overseas. The hate speech and racial vilification on display by those protesters have caused emotional distress and have fostered feelings of mistrust and fear within the Jewish and wider community, who are now scared to leave their homes.

On Monday night we witnessed what was supposed to be a peaceful gathering turn into a discriminatory hate parade along the shoreline of Sydney. The behaviour that we witnessed was disgraceful; it was horrific. Sydney is embarrassed; New South Wales is embarrassed. We saw flags being burnt. We heard chants of hatred. We saw flares being lit up. No matter someone's culture or belief system, it is unacceptable to burn the flag of another country, and it is unacceptable to chant hatred towards people. I make clear that there is no place for antisemitism in our State, now or ever. The scenes that we saw on Monday night in Sydney are un-Australian. It is not our culture to rally in the streets, yelling hateful comments at another community group. Our diversity should strengthen us in tough times. It should not divide us.

The Sydney Opera House has long stood as a symbol of cultural diversity and free expression. It is deeply disheartening to see it being used as a platform for promoting division and hatred. Allowing an event that targets a specific religious and ethnic community with antisemitic rhetoric is unacceptable, and it goes against the principles of inclusivity and tolerance that our society values. This was an unlawful protest. No form or notice of intention to hold a public assembly was submitted to the police. New South Wales citizens have a right to protest peacefully, and, when doing so, to follow the correct procedure. But those antisemitic people had no right to voice those statements or to rid the Jewish and wider community of their opportunity to stand in solidarity under the blue and white lights of the Sydney Opera House sails, in honour of the lives that were lost in Israel. I also acknowledge the work of the police officers on the ground. They did everything they could to keep the situation as calm as possible. I bet that they wish they had a police Minister standing in their corner, like the former ones did.

This is not the first—or the last—time that we will see the Opera House sails being lit up in solidarity. We have done it in previous years for other overseas conflicts. I remember when former Premier Dominic Perrottet wanted the Opera House to be lit up in blue and yellow, the colours of the Ukrainian flag. The difference was that everyone knew what was going on. There was open communication between the Government, its agencies and both the Russian and Ukrainian community groups. The Labor Government failed to keep the community safe. It failed to communicate with what was happening. The former Premier and I, as former Deputy Premier and police Minister, were in close contact on these matters. The same relationship cannot be said for the current Premier and his police Minister.

We contacted organisations, like the police, to allow the community to come together and sing safely on the steps of the Opera House. We communicated with the Ukrainians, the Russians and religious groups, and it was peaceful. What we have seen is an abject failure from Labor. It failed these communities. The Government has failed the Jewish community and the people of New South Wales. Whilst I acknowledge the Premier's apology, the actions of the Labor Government this week say to the people of New South Wales that, as a government, it will accept racism in our State rather than promote tolerance, understanding and respect among all people, regardless of their religious or cultural background.

This week we also heard the police Minister state on multiple occasions that this is not her job. Either the Minister has not read her role description, or she is clearly inept at fulfilling the role that she has been given. She says it is not her job. She says, "We're not in charge." Yes, she is in charge. Yes, she can influence decisions with respect to community safety. I will tell the Minister how to do her job. She can pick up the phone and raise concerns with the relevant people in the department, and she can ask them to put appropriate measures in place to ensure that the community is safe. She can front up and tell the community about the actions that she is taking in her role as police Minister.

To be clear, it is the role of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism to ensure the safety of every New South Wales resident, no matter their race, their culture or their beliefs. The Minister's role is to provide oversight of law enforcement and to ensure that they operate efficiently, effectively and ethically, and to be accountable when things go wrong. She has to stop using the excuse, "It is not up to me." The community has no confidence in the actions of the police Minister. In fact, it is embarrassing. This is not a government on its training wheels anymore; this is a government with training wheels that have fallen off. We have amateur Ministers running this State.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:08): I begin by acknowledging the tragic events of the past few days. I stand with the Premier and all members of this Government in unequivocally condemning the acts of violence on Israeli citizens by Hamas. There are no circumstances in which the killing of innocents, the firing of rockets at civilians or the taking of hostages can be justified. The Government rejects and denounces the abhorrent actions of Hamas. I am sure that I speak for all members when I say our thoughts and prayers are with those killed and injured, those who are missing, as well as their families and friends here in New South Wales.

We are witnessing a devastating loss of human life and the suffering of innocent civilians. In Australia, countless families have been affected by these tragic events. We have already had the devastating news of the death of Australian grandmother Galit Carbone, murdered in the attack on Israel by Hamas at the weekend.

As we speak, families in Australia are experiencing the terrible agony of waiting to hear if their loved ones are safe. That is why the New South Wales Government made the decision to light up the Opera House in the colours of the Israeli flag, blue and white, alongside the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, the Empire State Building, the Eiffel Tower and the White House. It was an act of international solidarity at the time of such a horrific event.

Here at home, buildings across the country were also lit up in solidarity. Sadly, several hundred people chose to protest the decision to light up the Opera House sails. The behaviour at this protest was repugnant and abhorrent. We saw the shouting of racial epithets at the Jewish community—horrible, violent, antisemitic words. No-one should celebrate terrorism. No-one should celebrate the barbaric massacre of innocent civilians. Members of the Jewish community should not feel unsafe in their own city, ever. The Government's position is clear: such a situation is intolerable.

Let me now turn to the response of police. The Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism is on record extending to the Jewish community in Sydney her deepest sympathy and solidarity. The Jewish Board of Deputies asked police what they should advise their community. The situation with the protesters was expected to be volatile and it was possible it could become dangerous. Assistant Commissioner Tony Cooke, Central Metropolitan Region Commander, said:

In the circumstances, it was considered the best option for police was to manage the movement of those people from Sydney Town Hall to the Opera House to ensure that we were able to control the movement of the people and get them to a place where we could manage the rally in its form and to prevent the risk of conflict.

I conclude by saying that the Minns Labor Government is absolutely committed to ensuring the safety of the Jewish community of this State. While the Opposition is content to engage in political pointscore over this matter, cynically using an horrific atrocity overseas and a grieving community for its own narrow political gain, our focus is on working with Jewish community leaders—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The Clerk will stop the clock. All members, particularly the member for North Shore, will come to order.

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL: Our focus is on working with Jewish community leaders, the Community Security Group and the NSW Police Force to ensure the security of the Jewish community at this difficult time.

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (17:11): All of us who have the great privilege of being Australians expect to go about every single day of our lives in safety. It is one of the greatest benefits of being in Australia. Every single one of us expects to be safe, regardless of our race, the faith we choose to worship—or whether we choose not to worship—and whether we were born here or far away. We expect to be free and have our liberties and rights upheld every day. In light of the recent atrocious events in our city and across the globe, the motion before the House today debates whether this Labor Government has been able to ensure that. Members on this side of the House say that the Labor Government and the police Minister have failed to do so.

There is a responsibility on those opposite to accept the mantle they have been given by the people of New South Wales to show leadership, courage and respect for our community and ensure that they enshrine our rights, freedoms, liberties, safety and opportunity. This week they have abjectly failed. Members have heard a short contribution from the member for Camden and a refusal from the police Minister to answer legitimate questions from the Opposition that seek to hold Labor to account. Today we fail to see the Minister in the Chamber for an incredibly important debate about law and order. Members on this side of the House stand up for the rights, liberties and safety of people in New South Wales.

This week we have seen truly heartbreaking scenes of extreme horror resulting from the brutal terrorist attacks by Hamas on innocent civilians in Israel. Frankly, we are fortunate to live in a country where we do not face those same threats. All of us join together to express profound sadness and regret for those across the world who experience this terror and violence. Lives have been lost and people have been kidnapped or gravely injured—and we know that this is just the beginning of their experience. All members in this place stand and condemn the incredibly despicable violence. We are unified on that; it is not something that divides us.

Civilians in Gaza, the people of Israel and our own Jewish community here at home fear the impact to their own safety. The thoughts of members are obviously with the family and friends of the Australian-born grandmother, Galit Carbone, who today was named as the first Australian casualty of this crisis. These attacks have caused immense pain—and will continue to do so—to Israelis, people of the Jewish faith community in New South Wales, and to Palestinians themselves. Any government needs to observe, monitor and provide any kind of assistance required to communities experiencing this struggle—but this Government has failed to do that.

As the member for Camden noted, on Monday night the Opera House was lit in the colours of the Israeli flag. It was meant to be a symbol of solidarity and compassion for those lives lost after a terrorist attack. Unfortunately, the people most affected by this egregious assault on the civilians of Israel were not able to attend the ceremony because of this Government's inability to maintain law, order and safety in our city. They were told to stay away from a moment orchestrated purely to demonstrate solidarity with and compassion for them. However, other protesters were allowed to march throughout the streets of Sydney from the Town Hall to the Opera House.

We have seen young teenagers threatened with their lives for displaying a Israeli flag on their car in Bellevue Hill. Today members heard about Mark Spiro, who was arrested—for his own safety, it seems—for trying to unfurl an Israeli flag. While the protesters who burned flags, shouted racist epithets and threatened violence were allowed to go about their day in peace, the individuals who were meant to be able to join in this solidarity for the lives lost in Israel were not able to do so. This Minister has failed abjectly in her responsibility to the people of New South Wales. There is a lot of talk in this place about ensuring that we preserve and respect people's rights and liberties across the State, but this Government has failed its most basic obligations to keep us safe and maintain our liberties.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (17:17): I make a brief contribution to the public interest debate moved by the member for Bathurst. The Minns Labor Government condemns all acts of violence and barbarism conducted by members of Hamas against citizens of Israel. The atrocities that have occurred since the weekend are unprecedented; they can only be described as acts of terrorism. Many of the casualties have families here in New South Wales and Australia. To those families we offer our deepest sympathies and condolences for the loss of their loved ones. Acts of hatred, racial vilification and hate speech have no place in Australia and are contrary to everything that we stand for, as a State and as a country.

The New South Wales Government lit the Opera House in blue and white, at the request of the Jewish community, specifically to show solidarity with the Jewish community here in New South Wales and ensure that members of the Jewish community in Australia are able to feel safe and secure in their city. The Premier has apologised on the Government's behalf that clearly this did not turn out the way we intended. He has taken responsibility for this.

[Opposition members interjected.]

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

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: But the Opposition is not satisfied. Instead, Opposition members have decided to exploit this matter for political gain—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Mount Druitt will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

The member for Mount Druitt will resume his seat. Members to my left will cease interjecting. I warn the member for Hawkesbury and other members that I will start putting them on calls to order and may have them removed from the Chamber for the duration of this debate. I ask all members to sit quietly and listen. The member for Mount Druitt has the call.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: Since my appointment as the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Counter-terrorism earlier this year, I have had the opportunity to work closely with the police commissioner and the police Minister on many issues. Both the police commissioner and the Minister possess the highest level of integrity—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for North Shore will cease interjecting or I will have her removed from the Chamber.

Ms Anna Watson: No-one did it to you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The member for Shellharbour will cease interjecting or I will place her on a call to order.

Ms Felicity Wilson: Am I on a call?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): No, but I will place the member on a call to order if she continues to interject. I do not need to call the member to order to have her removed from the Chamber. Members will lower the temperature of the debate. The member for Mount Druitt has the call.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: Both the police commissioner and the Minister possess the highest level of integrity and professionalism, and both have my unequivocal support. I strongly support the actions of the NSW Police Force. Its priority is to ensure the safety of people who may have been in harm's way. I have full confidence in the Police Force. The Opposition should stop using the Police Force and the police Minister as political footballs. Unfortunately, the Opposition is using the atrocities and the crisis overseas in its attack on the New South Wales Government as nothing more than political pointscoring. There are people in New South Wales who are grieving the loss of their family members. The Opposition is only rubbing salt in their wounds. This horrific set of acts should never have been used for political pointscoring. The Opposition should be condemned for using them as such.

Most critically, the Minns Labor Government is focused on the safety and security of the Jewish community in New South Wales. It is unacceptable for any resident of New South Wales to feel unsafe on their own streets. That is why the NSW Police Force today announced that Operation Shelter has commenced to coordinate the response and gather all intelligence available about community sentiment, potential protest activity and potential demonstrations that might take place in the future. The Minns Labor Government is absolutely committed to doing everything necessary to ensure that members of the Jewish community in New South Wales are safe, and feel safe, as they go about their daily lives. We will continue to work with Jewish community leaders, the Community Security Group and the NSW Police Force to ensure that this is the case.

Mr Tim James: You failed the other day, didn't you?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I call the member for Willoughby to order for the first time.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (17:22): I contribute to the public interest debate. From the outset, I express to the Jewish community in Israel, in Sydney and globally my sincere condolences and sympathies for what has been a terrorist attack. A lot of debate has been going on for decades about the grievances between the Israelis and the Palestinians. That has been source of contention and conflict for generations, but that is not the point of this discussion today. We are raising the issue of an actual terrorist attack on Israeli grounds, which has seen innocent civilians—babies, women, the elderly and the vulnerable—murdered in their homes, their beds and their communities. That is the source of our global grievance.

I extend my sincere condolences to those Israelis who have lost loved ones, including those in Israel and those in our community. It is very important to understand that what we saw in our city over the past two days was an apparent celebration of terrorism and apparent jubilation that innocents were gunned down. I do not think any member in this Chamber would condone that. If it was the other way around, we would all be aghast that a terrorist attack on civilians could be carried out by any community group, militant group or country. That is what we are appalled and aghast about. It comes down to a desire by fair-minded people living in a liberal democracy to want to commemorate and stand alongside those who have lost so much in Israel because of these terrorist acts. We are doing that by speaking in this place, by wearing the badges, by posting solidarity notices on our social media platforms and by lighting the Opera House sails.

To disrupt the compassionate solidarity of our community with the joyful celebration of terrorism is absolutely, completely unacceptable. It is un-Australian, and a disgusting defilement of this peaceful country that we are proudly members and leaders of. That should be condemned from the rooftops. I think members know that I like to get along with everyone in this place and work productively for our communities. But it distressed me that the police Minister did not do everything in her power to prevent those protesters from getting all the way to the Opera House. I have been a Minister. I know the powers that are invested in a ministry. I understand it. There was the possibility of doing more. I do not believe that everything was done.

I say to the police, the police Minister and the Labor Government, if we can amend our laws or create a new law to empower our police services through the structures and the departments that exist to stop the same thing happening again then let us work together to deliver that. Let us give more powers and more authority to police, to counterterrorism and to whoever needs it. We witnessed the most appalling, embarrassing and shameful sight in our city, and it has gone global. We witnessed an awful, terrible thing. It should never have occurred. We must find out what more we can do in this place to ensure that it does not happen again. I call upon the Labor Government to find out what else we can do through regulations or laws to ensure that this never happens again.

Mr Paul Toole: We have the law. They need to enforce it.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: Thank you. I stand with the Jewish community and I hope that a resolution is quickly achieved in the Middle East so that everyone can begin to repair and heal from what we have just witnessed.

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (17:27): I find it disappointing that in this moment, when we should be solemnly thinking about and commemorating the awful things that have happened, we are having this highly politicised debate that is targeting the police Minister. I reiterate that the Minns Labor Government unequivocally condemns the Hamas attack on Israel and any celebration of that attack. There is never, whatever the circumstances, any excuse for the murder of innocent civilians. There is never a justification for the murder of women and children, and the taking of hostages. It is a war crime under international law. Even in a wartime scenario, the targeting of civilians is unequivocally a war crime.

NSW Labor is proud that it has consistently and strongly supported zero tolerance towards antisemitism, racial vilification and hate speech.

Section 18C of the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act outlaws public actions and words which were reasonably likely in all the circumstances to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people on the basis of their race, colour or national or ethnic origin. What did the Federal Coalition try to do in 2016 and 2017? It tried to repeal that provision, and it took not just the political lobby, the Australian Labor Party, The Greens and Jacqui Lambie to oppose it—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. I remind the member for Dubbo that he is on two calls to order from question time. Opposition members will come to order.

Mr JASON LI: It was a coalition of multicultural community groups, including the Jewish community, the Muslim community, the Christian community and the Sikh community, that stood together hand in hand to oppose those changes. To be fair, members of the New South Wales Coalition opposed those changes as well and the repeals were defeated. When the legislation was defeated, George Brandis called it a sad day.

Mr Paul Toole: Point of order: The point of order is taken under relevance. The contribution of the member for Strathfield does not relate to the motion before the House. I ask that the member be brought back to the leave of the motion before the House and not Federal legislation that is not part of the motion.

Mr JASON LI: To the point of order—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): I thank the member for Strathfield but I have made my decision. The member for Bathurst will resume his seat. I do not uphold the point of order. I have been listening very carefully and the member for Strathfield is being relevant to the motion.

Mr JASON LI: I will move an amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting paragraphs (3) and (4) and inserting instead:

- (3) That this House condemns the horrific and coordinated attack by Hamas on Israel.
- (4) That this House denounces the killing of civilians, the firing of rockets into cities and the taking of hostages.
- (5) That this House extends its sympathy to the loved ones of those who have died.
- (6) That this House calls for an end to the attacks and the immediate release of all hostages.
- (7) That this House recognises Israel's right to defend itself.

The actions of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism reflect the principle of police independence, which is to be independent from political interference in the fulfilment of their duty. That is a nuance to the separation of powers because the police have to be free to determine who they charge and who they do not charge, who they investigate and who they do not investigate, or who they prosecute and who they do not prosecute—free from political interference.

Mrs Tanya Davies: Why have a Minister then?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Badgerys Creek will cease interjecting. The member for Dubbo will cease interjecting.

Mr JASON LI: The interjection from the member for Badgerys Creek highlights Opposition members' lack of understanding of the fundamental principle that the actions of police should be free from political interference. The police took an operational decision, and we should back our police.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Opposition members will come to order. I remind the following members that they are on calls to order from question time: the member for Goulburn is on one call to order; the member for Hornsby is on one call to order; the member for Oatley, who is not in the Chamber, is on

two calls to order; the member for Dubbo is on two calls to order and the member for Upper Hunter is on two calls to order. The member for Willoughby is on one call to order.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:33): I thank the member for Bathurst for bringing forward the motion today. I hope all members of the House stand in solidarity with the people of Israel. I note the member for North Shore mentioned Galit Carbone, an Australian citizen who has tragically been taken in this conflict along with too many other lives. I read an article before I came down to the Chamber about 40 babies who were beheaded today by Hamas. The extent of this atrocity is gut-wrenchingly abhorrent. I am sure we all stand in solidarity with the State of Israel. I think about how hard it has been for the people of this faith and culture to survive in the world over the ages—the Holocaust, the intifada, the Yom Kippur War, the Six-Day War. It has been a challenge for people to hold in their hands the idea of the State of Israel, which came about as a result of Theodor Herzl's campaign for a state that he would never see.

I have had the good fortune to visit the Middle East and walk at Mount Herzl past the sites of many great Israeli leaders like Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Golda Meir and think about the fight they endured to sustain their nation. That is a fight of great courage and a story of great conviction. I hope that we all continue to believe in that story so that Israel continues to exist as a state and as a belief in the Middle East but also so that its residents feel safe and secure in our State.

Having visited the Middle East on two occasions, I have had the great privilege of meeting with both Israelis and Palestinians. One of the things I found most empowering when I was there was that the vast majority of people in Israel want to get along. They want to live their lives, raise their families and not be impeded by acts of barbarism and terrorism that we have seen writ large on our screens, heard on our radios and read in our newspapers. I sincerely hope that those scenes come to an end as soon as humanly possible.

There is a point to be made about free speech in this country. I think it is very unfortunate that members, particularly of The Greens, have sought to conflate the issue of Palestine with this conflict. I think it is grossly irresponsible. I think those members should think very carefully about their actions. There is a time and a place for the debate about Palestine. At this particular time, all of us should be standing with the people of Israel, the people with an Israeli background or heritage and the people of Jewish faith in this State who are feeling incredibly unsafe at this time because of the actions that are happening not just in their country but also on the streets in Sydney.

There is always a debate to be had about free speech, but I believe there are limitations to that freedom, particularly when it comes to vilification, inciting violence and acts of terrorism. Perhaps the motion does not go far enough. If there are non-citizens or dual citizens found to be engaging in acts of vilification or collaborating with groups like Hamas, they should be deported from this country. They should not be allowed to stay in Australia and enjoy all of the rights and liberties that we enjoy. They abuse those rights and liberties and use them to threaten our citizens and our allies who we support. I call on the Federal Government to use its powers to take that action because Hamas has been registered as a terrorist organisation.

I thank the member for Bathurst for bringing the motion to the House. I know many people of Jewish faith and Israeli heritage in my electorate who are currently fearing for their safety. I know that the overwhelming majority of members on both sides of the Chamber feel deeply for local people and people overseas experiencing troubles. I hope that after the events at the Opera House the other night we see an enormous improvement in safety as people should be allowed to express views. They should not be allowed to express views in a way that incites violence.

I found it extraordinary that someone who wanted to express their support for Israel was arrested for having done so. They should be able to express their support for their country or their belief without fear of being arrested in the CBD because the police fear for their safety. That is wrong. I live in a free country. I want that freedom to continue. There are limits to that freedom. At the same time, I think we should also ensure that we support those people who are expressing those freedoms and also make sure that people in our State are safe and secure. I stand with Israel and I hope this conflict comes to an end as soon as humanly possible.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Kellyville) (17:39): By leave: As a former Minister for Multiculturalism in the previous Government, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to contribute to debate on one specific matter, and that is a very profound change that was made to the law. When I entered this place not long after 2007, a collective group of leaders was brought together representing many, if not all, religious and cultural organisations in New South Wales to try to advocate for change in regard to racial hate speech. This dragged on for many years. I was approached by many members of those groups, in particular by the Jewish community, who had suffered and who continue to suffer from a rise in antisemitism. I raised the matter in the party room with my own party and with the then Government. It took some time and there was quite a deal of pushback. Even when the matter

came before Cabinet—I was a Cabinet Minister at the time—there was a significant amount of reluctance to make this particular change.

In 2018 we moved the definition of "racial hate speech" from the Anti-Discrimination Act into the Crimes Act, making racial hate speech a punishable offence under the law in this State. There was overwhelming endorsement and support from every member of our multicultural community in New South Wales because we stood up for them and said that New South Wales—and, indeed, this country—will never tolerate anyone invoking violence through racially motivated speech. I make this comment in light of what happened the other night at the Opera House. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the people of Israel who have been subject to barbaric, gross and horrific actions, which were invoked by the terrorist aggressor Hamas. I extend my sympathies also to those who are suffering in Gaza. Many families who are suffering in Gaza would have wished that those actions had never taken place.

Much suffering has happened and, sadly, much more suffering will happen in the future. There will be no winners. One member mentioned that this has gone on for generations, but we have enjoyed a great period of peace in the Middle East and in that particular part of the world for quite a long period. It is offensive to every person around the world that that aggressor, Hamas, has undertaken these barbaric actions, which have led to such dreadful loss of life, and in the worst possible ways. I will not put those ways on record because we have all seen them and, sadly, we will see more of them in future.

I say to the leadership in this State: Leadership is a tough thing. Sometimes it must step up and do what is right. Recently people came out in support of the terrorist actions of Hamas. Those public comments have been reported on and videotaped. They are on record; they are there. A specific law has been broken by those people. Without making this political, the police Minister has the authority and the opportunity to invoke those laws and punish those people for what they have done. Leadership is tough, but at this time the leadership and the Government must speak out against these horrific actions. It must ensure that every person in the State of New South Wales and in this country understands that racial hate speech and invoking violence against any member of our society will never, ever be tolerated. That lies in the hands of the leadership and the police Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (17:44): In reply: I thank those members who have contributed to debate on this very important matter, including members representing the electorates of Camden, North Shore, Mount Druitt, Badgerys Creek, Strathfield, Kiama and Kellyville. I make a number of points. While an amendment to the motion has been moved, it does not defy the fundamental fact that for seven months under this Labor Government the police Minister's performance in fulfilling her duties has been subpar. Despite her important role, she has quite disrespectfully passed responsibility where she can. The Labor Government and police Minister must ensure that people feel safe in this State, regardless of their race, beliefs or culture. Some members opposite would have been embarrassed by the speech that was put forward because they would not have believed in it.

We cannot have a Minister saying on radio that the handling of the protest was a success. It is not a success to see a flag burning at the Opera House, it is not a success to see chants of hatred and it is not a success to see flares going off. I will say it again: It is un-Australian. The community needs to feel safe. Year 12 kids did not attend school today because they were scared. The Government has failed. People are scared to leave their homes. The Government has failed in community safety. That should not have happened. The police Minister's job is to support our police and ensure that the community has public confidence in the police to keep them safe. Her role comes with enormous responsibility.

The police Minister and the Labor Government have lost control. People across the State are horrified by what they have seen. I call on the Labor Government to reconsider its stance on any protest permits in future, especially where brutal and violent acts are to be committed or where hatred is to be incited. Such protests have been blocked before. Look at Black Lives Matter. Those protests were blocked before. Now is not the time for the Labor Government to go soft on law and order. The people of New South Wales are watching the Government's actions.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): The Clerk will stop the clock. I call the member for Monaro to order for the first time.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I ask the Government to stand up for the community and throw the full force of the law at those who break it. It is crucial that the Government ensures the safety and security of our citizens. I note that an amendment was moved by the member for Strathfield and that the Opposition also condemns those attacks. While we maintain the concerns contained in paragraphs (3) and (4) of the motion, we will support the amendment.

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

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.*Bills***MOTOR DEALERS AND REPAIRERS AMENDMENT BILL 2023****Second Reading Debate****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (17:49): As I was saying earlier, the Minns Labor Government has taken up the mantle of delivering the much-needed reform that will propel the automotive industry into the twenty-first century by aligning our laws with the current realities of the market. The Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023 is a critical piece of legislation that addresses the longstanding need for reform in the automotive sector and will benefit my electorate and the State as a whole. It is for these reasons that I strongly support the bill.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (17:50): The Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023 implements recommendations arising out of the November 2020 *Final Report-Statutory Review of the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013*. Under the Australian Consumer Law, purchased products and services come with automatic guarantees that they will work or do what was asked for. Motor vehicles, both new and used, come under that consumer protection. In contrast, the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act concerns the licensing and conduct of motor dealers, motor vehicle repairers and recyclers, and motor vehicle repair tradespersons.

For three years industry stakeholders have been patiently awaiting legislative reforms that will bring our automotive sector into the twenty-first century and strengthen consumer protections. The New South Wales Government has acted swiftly by introducing the bill within the first six months of its term. It is an example of the commitment of the Minns Labor Government to modernise our laws so that they are conducive to fostering a vibrant automotive industry that can continue to thrive into the future.

The automotive industry has a pivotal role in New South Wales, and the sector is the largest in Australia, boasting a total value exceeding \$37 billion. I outline some key statistics that underscore the significance of the industry in our State. New South Wales leads the nation in new vehicle purchases, with a staggering 31 per cent of the one million purchases made nationwide originating from our State. This puts us ahead of Victoria and Queensland, which respectively account for 26 per cent and 22 per cent of new vehicle purchases. According to the Australian Automotive Dealer Association, which represents franchised new car dealers across the nation, New South Wales is home to 971 franchised new car dealerships, which employ over 19,000 hardworking people and contribute a total of \$4.63 billion to our State economy. The industry serves as a cornerstone of employment and plays a crucial role in the wellbeing of our constituents, as most individuals inevitably engage in purchasing and maintaining motor vehicles during their lifetime.

The New South Wales Government anticipates a significant uptick in the volume of vehicles being bought and sold. In light of this, it is imperative that we implement the review's recommendations to ensure that our State's dealerships remain well positioned to meet the burgeoning demand for vehicles within our communities. The ever-evolving landscape of consumer preferences, characterised by the increasing inclination towards digital sales, coupled with the emergence of innovative technologies and the entry of new manufacturers such as Tesla into the market, necessitates a continuous adaptation of our legislation to ensure its relevance and efficacy. Feedback to the statutory review raised the following issues: the impact on the industry of the burdensome nature of some of the record keeping obligations, the classes of repair work, the relationship between insurers and repairers, the rapid improvements in technology, and the regulatory gaps around the conduct of some motor vehicle recyclers.

The Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill is a definite step in the right direction, and I welcome the work done by the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading in implementing the recommendations of the statutory review. The Minister worked closely with the Motor Traders' Association of New South Wales, the Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers, the Caravan Industry Association, the Australian Automotive Dealer Association, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, the Insurance Council of Australia and Legal Aid NSW to consider their suggestions for ensuring that the motor industry in New South Wales remains a fair and thriving part of our economy. This is in contrast to the actions of the previous Government.

In the second reading speech on its Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 the previous Government did not give any explanation for why it proposed to amend the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act to change the provisions relating to the restoration of licences. Nor did it explain why it had decided to change the criteria for the restoration. For that proposal there was no consultation on the proposed new requirements, and it was unclear on what basis the previous Government had decided that changes were required. Both industry and employee representatives were caught unaware of the proposed definition. I am delighted that in contrast the Minns Labor Government is demonstrating a fresh start in its approach to regulatory reform and consulting widely and genuinely.

The 2023 amendment bill is well balanced and will deliver positive benefits for motor dealers, repairers and recyclers. However, it will continue to protect consumers by ensuring that they will continue to be able to access the information they need to make choices about motor vehicles they buy, even if they buy them completely online, which is increasingly common. It ensures that there are appropriate deterrents for misconduct, and that NSW Fair Trading has the required tools to deal with industry players who do not meet their obligations. I agree with this comment by the Minister in his second reading speech:

Through the bill, this Government is committed to ensuring that this critical industry is futureproofed for the benefit of dealers, repairers, recyclers and all consumers in New South Wales.

The automotive industry is not only a vital economic contributor but also an integral part of the lives of our constituents. Most of our constituents own cars, and during COVID we saw a huge increase in the number of second-hand car sales, as many families felt the need to drive rather than use public transport during the health emergency. We have seen an increase in the value of second-hand cars, but that also brings increased risks for purchasers. They need up-to-date protections that will ensure that their investment is solid. The Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill is a significant step in that direction, and I urge all members to support this crucial piece of legislation.

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) (17:56): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Motor Dealers and Repairers Amendment Bill 2023. I particularly thank the member for Willoughby, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Liverpool, the member for Kellyville, the member for Riverstone and the member for Granville. An important role of government is to ensure that legislation remains up to date, fit for purpose and well balanced so that it protects consumers while allowing industry to innovate and grow.

After the 2020 statutory review was carried out, the previous Government sat on its hands instead of getting to work to implement the recommendations of the review. However, the automotive industry has been waiting for three years for action. It languished under the former Government and purchasers missed out on increased consumer protections. In contrast, the Minns Government has moved quickly to deliver much-needed reform to support the automotive industry and consumers.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated consumer preferences towards online retail and sales in the broader economy. This trend is continuing in the automotive industry and dealer-franchise model. As such, it is paramount to modernise the Act to ensure it supports industry growth and produces benefits for consumers. Indeed, it has taken this Government mere months to achieve what the former Government failed to do. The amendments in the bill will allow motor dealers to complete vehicle sales entirely online while ensuring that consumers continue to enjoy the same protections, regardless of the sales method they use to purchase a new or used motor vehicle.

The bill will support higher standards of conduct in the industry by prohibiting motor recyclers from making cash payments for end-of-life motor vehicles and parts. The bill will also provide the tools for regulators to crack down on misconduct in the industry, including odometer tampering, which has increased since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. The bill does this by expanding offences relating to odometer tampering. The vast majority of motor dealers, repairers and recyclers do the right thing and act in the best interest of consumers.

I am sure that the industry welcomes the Government's move to crack down on the minority who flout the law.

The Government is also acting to reduce red tape for businesses. The bill introduces more flexible and efficient recordkeeping requirements for industry. Motor dealers, repairers and recyclers have told us that the current requirements to keep physical registers are duplicative and onerous. Removing regulatory burden where possible, particularly for small businesses, is a focus of the Government, and the Government is glad to propose changes that achieve such beneficial outcomes. Overall, the bill increases transparency and accountability of licence holders and strengthens compliance mechanisms for regulators so they can address poor behaviour and things that go wrong for consumers. The bill will ensure that the Motor Dealers and Repairers Act is fit for the future and able to respond to the ever-changing challenges the industry faces.

I will now respond briefly to points made by members in debate. The member for Willoughby asked the Government to explore further opportunities to align dealer guarantees and consumer guarantees under the Act. Second to a house, motor vehicles are one of the largest purchases that a consumer makes and it is important that consumers have access to the most suitable remedy available to them. That is why the bill maintains both consumer guarantees and dealer guarantees. Dealer guarantees make it clear to dealers and consumers that dealers are responsible for fixing defects that occur within the defined limitation periods for a vehicle. In contrast, consumer guarantees are broader than dealer guarantees. Dealer guarantees also provide an ability for the regulator to intervene, for example, by issuing penalties for noncompliance.

I also acknowledge the Opposition's support for the bill, as stated by the member for Willoughby. The comments by the member for Kellyville relate to heavy vehicle licensing. During consultation on the bill, we heard from industry about changes it would like to see to the licensing regime under the Act. There will be a regulation-remaking process following the passage of the bill. The department will continue the licensing conversation with stakeholders during that process to determine the tangible benefits to consumers and industry of introducing any new licence classes. The department will also provide clarification to the industry on the operation of section 186 (2) (f) to provide certainty to business owners and employees. I am confident that the bill will deliver meaningful change for the people of New South Wales. It demonstrates our Government's continued commitment to ensure legislation is fit for purpose as industry evolves and embraces new technology. It demonstrates our commitment to protecting the rights of New South Wales consumers, reducing and removing unnecessary red tape, and providing greater clarity and certainty in the law.

I again thank the industry, consumer and other government stakeholders that have contributed to the development of the bill. In particular, I thank the Motor Traders' Association of New South Wales, the Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers, the Caravan and Camping Industry Association, the Australian Automotive Dealer Association, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association, the Insurance Council of Australia and Legal Aid NSW for their considered input. I also thank those members of NSW Fair Trading who supported the development of the bill, including consultation with stakeholders. I thank Warren McAllister, Sarah Low, Timothy Richardson, James Farquharson and Elizabeth Tunnecliff for their work and commitment to ensuring that the laws governing the automotive industry are well balanced to support industry and protect consumers. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

PAINTBALL AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 10 October 2023

No. 1 **SFF No. 1 [c2023-080A]**

Page 4, Schedule 1[6], lines 1-8. Omit all words on the lines.

No. 2 **SFF No. 2 [c2023-080A] [as amended]**

Page 4, Schedule 1. Insert after line 8—

[6A] Section 34 Transport of paintball markers

Insert ", unless the paintball marker is secured in a locked vehicle" after "transported" in section 34(2).

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (18:03): I move:

That the Legislative Council amendments be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

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

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:04): On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023 introduced in the other place by the Minister for Finance, Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement. I am also pleased, as a geologist by profession, to introduce a bill that relates to one of our State's great geological treasures. The opal gemstone has great importance in the life of this nation. New South Wales has nine symbols: the State flag; the coat of arms; the badge displayed on our State flag; our floral emblem, the waratah; the kookaburra; the platypus; the eastern blue groper; and two geological symbols, the mandageria fairfaxi fossil found in Canowindra and our gemstone emblem, which is the black opal. The opal is also a national symbol of Australia. Australia produces over 90 per cent of the world's supply of opal. The major opal-producing areas in New South Wales are Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs. Over 99 per cent of the most valuable black opal comes from only two localities: Lightning Ridge in New South Wales and Mintabie in South Australia.

Interestingly, whilst opals are gemstones, they are not crystalline like a lot of gemstones. They are an amorphous, glassy material comprised of thin layers of silica spheres, which we now believe are related to biological weathering in situ when the rock developed. The silica host rock was inhabited by microbes and bacteria, which created those thin layers of silica. The diffraction of light across those layers produces the play of colours that we value. Black opal has a black background that still has a play of light. That gives it its special value. The area around Lightning Ridge was part of an inland sea and a coastal plain in the Cretaceous about 100 million years ago and was home to many animals, including birds and fish. Many of those sunk into the mud. One of those was Eric the Pliosaur, which can be found in the Australian Museum. That animal has a large display of opal within its bone structure.

The mining of opal is an important and long-established part of the New South Wales economy. The Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023 amends the Mining Act 1992. The bill addresses the invalidity and liability issues arising from invalid mineral claims for opal mining in the Lightning Ridge Mineral Claims District and the White Cliffs Mineral Claims District. It remedies mineral claims that have been invalidly granted, renewed and transferred since 2015 and that the Department of Regional NSW, miners and landholders have been wrongly proceeding on the basis that opal mining was authorised by the mineral claims. The bill will retrospectively validate the affected mineral claims. It will manage rehabilitation and other compliance risks by ensuring that the conditions of affected mineral claims can be enforced. The amendments will ensure that the department can lawfully collect or refund money in relation to the invalid mineral claims. It will prevent legal claims against the State, the department or any other person in relation to any loss or harm arising out of the invalid mineral claims.

The Minns Labor Government recognises the importance of the opal mining industry to Lightning Ridge, White Cliffs and surrounding communities. As such, our priority is to seek to minimise the disruption and uncertainty to affected stakeholders. Earlier this year, following a review of its processes, the department identified the invalidity issue associated with the mineral claims. Over 3,000 mineral claims granted, renewed or transferred between 1 January 2015 and 13 February 2023 were affected. Approximately 1,230 affected mineral claims had no lawful right to mine and mining needed to stop. A remaining 2,112 affected mineral claims have been able to continue mining. There is no easy fix to this legacy issue. The amendments proposed in the bill are just one component of a multi-pronged complementary approach we are taking to resolve the issue.

In May this year the Minister for Natural Resources instructed the department to commence an administrative validation program to minimise disruption to affected stakeholders by providing a timely mechanism for miners to have their mineral claim applications lawfully redetermined. That process has allowed opal miners to recommence mining as quickly as possible. As at 13 September 2023 the department has lawfully redetermined 694 mineral claims. To ensure proactive engagement, the Minister for Natural Resources travelled to Lightning Ridge with the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, MLC, and the member for Barwon to meet with and hear firsthand from opal miners, landholders and the Crown reserve. However, the administrative validation program cannot address the fact that past mining occurred under the mineral claims without lawful approval. Therefore, retrospective legislation is needed. This bill is that legislation.

The bill will deem mineral claims to be legally valid from the time the original application was purportedly granted until the date the department lawfully determines the application through the administrative validation program. Effectively, it puts affected landholders into the same, or as close as possible to the same, position they thought they were in before the invalidity issue was discovered. Until the invalidity issue was discovered, all parties—for example, opal miners, landholders and the department—were operating on the basis that these were

valid mineral claims. We have an obligation as the State to ensure that any potential legal risks arising from this issue are mitigated as far as possible and that those risks are not borne by our stakeholders. Therefore, the amendments essentially put into effect what has been understood to be the position by all parties involved.

The bill will retrospectively validate mineral claims affected by a failure to comply with procedural requirements under section 266 of the Mining Act between 1 January 2015 and 13 September 2023. That includes expired mineral claims, transfers, devolutions and current mineral claims. It also confirms the validity of actions taken by the department and the claimholders in relation to the invalid claims. The retrospective nature of the bill is targeted at affected mineral claims. It is important to note that this retrospective process ensures that the department can still take compliance action in relation to anything done under affected mineral claims that were unlawful or were inconsistent with their conditions.

The Minister has announced an independent review of the statutory framework for the administration and regulation of the opal mining industry in New South Wales as a separate and concurrent process. The review will analyse the current statutory framework and the state of the industry, including issues such as land access and landholder compensation. As part of the review, the Government will listen to stakeholder views and make informed recommendations to deliver the practical and beneficial changes needed. The Government is committed to consulting with the community, miners, landholders and with all affected stakeholders throughout this process.

I now turn to the benefits of the bill. The bill recognises and protects the interests of affected stakeholders, including impacted landholders. It protects miners by validating the use of the land and the lawful exercise of rights under any affected mineral claim. It also protects landholders by ensuring that rehabilitation conditions can be enforced and by validating compensation payments already received by landholders for mining on their land. The rights of mineral claim transferees will be protected, helping to ensure that they are not unfairly disadvantaged as far as possible. The bill will ensure that transferees have the sole right to apply for a mineral claim over land affected by an invalid mineral claim they thought they held. That will protect the rights and interests of such transferees who have, in many cases, paid money for the mineral claims. To claim this right, transferees will need to make sure they lodge an application before 22 November 2023.

The bill will also protect people where rights under an affected mineral claim have devolved to them—such as where a holder has died—by ensuring that they are validly recorded as the holder of the mineral claim. The bill makes clear that the requirements and provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 and the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993 are not impacted by the validation of mineral claims under this bill. The bill seeks to address that risk by ensuring the conditions of affected mineral claims can be enforced. The bill ensures that the NSW Resources Regulator can still undertake compliance action in relation to the affected mineral claims, as appropriate. The legislation will enable the department to take action against miners who may have breached the conditions of their mineral claim by validating the affected claims and their conditions. That will allow the department to ensure appropriate rehabilitation can occur and appropriate environmental standards are maintained.

The department has also allocated additional compliance resources within the NSW Resources Regulator, including a dedicated opals team to improve rehabilitation and compliance outcomes. This further demonstrates the Government's commitment to sustainable and responsible mining. The legislation will ensure that the collection, expenditure or refund of money by the Crown, landholders or any other person in connection with an affected mineral claim, is valid. That includes money collected for landholders as compensation for the mining operations on their land. It also includes any security deposits collected under a condition of a mineral claim, which is an important means for ensuring rehabilitation is carried out.

Finally, the bill will prevent legal claims against the Crown or anyone else arising out of the invalid mineral claims. It seeks to minimise exposure to legal risk because of the invalid grant, renewal or transfer of mineral claims between 2015 and 2023. Without this legislation, opal miners who thought they had a valid mineral claim could be exposed to the risk of legal action for undertaking illegal mining activity and trespassing on land. The Government wants to protect stakeholders from that risk. Retrospectively validating the affected claims will protect stakeholders by ensuring that mining activities are lawful. The Government recognises the historical significance of the opal mining industry in the State, its uniqueness and its contribution to communities in the Far West region of New South Wales. This legislation seeks to minimise disruption and provide certainty to all stakeholders in relation to invalidly granted claims. It will protect stakeholders, miners and landholders. I encourage all members to support the bill.

Second Reading Debate

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:16): As shadow Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources, I support the Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023. The member for The Entrance— and geologist, as I learnt this afternoon—gave a great description of opal, how it is formed and the specifics of

the spectacular range we have in Lightning Ridge and at White Cliffs. The bill addresses the unintended consequences of the 2015 reforms to the Mining Act 1992 and issues arising from invalid mineral claims for opal mining in the Lightning Ridge and White Cliff mineral claims areas. The bill is an important part of providing certainty to small tenement holders in Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs in the west of the State.

As we have heard, Australia provides 95 per cent of the world's supply of gemstones, those quality opals that are highly regarded. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals wholeheartedly support this industry. It delivers important economic benefits, alongside employment for thousands of people living in regional New South Wales. It is a dynamic sector that has created a thriving ecosystem of opportunities for many who live and work in the west of our State. It fosters not only jobs but also the tourism sector. It attracts enthusiasts, collectors and tourists from around the globe who travel to Lightning Ridge or White Cliffs to see this amazing industry. The influx of visitors invigorates local economies, supports small businesses and promotes the rich and diverse cultural heritage of our State. It is great to see the introduction of the bill and the Opposition supports it. I thank the House.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:18): I speak in support of the Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023. The bill addresses a series of issues arising from invalid mineral claims for opal mining in both the Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs mineral claims districts. Miners and landholders had been proceeding on the basis that opal mining was authorised; however, earlier this year it was revealed that the Department of Regional NSW had incorrectly issued thousands of mineral claims since 1 January 2015.

As such, people with these claims had no lawful right to mine, and that mining needed to stop.

The amendments proposed in the bill seek to remedy this issue. The bill will retrospectively validate the affected mineral claims and manage rehabilitation and potential compliance issues. The amendments will also ensure that the department can lawfully collect moneys in relation to mineral claims and prevent legal claims. This Government will protect the rights of stakeholders affected by this issue and minimise further disruption to the opal industry, which is important to the State and nation. The bill recognises the interests of stakeholders, including impacted landholders, and provides them with protections. It does this by retrospectively validating mineral claims, thus recognising the lawfulness of mining activities carried out under affected mineral claims since 2015.

The bill provides protections for the rights of people who purchased or accepted the transfer of a mineral claim by helping to ensure that they are not unfairly disadvantaged. Reversing these transfers would be logistically difficult and unjust to the transferees, who believed they were paying for a valid mineral claim. The bill also protects people who had an affected mineral claim devolved to them, for example, where the holder has died and the claim is inherited, by validating that person as the lawful holder of the mineral claim. The bill also gives certainty to landholders where mining is taking place. By validating mineral claims, compensation paid to them will not have to be refunded; rather, it will be taken as legally paid. Validating mineral claims, as the bill will do, helps to ensure as far as possible that no-one is disadvantaged by this invalidity error.

Importantly, the bill does not affect land claims under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, nor does it validate mineral claims for native title purposes. As is appropriate, the bill makes it clear that requirements under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 and the Native Title Act 1993 of the Commonwealth apply and are not impacted by the validation of mineral claims under the bill. In addition, validating the affected claims offers landholders protection by ensuring that the NSW Resources Regulator can monitor and enforce compliance with the conditions of mineral claims. This includes ensuring that rehabilitation requirements are met. The bill will ensure that we uphold appropriate standards for the people of New South Wales now and into the future. These will be regulated through the conditions of mineral claims.

Our Government has heard the concerns of landholders about the potential that rehabilitation may not occur due to invalid mineral claims, and we are seeking to mitigate that potential risk. Validating the affected mineral claims will ensure that the conditions of the mineral claim are enforceable. This will allow the NSW Resources Regulator to take compliance action against miners who may have breached the conditions of their mineral claims. The Department of Regional NSW has also allocated additional resources within the NSW Resources Regulator to further improve environmental and compliance outcomes. The department has established a dedicated opals team to oversee this—not to be confused with the national women's basketball team, the Opals. A recent article in *The Guardian* on the issues the bill seeks to rectify was titled "Is this Australia's last generation of opal miners?" I trust that, with the passage of the bill, the answer to that question is no.

Australia supplies somewhere in the range of 95 per cent to 98 per cent of the world's opals. As such, opals and the opal mining industry are an iconic part of not only New South Wales but also the nation. It is our national gemstone. I note that, all going well, the bill will pass this month—October—and the birthstone for people born in October is the opal. We are learning a lot about opals today. The opal mining industry is an important part of life in Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs. The industry plays a large role in the local economies of those places,

including through tourism. Many of us have popped into Lightning Ridge and bought opals. It really is an important part of its economy. The Government sympathises with the situation that has unfolded on the ground, and believes it is critical that it minimises disruption to the operation of the opal mining industry to ensure it continues for generations to come. For those reasons, I support the bill. I believe it is in the best interests of the Parliament to ensure its quick passage.

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (18:24): First and foremost, I commend the Minister, the Hon. Courtney Houssos, for her work on the Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023. I also give credit to Kris Neill, who was the interim chief of staff while the Minister took the reins of her new office. Kris quickly identified the issues and connected me and other stakeholders to the Minister. Our concerns were raised, examined and responded to. The Minister came into a new portfolio under a new Government, where she quickly found out that since 2015 mining claims had been invalidly issued, renewed and transferred by Mining, Exploration and Geoscience. The intent is clear: These permits should have been valid. A failure of procedure revealed deficiency in the Act and regulations. As such, all permits issued, renewed and transferred during those eight years are invalid, and the activities conducted were unintentionally but effectively unlawful, exposing the department to litigation and all parties involved to potential liability and possible litigation.

It is the role of this place to ensure that laws are well made and that unintended consequences are minimised or dealt with appropriately. The number of claims to be redetermined is tipping 3,000. Hats off to the Minister, who, within days of finding out about the situation, attended stakeholder meetings in Lightning Ridge to front up to those impacted, work on solutions and get them back to mining as soon as possible. It has been a hard road at times for farmers. The discovery of the legislative deficits came about as a result of legitimate questions raised by landholders.

There are many issues to be resolved in the review of the Act. This bill is not about that, and I make clear to farmers and miners that the upcoming review will be thorough and provide opportunities for all to be heard and share their concerns. It has not been an easy job for the Minister, and it has been a bitter pill to swallow for the stakeholders, who should also be commended for their patience, input and collaboration during an incredibly stressful time. They include the Lightning Ridge Miners Association; Glengarry, Grawin, Sheepyards, Miners Association; Lightning Ridge Area Opal Reserve; NSW Farmers; and the White Cliffs Miners Association.

The complexity of what has occurred cannot be underestimated. When mining stopped in May due to the invalidity of licences, the world's opal trade was put on hold. Lightning Ridge is the world's number one source of the precious black opal. It is unique to Australia, and opal mining makes places like Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs economically viable and able to be tourist attractions. Put simply, it makes these towns possible. Unlike other mining, opal mining is small in scale and requires a different approach and unique conditions. We must continue to engage with all parties involved in opal mining so the changes we make reflect the needs within the industry and the communities it supports.

I acknowledge the complexity of the issue means that this piece of legislation will only fix some of the problems. There is still much to do in the eyes of farmers, and we are working towards that solution. The Minister has undertaken to conduct a review of the entire Act, and I encourage all stakeholders to be involved in this process. I thank the Minister for her speedy response to this. Legislatively speaking, this is a pretty quick response, and it will certainly resolve the issue of the invalidity of licences.

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:28): I am pleased to speak in support of the Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023. I acknowledge the value of the opal industry to New South Wales. Lightning Ridge is famous for producing black opal, the most valuable form of opal in the world. This may not be known to all, but the opal is the official gemstone of New South Wales. White Cliffs is well known for producing seam opals. In my contribution I will focus on several key elements of the bill, the first being the collection and expenditure of money. The department has collected, expended or refunded fees and levies in relation to the invalid mineral claims. The bill will ensure the validity of those moneys that have been collected, expended or refunded.

This includes the collection of security deposits under conditions of mineral claims, landholder compensation under the Mining Act and duties under the Duties Act 1997.

Security deposits are an important part of ensuring effective rehabilitation of utilised areas and lands, and the importance of rehabilitation was highlighted by my fellow member of the House in their address. The bill will allow the Government to lawfully retain any security deposits over areas affected by opal mining during the invalidity period. Security deposits are funds held by the department to ensure that rehabilitation is carried out if a miner defaults on their obligations. These security deposits are an integral part of our environmental rehabilitation framework, and it is imperative we can continue to keep any funds already collected as security for mining activities that occurred under the affected mineral claims.

The bill also provides certainty to landholders. By validating mineral claims, compensation paid to them will not have to be refunded as it will be taken as legally paid. Furthermore, the Government recognises the impact that the invalidity issue has had on miners during the height of the mining season. As such, the department commenced a refund scheme, refunding the application fees and the administrative levy payment made against the affected mineral claims for miners with current affected mineral claims who had their right to mine affected for a time. To that effect, the bill contains provisions that validate the collection, expenditure or refund of any money by or on behalf of the Crown, landholders and any other person in association with an affected mineral claim. It will ensure that the department acted lawfully when it collected or refunded money in relation to applications for the invalid mineral claims.

The second element of the bill that I focus on is the benefit it will have regarding the prevention of legal claims. The invalid mineral claims give rise to the potential for liability risks for miners, landholders and the State. That creates an environment of uncertainty for stakeholders and the Government, which we seek to avoid through the bill. As a result of the invalid mineral claims, miners who thought they held valid mineral claims have been entering land and mining without authority. That exposes them to significant legal risks. This legislation will prevent legal claims against miners for such actions by retrospectively validating mineral claims, putting into effect what was understood by the miners, legally validating their mining activities. This uncertainty must be removed to restore confidence to the working relationships required to mine opals in New South Wales. We also want to protect the industry contribution to their local economies. The bill will clear the air of any liability issues and allow miners, landholders and the Government to work together with assurance.

The invalid grant, renewal and transfer of mineral claims also exposes the State to legal risk. Without this legislation, legal action could be taken against the State by miners and landholders. Retrospectively validating the affected claims will afford stakeholders the legal protection they need to continue mining with confidence. In this respect, the bill will help prevent successful legal claims against the State or any other person arising out of the invalid mineral claims and allow the opal mining industry to operate free of any questions of liability. In preparing my contribution, I have heard a great deal of information explained in the House about opals and the mining process. I also learnt about how Lightning Ridge got its name after a shepherd, his dog and 600 sheep were killed during a fierce electrical storm while sheltering in a low ridge in the area. The Aboriginal explanation for the opals discovered in the area refers to a legend that predates this story. A huge wheel of fire fell to earth and sprayed the countryside with brilliant coloured stones. Those stones have contributed to the New South Wales economy for the past 150 years or longer. That is why I support the bill and the need for a quick resolution to this issue. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (18:33): I support the Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023. The bill addresses a critical issue that affects the mining industry, landholders and the Indigenous people of New South Wales by providing a comprehensive solution to the invalidity issue that has plagued the industry for far too long. Australia produces 95 per cent of the world's opals, which is our national gemstone. New South Wales produces the largest amount of Australian opals by value, making this beautiful stone vital to the State's economy.

The two most famous opal mining towns in New South Wales are Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs. As has already been mentioned, Lightning Ridge is the global home of the black opal and its fields have no equal in the world. Indeed, it is the only known place on earth where the breathtaking world-famous black opal is found. White Cliffs was Australia's first opal mining town. It is known for its seam opal, which tends to be white or crystal. Any issues that negatively impact the mining of this precious gem must be addressed, which is what the bill does. The issue at hand was brought to light as a result of a departmental review into the administrative processes. This review, conducted in January this year, unearthed that legislative amendments to the Mining Act that commenced on 1 January 2015 were not properly implemented.

Specifically, section 266 (4) stipulated that before the grant or renewal of a mineral claim, the applicant must give notice or pay compensation to landholders. While this might seem like an insignificant error, to give the House a sense of the scale of this problem, as of 13 February 2023, over 3,000 mineral claims were affected by this failure to apply these requirements correctly. It is not a minor issue; it is a matter that touches the very heart of our mining industry and the livelihoods of those involved. The bill is alone in addressing the issue. It complements an administrative validation program that is already in progress, aimed at providing a timely avenue for miners to recommence their operations. Together, the bill and the administrative validation program form a comprehensive solution that ensures the rights and interests of all parties involved are protected.

Furthermore, the Government has recognised the need for an independent review of the administration and regulation of opal mining in New South Wales. The review will analyse the current statutory framework and make sure we are on the right track for the future. The bill will also provide a lifeline to landholders by ensuring that mining operations occurring under invalid mineral claims are retroactively validated as lawful. It also validates

decisions to grant or renew mineral claims since 1 January 2015, thus providing certainty for landholders. Compensation paid to them will not have to be refunded; rather, it will be legally recognised as paid. The bill offers landholders further protection by ensuring the NSW Resources Regulator can monitor and enforce compliance with the conditions of mineral claims. This includes making sure that rehabilitation requirements are met in order to safeguard the environment for future generations.

Importantly, the bill does not interfere with Aboriginal land claims made over the land before its enactment. It validates mining activities under the Mining Act but does not validate mineral claims for native title purposes. It respects and acknowledges the requirements and provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 and the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993, ensuring they are not impacted by the validation of mineral claims under the bill. Undoubtedly one of the questions people working in the industry will have is whether mining can continue while this issue is being resolved. Unfortunately, the answer is not a simple one size fits all. If a mineral claim were granted prior to 2015 and subsequently renewed, mining can continue because the initial grant remains valid until the renewal application is properly determined. That means their claim remains subject to a pending renewal application. However, if a mineral claim were granted after 2015, mining cannot occur until the mineral claim application is redetermined or the bill comes into effect.

The Government understands the inconvenience for stakeholders, but it is a necessary step to ensure that valid titles are in place to protect the interests of all parties and complement the administrative validation program. To date, substantial progress has been made in resolving these claims. As of 19 September, 733 mineral claims have been reissued or resolved by the department, demonstrating a firm commitment to bringing these issues to a close. To its credit, the department did not seek to rush through validating legislation in favour of careful consideration of all the potential options.

It was determined that the most appropriate immediate solution was the commencement of the administrative validation program, allowing impacted miners to recommence their operations in a timely manner. The validating legislation has run in parallel with that program, serving to validate not only invalid mineral claims but also the steps taken to lawfully redetermine mineral claims under the program.

Some miners may ask whether claims granted after 2015 will be compensated. The department has initially focused its efforts on the validation of post-2015 claims to resolve the inability to mine as its highest priority. It has initiated a refund scheme, refunding the administrative levy and application fees paid by miners who had their right to mine affected for a period. To date the department has refunded \$548,440 to affected miners. Additionally, it is reviewing cases of financial or other detriment on a case by case basis. That amendment ensures miners are not exposed to any legal action by landholders as a result of these changes. The bill directly addresses the invalidity of titles and protects stakeholders from the risk of legal action arising from unlawful mining under the affected mineral claims. It effectively prevents legal claims from being brought against any person in connection with these claims.

The next important aspect to consider is whether rehabilitation and remediation requirements are enforceable. The bill ensures that the NSW Resources Regulator can enforce and take compliance action as appropriate in relation to affected mineral claims. It validates the rehabilitation obligations imposed as conditions of those mineral claims, making them both valid and enforceable. To further enhance rehabilitation and compliance outcomes, the department has allocated additional resources within the NSW Resources Regulator, including a dedicated opals team. Validating affected mineral claims will also ensure that security deposits collected in connection with those claims are lawful. That means the Government can step in and call on the deposits if a miner defaults on rehabilitation obligations. Finally, an independent review of the statutory framework for the administration and regulation of the opal mining industry in New South Wales will commence later this year. The review will provide an opportunity to thoroughly analyse and potentially refine the current statutory framework to ensure a more robust and efficient system.

In conclusion, the Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023 is a crucial step forward in resolving a longstanding issue that has affected our mining industry, landholders and the Indigenous peoples of New South Wales. The amendments provide protections, prevent legal claims, ensure the enforcement of rehabilitation requirements and validate past actions taken under invalid mineral claims. The bill is not just about addressing past mistakes; it is about ensuring a sustainable and legally sound future for our mining industry. It is about providing certainty and protection for landholders, miners and all other stakeholders involved. I congratulate Minister Houssos on her work on the Mining Amendment (Mineral Claims—Opal) Bill 2023 and on paving the way for a brighter, more secure future for the New South Wales mining industry.

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (18:42): On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: In reply: I thank the member for Dubbo, the Leader of the Nationals, and I acknowledge the support the Opposition has shown for the bill. I also thank the member for Leppington, the member for Liverpool, the member for Riverstone and especially the member for Barwon, whose electorate contains these opals and the industry we are seeking to protect with the

bill. The bill makes important changes to the Mining Act that ensure that the actions of the department, miners and landholders in relation to mineral claims for opal mining have been carried out lawfully in circumstances where no wrongdoing has occurred. It also allows for compliance and enforcement action to occur where required.

The bill minimises disturbances to those affected by the issues arising from invalidly granted claims and provides certainty to miners, landholders and the opal mining communities in the Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs areas. The department's complementary administrative validation program will also make sure those communities and industries can continue with minimal disturbance. The cornerstone of the bill is the validation of mineral claims that have been adversely affected by the administrative procedural issue. Applied retrospectively, the bill will ensure any affected mineral claims will be taken to be lawful and addresses the issue of the department, miners and landholders wrongly proceeding on the basis that mining was occurring lawfully. That removes issues of liability that would otherwise arise for affected stakeholders.

The bill provides explicit protections for all stakeholders involved, including impacted landholders and mineral claims holders. It achieves that by retrospectively validating the use of the land and recognising the lawfulness of mining activities conducted under the affected claims. Importantly, nothing in the bill affects Aboriginal land rights claims made before the bill is passed, and the validation does not affect pre-existing native title rights and interests. The bill ensures that the validated mineral claims can be treated with confidence and that actions carried out under them were lawful where they were conducted in accordance with the conditions of the claim. The validating legislation also ensures that conditions of the mineral claims, including rehabilitation requirements, can be enforced. That provides assurance to landholders that rehabilitation conditions can be enforced on their land. Validating affected claims safeguards the State's ability to maintain and enforce our high standards of environmental rehabilitation. The bill does that by ensuring that the conditions of the mineral claims, including rehabilitation requirements, can be enforced by the Resources Regulator.

The bill contains provisions that validate the collection, expenditure or refund of any money by or on behalf of the Crown, landholders and any other person in association with an affected mineral claim. Those provisions will ensure that the department acted lawfully when it collected or refunded money in relation to applications for the invalid mineral claims. The invalid titles create an environment of uncertainty for stakeholders in relation to the law and liability. Retrospectively validating the affected claims will ensure that miners who entered land and mined under a mineral claim had the right to do so. The bill prevents legal action against the Crown or any other person as a result of the grant, renewal or transfer of the invalid mineral claims.

I acknowledge the comments made about the bill by the Legislation Review Committee and I am advised that a response will be provided by the Minister to the Legislation Review Committee in accordance with standing orders. I also thank the departmental and ministerial staff who have worked so diligently on the bill to address the issue for the opal mining industry. The bill will remedy the fact that the department, miners and landholders have been wrongly proceeding on the basis that mining has been lawfully occurring. The Government recognises that opal mining remains a vibrant part of the New South Wales economy. The employment and money that flows into our regions from mining supports regional towns and communities. The people of New South Wales expect that mining is carried out responsibly and lawfully, and the bill will deliver certainty and transparency for industry and the community. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr DAVID MEHAN: On behalf of Mr Paul Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

RADIATION CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading Speech

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (18:48): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Radiation Control Amendment Bill 2023, and I speak on behalf of the Minister for the Environment in the other place.

The bill amends the Radiation Control Act 1990 to ensure that sources of radiation regulated under the Act are managed throughout their life cycle to ensure that the community and the environment are protected from unnecessary exposure to harmful radiation. The proposals in the bill improve oversight of the transport and disposal of radioactive sources. The bill improves accountability measures that apply to organisations that are responsible for radioactive sources, with cost recovery provisions and tougher penalties for offending.

The bill introduces ecologically sustainable development, or ESD, principles into the objectives of the Act. Persons administering the Act and those conducting regulated activities will need to consider those principles in their work. The bill also reforms the Radiation Advisory Council established under the Act to focus the council on the technical and expert advice needed by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] to administer the Act. The bill also renames the Act as the Protection from Harmful Radiation Act 1990, emphasising its protective character and the nature of the new provisions. The bill also makes necessary minor and machinery amendments to other environmental legislation.

I turn to the provisions of the bill. The beneficial use of radiation is now routine in our lives, whether in medical, dental or veterinary practice, and in specialised industrial and other practices. But unnecessary radiation exposure to people—whether they are patients, occupational users or members of the public—is harmful. It can also damage the environment by pollution, and can impact plants, animals and ecosystems. That is why the Act exists to provide government oversight of sources of radiation to ensure that they are safe to use and ensure that the people who use radiation are competent and undertake radiation practices safely.

The harm from radiation can present immediately in the most serious situations as burns and tissue damage, but more often it is experienced in cumulative effects over a lifetime of exposure, which gradually increase the risk of cancer. That is why we take a protective and precautionary approach, expressed in the objectives of the Act as the "radiation protection principles". Those objectives start with "justification" such that the benefits of radiation exposure must be demonstrated to do more good than harm before a radiation practice is authorised. The second principle is that of "optimisation", which means that when a radiation practice is undertaken, the magnitude of radiation, the number of people exposed and the likelihood of exposure is "as low as reasonably achievable".

The third principle is "dose and risk limitation", by which the health risks to any person exposed to ionising radiation is kept below levels that are generally considered to be unacceptable. When the use of radiation is not carried out according to those principles, and when the protective safety requirements relating to radiation equipment are not observed, unnecessary exposure and other safety incidents can occur. The reforms in the bill enhance the ability of regulators, particularly the EPA, to protect our community and the environment from harm.

As our understanding of radiation and its impacts evolves, so do the quality of protective standards that apply to radiation practices. Australia adopts international standards published by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiation Protection through a suite of national codes and standards. They are published by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency, also known as ARPANSA. New South Wales actively engages in the development of those national codes and standards through the Radiation Health Committee. The Act provides for the adoption of national codes and standards as published in the National Directory for Radiation Protection and their application in the regulatory framework.

The proposed reforms in the bill ensure that we are keeping pace with best practice in radiation protection as recommended by national and international authorities. A 10-year statutory review of the Radiation Control Act occurred in 2021 and considered whether the objectives of the Act remain valid and whether the terms of the Act remain effective for achieving its objectives. A report on the outcome of that review was tabled in Parliament by the former Minister in December 2021. The reforms in the bill address and bring all the recommendations of the review into effect.

These days, the community is more aware of how radiation impacts individual and population health and of some of the environmental impacts of radiation, but little consideration has generally been given to radiation as a broader sustainability issue. The proposals in the bill include incorporating the ecologically sustainable development, or ESD, principles into the objectives of the Act. Only one other Australian jurisdiction, South Australia, has incorporated such a commitment in its radiation legislation. The bill proposes to incorporate the ESD principles as they are set out in the Protection of the Environment Administration Act. Those principles include the precautionary principle, intergenerational equity, and conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity. Incorporating the ESD principles in the objectives of the Act signals the Government's commitment to sustainability and the protection of the environment when regulating hazardous and harmful materials like radiation.

The proposed change will require the EPA to take the ESD principles into consideration when administering the Act and will require people who undertake regulated activities to take them into account when

conducting those activities. That will provide the EPA with the opportunity to impose requirements on licensees to prevent environmental impacts and harmful legacies resulting from regulated activities or following accidents or emergencies.

Other provisions in the bill will strengthen the regulatory framework. Radioactive sources can be especially vulnerable to the risk of accidents or negligent management when they are transported or at the end of their working life, when they need to be disposed of. In general, radioactive sources from Australia are disposed of overseas by return to manufacturer or supplier, by recycling in a nuclear reactor, or in a permanent repository. Some radioactive substances can be stored by the user until they decay to a safe level and can be reclassified for local disposal.

There are two measures proposed in the bill to improve disposal oversight and management. First, an organisation that undertakes the activity of disposing of regulated material will need to hold a radiation management licence. That will provide the EPA with the opportunity to ensure that the company is a "fit and proper person", applying the test that exists in the Act; to impose conditions around the conduct of that activity; and to suspend, vary or cancel such a licence if necessary. Second, the provision that requires EPA consent to dispose of particular radioactive sources and to comply with conditions imposed on that action will migrate from the Radiation Control Regulation to the principal Act. That means that unlawful conduct can attract significantly higher maximum penalties that are commensurate with the potential for significant harm that can occur when a radioactive source is not properly managed at end of life.

An accident or incident during the transportation of a radioactive source can have significant health, environmental and economic impacts, and can place a burden on the resources of the EPA and emergency response agencies. Therefore, under the bill an organisation involved in the activity of consigning radioactive sources for transport will also require a radiation management licence. The bill adopts the definition of consignment in this context from the Dangerous Goods (Road and Rail Transport) Act 2008. Similar to the rationale for requiring a licence to undertake the activity of disposal, licensing the activity of transport consignment will enhance the oversight and regulation of organisations that undertake that activity as part of their business.

Currently the Radiation Control Regulation imposes the requirement that when transporting a radiation source, a person must comply with the national Code for Safe Transport of Radioactive Material, published by ARPANSA. As with the consent to dispose provisions, the maximum penalties for breaching the Safe Transport Code do not measure up to the significant costs that can result from unsafe conduct. That provision will also migrate from the regulation to the Act. The maximum penalties for disposal without consent, or not in accordance with conditions of consent, and for failing to adhere to the Safe Transport Code requirements will increase under those changes from \$44,000 to \$165,000.

At the end of a radioactive source's working life, there may be a temptation to avoid the cost of transport and disposal logistics by wilfully abandoning a source. That may also occur simply by negligence. An abandoned radioactive source has the potential to fall into the wrong hands and seriously hurt someone who unwittingly comes into contact with it. A small but powerful source housed in machinery may end up being inadvertently processed in a load of scrap metal and could end up contaminating the whole load. There have even been instances detected by the EPA where a radioactive source has gone right through the recycling process and contaminated new stainless steel products. The offence of abandoning a radioactive source is analogous to waste dumping, and the bill proposes to increase penalties for the offence to align with the maximum financial penalties that apply for serious waste dumping offences in the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. Those changes show how seriously the Government takes the mismanagement of radioactive sources in transport and disposal situations and other end-of-life mismanagement, with penalties to fit the crime.

In addition to its safety and environmental protection objectives, the Radiation Control Act addresses the security of high-activity radioactive sources, known as "security enhanced sources", by prescribing that responsible organisations take special measures for keeping them secure from unauthorised access or malicious misuse. The Act prescribes protective measures that must be applied for security enhanced sources, which increase in strictness depending on how the source is categorised, from category 3 to category 1—category 1 being the highest. Organisations responsible for security enhanced sources must prepare a source security plan or a source transport security plan when a security enhanced source is being moved. The Act provides for a special class of accredited "radiation security assessors", who must be engaged by the organisation to endorse that such plans comply with the Act.

To date, there has been some ambiguity with regard to whether a radioactive source shipped from another jurisdiction that arrives in or passes through New South Wales requires a source transport security plan. To remove any doubt, the bill specifies that if a security enhanced source is shipped to or through New South Wales, it must be subject to a source transport security plan endorsed by an accredited radiation security assessor, even if the shipment originates interstate or outside Australia. A source security plan is required covering the location where

a security enhanced source is normally kept. The small number of organisations that are responsible for these high-activity sources have performed well to date in making plans and having them endorsed. But over time, circumstances at a location can change. Renovations, changing personnel and roles, and replacement of sources can all have an impact. The bill strengthens the source security plan provisions by requiring an annual review of the plan by the responsible person and a five-yearly re-endorsement of a plan by an accredited assessor. These measures ensure that these potentially highly dangerous sources are protected by documented security measures of the highest standard at all times.

The Act provides the EPA with the power to take action in a dangerous situation—that is, a situation involving actual or threatened exposure of any person, animal or thing, or the environment, to an excessive level of radiation or contamination by regulated material. In a dangerous situation, the EPA may, to avoid, remove or alleviate the danger or potential danger, intervene and seize the material that is causing the danger. A court may order forfeiture of such seized material to the Crown so the EPA can manage it safely. Material may also be forfeited by court order when a person responsible for the material is convicted of an offence under the Act. The EPA may incur significant costs in dealing with a dangerous situation. Similarly, disposing of forfeited material can be an expensive exercise, given the conditioning and management required to transport and dispose of radioactive material and the limited available pathways. The bill proposes that when the EPA is forced to take action in a dangerous situation or dispose of forfeited material, it can recover its costs in a court of competent jurisdiction.

The investigation of radiation offences can be complex, requiring the engagement of special expertise and forensic investigation to gather evidence. The bill will permit the EPA to recover its investigation costs when a person is convicted of an offence against the Act. These additional cost recovery measures ensure that the whole community, through the EPA, does not bear costs that should reasonably be met by the people who are responsible for the mismanagement of radioactive sources or who commit offences. When the EPA does take a matter to court, it is important that the court is able to impose a penalty that reflects the seriousness of the offending. In the most serious cases, the EPA has the option of taking the matter to the Land and Environment Court, but in other cases Local Court action is more appropriate.

However, at present the Local Court is limited to imposing a maximum fine of \$22,000 per offence against the Act. This maximum does not align with other environmental legislation, such as the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, or POEO Act. The bill increases the upper limit on the penalty that the Local Court may impose for offences against the Act from \$22,000 per offence to \$110,000, as applies under the POEO Act. The bill also aligns the Radiation Control Act with the POEO Act in relation to the offence of providing false and misleading information to the EPA. The Act establishes a Radiation Advisory Council to advise the Minister and the EPA. As the role of the EPA as an independent regulator and the legislation and regulatory environment evolves, so too should the advisory council.

The bill proposes to modernise and refocus the council towards the expert knowledge the EPA requires to effectively administer the Act. The bill provides that the EPA CEO, rather than the Minister, shall appoint the council in future and that the council is to provide advice to the EPA. The bill provides for membership comprising a chair appointed by the EPA CEO, a nominee of the Secretary of the Ministry of Health and members with expertise in the core medical radiation practices of radiology, nuclear medicine and radiation oncology. Additional members are to be appointed from a range of non-medical expertise to make up a council of a minimum of 12 members. These additional members include expertise in emergency management and emergency services operational capabilities, recognising and strengthening the relationship between the EPA and emergency services in preventing and responding to hazardous materials incidents. These changes are consistent with the approach taken to advisory committees under environmental legislation and several other States' radiation advisory bodies.

In conclusion, the changes in this bill enhance the effectiveness of the New South Wales radiation regulatory framework. They ensure that the many beneficial uses of radiation continue to be enabled, while providing the protective regime expected by the community. They close gaps in the life cycle management of radioactive sources and send a message to those who do the wrong thing that the EPA and the courts have the powers and the penalties they need to respond effectively. I thank everyone in the department who contributed to the drafting of this very lexically dense speech. I commend the bill to the House.

Second Reading Debate

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (19:05): I congratulate the Minister on his outstanding explanation of the excitingly named Radiation Control Amendment Bill 2023. Unfortunately, the substance of what the bill deals with, although important, is not met with the same level of excitement. I speak for the Opposition on the bill. I do so because the shadow Minister for Environment is attending a vigil this afternoon in her community regarding the horrific attacks in Israel. The Opposition will be supporting the bill. It was written during my time as the former environment Minister, which is why it makes such great sense. The department has done outstanding work

in what is a very challenging area and an important one to deal with. I thank the department staff, including my former ministerial staff, who worked on this important reform. I also thank the Hon. Natalie Ward, who articulated the Opposition's position in the other place.

I note that in 2021, under the former Coalition Government, the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] conducted a statutory review of the Radiation Control Act. The bill enacts the recommendations of that review. It seeks to introduce reforms to ensure that radiation, which is usually medical waste, is managed in a safe way to protect human health and the environment. As the Minister outlined, the bill will also give the EPA increased powers. The Coalition supports measures to ensure safe transportation of potentially harmful waste and the introduction of harsher penalties to act as a deterrent to those engaging in unsafe management practices, such as the abandoning of radioactive materials. It is good to see that good policy continues, in some respects, under this Government. For that reason, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (19:06): In reply: There is nothing for me to add, other than to thank the Opposition and to acknowledge the contribution of Mr James Griffin, representing the shadow Minister for Environment.

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

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr JIHAD DIB: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Community Recognition Statements

AUNTY LINDY LAWLER

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:09): This evening I congratulate Aunty Lindy Lawler, who, at the age of 64, recently completed the City2Surf for the seventh time. Aunty Lindy is a proud Illawarra Elder, a Yuin nation person from the Wallaga Lake people and a survivor of the Stolen Generation. This year Lindy competed in memory of her identical twin, Mandy Courtney, who passed away from cancer in 2009. Finishing the race was very emotional for Lindy, as she remembered crossing the line with her sister. Health issues did not deter Aunty Lindy this year—she decided to walk, rather than run like she has the past six times that she has competed. In 2010 Lindy suffered a minor heart attack on Heartbreak Hill, but she was very determined to finish the course this year. Aunty Lindy is determined to participate in the 2025 City2Surf to mark 50 years since the anniversary of her first race with her twin sister. I congratulate her.

PENRITH PANTHERS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek) (19:10): I proudly acknowledge the outstanding triumph of the Penrith Panthers in winning their hat-trick National Rugby League grand final victory. This historic three-peat solidifies the club's place in rugby league history and enshrines their status as one of the greatest teams in the NRL. The Broncos and Panthers delivered one of the most enthralling premiership deciders in recent memory. We began the game very strong, but I will never forget the heart-stopping moments when our family watched Ezra Mam score a hat-trick of tries in only 10 minutes, which left us 16 points behind. But having watched the Panthers stage mighty comebacks, I knew there was still hope. A Nathan Cleary inspired Panthers did come back from a 16-point deficit to stun the Brisbane Broncos 26-24, winning their third straight premiership in the process. The boys delivered an outstanding, wonderfully captivating and truly uplifting end to the 2023 season. I congratulate all the players, their wives, partners, children, family and the coaches and broader Panther family, who delivered this remarkable result. They are truly the indisputable champions.

EAST HILLS ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (19:11): I take this moment to congratulate and wish the approximately 850 year 12 students in the East Hills electorate the best of luck in their HSC exams. As they embark on the final leg of their high school journey and prepare to tackle the HSC, I extend my congratulations on getting this far. This pivotal moment in their academic life represents the culmination of years of hard work, dedication and perseverance for the students and also their families, friends and teachers. I commend all those who have been supporting students along this journey. Whilst I know all students in East Hills will be trying their best, I remind students to look after their mental health, stay connected to friends and family, and make sure there

is some balance. I wish all students the very best of luck in their HSC exams, and I am sure that the students in East Hills will give their all.

TRIBUTE TO NAN COWLING

Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (19:12): Coffs Harbour has lost a staunch supporter of our city with the death of Nan Cowling, aged 78. Nan was an enthusiastic advocate for our local community, an attribute that eventually led to her serving a term as a Coffs Harbour city councillor. Nan was a loving sister, wife, mum, grandmother and great-grandmother, who was passionate about family history and the history of Coffs Harbour. Nan had a deep involvement with countless community organisations, associations, clubs, committees, events and celebrations, with tennis being a big part of her life. She made a lasting impression on the people she met and the friendships she forged, with a large attendance at Hogbin Drive Crematorium chapel on 29 September for the celebration of her life. Nan Cowling will be fondly remembered for her tenacity and organisational flair, for enjoying a good yarn and a good laugh, and for her determination to get things done. Rest in peace, Nan Cowling.

STRATHFIELD TOWN HALL

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (19:13): Yesterday evening I had the great pleasure of taking part in the 100-year anniversary celebration of Strathfield Town Hall with Strathfield Council. Located on Homebush Road in Strathfield, the town hall continues to serve our local community as a shared civic and community space. The celebration involved an official opening dinner, live music, an enlightening historical discussion and a public exhibition of the town hall's rich history. I also had the great opportunity of participating in a panel discussion, which included Mayor of Strathfield Karen Pensabene and two local students from St Patrick's College and Strathfield Girls High School. We had an engaging discussion about the importance of being actively involved in our local community, which is defined by continuity and change. I say a warm thank you to Mayor Pensabene and her team for inviting me to this occasion and for organising a wonderful evening.

THIRLMERE ROOSTERS

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (19:14): In a nailbiting finish, the Thirlmere Roosters defeated the Camden Rams at Campbelltown Sports Stadium last Sunday to win the group 6 rugby league grand final. The Roosters triumphed with a score of 28-26, taking the lead in the last minutes of the game. First-grade coach Darren McLeod praised his team's resilience, saying they built in momentum throughout the final rounds and that finishing with a win was the icing on the cake. Despite early season injuries, the Roosters managed to field a strong side for the grand final. The match was a roller-coaster, with Thirlmere initially leading 14-6 before Camden staged a comeback. However, it was in the last seven minutes that Thirlmere scored crucial tries, sealing the game with a successful conversion by halfback Damon New in the final three minutes. The challenging kick came under the gaze of the Camden supporters, making it all the more remarkable. With 1,000 spectators filling half the grandstand and family and friends getting a Roosters chant going, it is clear our area is maroon and yellow. Up the Roosters!

WESTRAC

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (19:15): Port Stephens is the proud home to many impressive manufacturing businesses. In fact, manufacturing is the sector that employs the most people in Port Stephens. One of our innovative local businesses is WesTrac, which is one of the largest authorised Cat equipment dealers in the world. It is safe to say that the kit at Cat does not get much bigger than what is at WesTrac, which offers a range of massive machinery and construction equipment, much of it servicing local mining and construction industries. Locally, it employs 600 people in Tomago and offers up to 30 new apprenticeships every year. The WesTrac Institute provides training for all employees in its local Tomago state-of-the-art classrooms and workshops. Recently, WesTrac launched a new technology experience centre to showcase the latest in equipment, technology and innovation. The new state-of-the-art centre provides customers with a hands-on experience to demonstrate the latest Cat products. I congratulate WesTrac and its local leadership team on this new initiative, connecting local people to good local jobs and frequently generously backing our local community.

RYDE ELECTORATE CIVIC EDUCATION

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (19:16): Yesterday I had the privilege of welcoming a vibrant group of students and their parents from Ryde Public School and St Kevin's Primary School to Parliament. From Ryde, I was delighted to host Liam, Rue, Dale, Milad, Sarah, Lucinda, Sophie, Conner, Adam, Kirupa, Mayyar, David, Mia, Adeline and Cara; and from St Kevin's we had Olivia, Kristof, Michael, William, Hannah, Harrison, Benjamin, Soumaya, Byron, Timothy, Erica and Francesca. Each student was highly engaged during our morning tea and Q and A session in the historic Jubilee Room, before having the opportunity to experience our democracy

firsthand during question time in this very Chamber. They were an exceptionally well-behaved group and hopefully did not pick up too many bad habits from some of the poorly behaved members in this House. I thank the school staff for recognising the important value of civic education, and I hope that the visit inspired our local school students to continue to be involved in shaping the future of our society. This Parliament is for them, and I congratulate each and every one of them on representing their school with the utmost distinction. I thank them for visiting the New South Wales Parliament.

PENRITH PANTHERS

Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (19:17): It is with great pride that I too congratulate our local Penrith Panthers on their outstanding three-peat win in the 2023 grand final, the first in 40 years. This was the fourth straight grand final appearance for the Panthers. We were mesmerised by a game that had us all stunned and jubilant at the same time. To come from 16 points down with 20 minutes to go was magical. The Broncos certainly brought their best game. I still wonder how you can score three grand final tries in 10 minutes and still have the worst day, outcome-wise, of the season. It is down to the Panthers' never-give-up attitude. The community have it, and it shone through the team during the momentous game. The fierceness, passion and collective brilliance and skill saw them to victory. I also congratulate those behind the scenes who prepare the players each and every week: the coaches and support staff. The culture at Penrith Panthers is something to be admired. They give back to our community in so many ways. As Ivan Cleary said, "May the fourth be with you."

LIBERTY FOODCARE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) (19:18): I pay thanks to Pastor James Ardil and Liberty Foodcare for the work they do providing low-cost community supermarkets to communities in my region. Times are tough and families are feeling the pinch. The cost-of-living crisis is continuing to significantly impact local families. This pain is felt most at the supermarket checkout, which is why Pastor Ardil and Liberty Foodcare have volunteered their time to provide low-cost groceries in Tamworth and Barraba. The organisation works in tandem with local supermarkets, filling a gap for those who cannot afford to fill their trolley. Last year the Community Building Partnerships program provided fridges to the Barraba store, meaning a wider range of goods available in Barraba. I thank Liberty Foodcare for the outstanding work it does caring for those in need and offer my continued support to its programs.

NEWCASTLE ROLLER DERBY LEAGUE

Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP (Newcastle) (19:19): The Newcastle Roller Derby League offers everyone in my electorate a safe and inclusive space to make friends, stay fit and have fun. Well done to the unstoppable Bogy Rollers, champions of the 2023 season. This team and the other competing teams—the Harbour Hellcats and Fort Smashleys—all played with great integrity and sportsmanship. Roller derby is a unique sport that is not only physically demanding but also a strong act of self-expression. It has been an incredible year for women's sport, and I am so glad we have such a wonderful local roller derby league in Newcastle. I was honoured to attend my first roller derby match this season and I cannot downplay how exciting and exhilarating this sport is. I cannot wait to come back next season and support these athletes in 2024.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (19:20): Today I acknowledge and commend the indispensable work of Women and Children First under the exceptional leadership of CEO Gabrielle Morrissey and its chair, Mayor Sue Heins. Women and Children First has served our community since 1974. It soon evolved, launching refuges and providing sanctuary for women and children fleeing domestic violence. The organisation is enhancing its capacity to offer crucial support to vulnerable families. In 2020, amidst the extraordinary further challenges of COVID-19, Women and Children First rebranded and forged a vital partnership with Royal Far West, establishing a safe house to respond to escalating needs. This not-for-profit entity epitomises strength and compassion, with a vision that resonates deeply within our community to ensure that women, children and families are not only safe and secure but also connected and empowered. Its tireless efforts have found pathways for countless lives over decades, fostering hope and resilience. I urge my community to continue to support and thank Women and Children First, acknowledging its invaluable contribution to fostering a society where safety and opportunity are accessible. Let's eliminate domestic violence.

PROFESSOR JOSEPHINE CHOW

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (19:21): I am delighted to recognise Professor Josephine Chow, a huge advocate for Liverpool and finalist for the Staff Member of the Year award at this year's NSW Health Awards. This prestigious award recognises the exceptional contributions of NSW Health employees to public health in New South Wales. Professor Chow is the founder of the HOME Network, an Australasian initiative that brings healthcare professionals and consumers together to promote home dialysis as a choice. She

has also been successful in securing funding for significant projects, including TEACH-PD and the PEACH initiatives. I also note her contribution to research into renal care and nursing practices; her role as deputy director of the renal clinical trial centre; deputy director of research at the South Western Sydney Local Health District; and as chair of the South Western Sydney Nursing and Midwifery Research Alliance. I thank Professor Chow for her contribution to the South Western Sydney Local Health District. I extend my congratulations to the other finalists, who have made valuable contributions to public health in New South Wales.

BEAR COTTAGE

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (19:23): For members who do not know, Bear Cottage in Manly is a children's hospice dedicated to caring for children with life-limiting conditions. It takes a special kind of person to be able to volunteer their time alongside the professional staff to ensure that these kids and their families have some comfort during devastating times. Mosman local Julie Jennings has dedicated her time over the last eight years as a volunteer at Bear Cottage. Recently she was awarded the Bear Cottage Superhero Award for her dedication, care and service to children with a life-limiting or terminal illness. Julie tragically lost her youngest son, Martin, in 2005. A few years later, she decided to help families who are in the same situation to process their grief and live with the loss. I acknowledge and thank the team at Bear Cottage, which provides excellent palliative care around the clock and supports the families and loved ones of those with life-limiting conditions. But the biggest congratulations go to Julie and all the other volunteers on this well-deserved recognition. Julie, you truly are one of our local superheroes.

TRIBUTE TO RONALD "RONNIE" EVANS

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ (Auburn) (19:24): The Lidcombe community is mourning the loss and celebrating the life of much-loved local Ronnie Evans. Ronnie was born in Greenock, Scotland in 1949. He served his apprenticeship as a coppersmith at Kincaid's Shipyards, Greenock, where he worked until he migrated to Australia in 1981. Ronnie met the love of his life, Violet, at a Glasgow Rangers game in 1969. They married in 1975 and their son David was born in 1976. As soon as Ronnie arrived in Australia, he and Vi became stalwarts of their local football club, Lidcombe Waratahs. In recognition of this commitment he was awarded life membership. Lawn bowls was another shared family interest, and he played for many years at Lidcombe Bowling Club. There he served as a board member and men's president, and was awarded life membership. Ronnie loved movies, reading, doing puzzles, the odd beer and single malt whisky, and hanging out with neighbours and friends. He was generous and kind, and always had time for a chat and a laugh. Ronnie was part of the glue that holds together our local communities. He will be sadly missed by his wife Violet, granddaughters Tabitha and Sidney, and his broader family and friends.

HOLLY CONSADINE

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:25): I recognise Holly Consadine of the 1st Mudgee Scout Group on receiving the Queen's Scout Award. Holly's journey through Scouting is really impressive. The Queen's Scout Award is a testament to her dedication and the high-level skills and adventurous spirit she possesses. Her four-day, three-night hiking journey at Hill End—even during floods—demonstrated her resilience and leadership. She also modified the hike to ensure her team's safety. Holly's contributions to the community are equally commendable. Her efforts in making toiletry bags for women in abusive situations, visiting nursing homes to engage with the elderly and teaching younger Scouting members valuable skills make her a wonderful ambassador for Scouting in the community and the region. Her involvement in both the town and school bands—along with her participation in fundraising not only for her Scouting family but also for organisations like Lions and Rotary—reflects her commitment to various aspects of her life beyond Scouting. It is really good to hear that Holly's efforts have been recognised with her selection as this year's Mudgee Lions Club scholarship awardee. I again congratulate Holly on her outstanding accomplishments.

TRIBUTE TO MARIE STANDEN

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (19:26): Today I pay tribute to a remarkable woman who recently passed away at the age of 92. Marie Standen was a pillar of the Blue Mountains community, beginning her career as a teacher at Fairfield High School and later becoming principal at Katoomba High School, all whilst raising four children on her own. It is impossible to list all her services to our community. Her passions included highlighting the rights of refugees. In 2001, emboldened by the injustice of the *Tampa* incident, Marie founded the Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group. The group has since amassed more than 800 members, supporting countless refugees in our community and in detention. In 2020 Marie was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to refugees and to the community of the Blue Mountains. Marie was the epitome of a strident and principled woman. She leaves behind a powerful legacy. She will be missed by the Blue Mountains community and remembered as an inspiration to all. A beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, her

family was her pride and joy. Marie was honoured in a beautiful farewell by the Blue Mountains community, who shared tears and laughter in remembering her antics and enormous heart. Rest up now, Marie.

KEN BRAIN

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (19:27): Today I recognise Ken Brain from the Emery Rural Fire Service brigade for his outstanding community service. Ken has been an integral part of the Emery Rural Fire Service for more than 33 years. Recently his dedication to his local community was celebrated by Rural Fire Service staff, volunteers and the Mayor of Murrumbidgee Council, Ruth McCrae. As fire captain, Ken has led his brigade through many harrowing incidents involving bushfires, motor vehicle accidents and significant building fires. Under Ken's leadership, the Emery rural fire brigade has ensured the safety of the community in the Coleambally area. Of course, behind every successful man or woman you often find a supportive partner. In Ken's case that partner is his wife Wendy, who has always worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure Ken could fulfil his duties with the brigade. I extend my congratulations and best wishes to Ken for his outstanding service to the Emery Rural Fire Service brigade. Volunteers like Ken are the backbone of their communities. It is important that we take the time to highlight the incredible work of people like Ken.

BLACKTOWN WOMEN'S SHED

Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (19:28): I celebrate the creation of the Blacktown Women's Shed in Quakers Hill. Amidst a whirlwind of emotions, a treasure trove of tools and a vibrant splash of hot pink, the official inauguration of the Blacktown Women's Shed recently took place. After COVID shutdowns nearly derailed the project, the women's shed was revitalised and completed thanks to community warrior Marti Fletcher. Marti, who has worked at Blacktown City Council for the last 10 years, dreamed of a place where women could come together to learn new skills, share stories, learn from one another and build lasting friendships. Thanks to the kindness of MTO Global—along with the support and advocacy of Blacktown councillors of wards 1 and 2, particularly Julie Griffiths—a once disused shed in Quakers Hill Reserve is now decked out with tools and has become home to the Blacktown Women's Shed, a place where everyone can belong. The women's shed provides valuable resources and creates opportunities for the women in my community to flourish. This shed provides a safe space for women to uplift each other, share wisdom and inspire ingenuity.

MENAI MEN'S SHED

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (19:29): On Friday 29 September 2023 I had the pleasure of celebrating 30 years of the Australian Men's Shed Association with the Menai Men's Shed in Barden Ridge. The occasion was celebrated with an open day at the shed, with all members showing off their works and intricate crafts. A certain highlight was Robert's alpine horn replica, which was one-quarter the size of the original and was playable. I extend my thanks to all members for their courtesy, as well as to the executive team, including president Cam Terry, vice-president John Brustolin, secretary Jo Buchan, membership secretary Rob Montgomery and treasurer Mike Burke. I also thank the support committee members for their work, including Gerry Flannery, Bill Black, Gary Melbourne, Ken Auchterlonie, Ron Alexander and Kevin Crowe. It was a wonderful time celebrating with the gentlemen, and I look forward to seeing their newest creations soon.

LEPPINGTON VILLAGE SHOPPING CENTRE

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (19:30): In mid-August the Leppington Village Shopping Centre officially opened its doors. Leppington Village is home to 30 speciality stores and a top-of-the-line Woolworths supermarket. During the opening ceremony I spoke to many of the new storeowners and my constituents about our rapidly changing community and its massive potential. The opening ceremony included a fantastic dance and singing performance by students from nearby Leppington Public School. Leppington Village is also home to my fabulous new electorate office. I thank the Department of Parliamentary Services for the fabulous job after almost five long months as an orphan. I also thank the monks from the Ming Yue Lay Temple who attended the opening day to give my office a traditional Buddhist blessing. The opening of Leppington Village is an important milestone in the development of the Leppington Town Centre and my growing community.

ALICE WARWICK

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (19:31): The smallest people house the biggest hearts. I celebrate the achievements of Oxley's brightest Rotarian star, Alice Warwick. At just 11 years of age, she showcases passion, generosity and determination to make a difference. Alice embarked on a unique challenge to support Kempsey West Rotary. Through unwavering dedication, Alice collected every \$2 coin she encountered and saved them in her Rotary centurion money box. After months of patiently collecting, Alice presented her second \$100 donation to Rotary, asking that it specifically go towards Rotary Lodge, a second home for patients and their families when they need to stay close to hospital. But Alice's generosity does not stop there. For years she has actively participated in Rotary activities, including at raffles, at meetings and by offering a helping hand in delivering

books for the home lending library. For years of commitment and selflessness, Alice was recently officially declared a junior Rotarian. That is well-deserved recognition of her incredible spirit and positive impact on the community. Well done to Alice. She continues to inspire.

CLEANAWAY RESOURCECO RECOVERY CENTRE

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (19:32): It was great to tour Cleanaway ResourceCo Recovery Centre at Wetherill Park on 8 September. As Australasia's largest producer of energy from waste, ResourceCo is a global leader in waste management. It re-manufactures commercial and industrial construction waste that would normally be landfill into recycled products. ResourceCo processes dry waste to recover products like metal, timber, textiles and asphalt. It manufactures processed engineered fuel, offering alternative, high-yield energy sources to reduce emissions. ResourceCo has repurposed 60 million tonnes of waste, saving 60 million tonnes of CO2 emissions. In New South Wales, 40 per cent of waste is directed to landfills. With predictions that Sydney will run out of landfill space by 2028, ResourceCo needs further State and Federal government support in developing credible alternatives for waste management. I thank CEO Tyson Sara, development director Sam Marshall and general manager Sanderan Govender for their commitment to sustainable solutions in Western Sydney.

DAVID ABERDEEN HAY, MBE

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (19:33): It is with great delight that I notify the House that David Aberdeen Hay, MBE, will celebrate his ninetieth birthday on Thursday 26 October 2023, having been born in 1933. David Hay, MBE, is a former State member for Manly and a former Minister in the Greiner Government. David was elected in 1984—defeating the Labor member for the seat of Manly, of which one has never been seen again—and served until May 1991. Mr Hay served as a Manly councillor for 23 years, including six terms as mayor and eight as deputy mayor. Mr Hay, together with his wife, Jean Hay, AM, have been Manly's very own royalty. Mr Hay was educated and grew up in Manly, attending the former Manly Boys High School. He served as a Royal Australian Air Force pilot and worked in Manly as a company director. It has been my honour and privilege to know Mr Hay and follow in his footsteps. I am delighted to provide this community recognition statement to recognise his work and his life. Well done and happy ninetieth birthday to David.

MS GONG RIDE

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (19:34): It is one of the biggest fundraisers of the year and certainly one of the most picturesque. The MS Gong Ride sees thousands of cyclists each year make the journey from Tempe Recreation Reserve to Lang Park in Wollongong. During the 82-kilometre ride, riders make their way from one end of the Heathcote electorate to the other. They pass through the Royal National Park—the second oldest national park in the world—and along the coast as they traverse Lawrence Hargrave Drive. There is also a 54-kilometre ride that begins at Preston Park in Engadine, in my electorate of Heathcote, and also finishes at Lang Park in Wollongong. The event, which will be held on Sunday 5 November this year, has made an incredible difference to the lives of many people through the funds raised. More than \$40 million has been raised during the 40 years the event has been held. I am proud that the Heathcote electorate has embraced the event every year, with local residents lining the sides of the road to cheer riders on. Good luck to everyone on 5 November this year, and congratulations in advance.

CASTLE HILL RSL ANZAC AMBASSADORS

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (19:35): I recently had the pleasure of hosting this year's Castle Hill RSL Anzac Ambassadors at Parliament House. Four year 11 students are selected from applicants across 17 schools in the Hills district. The ambassadors are taught public speaking and research a set subject to present at various commemorations throughout the year, including Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and others. The Castle Hill RSL Sub-Branch Secondary School Ambassador Program began in 2015, the first year of the Centenary of Anzac. The ambassadors were given a tour of Parliament House, including the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council chambers.

I commend and recognise this year's ambassadors: Damon Buchanan from Marian Catholic College, Heidi Wilkinson from Castle Hill High School, Aryan Roy from Oakhill College and Gemma Oaklands from Northholm Grammar School. Gemma is also a recipient of this year's Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship. I recognise and commend the following for supporting the program: Elizabeth Rodd, Anzac Ambassador trainer and mentor, and Anzac Ambassador 2019; Bryan Mullan, Anzac Ambassador coordinator; Colonel Don Tait, OAM, retired Castle Hill and District RSL Sub-Branch liaison; and Cheryl Hill, sub-branch president.

KUKU FAMILY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:37): Being the first at anything is always hard and challenging. The Kuku family were the first Sudanese refugee family to call Maitland home. The women of the family, however, have relished this challenge. Christina, Veronica, Jomoko and their sister, Margaret, have been deeply influential in the creation of a positive cultural environment within the Maitland region. The family have overcome many of the initial challenges they faced, with language barriers, cultural differences and educational opportunities. It is great to see them sharing their knowledge with other people in our community. The family overcame those challenges by getting involved. As anyone does when they move to a new community, they engaged with our local institutions. They got involved in cultural engagement and sharing at TAFE, they engaged with businesses and they initiated small community celebrations for Refugee Week. They started really small, but they have blossomed. They were central to the cultural sharing experience that went on to become the Maitland Riverlights Festival. Their involvement started way back in 2012 and they have continued that involvement over the intervening years. I thank them for their contribution.

PITTWATER ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (19:38): I recognise the hard work of all the year 12 students in my community. Wednesday marked the start of the HSC written exam period. After years of study, these students are on the home stretch. I wish each student all the best over the coming weeks, years and times ahead. I encourage them to remember to take some time to relax and reflect on all they have accomplished. I acknowledge the wonderful teachers and staff at our high schools in and around Pittwater, including Narrabeen Sports High School, Barrenjoey High School, Pittwater High School, Mater Maria Catholic College, Northern Beaches Christian School, the German International School Sydney, Sydney Japanese International School, Oxford Falls Grammar, Pittwater House, St Luke's Grammar School and Covenant Christian School. I thank them for all they have done to support our young people, preparing them for their final exams and equipping them to enter the next stage of their lives. I thank all the parents and carers who have supported our year 12 students in their study, making sure they eat and take breaks. Congratulations! They are almost there as well.

EFTHYMIOS ANDREOU

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (19:39): I acknowledge Efthymios Andreou, or Andrew, as he is known to me. Andrew is a native of Cyprus. He is a particle physicist by profession and these days he operates a restaurant, which I attend occasionally when I am conducting business in Parliament and staying in town. Andrew and his family came to Australia in 1977, when he was 17 years of age, as a result of the coup d'état by Cypriot conservatives that led to the Turkish invasion in 1974. Andrew wanted to share with me a series of emails he had sent to his friends and acquaintances in favour of the yes campaign as it relates to the referendum this Saturday. I commend him for what he is trying to do for the yes campaign. He appreciates what he has been able to achieve in this country and he wants to see more people achieve what he has. He is a fine example of what is best in this State and in Australia.

ST JOHN AMBULANCE PARRAMATTA

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (19:40): I acknowledge the St John Ambulance division in Parramatta for the terrific work it continues to do within our local community and beyond. I recently had the opportunity to visit the division's facilities in Toongabbie and see the upgrades to its hall. The funds for the upgrade were provided through the 2022 round of the Community Building Partnership Grant. The upgrades were supported by the team at Bunnings in Northmead, who provided concrete and tiles to further improve the facilities. The volunteers in the Parramatta division have recently been assisting as first responders at community events and preparing for the potential bushfire season ahead. I thank St John Ambulance CEO Dominic Teakle for his ongoing support of the local St John branches across the electorate of Winston Hills. I also thank Brian Daniell and the team at the Parramatta division for their ongoing support of our community in times of need. I wish the team at St John Parramatta all the very best.

Private Members' Statements

MAITLAND ELECTORATE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (19:41): I will talk about my community of Maitland, how important it is to me and how I am so proud and pleased that the Minns Labor Government has been able to work with the community and Maitland City Council to make great plans for the future. I recently met with Jeff Smith, the new general manager of the council, and it was a really positive meeting. I relished the opportunity to meet him and have a frank and open discussion about the priorities for Maitland. Labor's advocacy document was released in the lead-up to the State election in March. I had a very good relationship with the former general manager of the council, so it was good to have that conversation.

The last time this House sat, I spoke about the budget's impact on my community and the great things that the Government is achieving in Maitland. The National Party has obfuscated a lot in this place and has tried to present the budget as lacking clarity, messaging mayors that funding was not available when it was. The Liberal Party has been claiming credit for projects that were already completed under Restart and which were being reported in the normal cumulative way as they have been for years. I thought it important to be very clear about the commitments for Maitland in the budget.

Maitland is one of the fastest growing communities outside of Sydney. Road infrastructure is a huge issue for the community. I was very pleased that the Government was able to deliver in this budget its commitment to the Thornton Road duplication. There has been talk in the community, and negativity particularly from the National Party, about that funding being for \$15 million. That will not cover the whole project. If the former Government had finished that duplication in 2011, when the first leg cost \$12 million, we would have had a chance. Until November last year, the duplication was costed on the council's website at \$15 million. Funnily enough, after we put in all our bids with the Expenditure Review Committee, the price went up to \$26 million. I was very interested to hear that the council was throwing around a figure of \$30 million.

The Government has made a commitment of \$15 million towards the Thornton rail bridge to duplicate that State asset. It will be a Transport for NSW project. We will advise what the cost of that project will be and make sure we fund it, but there is \$15 million in the four years ahead to start the project and get it off the ground. The project is urgent. There was \$100 million worth of work to be done in Maitland a few years ago. That is now \$150 million in Thornton alone because of the delays and obstruction by the Opposition when it was in government.

The other project I will talk about is the Melville Ford Bridge. That bridge has gone under in so many floods. The previous Government committed funding to it and spruiked \$4.1 million in the lead-up to the State election. That included \$2.5 million from the Infrastructure Betterment Fund, \$1.6 million from Fixing Country Bridges and a council contribution of \$1.6 million. When Labor was in opposition, we confirmed in our budget a contribution of \$2.5 million to that bridge. The \$2.5 million from the Infrastructure Betterment Fund will be on top of Labor's commitment once that program goes through the final review process. We will get a really fantastic bridge with that money. In addition, another \$6 million will go towards Maitland Vale Road and Melville Ford Road to strengthen them so that as traffic volume increases through that area, the access across the river is maintained. Maitland is a river city so that is important.

There are many other aspects of Labor's advocacy document. In my previous private member's statement I went through what commitments Labor has delivered with the budget. I will put that on my website because some people in our community do not want to work together and do not want to work for Maitland. I will continue to work with people whatever their political persuasions, declared or undeclared. I will be very clear with our community about the commitments I have made. The Government will fund them, and we will make Maitland better.

NIGHT AT THE BARRACKS CONCERTS

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly) (19:46): I am thrilled to speak about the outstanding concert series that just concluded in Manly, the Night at the Barracks concert series, which is now in its second season. If we cast our minds back to COVID, there was a silver lining to some of the challenges that we all experienced. The lack of international tourists and interstate visitors absolutely decimated the local economy and visitor economy of Manly. However, a collective of local businesses, the business chamber, the council and local entrepreneurs got together to look at what could possibly be changed when the COVID lockdowns ended. One of the things that was seen as an opportunity was to better utilise and use the barracks precinct at North Head.

Night at the Barracks came about as a result of that. It is a concert series held at North Head, providing two wonderful weeks of outstanding acts. It supported two wonderful local charities, with every ticket sale providing a dollar to either Bear Cottage or Lifeline. The event was a fully sustainable event. Clothing merchandise was made from 100 per cent recycled materials. The programs were digital. The signage was able to be broken down and reused, and it was a carbon emissions reduction project, which allowed the event to be 100 per cent carbon neutral. It was truly a community event. The organisers that hosted the event are an events company called Second Sunday, operating out of Manly.

I pay special tribute to the wonderful Cameron Coghlan, a co-founder and director of Second Sunday, and his partner in crime Brendan Maher. They both dug deep, came up with a concept and then pitched it to the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and a variety of other local supporters. That ultimately gave rise to Night at the Barracks. I acknowledge its wonderful team, Mel Key, Brianna Andersen, Josh Green, Katie Helyer, Jesse Flavell and Ellie Haffey, and the entire team at Second Sunday for the outstanding work they did in ensuring that the event was such a success.

To the partners of Night at the Barracks—Polestar, the New South Wales Government, the Northern Beaches Council, ENGIE, Cunard, Gage Roads, Tempus Two, Manly Spirits Co., Westfield and the Harbour Trust—I place on record my sincere thanks for their willingness to work with the community and Second Sunday to bring to life an event that demonstrates the types of acts and performances that can be brought to Manly. Jessica Mauboy performed in the first year, and this year Tina Arena performed. The event demonstrates that a part of Sydney that is not known to many people, the Barracks Precinct at North Head, can be brought to life and re-used in a way that many people could not have imagined.

The organisers put on a number of wonderful nights. It is my sincere hope, together with the business chamber and many other people in our community, that the event continues for many more years. While we appreciate there are budget challenges, we hope that the New South Wales Government will support and fund the event in the years ahead as it drives significant benefits to our local economy. We are trying to pivot and demonstrate that Manly is much more than the Corso in summer. In fact, it has much to offer year round. I place on record my congratulations to the team at Second Sunday, the Northern Beaches Council and all the wonderful supporters of the Night at the Barracks concert series.

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (19:50): While I often speak about the amazing natural beauty of the Illawarra, it really is the wonderful people who make our region so special. There is no better example of my electorate's true fighting spirit than Stacey-Anne Chater from Horsley. On 19 November 2022 Stacey-Anne's fit and healthy 23-year-old son Brayden died of the deadly bacterial infection meningococcal disease. The story of Brayden's death is truly tragic. In mid-November last year he came home from footy saying he felt unwell. Unlike many people who get the disease, Brayden did not have a rash or the usual signs of the illness, so Stacey-Anne gave him some painkillers and he went to bed. Although he was still unwell the next morning, Brayden soldiered on. He went to a work party with his mates, but came home early as he felt sick.

That night Stacey-Anne found her son unresponsive in his room, so she immediately called an ambulance. Brayden was taken to hospital, but within two days of feeling unwell doctors told Brayden's family the harrowing news that he could not be saved. Along with Brayden's devastated father, Ralph Chater, Stacey-Anne went searching for answers. How could this happen to a young and healthy man in a country like Australia? Meningococcus is transmitted via droplets or direct contact, so the illness can impact anyone. Stacey-Anne and Ralph had assumed, as most of us would, that Brayden had been vaccinated against the illness when he was at school, but that was not the case. In their search for answers they soon discovered that, although common strains of the disease are included in vaccines for schoolchildren, the strain that killed Brayden, the B strain, is not currently included in the NSW Immunisation Schedule.

This devastating news led to Brayden's family working closely with Meningitis Centre Australia to lobby members of Parliament to ensure access to vaccines for the additional strains of meningococcal. Last month I had the pleasure of meeting with Stacey-Anne. As her local representative in this House, I am fully supportive of her quest to save the lives of people who may otherwise contract and succumb to the horrible disease. This year Brayden's family and friends have fought through unimaginable grief to ensure that his death was not in vain and to stop such a tragedy from affecting more families. Unfortunately, one in 10 people who end up with the horrible disease will die, and three or four victims will have long-term health issues. The Chater family are working hard not only to raise awareness about this disease but also to ensure that more people get vaccinated for all strains.

I thank the Chater family for their tireless efforts in letting us know about the dangers of this disease and that our children are not currently vaccinated against all strains. Finally, the people whose lives are saved by Stacey-Anne's advocacy will most likely never know of her tenacious work, and that is a shame. So on behalf of all of them, their friends and family—especially the mums—I say thank you. I say a huge thank you also to the wonderful staff at the Meningitis Centre Australia for their tireless work in raising awareness about this deadly disease and for raising funds for research to ensure that no-one else has to experience a loss like that of the Chater family. I encourage everyone to sign the petition at meningitis.com.au/b-the-change-for-brayden/. I will continue to lobby my Government to ensure that this vaccination is placed on the NSW Immunisation Schedule.

ORANA NSW VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (19:54): Recently I attended the Orana NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards run by the Centre for Volunteering and hosted at the Dubbo Golf Club. Aimed at recognising the incredible dedication, efforts and community service of our State's volunteers, the annual event is in its seventeenth year. Individuals or teams can be nominated in one of the eight award categories, which include Young Volunteer of the Year, Employee Volunteer, Adult Volunteer, Volunteer Leader, Senior Volunteer, NSW Club Volunteer and Volunteer Team of the Year. I recognise the remarkable contribution of all the nominees

for this year's awards. In particular, I recognise the local winners: Zaineb Fawad, Barbara O'Brien and the National Association for Loss and Grief, or NALAG.

Zaineb received the Orana Adult Volunteer of the Year award for the work she has done as a volunteer tutor with the Adult Migrant English Program for the past five years. As a new migrant from Pakistan, Zaineb saw the program as an opportunity to connect with the community while at the same time helping other new migrants and refugees with their English language skills. Zaineb also helps students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to provide a pathway to greater social participation, employment, further study and training.

The Orana Volunteer Team of the Year was presented to the National Association for Loss and Grief, or NALAG, which was formed after the Granville train disaster in 1977 to provide a support network for people experiencing loss and grief. The not-for-profit organisation has several branches across New South Wales, with its head office in Dubbo. NALAG conducts a variety of educational programs, workshops, training and mental health awareness events to enhance wellbeing and promote resilience following loss, grief, trauma and adverse life events. Grief support volunteers undergo specialised training so they can make a difference in the community. They certainly play a vital role in providing support to people recovering from loss and adjusting to life. There has been an increase in demand for the counselling services offered by the association, particularly over the past three years, and without the volunteers those services could not be accessed. Well done to the entire NALAG team.

The Orana Senior Volunteer of the Year and overall Orana Volunteer of the Year awards went to Barbara O'Brien for her work in the community. Barbara is no stranger to volunteering. In 2014 she received a Medal of the Order of Australia for her tireless work in the Gulargambone community, which she called home until 2012, when she moved to Dubbo. Having lived in Gular for over 50 years, Barbara has engaged in many different community-minded initiatives, including welcomes to Gulargambone, Seniors Week and International Women's Day. Barbara served as the director of nursing at Gulargambone hospital, was a committee member of the Coonamble health council and volunteered her time on the Coonamble heritage committee.

Barbara is also passionate about the Country Women's Association [CWA]. She has been a member of the Gular CWA branch, the Armatree branch, and these days she is a member and secretary of the Terramungamine branch. A lifelong advocate for volunteering, Barbara's efforts go far beyond any one organisation, even after her move to Dubbo. She attends weekly meetings in her role as State secretary of the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, and she has been the Dubbo secretary for some time. Barbara is an ambassador at the Western Plains Cultural Centre, where she welcome visitors one Sunday a month, and she has volunteered as a welcomer at Taronga Western Plains Zoo every week since moving to Dubbo. If that does not seem like enough, Barbara is also secretary of the University of the Third Age, where she attends several classes and runs a monthly class called Dubbo Personalities.

Barbara helps one Friday a month at the BaptistCare community kitchen, volunteers at her local Catholic church, spends half a day each week at the Vinnies Dubbo shop and one day a fortnight at the Vinnies care and support service—I am exhausted just thinking about it. Barbara is incredible. All members know that volunteers make a vital contribution across all facets of our society and economy. They are integral to our social fabric, and communities across regional New South Wales particularly rely on them. Investment in volunteering reaps positive returns both economically and socially.

Barbara, Zained and NALAG have made a significant impact on our community through their selfless dedication and service. They are truly commendable and serve as inspiring examples of the power of volunteering to make a positive difference in the lives of others. I say well done to all of our winners, who will now attend the gala State ceremony for the announcement of the 2023 NSW Volunteer of the Year Award winner. I wish them all the best and thank them for what they do.

MACQUARIE FIELDS ELECTORATE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

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) (19:59): One of my favourite tasks as the local MP is visiting our local public schools, meeting young people from the electorate and hearing about their great and wonderful achievements. Indeed, it brings me much joy to see their faces light up when they talk about all they are learning and their aspirations for the future. Education is the key to success, which is why the delivery of schools to our growing communities is a priority of the Labor Government.

Since being elected in 2015, I have witnessed enormous growth in my electorate and the surrounding areas. I have seen the ongoing fight for infrastructure and services to support our growing communities. Over many years residents of Edmondson Park and Bardia have fought long and hard for local schools, and I am delighted

that the community's efforts are finally paying off. I have met and spoken with many parents who have been frustrated that local public schools were delayed, or in some instances non-existent, under the former Liberal Government. The delivery of school infrastructure did not keep pace with the growing population in my local community.

In July I had the immense pleasure of visiting Edmondson Park Public School with the Premier and Deputy Premier. The public school finally opened earlier this year, and further facilities were recently added, including 16 new learning spaces, outdoor game courts and a car park. The primary school can accommodate up to 1,000 kindergarten to year 6 students and provides before and after school care. A recent welcome addition is a preschool on the grounds of the public school that gives local families convenient access to child care.

The Government's recent announcement of a public high school in Edmondson Park is an exciting development. The high school will be built on government land adjacent to the primary school. The delivery of a high school will mean children in the area can attend school locally from preschool right through to year 12, giving students the best public education opportunities close to their home. The high school will accommodate up to 800 students initially, with provision for up to 2,000 students in the future.

Students in south-west Sydney deserve every opportunity to achieve success, and that starts with having access to the best education. Every child should have the right to attend a school in their local area. My community waited too long under the former Government for that right to be realised. After more than a decade of neglect by the former Liberal Government, and a long community campaign, the Minns Labor Government is getting on with the job of delivering long overdue infrastructure.

I look forward to seeing plans for the new high school progressing so that, once students finish primary school, they will not have to look far to start their secondary education. Growing communities such as Edmondson Park and Bardia have strongly advocated over the years for infrastructure, whether it be for schools or more commuter car parking. Delivering much-needed infrastructure is one of my key priorities for the Macquarie Fields electorate. Our community deserves its fair share, and it looks forward to seeing the next steps in the delivery of a long-awaited high school for Edmondson Park.

The foundation of our schools may be bricks and mortar, but at the heart of our schools are dedicated teachers who provide opportunities to learn and grow and who inspire the next generation. Of course, New South Wales teachers are now the highest paid in the country after the Government secured an historic pay rise for 95,000 New South Wales teachers. Education is the foundation upon which we build our future. Today year 12 students around the State completed their first HSC exam, and I take this opportunity to wish them all the best as they continue their lifelong journey of learning. Their future awaits, and I look forward to seeing all that our young people can achieve at our local schools—now and into the future.

PORT STEPHENS CLANS ON THE COAST

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens—Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion) (20:03): Starting the day with the sound of many bagpipes playing may not be everyone's cup of tea, but I have to say it makes my heart sing. Thanks to a band of community volunteers working tirelessly to organise and host a very special event, the Port Stephens Clans on the Coast came back to life this year in the biggest and best way possible. Clans on the Coast attracted clans from all over the Hunter region and the North Coast, who came with pipe bands, dancers and competitors to celebrate Celtic culture and share it with our community. Throughout the day the soulful sound of bagpipes wafted across Lakeside Leisure Centre at Raymond Terrace, and there were kilts and big beards as far as the eye could see.

For bringing the clans together again for the first time since COVID, I congratulate chieftain Geoff Davidson and the Port Stephens Celtic Association committee members Ron Swan, Adam Nicholas, Mark Harges, Michelle Nicholas, Caitlin Macinante and Nolene Ralston. Many years ago the Clans on the Coast was a vision of president Ron Swan, a man whose passion for Scottish culture and heritage is contagious. Ron's vision was to create an annual festival that celebrates and shares the cultural contribution of the Scottish and Celtic settlers to Australia in a way that brings the community in, so that we can all learn about the rich history.

On the day festival goers were treated to many stirring performances, starting with an impressive mass march of the pipe bands, who were proudly emblazoned in their clan tartans. Then there were Highland dancers, Irish dancers, caber toss and sheaf toss competitions, strong man and strong woman competitions, sword fights, battle re-enactments and so much more. Festival goers also enjoyed a wonderful collection of artisan stalls, weaponry displays and cultural stalls. President Ron Swan presided over the official ceremony with all the panache of a proud Scotsman in full regalia, including a very long plume, speaking about the importance of continuing these traditions to ensure the next generation continues to share these special customs, dances and rituals to keep the culture strong.

Importantly, we were welcomed to country by Worimi Elder Debbie Ridgeway, who acknowledged the importance of cultures working together so that we can all move forward together in respect and harmony. I thank the clans who came together for this year's Clans on the Coast: Buchanan, Davidson, Donaldson, Hope of Craighall, Labhran, MacEwen, MacNicol, MacThomas, as well as the Scottish Australian Heritage Council. I thank the pipe bands for bringing their soulful sounds and impressive displays, including the City of Newcastle RSL Pipe Band, City of Maitland Pipes and Drums, Cessnock District Pipes and Drums, Hornsby RSL Pipe Band and Manning Valley Pipes and Drums.

The Elevate Irish Dance Academy and the Scotia Highland dancers also impressed onlookers alongside the unique sounds of the Ukulele Scotsman. Acknowledgement must also go to the fantastic master of ceremonies and town crier, Stephen Clarke, who certainly had an impressive way with the crowds. You could have heard a pin drop when a Newcastle bagpiper performed a solo rendition of *You're the Voice* on the bagpipes, which so beautifully captured the coming together of cultures on the day and the wonderful respect shown all around. It highlighted the importance of voting yes in the upcoming referendum. I was delighted to join sponsors and Port Stephens Council councillors to judge the best dressed children's award. The young kids were amazing and so impressive in their full regalia. Prizes went not only to the children but to their schools as well.

Massive events like this are only possible with the backing of our community. I thank the amazing sponsors: HBT National Buying Group, Osborn George, Senator Deb O'Neill, Meryl Swanson MP, Raymond Terrace Bowling Club, Le Mottee Group, Anglo&Celtic Australia Magazine, Ian Jones Insurance Brokers, Rivergum Kinship Carers, Raymond Terrace Men's Shed, Curtis Contracts, BK Plumbing and Civil, Hunter River Brewery Trail, Finn Valley Plant and Civil, Port Stephens Council, author M. J. Wright, The Mutual Bank, Two Hands on Wheel driving school, Top Nutrition, East Coast Supplements and me. But none of this would have happened without the hard work of a handful of people, especially Adam Nicholas, who was capably backed up on the day by his amazing team at Raymond Terrace Rotary Club. And, of course, nothing would have happened without the initial vision of Ron Swan. On behalf of our community, I thank every single one of the sponsors and everyone who came to our very special event this year at Clans on the Coast.

PORT MACQUARIE ELECTORATE PROJECTS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) (20:08): I inform the House about a number of projects that have been delivered in the Port Macquarie electorate with funding from the New South Wales Government. However, I need to emphasise at the outset that each and every project I will highlight have been delivered thanks to commitments from the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. We all know how important it is to protect our koala population and, with Port Macquarie often referred to as the koala capital of the world, I am very pleased that a series of warning signs to alert motorists to slow down in koala zones have been installed thanks to \$150,000 funding from the Government. This was a part of a \$1.25 million funding announcement that I made last year with previous environment Minister James Griffin as part of the NSW Koala Strategy. Locations include Lake Road in the industrial area, Kennedy Drive near the koala hospital, Ocean Drive near the golf club and at Ocean Drive at Laurieton.

Local fishers in the Camden Haven have applauded the new fish cleaning tables at Seymour Street reserve at Laurieton. Port Macquarie-Hastings Council was granted \$25,500 to remove the former outdated table and replace it with a new, safe and hygienic facility. Fishing is one of our favourite pastimes so it is wonderful that we can make the experience even better for everyone to enjoy. Recently I inspected the facilities with local fishers. They are overjoyed with the huge improvements to those amenities, which now feature running water and solar-powered lighting. The new facilities were funded through the annual Recreational Fishing Trust grants program, which puts fishers' licence fees to work by reinvesting them into projects that will benefit the local area.

As I speak work is underway to revamp the children's area of the Port Macquarie Library thanks to a New South Wales Government Public Library Infrastructure Grant of \$497,264. I was delighted to announce the funding last year alongside Councillor Nik Lipovac, council director Melissa Watkins and library staff. The upgrade will include contemporary furniture, book collections and display areas as well as a new garden space. The communities of Lake Cathie and Bonny Hills can now enjoy an accessible playground at Rainbow Beach Sporting Fields following a \$90,000 Everyone Can Play grant towards the project.

In November 2021, I announced two significant infrastructure projects totalling \$1.5 million, both of which have been completed by council this year. The new Westport Park water play space has been a wonderful addition for young people to enjoy thanks to a \$1.1 million grant through the NSW Public Spaces Legacy Program. The playground certainly got a workout during the recent school holidays. I expect it will continue to be well utilised by children and their parents over the upcoming hot summer. A \$450,000 amphitheatre has also been constructed at Town Beach in Port Macquarie through the same funding stream, which has enhanced the area as a key outdoor entertainment space. I particularly thank the previous Liberal Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Rob Stokes for that initiative, which has benefited communities across the State.

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council has also been allocated \$21 million through the Government's Fixing Country Bridges Program to replace 13 timber bridges in the local government area. I know that local residents at Logans Crossing are very excited at the progress of the timber bridge replacement that is now nearing completion. The duplication of Ocean Drive in Port Macquarie is well underway, with work progressing well after the previous Liberal-Nationals Government allocated \$60 million towards the significant road project. Of course, work will begin next year on the much-needed upgrade to the southern breakwall, including enhancements for pedestrians using that very popular walkway, thanks to a funding commitment by the previous Liberal Government and strongly supported by the incoming Labor Government.

Yesterday the Kew Main Street upgrade opening went ahead following completion of works by Port Macquarie-Hastings Council thanks to \$800,000 in funding from the Australian Government and \$600,000 from the New South Wales Government through the Liberal-Nationals Stronger Country Communities Fund, as well as funding from Transport for NSW. It is very pleasing to see the works finally completed to beautify the village of Kew, which is the gateway to the Camden Haven. However, I am incredibly disappointed that, despite significant State Government funding for the project, I as the local member was not afforded the courtesy of being invited to attend the opening.

On the contrary, the Federal member for Lyne was provided with an invitation but was unable to attend. I know from discussions and correspondence with council that it is seeking significant support from the New South Wales Government into the future to fund projects such as the upgrade to Lake Road, the proposed aquatic centre and the new Thrumster sporting fields—to name just a few. I therefore encourage council and councillors to work collaboratively with me as the local member and with the State Government so we can achieve positive outcomes for the community that will benefit generations to come.

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (20:12): Earlier this year the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage appointed me as her Parliamentary Secretary, a role I am incredibly honoured to fulfill and one I feel is befitting of an elected representative from a World Heritage listed region, the unique Blue Mountains. Our environment needs our attention and care more than ever. Government cannot fix it all, but we acknowledge the critical role that we do play in working alongside industry and community to tackle challenges head on. The impacts of climate change are indiscriminate and our goal in government is to find equitable solutions that leave no-one behind.

Since my appointment as Parliamentary Secretary, I have met with a diverse and inspiring range of people and organisations. Some have grand visions; others, simpler ones. But all have expressed a heartfelt commitment to our environment and a genuine desire for a positive, sustainable movement centred on the betterment and rectification of our human impacts on the planet. I take this time to mention some of the people I have had the great privilege of meeting with in recent months and to speak briefly about their work. In June I met with Professor Belinda Medlyn, on behalf of Western Sydney University professor Brendan Choat. We discussed their plans for a Blue Mountains hub for ecology and conservation to extend the monitoring of vegetation and species that exist within critically important, fragile ecosystems. Their work may not be in the spotlight but it is vital nonetheless, and I felt privileged to have caught a glimpse into it.

I also met with Blue Mountains resident Robin Murray and the Knitting Nannas. I applaud them for their ongoing, unwavering advocacy for koalas and, more broadly, our environment. The Nannas bring with them a wisdom that comes from lived experience and a deep knowledge of the frightening trajectory of the demise of our climate in just one generation. In July I engaged in a thought-provoking conversation with Dr Bronwyn McDonald and Dr Shaun Watson from Healthy Futures. They have identified one key New South Wales hospital to trial moving away from natural gas, a model project with prospects of being replicated across the State. Their vision reminds us of the need for a cross-portfolio lens to ensure that the climate challenges we face are approached in a holistic way.

My conversations with the healthcare sector continued a month later when I met Kaitlyn Cooke from Ecodefend. Kaitlyn is a young registered nurse who struggled to reconcile the amount of waste being produced during the pandemic. Whilst acknowledging the necessity of personal protective equipment, she felt in her heart that there was a better way. Years and many dollars later, Kaitlyn has created a 100 per cent biodegradable disposable face mask that could, along with other biodegradable products she is developing, quite literally revolutionise the amount of waste that makes its way from our hospitals to landfill. In August I attended an insightful seminar hosted by the Australian British Chamber of Commerce. I found myself amongst industry, business and banks discussing the investment realities and potential of renewable energy. The panel discussion was illuminating.

We cannot have conversations about the current and future state of our environment without engaging our young people, because they are the ones who have the most at stake and their voices must be heard. In August I met with students from Kindlehill School in the Blue Mountains to discuss their project to support cafes in Katoomba to transition to bulk milk supplies that use 80 per cent less plastic than the containers currently used. I also attended two compelling events in Sydney: the Risk and Dare conference in North Sydney, as well as the Orbispace Initiative Pitch for the Planet event at the Sydney Startup Hub. On both occasions I sat transfixed as I listened to school students and young activists put forward their ideas and visions for the future.

I met with Workways and Envite Environment, which is engaging community and restoring the natural environment, with a focus on teaching the skills necessary for our future workforce to effectively combat the impacts of climate change, both environmentally and socially. I enjoyed hearing from members of the Australian Marine Conservation Society, a passionate and informed group that cares deeply about our marine environments, the crucial role they play in our broader biodiversity and the necessity for their protection and preservation. More recently, I met with a company called ResourceCo and toured its facility at Wetherill Park. It was uplifting to see firsthand that its processes of waste recovery and re-manufacturing are making sizeable reductions in the amount of primary resources going into landfill. Barack Obama once said:

One voice can change a room, and if one voice can change a room, then it can change a city, and if it can change a city, it can change a state, and if it change a state, it can change a nation, and if it can change a nation, it can change the world.

I feel proud, hopeful and inspired to be working in this role, knowing that we are listening to those voices. Individually and collectively, they are changing the world.

CLARENCE ELECTORATE DROUGHT

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (20:18): As members of the House know, my electorate was significantly impacted by the great flood in the Northern Rivers in 2022. Homes and lives were destroyed. Businesses are still not open. Students are still not back in school. Courthouses are still not reopened. People are living in pod villages. Roads, today, remain closed. The job ahead of us is massive and will take years to complete. That flood has had a profound impact on my community. Of course, we lived through the worst bushfires in a generation. Hundreds of homes were burnt to the ground—gone in an instant. And we lived through the worst drought in 100 years. I have said in this place before that we are a resilient lot up north. We have to be. This season we have already seen a section 44 fire declared in my electorate and, just a few weeks ago, a major fire at Evans Head.

We are indeed staring down the barrel of another bad fire season. Frankly, I did not think I would be standing here today calling for the New South Wales Labor Government to provide immediate support to the farmers in my electorate who are now in the grip of drought. But here I am. In the bush, rainfall totals mean a lot and many of us keep our rainfall totals at home—whether it be on the fridge or in the office. At my place, this year we have received just 312 millimetres of rain and the next few months are not looking good. To put that into some perspective, in the worst drought in 100 years we received 156 millimetres of rain. Things are crook.

Today large parts of my electorate and across the Richmond and Clarence valleys have been identified as being in intense drought, which has been registered by the Department of Primary Industries Combined Drought Indicator. This is an interactive tool that provides a snapshot of the current seasonal conditions across the State, factoring in rainfall, soil moisture and also crop growth indicators. By accounting for all of the above, areas in my electorate are now in severe drought, at the same time as many farmers are still recovering from floods. Now is the time that the Minns Labor Government needs to help these farmers. Sadly, it appears the Government has no drought plans—or, if it does, has not yet enacted them. The forecast for continuing dry weather for the remainder of this year is frightening for many on the land. It is imperative that the New South Wales Government understands the gravity of the situation and immediately provides support for these producers. The lack of action so far—

Ms Kate Washington: For the last 12 years.

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON: —is frightening. In fact, I am shaking my head at the silence—

Ms Kate Washington: Twelve years, mate.

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON: —of the Labor Government on this drought. We are talking about people's lives.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON: This is a disgrace. This Government is happily turning its back on farmers in my electorate. To put it into some perspective, the cost of providing fodder for stock is skyrocketing. To transport 40 tonnes of fodder from Victoria costs \$25,000 a load. This is the added pain that the beef producers

are now feeling. Let us talk about the last 12 years, when the previous Government supported our farmers to the tune of \$2.4 billion.

Ms Kate Washington: Where's your water security?

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON: Let us talk about water security. What has the Government done to help our farmers? It has cut harvesting rights to water from 30 per cent to 10 per cent. What a terrific idea. No warning, no consultation. At the time the farmers need a bit of a hand, what do we do in this place? We cut their water security by 20 per cent. That is a disgrace. At a time when our people need the Government's support, it has turned its back. I again implore the Government to support our farmers, stop cutting the harvestable water rights, start building dams and stop turning its back on the bush.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (20:23): The referendum on the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is just over two days away and many voters in my electorate of Strathfield are turning out to pre-poll. There are still a lot of questions and misinformation out there. I would like to answer some of those questions as simply as I can for the benefit of people who may be undecided or confused. In my electorate 30 per cent of residents are of Chinese background and 20 per cent are of Indian background. It is a massive multicultural community whose English may not be as good as ours. It is critically important that they make this decision on a national referendum based on facts and accurate information.

What is the referendum all about? It is to approve a constitutional amendment to, firstly, recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first people; and, secondly, to establish an advisory body called the Voice, which may make representations to Parliament or to the Executive Government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Should Indigenous people be recognised in the Constitution as Australia's First Nations people? I think the answer to that is clearly yes, because they have lived in Australia for over 65,000 years before British settlement and before being dispossessed. The proposition that they should be recognised as Australia's First Nations people is fair and it is true.

Why do we need the Voice as an advisory body? Common sense would say that when you listen to people who are affected by a decision, you are going to make a better decision. If somebody is building a house for you, if they take into account your views about how you would like that house, what your needs are, what your preferences are, it will be a better house. If somebody is organising an event for you, if they take your opinion about how you would like that event to be, it will be a better event. Some people will point out that a lot of money has already been spent on Indigenous people. To that, I say that money would be more effectively spent and more efficiently spent if we listened to Indigenous people about how it should be spent.

Will the Voice be able to block government decisions? The answer to that is no. The voice will have no decision-making power and no power of veto. It is just an advisory body. The Government can choose to ignore its advice if the Government so chooses. One of the key arguments of the no campaign is that the Voice will divide Australia by race, and should we all not be equal? Well, race is already in the Constitution, in section 51 (xxvi), which allows the Parliament to make laws for the people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws. But over and above this, the reality is that we are not all equal. Some of us are born taller, some of us are born shorter, some of us are richer, some of us are poorer, some of us are smarter, some of us are dumber and some of us are more or less beautiful. What we want to be is fairer. Fairness is at the core of Australian values.

Indigenous people are among the most disadvantaged people on earth. Their life expectancy is eight years below the average Australian. A young Indigenous male is more likely to go to jail than to go to school. This is why sometimes we need to treat people differently to achieve fairness. There is a difference between equality and equity. Will the Voice result in a treaty or in reparations? The answer to that is no. These are completely separate issues. If the Government wanted to create a treaty with Indigenous people, it could do so now without the Voice. Victoria is embarking on that journey right now. Why is there not more detail on the Voice, such as its composition and powers? The constitutional amendment says that will be left to Parliament, just as we leave it to Parliament to make decisions about every other aspect of our lives. In conclusion, what the Indigenous people of Australia are asking of us as Australians is modest: simply to be recognised as Australia's First Nations people and to have an advisory body on decisions that affect them.

COUNTRY RACE MEETS

Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon) (20:28): The First Fleet arrived in 1788 and off-loaded the first seven horses to come to this continent. They were mostly used as working animals and there would not have been much time for racing, although informal races between military officers were almost certainly part of life in the colony. But the first approved horseracing meeting in Australia was held in Hyde Park in 1810, just down the road from

us here on Macquarie Street, between Park and Market streets. The 1810 race was primarily conducted by the 73rd Regiment. The prize was a plate valued at 50 guineas.

By 1810 it is said that there were around 1,100 horses in Australia. The horses sent from England were chosen for their hardiness because they needed to survive the long voyage before they could even set foot in Australia. Today the New South Wales thoroughbred racing industry has about 50,000 participants and generates over \$3½ billion for the New South Wales economy each year.

Likewise, the Australian thoroughbred industry is one of the strongest of its kind in the world. This is a monumental accomplishment for us Aussies, considering we started the industry in 1788 with one stallion, three mares and three yearlings.

The horse racing industry is inextricably linked to the economic and social growth of our nation. As the popularity of racing in the cities soared in the nineteenth century, racing in the country also boomed. While country races were sometimes an opportunity to test horses before they went on to become champions in the city, the country race meeting took on its own character and importance that was in many ways different to city races. Country races became important places for amateurs to try their hand, hone their skills and try out their horses. Country racing today has more than 121 clubs, and in 2022-2023 there were 496 race meetings held at country racecourses. These races are huge community events, drawing in almost everybody in town and more from beyond. Some races attract thousands of visitors to their small communities, often doubling and tripling local populations.

In Louth the population is less than 50 people, but the Louth Races attract 5,000 visitors. These visitors need accommodation, food and fuel. When a race meet happens in a small rural community, it is not just the bookies that get paid. Entire towns are economically stimulated. Often the race meets also offer a chance to raise money for various causes and charities. In tough times, like the ones we have had recently with drought, floods, fires and COVID, an annual race meet can mean a great deal to struggling businesses. Likewise, for rural communities that host annual race meets, like the Back O Bourke, Cobar Miners, Come-By-Chance and Duck Creek picnic races, residents look forward to the event each year. They provide opportunities for social cohesion, which can be rare in many parts of the State, particularly considering the tyranny of distance out west.

In Barwon over the past few months there have been multiple country race cancellations at Brewarrina, Come by Chance, Quambone and Marthaguy. Only last week, a meet was cancelled at Collarenebri. The cancellations were due to track safety. In some instances, the races were cancelled on the day of the event, as was the case in Brewarrina, where attendees received 1½ hours' notice from Racing NSW that the race was being abandoned. The Brewarrina Jockey Club is run through the support of sponsors and volunteers. The local primary school was running the barbecue. It is now out of pocket \$3,000 because it could not get refunded. The race vet travelled for three hours to get to Brewarrina, and the club must now honour the vet's out-of-pocket expenses, along with the out-of-pocket expenses for the ambulance, farrier, race caller, barrier attendants and hospitality staff. Correspondence I was sent regarding the cancellation of these events stated:

Events like that annual race meet are the glue that hold country communities together and make communities like Brewarrina unique. Cancellation or removal of such events such as the annual race meeting has a huge impact on small communities and can't be undervalued, particularly during times of economic and social hardship.

We do not want unaddressed safety issues. We need a mechanism to remediate and allow races to proceed, which will allow economic benefits to flow. When the Come By Chance races were cancelled earlier this year, the committee knew it had to salvage what it could of the day. Racing continued, albeit off the track using wheelie bins, stock horses and rams. This out-of-the-box thinking meant that the band could still play, fashions on the field went ahead and the bar and food outlets could continue serving. The committee should be commended for saving the day, and any suggestion that this event be investigated should be quashed immediately.

The growing concern out west is that with continued, inconsistent cancellations, confidence will be lost, and people will have second thoughts about travelling to rural communities for a race meet. With the rich history of horseracing in this State, it would be a shame for our colourful country fixtures to come to an end because of a lack of understanding. The body that regulates horse races is based in the city and fails to understand the true nature of the country race meeting, what it means to rural people and how it is a fundamental part of their nature. In the words of Banjo Paterson:

Why, everything races, no matter
Whatever its method may be:
The waterfowl hold a regatta;
The possums run heats up a tree;
The emus are constantly sprinting
A handicap out on the plain;
It seems that all nature is hinting
'Tis time to be at it again.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:33): I congratulate the member for Barwon on bringing a very important private member's statement to the House. He is 100 per cent correct. I have travelled to Broken Hill, and I have seen what racing means to the community in his area. He is a true champion of the people in his electorate, and I congratulate him on everything he does. I look forward to hearing more about racing in the Barwon electorate.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): I thank the member for Barwon. It seems an appropriate topic to raise during the Everest Carnival, perhaps the greatest race event of the nation, with Everest Race Day happening on Saturday.

ENGADINE ROTARY CLUB

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (20:34): In 1973 the Rotary Club of Engadine was established. On 31 January 1973 the club had its genesis at a meeting of the Rotary Club of Sutherland. The need to have a standalone club in Engadine was identified by local residents, and the Rotary Club of Sutherland ceded the area of Engadine for the formation of a new club, which was to be led by Mr Ed Brownscombe. Ed was an extremely well-known member of the community. He was the owner of the Brownscombe menswear shop, the number one clothing shop for Engadine residents for decades. It was the place many parents, such as mine, shopped for school uniforms. Ed was known for his compassion and community values. Such was the extent of his goodwill, he often let families pay off items needed for schoolchildren over time so the students would not go without during the school term.

Prior to the Rotary Club of Engadine's establishment, Ed was a long-term member of the Sutherland branch. In fact, he even held the position of president of the Rotary Club of Sutherland at one stage. The Rotary Club of Engadine's website quotes Ed's words spoken during the charter night on 23 May 1973. I will not read the entire quote, but here are some snippets:

Over the past 10 years, Rotary International has raised the question almost annually of the possibility of forming a Rotary Club of Engadine, and on each occasion our Club replied after carrying out a survey that Engadine was not ready for Rotary, because we felt that it had little in the way of industry, and in any case it was well served by others by other service clubs. I must confess that I was one that held this view.

Ed added:

The Organisational meeting of the new Club was held on Monday, 12th March 1973, with 26 Charter applicants in attendance—twenty four of whom have their place of business situated within the club territory, and two are residentially qualified.

It was clear from the eager membership take-up at the start that the need for a Rotary club in Engadine was there. The club takes in a large area, including Bundeena, South Loftus, Yarrawarra, Woronora Heights, Engadine, Heathcote, Lucas Heights, Barden Ridge, Waterfall, Helensburgh and Stanwell Park. I recently met with the members of the Rotary Club of Engadine to discuss the great work they are doing, like hosting the 2023 Christmas carols. There is an incredible amount of work and time that goes into hosting such an event. These events would simply not occur without the efforts of the many members of the club. I have now also become an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Engadine, an honour which I am humbled to have received.

The club and Rotary International in general have a heavy focus on providing opportunities for young people. This is particularly evident through the number of youth programs offered, including the Rotary Youth Leadership Award, the Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment, the Model United Nations Assembly, U-Turn the Wheel, and Student Leadership in Primary Schools. By providing such programs, members of Rotary International, including those at Engadine, are changing the lives of young people for the better. It is a significant impact that often goes unnoticed by those on the outside. I acknowledge the efforts of members of the Rotary Club of Engadine in this place.

We are so fortunate in the Heathcote community to have many volunteer-based organisations like the Rotary Club of Engadine. The volunteers that keep these organisations going do not do it for personal gain; they do it simply for the betterment of their community. I congratulate and thank everyone who has been involved with the Rotary Club of Engadine over the past 50 years. Their contribution and dedication to the local community has certainly not gone unnoticed or unappreciated. I cannot wait to see what wonderful work the club will undertake over the next 50 years. I encourage other residents throughout the Rotary Club of Engadine's catchment to consider joining and volunteering so that they can give back to the community and an organisation that has served us well over the past 50 years.

ILLAWONG RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) (20:38): With bushfire season now upon us, it is time to give a shout-out to my favourite rural fire brigade, Illawong. I joined the incredible team at the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade on 16 September for their Get Ready Weekend event, which raises fire awareness and encourages

preparedness in our community. This year's Get Ready Weekend was made all the more important as a result of several years of wet weather brought about by La Niña, which has seen increased grass and scrub growth throughout the Sutherland shire and across New South Wales, presenting added concern this bushfire season as we endeavour to keep our community safe.

The key messages of the weekend were to trim overhanging trees and shrubs; mow grass and remove cuttings to clear an area around your home; remove material that can burn around your home, such as doormats, wood piles and mulch; clear and remove all debris and leaves from gutters surrounding your home; prepare a sturdy hose or hoses that will reach around your home in the event of a bushfire; and prepare ahead and have a bushfire survival plan.

The Illawong rural brigade runs a unique Get Ready Weekend open day with the support of Brady Clarke and the team at Fire and Rescue NSW Menai. Over 400 people attended the station at Illawong to learn about their important work protecting life and property from bushfires. The day included interactive demonstrations and safety advice, activity kits for children, an opportunity to sit in a real fire truck, station tours, and free sausage sizzles. To put together an event of this quality is no small task. I thank the exceptional team of men and women involved on the day for their efforts. I also recognise all volunteers from the Illawong brigade who were giving of their time on such a hot day, including Bruce Angus, Hayden Sankey, Terry Hales, Andrew Loreggian, Peter Ross, Dom Bondar, Simon Delander, Caitlin Gavin, Danielle Meggos, Jason Piggin, Ross Williamson, Nick Field, Peter Moore, George Kouroulis, Jenny Dolden, Matt Angus, Jason Eshman, Charlotte Ward, David Lawford and Andrew Houghton, without whose efforts the event would not have been possible.

The Illawong Rural Fire Brigade has held a special place in my community since its founding in 1957, having diligently protected the community for 66 years. From its base in Illawong, this community-minded group of individuals has been instrumental in protecting life and property through some of the State's toughest bushfire seasons, superstorms and unprecedented floods. More recently, members of the Illawong brigade have been busy completing hazard reduction burns throughout the Sutherland shire to ensure that our local community remains safe this upcoming bushfire season and is ready, should the worst happen. However, the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade's services extend even further than these core but essential activities. The crew regularly educate our local community on fire safety. This includes visits to schools and local organisations, as well as regularly posting informative videos and information on their social media channels, to ensure that their message is available to everyone.

Furthermore, each year the brigade visits residents in Alford's Point, Illawong and Menai with the help of Santa. This annual event, known as the "Santa run", is an institution in the western end of the Miranda electorate and one that I have had the joy of participating in many times over the years. The event sees Santa join volunteers from the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade in a big red truck to visit children and families in the area to hand out lollies to children and bushfire pamphlets and information to their parents in the weeks leading up to Christmas. To see Santa riding in a fire truck is quite the sight. Events like this mean that the brigade is at the heart of our local community.

I take this opportunity to thank every volunteer in the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade for their tremendous contribution to our local community. I particularly recognise the executive committee, including Captain Simon Delander, Senior Deputy Captain Mark Pryor, president Peter Moore, vice-president Adam Smith, treasurer Greg Last and secretary Peter Ross. The shire is undoubtedly the best place to live, one of the greatest reasons being its unique natural environment where the beach meets the bush. But its leafy natural environment and the Royal National Park are prone to bushfires, which is why fire preparedness is essential. I again thank the incredible men and women of the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade for their selflessness, sacrifice, dedication and ongoing commitment to keeping the community we all love safe.

FAIRFIELD ELECTORATE COST-OF-LIVING CHALLENGES

Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (20:42): The cost-of-living crisis has its full sights set on New South Wales, nowhere more so than in my electorate of Fairfield. According to the 2023 New South Wales budget, the Sydney consumer price index last financial year was 7.1 per cent, compared with 3.9 per cent the previous year. That is huge considering the Reserve Bank of Australia seeks to keep underlying consumer price inflation within 2 per cent to 3 per cent. As NSW Treasury puts it, "When the costs of essential items increase more rapidly, it disproportionately affects lower-income families." Unfortunately, a lot of those lower-income families are in Western Sydney and Fairfield—families who are the backbone of our economy, working in areas such as construction, manufacturing, retail and health care.

According to the Centre for Western Sydney and the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2021 approximately 70 per cent of Fairfield residents earned less than the minimum wage of \$800 a week, compared with 46 per cent for the rest of Sydney. It is even worse for women. Seventy-six per cent of women in Fairfield earned less than

the minimum wage, compared with 53 per cent for the rest of Sydney. Despite the high numbers in Fairfield, this crisis is not confined by electoral boundaries. Families are hurting in every corner of the State and it is up to us in this House to do something about it. While significant work is already underway, we must pivot to develop and execute targeted learn-and-earn initiatives to build employment resilience as well as an holistic productivity-boosting agenda to unlock supply constraints. We must boost our State's collective financial IQ to minimise the impact of business cycle shocks. Governments across all levels need to work together alongside academia, business, non-profit and other sectors to synchronise efforts to help our most vulnerable. This crisis was not born overnight; generational factors shaped it. We need a long-term outlook to solve it. I will update the House on my progress.

COASTAL HARVESTABLE RIGHTS

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (20:45): I will speak about the latest decision of the Minns Government to cut coastal harvestable rights and, in doing so, steal available water from farmers on the coast right as they head into drought. The change was made without any consultation and has blindsided farmers as we on the coast face the dry season ahead. The first moment we have to use harvestable rights is now. We have had two wet seasons where we could not get onto the land to build the infrastructure that slows down water during floods, remove cattle from creeks and rivers and, importantly, drought-proof for the next one. How can a Minister use low numbers as evidence when we could not use the regulations at the time? In 2021 my predecessor as the member for Oxley and then water Minister, Melinda Pavey, undertook a review into coastal harvestable water rights. We were seeing severe flooding across coastal New South Wales and had just lived through one of the worst dry periods on record. We had also been through a devastating bushfire season, and along the way saw the important role that rural landholders with on-farm storages played in supplying RFS helicopters with water to fight fires and protect lives and property.

Water rights and licensing is a very complicated space. I can understand members of this place who live in the city not understanding it, but they should at least try to. In my electorate of Oxley, many people live on rural blocks, such as productive or hobby farms, and are not connected to the town water supply. This means that rather than having a provider like Sydney Water to build and maintain infrastructure, landholders build rain tanks and on-farm storages themselves at their cost and capture rainwater from the sky instead of drawing it from the river. There were strict and necessary regulations around ensuring the flow of the river was not impeded, providing fair and equitable access to water downstream.

Coastal harvestable rights are in a class of water rights that is completely different to a water access licence. The water cannot be traded and it is not a licence to irrigate. These rights are to keep a small proportion of water that falls on your land in an on-farm storage, a billabong or a rainwater tank that is forever attached to your property. When these farmers go into a drought, they do not magically get looked after. The tap does not keep flowing like it does in the city. Either the water in the storage is enough to get them through or they pay large sums of money to have water carted on trucks from the town to their property for a refill. Imagine the cost to the environment of all that unnecessary diesel flowing through the State, instead of water flowing to the farm and then to the ocean.

The Nambucca River and Macleay Valley branches of NSW Farmers have long argued that we need to find the ground truths for each valley and that we should be utilising our water based on topography of the area and not the ideology of a few. We cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach, where a coastal area like Bellingen gets treated the same as a town in the Central West despite receiving three to four times the rainfall. NSW Farmers dairy committee chair Phil Ryan, who is from the Bega Valley, has called this move "a kick in the guts". I could not agree more. The Government has chosen not to consult with farmers and rural landholders, undertake scientific studies, or speak to our regional councils and water utilities.

Instead, it has made an overnight decision to cut our harvestable rights by two-thirds, which is a kick in the guts.

A couple of weeks ago, I was up in Dorrigo for the opening of a new Country Women's Association [CWA] co-working space with the Minister for Women, Jodie Harrison. A councillor from the Bellingen Shire, Joanne Cook, said in her speech that she just had to mention coastal harvestable rights while we had a Minister within our region. The room was packed with hearty applause. From whom, I hear you say? Well, it was not from old blokey farmers who have lost their water. It was not from large farm corporations or their representatives. It was actually the hardworking, smart, community-minded women in the CWA. They know how important this water is for fighting bushfires, getting through the drought, growing our food and supporting our country way of life.

The previous Government did the work, followed the science and consulted with the community to take a commonsense approach, which has now been undone. I hope that the country-based Greens and Labor members in this place—the members for the electorates of Lismore, Ballina, South Coast and Bega, whose electorates are

also hurt by this change—will join me in standing up for our farmers. What happened to getting the cattle out of creeks, rehydrating our landscape or combating climate change? What a load of rubbish! I call on the Minns Labor Government to show us the science that it referred to, reverse this short-sighted decision and not hang our communities out to dry ahead of an upcoming bushfire season.

ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (20:50): Now is a time of incredible sadness, as horrific events unfold in Israel and Palestine. Whatever the situation, there is never any justification for the taking of innocent lives. We are watching these events portrayed in media and on social media in heart-wrenching detail, as the reality of what is happening is brought home to Australia. There are people who cannot sleep tonight for fear. Innocent people in Israel, innocent people in Gaza and their loved ones around the world—every single innocent life matters.

People of Palestinian heritage, like my stepmother, do not equate justice with the horrific actions taken against Israel over the weekend—attacks that can never be justified. They see justice as living in harmony and self-determination. Justice for Palestinians is not gained by the senseless taking of life and what we have seen is abhorrent: Young people at a music festival and children and the elderly hiding in their homes have been killed or taken hostage. Australians living in Israel and Palestine are experiencing the horror of war firsthand. Many in my community of Bankstown have relatives in danger as matters escalate. Many carry the scars of having lived through previous conflict in this region. My thoughts and prayers are with all families of those killed, missing or threatened by these tragic events.

For people who have experienced war, Australia has been a safe haven to start a new life, free from persecution. Australia has also benefited from the diversity of cultures that those communities bring to our society. Many Palestinians in my electorate of Bankstown feel that the attacks by Hamas have been characterised as a negative reflection on them and their legitimate calls for Palestinian statehood. They are peace-loving members of the community who would never celebrate violence. I know people in my community who come from Gaza, and they do not support the actions of Hamas. But now they have family who live in areas where they do not have electricity, food or water, cut off from the world, and they do not know if they will survive, especially in the face of escalating bombardment. We are seeing a humanitarian crisis unfold. Mothers are grieving; communities are broken. That is the horror that war brings. While there may not be a lot that we can do from this Parliament to resolve the conflict, there is much we can do to try to understand that people on all sides are feeling pain.

This week's events in the Middle East follow a long history of conflict. The underlying issues are complex. It is important to acknowledge the loss of all civilian lives in the Israel-Hamas war, as well as the Palestinian and Israeli lives that have been lost over the course of the many years of conflict between the two parties. I pray for a de-escalation that ensures that both sides protect the innocent civilians who are caught up in the middle. To call for restraint is not to deny self-defence. It is a legitimate request for all sides of a conflict to do everything possible to minimise civilian casualties. As difficult as it may be for so many and as hard as it may seem right now with all the hurt and all the anger, in Australia now is the time for unity, not division. It is important that we maintain harmony here, recognising that people are suffering. We must also recognise the multicultural foundation that our society is built on and the benefits of that diversity of cultures, which does not vilify based on race or beliefs.

The chants on the Opera House steps vilifying Jewish people are not acceptable and should not be tolerated in our society, but neither should this tarnish the wider Palestinian community. Society will judge the actions of those specific people; they do not represent the majority of the community. Antisemitism has no place here, nor does Islamophobia or any type of racial or religious vilification. That is true on the streets, and it is true online. People are hurting, scared and heartbroken, and there is a need for compassion for people from all groups as we seek a way forward. Violence will never be the answer. It should not be celebrated or encouraged. Violence only begets more violence, and conflicts escalate quickly. When that happens, more innocent people lose their lives. When that happens, humanity is the ultimate loser.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (20:55): I congratulate the member for Bankstown on giving that heartfelt speech to the House tonight, given what we heard in the public interest debate this afternoon. The member for Bankstown has brought a humanitarian view to the House tonight. It is not about one side versus the other; it is about human beings feeling the pain on both sides. I congratulate him on his bravery and on bringing that view to the New South Wales Parliament. He is 100 per cent correct, and we need to remember that human beings—ordinary men, women and children—are being harmed. It is important that we remember that on both sides of this argument, no matter where we stand.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (20:56): Last week I was reading the *Deni*, or the *Deniliquin Pastoral Times*. That is one of the joys of being a local member. We can read the local papers, talk to local people and understand the local issues. It is something that some politicians just do not do. They ignore local knowledge, and they end up incredibly ignorant. Anyhow, one letter in the local paper really stood out to me. It was written by a local man in his 90s called Donald Douglas. After almost a century of living, Donald has seen it all, and he can see a con job a mile off. Donald sees what the Federal Government is doing to our rivers as an absolute con job, and it is a con job based on one big lie. That lie is that the Lower Lakes in South Australia have always been full of fresh water. That is a lie. If we actually want to fix our rivers, we need to call out this one big lie. As Donald wrote:

For 7,000 years the tidal waters flowed naturally in and out the Murray mouth.

When I was a young boy, 86 years ago, my relatives fished for mulloway and indeed many other sea fishes that you would catch in an estuarine environment.

There was coastal trade in and out the mouth of the Murray from Victor Harbour to Adelaide.

Donald remembers what the water Minister wants us all to forget, and that is that the Lower Lakes have always had plenty of salt water in them. It is complete madness to take fresh water from upstream to try to artificially turn the Lower Lakes into freshwater lakes. We all know that the real reason the Minister wants to send fresh water to the Lower Lakes has nothing to do with water and everything to do with politics. As Donald wrote in his letter to the *Deniliquin Pastoral Times*:

The saddest part of this whole dreadful saga is the fact that South Australia and the Federal Government continue telling the lie that the Lower Lakes have always been fresh.

If they had always been fresh, why in heaven's name did they erect the barrages to keep the saltwater out in the first place?

Donald is right. It is time for the New South Wales Government to start governing in the interests of New South Wales and stop covering for its Federal Labor mate, water Minister Tanya Plibersek. As Donald wrote:

Tanya Plibersek continues to turn a deaf and unempathetic ear to the damage that her buybacks will make on our farmers, farming communities and food production.

Well, I would put it more bluntly. Tanya Plibersek needs to admit that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is a plan to fail. It is based on a lie and it is destroying hardworking families and communities. If Tanya cannot admit that, our Premier Chris Minns needs to do what Victoria has done and stop New South Wales water from being part of any Federal Government buybacks. The people of New South Wales deserve the same protections from the Federal Government as the Victorian people already have. Not a single drop of water should be sold to the Federal Government from New South Wales. We need that water, and we cannot let the Federal water Minister waste that water. Donald Douglas, who wrote the letter to the *Deniliquin Pastoral Times*, knows what we need to do. Surely it is time we all do the right thing by our rivers and the people whose lives and livelihoods depend on them.

PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (21:00): Recently, from 25 to 28 September, I was proud and honoured to co-lead an Australian parliamentary delegation to the Republic of Armenia, together with my fellow chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Armenia, Hugh McDermott, MP. Comprised of seven MPs from the New South Wales and Victorian parliaments, the delegation also included my colleagues the Hon. Susan Carter, MLC, Mark Coure, MP, and Matt Cross, MP. The parliamentary delegation was facilitated by the Armenian National Committee of Australia. I pay tribute to Michael Kolokossian, the ANC Executive Director, and his excellent team for the outstanding organisation, planning and support behind the delegation.

The purpose of the parliamentary delegation was to raise awareness, understanding and mutual opportunity in respect of Armenia's people, community, economy, culture and history—and a rich history it is. In what was a busy four-day itinerary, the delegation met with many significant political, community, faith and business leaders of Armenia. With opportunities for the delegation to also savour the rich culture and magnificent scenery of Armenia, the itinerary included visits to some of Armenia's picturesque mountains and historical sites. We also visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial and the Yerablur Military Pantheon to pay our respects to all Armenian lives tragically lost over the last century or so.

The delegation occurred at a terribly challenging time for the people of Armenia. We were present following the aggression of neighbouring Azerbaijan, which had imposed a nine-month blockade over the Lachin Corridor. This had made life hell for the people of the Republic of Artsakh, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh. This area has been home to ethnic Armenians who are Christians for thousands of years. Its population was 99.7 per cent Armenian. This aggression by Azerbaijan caused severe shortages of vital food, medical and energy supplies for the people of Artsakh. This suffering was compounded terribly by military

assaults on Artsakh's Armenian population by Azerbaijani forces on 19 and 20 September this year. With these assaults, murders, imprisonments, rapes, threats and more, a dreadful crisis has unfolded, with over 100,000 people fleeing their homeland in desperation. I recorded at the time:

I saw firsthand the human toll and tragedy wrought by ethnic cleansing: children, parents, grandparents, people of all ages and stages evicted from their homeland.

Peaceful people had to flee their homes, some with little more than the clothes they were wearing, having been attacked, threatened and, in some cases, seeing family members killed or captured.

It was heartbreaking.

All delegation members felt this deeply. The international community must act swiftly to address this crisis. For a people who have suffered so much since the notorious genocide of 1915, Australia and the international community must stand in solidarity with the people of Armenia as they are once again subjected to oppression and persecution. As the member for Willoughby, with a large Armenian community in my electorate, I was pleased to be able to play my part in leading this delegation to show Australia's support. We received comprehensive updates as to the critical situation in Artsakh.

We thanked government officials for briefing us at such a difficult juncture in Armenia's history, and we presented gifts of appreciation and expressed our solidarity. Prior to the delegation, I had heard much about assaults on Armenia and the harms caused over generations, but the experience of being there on the ground was all the more sobering. As distressed as I was to witness what we did, I was moved and heartened by the humanitarian efforts of good people to help those in need. The delegation was proud to lend a hand to these efforts in person. As I recorded at the time:

Amidst so much adversity, I witnessed the great spirit of a proud and resilient people who love their country and culture and who will, in time, prevail.

That people from my homeland and electorate in Australia are helping to provide support and aid, is something I'm proud of—but there's much more to do, and we need all people of goodwill to lend their support.

In so many ways, this delegation is only the beginning. I and my fellow delegates will continue to urge Australia and other countries to provide aid and supplies, and we have called on the international community to send observers into Artsakh. I welcome the call of the shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Simon Birmingham, for the Federal Government to provide much-needed emergency humanitarian aid to the region and to join partner nations in contributing towards emergency funding and expertise. I also believe Australia must continue to lobby for the Lachin Corridor to be fully reopened so that humanitarian assistance can reach those remaining. I welcome foreign affairs Minister Penny Wong's condemnation of Azerbaijan's blockade and attacks. I will keep up pressure on Canberra to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis on the ground and to bring much-needed justice. Australia and the world must stand with the Armenian people in their hour of need. I am proud to do so.

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (21:05): I acknowledge that October is Mental Health Month 2023. It is a time to focus on our mental health and wellbeing and to support the people around us. Think about ways to connect with others and be a good listener, because sometimes that is all it takes to encourage and assist someone who needs a helping hand. Just knowing you care can make someone feel valued. As shadow Minister for Mental Health, I have been honoured to engage and connect with many worthy groups that provide much-needed support locally in the Hawkesbury electorate and across the State. Their advocacy for more funding to carry on their work—or for adopting better legislation or introducing new ways to tackle mental health issues—is a continual discussion. There are individuals in New South Wales who experience mental illness in a variety of forms. Some may end up in perilous situations without predetermining their destiny or having any knowledge as to the events occurring.

It is at this point that I draw the attention of the House to an innovative program that has shown strong results within the first six months of it being rolled out. It is a partnership program called the Police Ambulance and Clinical Early Response [PACER] program, which was launched on the Central Coast in June 2020 and funded by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. Other districts in this State that have been participating in the program as well. PACER provides person-centred, trauma-informed care, reducing the number of people presenting at emergency departments, increasing out-of-hospital referral capabilities and early links to community and welfare services whilst reducing the demand on agencies, including police time on scene.

The NSW Police Force PACER program, under which mental health clinicians are stationed with the force, will continue until 2025 under current funding arrangements. Police Minister Catley has praised the program, which has seen a 48 per cent reduction in people detained by police under the Mental Health Act. I understand that the NSW Police Force may be looking to replace the program designed to provide person-centred,

trauma-informed care to people with severe mental health challenges, despite the police Minister describing it as "so successful". On the Central Coast, for example, there have been positive results since the implementation of this program, with a 50 per cent decline in police transportations to hospitals for a mental health assessment.

Ensuring people receive expert mental health care at times of crisis, in an environment they are familiar with, sends a message that help is available and it is acceptable to ask for it. According to a new report released last month, almost half the people involved in critical incidents with the NSW Police Force over the past five years were experiencing a mental health crisis, while the number of Indigenous people killed and seriously injured doubled last financial year. In my discussions with advocates of the PACER program, their concern is that future funding has not been allocated. Today I put on the record my support for the PACER program and its future funding.

Closer to home, I see the emotional scars of the devastation that Hawkesbury has endured through drought, bushfires, floods and a pandemic. Mental health support agencies have been in heavy demand as they quietly go about supporting those in need.

The Australian Man Cave connected with me recently. I acknowledge CEO Louie Greco and his team for the work they do in suicide prevention and healthy mind programs that engage with men and their families to create a welcoming and nurturing space for those seeking their support and guidance.

I cannot list all the worthy organisations that offer salvation, assistance and hope to people with a mental health condition, but I note that we have come a long way in our acceptance of mental health conditions. One in five Australians experiences a mental illness in any year and compounding this is the confronting statistic that 54 per cent of people do not seek treatment. Looking back four decades ago, mental health and wellbeing had such a stigma attached to it. Rarely did we seek treatment. It was considered a weakness, so people withdrew and did not acknowledge that they needed help and rarely resolved the anxiety, grief, depression and trauma that confronted them in life.

In those days, we compartmentalised our feelings. Veterans came back from war-torn engagements and were told to just get on with life. Some mothers experiencing postnatal depression saw it as a weakness. For so long we believed time would heal everything, when in fact it perpetuates misery, detaches us from loved ones and creates the real feeling of isolation that comes with the rollercoaster of our mental wellbeing. Fast-forward to 2023, we have identified October as Mental Health Month. That is a stark difference from the hidden landscape of four decades ago. Knowing where to go to seek help is the first step to recovery, and over the years governments have invested in an area that is still underfunded. We need to do more. We need to invest in our people as an investment for the future.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (21:11): Over the course of Federation, history has demonstrated that winning a referendum is not easy. The debate on the Voice has many voices. Much has been written and much has been said. As a member of the national Referendum Council that recommended a referendum on the Voice, I found Amanda Vanstone's qualifying statement instructive. Vanstone made a key point. She said:

Recommending a referendum is the last step. The first is finding the common ground.

We must remember that Vanstone presented her qualifying statement back in 2017. That is plenty of time to heed such advice. Rather than finding common ground though, Jesuit priest and lawyer Frank Brennan, SJ, observed that "the Referendum Working Group, the Government and the Opposition had all committed themselves to a 'crash or crash through' strategy" because of the "series of captain's picks without a process for public engagement". That is no way to bring the country together to vote yes. Recognising the draw towards constitutional recognition and understanding the importance of consultation and co-design to effective outcomes, I have held goodwill towards an Indigenous Voice in the Constitution. We understand by now that, as Frank Brennan, SJ, writes:

But for the referendum to succeed, there will need to be ... those who are not convinced that the wording is perfect but who nonetheless think it better for the nation and better for First Nations peoples that the change be made.

Each of us must make our own decision independently at the ballot box, as is our democratic right and obligation. May we each discern our position through being informed, through the lens of both our personal and national values and through how we see the future of our nation being shaped. That necessarily draws a focus to actions and beliefs that go towards remedying areas of Indigenous inequity and disadvantage. Irrespective of the outcome of the referendum, there is much that lies ahead of us. As a community and as a nation, who do we aspire to be? Australians innately understand that the status quo when it comes to Indigenous disadvantage is not acceptable. The Voice debate has raised challenges while also pursuing solutions. What are the themes that we can take from the debate to guide us forward? Warren Mundine writes:

We cannot be truly reconciled until the scourge of disadvantage that affects some Indigenous Australians is ended.

That draws attention to four areas: accountability, education, economic participation and social change. Education, throughout history and across cultures and nations, has always been the door of opportunity. Practical, lasting improvements to our society as we pursue measures to close the gap cannot survive without a solid foundation of lifelong learning in our communities. In addressing intergenerational trauma and disadvantage, there is a clear role for co-design and input from lived experience to guide policy formation and implementation. The stories, the history and the day-to-day experiences of Indigenous Australians are something we cannot live without and cannot plan without. We are talking about the experiences of the oldest culture on the planet, living in an often harsh but beautiful land, where the tyranny of distance continues to throw challenges our way.

Irrespective of the referendum result, the question will remain: How does the nation recognise Indigenous Australians in its Constitution in a meaningful way? Mere words are of little value until they are tested in action. The Australian Constitution is seen at its best when the different clauses rise from the page and shape the way we act for the common good and the common wealth, in all its nuances. Australian poet and songwriter Paul Kelly noted:

Recognition is not achieved with fine-sounding words and feel-good statements but by promising to listen. There is a huge and stubborn gap in health, education and opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. That yawning gap ... diminishes us all.

Kelly went on to reflect on balance and engagement. He said:

Having a voice gives people responsibility as well as agency.

We must continue to embrace the spirit of reconciliation and walk with Indigenous Australians in a movement towards a better future. This remains a task for the nation to honour. I hope we will do so in our own unique style, without necessarily feeling compelled to copy what other nations have done in conducting the same exercise. Today, tomorrow and next week, we must continue to find our common ground and to strive to see that the nation brings its people along on this journey. We will find our way forward, whatever the outcome. People of goodwill will remain people of goodwill. There is so much to work with there.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (21:16): How refreshing it is to hear that great speech from the member from Albury. I could not agree with him more. We are on the world stage; the world is watching what Australia does in relation to the Voice. This is one of the most important referendums that we will ever vote in. I thank the member for bringing this before the House tonight. I urge every member to do the right thing and vote with their heart. It is time that we recognised the First Nations as the first nations of this country. That is the crux of this whole issue. We must not listen to the cooks, the right-wing extremists and the naysayers. It is time to truly close the gap. The only way to do that—the member for Albury is right—is by voting yes in the referendum.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (21:17): I discuss how Australia can harness nuclear to futureproof our economy. My electorate of Holsworthy is home to the only nuclear reactor in the country at the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation [ANSTO] in Lucas Heights, which has operated continuously since 1958. The shire community is the only living and breathing example in Australia where communities can coexist, literally hundreds of metres away, from an active nuclear reactor. There is no fear of nuclear power. It is simply something they have lived with, and they embrace the economic opportunities that have come with it.

There is proof that support for nuclear power is certainly getting stronger. A recent community survey that I conducted in the Sutherland shire demonstrated very strong support for nuclear power being part of Australia's energy mix. Additionally, a nationwide survey by Freshwater Strategy claimed that 35 per cent of respondents supported nuclear and 33 per cent supported coal. For many years, nuclear was hamstrung by its association with weapons and arms. However, it makes little sense to keep the moratorium on nuclear power after the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines through the AUKUS program. Put simply, if the justification for the moratorium is based on safety, our country will soon be protected and surrounded by floating nuclear reactors.

A Guardian Essential poll from March 2023 found that 40 per cent of respondents supported the AUKUS program, whilst 21 per cent were against. If we fail to harness the technological advances we can make through the manufacture of nuclear reactors domestically, we will be arbitrarily locking out a source of economic growth for decades.

This is not only about nuclear energy. This is about medical research, space exploration, criminal investigation and agriculture. Nuclear technology plays a critical role in diagnostics and treatment in the field of medicine. By exporting medical isotopes, radiation therapy equipment and nuclear imaging technology, our nation can bolster its healthcare infrastructure while also contributing to global healthcare advancements. If done right, such exports can make us self-sufficient and enhance Australia's reputation as a leader in medical innovation.

The benefits can be seen in the electorate of Holsworthy, with the Liverpool Health and Academic Precinct poised to transform Liverpool into a city of world-class health care. With a TAFE and three universities nurturing our future leaders in STEM, we can export both our skills and knowledge as well as the physical export of radioisotopes as a sustainable and inelastic export source. That can be complemented by the Federal Government's plan for a new nuclear medicine facility at the ANSTO Lucas Heights campus. Currently ANSTO produces between 75 per cent to 80 per cent of nuclear medicine in Australia. Its work in research and development of nuclear reactors can assist in the creation of an industry designing small modular reactors [SMR].

Unlike traditional large-scale nuclear power plants, SMRs are compact factory-built nuclear reactors that are designed to be smaller in size. They are more efficient. Their smaller size allows for standardised factory production, reducing construction costs and enabling faster deployment. Moreover, their modularity means that power generation can be easily scaled up by adding more SMRs to meet the evolving energy needs of a region or community, providing greater flexibility in adapting to changes in demand. They also offer enhanced safety features due to their intrinsic design. They often employ passive safety systems that can safely shut down the reactor in case of emergencies, which mitigates the risks associated with larger, more complex conventional nuclear reactors.

The compact size of SMRs also means that they can be located in a wider variety of settings, including remote or distributed locations, making them suitable for off-grid or decentralised power generation. This adaptability can be particularly valuable for regions with limited infrastructure, as well as in supporting energy security and resilience in the face of natural disasters or grid failures. Their potential to be rapidly deployed, scalability and applicability to diverse scenarios make them a promising solution for meeting future energy demands while simultaneously addressing safety and economic concerns in the nuclear energy sector. While critics claim that it could take more than a decade to fully integrate nuclear power into the energy mix, it is important to understand that nuclear power has the potential to be part of the energy mix for the next century. I thank the House.

BEGA ELECTORATE BUSHFIRES

Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (21:22): On the afternoon of Tuesday 3 October the electorate of Bega was impacted by a catastrophic bushfire emergency. The temperature was in the thirties and 90-kilometre per hour winds were blowing from the north-west. I was working in the Bega electorate office when a staff member mentioned that there was a fire at Coolagolite between Cobargo and Bermagui. Within minutes, the alert on the Hazards Near Me app jumped from yellow to red.

On arriving at the Bega emergency control centre and Rural Fire Service fire control centre, the local emergency teams were already in action. There was a sense of what is described as situational awareness: the understanding of what is going on around you, gathering the right information, analysing it and making predictions based on the analysis. It is a loop of observation, orientation, decision and action that was first described in aerial warfare, but this dogfight was with the impending threat to the communities of Cuttagee, Barragga Bay, Murrah and Goalen Head as well as the potential change of battlefield to the town of Bermagui if the wind had changed direction.

I was reminded of the times of walking into a medical emergency where each member of the team had a defined role and was acting individually in that role as well as performing their role as an organic component of a functional unit. At the RFS fire control centre, combat agencies—including members of the RFS, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and Forestry Corporation—were dealing with the electronic data, feedback from units at the fireground and aerial firefighting units.

In an adjoining building a team was implementing the local emergency plan. The team consisted of a local emergency operation controller from New South Wales police, a local emergency management officer and representatives from the State Emergency Service, Volunteer Rescue Australia, Surf Life Saving Australia, Southern NSW Local Health District, NSW Ambulance, Department of Primary Industries, Department of Communities and Justice, and Transport for NSW.

Firefighting teams from Sydney to the Victorian border had arrived or were en route to the fireground. Evacuation centres were prepared at Narooma community centre and at the Bega Showground. The response at the evacuation centres was coordinated by other agencies, including the Australian Red Cross, Anglicare, The Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society. Although only a few people needed to stay overnight, the Narooma evacuation centre, for example, had 50 visitors of whom 20 were accommodated in local motels. Many people with mobile homes and caravans set themselves up overnight at local sports fields or at the showground. In an organised manner, the Register, Find, Reunite system was established.

The fire spread rapidly, moving 15 kilometres in a south-easterly direction in only a couple of hours. Apart from the ground firefighting units, the fire was fought from the air, with a Boeing 737 from Canberra dropping fire retardant and several helicopters, including the 10,000 litre capacity CH-47 Chinook. Over 200 volunteers were working on the fireground. Two homes were destroyed. I will not say "only two homes" as these are the homes and lives of two families, which is a tragedy in itself. At least 14 outbuildings have been destroyed and assessment continues still, a week after the start of the fire. Ultimately, over 7,000 hectares of land were burned.

A week after the start of the fire it still remains at advice stage. Firefighters, heavy machinery and aircraft are still working to contain spot fires on the south-west border of the fire front. Back-burning operations are taking place and NSW National Parks and Wildlife and Forestry Corporation workers continue to clear dangerous trees. In transition from response to recovery, the NSW Reconstruction Authority has established a recovery centre at the Bermagui Surf Life Saving Club, offering insurance advice, legal aid, chaplaincy, mental and physical health checks, and rural aid and financial counselling services.

Disaster has affected one of the most beautiful regions of New South Wales, if not Australia. Tourist Drive 9 along the Tathra-Bermagui Road is an iconic tourist drive consisting of heritage wooden bridges, beautiful beaches, estuaries, farmland and varied forests. This is now a statewide threat. Our fire season has started early, just as in the Northern Hemisphere, as a consequence of climate change. On behalf of the Bega electorate, I thank all who contributed to the response and recovery effort. I encourage the community to be prepared and be reassured of the capacity of our emergency services.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (21:27): I thank the member for Bega. His electorate is so lucky to have such a fantastic member of Parliament. Even though he is quite new to this place, he has continually fought for his electorate. What occurred on the South Coast last summer is an indication of what is to come. The member for Bega travels from south to north and east to west across his electorate. He covers his whole electorate to make sure that everyone is okay and everyone is safe. He checks in on every single place he can. I congratulate the member for Bega on his dedication to his electorate.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell): Before the House adjourns, I thank the Hansard team, who are up in their gallery working away. They are silent in nature but a very important part of our democracy.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 21:28 until
Thursday 12 October 2023 at 10:00.**

Written Community Recognition Statements

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

PORT HACKING LITTLE ATHLETICS CENTRE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—On 7 October I attended Port Hacking Little Athletics Centre's 46th season opening, in Sylvania Waters. The Centre, with around 600 registered competitors, describes itself as follows: "We are all about Family, Fun and Fitness for young athletes aged 4-17yrs old, teaching kids sport foundations and skills via running, jumping and throwing. Little Athletics is a foundation for all sports, giving young athletes skills to improve all areas of their fitness and co-ordination. We're not really about winning; the main focus is on athlete participation and personal improvement. Our mission statement is that of Little Athletics NSW: "Little Athletics NSW aspires to provide the community with recreational athletics activities that contribute to the healthy development of our children. Such activities will promote: - Fun Fitness The development of skills The building of character and self-esteem The fostering of good sportsmanship in a safe, positive, family-friendly and inclusive environment." I acknowledge the tireless Executive Committee members Matt Cook (president), Trevor Orsaris (vice president), Phil Turpin (secretary), Sharon Potts (registrar) and Cameron Burne (treasurer), and general members Nicole Orsaris, Leni Vilivli, Ray Russell, Matt Jupp, Ozkan Eren, Pete Galanopoulos, Sonia Lewis, Annette Kersselring and Melissa Mullin.

VALE BARRY ROSS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—Vale well-known Sutherland Shire resident Barry Ross passed away on 2 October aged 82. Barry was a teacher who became part of a celebrated rugby league television commentary duo alongside the legendary Rex Mossop in the 1970s and 1980s. More recently Barry was involved in the Family of League Foundation's welfare activities. The Foundation says that nothing was too much trouble for Barry when it came to helping a friend in need or contributing to sporting good causes. Australian Rugby League Commission Chairman Peter V'landys AM said of Barry "he contributed to the Men of League and now Family of League Foundations. In particular, he was a tower of strength to former players especially ones that became sick or needed help." Barry was also a keen historian who wrote books on a variety of topics and a noted

MS and public speaker. I extend my sympathy to Barry's family and friends, in wife of 47 years, Susan, sons David and Nathan.

KARLIE SKYLLAS - KOOBA KIDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)—I congratulate Cronulla's Karlie Skyllas on receiving the 'highly recommended' award in the baby clothing category of the 'SheCom' Women in E-Commerce Awards on 6 September in Queensland. Ms Skyllas, a mother of three boys, was recognised for her business. She launched her online swimsuit company 'Kooba Kids' in 2018. Her mission has been to design easy to use swimsuits for parents that provide full body 50-plus protection, plugging a market gap in the Australian baby and toddler market given the Australian lifestyle or climate. The products submitted for judging in the awards were sent to the Blue Butterfly Institute for distribution to women with children who are victim-survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse.

HARMAN FOUNDATION, MULTICULTURAL FASHION EXTRAVAGANZA, 23 SEPTEMBER 2023

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—I was delighted to recently attend the Multicultural Fashion Extravaganza presented by the Harman Foundation. The event was held at the Pioneer Theatre, Castle Hill, in my electorate. The event brought together the rich fashion, traditional costumes, cultures, dance and dialogue from multicultural communities. Harindaur Kaur, the founder of the Harman Foundation provided an inspirational speech calling for respect and unity in our diverse world. I recognise and give thanks to Tiya Gorain and Mercedes Durante for contributing to the wonderful and vibrant fashion show. All models were wonderfully attired in rich and timeless bridal ensembles. The event marked the launch of Harman Foundations 'Beyond Boundaries, Stories of Visionaries and Survivors.' The book contains inspirational stories of the resilience of the human spirit. I recognise and give a heartfelt thanks to each contributor for allowing your story to be told. The contributors to the book were: Jean Bartley, Harinder Kaur, Tiya Gorain, Alphana Srivastava, Mercedes Durante, Uthra Raghavasimhan, Shantana Dutta, Dr. Smitha Balu, Deepa Sujeet Nair, Kiran Jaems and Manta Upadhayay. An electronic copy of the wonderful book can be obtained at: <https://bit.ly/3rurtR5>

INDIAN MUMPRENEURS, ARTISAN HOUSE MARKETS, 24 SEPTEMBER 2023

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—The sixth annual Indian Mumpreneurs, Artisan House Markets, was held on 24 September 2023 at the Pioneer Theatre, Castle Hill. It was wonderful to see so many of the community at the event. Indian Mumpreneurs is a group of Indian Mums who own their own business. They meet, network, motivate and learn from each other. The social value to the community of the markets is much more than a place to shop. The markets promote local businesses, generates employment, provides the opportunity for new businesses, provides the opportunity for collaboration with existing businesses and further provides the opportunity for our community to attend and discuss new cultural fashion. More generally, the markets contribute to social and economic wellbeing of our community by providing a place for stall owners to forge social and business bonds and for customers to positively interact with business owners in a friendly atmosphere. On behalf of the Castle Hill community, I congratulate and thank the organisers of this year's markets, Shirpha Tewani and Maha Rajagopal. I am sure our community now looks forward to the next Indian Mumpreneurs, Artisan House Markets.

HINDI LANGUAGE DAY, CASTLE HILL

Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)—I recently joined members of the Indian Literary and Art Society of Australia [ILASA] at Castle Hill to celebrate Hindi Language Day. The celebration commenced with the National Anthems of Australia and India and the Lamp Lighting. I congratulate Harmohan Singh Walia who was given a Lifetime Achievement Awards for his literary works in Punjabi. I also congratulate Tara Chand Sharma who was also given a Lifetime Achievement Award for promoting Hindi in Australia. I recognise Anubha Varma who spoke about the great poet of her time, Mahadevi Varma. The keynote speaker was renowned Indian television broadcaster, Charles Thomson. There was a monologue by Sydney's renowned Drama Artist Taufeeq Ahmed Sheikh. Monologues/Storytelling was the last item of the day where Saba Zaidi Abdi, Vipun Vyas and Gaytri Singh were the judges. Participants were - Manish Jha, Roshanlal Gakhar, Ingita Chaddha, Riju Bhargava, Renu Singal, Rajendra Tiwani, Ritu Kulshrestha, Nisar Sirguroh, Tarun Malviya, Jyoti Dogra, Samay Jain, Ranjana Kumari and Paragraphed Patki. Renowned Poet. Sewa Singh Redhu was MC was a wonderful Master of Ceremonies. Lastly, I recognise Rekha Rajvanshi and the Indian Literary and Art Society of Australia for organising a wonderful Hindi Language Day.

QUILTING FOR CHARITY IN THIRLMERE: A HEARTWARMING SUCCESS

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—I'd like to take a moment to celebrate the recent charity quilting day hosted by the Blankets of Love project at St Stephen's Church in Thirlmere. Volunteers of all skill levels came together to create quilts for some of our community's most vulnerable members—from young people in foster

care to domestic violence survivors. Sharon Andrew, a steadfast volunteer, donated both her time and her long-arm sewing machine to the cause. Whether you sewed, ironed, or operated a machine, there was a place for everyone to contribute their skills. These quilts serve a dual purpose: providing physical warmth and also letting the recipients know that there are people who care deeply for their well-being. The project, which originated in 2010 and is sponsored by Wollondilly Anglican Church, has now crafted over 106 quilts just this year, thanks to the dedication of around 20 regular volunteers. It's not just about the fabric and the thread, but about the community coming together to lend a hand and make a meaningful difference. Let's continue to celebrate and support such wonderful initiatives that truly make our community a better place to live.

A FOND FAREWELL TO MR K AFTER 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—Today, we celebrate Michael Kicielinski, affectionately known as "Mr K," who has retired after an astonishing 50 years in teaching, 42 of which were spent at Picton High School. Specialising in industrial arts and technology, Mr K has guided multiple generations of students, imparting invaluable skills and lessons they could take home and into their lives. He maintained a positive rapport with students, especially those in the later stages of their education. His hope? To help them find a vocation that would not only employ them but also ignite their passion. He's had a lasting impact on his students, thanks to his skill, patience, and the ability to make something out of nothing. Mr K describes his last day as both celebratory and bittersweet. "I look forward to not doing much for a while," he said, but his years of service were made enjoyable through humour and the joy he found in his work. He also took a moment to thank his co-workers and staff at Picton High School for their constant support over the years. May his retirement be as enriching as the lives he's touched.

IN MEMORY OF TREVOR THOMPSON: A PILLAR OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)—Trevor Thompson, a devoted husband to Jacqui and father to Liam and Jonathan, was diagnosed with Neuroendocrine Cancer in 2016. Despite the physical and emotional challenges, Trevor never ceased fighting. He recently received notice to prepare his affairs, a devastating moment for his family. For over three decades, Trevor committed himself to community service. He was an active member of the Rural Fire Service in Tahmoor and Thirlmere for 34 years. He held various roles, including the Group Officer's position for eight years and a Fire Investigator for 16 years. Trevor also served as the Captain of Tahmoor Rural Fire Brigade for five years and was honoured as a Life Member. Trevor's impact on his community went beyond the boundaries of Wollondilly. He played an essential role in various disaster responses, including the 2019/2020 Green Wattle fires, the 2016 Picton weather event, and Victoria's Black Saturday fires in 2009. His efforts earned him a National Emergency Medal. Trevor was an irreplaceable asset to his community and leaves behind a legacy of courage and selfless service.

BOB IRELAND

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to recognise Mr Bill Ireland, who has made over 700 blood and plasma donations in his lifetime and is one of Australia's largest donors. Bill's journey as a blood donor began in 1963, at Sydney University's Great Hall. Bill was inspired by his father, Clive, whose life had been saved by a blood transfusion during the war. Clive went on to be a blood donor for many years. In honour of his father's legacy, Bill has continued to donate plasma every fortnight and you'll find his photo at Taree Donor Centre at the top of the Donor Legends board. Thank you, Bill, for donating regularly and impacting on so many lives – what a profound contribution.

RAINBOW FLAT RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to acknowledge the Rainbow Flat Rural Fire Brigade for their successful 'Get Ready Weekend.' Get Ready Weekend is an initiative held across 500 locations in NSW and its aim is to encourage residents and landowners to plan and prepare for the upcoming bush fire season. Throughout the day, a steady stream of residents visited the Rainbow Flat Fire Station. They sought advice, inspected their new shed, (a replacement for the original which was lost during the devastating Black Summer Bushfires), and were shown firefighting demonstrations. Visitors were provided with crucial information on bushfire preparedness, the Fires Near Me app, and how to read the new fire danger rating signs. Twelve RFS volunteers offered personalised assistance, ensuring attendees left with valuable insights. Distributing static water supply signs for emergency use showcased their foresight. I applaud the Rainbow Flat Rural Fire Brigade for their outstanding efforts during this Get Ready Weekend. Their service is invaluable, and together, we are better prepared to face challenges this Summer.

AMELIA-JANE BRADY

Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)—I would like to acknowledge Amelia-Jane Brady, a recipient of the 2023 Variety Heart Scholarship. Her dedication to the performing arts is commendable and despite

academic challenges, she shines on stage. Variety is awarding almost \$300,000 in scholarships enabling 63 young individuals to pursue their sporting and artistic dreams. These Variety Heart Scholarships support young people with an existing talent who are sick, experiencing disadvantage or living with a disability. Amelia-Jane's passion for dancing, singing, and acting has been her anchor through tough times. This scholarship is a lifeline for her, enabling her to attend drama workshops and pursue her dreams. It provides her access to private lessons and auditions, encouraging her growth as a performer. Amelia-Jane's story reflects the transformative power of the arts, boosting her confidence and resilience. It's a reminder that dreams can be achieved even in adversity. I congratulate Amelia-Jane for her determination and talent. She serves as an inspiring example of what passion and perseverance can achieve. I eagerly anticipate her future successes in the performing arts.

CASSIE JESS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Congratulations to Narrandera Local, Cassie Jess on being awarded the 2023 South West Junior Auskick Coordinator of the Year award. AFL Riverina announced, at their South West Junior Presentation 2023, Cassie Jess of the Narrandera Imperial Football-Netball Senior and Junior Club has been nominated and won the AusKick Coordinator of the Year Award. Cassie was recognised with this award for her voluntary efforts in organising meetings, advertising, and recruiting players, facilitating parent participation, maintaining resources and providing feedback to the Australian Football League. Cassie and her family are heavily involved in the sporting community of Narrandera and play a pivotal role in ensuring that female participation and involvement in sport continues well into the future. Cassie is well regarded within the Auskick community. I congratulate and thank Cassie once again for all her efforts to ensure Auskick continues to grow within the Narrandera community.

MADI LEADING THE WAY FOR WOMEN'S BOWLS

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—At just 16 years old Junee High School student Madison Hazell is already showing her strength in advocating for others, especially in the field of women's sport. Madi has a true passion for lawn bowls, however, has come across many obstacles throughout her lawn bowls journey. Additional travel costs to compete against other women, and not all division's offer a women's only competition. Madi is a five-time club champion, having represented at National school sporting events, including Zone, Junior State and Club Championships. Competing in several classes, including singles, pairs, mixed pairs, fours and mixed fours. Current Bowls rules state that Women and Men State Championships must be separate, however, the women's side of bowls in Madi's district has been abolished, leaving Madi with no competition locally to compete in. Madi was recently selected to represent the NSW Combined High Schools in the National Lawn Bowls Championships held recently in Tweed Heads with 15 children from around the state competing. Madi's team were awarded 'Best Performed Team' and the NSW team she represented came away with Silver. Congratulations Madi on your achievements, keep following your dreams.

COMMONWEALTH YOUTH GAMES

Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)—Congratulations to all the young athletes who recently represented Australia at the Commonwealth Youth Games in Trinidad and Tabago. This prestigious event provided the opportunity for some of our very own local athletes show the world how strong our future champions from regional NSW are. One of the youngest members of the 25 strong Australian team was Temora local, Grace Krause. At just 15 years old and competing in the under 18 categories, Grace is already making her mark on the world stage. Returning home with a bronze medal in hand for her jump of 6.01m into the long jump pit. Grace was also hot off the blocks for her first international Women's 200mtr final where she ran 24.46sec finishing in 7th place. Our other rising star, Gundagai's Indi Cooper returned home with a silver medal for her run of 14.01sec in the 100m final. Both these young athletes are inspiring other young athletes to put in the hard work, train and follow your dreams to also one day wear the green and gold for Australia.

CAMDEN CULTURAL FUSION

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—On Thursday 28 September the brilliant Camden Cultural Fusion Festival kicked off for another year. Held at the Camden Civic Centre, Cultural Fusion will run on six different afternoons and evenings between 5pm and 8pm each month up until February. Entry is free and I would encourage everyone who is keen to head along to Camden Civic Centre on one of the many dates Cultural Fusion is on and experience the different cultural experiences on offer in the community. Camden Civic Centre and its surrounding grounds came alive on Thursday 28 September for Council's Cultural Fusion program. Cultural Fusion combines live performance, inspiring art, bustling markets, and soul-stirring music to create an atmosphere that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and cultural backgrounds, and community. September's program featured the Spring Cultural Fusion Art Sale, artisan market stalls showcasing emerging artists and young entrepreneurs, and a performance by Worlds Collide. Overall, Cultural Fusion is a great opportunity for people to experience different cultures right across the local community.

GANESH FESTIVAL CAMDEN

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—On Saturday 24th September I had the privilege to attend the Ganesh Festival Camden. The Ganesh Festival is a time when the community comes together to celebrate the birth and life of Lord Ganesha. Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity, is the remover of obstacles and the harbinger of wisdom and prosperity. The festival was a true testament to cultural richness and unity throughout the local community as the festival showcased the beauty of Hindu traditions and heritage. I would particularly like to acknowledge the SouthWest Telegu Association, for hosting this wonderful festival. Their vision reflects a commitment to promoting and preserving Telegu culture and heritage while embracing the vibrant multicultural community in South-Western Sydney. The President, Mr Vijay Medidi, the Vice-President Mr Rajesh Mummaneni, the secretary Mr Kishore Ranga and the Treasurer Mr Suresh Raavi have all done a terrific job in the short time since founding SouthWest Telugu to put on this event for the wider community. It was fantastic to attend the Ganesh Festival Camden, I thoroughly enjoyed it and I look forward to next year's festival.

NARELLAN MEN'S SHED 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)—I recently had the privilege to attend the 10th anniversary celebration of the opening of Narellan Men's Shed. It was a fantastic celebration of the wider men's shed organisation and the people who helped set up and run the Narellan men's shed from its very beginning. Narellan Men's Shed officially opened on 5th October 2013 and was originally established by the Rotary Club of Narellan. At this celebration, 19 of the 82 members were presented with a badge and certificate in recognition for having been members for 10 years and in recognition for their services to the shed and local community. It was a brilliant event celebrating those who have put in their time and effort into supporting and being apart of the great community that is Men's Shed. I would like to particularly acknowledge President Denis Cummins, Secretary Terry Lucas, and Vice-President Gordon Tuthill for putting on such a joyous occasion.

KAREN MEIRING DE GONZALEZ - SKIN CORRECTIVES

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Karen Meiring de Gonzalez - Skin Correctives, in Shellharbour & Wollongong, for winning the Business Person of the Year 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 Karen Meiring de Gonzalez - Skin Correctives on this outstanding achievement.

ROSALYNNE BOOTHROYD - EXERCISE BY DANCE CLASSES

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Rosalynne Boothroyd, a local dance teacher, who is helping seniors strap on their tap shoes and experience the incredible physical and social benefits of returning to the stage, with inclusive classes for all ages and levels of mobility. Rosalynne, aged 74, has worked as a professional dancer and is still coming up with routines and providing opportunities for people to experience the benefits of the activity with her Exercise By Dance classes, with participants aged from 30 all the way to 80. Rosalynne said: "Tap dancing is apparently one of the best things you can do, especially when you get older. It also keeps the mind occupied and working, and it's low impact and people prefer it to the gym." During the school term, Rosalynne runs classes from Shellharbour Village, Gerringong and Shell Cove, teaching everything from tap dancing and jazz ballet to classical ballet, stretching and balance. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour electorate, I would like to express our congratulations to Rosalynne Boothroyd for running these classes that benefit all of our community.

PELICAN PRE-SCHOOL

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)—I would like to congratulate Pelican Pre-School, in Blackbutt, for winning the Outstanding Early Childhood Centre 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 Pelican Pre-School on this outstanding achievement.

AMING SUNTARA

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I would like to celebrate and acknowledge the incredible work of lifelong volunteer, Mr Aming Suntara. Mr Suntara has been giving up his 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. Mr Suntara is primarily involved with the organisation's food parcel program. Aming and his 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 Aming, many of our most vulnerable community members would most likely go hungry. The fact that Mr Suntara sacrificed his health and wellbeing to continue delivering food parcels during the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies his unwavering dedication and commitment to serving his local community. It is such an honour to be able to recognise the selfless and tiring work that Aming does, serving vulnerable people of the St George community for many years. I wish to sincerely thank Mr Suntara for the wonderful work he does to support our community, for which we are extremely grateful.

ELEFTERIOS DIASINOS

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I would like to celebrate and recognise the wonderful work of lifelong volunteer, Mr Elefterios Diasinos. Mr Diasinos has been sacrificing his time and energy to volunteer at the Parish Community of Kogarah for over 38 years. Over the years, Elefterios has served in many different roles, including President and director over three different periods. In his many roles, Mr Diasinos has helped and grown all facets of Church Operations, including, looking after the church's elderly members, educating the youth on Greek language, culture, religion and philanthropic works and organising parish events such as the annual walkathon. Without the selfless and generous work that Mr Diasinos does, the Parish would not be able to run so successfully and efficiency for so many years. Elefterios is well-known to church members as a noble, virtuous and kind person who is always there to open and close the church for all its services and sacraments. I would like to sincerely thank Ms Diasinos and express my deepest appreciation for the wonderful work he does to help and support both the Parish community and our local St George community.

VASSILIOS KRITIKOS

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)—I wish to acknowledge and recognise the wonderful work of lifelong volunteer, Mr Vassilios Kritikos. Mr Kritikos has been sacrificing his time and energy to volunteer at the Parish Community of Kogarah for over 38 years. Over the years, Vassilios has served in many different capacities, from President of the Parish to Director of the Aged Care Facility. In his many roles, Mr Kritikos has helped and grown all facets of Church Operations, including, looking after the church's elderly members, educating the youth on Greek language, culture, religion and philanthropic works and organising parish events such as the annual walkathon. Ms Kritikos also plays a vital role in organising and running the Parish's annual toy drive. Last year, the Parish collected more than 1,200 toys which were then delivered to underprivileged children right across Sydney. Vassilios is well-known to church members as a noble, kind and loving person who is always there to open and close the church for all its services and sacraments. I would like to sincerely thank Ms Kritikos and express my deepest appreciation for the wonderful work he does to help and support both the Parish community and our local St George community.

GUARDIAN BLACKWALL EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—While visiting our local beach, an adorable poster made by children caught my attention. Once I got closer, I learned that this poster was made by a group of four-year-old children who go to our local Guardian Blackwall Early Learning Centre in Woy Woy. If you ask, what's on the poster? A wonderful message to remind us: "Please put the rubbish in the bin. Plastic is bad for turtles." There are playful turtles, which were created by the children on the background of colourful mixture that represents the children's imagination. Overall, it is a fabulous piece of art. As an ex-teacher myself, I can assure you this quality of education is the fruit of passion and determination of the educators themselves. The Guardian Blackwall Early Learning Centre sets a high bar for other centres nationally as they go above and beyond to educate our younger generation about looking after our environment, and this is how changes happen. To the educators, well done and thank you for fostering our children's passion and care for the environment. With early childhood educators such as those at Guardian Blackwall, I know that our future generation is in safe hands.

ETTALONG'S OWN SUPER STAR – MELINDA SCHNEIDER

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—Tucked away in the quaint little town of Ettalong Beach is our own super star – country music singer and song writer Melinda Schneider. Melinda is well known for her hit release The

Story of My Life, which won the Country Music Association of Australia Female Vocalist of the Year Golden Guitar in 2003 and for her sell-out seasons of her Doris Day stage show at the Sydney Opera House. Today, I wish to congratulate Melinda on the re-release of The Story of My Life (the next chapter), which also coincides with the 21st anniversary since its first release. The Story of My Life, like many of Melinda's songs, captures a moment in time and touches the hearts and souls of her fans. Her beautiful and inspiring words bring a tear to many listeners' eyes and a smile to their heart. Congratulations Melinda on not only your passionate work in the music industry, but also for sharing your personal journey and struggles to help normalise them to the world.

NICOLE KRUSE

Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)—October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful Nicole Kruse, a breast-cancer-survivor and Tascott local who runs 100km every year to celebrate life and raise money for cancer research. After being diagnosed with stage three breast cancer in 2016, Nicole fought this life changing news with positivity and determination. Two years later, Nicole received the fantastic news that she is free of cancer. Over the last 4 consecutive years, Nicole has been training in order to run 100km every year to raise money for the Honeybee Venom Project at Harry Perkins Cancer Research Institute. It took Nicole an average of 19 hours to finish her 100km run. Beside an impressive ability to complete 100km run, Nicole is also an amazing baker. In the last two years, Nicole hosted a cake stall at Locomotive Station Café and with the support of the café, friends and neighbours, has raised close to \$3000 for cancer research. I praise Nicole for her dedication, and I hope her positivity will inspire everyone to fight for your goal and never give up.

ZION

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)—The Illawarra and Sutherland Shire have a rich history when it comes to talented musicians and iconic venues. And now there is an up and coming trio from northern Illawarra making a name for themselves in the music scene. Oscar, Daniel and Hamish are the three teenagers from Helensburgh and Stanwell Park who are collectively known as Zion. The former Bulli High School students recently took out the Battle of the Bands competition at Petersham Bowling Club. Performing against a host of other bands, the 'grunge' band eventually came out on top, winning a recording, mixing and mastering package as a result. Zion have forged quite the reputation as a talented trio over the years. Their first single titled, Mongoose, was even picked up by Triple J's Home and Hosed presenter Ash McGregor. The band is set to release its second single titled, Saturation, on October 31 this year. They will then head back into the studio to record their next track as part of the Battle of the Bands prize package. Congratulations again to Oscar, Daniel and Hamish. The entire Heathcote electorate is extremely proud of your achievements.

BULLI COMMUNITY CENTRE

Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)—A community centre is much more than a building. It is a thriving hub where local residents can meet, share ideas and share passions. They are also a place where those in need can access vital services. That is why places like the Bulli Community Centre are so important. A variety of services operate from the Bulli Community Centre including the No Interest Loan Scheme, which provides people and families on low incomes with access to affordable loans. There is also a food pantry that operates on a fortnightly basis from 9:30am-12pm on Thursdays. A community garden, counselling services, Meals on Wheels, the Modern Quilters and a Justice of the Peace service are also all on site. There are also yoga classes for all levels of skill, as well as several dance classes. Vital services to help those struggling with addiction such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Gambling Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, also operate out of the community centre. On behalf of all those who help keep the doors of the Bulli Community Centre open, thank you for all that you have done and continue to do.

2023 YEAR 12 COHORT OF ST LUKE'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)—Congratulations to the 2023 Year 12 cohort at St Luke's Catholic College in Marsden Park. This cohort was St Luke's first Year 12 cohort to graduate from the college. These students have worked incredibly hard to achieve their best and leave a legacy as the first Year 12 cohort. With many students already receiving early offers into university, I have no doubt that you will succeed in your future endeavours and inspire the subsequent years of senior students at St Luke's. Furthermore, I would like to recognise the hard work of the teachers and support staff at St Luke's that contributed to the development of these students. Congratulations Year 12 and best of luck for your upcoming HSC exams!

LEISA MCGIVERN OAM

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—It is with profound respect and admiration that I rise to congratulate Leisa McGivern of Glenmore Park, who was honoured earlier this year on the King's Honour Roll. Leisa was rightfully awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, recognising her unwavering and compassionate

service to children as a devoted foster carer. For more than two decades, since 2000, Leisa has opened her heart and home to over 50 children, providing a sanctuary of love, care, and stability. Her dedicated service, first with the Department of Communities and Justice and currently with Anglicare Sydney since 2014, is a testament to her extraordinary kindness and selflessness. Her loving arms have cradled many, her compassionate care shaping positive futures and nurturing potential where others might see despair. Leisa's exceptional service not only benefits the children she fosters directly but ripples positively throughout our community, embodying true humanitarian spirit. Today, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Mrs. Leisa McGivern OAM, and commend her for the enormous impact she has made through her selfless service.

PREETPAL SINGH ACM

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)—I rise to heartily congratulate a distinguished Glenmore Park resident, Mr Preetpal Singh, who was notably recognised on the King's Honour Roll earlier this year. Preetpal was bestowed with the esteemed Australian Corrections Medal, highlighting his service as a correctional officer with Corrective Services NSW. Preetpal's exceptional dedication and conscientious efforts within our correctional system symbolise a commitment to not only maintaining safety and order but also fostering an environment conducive to rehabilitation and positive change for those within the system. His significant achievements in this challenging and vital role underscore the crucial work undertaken by correctional officers across our state, often under the most demanding and difficult circumstances. It is a privilege to extend heartfelt congratulations to Preetpal Singh ACM on this well-earned recognition. May his exemplary service inspire others within our community to pursue excellence and dedication in their respective fields.

MAITLAND JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—Last month the Maitland Junior Magpies Football Club was awarded the Club Development Program Club of the Month National prize of Club Changer. The club's development program has been recognised for its success in enhancing female participation at a local level. The Club's action plan commits to creating a pathway for children through to adults to play football at the one club. Maitland Juniors has more than 1,000 players ranging in age from five to 65-years-old, which is the largest junior football club in Maitland. As a result of the club's investment in growing the sport for children and adults a third of the players are now female. The club are working towards the goal of achieving the target of 50 percent female participation. Starting with less than 100 female players a few short years ago, the club is now approaching 400 with a large increase in female coaches as well. The Club Changer Award recognises clubs who build welcoming and inclusive cultures, and the Maitland Junior Football club has done just that, congratulations. Congratulations to Club President Ian McDonald and the committee on such a fabulous achievement!

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—On September 29th Australia remembered those who have lost their lives in the line of duty, as well as members of the nation's police forces who have died in other circumstances. I wish to acknowledge and pay my respects to the officers who have so tragically lost their lives defending the safety of communities throughout New South Wales and Australia. I thank them for serving our communities with dedication and selflessness, and for their protection, guidance and friendship. Beyond this, I wish to acknowledge the families of these individuals and express how I stand with those who carry the grief that comes with losing someone close to them. The New South Wales police force are a family. I pay my respects to the 14 serving members of the New South Wales Police Force who have passed away in the previous 12 months and remember the 275 names already inscribed on the Wall of Remembrance. To honour these people, Morpeth bridge, a bridge in my electorate, was lit up in white and blue to remember those who never came home. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

MAITLAND AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)—I would like to recognise the dedicated members of the Maitland & District Historical Society for their 45 years work in preserving and communicating the colonial history and culture of Maitland and its surrounding communities. Their dedicated members volunteer their time and skills to both undertake research on topics requested by the public and fundraise for the maintenance of their collection and ongoing research projects. The Society holds speaker nights once a month, conducts regular historical walks, and publishes a popular quarterly newsletter. The newsletter contains a diverse array of articles that range from the impact of the 1955 flood on families, the history of the Cabbage Tree Hats, the conservation of The Maitland Jewish Cemetery, and the life of bee keeping, just to name a few. This work is vital to enhance our understanding of our community's culture, values and of the development of Maitland. I thank the historical society for their consistent and dedicated work to the community of Maitland.

RYAN PREDERGAST

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)—I wish to recognise Mr Ryan Predergast who is one of the Operations Officers of the Mount Druitt Clontarf Academy. The Academy was created to improve the education, discipline, self-esteem and life skills of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, by encouraging their school attendance. Ryan is instrumental to the Academy, organising activities such as a Café Club, after school gym sessions, sports games with other schools and school camps. With Ryan's help, the Academy had an average attendance of 82% in term 3 alone, a testament to Ryan's effort. I commend him for his encouragement and dedication.

ST ANTHONY'S MERCY DAY AWARDS – YEAR FOUR

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to Adrian Dinesh and James Lakeman on receiving a 2023 Mercy Award, on Friday 22nd September at St Anthony's Primary School, Girraween. Adrian is a valued member of the 4G Class at St Anthony's Primary School, who received the Mercy Award for Respect, for his courteous engagement with others. Adrian listens well and interacts in a calm and focused manner. Acting with integrity, Adrian's moral compass guides him in word and deed. An excellent student in the 4W class, James received the Mercy Award for Service, for his boundless compassion. Whether helping classmates, trouble-shooting problems with devices or assisting the teacher, James' selflessness is unwavering. His support for others emphasises the importance of kindness and empathy, and fulfils St Anthony's mission to serve the greater good. Mercy Awards recognise students who embody the Mercy values of hospitality, justice, compassion, respect, service and courage. Adrian and James were the Year Four Award winners. Congratulations Adrian and James. You are commended for the example you set to your peers. Thank you to Principal Patricia Reilly, and the dedicated teaching and support staff, for guiding our students through their Catholic faith.

ST ANTHONY'S MERCY DAY AWARDS – YEAR THREE

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to Alan Mahesh and Dominic Bernard on receiving a 2023 Mercy Award, on Friday 22nd September at St Anthony's Primary School, Girraween. Alan is an important member of the 3G Class at St Anthony's Primary School. Alan received the Mercy Award for Respect, in recognition of his courtesy and thoughtfulness. Modelling the St Anthony's values, Alan includes everyone, through his kind and patient nature. He embodies his faith through inherent Christ-like qualities. An excellent student in the 3W class, Dominic received the Mercy Award for Service, in recognition of his consistent help in the classroom. Dominic's generosity and positive attitude is contagious. Following in St Anthony of Padua's legacy, Dominic's selfless nature guides him to help and put the needs of others before his own. Mercy Awards recognise students who embody the Mercy values of hospitality, justice, compassion, respect, service and courage. Alan and Dominic were the Year Three Award recipients for 2023. Congratulations Alan and Dominic. You are commended for the example you set to your peers. Thank you to Principal Patricia Reilly, and the dedicated teaching and support staff, for guiding our students through their Catholic faith.

ST ANTHONY'S MERCY DAY AWARDS – YEAR SIX

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)—Congratulations to Ruby Aguila and Sitiveni Vaiaku on receiving a 2023 Mercy Award, on Friday 22nd September at St Anthony's Primary School, Girraween. An integral member of the 6G Class at St Anthony's Primary School, Sitiveni received the Mercy Award for Compassion, displaying this value through words and deeds. Sitiveni is always ready to lend a helping hand or sympathetic ear. His genuine nature makes everyone feel valued. Through acts of kindness and empathy, Sitiveni exemplifies the Mercy spirit of compassion. An excellent student in the 6W class, Ruby received the Mercy Award for Respect, for her well-mannered and thoughtful engagement with others. Ruby's maturity and humility make her a role model. Her kind nature supports all students to feel they belong, fulfilling St Anthony's mission. Mercy Awards recognise students who embody the Mercy values of hospitality, justice, compassion, respect, service and courage. Sitiveni and Ruby were the Year Six winners of this important Award. Congratulations once again Sitiveni and Ruby. You are commended for the example you set to your peers. Thank you to Principal Patricia Reilly, and the dedicated teaching and support staff, for guiding our students through their Catholic faith.

MARIUPOL FILM

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend)—On 23 August 2023, the Ukrainian Council of NSW presented a special screening of the documentary film "Mariupol. Unlost Hope" in advance of Independence Day of Ukraine on 24 August. His Excellency Vasyl Myroshnychenko, the Ambassador of Ukraine to Australia, and Lynda Voltz MP, were official hosts. We witnessed a film about terrible events, but without gratuitous brutal scenes shown. It is, rather, a reflection of the testimonies and reality of day-to-day life in Ukraine at the present time. In attendance were 140 members of the Ukrainian community, leaders of other ethnic communities and NSW MPs. Director

Maksym Litvinov and Producer Volodymyr Borodyansky have created a powerful and inspiring story of courage, resilience and hope in the face of adversity. The parliamentarians who saw the film noted that it was remarkable and gave them a deeper insight into the realities of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the impact of atrocities committed and the resilience of the Ukrainian spirit. We were all enlightened and moved by this film and gained an insight into the strength and togetherness of the Ukrainian community in NSW. We stand with you.

UNI WOMEN'S FC GRAND FINAL WINNERS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Our local sports have made a strong resurgence following the challenges of the pandemic and extreme weather conditions over the last three years. Participant numbers are increasing and there are wonderful representations of community engagement to be seen around our local playing fields. I wish to praise each and every sporting club, team, player, parent, guardian, spectator, volunteer, referee and organiser for your participation, support and dedication. I am especially proud to recognise the spectacular efforts of all the football teams within the Wallsend Electorate who recently won their Grand Final this season. Congratulations to Uni Women's FC in the Interdistrict AA Women Sunday (F) competition, winning against Kotara South FC 2-1. Well done on your success for this season and best wishes for continued success in 2024.

MARYLAND FLETCHER FC GRAND FINAL WINNERS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)—Our local sports have made a strong resurgence following the challenges of the pandemic and extreme weather conditions over the last three years. Participant numbers are increasing and there are wonderful representations of community engagement to be seen around our local playing fields. I wish to praise each and every sporting club, team, player, parent, guardian, spectator, volunteer, referee and organiser for your participation, support and dedication. I am especially proud to recognise the spectacular efforts of all the football teams within the Wallsend Electorate who recently won their Grand Final this season. Congratulations to Maryland Fletcher FC defeating Uni Women FC 1-0 in the Interdistrict AA Women Sunday (E) competition. Also, congratulations to Maryland Fletcher FC winning against Newcastle Suns FC 3-2 in the Over 35 Saturday (C) competition. Well done on your wins for this season and best wishes for continued success in 2024.

ELECTION OF SUE HO AS 11TH KOWIN PRESIDENT

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—I recently attended the official presidential transfer dinner for the Korean Women's International Network, KOWIN. I congratulate Sue Ho on her elevation to the presidency of this outstanding organisation. The celebration which marked the handover of leadership to a woman of great calibre, was one of elegance and significance. KOWIN is an esteemed organisation which strives to enhance the pride of Korean businesswomen around the world, while also contributing to shaping their identity and vision. Their central purpose is to empower and elevate Korean women globally, while utilising their talents and capabilities to bolster the nation's international standing. As the new President of KOWIN, Sue will make an enduring impact on our community. Her leadership promises to inspire and empower women, cultivating a platform where their voices and contributions will be heard and celebrated. I also recognise Sue's dedication to the community through her former presidency at the World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Association, OKTA Sydney Branch from 2017 to 2018. Sue's accomplishments go beyond these positions; they embody the essence of leadership and perseverance, inspiring those in her community. With great pride, we honour and congratulate Sue on her achievements.

NEW PARRAMATTA MAYOR

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—Congratulations to Councillor Pierre Esber on his election as the new Lord Mayor of Parramatta! With over two decades of dedicated service to the community, his leadership promises an exciting new chapter for the city. Parramatta's vibrant diversity and commitment to community welfare have indeed garnered global recognition, and I'm confident that under Mayor Esber's guidance, the city will continue to flourish. A hearty congratulations also goes to Deputy Lord Mayor Dr Patricia Prociv, representing Rosehill Ward. What an honour it must be to contribute to the progress of such a dynamic city alongside Mayor Esber and fellow councillors. I look forward to working with both of them in support of the shared parts of our respective constituencies. As we look to the future, I have no doubt that the leadership duo of Mayor Esber and Deputy Mayor Prociv will make every day count in shaping the next decade for Parramatta. Here's to a prosperous and transformative period ahead! Congratulations and good luck.

MACQUARIE PARK BUSINESS CHAMBER

Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)—The Macquarie Park Business Chamber has elected a new executive, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the incoming president, Soraya Raju, who has stepped up after a previously active term as a member of the Chamber's executive. In addition to her new responsibilities as President, Soraya is an Australian migrant success story, and has built a strong reputation in her own business for

sharing insights, learnings and wisdom with new migrants in our local Ryde community. Joining her on the new executive is the newly elected Vice President Sabrina Bir - a stalwart of our local community and someone I know will elevate the chamber to new heights. I also acknowledge the continued service of Secretary Chris Atree, Treasurer Smita Khakhar and committee members Jean Kropper, Dr. Felix Lo, and Stefan Sojska, and Executive Officer Mark Kimber. Thank you to each of you. Finally, I must acknowledge the service of outgoing President Geoff Anderson and Vice President Andrew Hill, who was fittingly made a life member of the chamber. Both leave a strong legacy and have ensured a seamless transition to the new team. I look forward to supporting the new executive this term.

FREE FASHION FITTINGS FOR YEAR 12 FORMALS

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—With Year 12 school formals coming up the pressure is on for school leavers to dress up in their finest for their night of nights, but some students in my electorate find it hard to afford the expense. The good news is that once again the team from clothing charity Thread Together will be offering free fashion fittings for students at six of our Northern Rivers high schools: Richmond River, Kadina, Lismore, Casino, Evans Head and Ballina Coast. Students at these schools are more likely to come from families still struggling post-2022 floods and Thread Together gives them the chance to select from a range of brand new formalwear to look their very best. Around 100 students have already placed orders and the fittings are taking place over the next few weeks. I thank former Richmond River student Adam Worling for all his work organising, and Thread Together CEO Anthony Chesler and Founder Andie Halas OAM for delivering this wonderful program to our communities. Now in its second year, it's truly heart-warming to see the positive impact of Thread Together's initiative.

KYOGLE HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—Among the hardest-working community groups in NSW are the hospital auxiliaries who fundraise for our regional hospitals, and today I would like to acknowledge the great work being done by the Kyogle Hospital Auxiliary. I visited Kyogle Hospital on 30th August and was impressed to hear that the Auxiliary is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. It is still going as strong as ever, with 33 active members and growing under the leadership of President Margaret Mitchell. The Auxiliary donates around \$20,000 each year both to the hospital and the attached residential aged care facility, which they raise through street stalls, raffles and other activities. Among the Auxiliary's many supporters is the local IGA store, which donates generously each month from its Community Benefits Fund. Right now the top priority for the Auxiliary is to fit out the recently completed aged care facility extension with tables, chairs, lounges and other furniture. Later in the year the Auxiliary will, as usual, be supporting Christmas entertainment and presents for the residents. I offer my very best wishes to the Auxiliary members for the vital contribution they make to the health and wellbeing of the Kyogle community.

A TRIBUTE TO PETER (PEDALS) VAN DER WYCK

Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)—It was with immense sadness that I learnt of the recent passing of Peter 'Pedals' van der Wyck, a renewable energy visionary in this country and one of the founders of Nimbin's Rainbow Power Company. Peter moved to Nimbin after attending the Aquarius Festival in 1973 and it was his desire for sustainable living that saw him investigate the possibilities of alternative power sources. He started with a pedal-powered juicer – hence the nickname – and came up with other ideas such as a solar-powered oven, which I remember demonstrating to schoolkids during my time teaching. Along with Nimbin friends Dave Christmas and Jack von Hest he started Rainbow Power in 1985, and despite being labelled "an extremist greenie" who shouldn't be taken seriously, it was the beginning of Australia's renewable energy industry. Peter literally wrote the book on home-made energy systems, *Energy From Nature*, and long before the Clean Energy Council he helped produce Australia's first off-grid solar accreditation. Rainbow Power is today the largest private employer in Nimbin and continues as an enduring testament to Peter's life's work. Vale Pedals, you will be missed.

BANKSIA ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL – OUR SPECTACULAR CONCERT (STORY TIME) 20TH ANNIVERSARY 2023

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—I would like to congratulate students and staff from Banksia Road Public School on their choir group's exceptional performance at the Our Spectacular Concert at Sydney Opera House on Thursday 21 September 2023. The team's performance was a beautiful showcase of the immense talent of the young students who proved that through their collaborative efforts, music can be powerful. The combined choir team of Amira, Alyssar, Aya, Christina, Tala, and Amara took part in rehearsals with their teachers Mrs Zeinab Habib and Miss Amy Pham. The students invested a great deal of time and effort in preparing for the concert. Their excellent performance in the Opera House is a source of great pride for our community and through their enthusiasm and hard work, as well as their technique, they produced an exceptional performance.

At the concert, under the spectacular lights, when they stepped on stage, the whole community erupted in celebration of their talent. This was a moment they will remember all their lives, and the school will always be thankful to these talented young students and their teachers for creating such amazing music.

BULLDOGS PITCH FOR NRLW LICENSE

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—The National Rugby League Canterbury-Bankstown Women's Bulldogs team will take a significant step in submitting their application to achieve a license and secure a place in the NRLW competition. The NRL is eagerly anticipated to officially announce the teams for the upcoming year. The Bulldogs have generously invested approximately \$1.5M towards empowering women to partake in this program including various initiatives over the past 18 months, nurturing and empowering young female footballers in preparation for this remarkable opportunity. The club aims to provide young females with the platform to thrive and shine on a national stage, ensuring that all participants excel at a national level and ensure they are inclusive of all participating games. In July of this year, one program, the Pups Elite Program, empowered young women from junior league clubs to participate in the women's programs and produce young football players to play for the NRLW Bulldogs. According to a Daily Telegraph report, this is the "first of its kind in rugby league in Australia." We wish the Bulldogs women's team the best of luck with their application and are excited to see the next generation of female football players.

LAKEMBA PURPLE FLAG ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)—On Sunday 24 September 2023, Lakemba became the first area outside the Sydney CBD and Parramatta to join world cities in being recognised as a Purple Flag-accredited safe nightlife zone. I joined Ministers John Graham MLC, and Sophie Cotsis MP, 24-hour Economy Commissioner, Michael Rodrigues, and Deputy Mayor Rachelle Harika to announce Lakemba's global recognition as a 24-hour precinct that welcomes visitors from across the world. From the spices of India to the classics and sweet desserts of Middle Eastern cuisine, Lakemba offers something for everyone. With over 160 businesses and home to the popular Ramadan Night Markets, the vibrant and welcoming suburb attracts more than a million visitors each year. Joining London, Dublin, Stockholm, and 90 other international locations, this incredible Sydney suburb is the third area in Australia to receive international accreditation. Accredited Purple Flag areas allow members of the public to quickly identify them as districts that offer a safe, vibrant, and well-managed night entertainment with a diversity of offerings across retail and dining for a great night out. I am so proud of our incredible community for opening its doors to the world and welcoming people of all cultures.

SARAH KALIDIS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I would like to acknowledge a member of my community for significant contributions to the art sector, Mrs Sarah Kalidis of Connells Point. Sarah recently was selected to participate in 'The Other Art Fair' Sydney, taking place on the 12th to the 15th of October at the Cutaway, Barangaroo. 'The Other Art Fair' is a space for independent artists to come together and exhibit their work. Sarah draws inspiration from the natural landscape around her, using colour and texture to create unique portraits of native Australian flora. Her design process is certainly experimental, using acrylic and watercolour to compose original and organic pieces. Local artists contribute to a web of diverse talent in my local area. From painters, to musicians, to actors, every artist in my community brings a unique perspective and artistic style. We are fortunate to have an array of talented artists right across the St George region. I would like to congratulate Sarah and wish her all the best over the coming years. I look forward to seeing how her artistic style continues to evolve.

ST GEORGE LEAGUES BOWLING CLUB

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I truly believe that St George Hospital is one of the finest in the State. Thanks to a generous donation from the St George Leagues Bowling Club, St George Hospital is set to receive a completely revamped play space for kids undergoing treatment. Going to hospital as a child can be an overwhelming experience, however this new space will allow kids and parents to take a break from the medical wards. It also gives children the opportunity to meet people their own age. This is all thanks to a donation from the St George Leagues Bowling Club, who make an annual donation to help improve outcomes for patients and staff. They have kindly presented \$4000 this year, which will go a long way to revitalise this space. I would like to acknowledge representatives from the club, President Carroll and Frank Dannaher, who presented St George Hospital with the donation. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone at the St George Leagues Bowling Club who made a generous donation to this cause.

TAIPEI ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL OFFICE - 112TH NATIONAL DAY OF TAIWAN CELEBRATIONS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—Speaker, I rise to recognise the 112th National Day of Taiwan. I recently had the opportunity to take part in celebrations, organised by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Sydney. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the rich and vibrant history of Taiwan, whilst also recognising their contributions to New South Wales, Australia, and the globe. As the Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, I take great pride in recognising the important connection between Taiwan and New South Wales. Taiwan has become a beacon for democracy, economic stability and human rights in the Indo-Pacific region. These shared values build upon the Multicultural principles that make our state such a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. It was wonderful to attend with many of my Parliamentary colleagues, paying tribute to the incredible things that Taiwan continues to do for NSW. I'd like to thank Director General Mr. David Cheng-Wei Wu, as well as the rest of the team of staff who made the event such a success. I look forward to working alongside them into the future.

MACQUARIE FIELDS SWIMMING CLUB 50TH ANNIVERSARY

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)—The Macquarie Fields electorate is home to many sporting clubs that provide inclusive spaces for recreation and belonging. The Macquarie Fields Swimming Club celebrates 50 years of serving our community and promoting athleticism and sportsmanship. The club was founded on 30th May 1973 and since then has continuously run swimming competitions. Today, the club has 75 members of ages ranging from 6 years to late seventies and of varying abilities. The club has seen many changes since its inception. These include introducing a winter season after the opening of the indoor heated pool at Macquarie Fields and transitioning to a fully automated system for competitions. But the club has remained strong and proud of its dedicated volunteers and many awards for the club and its swimmers over the years. I commend the efforts of everyone involved in helping the club reach this fantastic milestone. With membership on the rise, Macquarie Fields Swimming Club is set to make splashes for years to come.

GREG BABBAGE TREKS TO K2 BASE CAMP AT AGE 69

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—I stand to extend my heartfelt admiration and recognition to Mr, Greg Babbage, a true testament to the indomitable spirit and unwavering determination that resides within our community. At the age of 69, Mr Babbage embarked on an awe-inspiring journey, trekking in Nepal to the K2 Base camp. His unwavering commitment to pushing boundaries and embracing challenges serves as an inspiration to individuals of all ages. This remarkable achievement by Mr. Babbage serves as a shining example for our community, encouraging us to embrace adventure, face adversity head-on and never let age be a barrier to our aspirations. His journey reminds us that life is meant to be lived to the fullest, with every step taken serving as a testament to our strength, resilience and unwavering determination. I comment Mr. Greg Babbage for his extraordinary accomplishment and extend my heartfelt congratulations. May his remarkable journey continue to inspire others to break free from limitations, embrace challenges and embark on their own extraordinary adventures.

MACLEAY VALLEY RANGERS TAKE OUT ZPL GRAND FINAL

Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)—I rise today, congratulating the Macleay Valley Rangers for their stunning grand final finish in the Zone Premier League, proving that you never give up, even when the odds aren't in your favour. Macleay Valley were on the back foot by half-time, with Port United holding a 2-nil lead. With newfound intensity, determination and that fighting Macleay spirit, the boys returned to the pitch to even out the playing field, before taking a narrow 3-2 lead. The highs and lows of the grand final clash didn't stop there either. Macleay Valley backed up again to go through a penalty shootout, with new goalkeeper Jack Macallister saving the day. The game showed integrity and grit. It's not an easy task to rebound from three goals down and persevere through penalties for the victory, but these boys strapped their boots and took the fight head on. The stellar performance even earning Ranger's Josh Munro the MVP award. Congratulations, Macleay Valley Rangers for securing top spot in the Zone Premier League. You have made our football community proud. A deserved victory!

WHITLAM LEISURE CENTRE

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)—I acknowledge the Whitlam Leisure Centre in Liverpool, which was recognised a finalist in the 2023 Aquatic and Recreation Institute awards of excellence. The Aquatic and Recreation institute excellence awards celebrate individual and team achievements within the Aquatic and Recreation Sector in NSW, singling out exceptional leisure facilities and programs. This year, the Whitlam Leisure Centre was recognised for its leadership in areas including accessibility and social impact, in addition to placing as a finalist for the Children's Program of the Year award and AH Pierce memorial facility of the year

award. I note my attendance at the Whitlam centre's open day last weekend, where I saw first-hand the many steps taken to boost accessibility and inclusion, including Cérge, a digital concierge for people with a disability. I extend my congratulations to Belgravia Leisure and the hardworking staff who provide these amenities to our community, and I look forward to the summer swim season.

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL (T2S)

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)—Communication skills are key to developing literacy in children, with underdevelopment leading to potential shortfalls in future academic achievement, social inclusion, employment, and long-term health outcomes. T2S is a community partnership program that aims to address this. It is facilitated by speech pathologists and partners with Sing & Grow at Liverpool Hospital. T2S builds children's self-regulation, social and emotional wellbeing, language skills and pre-literacy. T2S also supports parents' responsiveness to their children's speech development through a blend of practical sessions and efforts to enrich the home environment. The program is part of a broader system of early intervention activities that provide access to individual speech and music therapy where required. Transition to School is open to children who are planning to attend school the following year and is delivered over 16 weeks. I commend the Speech Pathology Unit at Liverpool Hospital for its efforts in addressing this crucial health issue.

2023 NSW HEALTH AWARDS

Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool)—I rise to recognise the 25th anniversary of the NSW Health Awards, which acknowledge the exceptional contributions of people and programs to our public health system. This year, South-Western Sydney Local Health District was recognised for its leadership in areas including environmental sustainability, Aboriginal healthcare, and youth mental health. One recognised program, The Waste Action Reuse Portal (WARPIT), lists items of furniture and medical equipment no longer being used online for other staff to claim, and has diverted more than 65 tonnes of waste from landfill. The SWSLHD Aboriginal Health Escalated Housing Pathway was also recognised for approach to identifying and advancing complex housing cases through collaboration between the Aboriginal Health Service and the Department of Communities and Justice. Moreover, The Out of Home Care mental health program was recognised for its impact in addressing mental health concerns and improving outcomes for children in out of home care. I extend my sincere thanks to those who have helped enable the success of these programs.

NORTH HEAD SANCTUARY FOUNDATION - VOLUNTEERS

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—I notify the House that the North Head Sanctuary Foundation's Nursery volunteers form the background of this busy and committed community group who work out of a site on North Head in Manly as part of the Sydney Harbour Trust. The Nursery volunteers in the first six months of 2023 have performed some 3,600 volunteer hours. These volunteers have propagated nearly 1700 plants which are native to North Head and will soon become part of the landscaping in the Fairfax lookouts area. Volunteers also provide education to the community for visitors on the weekend who attend Building 20 in the former Barracks Precinct. They also assist with 'citizen science' projects such as the recent photo survey of echidnas on North Head. The most recent newsletter of the Foundation states that too June this year these volunteers had discussions with nearly 5,000 visitors. Finally, thanks must also go to Jenny Wilson who faithfully produces the Foundation's monthly e-newsletter which is distributed to almost 1,000 members and supporters.

HARBORD SUBURB 100 YEARS

Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)—I notify the House that Harbord in my electorate of Manly, celebrates its centenary in 2023. Research provided by the Manly Warringah Pittwater Historical Society indicates that a Miss Judith Harbord (the sister-in-law of the NSW State Governor Lord Carrington) was the source of the suburb's name. Ms Harbord had sailed to Australia with her sister Cecilia, the wife of Lord Carrington when he was appointed as Governor NSW in 1885. The first Crown grant of land in Harbord was to a Thomas Bruin in 1815, opposite the beach. In 1884 The Manly Land Company subdivided and named the property Freshwater Estate. Originally the area was widely known as Freshwater (likely for the fresh water that went down to the beach on its northern side). The suburb was then named Harbord on 1 September 1923 which locals thought would be an 'upgrade' from Freshwater. The first sale of land in the Harbord Estate was in August 1886. Harbord or Freshwater as it has been known since 2008, has a worldwide reputation as the Australian home of surfing with Duke Kahanamoku from Hawaii who gave a demonstration of his surfboard riding at Freshwater beach in 1914.

INDIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY OF CSU ORANGE

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Speaker, I wish to recognise a unique social group which is striving to promote regional Australia as an educational destination to one of the world's largest cultures. The Indian Cultural Society [ICS] of Charles Sturt University's Orange campus has set itself a goal of unification, striving to fuse its members with the community in Orange while also providing a nurturing, supportive environment for

those students, who are studying a long way from home. By observing the celebration of Holi, Ramadan and Diwali, the ICS provides a link with students' homelands while trivia nights and this month's first-of-its-kind-for-the-Orange-campus Bollywood night, are building a sense of belonging. President Paneet Gill says the ICS's posts to social media enable families thousands of kilometres away to see their loved one being embraced by the student community, which reassures their decision to choose Australia for study. It's hoped that reassurance is confected, encouraging families to consider not only an Australian education, but one based in the regions. Orange has a proud history of welcoming people from overseas, recognising that embracing their culture adds to a vibrant community and I congratulate the ICS on its work at CSU Orange.

FIONA MACNAUGHT

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)—I would like to congratulate the newly elected Liverpool City Council Deputy Mayor Councillor Fiona Macnaught to her office. Elected at the council meeting in late August, Councillor Macnaught has served on Council in the South Ward since 2021. She has lived in Moorebank with her family for more than years and is a registered sonographer working previously at Liverpool Hospital. Her dedication to making Liverpool a better place to live and raise a family is simply unwavering, as we continue to work together to implement a tonnage limit along Nuwarra Road in Moorebank. I wish her all the best for her term as Deputy Mayor and look forward to working with her closely on local issues that impact all of us.

INGHAM INSTITUTE AND VICTOR CHANG CARDIAC RESEARCH INSTITUTE PARTNERSHIP

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)—On Thursday 28 September 2023 I had the pleasure of attending the official launch of the strategic partnership between the Ingham Institute and Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute in Liverpool. The innovative partnership, in conjunction with the South-Western Sydney Local Health District and the University of New South Wales. The partnership will create a world-class cardiovascular research hub in South-West Sydney to improve health outcomes and accelerate scientific breakthroughs. The event brought together leaders from Government, including some of my local, state, and federal parliamentary colleagues. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Matthew Grounds AM, David Craig, Professor Jason Kovacic, Professor Sally Dunwoodie, Professor Jamie Vandenberg, and Susannah Rooney from Victor Chang, as well as Stephen Thompson, Professor Les Bokey AM and the Ingham Institute Board for their work behind the scenes for this project to come to fruition.

REV. FATHER ANTONIOS CHAOUKI IBRAHIM

Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)—On Saturday 7 October 2023 I had the pleasure of attending St. Rita Melkite Catholic Church in Ashcroft to celebrate the 1st Priesthood Anniversary for Reverend Father Antonios Chaouki Ibrahim. The evening started with a Divine Liturgy, and was followed by a wonderful dinner in the Church Hall, surrounded by parishioners, friends, family, and the local community. I would like to extend my thanks to the patronage of His Grace Bishop Robert Rabbat, Father Fady Salameh, and the Parish Council for their courtesies, and extend my biggest congratulations to Rev. Father Antonios Chaouki Ibrahim. I look forward to supporting him, along with the entire Melkite community in Holsworthy into the future and supporting their wonderful work.

BROADMEADOW MAGIC FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)—Well done to the Broadmeadow Magic Football Club on completing another great season of football. A big congratulations go to the NPL Women's Northern NSW team who came out on top of the competition. The whole team played spectacularly. Broadmeadow Magic also came home with five awards at the Van Egmond Jennings Awards night. Congratulations to Adriana Konjarski on the NPL Women's Golden Boot with 34 goals throughout the season. Adriana was also named in the Team of the Year alongside teammate Kalista Hunter. Superstar Bailey Wells swept up the men's awards with NPL Men's Media Player, NPL Men's Players Player, and MPL Men's Young Player of the Year Awards and was named in the Team of the Year. Such a huge effort, well done! NPL Men's coach John Bennis was named Coach of the Year and chosen for the Team of the Year as well. What a team and what a year – bring on 2024!

NEWCASTLE OLYMPIC FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)—Newcastle Olympic FC had a spectacular night at the Van Egmond Jennings Awards, recognising the Northern NSW football stars of the year. Both the Olympic Boys Youth and the NPL Women's teams were awarded Club Championship, truly showing how tightly knit and connected this sporting community is. There was one player who really stood out at the evening, Elodie Dagg, who received Media Player of the Year and Players' Player of the Year. She was named in the NNSW Team of the Year, along with her teammate Alesha Clifford. Well done to you both. Elodie was also the runner-up for the Emily Van Egmond Medal and another Newcastle Olympic Player, Jemma House, came in third. This medal recognises the NPL Women's Northern NSW Player of the Year. It is such an amazing achievement to have two

women from Newcastle Olympic on the podium for this award. Congratulations to all the award winners and the whole club!

CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—On Friday 6 October, I was honoured to witness and celebrate as Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser swore in new Australian citizens at Rathmines. It was a beautiful day at Rathmines, with a gorgeous view of the Lake. I couldn't imagine a more fitting start to their citizenship. It is always an honour to take part in a citizenship ceremony. In my time as Lake Macquarie Mayor, it was one of my favourite parts of the job—and now that I represent my community here in the Parliament, I like to go along as often as I am able. I never get tired of welcoming new members to our fantastic Australian family and meet new Charlestown electorate constituents. Those taking part in the ceremony came from across the world, and it is so wonderful to see the culture they bring with them added to our beautiful multicultural mix. My congratulations to all the new citizens: welcome to the Charlestown electorate, the city of Lake Macquarie, the state of New South Wales and the Commonwealth of Australia!

WHITEBRIDGE HIGH GRADUATION 2023

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—On Friday 22 September Whitebridge High School students, staff and families attended the final assembly for the graduating class of 2023. Erin Grey, a past student of Whitebridge and the 2018 School Captain, was the guest speaker and spoke fondly of her time at WHS. She told those present about her journey after high school and her current teaching career. A very special and significant moment of the ceremony continued the theme of school leadership, with the 2023 school leaders welcoming and handing over blazers to the incoming leadership team for 2024. Special awards for those who have achieved highly across fields of endeavour including academics, sport, service, commitment and culture were handed out, and Mia Bryne received the Whitebridge High School Principal Award for Highest Academic Achievement. My congratulations to the class of 2023, and I hope they were able to rest, recharge and study ahead of their exams. I wish them all the best in their future study and careers.

HELEN PLUMMER

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)—Helen Plummer is the Manager of Lake Macquarie City Council's Asset Management team, and has worked in local government for sixteen years. Helen's commitment to the work of local government was recognised at the 2023 Women in Local Government Awards, where she shared the Woman of Distinction Award in the Regional/Rural Category. In her role at Lake Macquarie City Council, Helen has been involved in the delivery parks, playgrounds, accessible pathways and connections, swim centres, bridges, roads and improvements to water quality for the Lake Mac Community. I was honoured to join with the Local Government Minister, the Hon Ron Hoenig MP, to give the award and was particularly glad to hear that Helen has been inspired by her mother's career in local government, which is a fantastic legacy. Helen is a valued member of the Lake Macquarie City Council team, and an incredible asset for those of us who live around the lake. I want to offer my congratulations on this well-deserved recognition and thank her for all the work she has done for Council and the broader Lake Macquarie community. Well done, Helen.

WILLOUGHBY CLASS OF 2023

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—I would like to offer my best wishes to the 'Class of 2023', Year 12 students as they prepare for their HSC exams beginning this month. I acknowledge all Year 12 students from each of the eight high schools in the Willoughby electorate; Bradfield Senior College, Cammeraygal High School, Chatswood High School, Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School, Mercy Catholic College, Redlands, St Pius X College and Willoughby Girls High School. I congratulate each and every one of the students from these schools for their conscientiousness, perseverance, and dedication to their studies. I would particularly like to thank the teachers for professionalism and dedication to teaching our students across such a wide range of subjects and disciplines. Their mentorship of our students and investment in their secondary education will pay rich dividends for years to come. Last but not least, I thank the parents of each student for the love, support and encouragement they have given their children to reach this milestone of their educational journey. Our Year 12 students can be very proud of all they have accomplished and I know they will go on to great careers.

FIONA BYLSMA

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—I pay tribute to Fiona Bylsma who stepped down as Principal of St Philip Neri Catholic Primary School in Northbridge at the end of Term 3. As head of St Philip Neri, Fiona has led a dedicated and talented staff team that nurtures the academic, spiritual and personal wellbeing of each pupil.

With over twenty years experience as a School Principal, Assistant Principal, instructional leader, coach and coordinator, Fiona is a dedicated and results-driven educational leader. As Principal of St Philip Neri, Fiona can be proud of her proven track-record of fostering academic excellence, creating a positive learning environment, and nourishing the spiritual and community life of the school. I thank Fiona for her leadership and acknowledge the high esteem in which she is held by the staff, pupils, and parents of the school community. I wish Fiona all the best in the next chapter of her educational career and look forward to welcoming the incoming Principal of St Philip Neri Catholic School.

NORTH SYDNEY PCYC

Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)—For seventy years, the North Sydney PCYC has been an integral part of the local community. Since its founding in 1953, this Club has provided generations of youth on the lower North Shore with sporting, recreational, and personal development opportunities to learn new skills, form new friendships, and build self-confidence. A sizeable proportion of the young people who belong to PCYC North Sydney live in my electorate of Willoughby. For these youth, their local PCYC is their community and a place they can call home. The fellowship and activities that North Sydney PCYC offers to our local youth are invaluable, and like other PCYC's across our state, it has proven capable of turning young lives around. I thank the local volunteers of the North Sydney PCYC who selflessly give of their time and talents to serve our youth. I am concerned by moves by the PCYC to sell this site and not replace our local PCYC. The PCYC must act in our community's interests to keep it open.

ARANCIA WOOD FIRED PIZZA

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Speaker, It brings immense pleasure to recognise Adrian and Charis Cavallaro for their outstanding achievement. Starting Orange's Arancia Wood Fired Pizza as a modest side hustle in 2020, this dynamic duo has now triumphantly secured the Central West Wedding Caterer of the Year title at the 2023 Wedding Industry Awards. Remarkably, they've achieved this monumental success from the confines of a trailer. Drawing from a deep-seated Sicilian lineage, Adrian was nurtured in the culinary arts. Growing up amid the warm aromas of his father's Pasticceria, he mastered the art of crafting the perfect cannoli even before being able to write his own name. Together, Adrian and Charis embody the spirit of sharing food, forging connections, and offering comfort. Their commitment to using high-quality, local ingredients and traditional Italian methods shines brightly in their creations. It's no wonder they're a sensation, consistently selling out at markets throughout the region. The overwhelming support from locals is a testament to their dedication and culinary prowess. Congratulations to Adrian and Charis Cavallaro for this well-deserved recognition.

SARAH TOWNSEND

Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Sarah Townsend from Parkes for her commitment to the Parkes Show. Ms Townsend was named Parkes Show's Young Woman of the Year in 2022 and backed that up this year with recognition from the Agricultural Societies Council [ASC] of NSW, who have dubbed Sarah an 'up-and-coming' star, awarding her a Next Gen ribbon. The nod comes after Sarah was approached by Parkes Show Society president Cynara Jones to join the committee for this year's show, the 142nd on record. Further, Sarah didn't blink an eye when asked to nominate for the vice president's role, which she filled, along with publicity officer. She also happily administers its social media accounts. The Agricultural Societies Council's Group 10 delegate Meg Austin, who awarded Sarah the next gen ribbon, described her as positive, friendly and willing. The Next Generation is an extension of the ASC of NSW, which is working to make sure agricultural shows continue to prosper through new blood. The ASC Next Generation program ensures show society committees of the future have the tools to keep an Australian tradition, the local show, thriving. Young people of Sarah's calibre bode well for that future.

DEAF FESTIVAL

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—I rise today to recognise the fantastically successful Deaf Festival Sydney which recently took place within the Parramatta Electorate at the Cathy Freeman Park. The day was a wonderful celebration of deaf culture, history community and Auslan as well as the remarkable talents of members of the deaf community and a reminder of how much human expression and passion can be found outside of just verbal communication. There were dance routines, art showcases, storytelling, and food which culminated in a fantastic day of fun for all. A special shout out to the Lions Club of Parramatta for their in-demand sausage sizzle. Hosted by Deaf Connect, the event was a follow up to their highly successful 2022 festival. Congratulations to all the organisers who made this event a reality as well as all the performers, volunteers and workers who made it come alive. Notable was the carefully choreographed 'Come Together' by the Beatles performed by the students of NextSense. I am very proud that our Parramatta community has the facilities to play host to such a wonderful celebration of diversity, accessibility and connection. I hope to have the opportunity to gather with our wonderful deaf community again next year.

POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)—Police Remembrance Day honours the lives of officers that have lost their lives in the line of duty. On the 29th of September, I had the pleasure of attending the commemoration of Constable Benjamin Ratty a former convict that was shot while attempting to arrest escaped bush rangers on the Great Western Road at Parramatta on the 23rd of September 1826. A plaque was unveiled to acknowledge the service of Chief Constable John Thorn, a veteran of 16 years in the Paramatta Police force. On his retirement he was granted land in what was later named in his honour as the suburb of Thornleigh. Thanks to the Parramatta Local Area Command, Parramatta Leagues Club, City of Parramatta Council, NSW Government and Friends of St Johns Cemetery for contributing to this long overdue acknowledgement and restoration of Constable Ratty's grave. Commemorating the lives of police officers that made the ultimate sacrifice is important in recognising the risks that those serving in our police forces take to protect our community. Considering this, I thank those in the Ryde, Cumberland, Auburn and Parramatta Area Commands for their dedicated service in keeping the local community safe across the Parramatta Electorate.

SAINT MATTHEW'S CHURCH

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise Saint Matthew's Church in Bannaby, built in 1898. The land on which it was built, donated by Mr Matthew Hillas, who was the owner of Bannaby Station. The building was built by Joe Alders, who named Saint Matthews after Mr Hillas, who had provided most funds to build the structure. The building was licensed as a church on the 1st October 1900 and today is listed as a heritage item on the Upper Lachlan Shire Council's local environmental plan. The committee of the Taralga Historical Society has maintained the church and the cemetery, while enduring the elements over many years it has required restoration and repair including a robbery, which saw the loss of the organ, two windows and angel from a Hillas grave. The church has played a vital role in the community, being host to numerous christenings, weddings, funerals, and services over many decades, with services still being held every second month. With its rich community history and commanding views Saint Matthews triumphantly celebrated its 125th anniversary on the 23rd September. I thank all committee members and community for maintaining the historical landmark for the benefit of all.

CROOKWELL JUNIOR GREEN DEVILS

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise the phenomenal year Crookwell Junior Green Devils have had in 2023. The Under 10's, 12's and 16's girl league tag teams represented the club in the Canberra competition, which saw all teams make the finals, and both the Under 12's and 16's going all the way to the grand final. Despite both teams losing by the narrowest of margins the fact that all teams made the finals, was a fantastic achievement for all involved. The Under 10's played so well, in an exceptionally close sudden-death semi-final, is a true sign of how well the team worked together and graciously took on the challenges of a very tough competition. The Under 12's is another team that rose to the challenges, seeing a merger of the Under 11's and 12's at the start of the season, and progressing through the season demonstrating a very commendable defence and ever-growing attack. The Under 16's team played also played well throughout the season, showing determination in all games, and displaying the depth of skills and growth as individuals and teams. Well done Junior Green Devils, you have made Crookwell proud.

GOULBURN FARMERS MARKET

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn)—I rise today to recognise the commencement of the Goulburn Farmers Market. It is wonderful to see a six-month trial of the Goulburn Farmers Markets to be held at Peden Pavilion, on the 28th October 2023. The markets will then be held for six months on the fourth Saturday of each month. The market aims to entice the many community patrons to enjoy fresh and high-quality produce – ranging from eggs, artisan breads, fruit, vegetables, flowers, distilled products, and plants. A group of fifteen producers, within a one hundred kilometres radius of Goulburn, have already booked stalls for the inaugural event. To support the initiative, the market has been successful in obtaining two grants from the Goulburn Mulwaree Council and the Veolia Mulwaree Trust. The markets will be producer-operated and a non-profit entity and hope to become self-supporting. In addition, is forecasted that they will go on to have small-scale production and sustainability workshops. The trial of the markets is a wonderful achievement for Rita Warleigh, formerly of Taralga and her International Volunteers for Peace Group. I applaud the work of all involved and wish them every success.

JESSICA DUN – 1ST PLACE NSW SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIP SPRINT ORIENTEERING

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—Today I extend my heartfelt congratulations local student Jessica Dun and acknowledge her achievements in securing a win at the NSW School Championship Sprint Orienteering Under 14yrs Girls event and impressively also taking 2nd place in the Middle Distance (Bush)

Orienteering event. Jessica's skills are undeniable and her scope of sporting talent is remarkable achieving top places in two very different events. As the name suggests, sprint orienteering is a short-paced event generally held in urban environments such as a park. A sprint orienteering course is designed to test your ability to interpret a map and to plan and carry out route choices whilst running as fast as you can. This sport demands that the participant not only have great fitness, but also be able to multi-task by reading the map whilst running, be aware of the environment, make decisions and ensure that all check points are reached. In comparison, although still using a map, bush orienteering involves navigating around control points in the bush which is often a much more challenging and different landscape. Congratulations Jessica on your achievements and I wish you well in your future endeavours.

NEWMAN COLLEGE SUCCESS AT NATIONAL WORLDSKILLS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—It is an absolute honour to have the opportunity to inform the House of the recent success of students from Newman Senior Technical College Port Macquarie at the 2023 National WorldSkills. The Newman students representing the Vocational Education in Schools NSW team won four gold medals, one silver medal and four bronze medals. Skill competitions provide an opportunity for young people to benchmark their skill level against their peers. Competitors perform tasks in their skill area over an allocated time while being observed and judged on their processes, practices and outcomes. National WorldSkills follows regional competitions, and once selected for NSW the students practice, practice and practice to deliver their best performance at the Nationals. Congratulations to: Gold medal winners Abbey Slater in Automotive, Flynn Hall in Business Services, Cooper Williams in Construction and Lillie Jepp in Health Assistance. Well done to Silver medal winner Elka Monckton in Commercial Cookery and Bronze medal winners Emma Marchant in Food and Beverage, Kingsley Threlfo in Bricklaying, Jayden Farrington in Information Technology, and Jasmyn Debreceny in Tourism. Congratulation to Karen Warneken, Leader of Learning VET Curriculum, and all the staff at the College who support student learning.

TESS MCWILLIAMS – MACKILLOP COLLEGE YR12 SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)—I rise to recognise the exceptional all-round sporting achievements of Year 12 MacKillop College student, Tess McWilliams who has enjoyed a remarkable school sporting career. To have gained the title of Year 12 Sportsperson of the Year, Tess needed to have participated in a wide range of sports at a competitive level. Additionally, the recipient is required to have conducted themselves in a manner that demonstrated outstanding school spirit, sportsmanship and dedication to training and competition. Tess ticked all these boxes and more. To secure the title, she competed at a high level in an astonishing number of sports. Tess's most celebrated achievement was her selection in the NSW Combined Catholic College 18-years Girls Rugby League team. Despite having suffered a broken collar bone at the beginning of the season, Tess recovered and returned to competition surprisingly quickly. She immersed herself in sport whilst simultaneously juggling the demands of studying for the HSC. Tess's impressive portfolio encompasses rugby league, soccer, Futsal, AFL and athletics. Tess has also developed impressive leadership skills which are well known and acknowledged in sporting circles. With admiration, I will be avidly following Tess's sporting career.

SCOTT ANDERSON AND DARREN BUNDOCK OF SARATOGA SAILING CLUB

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to recognise and congratulate Saratoga Sailing Club members Scott Anderson and Darren Bundock for their fantastic performances at the recent A-Class Catamaran World Championships held in Toulon, France. Scott and Darren came 1st and 3rd in the Classic and Open divisions respectively of the A-Class Catamaran world championships. This incredible result effectively means the humble little Saratoga Sailing Club can now rightfully claim to be the premier A-Class Cat Club in the world, an achievement worth celebrating. Congratulations Scott and Darren, you have done Saratoga Sailing Club and the Central Coast proud.

SURF LIFE SAVING CENTRAL COAST RAISING OF THE FLAGS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to take this opportunity to thank Surf Life Saving Central Coast for inviting me to the official annual Raising of the Flags which was hosted by Terrigal SLSC at Terrigal Beach on Saturday 23rd September. This annual event marks the commencement of the patrolling season, and it was great to join the numerous local surf clubs for the Raising of the Flags ceremony at Terrigal Beach. I would like to acknowledge the following patrolled clubs in my electorate. Avoca Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Copacabana Surf Life Saving Club, North Avoca Surf Life Saving Club, Killcare Surf Life Saving Club, MacMasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club and Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club. Thank you to all who contributed and attended to make this day a huge success to commence the patrolling season and to all the volunteers trained in first aid and rescue operations who are ready to help keep people safe this summer.

CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL GRANDMA MOSES ART COMPETITION AND EXHIBITION

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the follow local artists in my community for recently wining prizes in the Central Coast Councils 2023 prestigious Grandma Moses Art Competition. The Grandma Moses Art Competition and Exhibition was open to local amateur artists over the age of 50 and the program is inspired by the life and work of Anna Mary Robertson, better known as Grandma Moses, who became widely famous for taking up painting in her late seventies, proving that age is no barrier to expand or learn new skills. Giuliano Balos of Killcare took out the top prize of \$1,000 in the Open Section for his acrylic artwork titled 'The House on the Hill'. Helen Carson of Killcare took out the 50+ Centre Art Group Member Section for her artwork titled 'Place du Tertre Montmartre, Paris, France'. Beth Miller of Kincumber won the 'Central Coast Inspired Section' for her artwork titled 'Beautiful Central Coast'. Congratulations to all three artists on your wonderful winning entries and to Central Coast Council and everyone involved in holding this successful event.

RAISING BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—Once again this year North Sydney will turn pink to raise awareness for breast cancer. Breast cancer is an insidious disease that tragically claims the lives of thousands of Australian women each year. October marks Breast Cancer Awareness month organised by the National Breast Cancer Foundation to raise more than awareness but taking action, supporting one another, and helping women now. Locally there will be a vibrant 'Pink Up' event at Brett Whiteley Place in North Sydney to raise funds for the McGrath Foundation, so they can continue to fund their McGrath Breast Care Nurses who provide care and support for early or metastatic breast cancer. I commend the McGrath Foundation on the work that they do to support individuals and their families experiencing breast cancer. I also acknowledge the work of the Sydney Breast Cancer Foundation who do an incredible amount of work across Sydney raising much needed funds in support of research, treatment and care including for Chris O'Brien LifeHouse. This Breast Cancer Awareness Month I encourage everyone to join a local event and help raise those critical funds to combat breast cancer in our communities.

BALMORAL BEACH CLUB SUPPORTING NIPPERS ON MID NORTH COAST

Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)—On many beaches up and down our beautiful New South Wales coast thousands of our kids take part in the Surf Life Saving program Nippers. We know that Nippers is so important for coastal communities as they provide water safety education, lifesaving skills, physical fitness, community involvement, builds future lifesavers, and promotes respect for the environment. Recently Balmoral Beach Club generously donated more than one-hundred and seventy nippers boards of various sizes and conditions for Nippers across the Surf Life Saving Mid North Coast Branch so that surf clubs along the mid north coast can help run Nippers for the next generations. A big congratulations and thank you to Balmoral Beach Club for their generosity in donating these Nipper boards. I want to acknowledge the incredible work of our surf life savers and volunteers who dedicate countless hours to keeping us safe during summer as we all head to the beach to cool off and enjoy our pristine coast lines.

DOING IT FOR LIONEL

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to take a minute to remind everyone to get a skin check – because that's the message that Narromine woman Sally Everett and her family want everyone to hear. After losing her father Lionel to Melanoma in 2021, Sally, her sister Carin and mum Denise have made it their mission to promote the importance of regular skin checks and developing sun safe habits. This year, the family held the 'Doin' it for Lionel Golf Day' which raised over \$9000 for the Melanoma Foundation. To really get the message to sink in, the Skin Check Truck was in Narromine offering free skin checks and the constant stream of people over the two days showed how well their message is reaching members of the community and beyond. Skin cancer awareness, specifically melanoma, is a topic that often goes unnoticed. Your tireless advocacy and educational initiatives have not only raised awareness but have also empowered individuals to take proactive steps in safeguarding their health. Congratulations on your outstanding efforts in advocating for melanoma awareness and the importance of skin checks. Your work is making a difference, and I am so proud of your achievements so far!

MONEYQUEST DUBBO

Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)—I would like to recognise Matt Wright and the team at MoneyQuest Dubbo for winning the title of National Franchise of the Year in Asset Lending for the highest number of loans settled. Matt's passion for helping clients achieve their financial goals has not only garnered the team this recognition but has also made a significant impact on the lives of countless individuals in our region. The team's ability to navigate the complexities of the financial world and deliver personalised solutions has made

a positive difference in the community and the industry at large. This fantastic achievement coincides beautifully with Matt celebrating 20 years since starting his own mortgage broking business. It's no small feat to take out the number one spot nationally, so it is a clear testament to the service and dedication of Matt and the entire team and the commitment they show to each and every one of their clients. Once again, congratulations on this well-deserved honour. May this award be a steppingstone to even greater success and continued excellence. I look forward to witnessing your future achievements and the positive impact you will undoubtedly continue to make.

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.

RIVAH TAYLOR - DENILIQUIN

Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)—Today I would like to recognize Rivah Taylor, a 9-year-old rising golf star from Deniliquin North Public School, for her remarkable achievements during her short time in the sport of golf. Rivah's journey in golf began with her dad, Ross Taylor, and since then she's been inseparable from the golf course. After her performance in the Riverina Golf Championship, she was selected as a member of the Riverina Golf team, where she represented our region at the NSW PSSA Golf Championships in Batemans Bay. Despite facing challenges, Rivah's resilience and determination shone through, embodying the spirit of a young athlete. Rivah's commitment to improving her skills, including regular practice at Deniliquin Golf Club and seeking guidance from mentors, showcases her dedication to sport. I would again like to commend Rivah Taylor for her outstanding achievements and look forward to her continued success in the golfing world.

SIMON BARLOW

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I congratulate Newport artist, Simon Barlow, on the opening of his exhibition 'Remaining Light'. Simon's second exhibition at the popular 'Studio Gallery' in Waterloo, 'Remaining Light' is an exploration of light and life. The exhibition invites viewers to ponder the transience of life and the fleeting beauty that can be found in even the delicate of subjects. Simon's ability to encapsulate the final moments of light on florals through his paintings is truly mesmerizing. Through 'Remaining Light,' Simon has once again demonstrated his commitment to pushing artistic boundaries. His work resonates with viewers on a profound level, reminding us of the beauty that surrounds us, even in the most ordinary moments. We applaud Simon Barlow for his extraordinary talent and his dedication to enriching our community's cultural landscape. We eagerly anticipate the continued growth and success of this remarkable artist and look forward to witnessing his future creative endeavours. Congratulations, Simon, on your remarkable achievement. Your 'Remaining Light' exhibition is a beacon of inspiration for us all - Pittwater is proud to have such a talented artist in our midst.

BEACH WITHOUT SAND SURF SHOP – 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—I congratulate local surf shop, Beach Without Sand, on their 40th anniversary. This remarkable milestone is a testament to four decades of unwavering dedication, passion, and commitment to the local surfing community. In 1983, Wato opened the first Beach Without Sand store in North Avalon. With the help of his mate Kong, the store was a massive success. Beach Without Sand has since expanded, opening a store in Palm Beach. The stores are still run by Wato and Kong, with the help of Sam and Bec, Wato's kids, and Abbey. Beach Without Sand has always been more than just a surf shop; it is a cherished gathering place for surf enthusiasts and beachgoers alike. Customers rave of the team's dedication to providing top-notch equipment, expert advice, and fostering a sense of community. Pittwater is so lucky to have Beach Without Sand. As we celebrate this remarkable 40th anniversary, we thank the Beach Without Sand team and look forward to many more years of sun, surf, and community. I am pleased that acknowledgement of Beach Without Sand will now be preserved in the records of the oldest Parliament in our nation.

TERREY HILLS COMMUNITY PAGE

Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)—Mr Speaker, many Members in this place will know very well the positive role that local Facebook groups play in connecting local community, businesses and keeping residents informed. The Pittwater community is serviced by many wonderful Facebook groups and the Terrey Hills

Community Page is no exception. The group has over 9,200 members and its success is a tribute to its wonderful admin team: Rebecca Rigney, Sarah Gerdovic and Lisa Boyle. As most would be aware, Facebook can be a place where keyboard warriors and anarchy runs rampant. But, thanks to the selfless dedication of the admin team, Terrey Hills Community Page remains a safe space and friendly for our community to stay connected. Recent contributions have seen residents track down the owner of a horse that has gone walk abouts, well wishes for HSC students, sharing of charity fundraisers and free webinars. The content of Terrey Hills Community Page is diverse, helping all members of the group find information and services that they need or find interesting. Facilitating this group takes hours every week. On behalf of the group's members, I thank Rebecca, Sarah and Lisa for their service to our community.

UPPER NORTH SHORE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Monday 9 October 2023, I attended and presented awards at the Upper North Shore Volunteer of the Year Awards. I acknowledge all those who were nominated and thank them for their ongoing contributions to our community. I am pleased to recognise the following: Rebecca Ju is the Young Volunteer of the Year. Rebecca is a youth advocate for human rights and volunteers with United Nations Association of Australia. William Siomiak is the Volunteer and Adult Volunteer of the Year. William volunteers with Willoughby City Council giving countless hours each week at Willoughby Library leading community events. Davidson Resident Dougal Graham is the Senior Volunteer of the Year who at 88 years of age still volunteers with Blowfly Cricket and is integral to the ongoing fundraising for the club. St Ives Public School Band is the Volunteer Team of the Year. Two members of St Ives Public School P&C, Fiona Ulrick and Nadia Batchelor, each week give up their time to lead the band and teach music to its members. This awards event was an honour to attend, and I am proud to have been there to share this special moment with our amazing volunteers.

BELROSE'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—I recognise Nicole Romain, Ron and Cynthia Patton, Neil Evers and Rachael Jackson, who I met on 3 October 2023 at Ralston and Wyatt avenues in Belrose. It was a privilege to be guided on a bushwalk and observing firsthand the trails, breathtaking views and our local environment within our Davidson community. Our community greatly appreciates protecting the natural and built environment – and I share with them my strong support. It was truly heart-warming to see the level of commitment displayed towards preserving the beauty of their local area. Our local community is known as the lungs of Sydney due to our trees, greenspace and three national parks. The experience has led me to further appreciate the natural attractions present in Davidson and renewed my drive to preserve these valuable areas of native bushland. Thank you to Nicole, Ron, Cynthia, Neil and Rachael for your ongoing advocacy.

FIVER FOR A FARMER

Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)—On Thursday 21 September 2023, I briefly met Northern Beaches resident Jack Berne, a 15-year-old champion to discuss his charitable initiative Fiver for a farmer. Fiver for a Farmer, now in its fifth year, aims to support for farmers who over the last five years have confronted drought, fire, floods and COVID-19 by dressing up like farmers and donating a fiver. Jack is a remarkable young man who has through his initiative done a Ted Talk and even toured the US spreading his fantastic message promoting resilience. I thank the Member for Manly James Griffin MP for allowing me to meet and be inspired by Jack and his work. I look forward to seeing Jack's ongoing work.

CONGRATULATIONS MOREE JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I would like to recognise the Moree Junior Rugby League Club for being nominated and receiving the Community Club of the Year Award at the NSW Rugby League Community Awards recently. I congratulate the club for their efforts to promote respect, positivity, unity, discipline and inclusivity. Such is their success, that in this 2023 season they fielded every grade from under 6s-16s including all available League Tag age groups, comprising a staggering 200 players. Special thanks to President Stephen Cory, Vice President Blake Philips, Secretary Kerry Cassells, Treasurer/Registrar/Publicity and Canteen Manager Wilmar Heymer and the committee members for working tirelessly behind the scenes. Special thanks also to the coaches, referees, canteen and parent volunteers, supporters and all junior competitors. I commend all involved with Moree Junior Rugby Club on their hard work, time and effort put into our young people, which is appreciated by the entire Moree community.

RECOGNITION OF PETER BIRCH

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise Peter Birch on being awarded the winner of the prestigious Incitec Fertilisers Service to the Cotton Industry Award, for demonstrating a passion for agriculture and supporting young people in agriculture. I congratulate Peter for his award, for his 40 year career

in the Cotton industry and 30 year history with B&W Rural, Moree. His achievements include: being one of the first in the region to investigate using digital technology in cropping systems; instrumental in the adoption of controlled traffic farming and the super single dryland cotton growing system; exploring ultra spectral photography; and being a primary investigator of Cotton MAP with Nufarm, following up with Satamap. I commend Peter for actively supporting and mentoring staff, Agronomists and new growers across the region. Also for lending his expertise and time to many industry and community organisations, which has included being a member of the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association and Gwydir Valley Cotton Growers Association and Crop Consultants Association. I thank Peter for his contribution and positive impact to the Australian Cotton Industry, to agriculture and to his community.

INVERELL VINTAGE FARMALL TRACTOR PARADE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)—I recognise the wonderful achievements of the Inverell Community, Inverell Council and the local Business Chamber for staging a Vintage Tractor Parade as part of centenary celebrations in the New England Region, resulting in a new Guinness World Record. The parade consisted of about 110 Farmall Tractors, which lined 3.2km around the trotting track of the Inverell Showground. I congratulate the greater Inverell Community and all those who assisted throughout the event, grounds, facilities and catering. Events such as this in regional towns, cannot function without the wonderful support and commitment that these volunteers give. I thank all those involved who supported the event, with special thanks to Inverell resident Tom Horwood for his contribution of vintage tractors, along with tractor enthusiasts and everyone who went above and beyond to make the event a success.

FRANK DAVIES OAM

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)—I would like to take this moment to congratulate and recognise the achievements of Frank Davies OAM. I had the pleasure of meeting him last month at a special branch meeting of the Canterbury-Bankstown NSW Justices Association and was amazed by his generosity and good-natured spirit. Frank Davies, an 85-year-old Greenacre tennis, table tennis, and ballroom dancing teacher, boasts numerous volunteering awards, and has volunteered and fundraised at over 50 charities over his life, since the 1950s. Mr Davies became a Justice of the Peace in 1978, and has achieved several awards recognising his commitment to helping the community, including: the Anniversary of National Service Medal, 2002; NSW Seniors Week Achievement Award, 2010; Community Service Award, NSW Government, 2011; Volunteer of the Year, Bicycle NSW, 2013; Senior Volunteer of the Year, the Centre for Volunteering, 2014; Citizen of the Year in Bankstown Council's Australia Day Awards, 2016. I congratulate Mr Davies on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia and thank him for his selfless service to the community.

GEORGES RIVER MOTHERS NETWORK

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)—I would like to commend and celebrate the remarkable work of the Georges River Mothers [G.R.M] Network. This group, based in Padstow Heights, has redefined the concept of mother's groups and has created an incredibly safe and inclusive space. G.R.M Network is a "mother's group done differently," and has become a beacon of support for new mothers. Their distinctive focus lies not on the developmental milestones of children, but on the well-being and nurturing of the mothers themselves. Their mission is the acknowledgment of the profound physical, psychological, and emotional changes that women experience after the birth of a child. G.R.M Founder, Courtney Whittle, knows firsthand the challenges faced by new mothers, having overcome postpartum depression and anxiety during her own journey as a second-time mother. Weekly and monthly meetups, moms' nights out, and online community support—all these offerings create an invaluable opportunity for mothers to step out of their homes, share laughter, and engage in heartfelt conversations with others who truly understand their unique journey. Today, I commend the Georges River Mothers Network work in supporting and empowering mothers during this pivotal chapter of their lives.

BANKSTOWN BRUINS 47TH ANNUAL AWARDS

Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)—On 16 September I attended the Bankstown Bruins 47th Annual Awards dinner. With over 180 basketball enthusiasts, it was a wonderful night honouring the coaches, managers, players, referees and volunteers for their passionate commitment to the club. The Bankstown Bruins was established in 1964 as the Canterbury Bankstown Amateur Basketball Association. Competitions were originally held at Beverly Hills Girls High School, with other venues such as Revesby and Greenacre YMCAs hosting matches as the club expanded until a dedicated indoor stadium was opened in Bankstown in 1976 by Premier Neville Wran. The club has expanded to include both female and male players of all ages, levels and skill. The Bruins hosts skills and development classes throughout the year providing athletes of all abilities the opportunity to develop their talents in a fun, friendly and encouraging environment. I congratulate the nominees and award winners on their fantastic efforts this season, including recent hall of famer inductees Vickie Croucher, Debbie

Cadee, Ray Dawson, Peter Lopez and Alan Morris. I thank President Tracey Lopez and CEO Christian Gobolos for their leadership and dedication to the club and for organising a terrific event.

ILUKA SOLDIERS MEMORIAL HALL CENTENARY

Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)—I congratulate the Iluka History Group on organising a wonderful community celebration to mark the Centenary of the Iluka Soldiers Memorial Hall, an iconic building made possible by the generous fundraising efforts of the community to commemorate fallen soldiers from WWI. The day started under the watchful eye of MC Col Hennessy and Secretary Ruth Dawson with a flag raising ceremony, a bush ballad written by local Jocelyn Wrench followed by a ribbon cutting by time local identities John Collis and Noel Everson. Speeches followed by dignitaries including special guest Air Vice Marshall Glen Braz who grew up in Iluka and delivered a heartwarming address recollecting fond memories of his boyhood days followed by the unveiling of a commemorative plaque. Festivities continued with Cr Karen Toms launching a recently published book on the history of Iluka and Woody Head written by Museum Co-ordinator, Janet Hauser, cutting of the cake by President Marcia Hunter and Janet Hauser and concluded with a special rendition of "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" by the Iluka Ladies Dancing group who were dressed in as US service women. A wonderful day was had by all and I congratulate everyone involved.

ENDEAVOUR SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I congratulate the incoming student leadership team of Endeavour Sports High School on their appointment. Being democratically elected by your peers is an incredible achievement of which these students should be proud. I encourage them to make the most of this fantastic opportunity to contribute to their school community and to develop the skills that shape the community and professional leaders of the future. I use this occasion in NSW Parliament to acknowledge the new student leadership team for 2024, namely School Captains Crystal Woods and Semisi Cheekam, Vice Captains Allira Jones and Jackson Damcevski, Senior Prefects Katherine Reid, Sarah Etheridge, Kobey Freer, Louis Hogg, Jay Yarnold and Lucas Rego. I also recognise the school's Student Representative Council members including Miricah Murdoch, Taylor McMahon, Lucy De Coque, Olivia Trieu, Aaron Biradar, Zac Brealey, Anna McCrone, Canberra Yamasaki, Emmely Metirtikas, Neve Jenkins, Dane Corbin, Sasha Croft, Felicia Dimitriadis, Luca Croft, Tallulah Prentice, Byron Dollman, Aaron Moinie and Ryan Baber. I extend my best wishes to these student leaders as they continue to exemplify Endeavour Sports High School's motto of 'valuing individual potential [and] achieving personal best'.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE POLICE AREA COMMAND NSW 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 awards presented on the day was the NSW Police Medal which recognises ten years eligible service with clasps awarded for each additional five-year period thereafter. I commend our police officers that were recognised. I acknowledge the recipients of the NSW Police Medal namely Elleyse Clarke, Paul Rial, Joanne Warner, Shane Hole, Zoe Sanders, Mary Portelli, Kelly Swords and Kate White. I also acknowledge Shane Amor, Rennae Nicholson, Jason Paull and Emily Mackay for receiving their First Clasp to the NSW Police Medal and Carl Middleton, Adam Hucker, Ross Walters and Luke Stibbard for receiving their Second Clasp to the NSW Police Medal. Furthermore, I acknowledge Donna Prentice who received her Fourth Clasp to the NSW Police Medal marking an extraordinary 30 years' of service in the NSW Police Force. 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.

SUTHERLAND ROTARY CLUB

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)—I acknowledge the community mindedness of the members of the Sutherland Rotary Club, who support a range of local, national and international causes to create lasting change. Convening at both Diggers Miranda RSL and Sharks at Kareela, the Sutherland Rotary Club's members exemplify Rotary International's guiding principal of "service above all". The club's annual highlights include the highly successful Shire Vintage and Collectables Fair hosted at the Sutherland Basketball Stadium. Proceeds from Sutherland Rotary Club's fundraising events like the annual fair are directed to projects including participation in Sutherland Shire Council's Australia Day festivities, Breakfast for Shire Kids, and the End Polio now campaign. I recognise Sutherland Rotary Club's committee members for their dedication to facilitating a network for people committed to giving back. I recognise President Nouri Nader, Secretary Robert Richards, Treasurer Stephen Hooper and Directors John Barker, Warwick Parnell, Alan Heighway and Harden Erskine for their efforts. I commend Sutherland Rotary Club members for positively contributing to our community and extend my best wishes for the future.

MARONITES IN AUSTRALIA

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—The Maronite Eparchy of Australia celebrates its Golden Jubilee in 2023, marking fifty years of spiritual journey under the theme "The Maronites in Australia: A Journey of Holiness and Openness." After over a century of Maronite presence in Australia, the Holy See established the Maronite Eparchy in 1973, with the appointment of its first bishop. The Jubilee Year, commenced on 9 February 2023 with the Feast of St. Maroun, and has been focusing on a spiritual experience, featuring selected relics of saints for veneration, including Saints Maroun, Charbel, Rafqa, Nehmetallah, and Australia's first canonised saint, Mary of the Cross Mackillop. This celebration reflects gratitude for the support and preservation of Maronite religious and liturgical traditions by the Catholic Church of Australia. It encompasses various events across parishes and a visit from Maronite Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai in September 2023. The Jubilee Year aims to deepen faith, ignite spiritual fervor, encourage repentance, and renew commitment to spiritual heritage. The Maronite community's history of migration and faith is exemplified by their saints and provides inspiration for today's challenges. It is a call to open hearts to holiness and goodness in families, communities, and the world.

2ND IFA SHIELD

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)—I was delighted to attend the 2nd IFA Shield Football Tournament, at Granville Community Centre, in my electorate, on 16 September 2023. The Indian Fans' Alliance Shield Australia, created by the Indian Football Association, organised a football tournament as part of the 'Vande Bharat' program to celebrate the 75th 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (Celebrations of 75 years of Indian Independence) in Sydney in November 2022. This year, teams of Indian- Australians, Bangladeshi- Australians, and Nepalese-Australians participated. The matches displayed the camaraderie that transcends borders and cultures through the universal language of sport and it was clear players and spectators enjoyed the matches, The final took place between Bhaichung Bhutia XI and Chuni Goswami XI with Bhaichung Bhutia winning the match 1-0. East Bengal won the Sydney Granville Shield in all three and in women's football East Bengal girls won 2-1 and they clinched the title also by winning 2-0 in child's category. Thank to Strathfield Cllr Raj Datta for the kind invitation to attend, colleagues Member for Liverpool Charishma Kaliyand and Member for Strathfield Jason Yat-sen Li, Parramatta Lord Mayor Sameer Pandey, Cumberland Deputy Mayor Suman Saha for joining me at the event.
