



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday 12 October 2023**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Thursday 12 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*

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

**The SPEAKER:** Photographers are approved to cover question time today. Members should dress neatly.

*[Notices of motions given.]*

## *Bills*

### WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (WATER ACCESS LICENCE REGISTER) BILL 2023

#### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mrs Helen Dalton, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (10:19):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I introduce the Water Management Amendment (Water Access Licence Register) Bill 2023. As members know, I have spent my life on the land, and I know how precious Australia's water is. I know that without water our way of life in the regions cannot exist. Australian water should be used for the benefit of all of us. It should not be used as a way of getting rich through water trading schemes, and it certainly should not be in the hands of foreign governments. I will have more to say about that in a moment. Right now, water ownership is effectively secret, and, as we know, it is the people who are doing the wrong thing who like secrets. When I was first elected to this place in 2019, one of the most surprising things to me was the fact that I was not asked to declare my own water entitlements as a pecuniary interest. I found this bizarre, to be honest. I knew I was going to be voting on things that affected water in my electorate and in our State. I had to declare property and other business interests, but not water. Why were valuable water entitlements being hidden from public scrutiny?

Since 2019 I have had a very important win on this issue when it comes to transparency. Despite strong opposition to the idea from the former Government, through the Integrity Legislation Amendment Act 2022, I have been able to achieve legislative changes that require MPs like me, and all MPs in this place, to publicly declare our water entitlements. I am waiting for the Labor Government to make sure that water entitlements are included in the pecuniary interests register. Now we have to go further. Everyone who owns water needs to be publicly identified. At the heart of our democracy is the voter's right to know. We must never forget this. Sadly, however, it has become clear to me that a lot of rich and powerful people want to keep a system of secrecy over their water ownership because they are determined to keep pulling the wool over everyone's eyes. Right now, a person needs to provide more information to open a basic savings account at a local bank than they need to provide to get a water licence worth hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars. How is that okay?

The National Party, for reasons best known to itself, has always opposed an honest and transparent water licensing system, and in the previous Government the Liberal Party played along. Clearly, there are key donors to the National Party who do not want things to change. But things must change. Water secrecy is a threat to our national interest. There are very clear signs that Australian water is being secretly bought up along the Murray-Darling by Chinese business interests who have close ties to the Chinese communist government. A Chinese government company, COFCO Corporation, owns at least 7,000 megalitres of water in the Gwydir Valley, and that is just one corporation that we know about. Let that sink in. Foreign governments—some of them hostile to Australia—can buy and trade our most valuable natural resource. There are no restrictions. I have said it before, and I will say it again. The New South Wales Government has turned our State river system into a casino. Anyone in the world can buy our water, trade it and make a killing, and it is all being done under a cloak of secrecy.

One also has to wonder how much money is being laundered through water trades, when no-one can ever find out who is buying what, or why they are buying it. We should not believe that the Foreign Investment Review Board will help, because the board does not even bother to keep track of water ownership. It is not its job, apparently. It is no-one's job at the moment. That is why we need to pass the bill. It is not good enough for a company in the Cayman Islands to be able to buy large quantities of water while keeping the names of directors, board members and major shareholders a secret. If a corporation, foreign or domestic, wants to own Australia's most valuable natural resource, then we as the Australian taxpayers deserve to know who they are. The current system is absolutely mad, and it must change.

The bill will achieve a number of important things. The first group who will finally be made accountable by this bill, together with the integrity bill we passed last year, are elected members of the New South Wales Parliament. Under the provisions of the Water Management Amendment (Water Access Licence Register) Bill 2023, New South Wales MPs will be required to declare their water interests on the parliamentary pecuniary interest register. This includes any water MPs previously owned in the past five years, and also any water MPs' spouses may own. Voters will finally know whether MPs are acting in the voters' interest or in their personal interest.

The bill will also stop people and companies from hiding their identity when they apply for a licence. This is crucial. Voters have a right to know this information. The bill will also mean that all current licence holders will have to provide more information about company directors, shareholders and related corporations. That will also help to end the secrecy, once and for all. Crucially, the bill will change the way the online water register works, so that ordinary people will finally be able to search the water holdings of people, companies, local councils and government departments. That is the level of transparency we all need and deserve. I also add that the bill will still protect the privacy of regular mum-and-dad farmers by ensuring the public register does not publish personal phone numbers, emails or residential addresses.

Nothing is more precious to regional New South Wales than water. We must end the secrecy. We all deserve accountability. It is time for the water register to be run honestly and transparently. We have waited for far too long for a system like this. In 2004 all the State governments, together with the Federal Government, agreed to implement a transparent water register under the National Water Initiative. That was agreed in 2004. Almost two decades later, New South Wales has done nothing and is still dragging its feet. We must protect our water if we are going to support our growing population and protect Australia's long-term food security. This is a matter of national security. The bill is the answer to all those problems. The bill will finally stop the foreign buy-ups, the money laundering and the other secret, dodgy deals taking place along our rivers that are currently destroying regional communities. I call on every elected member in this place to do their homework and support the bill.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Business of the House*

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

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (10:29):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit Mr Gareth Ward to deliver his introduction and second reading speech for the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Diary Disclosure) Bill 2023 following the routine of business after question time today.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (10:30):** The Opposition agrees.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Bills*

#### **RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (RED FLEET) BILL 2023**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 14 September 2023.**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (10:30):** I lead for the Government in debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Red Fleet) Bill 2023. I indicate to the House that one of the first issues that crossed my path within a week of becoming Minister for Local Government was at a meeting with the New South Wales Auditor-General and her staff. They advised me that more than 40 councils—I think 43 is the figure—had qualified audits because they refused to provide, within their accounts, Rural Fire Service assets on

their balance sheet and did not provide the depreciation schedules, as required by the accounting standard AASB 116. It seems a dispute had developed between a number of councils, Local Government NSW, the Auditor-General and the Office of Local Government and the Rural Fire Service in respect of how rural fire assets should be accounted and why they should be accounted by local government.

Subsequent to that, in my meetings with various councils, mayors, general managers, joint organisations and the president of Local Government NSW the question of accounting of the red fleet, as they call it, which relates to rural fire assets, was continually raised with me. What I found peculiar was that I knew from the Auditor-General that a provision for the depreciation of Rural Fire Service assets that were vested in the council by virtue of the Rural Fires Act 1997 was required to be made. It did not affect a council's bottom line. It was not a depreciation that had to be funded. As I spoke to the various mayors and general managers who raised the issue with me, one of the things I found to be particularly troubling—and this relates to a number of issues in local government—was the complete lack of understanding of the way their financial and accounting systems worked.

Local Government NSW asked to be the owners of the red fleet, for reasons I will refer to later in this speech. Councils had no understanding of their rights and entitlements with respect to their involvement with the Rural Fire Service, nor did they know they had signed service agreements with the Rural Fire Service. Generally speaking, certainly in my time in local government—and, I imagine, also in the time of the member for Northern Tablelands—when a council goes to the Government seeking to advocate a position, to persuade the Government to change a position or to change the Treasurer's position, which is always difficult, they would be on the top of the material and the information to provide some assistance to the Minister to achieve their objectives.

Councils that advocated to me for changes when they did not know how things worked and were simply told by their bureaucracies, "This is on your balance sheet and you have to fund it"—which was untrue—did not allow me as the Minister for Local Government a pathway to follow. I was then frustrated because I sought from my own Government material about the red fleet and how it came about and I received the same advice and information that was received by my predecessors, although my predecessor received far more accurate information from Treasury than I initially received. I then sought further information from the Treasurer, who allocated some Treasury officers to provide me with information. I have continuously sought information about the history of the red fleet and how these circumstances presented themselves in order to try to affect some sort of fair reform.

This morning I spoke to the member for Northern Tablelands, who introduced the bill. I say to him that it is not the way to go. It will have considerable unintended consequences and there is a better way to deal with this public policy issue, which goes back—at least on a legislative basis—to about 1906. The member for Northern Tablelands does not come to this issue—as was pretty clear from the conversation I had with him this morning—from a political position of trying to advocate for country and National Party mayors to wedge the government of the day. He has been a member of this House since 2013, taking over from Richard Torbay. He was a Minister for more than four years, serving as Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales, Assistant Minister for Skills, and Minister for Tourism and Major Events. He was also the Mayor of Gunnedah for a number of years. So he comes to this place well skilled and experienced not just in local government but also in State government.

He said to me this morning that he pursued this issue in government unsuccessfully and the bill is the only avenue left open to him. Normally a new government would say, "Well, you have been in for 12 years. You had ample opportunity if you thought there was a problem. You were a Minister; why didn't you fix it?" But it does not work that way in all cases. I accept that the member for Northern Tablelands is genuine and that this is a last-ditch effort and the only vehicle he has available to him to try to effect some type of rational process for how the Rural Fire Service operates and is funded in this State. I will treat this issue with the respect that such an approach deserves.

Prior to 1997, bushfire fighting services in this State were a patchwork of more than 200 separate firefighting agencies, working under a loose umbrella with no chain of command. The core of that service then, as it is now, was volunteer brigades—currently, there are some 73,000 volunteers. They were organised along council district lines under the command of locally appointed fire control officers. In 1916 this Parliament amended the Local Government Act 1906 to provide for the prevention and mitigation of bushfires by authorising local councils to establish, manage and maintain these brigades. The establishment of the Bush Fires Act in 1930 granted local councils the authority to appoint bushfire officers with powers comparable to those held by the chief officer of the New South Wales Fire Brigade. Those fire control officers were responsible for bushfire management within their appointed local council areas.

Firefighting efforts were funded by the Bush Fire Fighting Fund, which was established in 1949, and financed by insurance companies, local councils and the New South Wales Government. A variety of State-run committees and councils oversaw bushfire operations, with members drawn from various government firefighting agencies, and council and volunteer representatives. Those groups developed legislation and technique but, in the

main, the responsibility for bushfire management was vested in individual local councils in dedicated bushfire areas, as determined under the 1909 bushfire Act.

In 1994 extreme weather conditions resulted in over 800 bushfires breaking out along the coast of New South Wales. More than 800,000 hectares of land and 205 homes were burnt; 120 people were injured and four people were killed, including a volunteer firefighter from the Wingello bushfire brigade. The financial cost of the disaster was estimated then at \$165 million. The lengthy coronial inquiry that followed, led by New South Wales Deputy State Coroner John Hiatt, recommended that the Government introduce a single entity responsible for the management of bushfires in New South Wales. On 1 September 1997 the Rural Fires Act was proclaimed, with Phil Koperberg being announced as the commissioner. The Act differed from the findings of the coronial inquiry in several important ways. In his second reading speech, then Minister for Emergency Services Bob Debus said:

On 28 February 1996 the then Senior Deputy State Coroner, Mr John Hiatt, presented his wide-ranging report to the Government on the 1994 emergency. That report contains 125 findings and recommendations. The deputy coroner's principal recommendation was that the Government should introduce a more cohesive and integrated command structure under the umbrella of a Rural Fire Service. He—

being the Coroner—

specifically suggested that local government should be removed from any role in the administration and management of the Rural Fire Service, and that ultimately the rural and urban fire services should be amalgamated.

The Government immediately rejected the last two propositions. However, the Minister said:

To have adopted them, in our view, would have undermined the very essence of the volunteer bush fire fighting movement, and removed the local administrative and community autonomy that goes hand in hand with the volunteer spirit and culture.

Indeed, in the Opposition's response, Kerry Chikarovski noted:

... it would be fair to say that the most significant problem with the draft bill was the strong perception that it both overrode local autonomy currently enjoyed by the brigades and sought to exclude local government from its traditional role in rural fire services.

Kerry Chikarovski also quoted the NSW Farmers Association Illabo branch, which said:

The concern expressed at the meeting was for one of self determination and local control. They [members] must have faith in the officers they choose to control any fire outbreaks, with the local knowledge that is available to them. They are concerned about the role of the future administration of the Bush Fire Services when they only want the administration to source the resources needed to fight fires and to be able to co-ordinate resources around the State as and when needed.

Brigade members must be able to control their own destiny as volunteers of a service that is a volunteer service and not one that is controlled by a system that is out of touch with the realities of a volunteer service dedicating itself to helping others in a time of need.

Mrs Chikarovski went on to say:

I accept the Minister's assurance that, in spite of his ability to determine expenditure levels in a rural fire district, as provided for in the bill, he will insist that the Rural Fire Service continues to consult local government authorities about resource levels, which are agreed to by both parties.

It should be pretty clear from those parts of *Hansard* that I have drawn to the attention of the House that the reason for the ongoing role for local government in the fighting of fires is because the Local Government and Shires Associations asked for it. That relationship is not limited to the creation of the Rural Fires Act either. In 2000 the Legislative Council inquired into the operations of the Rural Fire Service. The initial reason for that inquiry was the confusion in the Rural Fires Act 1997 as to whether or not the fire control officers reported to the general managers, who paid their salaries, or to the Rural Fire Service Commissioner, who directed the RFS across the State.

The upper House inquiry resolved the accountability issues by providing the option for fire control officers to become public servants on the public payroll, and providing for the direct line of accountability between those officers and the Rural Fire Service Commissioner. However, the inquiry made a series of other recommendations relating to the funding of RFS tankers and premises. After direct lobbying from the Local Government and Shires Associations, one of the key findings was that the RFS should enter into service agreements with councils. The Local Government and Shires Associations' position in its submission at the time was:

All fire fighting equipment to remain vested in the ownership of local councils and local councils continue to maintain the equipment. However, the management responsibility for equipment stays with the Commissioner under the Local Service Level Agreement.

In very specific forms, the very issue and the very ownership of what is termed the red fleet, which was raised in the 2000 upper House inquiry, were requested by local government itself again three years later in a further inquiry. The Local Government and Shires Associations' requests were adopted, and the service agreements were enabled by the Rural Fires Amendment Act 2000. On 17 November 2000 the then Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Emergency Services, on behalf of Minister Bob Debus, explained the purpose of the Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2000. He stated:

There are approximately 300 fire control staff employed by local government, with almost half being fire control officers [FCOs]. Fire control officers occupy a pivotal position. They are responsible, on behalf of local council general managers, for the day-to-day management of rural fire brigades. At the same time, they are the most important operational link between the Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service and volunteer firefighters. Unfortunately, this dual line of accountability has been the source of tension between some smaller rural councils and Rural Fire Service management.

Some councils claim that the dual accountability arrangements have led to conflicts because FCOs allegedly put the interests of the service before councils' interests. The reality, however, is that the Rural Fire Service must have clear lines of command, in line with the Coroner's recommendation.

...

For example, a local council could request the commissioner to fulfil its responsibilities for forming or disbanding brigades, determining the area in which brigades are to operate and performing administrative functions.

...

The principal Act will also be amended to include a new subsection 12A to enable the commissioner to enter into service agreements with any local council or councils responsible for a rural fire district or districts. The Government thinks it desirable for local councils to enter into service agreements. They will not, however, be compulsory. The agreements will in effect be contracts between the service and councils to carry out functions imposed on councils by the Rural Fires Act.

For example, a local council could request the commissioner to fulfil its responsibilities for forming or disbanding brigades, determining the area in which brigades are to operate and performing administrative functions. The service agreement could establish certain performance targets to be met and provide for an appropriate evaluation of results. Where a service agreement is in place the commissioner must report the performance results within three months of the end of the financial year. Service agreements will be flexible and will be developed to suit local needs.

I will come to the details of those service agreements that councils entered into. The mayors, councillors and joint organisations that I met had not been told by their own bureaucracy that they had entered into those agreements and were quite surprised. In fact, when I advised some of the members of this House who had made representations to me on behalf of councils in their electorates about the responsibilities under the service agreements, they were quite surprised too. I provided those members with a copy of their own council's service agreements. I also told those MPs how much money, in terms of grants, has been paid to those individual councils—something those members were also not told when they had received representations from those councils. I do not blame the elected representatives. They get sent on a path by those whom they employ and are not given the appropriate information.

However, I note that when I go through the structure of the Rural Fire Service and provide the House with the facts in relation to it, the end result is that, historically, you had local independent associations of people defending their own communities with their own assets and not a vast bureaucracy with headquarters in Sydney, which is what the structure of the Rural Fire Service has become. For the year ending June 2022, the Rural Fire Service recorded a membership of 1,993 rural fire brigades and 72,855 volunteers across the State, as well as 1,142 staff, with approximately 68 of those staff members also serving as RFS volunteers. That same year the service reported 4,000 firefighting appliances, 2,193 support vehicles, 47 bulk water carriers, 32 marine craft and 10 Rural Fire Service owned aircraft. On its website the RFS claims:

In partnership with the community and through the professionalism of its members, the RFS continues to grow and to improve—while always promoting the ethos of volunteering.

In the second reading speech for the Rural Fires Bill 1997, Minister Debus repeatedly referenced the volunteer spirit of the bushfire brigade. This volunteer ethos is more than a spirit or a recruitment tactic. The Rural Fire Service is structured to be self-reliant as much as possible. Significantly, section 15 of the Rural Fires Act regulates the formation of a rural fire brigade. Under section 15, a council forms the brigade for its rural fire district. It is only when a council fails or refuses to form a brigade that the commissioner must do so.

Section 21 of the Rural Fires Act confers power on an officer of the rural fire brigade to exercise functions at a fire incident or other emergency in a Rural Fire Service district based on the boundaries of the council for which the brigade was formed. This means that the brigades are able to self-respond to any incident within the rural fire district. It is only with the approval of the commissioner that they may respond to incidents outside the district. That is significant. In other words, the rural fire services that act within the district cannot take those resources outside the district. This is predicated on the fact that they are under the control of local councils and that the rural fire districts cannot be left unprotected.

Unless a fire is so large as to be outside the ability of the local brigade to control, which is known as a section 44 declaration, rural fire brigades are independent associations of persons who operate within a council area using council-owned assets to fight local fires. Volunteers sign up and become members of local brigades and they report to local brigade officers, who are elected and appointed under local brigade constitutions. In practice, as the Rural Fire Service has grown, the RFS has undertaken more responsibilities to perform its core duties. These days the RFS also informs local brigades of 000 calls in their districts; monitors hazard reduction activities identified in bushfire risk management plans; creates and maintains training and accredited courses;

centrally purchases and dispenses protective clothing, safety and firefighting equipment to brigades; and handles bushfire hazard complaints.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** It being 11.00 a.m., in accordance with standing and sessional orders debate is interrupted for question time. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Members*

### UNPARLIAMENTARY REMARKS

**The SPEAKER (11:01):** At the end of question time yesterday the member for Campbelltown brought to my attention and the attention of the House a complaint that certain words were audibly stated in the Chamber when the member for Port Stephens, in her ministerial role, was asked a question. I did not hear the words, but it has been confirmed that they were clearly audible in the Chamber. The context of the words was unparliamentary, and they demeaned the House.

We all came into the Fifty-Eighth Parliament with the intention to improve the behaviour of the House and the way it is perceived by the public. I remind members of that. Yesterday I asked whether any member wished to withdraw the comments and suggested that they could approach me outside the Chamber, but neither of those things have happened. I ask members to reflect on the comments and be more careful in their statements, particularly because of the nature of the portfolio and the offence that could be taken to those comments. At this stage, I draw a line under the incident and ask members to be more considered.

### MEMBER FOR HOLSWORTHY

**The SPEAKER:** I wish the member for Holsworthy all the best for her upcoming birthday. I am sure she will have some wonderful celebrations with her extensive family.

#### *Visitors*

### VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a warm welcome to guests of the member for Cootamundra in the gallery. I am sure Steph Cooke is watching from somewhere. They are members from the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils, including Councillor Rick Firman and Melissa Boxall from Temora Shire Council, Councillor Tony Quinn and Evelyn Arnold from Greater Hume Shire Council, Councillor Greg Verdon and Peter Veneris from Lockhart Shire Council and Councillor David McCann and Tony Donoghue from Coolamon Shire Council. I also welcome to the gallery Nellie Beggs and Leah Edwards, Sam Cross, Sharyn and Richard Nicholson, and Justin and Kerrin Rumore, who are guests of the member for Lake Macquarie. Yes, Steph Cooke is watching. She just sent me a message. I welcome Steph and hope she is well. I also welcome to the gallery guests of the member for Goulburn, Mayor Pam Kensit and Nathan McDonald from Upper Lachlan Shire Council.

#### *Question Time*

### MINISTER FOR POLICE AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:05):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. What powers does the Minister have as the police Minister under the Police Act 1990?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for North Shore will come to order. The member for Oatley will come to order. That is his one freebie.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 128 (2) (g). Members cannot ask a Minister for an expression of opinion.

**The SPEAKER:** Members will come to order. Opposition members will come to order. At this stage the question is in order and the Minister is quite capable of answering it. The Minister has the call.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:07):** I first and foremost start by saying, again, that I condemn the vicious attacks on innocent people in Israel. I am sickened, like most people, by the murderous savagery unleashed in this evolving conflict. The New South Wales Government supports the police explicitly. We will make sure that they are well resourced to keep our streets safe. That sentiment was passed to me last night at the vigil. I thank the community for being so gracious.

**Mr Mark Speakman:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Mark Speakman:** My point of order is under Standing Order 129, direct relevance. I did not ask about Israel or any of that. I asked what powers she has under the Police Act.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the point of order. I uphold the point of order but I note that it is reasonably early in the Minister's answer.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** As the police Minister, I will continue to support the police—not condemn them—resource them properly and make sure they do their job.

### RURAL AND REGIONAL EDUCATION

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (11:08):** My question is addressed to—

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for North Shore to order for the first time. Members will come to order. I need to hear the question from the member for Lismore.

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN:** 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 significant investment in regional education is supporting students?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:09):** I thank the wonderful member from Lismore for her question. She knows why it is so important to have a government that is committed to improving the educational outcomes for students, no matter where they live in New South Wales. It is well evidenced that students in regional communities face greater challenges than those who live in the city, but they all share one thing and that is that they were all let down by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government.

Whether it is the 40,000 teachers in regional New South Wales whose wages were suppressed by those opposite for more than a decade, school communities that were forced to merge like in Griffith or in Murwillumbah in the electorate of the member for Lismore, or communities that were let down time and time again because the government of the day did not invest in growing communities like Medowie or Googong in Queanbeyan, they were absolutely ignored. There was a lack of investment to keep up with growth. The Liberals and The Nationals can put on their R.M. Williams and akubras but the people of regional New South Wales finally have a government that is investing in them.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Upper Hunter is too boisterous.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** This Government is investing more than \$1.4 billion over the next four years in new and upgraded schools in regional New South Wales. Communities that were given false promises by those opposite finally have a government that is delivering the schools they need, like those in the electorate of the member for Monaro. We are very proud of what we are delivering at Googong and Jerrabomberra. In the electorate of the member for Port Stephens there will finally be a high school at Medowie. The previous Government was simply not listening.

I am not sure what the previous Government was doing when it came to listening to regional and rural communities that desperately needed this investment. Two weeks ago on Bathurst radio the former Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning complained about the \$750,000 that this Government has allocated to Bathurst. She said, "That's not really enough. There's not a lot allocated." How much did the previous Government allocate to the electorate of Bathurst? It allocated \$71,000. That is less than \$750,000. Well done. [*Extension of time*]

The most important thing we are doing for future educational outcomes of students in rural, regional and remote New South Wales is investing in the single biggest thing that will make a difference to what happens in the classroom, and that is the qualified teacher in front of those children. More than 40 per cent of schools in New South Wales are in rural and regional New South Wales. A lot of students will benefit from this historic teachers' pay deal. There will be more teachers in front of those students, fewer merged and cancelled classes, and less minimal supervision to make sure they are getting a quality education. This significant pay rise will deliver significant pay increases for teachers in rural and regional New South Wales who are now going to be paid properly.

Dubbo has almost 1,300 teachers; that is not a small number. The Northern Tablelands has the same, with almost 1,400 teachers. This is very significant. I am sure members of the Opposition would agree that those teachers staying is important to regional communities. The magic of this policy is that it will encourage young people studying at university to work in public primary and high schools in rural and regional New South Wales

because they are finally going to be paid what they are worth. That pay packet will keep them in schools where we need them. The Upper Hunter has more than 1,500 teachers. This Government is proud of what it is doing to support the frontline regional workforce of teachers in our classrooms. We are doing that to improve the educational outcomes of every child in New South Wales, whether they live in the city or they live in rural and regional New South Wales.

#### MINISTER FOR POLICE AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (11:14):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Does the Minister understand that she has any powers under the Police Act to give directions to the police commissioner in the management and control of the Police Force?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:14):** My role as police Minister is to set the policy framework to ensure that our community is safe, to work with the police and to make sure they are resourced correctly. I will not be giving directions on matters that relate to the police's role in keeping our streets safe. The Opposition's line of questioning here is absolutely ridiculous. The Opposition's line of questioning here is out of line.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** The reality is, and we all know, that operational matters are for the police and will remain with the police.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has concluded her answer. However, as the member for Wahroonga was on his feet before she finished, I will hear his point of order.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** I did not ask the Minister how she would exercise her powers. I asked her: Does she understand that she has any powers? She has not answered the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Wahroonga. That may well be the case, but it is not unusual during question time. The Minister has concluded her answer and therefore it is a moot point. I will not debate the issue.

#### OPERATION SHELTER

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (11:16):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister inform the House of the latest initiatives by the NSW Police Force to ensure the safety of our Jewish community in light of recent events?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:16):** I thank the member for Heathcote for her question and for her interest. I know that she is genuinely interested in this issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for North Shore to order for the second time.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I reiterate my condemnation of the vicious attacks perpetrated on innocent Israelis by members of Hamas. I acknowledge the far-reaching impact that these atrocities are having on Jewish people across the world, including the Jewish community in New South Wales. Last night politics was put aside as leaders from all sides of politics stood united in solidarity with the Jewish community at a vigil in Dover Heights. It was profoundly moving, everybody agrees. This is a community whose hearts are broken. They are grieving and frightened, and we need to let them know they have our support. They have the support of the New South Wales Government in spades, and the NSW Police Force is pulling out all stops to wrap around this community and give them protection and reassurance.

Yesterday the NSW Police Force announced Operation Shelter, which has been established to ensure community safety. Operation Shelter is being led by Assistant Commissioner Scott Whyte; he is one of the State's most experienced police officers. Operation Shelter will coordinate high-visibility policing operations at protest activity as well as engage with community groups to make decisions about the best ways to ensure their safety. The operation will also oversee Strike Force Mealing, which was established this week to investigate offences that may have been committed at Monday night's protests. I know the Jewish community is concerned about safety but let me be unequivocal: There is no place for racism or antisemitism in New South Wales.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** There is no place for behaviour that seeks to intimidate, threaten or instil fear. Members of the House may have seen social media footage this week of a very ugly incident in Bellevue Hill involving young men who had an Israeli flag on their car. I advise the House that the NSW Police Force



investigated and yesterday charged a man in relation to that incident. He was charged with stalking, intimidation, intending fear and physical harm, and was refused police bail and will appear in court this morning.

#### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (11:19):** My question is directed to the Premier. How will voting yes for the Voice this Saturday improve the lives of all people in Australia, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:20):** I thank the member for Sydney for his question and acknowledge his support for constitutional change and a vote for yes on Saturday. I acknowledge also the previous Premier's support for constitutional change, and the Leader of the Opposition's principled, and I think courageous, support for constitutional change in Australia.

*[A member interjected.]*

No, put politics to one side. That was not an easy decision for the Opposition to make. It was considered, and it deserves to be recognised in Parliament. In support of this constitutional change, I recognise the decision made by the Leader of the Opposition and former Premier. I make clear that this modest change will make a massive difference for Indigenous Australians. It is important to reflect on the fact that Closing the Gap data shows that in New South Wales the life expectancy gap is 9.3 years for Aboriginal males and 7.6 years for females. Despite some narrowing of the gap, this improvement to the national target of no gap in life expectancy is not on track, regrettably and shamefully, for males or females in New South Wales.

In this State, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census was 38 per cent, which is well below the target of 55 per cent. It is obviously terrible to report to the House that during the period 2018 to 2022 suicide was the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children—27 per cent of deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were due to suicide. Voting yes gives Indigenous Australians a seat at the table. It means that when decisions are made at the Commonwealth level there is direct engagement with First Nations people, so we can see change.

By any objective measure—whether we speak to the Prime Minister, the previous Government or Indigenous leaders in this State and around the country—what we are doing is not working. So we must give this change a chance. The point I make about this constitutional change is that it will make no difference to our successful representative parliamentary democracy. It will not infringe on the House of Representatives or the Senate. The democratic institutions that have been built up over generations will remain in place. These are cherished institutions, and we need them in this country. But adding this Indigenous Voice to Parliament means that we would be in a position— *[Extension of time]*

Allowing a Voice to Parliament will mean that for the first time there will be a direct opportunity for the Government, minor parties and the crossbench—the Australian Parliament—to engage with the people whose lives, in many respects, depend on government support, government policy and changes in directions. We can all admit that the status quo is not working. There has been a lot of debate about whether this is a big or a little change, whether it is very significant or minor. I would say that for the vast majority of Australians it is not a big change to constitutional arrangements, but for First Nations Australians it is a massive change.

I completely respect people who have not made up their mind. It is important to have detailed and deep engagement on issues that deal particularly with the Constitution. Having a discerning attitude to constitutional change is fair enough. Far from being condemned for that, understanding, seeking information and being informed about that constitutional change before we make that decision is entirely understandable and should be appreciated by any side of this political debate. But to those who have not made up their mind, I say this is a positive vote for change that will make a meaningful difference to the First Nations people of this country.

#### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (11:24):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty. Noting the Premier's previous answer, will the Minister advise the House on the importance of supporting the Indigenous Voice to Parliament?

**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) (11:24):** I thank the member for The Entrance for his question and for his interest in an issue that is important to the future of our nation. Together with other Labor MPs, I took part in the recent yes walk on the Central Coast, along with hundreds from our community. It was a great turnout. It was great to see the Central Coast community come together to support the Voice. I acknowledge and thank the Premier for his leadership on the issue and for

his commitment to closing the gap and improving the lives of Aboriginal people in New South Wales. This Government is unwavering in its belief that we must work with Aboriginal people to solve issues that impact them.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to what we now call Australia stretches back thousands of years. For the Aboriginal people of New South Wales, connection to land and sea began in the Dreamtime, when ancestral spirits progressed over the land, creating life and forming the country, laws and government of its people. Since colonisation, our shared history has been marred by trauma and injustice. Dispossession, disease, massacres, dislocation, assimilation, elimination of culture and language, and stolen children have been legacies of past policies. All are consequences of a deafness to Aboriginal voices. The 1967 referendum correctly counted Aboriginal people as part of our population. For the first time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could be counted as citizens and could have laws made for them by the Commonwealth. Both of these changes to the Commonwealth Constitution were basic acknowledgements of human rights.

Since then, we saw land rights granted in New South Wales in 1983. The Mabo case ushered in a new era of native title in 1994. We saw over 250,000 Australians cross the Harbour Bridge in 2000 in support of reconciliation. New South Wales was the first State or Territory to apologise to Stolen Generations in 1997 following the Bringing Them Home report. The National Apology to the Stolen Generations was delivered in 2008. Since 2008, there has been a strong focus on closing the gap to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The referendum this weekend is the next important step on the journey towards a reconciled nation. It is an opportunity for Australians to make history together.

A yes vote will recognise 65,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to this land. It will establish a practical path to better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It will strengthen our nation's birth certificate—the Constitution. The Uluru Statement from the Heart clearly sets out why this change is needed. [*Extension of time*]

It states:

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take our rightful place in our own country. When we have power over destiny, our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

I believe the Voice proposal emerging from this historic gathering is a generous offer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to walk together with all of us for a better future. This weekend Australians have a chance not only to make history but also to make a difference. Health research demonstrates that when we take into account all of the usual negative factors, such as access to health services and education levels et cetera, there is still an unexplained gap in outcomes. A significant explanation is the loss of what is called "locus of control", meaning people in the system, when they have lost control in their lives or are excluded from decision-making, experience chronic stress, premature ageing and a range of other negative factors.

Using this logic, the Voice is about returning a sense of locus of control back to Aboriginal communities. It is about making sure they are part of the answer. It is about them making decisions together and not having things done to them. We know that when Aboriginal people have a direct say on issues that affect them we get better outcomes. That is in the research. It is not a secret. The research shows us that when they have a direct say they get better outcomes. This is a chance for all of us to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people, not just in New South Wales but in Australia. Aboriginal people have advocated for constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament for some time. This is not new; it has been part of a long discussion. Let us take the politics out of the referendum on Saturday and focus on the real issues. It is time to say yes to a Voice to Parliament.

### ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (11:30):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Did or did the Minister not personally tell any Jewish community leader on Monday that the Jewish community should stay away from the CBD of Sydney?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:30):** No, I did not. Again, I want to reiterate that I condemn these vicious attacks on innocent people in Israel. It is sickening me, like it is everybody in this Chamber, that this murderous savagery has been unleashed on innocent people. I condemn what is happening, and I support the people of Israel.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (11:31):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice, in his capacity representing the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, and Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is delivering on its election commitment to enshrine emissions reductions targets in law and establish an independent Net Zero Commission?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (11:32):** I do not carry business cards because I am not able to fit all that on one! I thank the member for Granville for her question. She is incredibly passionate about the environment and about the future of this planet and renewable energy. I am glad to hear from her that her solar panels are working fine at home. The Minns Labor Government took two significant commitments to the last election. One was to legislate our 2030 target to cut emissions by 50 per cent from 2005 and to achieve net zero by 2050. The other was to establish a strong, expert independent Net Zero Commission to monitor and advise government on the progress of achieving those climate targets. Today the Minns Labor Government does that by introducing the landmark Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 into Parliament.

Climate change is a massive threat to all of us and real action is needed. We know this; the community knows this. We just need to think about the events of the past few years, about the scenes of devastation, the bushfires and the floods. We just need to think about the Black Summer bushfires that burnt over five million hectares of land in New South Wales and burnt or displaced about three billion animals. In February 2022 the most significant flood event in recent history devastated Lismore and the Northern Rivers. We saw that reappear in the Hawkesbury and also in the Central West. We are currently living through the hottest spring on record, with temperatures predicted to be about 36 degrees in Sydney today. The science is unequivocal. Climate change is here, and the Government of New South Wales will act on it.

The new Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill, which Minister Sharpe will introduce in the other place, will commit New South Wales to strong action to protect our climate. The 2030 and 2050 targets in the bill are critical to New South Wales capturing the huge economic benefit of the clean energy transition. The bill will help attract private investment. It will put downward pressure on power bills and generate strong and secure jobs growth. The Minns Labor Government is already taking firm action by investing \$1.8 billion to facilitate the energy transition and develop a comprehensive Consumer Energy Strategy.

The bill will also establish the Net Zero Commission, which will be a respected independent body that provides expert advice to government on our State's progress. The Parliament must create a transparent mechanism to deliver the clean energy and storage that we need now and well into the future. The bill is part of a long-term solution to the current crisis. *[Extension of time]*

It will hold the Government, the bureaucracy and the Parliament to account for its performance and real action on climate change. The previous Government, though it talked it up, shirked its responsibility on climate risk until the last minute, when former Minister Kean talked the talk but did not walk the walk on climate action.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** I remind the House that members opposite actually voted against a bill like this. They can say whatever they want, but it came to Parliament and they voted against it. They did not walk the walk, they only talked the talk.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** The previous Government pursued headlines over policy. Even while the Federal Government, New Zealand and other States legislated emissions reductions targets, the former Government remained obstinate. Legislating net zero provides certainty to international investors looking to support green jobs and green growth. Attracting this investment is critical to reaching net zero. If we do not act, New South Wales will get left behind. That is why Minister Sharpe commissioned the energy check-up to ensure that New South Wales has the right policy settings and programs to deliver a timely and cost-efficient transition of the electricity sector, and that it manages any residual risks to reliability and price in the short term.

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

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** The significant climate bill that Minister Sharpe will introduce in the other place is a further step in securing a net zero future. The Minns Labor Government is committed to a net zero future and looks forward to Parliament passing the bill after the committee inquiry process concludes. I remind all those members opposite who interjected that, when a bill like this came up last year, they all voted against it. I hope that this time they do the right thing and stand up for the future of New South Wales.

### ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (11:37):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Yesterday during question time the Minister said, "My responsibility is to keep law and order in New South Wales as Minister." The Minister has not so far, but will she ever personally apologise to the Jewish community for telling them to stay away from the city while allowing terrorist supporters to vilify Jewish people at one of the country's most iconic landmarks?

**The SPEAKER:** I am happy for the Minister to answer the question if she chooses to do so, but it contains a number of elements that go close to offending against the standing orders.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:38):** I will, thank you, Mr Speaker. Yesterday I apologised to those in the Jewish community who ongoingly feel unsafe in New South Wales. But it is important that the House knows that all of us have the same position on this. We all condemn these vicious attacks on innocent people in Israel. We are all sickened by the murderous savagery unleashed in this evolving conflict. We have all been very clear that anybody who celebrates the murder of innocent civilians has no place on our streets. We have all been clear that there is no place for antisemitism, or behaviours that seek to intimidate, threaten or instil fear. We all attended the vigil for Israel last night. It was an incredibly solemn event that allowed us to come together in solidarity with the Jewish community.

**Ms Kellie Sloane:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. I understand and respect what the Minister is saying but she has not answered the question, which is about whether she will apologise. She gave a non-apology. That is not an apology.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Vaucluse will resume her seat. There is no point of order. While the Minister perhaps did not address the matter to the satisfaction of the questioner, she addressed it directly. I am less tolerant of points of order during this answer, because the question was only very marginally in order. The Minister will continue her answer.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I urge those opposite to end the blatant politicisation of these events.

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** That community is grieving. It needs our support. It needs our protection. It does not want to see this issue politicised any further. Enough is enough. We need to focus on bringing people together.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I have finished my answer.

**The SPEAKER:** I will not hear the point of order from the member for Hornsby.

**Mr Matt Kean:** I stood up before the Minister finished.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Hornsby will resume his seat in the Chamber or take a seat outside it.

### HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (11:41):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Will the Minister inform the House about how the Minns Labor Government is improving patient outcomes and reducing pressure on emergency departments?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:41):** I thank the member for Blue Mountains. I acknowledge that one of her sons is a paramedic and contributed to the virtual clinical care unit that I had a look at this morning. I congratulate him on that. Last night I was at Fairfield Hospital. There were no TikToks last night.

**Mr Paul Scully:** They recognised you.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I just made a few quick checks. I thank the crew at the hospital late last night. The emergency department was running pretty well. There was good patient flow. One of the challenges they spoke to me about was having a lot of triage categories 4 and 5. Those are generally GP-type illnesses and issues that they have to manage every day. Today I will tell the House what we are doing from a New South Wales Government perspective to open up some of those channels and alternative pathways to ensure that people do not always have to go to an emergency department or access a paramedic.

I was at Gladesville this morning announcing an expansion to the Virtual Clinical Care Centre unit there. What that does is very simple but particularly important. It was established by the former Government and we are now expanding it. It was established during COVID and was shown to work. When people who do not necessarily need a paramedic call 000—and I acknowledge the Health Services Union and Adam Hall, who is in the gallery today—there is an opportunity for a highly skilled clinician to be able to intervene and provide an alternative pathway, whether that is through one of our urgent care services, a GP referral or a range of different means that do not require them to attend an emergency department or receive help from a paramedic. That is good for the system, but it is very good for the patient because it is about delivering the right care at the right place at the right time. We cannot continue to run emergency departments in the way they are being run. We are seeing a reduction in bulk-billing and GPs. That is a fact. *[Extension of time]*

What that means for places like Fairfield emergency department, where I was last night, is that more and more patients are going there for issues that should traditionally be dealt with through a GP. We on this side of the House are not just looking down the road and pointing the finger to Canberra, because it will not solve the problem. We are rolling out urgent care services as fast as we can across New South Wales. We are expanding virtual care services, including innovative virtual models for kids, making sure that paediatric patients have an opportunity to access care without always having to go to an emergency department. As the father of a frequent flyer, that is a fantastic service.

But we are doing more. We are also investing in geriatric outreach services. That is important because it allows geriatric and aged-care patients to have care delivered in their home or residential care setting, avoiding a trip to our emergency departments and avoiding the need for a paramedic to come and see them. We are going to look at every avenue to open up additional pathways and treatment options for people to access care in New South Wales. In fact, Commissioner Morgan said something very important today. He wants to see an ambulance service that is not just about taking people to hospital but also about providing an alternative path to going to hospital in the first place. The New South Wales Government is going to work very closely with the NSW Ambulance, the team at NSW Health and communities across the State to make sure that we open up those alternative pathways and that people can access the right care at the right place at the right time.

#### ANTISEMITISM

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:46):** My question is directed to the Premier. Is there a place in any government for sympathisers with antisemites?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:46):** Antisemitism is a scourge and we need to battle it wherever we find it. Ultimately, as was demonstrated by many speakers last night at the memorial in eastern Sydney, members of the Jewish community in New South Wales face antisemitism in many cases on a daily basis and, regrettably, some of that was seen on the streets of Sydney in the past 72 hours. It is a responsibility of everybody to fight antisemitism.

#### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND PLANNING SYSTEM

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (11:47):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister advise the House on the Minns Labor Government's investment in artificial intelligence and how it will help improve the planning assessment system in New South Wales to deliver more affordable housing?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:47):** I thank the member for Strathfield for his question. He understands the intergenerational disadvantage that is created when you do not have enough homes. After all, he is a member who would love his kids to be able to live near him in the future, not be forced to live with him forever into the future. The Minns Government is confronting the housing crisis we inherited from the previous Government. Over the past 12 years under the former Government, the speed of housing approvals got slower and slower, and the list of agencies and Ministers involved in planning decisions got longer and longer.

The previous Government left us with a confused and confusing planning system. Too many agencies reported to too many Ministers. Our first action was to address that, putting all the relevant planning agencies under the responsibility of the planning Minister. But it is going to take a lot of work for us to produce by 2029 the 377,000 new homes that we need under the National Housing Accord. We are trying to achieve it in the context of inheriting an almost 70 per cent increase in development application assessment times over the past two years under the previous Government. The average went from 69 days in July 2021 to 116 days in March 2023. I am thankful that it is starting to come down. Confronting that housing crisis means we have to confront the decision-making process that underlies our planning system. To do that we need to take advantage and look at the opportunities that new technologies like artificial intelligence [AI] provide us.

**The SPEAKER:** There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** The expanded use of data is one of the five biggest forces shaping the Australian economy. I notice that this week members opposite have not asked questions about the budget. They must be pretty happy with it, like we are. There was \$5.6 billion allocated to artificial intelligence. We know that members opposite are really in touch with artificial intelligence, because they use ChatGPT as their chief policy development officer. I am told they like it so much, they are putting it in charge of tactics next week. They really needed it this week, but they are putting it in charge next week.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** Point of order: My point of order relates, firstly, to Standing Order 129. This has absolutely nothing to do with the question asked. Secondly, the Minister should direct his comments through the Chair and not to Opposition members.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold both parts of the point of order.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** I am sorry that talking about artificial intelligence, which is the crux of the question, has upset people.

**Mr Jason Li:** I request an extension of time.

**The SPEAKER:** If the Minister will come back to the leave of the question, two minutes is granted.

**Mr PAUL SCULLY:** Artificial intelligence can help us by making the system work more smoothly. It can improve the input to the planning system, which will help us get decisions more quickly. For example, of the nearly 50 applications accepted in the Regional Housing Flying Squad program—and I acknowledge the previous Government for developing that—additional information was required for around 30 per cent of proposals and the average time taken with that was an additional 42 days. The saving just from not having to request that additional information is 6,300 days, or around 17 years.

That is a real change that we can get into the planning system to make sure that we have that decision-making. That is without the broader application of artificial intelligence to faster data analysis in transport, health or education services, so that the planning system can keep up and better reflect the changing needs of communities and community demands. It will only ever be an adjunct, a support and a help to the good and detailed work that our planners are doing. The work that the Government is planning and doing has been welcomed. The New South Wales division of the Property Council of Australia welcomed the new AI project and said:

... NSW Government investment in AI will help our troubled NSW planning system deliver a quicker assessment and approval timeframes for proposed development.

Business NSW also banked it as one of the wins for its advocacy. AI will provide much faster and more accurate data collection, from which we can learn, use and make improvements to our assessment process. This will position New South Wales as a leader in the application of this new technology when it comes to transforming our planning system, just like we are leading the country with our energy efficiency standards in new buildings. I encourage members opposite to join us in supporting the new Rules as Code system to modernise the State planning system, just as soon as they work out what ChatGPT is all about.

## MENTAL HEALTH

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (11:53):** My question is directed to the Premier. Everyone in the Chamber acknowledges that we can always do better when it comes to supporting those with mental health challenges. Given October is Mental Health Month, what is the Government doing to support such people as New South Wales Israeli, Palestinian and Aboriginal people, who may be facing heightened anxiety and stress at this time?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:53):** I will take the question on notice.

## CYBERSECURITY

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (11:53):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is helping people to stay protected against hackers?

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (11:53):** I thank the member for Prospect for his question. I know he has a deep interest in the importance of digital security. Cybersecurity presents a significant global threat to governments, businesses and individuals. Threat actors are constantly enhancing their methods in an exponential way. This threat is not theoretical. We have seen it with data breaches at Optus, for example, with

9.8 million customers affected; Medibank, with 9.7 million current and former customers affected; and Latitude Financial Services, with 14 million records containing personal information compromised. Nationally in 2021-22, a cybercrime report was received every seven minutes. That is up 13 per cent. The Government needs to concern itself with not only the cybersecurity of its departments and agencies, but also that of the private sector and what it can do to support businesses.

To this end, ID Support NSW is a business unit to help individuals recover from the adverse impacts of identity misuse and data breaches, as well as strengthening the security of their identity and personal information. This is because so many data breaches arise from basic mistakes, including weak password protection. Financial losses to businesses as a result of email compromise jumped to over \$98 million in 2021-22. In 2022 over 28,000 people in New South Wales reported identity theft and phishing to Scamwatch. It takes customers an average of 34 hours to try to recover their identity. The ID Support NSW team is helping people choose more secure passwords to better protect their emails, bank accounts and social media accounts, with the launch of the Password Strength Tester tool. It was launched as part of Cyber Security Awareness Month.

**The SPEAKER:** Government members, particularly the member for Rockdale, will come to order.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** It will test how long it will take on average for a hacker to crack a password using special characters. We can make passwords longer, add more numbers and special characters and avoid predictable words to improve the protection of important information. The Password Strength Tester tool is completely anonymous and the New South Wales Government will never collect, track, store or send passwords anywhere. As Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government I get regular reports on the condition of potential cybersecurity risks for members of Parliament. It is clear that I will need to refer many members to the Password Strength Tester. We have had a rough week, so I will go for a bit of humour. It would take a hacker seconds to guess the password of the member for Rockdale.

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

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** I ask for an extension of time. I am very interested in knowing more about this.

**The SPEAKER:** I must consider whether we need an extra two minutes of the Minister's forecast comic relief. If it is only a momentary lapse into comedy, I will accept it. An additional two minutes is granted.

**Mr JIHAD DIB:** We do need a laugh and a little bit of humour. I say to the member for Rockdale that the password "stavros123" is not really a strong one. I know the member for Lane Cove is an analogue guy in a digital world, but the password "Robbo" does not really work. However, he gets extra points for using a capital R. I know the member for Wagga Wagga is working on a new password now, but I have to say "whatsupDoc" is not really a good one either. The member for Tweed, with all our love, has "justgotmarried". He could probably change that password real soon.

*[Members interjected.]*

Oh, for the third time. Everyone knows the Deputy Premier's passion at the moment; "mobilefreezone" was pretty easy to pick as well. But in some good news for the member for Wahroonga, I put into the password tester "alisterforleader". Guess what? It has never appeared in a data breach. Clearly, it is an idea whose time is yet to come. I confess, on my own journey I put in "#dadjokes". It said it will take 15 hours to process, which is about the same time it normally takes for someone to laugh at my jokes.

There is a lot that the Government is doing. Cybersecurity is incredibly important. I ask people to please go online and have a look at the Password Strength Tester tool. Put in a number, a capital letter or a different character. We have had a bit of a laugh about it today, but the Government is serious. We have invested a lot of money into cybersecurity. For example, the Department of Education through the NSW Education Standards Authority will invest over \$70 million to ensure that we do not have cyber breaches. We have Cyber Security NSW working with all agencies as well as businesses to try to strengthen security. The risks are real. We can have a bit of a laugh, but it starts with passwords. I implore everyone to get better passwords.

### ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (11:59):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Why did the Minister not direct the acting police commissioner to stop the pro-Hamas mob descending on the Opera House on Monday?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (12:00):** I thought we had finished question time, but it is good that we have not.

**The SPEAKER:** I think a lot of us were hoping that, but unfortunately the clock does not lie.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** True. The police managed the situation as best as they could. It was very volatile, and they dealt with what was before them. I have already answered this question. Clearly, the member has not been listening or she would not have asked the question again. The police make operational decisions and I support them. The Government supports them, and we will make sure they are well resourced.

*Petitions*

**PETITIONS RECEIVED**

**The CLERK:** I announce that the following paper petition signed by 500 or more persons has been lodged for presentation:

**Barraba Health Care Services**

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to provide funding for medical and mental health care services for the Barraba community, received from **Mr Kevin Anderson**.

**The SPEAKER:** Pursuant to the earlier resolution, the House will now proceed to the introduction of a bill and the delivery of a second reading speech by the member for Kiama.

*Bills*

**INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT (MINISTERIAL DIARY DISCLOSURE) BILL 2023**

**First Reading**

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

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (12:02):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Ministerial Diary Disclosure) Bill 2023 seeks to strengthen the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to enshrine transparency measures in legislation that go the heart of matters raised in previous ICAC inquiries, ensuring integrity in government and public confidence in the decision-making processes. The bill will require, under the New South Wales ministerial code of conduct, the publication of information relating to meetings involving Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries.

The bill ensures four basic principles. Firstly, it ensures an increase in transparency and public trust, requiring the actions of elected and appointed officials to align with their public duties and responsibilities. Secondly, it ensures accountability. If officials are making decisions influenced by certain groups or individuals, disclosure helps highlight any potential conflicts of interest. Thirdly, it ensures informed public debate, providing public access to information that informs debate on policy decisions. Finally, it ensures the prevention of undue influence. Put simply, lobbyists should not be able to meet in secret with officials. Disclosure can deter undue influence by lobbyists and promote decision-making that genuinely reflects public interest. In her introduction to the Trust and Democracy in Australia report, Daryl Karp, AM, then director of the Museum of Australian Democracy, said:

Trust is the glue that facilitates collective action for mutual benefit. Without trust we don't have the ability to address complex, long-term challenges. Trust is also closely tied to democratic satisfaction.

Ms Karp went on to observe that the erosion of trust in key institutions and social leaders, as well as satisfaction in democracy, had more than halved in a decade. Indeed, in the report it was found that less than half of the population was satisfied with democracy and, furthermore, only 20 per cent trusted politicians. Those findings were confirmed by evidence globally across 140 countries, with Australia placing eighty-fifth out of 134 countries for its political trust, compared with fourteenth out of 144 countries for trust in scientists. These findings should concern members in this place.

The report went on to observe that there is a perception that State public authorities or government bodies are involved in corruption. The report reached two key conclusions about democracy and trust. Firstly, there is a democratic values-practice legitimacy gap. It is the quality of democratic practice that is struggling in Australia and not its society. Secondly, there is a cultural values gap, and a corresponding need to find common ground around those democratic values that transcend cultural divisions such as electoral integrity, public accountability, transparency and the rule of law.



We in this place strongly believe in transparency and accountability, so I trust the bill will receive support from anyone who genuinely believes in protecting trust and confidence in government. The requirement for ministerial diary disclosure has never been enshrined in law, and does not presently extend to Parliamentary Secretaries, who are part of the Executive Government. I refer to the findings and recommendations made following ICAC's Operation Eclipse, which investigated the regulation of lobbying, access and influence in New South Wales and potential enhancements to the Lobbying of Government Officials Act 2011, also known as the LOGO Act. Like Operation Eclipse, the bill does not seek to target any individual that may have engaged in corrupt conduct. Rather, it aims to minimise the risk of corruption and nefarious influence through transparency, providing information to citizens of New South Wales and strengthening trust in our governmental process.

There were nine key findings and 29 recommendations made by the then Chief Commissioner of ICAC, the Hon. Peter Hall, QC, following Operation Eclipse. The former Government supported all the recommendations. Time does not permit a full discussion on the findings and recommendations, and the scope of the report goes well beyond this bill, but I highlight some key recommendations that the bill touches on. Recommendation 12 stated:

That the diary and overseas travel information of ministers and parliamentary secretaries should be published:

- monthly, not quarterly
- in a single, searchable document or database formatted for easy access to enable public scrutiny
- displaying each minister's name against his/her portfolio.

Recommendation 13 stated:

That the NSW Government creates a pre-set menu of options that must be used to indicate the purpose of each meeting disclosed in the diary summaries of ministers. These options could be based on the categories of lobbying set out in s 4(1) of the LOGO Act or another classification that adequately covers the types of disclosable meetings held by ministers. The individual ministers ultimately should be responsible for supplementing the indicated entry by adding a clear description of the specific purpose of the meeting.

Recommendation 21 stated:

That the requirement for ministers and parliamentary secretaries to publish summaries from their diaries should be set out in the regulation to the LOGO Act rather than a Premier's Memorandum. The lobbying regulator should be responsible for compliance.

I have taken the time to bring to the House a copy of the Premier's recent disclosure summary based on the terms of the Premier's memorandum. The quality of the document and the information it contains should be improved in accordance with the above recommendations, particularly in terms of providing the purpose of the meeting, including any lobbying by lobbyists. While the Premier's memorandum makes an attempt at transparency and disclosure, which has been the practice since July 2014—and I point out we are only one of two States that do this—the bill will make it a statutory requirement.

Given that Parliamentary Secretaries have greater access to Ministers and Cabinet processes than other members of Parliament—having been both a Minister and Parliamentary Secretary, I am well aware of this—it is important that meetings with lobbyists are also disclosed. As mentioned, the bill is not about pointing fingers but highlighting and minimising corruption risks, as indicated by ICAC through Operation Eclipse. If the new Labor Government does not want to make the mistakes of the last Labor Government—*[Time expired]*

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** Debate is interrupted for general business notices of motions for bills. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a future day.

## **RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (RED FLEET) BILL 2023**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (12:10):** Earlier in debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Red Fleet) Bill 2023 I was dealing with the structure of the Rural Fire Service. I effectively summarised by saying that the Rural Fire Service is made up of local independent associations of people historically defending their own communities with their own assets, not occurring with some vast bureaucracy in headquarters in Sydney. I was making the point that volunteers sign up to become members of local brigades and report to brigade officers, who are elected or appointed under the local brigade's constitution. In practice, as the Rural Fire Service has grown, it has undertaken more responsibilities to perform its core duties.

These days the RFS informs local brigades of 000 calls in their district; monitors hazard reduction activities identified in bushfire risk management plans; creates and maintains training and accreditation courses; centrally purchases and dispenses protective clothing, safety and firefighting equipment to brigades; and handles bushfire hazard complaints. Structurally, however, the Rural Fire Service to this day operates as a set of local institutions with an overarching authority. To simply remove local councils from that relationship is to completely and

fundamentally change the structure of the Rural Fire Service. This should not be attempted without due diligence to how this amendment would change the functioning of the services.

The issue of the responsibilities of councils is fundamental and not necessarily understood by many of the councils, particularly their mayors and councillors, that I have spoken to. Councils have a significant responsibility for bushfire prevention and management as landowners and management. Many of the specific landholdings that councils have responsibility for are fire trails and asset protection zones. The obligations on councils include the management of fire trails and fuel loads, and addressing complaints. Councils also participate in bushfire management committees for rural fire districts, established by the Rural Fire Service, based around one or more council boundary.

The bushfire management committees have the responsibility to prepare and oversee the bushfire management plan for the district, setting out the fire response strategy, the hazard reduction strategy and the management of bushfire risks, amongst others. That responsibility has always been local government's responsibility, because they asked for it. It is a fundamental responsibility of the operation of rural fire districts, which are, in effect, council areas. This occurs by virtue of section 15 of the Rural Fires Act. Subsection (1) states:

- (1) A local authority may form one or more rural fire brigades for any rural fire district constituted for its area or part of its area.

Rural fire brigades in rural fire districts can only be set up by decision of their local council. If it fails to do so, under subsection (4) the commissioner can set one up. Subsections (2) and (3) state:

- (2) Two or more local authorities may jointly form a rural fire brigade for a rural fire district constituted for their areas.
- (3) A rural fire brigade may be formed on the initiative of the local authority or local authorities concerned or on the request of any interested person.

As mentioned, subsection (4) states:

- (4) The Commissioner may form a rural fire brigade for a rural fire district if any local authority requested to form a rural fire brigade for that district refuses or fails to do so within the period prescribed by the regulations after being requested to do so by the Commissioner.

This means very clearly that, should a council not sign away their responsibility for maintaining bushfire prevention and management as the landowner in their own area, the council itself would take on the responsibility for the management and oversight of local brigades without the coordinating infrastructure, with the brigades still subject to the oversight and control of the commissioner. That responsibility includes the formation and disbandment of brigades, the administration and disciplinary management of the RFS volunteer members—noting that the RFS Act and regulations set out the responsibilities of the commission—insurance of the RFS red fleet and the maintenance of the grounds of RFS facilities.

Councils retain a series of powers and roles under the Rural Fires Act and other legislation, such as the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, for bushfire management and prevention, such as the mapping of bushfire-prone land. Councils are also required to ensure development applications and rezonings comply with the Rural Fire Service's guidelines around planning for bushfire management. However, due to the service agreements enabled under section 12A of the Rural Fires Act, the exercise of a council's actions is often at the direction or oversight of the commissioner. The reason those service agreements are vital for the functioning of rural fire services within a rural fire area or a specific council area is that without them, the obligation will fall upon the council to discharge the services. That is the mode of reasoning why the red fleet assets are within the ownership of councils.

The Legislative Council inquiry into the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Rural Fires Amendment Act 2000 resulted in jurisdictional questions surrounding accountability of rural fire officers. Those were settled by the introduction of the service agreements between the Rural Fire Service and local councils. Every council has a service agreement with the RFS, and they are consistent across the State. Some different contracts account for local variations, but, universally, the assets are vested to the councils, and control is signed away to the RFS. I say again to members of the House that nearly all the councillors, mayors and local members who advocated about the red fleet had no idea that their individual councils signed service agreements in which they agreed to a variety of responsibilities.

The service agreement is an agreement between the council in an area and the Rural Fire Service, where the commissioner agrees to exercise all the functions imposed upon councils by the Rural Fires Act and undertake day-to-day management of the service. In other words, if there was no such agreement or if such agreement was terminated, the councils would assume the very responsibility that gets undertaken by the Rural Fire Service; if they did not own the plant, they would have to buy their own. Under this agreement, the councils provide administrative accounting and maintenance services to the commissioner. The councils agree to let the service use

the district's fire control equipment and premises, because the premises and control equipment are generally vested in councils by the Act, which is the very thing that the bill seeks to address.

Councils are required to pay for insurance out of a statewide local government mutual liability scheme. In practice, that is paid for by the Treasury Managed Fund and operated by icare. The terms of the agreement require the council to acknowledge its ownership of the assets that the Rural Fire Service uses. The arguments that councils do not in fact own those assets is simply untrue, because otherwise they would not have the legal authority to sign the service agreement granting access to the service. Should they cease these service agreements, they would be required to exercise their own functions under the Rural Fires Act and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, and they would not have full access to the red fleet to fulfil those duties. I remind the House that, when I say that, I am not simply reading a paragraph; those responsibilities are for bushfire prevention and management as landowners.

The service agreements are so that the RFS can do their jobs properly. Without agreements, the trucks could not leave a local government area to fight a fire in a different local government area. Matters as small as disciplining an unruly volunteer would become the council's responsibility without the service agreements—and the council general managers would love to have responsibility, wouldn't they, for disciplining an unruly volunteer in the Rural Fire Service! I am sure that is not what the member for Northern Tablelands is advocating for in the bill. Broadly, local government areas are rural fire districts. Some councils have chosen to combine commands. Coolamon, Wagga Wagga, Junee, Lockart and Urana, for example, form a single rural fire district called the Riverina Zone.

The Rural Fire Service performs the council's duty of hazard management with the council-owned and council-vested trucks that are signed over to them in the service agreement. Councils do a lot of the maintenance. The RFS pays councils for that maintenance and receives advice on the maintenance so as to be assured of its workplace health and safety status, but it does not get remittances for the maintenance receipts. Responsibility for maintenance rests with the council. At the heart of the dispute, the RFS does not perform financial or monetary assessments of the vehicles, only operational assessments. It does not do condition-based assessments, and it does not revalue every three years; it does not know how much the vehicles are worth. The basis of the RFS's knowledge is whether they can be put into use, not how they are valued. It is written into the terms of the service agreements that councils perform the administrative accounting of these assets, and those councils that have been given disclaimed audits by the Auditor-General have failed to keep to the terms of their service agreements in relation to this.

The other arm of the dispute is the RFS sheds, which largely sit on Crown land but are built and maintained by the council. I am not sure that councils, nor the member for Northern Tablelands, are advocating that there should be a process of reverting the land and State control of those assets, because that would be onerous. Again, councils are responsible for bushfire prevention and management as land owners and managers, and that responsibility is discharged for them by the RFS. Bearing in mind that responsibility of councils, if it were not for that service agreement, it would cause a massive problem for the council and for the RFS, which would no longer be required to perform that role. It would endanger people's lives, but there would be no statutory requirement for a council to be in a service agreement with the Rural Fire Service.

Of course, should one council decide not to agree to the service agreement, there would be consequences. The Treasury Managed Fund insures every RFS vehicle in the State, based on the proviso that every council with assets vested in it under the Act signs a service agreement. Should the council not do that, the Treasury would be unable to provide the State-managed insurance. In those service agreements, the parties—the councils and the Rural Fire Service—have agreed to enter into those agreements pursuant to the provisions of section 12A. The councils and the commissioners have agreed to operate the districts as a zone, and the commissioner has agreed to exercise all of the functions imposed on the council by and under the Rural Fires Act, other than those functions in schedule 1.

When we look at many of those individual specific agreements, as I have, the councils have delegated other of their authorities that they are required to perform under the Local Government Act to the RFS. The commissioner has agreed to undertake the day-to-day management of the service operating in the zone, on behalf of councils; the councils have agreed to allow the commissioner and the service to use the district equipment; the councils have agreed to allow the commissioner and the service to use the premises; the councils and the commissioner have agreed to establish a liaison committee; and the councils have agreed to delegate certain functions, powers and duties to a fire control officer. As the House can see, the complete operation of the Rural Fire Service operates effectively in a council area. It discharges council responsibilities and operates by service agreement, by delegated authority from the council. That has been the structure of the Rural Fire Service since the beginning of the twentieth century.

The real bone of contention is the accounting. What does it mean to depreciate an asset? There is a belief among councils and mayors who have spoken with me that somehow or other it comes as a cost. Accounting valuations for fixed assets is typically marked at its historical price—that is to say, the value of an asset on the books is set at the cost when it was first built or purchased. Most assets, other than land or other fixed goods, like buildings, will one day no longer provide the benefit that they were purchased to provide. Sheds fall down, trucks reach the end of their service life, and technological equipment becomes obsolete. Depreciation is about allocating the cost of purchasing an asset across an asset's useful life.

It is not about funding a replacement or resale value because councils are not required to fund these vehicles and they are not responsible for disposing of them. It is an accounting fact that these assets are less valuable over time, and that under the accounting standards the loss of value must be recorded on the books of the organisation that owns them. In practice, what this means is that no money exchanges hands, no council services are put at risk by the presence of the assets on the council books and no resources are diverted. It does not affect the bottom line. The Auditor-General has tried repeatedly to explain that to those councils.

That is not to say that I agree with or understand the accounting standards or the need for the accounting standards imposed on local government to be the appropriate accounting standards. I find the accounting standards that apply to local government to be opaque to the elected mayors and councillors. I am of the view that that is probably one of the most significant reasons for local governments' financial sustainability problems throughout the State. Because the accounting standards do not enable mayors and councillors to be able to judge the allocation of their own resources—let alone enable the public to hold them to account for that allocation—it becomes almost impossible for them to take control of the very allocation of funds that they are elected to control. A new standard needs to be applied because, in my view, much of the financial sustainability of councils relates to expenditure control.

I have great faith in an accounting standard that exposes detailed management accounting to councillors, who are the experts and best equipped to allocate and prioritise funding. Quite frankly, it is clear to me from my limited time as Minister for Local Government that mayors and councillors in too many councils are not given those options. For example, in the Western Division there are many small councils that rely upon grants where the mayors and councillors know where every cent goes; I was extremely impressed to talk to so many of them as I moved throughout the State. But, from privately talking to mayors and councillors in other parts of the State, I know the frustration they have in trying to get through the bureaucratic structure that relates more to accounting standards. Getting to the future of local government is difficult. The future of local government is dependent on a far more transparent accounting standard that allows the press, the public and councillors to clearly oversight where expenditure goes.

There is another issue with accounting standards that I have trouble grappling with. If a business owns an asset, an asset is shown on the balance sheet and that business is encouraged to depreciate that asset because depreciation is tax-deductible. The business is encouraged to prepare depreciation schedules to obtain a deduction. A business would probably prefer the deduction in the first year; it is usually the commissioner that requires you to deduct it over a period of time or the life of the asset. Although everybody knows what depreciation is, there is a financial incentive for businesses to account for depreciation. How is it right that a council must account to depreciate a road or community land and attach a value to them that it could never realise? How is it right that a council must record the value of a drain, which can never be realised? What is the mode of reasoning for recording that? Why are those depreciation schedules so frustrating to local government? I note that they are, and I do intend to address that. I will make some reference to it shortly.

I refer to loans and TCorp, the Government's loaning institution. TCorp has communicated that it has recently amended its credit methodology relating to the assessment of council operating performance. I raise the issue of depreciation because TCorp has indicated that it will exclude depreciation from operating expenses as a non-cash item, whilst including scheduled principal repayments to give a more accurate view of a council's ability to contain operating expenditure within operating revenue. I referred to that mode of reasoning a minute ago. I say to the House that I am unsure how to achieve it, but if it is good enough for TCorp to exclude depreciation from an operating expense in relation to its loans, why is it not good enough for the Office of Local Government [OLG] to exclude that depreciation when it determines the ratios? Why is it not good enough for the Auditor-General to exclude that depreciation?

I am not an accountant; I am a barrister. Lawyers are not necessarily the best at financial figures, but I did do bookkeeping at school. There are people that are far smarter than me in relation to these areas. But over the past few months, as I have been pursuing this red fleet issue, I still have this trouble—despite repeatedly speaking to the Auditor-General, despite speaking to the Office of Local Government and despite seeking advice from people who have financial experience and capabilities—really understanding the mode of reasoning to apply non-cash depreciation schedules to local government. In any event, I assure the House that I intend to pursue it,

at least to either understand it myself and communicate it to the House in a way in which members of the House might understand or, alternatively, to communicate it to local governments so that they might understand. If it is wrong, I will do my best to address it.

As I said, if depreciation was included in the operating statement of a council when recognising the red fleet, this should have no adverse impact on a council's ability to borrow from TCorp. What is the purpose of having it there in the first place? Further, it is noted that from a debt service coverage and interest coverage perspective, TCorp's ratios are based upon earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation. In so doing, TCorp then adds back depreciation as a non-cash item to earnings. Therefore, the red fleet assets do not impact on a council's ability to borrow if it seeks a loan from TCorp. In any event, what I have done well before today is to ask the OLG to investigate rolling out this accounting basis to all council ratios so that we do not have councils penalised financially for the ownership of the red fleet assets—and many of their other assets.

Under that conceptual framework for financial reporting, the accounting standards I have just made reference to provide a definition of entity controls: If an entity has the right to deploy an economic resource in its activities, it may allow another party to deploy the economic resource in that other party's activities. To put it simply, a council controls the red fleet assets if it uses them or allows the RFS to use them. Under the service agreements, council has allowed the RFS to use its trucks that are vested in it. The ability to allow that use requires council to have accounting control over the red fleet. Whether or not this basis is sound is not a matter for legal debate any more than a car rental service agreement means that a company does not lose control of the car by renting it out. I say to councils that the issue will be sorted out, but they have to apply the accounting standards.

One of my responsibilities as Minister for Local Government is to ensure that the Local Government Act and the laws made under it and other laws governing councils apply. Refusing to apply an accounting standard leaves councils vulnerable to unnecessary action being taken. In the intervening period, councils should just comply with the accounting standards. They should not leave themselves open to constant criticism by the Auditor-General. The issue needs to be addressed fundamentally, and I am endeavouring to do that. The other issue I draw to the attention of the House, which is not known by members who have spoken to me, relates to a council's activities, responsibilities and relationships with the Rural Fire Service. Councils receive periodic grant fundings from the RFS for maintenance and firefighting assets. In the 2023-24 financial year, they will receive \$24.8 million for those assets. If members want to know how much councils are getting, I have a list. Some councils are in the electorates of members who have raised the issue with me. Their mayors and councillors did not know they were getting these grants, let alone even entering into service agreements.

Port Stephens Council gets \$1,050,482, Barwon Darling shire zone gets \$141,000, Orange City Council gets \$623,000, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council gets \$195,126, Mid-Western Regional Council gets \$370,709, Gunnedah Shire Council gets \$98,328, Blue Mountains City Council gets \$604,833, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council gets \$447,000, Snowy Monaro Regional Council gets \$429,000, Edward River Council gets \$142,000, Murray River Council gets \$230,000, Federation Council gets \$194,000, Snowy Valleys Council gets \$235,000 and Coolamon Shire Council gets \$522,549. As members can see, I have given examples of some councils within the electorates of the various members who have raised the issue with me. I indicate that there is more to the structure of this ancient service and the statutory requirements that bind it than we understand when we simply respond and try to be helpful when individual councils raise a matter.

In relation to the entire issue, I have taken the view that my predecessor was struggling to get detailed information about the operation of the Rural Fire Service. I know that the member for Northern Tablelands has been on about this for a couple of years. He told me that this morning. Even as a member of the Government and a Minister, he struggled. I have also been struggling to get information about this issue. As I want to resolve the issue, I have made a referral to the Public Accounts Committee. I have added not only the RFS but also all emergency services in an effort to have the Public Accounts Committee examine closely the operation, funding and structure of the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service, including their relationship with councils and the cost.

I have asked the Public Accounts Committee to inquire into and report on, firstly, the mechanisms for funding Rural Fire Service assets and premises, including maintaining Rural Fire Service assets and premises, and accounting for the ownership of the Rural Fire Service assets and premises; secondly, whether the following arrangements between councils and the Rural Fire Service are fit for purpose, including service agreements, the division of responsibilities for bushfire management and hazard reduction, the upkeep of assets, the provision of insurance, the provision of land and construction management for RFS premises, and bushfire management committees; thirdly, the appropriate role for local authorities and the provision of emergency services; fourthly, the sustainability of local government contributions to emergency service provisions; and, fifthly, any other related matters.

I want to give local government the opportunity to be heard in an informed way before a committee of this House that consists of some of its more skilful members—if I can use that expression. It is chaired by the member for Strathfield, who is held in the highest regard. That will give local government bipartisan consideration and the opportunity to be heard in an informed way. When local government predecessors felt strongly about an issue, as they did in 1997 and 2000, they knew what they were doing. They were well versed and well briefed and they understood the consequences of what they were doing. I confess that when I served in local government at around that time, I knew nothing about the RFS or about the SES. In 1997 councils would not have persuaded the Minister to amend a bill that was based upon a Coroner's recommendation, and in 2000 they would not have caused the other place to conduct an independent inquiry and have that organisation adopt their viewpoint. I want to hear from local government.

The member for Wagga Wagga tells me that his councillors say they do not have the keys or access to the Rural Fire Service premises. I showed him the service agreement and said that it is their building. They have to maintain it, so they can go in any time they want to. There is obviously something fundamentally wrong with the relationship. The other issue is that one of the reasons the councils want their own Rural Fire Service districts and control and ownership of their assets, or so I infer, is that it stops the commissioner from taking them outside their local government area, absent a section 44 declaration. I cannot find a record of that but I infer it. They do not want to leave themselves unprotected. They do not want to leave themselves without the ability to embark upon their own bushfire prevention programs, and they want to utilise their own volunteers for the benefit of their own community.

It goes back to those words I used before: The Rural Fire Service are local, independent associations of people historically defending their own communities with their own assets. They do not want to be run by some vast bureaucracy with headquarters in Sydney. That seems to be the mode of reasoning. That seems to be why the structure is in place. Local councils regard volunteers very highly. I can imagine that, when dealing with 70,000 volunteers and the service provided is based upon them, local councils would be reflecting those volunteers' views, as those of us who have come from local government and grown up with treating those volunteers in the SES and RFS with the greatest of respect. I suggest that the bill be referred to the Public Accounts Committee, which will be conducting an inquiry that I have asked them to conduct as Minister. Therefore, I move:

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

- (1) The bill be referred to the Public Accounts Committee for consideration and report.
- (2) The resumption of the debate on the second reading of the bill be restored to the *Business Paper* on the tabling of the committee's report.

That will not impact upon ensuring debate on the bill continues; the debate on the bill can continue. That question will be put at the conclusion of the debate. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for what he conveyed to me this morning and the genuine approach with which he came to me for this bill. He tells me he made the same genuine approach to the Minister for Emergency Services, who was very grateful that the member for Northern Tablelands raised the matter with him previously. I commend my amendment to the House.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH (Coffs Harbour) (12:52):** With the greatest respect to the member for Heffron, those guys who make apps to help people fall asleep will have to work hard to top that contribution. The Minister highlighted quite a few issues and I took some notes during his reply. One of those issues was that at least 26 years ago when the Act came into force, local government wanted the changes and that is why they are in the Act. Local government is all throughout the Rural Fires Act; there is no doubt about that. But we are in 2023, times have changed and just because somebody wanted something 30 years ago or 50 years ago or 100 years ago does not mean it is appropriate in 2023.

This issue was brought to my attention last year quite late in the piece. We were approached by a number of councils who, after reading the Auditor-General's report, were obviously concerned about this issue. We ran out of runway before the election in early 2023 to deal with this issue but we made a commitment that we would look into the issue if returned to government. Alas, that was not to be. The Minister rolled out the old refrain of unintended consequences. We have heard Government members use that as an excuse whenever they want to oppose any non-government bill.

We heard that excuse on water privatisation for regional New South Wales. We were told there would be unintended consequences. Months later, we have yet to hear a single unintended consequence of that piece of legislation. Last week the Minister for Water said there were unintended consequences for harvestable rights. Again, we are yet to hear any detail on that. One of the unintended consequences of the member for Heffron's long refrain was that we got to hear the very impressive résumé of the member for Northern Tablelands. We also heard a history of many things right back to 1906.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** I thought you meant about his resume. I thought, "I want to get whatever face cream you're using."

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** I note the Minister's interjection. He was one of the lucky ones who missed out on that history lesson. The Minister for Local Government made some points which I will refute. One of the points he made was that the bill would change the relationship of local government with the RFS. I disagree. The bill is quite short; it is quite modest. I think it reads to about six lines. The bill does not ask to change the relationship. It is not dealing with any assets or agreements that are in place, except for those relating to the fire trucks. The Minister also noted that the sheds will not be included; that is quite plain in the bill. He alluded to a conversation he had with the member for Wagga Wagga where he said that council did not have the keys to the RFS shed. That is a very common occurrence. The RFS and its members—be it their captain or their senior members—will be the only ones with keys, and it is not common at all for councils to have access whenever they like to RFS sheds.

The Minister also mentioned volunteers and how they would be proud to be volunteers. Obviously they are proud to be volunteers; that goes without saying. But I do not think many of them realise or equate their volunteering with the RFS as work for the council. All volunteers would see themselves as volunteers for the Rural Fire Service and part of a wider firefighting force that often fights fires across council lines and across regional lines, as well as helping out in many other different types of disasters, such as when the RFS helped in the Lismore floods. Without the RFS setting up their camp and helping in that flooding emergency, that recovery would have been tougher. The Minister also talked about accounting standards in local government. I think he made the surprising admission that he does not understand the accounting standards. That is the quote I have written down.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** I thought he said he could have been better. He said he is a barrister.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** He is a barrister. We will forgive him.

**Mr Jihad Dib:** And they need lots of accountants because they charge so much.

**Mr GURMESH SINGH:** That is right. That speech earlier would have cost the Government thousands, if we were paying. It is true that depreciation does not necessarily have to be a material cost. In business especially you do not have to pay that cost in order to incur the expense. If that argument is true for councils, then that argument is also true for the State Government. If we are saying to councils that this is easy, this is simple, it is not a cost that you have to incur, then surely the State Government can take its own advice on that and basically bring it into line under the State Government.

The Minister also spoke a little bit about business depreciation and the financial benefits that that can bring to a business. My experience in businesses, both big and small, is that the bigger the business, the more of a financial advantage that brings. Over the past couple of years the Federal Government had the instant asset write-off. A lot of small businesses, particularly rural businesses, upgraded their plant and their machinery such as tractors and the like. They wrote off the cost of that machinery immediately, which provided great stimulus to regional areas. Small businesses took that up more than bigger businesses did because they are typically more reliant on cash flow. Cash flow has less of an effect on the day-to-day or year-to-year operations of bigger businesses. Using that analogy, smaller councils in particular rely, year on year, on grants and cash windfalls coming through from the collection of rates et cetera, but they are also more susceptible to expenses.

The State Government, which operates a far larger budget, is able to more easily weather the ups and downs of things like depreciation, especially over a large fleet like that of the RFS. I note also that the Minister has moved an amendment to refer the bill to the Public Accounts Committee. The Auditor-General's report to the Parliament into local government wrote on page 11 about uncorrected errors in council financial statements. I will read very briefly from the report, which states:

An uncorrected error is an error identified by the auditor or council in the financial statements, which has not been corrected by council.

Sixty-one per cent of the total value of uncorrected errors was due to unrecorded rural firefighting equipment.

In 2020-21, 68 ... councils did not record rural firefighting equipment in their financial statements estimated to be \$145 million (2019-20: \$119 million). Forty-one councils recognise this equipment in their financial statements with a total value of \$162.8 million, highlighting the inconsistent recognition practices across the local government sector.

The financial statements of the NSW Total State Sector and the NSW Rural Fire Service do not include these assets, as the State is of the view that rural firefighting equipment that has been vested to councils under section 119(2) of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* is not controlled by the State. In reaching this conclusion, the State argued that on balance it would appear the councils control the rural firefighting equipment that has been vested to them. It is important to note that there are only two parties to the agreements that govern the use of vested rural firefighting equipment, leaving only two parties who would be considered to control this equipment—the NSW Rural Fire Service in the State sector, or councils in the local government sector.

Despite earlier assertions made by the Minister for Local Government and despite the complexities in the Act, the reality is that these assets are used at the request of the RFS without interference from councils. The bill seeks to bring the Act in line with the way the RFS operates in today's conditions. There is a risk that RFS assets across the State are not being managed equally, from one council to the next. We hope that is not a risk and that it does not lead to an accident. But, as a Parliament, we should not rely on hope. We should do everything we can to ensure that the State Government protects its RFS volunteers equally across the State.

As a volunteer firefighter, I know that the condition of vehicles and equipment varies across the State. Damage can be done to hoses during fires. It is my experience that, typically, councils have little to do with repairing those hoses. The bill aims to vest the ownership of those assets in the commissioner, where they belong, instead of in councils. Those assets may have belonged with councils in the past, but, under today's operational reality, they should be vested in the commissioner. The bill is very simple: It amends section 119 (2), (3), (5) and (6) of the Rural Fires Act. The bill provides a simple amendment with one clear purpose: to transfer the ownership of these assets to the State Government.

Currently, councils are financially and legally responsible for those RFS assets, but they do not have the ability to sell them, which is why I draw an analogy with business. Businesses can offload assets if they need to and make decisions based on those assets, whereas councils cannot make those decisions. They cannot offload assets or purchase additional assets off their own bat if they require them, nor can they deploy assets to different stations. That is controlled by the State Government through the RFS. The bill brings the RFS into line with other emergency services. Councils do not own or operate police cars, ambulances or Fire and Rescue NSW assets. Even SES trucks are owned by the State Government. The RFS stands out as an anomaly with State government run assets. It simply makes sense to bring them into line with those other assets.

The bill also helps councils with their finances. While depreciation is a paper cost only, the reality is that councils running at a deficit or running a small operating profit may borrow less money and their borrowing costs may go up. So it does not paint an accurate picture of councils' financial positions. Particularly in regional areas, councils can operate with quite small budgets. Unlike city areas, where councils have many hundreds of thousands of constituents—my local government area has a population of 80,000—some councils in the State are in the low thousands. Those councils have a small rate base, so introducing assets worth a few hundred thousand dollars—which is the cost of a modern, category 1 firefighting appliance—can really skew their books on the other side of the ledger due to those large depreciation expenses.

That can mean less money to fix potholes and build playgrounds. It can also mean that councils cannot deliver the services they were elected to deliver because they have to account for appliances and assets that we, as State parliamentarians, are elected to deliver. I think it is right to transfer the ownership of those assets. They are State government assets in everything but name. I support the bill.

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (13:08):** I contribute to debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Red Fleet) Bill 2023. At the outset, I thank the Minister for Local Government, who led for the Government in debate on the bill. We have joint responsibility for the matters covered in the bill. The bill relates to my responsibilities as Minister for Emergency Services. But if the bill is passed it will impact local government so the Minister for Local Government and I have worked closely together on it. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for introducing the legislation because it has brought the issue to a head. That is the context. I echo some of the words of my colleague the Minister for Local Government, who appreciates that this is not a political issue. The member for Northern Tablelands has tried to do it one way.

I also acknowledge the shadow Minister, and member for Coffs Harbour, who is here, and his efforts as a volunteer with the Rural Fire Service. There are a number of other volunteers in this Chamber and about 70,000 more across different parts of the State. We will take it that we have run out of runway. I would have liked to have seen some action before the very end of 12 years, but we will get there. One proposal put forward by the Government is to refer the bill to the Public Accounts Committee to ensure that we can look at it in the greatest detail possible and make sure that all stakeholders, including local government, the Rural Fire Service and other interested parties, have the chance for some proper consultation and analysis.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** The time for consideration of general business notices of motions for bills having lapsed, I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later time. I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

#### *Motions*

#### **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (14:31):** I move:



That this House:

- (1) Condemns the former Government for not planning for public schools in areas with high population growth such as West Dapto, Calderwood and Flinders.
- (2) Notes that the Government is committed to rectifying this lack of planning for public schools over the past 12 years.

The former Liberal-Nationals Government has left thousands of hardworking families in a terrible situation due to a lack of planning for public schools. In the Illawarra, residents of suburbs such as Calderwood, Flinders and West Dapto desperately need new schools but a lack of planning by the former Government has created an absolute mess. Led by our amazing education Minister, the Hon. Prue Car, the Labor Government has already started to clean up that mess. I am proud to see the Government deliver the planning funding that it committed to before the election for the future schools that we so desperately need. That includes planning for new public primary schools at Calderwood and West Dapto, and a new public high school for Flinders servicing Shell Cove and Shellharbour. The Liberals and The Nationals refused to plan for those three schools. They denied that there was even a need despite the population growth that we saw then and we are still seeing now.

The West Dapto Urban Release Area is one of the largest growth areas in New South Wales. Located between the beautiful Lake Illawarra and the magnificent Illawarra escarpment, the natural beauty of the area is attracting people from all over Australia to buy land and build new homes. Once completed, West Dapto will include approximately 19,000 dwellings and will house up to 50,000 residents. Once West Dapto is linked with other new subdivisions at Calderwood and Marshall Mount, the new residential area will be the size of Wagga Wagga. One of the new suburbs of West Dapto is Wongawilli. Like many new suburbs across our State, it has a high proportion of younger families with school-age children. In 2021 over 21 per cent of Wongawilli residents were aged nine or under.

The statistics clearly show that new school infrastructure should have been planned many years ago. As soon as the residential subdivisions were approved and whilst the land was still rolling green hills, the planning should have started. But it did not. Despite numerous letters from me and calls from Wollongong City Council over the past 12 years to plan for the new schools to cater for the fast-growing population, the previous Government did absolutely nothing. One of the main problems with the lack of planning is that the sites suitable for new schools have been purchased by the private sector rather than the Government. Therefore, the former Government did not purchase enough sites for schools but still somehow managed to leave us with \$187.5 billion in debt.

The former Government knew that planning for new schools was not keeping pace with the growing population of the Illawarra and yet it simply did not care. It did not care that young mums and dads across the Illawarra and other growth areas in New South Wales would need to spend hours each day driving many kilometres away for drop-offs and pick-ups. It is obvious why members opposite did not care: because they did not want to live in those areas. They do not represent the hardworking families who live in those new suburbs on the outskirts of Sydney or Wollongong. Those opposite certainly cannot say that they did not know about the pending disaster at West Dapto and Calderwood. In May 2017 I stood on the other side of the Chamber and called on the former Government to deliver to the citizens of West Dapto the educational infrastructure that they both needed and deserved. The former Liberal Parliamentary Secretary for Education and the Illawarra and South Coast stated:

As the Illawarra continues to grow we will need those schools. Indeed, West Dapto is the largest growth area outside south-western Sydney. The member for Shellharbour is right to raise these matters, and I look forward to joining with her to advocate for additional places in the Illawarra.

I was right then, and I am right now.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** You're quoting me again, are you?

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** You're welcome. Thankfully, we have had a change of government and Labor will get on with the job of planning for more public schools. Planning work from the Labor Government will include an analysis of demographic and education requirements to make sure that the schools are in the right place, are the right size and have the right facilities. The work includes consultation with stakeholders and school leadership teams through the Project Reference Group to make sure that our future schools are fit for purpose, meeting the requirements of the curriculum and catering to the educational needs of the Illawarra.

It will involve engaging with experts in the field—including architects, planners and design professionals—to make sure that the works deliver world-class, quality facilities. We would expect nothing else for our kids. Those experts will conduct site investigations, initial design work and other assessments to make sure that we have the land we need to build the schools that local communities deserve. We are not just planning for the schools that families need; we are ensuring that those schools are properly staffed with qualified teachers who are now the best paid in the country. That is what Labor governments do.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury) (14:37):** I refute the Government's argument that there was not any planning or budgeting in terms of capital infrastructure. In that regard, it is important to have some form of evidence. If we are going to consider evidence, why not turn to the New South Wales budget 2023-24—that great instrument of transparency and openness? I note Box 2.3 of *Budget Paper No. 3* regarding capital infrastructure. I will go first to ongoing works—as in those works that have already started. There is a new school at Chatswood, a new school at Edmondson Park, the new Gregory Hills Public School, the new Jindabyne Education Campus, a new school at Melonba, a new school at Midtown Macquarie Park, a new school at Nirimba Fields, a new school at Nowra, a new school at Rhodes East and a new school at Tallawong.

The Government has just said, "No, there was nothing happening previously." But its own budget documents say, "Do you know what? We're going to continue on with the work that these guys have been doing." Let us then look a little further and put that into context. In the last term of the former Government, \$9.1 billion was invested in projects delivered since 2017. The Liberal-Nationals Government had \$8.6 billion in the pipeline for future development over the next term. While we are on the budget, there are schools that the Government has fully committed funding for—planning and capital. I note that the previous New South Wales Government made sure that if it was putting a new school in, it was fully funded for planning and infrastructure right up-front. Jordan Springs, in the Deputy Premier's electorate, is a new project with full planning and capital.

**Ms Anna Watson:** She fought for it.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** She did fight for it. That is interesting. I will take that interjection. The Deputy Premier has a new school in her electorate that is fully funded for not just planning but capital as well. What happens with Flinders? There is funding for planning only. What happens with Calderwood? There is planning only. What happens with West Dapto? There is planning only. Even within the Labor Government there is a two-tier funding structure. In the Deputy Premier's electorate, there is a school with full funding for capital and planning. In Shellharbour, there is planning only. Capital? It is in the never-never.

That is important. It is something for the community of Shellharbour to be mindful of: Whilst other schools in the State are fully funded with capital, they are getting just the planning. This will be important for the member for Shellharbour and, I am sure, for her electorate to keep a focus on. Whilst the Labor Government is delivering whole schools in some electorates, in the electorates of some of their own hardworking members, they are delivering the planning only. It is important to look at evidence—

**Mr Warren Kirby:** Absolutely.

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY:** Well, it is the Government's own budget document. There are a lot of fallacies in it, but there is the truth about projects that are being delivered and that were funded by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. The member for Shellharbour spoke about important school projects in her community. There are schools in electorates represented by other Labor members that are fully funded for capital and planning, and she is getting planning only. She has every right to go to her own government and say, "Why is that? Why are you funding infrastructure in other electorates but not in mine?" The member needs to go to the Deputy Premier and say, "Deputy Premier, it is not fair and equitable for the people of Shellharbour that, while in your electorate you are getting a fully funded new school, in my electorate we are getting the planning only." She needs to ask why that is. At the same time, she should ask, "Why are the cooler classrooms, smart energy schools and LED lighting programs being scrapped? Why do we have to pump up our major infrastructure program with covered outdoor learning areas? Why do we need to be saying that?"

What happened to the Liberal-Nationals' \$15.9 billion early years commitment? It seems to be whittled away. The Government talks up the big game with 100 new preschools, but the funding is gone. Labor can talk the talk, but two of the 15 schools on the list are already under construction. Members come into this place and say that nothing happened previously. The Government's own budget document lists many new schools with capital underway. Unfortunately for the community of Shellharbour, the member's own Labor Government cannot provide the capital infrastructure, but it can in other electorates. It is only providing the planning money. It is critical for the people of Shellharbour that the member asks the Minister for Education, "Why have I only got the planning money when you are giving infrastructure money to other Labor electorates?"

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (14:43):** I am pleased to support the motion condemning the former Government for not planning for public schools in areas with high population growth, such as West Dapto, Calderwood and Flinders. To be perfectly honest, it could say Camden, Gregory Hills, Gledswood Hills and Leppington. The motion notes that the Government is committed to rectifying the lack of planning for public schools over the past 12 years. This is not just a problem for the Shellharbour electorate; it is a problem for the whole State. I vehemently support the motion because in my electorate of Camden, community groups have been crying out for a public school. I have an article from *The Sydney Morning Herald* stating that half a dozen new public schools announced in 2018 are yet to be started. Gregory Hills Public School was fought for by the

community of Gregory Hills. It took an appearance on *A Current Affair* for the community to be assured that there would be a public school. Surprise, surprise—when were the demountables for the public school delivered? That would be January of 2023. I do not want to be cynical, but something else happened in early 2023.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** Was there an election?

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** Oh, that's right; there was an election. The people of Gregory Hills saw this for exactly what it was: a very rushed attempt to win back their love. Actually, what was happening was they were being pushed back, and pushed back, and pushed back. The minute the community group was aware that it was getting the public school that it had spent years and years fighting for and had had countless meetings with members about, it turned its focus to a high school. Being parents, and human beings, they know that children grow. Every year they grow. Once they finish year six, they then go on to this other thing called high school. When they met with the former Minister for Education in the other place and the former member for Camden, they were told that one public high school would do not only for the electorate of Camden, but for the electorate of Leppington as well.

**Mr Nathan Hagarty:** A two-for-one deal.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL:** Yes, a two-for-one deal. That means more than five public primary schools would be feeding into what we locally called a mega high school. The parents came to me and said, "This is not good enough. Our children deserve a high school in our area." Now, as shown in the budget papers, a brand new high school has been planned for. Once the land is purchased a new high school will be built in the Gregory Hills-Gledswood Hills area. The Government is working very hard to rectify the lack of planning for important educational infrastructure in areas with high population growth, such as Shellharbour and Camden. Those are two very important areas where people have bought homes on the premise that they would be able to educate their children there in good-quality public schools. We are rectifying that lack of planning. It will take time. We are not saying this is a silver bullet that will fix the problem overnight. We are taking steps in the right direction. I applaud the motion.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (14:48):** In contributing to debate on the motion, I start by saying some positive things. Firstly, I commend the member for Shellharbour for her advocacy in relation to a number of her local schools. As a former Parliamentary Secretary, I remember the member for Shellharbour in particular lobbied very hard for Dapto Public School, which I did secure \$10 million for. I was perhaps optimistic that the motion would contain a thankyou for that. Of course, it does not, and that is all right. I acknowledge the member for Shellharbour has been a consistent advocate for schools in her area, particularly the key growth areas around West Dapto that border our electorates. I also commend the Government for its increase in teacher salaries, something I voted in this place to support. I have said consistently that whilst the wage cap started out as perhaps the right approach to manage the budget, when inflation overtook it, lifting the cap was the right thing to do to make sure we retain teachers in the system. I give a big shout-out to my friends in the Teachers Federation, whom I have a good relationship with locally, including Angelo, their president.

However, I make a couple of comments in relation to a proposed school in Calderwood, which the member mentioned in her motion. If members turn to the budget summary for Kiama, which covers the Calderwood area and which is referenced in the member's motion, they will see N/A, N/A and N/A for the funding allocated for planning. When the member talks about condemning the former Government for not planning for schools, I simply say that this Government has not allocated funding for a public school in Calderwood either at this point. I note that it has made that election commitment, and I strongly support any efforts to ensure that we provide schools for the Calderwood community, which along with West Dapto is the fastest growing area of New South Wales outside of south-western Sydney, as the member for Shellharbour rightly notes. I also note that in the master plan for the Calderwood estate three sites are specifically indicated for schools, and it is important that we look to those sites when working with the department in order to achieve the planning that needs to be done.

I ask the Minister—and I have asked this question on notice before—given the fact that the strategic plan for the site already indicates where those schools are going to be, what exactly does he need in terms of planning? I think that question needs to be answered, because we know where the sites are going to be. Why is the Minister not simply getting on with it? I also make the observation that Bomaderry High School, which is in fact my old high school, did not receive the money that it was expecting in the budget for the redevelopment it needs. Members would have heard me speak in this place before about the fact that, following rains, a lot of the buildings at that school have not been able to be inhabited, and there are a number of demountable buildings. There was originally meant to be a \$42 million allocation for Bomaderry High School. That has not eventuated in the budget. I think it is important that the Government be reminded of the need to upgrade a school that is over 50 years old.

With the expansion of population in the northern Shoalhaven area, we need to look at sustaining schools in places like Bomaderry, and also the need for a new primary school at Badagarang. I point out to those saying

that this Government is going to oversee an education renaissance that, while I hope that is the case, the former Labor Government closed 93 schools and also privatised the delivery of services to schools. At Tullimbar, it outsourced cleaning services to Spotless and other types of private entities—

**Ms Anna Watson:** That was your lot that did that.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** No. I acknowledge the interjection, but that was 2008. The former Labor Government engaged in part-privatisations of schools. Do not let members opposite say that they are the doyens of education. They have a rap sheet a mile long and I hope it improves from here.

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (14:52):** I thank the member for Shellharbour for bringing this important motion to the House that condemns members opposite for their failure to invest in funding for education and for public schools for 12 long years, especially in growth areas. We know the Illawarra is a growth area. As we heard from the member for Camden, south-west Sydney is also experiencing immense growth, especially in my electorate of Leppington. Western Sydney is home to two million people, many of whom are young, ambitious and eager to learn. For decades, education, particularly in public schools, has provided a springboard for people from Western Sydney to lift themselves up out of disadvantage. Keen listeners to my inaugural speech would know that I count myself amongst those many people.

Unfortunately, that opportunity has dwindled. Opportunity was diluted over 12 years of the previous Government, whose neglect and underfunding allowed schools to become overcrowded. The former Government knew people were coming to the region, because the areas had been opened up for zoning and for housing, but it failed to adequately plan. Worse than that, in my electorate of Leppington not only did it not build schools but it also sold off sites that were earmarked for future public schools. Unsurprisingly, due to the massive demand for education in Leppington, those sites were purchased by private schools. I think one could probably call that privatisation by stealth, as we saw from those opposite for 12 long years. As a result, the electorate of Leppington has the highest number of students in private schools in New South Wales. Of the public schools that do exist in Leppington, many of them are historically underfunded and overcrowded. Some are operating at more than 150 per cent capacity.

We spoke about the Illawarra and the lack of funding in public education. We spoke about the south-west of Sydney. I can also testify that the situation is the same in the north-west of Sydney. I was in Schofields a few weeks ago visiting my colleague the member for Riverstone. While we criticise members opposite for what they failed to do in education, I will give them credit for one innovation in public education that I witnessed during my trip to Schofields: double-storey demountable classrooms. The good news is that the Minns Labor Government is fixing that. We are investing in education right across the State, especially in Leppington.

There will be a new public high school in Leppington in the heart of my electorate. It will be the first, because there is not currently one in Austral, Leppington or Denham Court, where all the growth is happening. We will build it. We are also upgrading those schools I spoke about that are overcrowded—Dalmeny Public School, Eagle Vale High School, Greenway Park Public School, Austral Public School and Leppington Public School. They are all getting funding. It is fair to say that is probably the single biggest investment in education that Leppington has ever seen. I note the member for Badgerys Creek, who was formerly the member for my area, was having a crack at me yesterday in the House about banging on the table for more investment. I invite her to read the budget. Labor's historic budget for education begins the process of reversing the terrible 12 years we had under the previous Government. We are committed to public education because that is what Labor governments do.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (14:56):** Education is a passion of mine. I acknowledge the students at all our public schools in our local areas and especially in my local community in the electorate of Oatley. My wife is a schoolteacher, as many members know, and she is also the P&C president of Mortdale Public School.

**Mrs Sally Quinell:** I used to teach there.

**Mr MARK COURE:** It is a good school. My son is there. He is in year 4, and he is the student representative council school leader.

**Ms Sophie Cotsis:** He is taking after his mum.

**Mr MARK COURE:** That is right. I acknowledge that; he is certainly taking after his mum. We will both be at Mortdale Public School on Saturday for the referendum barbecue and, as members know, we in the Coure household will be voting yes. When it comes to track records, we all remember what happened during the 16 years of the former Labor Government. It was the stuff of nightmares. How many schools do members think they closed? Was it 10 schools they closed? Was it 20 schools they closed? Was it 30 schools they closed? They closed 90 schools! In my electorate of Oatley, they closed one high school that the member for Camden might be familiar

with—Narwee High School. In fact, former Premier Morris Iemma—who is, I declare, a really good guy—went to that school. They not only turfed him out of the premiership, but 10 days later they closed his old school.

That is Labor's record when it comes to education—closing schools. We on this side of the House have a strong, proud record when it comes to building and delivering schools, not just in the Oatley electorate but right across New South Wales. Why? Because we are proud of public education in this State. We have a strong public education system in New South Wales, and it is stronger now because of our intervention after 16 years of Labor. Some 90 schools were closed. In my own electorate of Oatley over \$40 million was spent to rebuild Penshurst Public School, Penshurst West Public School and Hurstville Grove Infants School were upgraded, the playground at Mortdale Public School was upgraded, and the list goes on. I will keep fighting for school education in my electorate. I will keep fighting for upgrades to Hannans Road Public School, Riverwood Public School and, of course, Narwee Public School. When there was a change of government a couple of months ago, I wrote to the Premier and the Treasurer to ask for their assistance to ensure that record funding continues in my electorate. We on this side will continue campaigning for upgrades at Narwee Public School and Peakhurst West Public School because we care about school education.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY:** I seek leave to make a contribution.

**Leave not granted.**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER:** I seek leave to make a contribution.

**Leave not granted.**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) (15:00):** In reply: Members opposite have said how fantastic they were on school infrastructure and yet they deny Labor members the chance to discuss it. That is okay; that is noted. I will address some of the issues that were raised. Firstly, I thank the members for Albury, Camden, Kiama, Leppington and Oatley for their contributions. Again, I am disappointed that those opposite denied leave for other members to speak. I will return to the motion. At the 2015 election Labor pledged to commit \$45 million for new school infrastructure in Dapto and the Liberals would not match it. At the 2019 election Labor pledged \$60 million for schools in West Dapto and, again, the Liberals did not match it. For the member for Kiama to talk about school infrastructure is a slap in the face for the teachers and families who wanted it. This Labor Government will deliver it for them in spades.

The member for Kiama also voted against a wages cap time and again in this place. Only this Labor Government has delivered for teachers across New South Wales. When in opposition, I cannot tell you how many questions on notice I put to the government of the day about purchasing land in West Dapto. I lost count of how many times I asked, "Where is the land? Have you purchased any land?" only to get zero response. There was no land purchased. In a brand-new area where there was plenty of land—as I said in my contribution—the previous Government did not buy one blade of grass. When it comes to education for future generations, if we fail to plan then we plan to fail, which is exactly what happened under those opposite. This Government is working hard to ensure that families in new and fast-growing areas and suburbs will have access to the first-class public education their children deserve.

Not only is the Government planning for new schools but it is also undertaking urgent upgrades across all existing schools, including in the Illawarra. These upgrades will make a world of difference. They include an additional specialist classroom for students with autism at Dapto High School, roof and pavement replacement at Koonawarra Public School, and upgrades to air conditioning at Lake Illawarra South Public School and Mount Brown Public School. As we wait for planning on schools to progress, this Government will get the basics right. In the face of a \$1.2 billion unpaid maintenance bill, inherited from the former Government, these upgrades will help the local communities that were left behind by those opposite. Opposition members have no licence to talk about their record in public education because they did very little.

**Mr Gurmish Singh:** Rubbish!

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** You couldn't even get the maintenance backlog right. The families of New South Wales gave the Minns Labor Government a mandate at the election to fix the school infrastructure backlog in the State's growth areas, including the Illawarra. I assure my community that public education infrastructure is a priority not only for me but also for the entire Labor team. This Labor Government is committed to ensuring that education is factored into future planning for expanding suburban areas. This approach is long overdue and raises serious questions about the performance of the previous Government. Why do the Liberals and Nationals not want to build public schools where people actually live? Having a primary school or a high school in an electorate is critical because it provides a new urban growth area with a sense of community. This Government will continue to rebuild essential services in the Illawarra and back our teachers, who are the highest paid in the country. We will get on with the job of planning for future schools where they are needed most.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### NEW SOUTH WALES JEWISH COMMUNITY

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (15:05):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that New South Wales has a vibrant Jewish community.
- (2) Calls on the Government to action its election commitments, including: \$15 million towards safety and security at faith institutions; enhancing Holocaust education; addressing rising antisemitism in our schools; \$5 million to the Sydney Jewish Museum; and exploring direct flights between Sydney and Tel Aviv.

I will start with a story. Six years ago I visited Yad Vashem in Israel. One of the displays was a small pocket watch that belonged to Włodzimierz Poczter. He gave it to his nephews, Benjamin and Nisan, in September 1944. Benjamin recounts:

... we saw all the prisoners, two thousand five hundred, sitting cross-legged on the ground with their hands on their heads. Uncle Poczter stepped out of line and approached my brother with his pocket watch and told him: "Take the watch, I won't be needing it anymore."

The pocket watch is the moment in time when the brothers parted with their uncle, who was later murdered. Six million Jewish people were murdered in the Holocaust simply because they were Jewish—the hatred, the pain and the terror of the Holocaust. On Saturday 7 October 2023 more Jewish people were murdered than on any other single day since the Holocaust. That is the gravity of the current situation. Many may ask why this motion and why now? Fate has it that the motion is being debated today. To not debate the motion today, when our Jewish community needs to hear from its leaders and friends, would be an act of cowardice. I first gave notice of the motion on 1 August 2023. It was a different time. The motivation then was to celebrate, recognise and acknowledge the vibrant Jewish community in New South Wales, which includes over 50,000 people and is growing.

On 16 March 2023 my friend David Ossip, who is the President of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, wrote in *The Australian Jewish News* of the 2023 State election that the community will benefit no matter who wins. It is in this spirit of bipartisanship that we owe it to our vibrant Jewish community to make sure we do everything we can to ensure their safety and security, enhance Holocaust education and address rising antisemitism in our schools. Last night it was inspiring to be in Dover Heights with so many parliamentary colleagues in a bipartisan effort to stand united with 10,000 others in solidarity with our Jewish community. Now is the time for this House to stand united against hate speech, violence and terror. I ask members who speak on this motion to do so, free of hatred. This is not the motion or the time to engage in bitter partisanship. Our Jewish community should expect a respectful contribution by all elected officials at this time and in this debate.

With the indulgence of the House, I take a moment to acknowledge the Jewish community in the Davidson electorate, which is home to over 2,500 people of Jewish faith, three beautiful synagogues and Masada College at St Ives. The Davidson electorate is stronger because of its vibrant Jewish community. I thank the Jewish community for making me feel so welcome since I have become a member of Parliament. They opened their arms and their homes to me and my wife, Gessika, from the lighting of the Menorah at the St Ives Village Green to sharing many Shabbat dinners on a Friday evening and welcoming me several times to Masada College to meet with students. I thank them for inviting me to join them on Monday 9 October 2023 for a gathering of North Shore synagogues at Masada with rabbis Schapiro, Friedler, Koncepolski and Lewin.

The events that we saw on Saturday 7 October 2023 have been sobering. They have been confronting. In fact, they have been heart-breaking. Over 1,200 Israelis have been murdered in the worst attacks in the country's 75-year history. Over 100 people in Be'eri have been murdered, including Sydney woman Galit Carbone. In Kfar Aza, 40 innocent babies and young children were murdered, many of them as they slept in their beds. In Sderot, seven people were murdered at a bus stop. The 260 people who attended the Supernova music festival were murdered by Hamas militants, who arrived by land and by air; others were raped and taken hostage. One hundred and fifty Israelis have been taken to Gaza as hostages. We hope and we pray for their safe return.

My message to the people of Israel is to please stay safe. For Australians wanting to leave Israel, our local Federal member of Parliament, Paul Fletcher, advises them to contact +61 2 6261 3305 or 1300 555 135. I thank the Federal Government for making sure that we are offering flights for those people who need to leave harm's way. In conclusion, I quote the Israeli Prime Minister, who once said, "If the Arabs put down their weapons today, there would be no more violence. But if the Jews put down their weapons today, there would be no more Israel." I am proud to place firmly on the record that I stand with Israel, with the people of Israel and with our vibrant

Jewish community. I am proud to be their friend and their supporter, both in the good times and in the not-so-good times. We need to make sure that we stick together as a community. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (15:11):** On behalf of the Government, I speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Davidson but foreshadow that the Government will move an amendment. The New South Wales Government has clearly and unequivocally condemned the acts of violence and hatred conducted by members of Hamas on citizens of Israel. This is an abhorrent attack on Israeli citizens. It is indiscriminate, with civilians being targeted, killed and murdered and many being taken hostage. The position of the Government could not be clearer: We stand with the people of Israel and the Jewish community in this very difficult time. We express our deepest sadness and grief for those impacted by this attack. We are working closely with the Australian Government to support those from New South Wales who may have been impacted. New South Wales is a strong and connected society. We respect the different backgrounds and cultures that make us stronger. We are proud to be one of the most successful multicultural States on the planet.

There is absolutely nothing to celebrate in the killing of innocent people, the firing of rockets at civilians or the taking of hostages. Members of the Jewish community should be able to feel safe and secure in their own city, State and country. The Jewish community has every right to get together to commemorate, in a solemn way, what has happened in Israel. The scenes on Monday, where epithets were thrown at the Jewish community by protesters, were nothing short of horrific. As we learn more about the impacts of this Hamas attack on Israel and its humanitarian consequences, we need to keep rejecting hate and violence and all those who perpetrate it. I endorse the comments of the member for Davidson about the continued support of the Israeli community during this difficult time. I also acknowledge his attendance, among others, at last night's ceremony. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend because I had to fill in here while Parliament continued to sit. Through talking to colleagues, I know that it was—I do not think there are words to describe the feeling of sadness but also support for each other in this difficult time.

The Government's amendment to the motion will focus on and highlight the election commitments that were mentioned in the original motion that we have delivered on for the Jewish community, and I am pleased to be able to share those details with the House. In a little more than six months, the New South Wales Government has delivered on many of Labor's key election commitments to the Jewish community and is taking steps to fulfil the others. We have delivered on our promise to pass legislation to make religious vilification unlawful by amending the Anti-Discrimination Act. We have delivered on our commitment of \$5 million for the Sydney Jewish Museum. The recent budget included funding for faith organisations to improve safety and security at religious institutions, including places of worship, schools, community centres and buildings. The Minister for Education and Early Learning is tackling religious intolerance and bullying in New South Wales schools. That includes developing best-practice curriculum resources for teaching about the Holocaust.

We have also established the NSW Faith Affairs Council. I was pleased to be at the dinner that launched the Faith Affairs Council, with the Minister for Multiculturalism, the Premier and many current and former members of Parliament in attendance, along with a diverse group of people across the whole religious landscape of New South Wales. It was a great demonstration of how it is important that we protect our way of life and our multicultural society in New South Wales. It is a beacon for the rest of the world in how communities can get on together and live in peace and harmony, learn from each other and support each other. The new body will act as a formal means of consultation between the New South Wales Government and religious communities. I am happy to inform the House that David Ossip, friend of the member for Davidson and President of the Jewish Board of Deputies, has been appointed to sit on the new Faith Affairs Council.

The Jewish community in New South Wales deserves praise for the work that it is doing to connect with other faiths in New South Wales. The Jewish community has led the way in encouraging and participating in multifaith dialogues. It engages constructively on areas where there are differences and works to find the common ground among people with different beliefs and traditions. For an example, we can look at the work that led to legislation to ban Nazi flags in New South Wales—a campaign led by Labor's shadow police Minister at the time, Walt Secord. The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the Hindu Council of Australia developed a landmark joint submission on this issue. Together, they showed a way forward that protected both communities. This is an example of the best of multiculturalism and of people of different faiths working together, achieving together.

In finishing, the New South Wales Government has been clear in our denunciation of both Hamas and the abhorrent protest that took place at the Sydney Opera House. We stand with the Jewish community, and we will continue to do everything we can to support them. Through the NSW Faith Affairs Council, we also hope that there can be world-leading dialogue that continues to show the world that in New South Wales people can live

together in peace and harmony, that they can live in safety and that they can be respected, no matter what their religion is, to be able to carry out their cultural and religious ceremonies without any sort of persecution.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:18):** I acknowledge this excellent motion brought on by the member for Davidson. The irony is not lost on me that he gave notice of this excellent motion on 1 August. In his first point, he notes that New South Wales has a vibrant Jewish community. It is so evident that our Jewish community has been fearful over the past few days, which is something that they should never ever have to face. My very good friend the late Hon. Margaret Davis from the other place would say that the member for Davidson has chutzpah. It is about standing up, being brave and making sure that we protect people in our community, no matter their faith or beliefs. People have the right to feel safe in New South Wales. Sadly, what we saw early this week in the forecourt of the Opera House was the absolute opposite of what our State and we as Australians stand for.

The images coming out of Israel are nothing short of horrendous. Unspeakable atrocities are being perpetrated on the most innocent of people. This should not and cannot ever be tolerated by any civilised community anywhere in the world. Some 1,200 Israelis, including 260 people who were simply going to a music festival, have been murdered. Women and children are being murdered. This is totally unacceptable. This is a barbaric act of terrorism. It should not go uncondemned by the world and it should be dealt with.

I again acknowledge the member for Davidson and his contribution. It is important that people remember what happened to the Jewish community. The entire world needs to accept the fact of the Holocaust. I remember being in Washington on a trip many years ago and attending the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. with my wife. On arrival people are given a name. Touring through that museum, we are confronted by some incredibly stark imagery. At the end of that journey people find out whether they survived. The majority did not survive. We are talking about the extermination of more than six million Jewish people during World War II.

It is unacceptable that people in this day and age think they have a right to chant antisemitic slogans at an iconic location such as the Opera House. It is totally abhorrent and unacceptable to all of us. We need zero tolerance for the sort of racial hate speech we sadly saw emanating out of our own backyard this week. It is cowardly. It is gutless. It is the worst possible kind of behaviour and Australians will not tolerate it. When a person comes to this country, they take an oath to abide by its laws and traditions. What we saw earlier this week was the opposite of all of that.

As Australians, we are proud to accept everybody. When people come to Australia, they leave their baggage at the door and are welcomed to the best multicultural nation in the world. The reason for that is our incredible tolerance for everybody. The motion of the member for Davidson, which I note he gave notice of on 1 August, typifies the problems that still exist and which we saw play out in stark reality earlier this week. All people living in New South Wales and this country need to know that they are safe 24/7, 365 days a year. I commend the member for Davidson on this excellent motion.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (15:22):** Today I speak in debate on the motion moved by the member for Davidson. The electorate of Coogee in the eastern suburbs is proudly home to one of the largest Jewish populations in Australia. I love the way that Jewish migration to the eastern suburbs has marked the unique culture of our area. From our dialect of English, which has Yiddish embedded in it, to the food we all enjoy eating and the not-for-profits that feed and house the most vulnerable, our community is a richer, better and more interesting place because of Jewish migration.

I know that many people in our community are deeply hurting right now. Many Jews and Israelis in our community—many of whom I am personally friends with—have been directly impacted by the acts of violence and hatred conducted by members of Hamas on citizens of Israel that we have all witnessed over the past few days. I reaffirm that the New South Wales Government and I clearly and unequivocally condemn these acts of violence and hatred conducted by members of Hamas on citizens of Israel. Along with the Government, I express our deepest sadness and grief for those impacted by this attack.

History has shown us that whenever there are acts of violence in the Middle East against Israel and her people, we are more likely to see increased antisemitism in Australia. Sadly, we have already seen such acts of violence displayed in New South Wales. There has never been clearer moment to demonstrate why the Government has a responsibility to fund security for the New South Wales Jewish community. I note that funding security for the Jewish community has always been, and should always remain, a nonpartisan issue as long as antisemitism exists within our society. I am proud that our recent budget included funding for faith organisations to improve safety and security at religious institutions, including places of worship, schools, community centres and buildings.



But in order to eliminate the oldest hate, we must do more. That is why the education Minister is tackling religious intolerance and bullying in New South Wales schools. This includes developing best-practice curriculum resources for teaching about the Holocaust. It is why we have established the NSW Faith Affairs Council, a new body that will act as a formal means of consolidation between the New South Wales Government and religious communities. I am also happy to inform the House that David Ossip, President of the Jewish Board of Deputies, has been appointed to sit on the new Faith Affairs Council.

The Jewish community in New South Wales deserves praise for the work it is doing to connect with other faiths in New South Wales. The Jewish community has led the way in encouraging and participating in multi-faith dialogues. It engages constructively on areas where there are differences and works to find the common ground among people with different beliefs and traditions. A prime example of this has been the work that led to legislation to ban Nazi flags in New South Wales. The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the Hindu Council of Australia developed a landmark joint submission on this issue. Together, they showed a way forward that protected both communities. This is an example of the best of multiculturalism—of people of different faiths working together and achieving together. For more than 2,000 years the Jewish story has been one of hope and survival. I know that at the end of this darkness, that story will continue.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:26):** I thank the member for Davidson for bringing this important motion before the House today. I express my unwavering support for the vibrant and diverse Jewish community of New South Wales. Our great State has always been a melting pot of cultures, religions and traditions. It is the unity and contributions of the Jewish community that enrich the cultural fabric of New South Wales. I express my solidarity with the Jewish community in the face of the violence and suffering occurring overseas. New South Wales is home to a thriving Jewish community with a rich heritage and storied history dating back to the early days of European settlement. Jewish immigrants first arrived on our shores in the nineteenth century, and the Jewish community has since become an integral part of our social, cultural and economic life. The Jewish community has not only persevered but thrived. The resilience of its members is a testament to the strength of their traditions and their commitment to building a better future for all.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Jewish community in New South Wales is its commitment to education and knowledge. The importance placed on learning and education is deeply ingrained in Jewish culture. It is reflected in the many educational institutions and programs established by the community. Jewish schools, synagogues and cultural organisations offer a wide array of educational opportunities for members of the community and the broader society. In doing so they promote inclusivity, diversity and cultural understanding, which are vital in our multicultural society. The Jewish community in New South Wales also makes significant contributions to the arts, science and business sectors. From renowned artists and musicians to esteemed scientists and successful entrepreneurs, individuals of Jewish heritage have made outstanding contributions to our State's prosperity and cultural richness. This dedication to excellence and innovation is a source of inspiration to all residents of New South Wales.

Furthermore, the Jewish community's strong emphasis on social justice and philanthropy has had a profound impact on our State. Acts of kindness and charity are core values that guide the actions of many Jewish community members. This commitment to helping those in need, regardless of their background, is a shining example of the spirit of generosity and compassion that is essential to the social fabric of New South Wales. I say this clearly: Everyone in our community has the right to live, work and practise their religion in safety, free from fear of violence and persecution. It is a central tenet of our democratic and rules-based society that all communities deserve to live in safety and happiness. Threats to this way of life must be condemned and addressed with the utmost seriousness.

In New South Wales we are fortunate to have a strong tradition of unity, diversity and mutual respect, and we must remain vigilant in preserving these values. It is essential that we recognise the challenges faced by the Jewish community, including combating discrimination and antisemitism. It is our shared responsibility to stand together and ensure that every member of our community, regardless of their faith or ethnicity, is treated with respect and dignity. I echo calls for the Government to deliver on its election commitments towards increasing the safety and security of our faith institutions. Through my many conversations with all our religious and faith groups, I know that the protection of places of worship is a significant priority for them. It is crucial that this Government does all it can to ensure that the safety of our faith institutions is protected. [*Extension of time*]

The Jewish community of New South Wales is a vital and cherished part of our State. Their history, values, contributions and commitment to education, culture and social justice are woven into the very fabric of our society. We must celebrate and support the New South Wales Jewish community, recognising their unique heritage and the positive influence they have on our State. I acknowledge the Jewish Board of Deputies for its advocacy and support for the Jewish community. I give particular thanks to President David Ossip, Acting CEO Michael Gencher and former CEO Darren Bark. As a Parliament, let us continue to stand on the side of peace and in

solidarity with those affected by this conflict and, in doing so, strengthen the bonds of our diverse society. Together, we can create a brighter future for New South Wales, where every individual is valued and respected and our community thrives on the principles of unity, diversity and inclusion.

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (15:31):** I thank the member for Davidson for recognising the vibrancy of the Jewish community. He gave notice of this motion before the horrors that occurred on Sukkot Simchat Torah over the weekend. Bearing that mind, I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting paragraph (2) and inserting instead:

(2) Notes the Government's action to fulfill its election commitments to the New South Wales Jewish community.

As a member of the Jewish community in this State, I value members' contributions about that community. I indicate to the House that, until I became a Minister, I was a member of the Jewish Board of Deputies representing Maroubra Synagogue. The ministerial code of conduct required me to resign and did not permit me to continue on the board of Maroubra Synagogue because being a member of corporations is not permitted for Ministers. Nevertheless, I cannot say that I have an independent view about the atrocities and barbarities that occurred over the weekend.

Coming from my background—when my grandparents were exterminated for the sole reason of being Jewish, when I stood in the killing fields and trekked down the sand dunes in Kalevi-Liiva in Estonia, where thousands of Jews were shot naked into the unmarked trenches beneath my feet, and with a mother who survived concentration camps and the horrors that millions of Jews experienced, remembering that six million were exterminated—I have a real understanding of the comments and offensive expressions that people made on the forecourt of the Opera House about members of the Jewish community. It does not require me to comment, other than to say that at least the world sees the extent of the challenge that it must continue to address.

I remind the House that Yom Kippur was only a little over two weeks ago. During Yom Kippur in Kensington Nazi slogans were painted on a wall out the front of a house. Antisemitism is not far away from us in any part of the international community. It is fundamental that we drive it out, lest there be a repeat of what we saw occur in Israel. There is a section of the international community that does not believe Jews should survive and has committed itself to their destruction. We need to be ever vigilant in this country to ensure that that plague does not spread in this country. We need to be vigilant to ensure that we do not permit opportunities for those things to even begin.

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:36):** By leave: Australia, and New South Wales in particular, is a great place to call home because of the success of our multicultural community—and a great part of that success is our vibrant Jewish community. I thank the member for Davidson for bringing this motion before the House. He gave notice of the motion a few months ago in the spirit of celebrating the Jewish community, and also with a great sense of sobriety around the need for security and safety for the Jewish community, which we have known for an incredibly long time is necessary. In light of the occurrences overseas, it is prescient that the motion was to be debated this week.

We know that the Jewish community plays an essential role in the cultural, economic and social fabric of New South Wales. I hope we can celebrate that contribution as well as contemplate the challenges that the community is facing. According to the Jewish Board of Deputies, approximately 50,000 people of Jewish faith reside in Sydney—throughout Greater Sydney but particularly in the eastern suburbs and north of the Harbour Bridge, including in my electorate of North Shore. I acknowledge Cremorne Synagogue in Neutral Bay, which is on the same street as my office, and Rabbi Chaim Konceptolski for all the work they do for the Jewish community on the North Shore. I have been fortunate to attend festivals and commemoration services as the member for North Shore and I have seen firsthand the strong bonds of community and friendship that the Jewish people share. They always welcome me into their shul as though they are welcoming me into their family home.

It would be remiss of me not to talk about the terrorist attacks that took place in Israel this week. Not since the Holocaust has there been such a large loss of Jewish life in a single day, and obviously everybody condemns that barbaric violence. I look forward to joining with Cremorne Synagogue in solidarity tomorrow and making sure that, as a community, we stand shoulder to shoulder with our Jewish community. We know that there is no place for the antisemitic behaviour that we have seen across Sydney in recent days—racial epithets, calling for death to the Jews, and protesters burning the Israeli flag.

When we were in government, with the support of the then Opposition, we banned the use of Nazi symbols in New South Wales amid concerns about rising antisemitism. I acknowledge that the motion calls for that focus to continue to ensure that we appropriately fund work to keep the community safe. But our Jewish community is resilient. I recall visiting Masada in Israel a number of years ago and I appreciate the spirit it imbues in Jewish people across the globe. It has done so throughout time. I note the 10,000 people who came together last night at

Dover Heights to think about and reflect on the resilience in the face of 2,000 years of persecution and exile, including the Holocaust. Despite all the challenges, they remain a deeply resilient people.

I acknowledge the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry for all their advocacy work. While our Jewish community may be going through a dark moment at this point in time, there is still so much to celebrate about this vibrant culture and community. I am so grateful that they call my community of North Shore home. We celebrate together, knowing that things have to—but will—get better. We know that our Australian Jewish community in Sydney and across the country will always be part of our great Australian story.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Alex Greenwich):** Before I call the member for Davidson to speak in reply, given the importance of this motion to the House, the Chair will show some lenience to go beyond the 3.40 p.m. deadline for general business.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (15:40):** In reply: I thank the Temporary Speaker. I thank the member for Wyong, the member for Terrigal, the member for Coojee, the member for Oatley, the member for Heffron and the member for North Shore for their contributions to the motion. I thank the member for Heffron for his amendment, which I am happy to support. As I said in my remarks, this is a time when we need to come together for the Jewish community. We are friends of the Jewish community in both the good times and the bad times. I thank all members for their support of a very respectful debate.

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

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **PIPPY POINT ILLOURA RESERVE**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (15:41):** I acknowledge and thank the following individuals, and the community groups they represent, who do a stellar job highlighting community issues and advocating constructively to all levels of government. One such issue raised with me is the Central Coast Council's Dogs in Open Spaces Plan, which has sought submissions regarding off-leash dog areas, including Pippi Point Illoura Reserve in Davistown. That much-loved local recreation space is a great place that is used by many locals and their dogs and there is great support for keeping it an off-leash dog area. I acknowledge the efforts of Jenny McCulla, president of the Davistown Progress Association; Rosalind Bonser of Central Coast Beach Access Reform Coalition; and Johnny Row from the Save Pippi Point campaign for their engagement with the community and Central Coast Council. From informing the community, encouraging everyone to make a submission to council using posters and social media, to holding community events to raise awareness and starting a local petition, which obtained over 3,400 signatures, their advocacy is applauded. I strongly encourage Central Coast Council to continue to engage and consult with the community on this issue.

#### **THE RISING COLLECTIVE BOUTIQUE**

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (15:42):** I recognise The Rising Collective Boutique, an amazing social enterprise that enables skills development for local women. An initiative of Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections, The Rising Collective aims to support women from the program's business incubator by running a pop-up shop to develop their business acumen. The boutique allows women to display and sell their products at the shop all year round. That includes everything from second-hand high-end clothing and accessories to a variety of handmade items. The availability of clothing is especially helpful for women attending job interviews or in need of new outfits. The store receives support from the Sydney Community Foundation and The Office Space, and the shop space is provided by Liverpool City Council. I was delighted to visit the shop last week and chat with the store's staff. I donated some pieces that I no longer had a need for. I laud the fabulous initiative and extend my congratulations to all involved on its profound success.

#### **MUSWELLBROOK AMATEUR THEATRICAL SOCIETY**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (15:43):** After four years offstage, Muswellbrook Amateur Theatrical Society, or MATS, as it is known, is back. I congratulate the team on returning to the stage for its 100th production, *MATS The Musical - Backstage*. I recently had a sneak preview from backstage and recommend it as a must-see for everyone. Written and directed by Virginia Greentree, *Backstage* is being performed in

collaboration with the Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music. In short, it is a production about putting on a production, encompassing an endless list of musical favourites. When forced to improvise a musical production following COVID and the lack of a suitable venue, the MATS members put their heads together and made a wish list of songs they would perform if given the chance. The result is much-loved songs from Broadway and the West End. Auditions were held in January, with the official launch in early March starting months of preparations. I hope the only thing broken will be the crowd attendance records for MATS 100th production.

#### **LEPPINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (15:44):** On Saturday 12 August Leppington Public School celebrated its centenary. Originally founded as the Raby School in 1923 on the grounds of Alexander Riley's property Raby Farm, the school changed its name to Leppington Public School in 1955. Over the years, the school has witnessed the region change from a rural outpost on Sydney's fringes to its more recent assimilation into Sydney's urban sprawl. As such, Leppington Public School has grown from one class of about 40 pupils, aged six to 15, in 1923 to 350 students today. Thanks to government investment and projected population growth, the school will continue to grow for many years to come. I thank all the students, teachers and parents, both past and present, who worked so hard to make this event a success. In particular, I thank principal Hayley Corvini and her deputy, Lauren Fryer.

#### **DILLY BUSINESS BREAKFAST**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (15:45):** I am pleased to speak about the Dilly Business Breakfast in Wollondilly hosted by R U OK? to support mental wellbeing in our community. More than 20 local organisations and businesses gathered to offer support, strategies and resources to local workers and enterprises. The event was not just a networking opportunity but also a hub for invaluable life skills. Handouts curated by the council educated attendees on how to approach conversations about mental health. Lifeline Macarthur, Business Wollondilly, Rotary Club of Picton and other noteworthy groups were on hand to share their expertise. This breakfast served as a vital platform to address mental health, especially among workers who are the backbone of the local community. The event was facilitated by the Picton Chamber of Commerce, the Rapid Relief Team, my office and the Wollondilly Shire Council. Attendees were encouraged to make a gold coin donation in support. I extend my appreciation to all organisers, participants and community members who made the event a success.

#### **QUAKERS HILL COMMUNITY LIBRARY**

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (15:46):** I acknowledge Selina Wong and Nick Miller for their outstanding dedication to fostering a love of literature within our community. Selina recognised the importance of encouraging literacy and a passion for reading among our residents. To turn that vision into a reality, they took the remarkable initiative of establishing a community library in their front yard. This crowd-funded community library is more than just a collection of books; it is testament to Selina and Nick's community mindedness and their unwavering dedication to enriching the lives of those around them. Through the library, they have given the community access to a wealth of stories and information. They have also demonstrated the power of grassroots initiatives and the impact of individuals who care deeply about their community. I thank Selina and Nick for their exceptional efforts in nurturing a community of bookworms in Quakers Hill. The community library stands as a beacon of community and a symbol of what can be achieved when passionate individuals come together with a common interest.

#### **MIDDLE HARBOUR YACHT CLUB**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore) (15:47):** I recognise the extraordinary efforts of eight young sailors from Middle Harbour Yacht Club who recently travelled to Lake Macquarie over the Labour Day long weekend. They were up against some fierce competition, taking part in a 50-strong Optimist division of the New South Wales Youth Championships. I particularly acknowledge Astrid Nixey, who finished top of the intermediate fleet, an extraordinary effort given the level of competition on display over the weekend. I also acknowledge the other sailors who competed over the weekend: Angus Griffin, Titouan Christodoulou-Le Gac, Tucker McKeon, Marcus Retboell, Marin Christodoulou-Le Gac, Annabel Griffin and Alana Harrison. I congratulate all the competitors from Middle Harbour Yacht Club on an outstanding effort competing in the New South Wales Youth Championships for sailing, and I look forward to seeing them all out on the water soon.

#### **WIRIPAANG PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) (15:48):** Today Wiripaang Public School celebrates its tenth birthday. To mark the double-digit milestone, the school hosted a special assembly, open to the community, featuring dancers, music and, of course, delicious cake. The Wiripaang school community also introduced a time capsule to be opened in 50 years. The capsule included mementos of life at the school including

pictures of the students, letters to future selves and predictions about what life might be like in 2073. Led by principal Julie Low, Wiri—as the school is known in my patch—has seen a growth in attendance, an improvement in results and the development of strong ties between the school and local community. Principal Low greets families at the front gate every day, while her deputy welcomes students and parents arriving at the back gate. Wiri is a fantastic local school and an important part of the local community. To principal Low, her staff, students and families, I say thank you and happy birthday to Wiripaang Public School. Here's to many more.

#### **MILLIE TRUSTUM**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (15:49):** I acknowledge and say a huge thank you to Millie Trustum. Millie is a young girl from my electorate who has been on a cancer journey and now has a bright, healthy future thanks to a trial wonder drug. Millie has a burning desire to give back to children who are on the same journey she has gone through. Recently Millie and her family held a Kids Cancer Morning Tea at Greenridge Hall. What a day. There were market stalls, arts and crafts, a plant sale and the biggest raffle I have ever been involved in—of course, thanks to some very generous businesses. Millie raised a staggering \$25,000 for the Kids Cancer Project. Well done to her mum, Erica, her dad, Kevin, and her sisters, Olivia and Georgia. Here's to a happy and healthy future.

#### **WESTERN SYDNEY ACADEMY OF SPORT**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (15:50):** Incorporated in 2004, the Western Sydney Academy of Sport is an institution that plays a crucial role in nurturing aspiring athletes from Fairfield and the broader Western Sydney region. In fact, over the years the academy has provided over 3,300 scholarships to athletes in Western Sydney. Through the academy, young people have the opportunity to develop their skills across a range of sports disciplines. The academy offers a holistic program, providing young athletes with access to specialist support services, including coaching as well as educational and personal development. That development extends beyond the field, shaping well-rounded individuals. Fairfield is not just a locality; it is a thriving hub for current and future sporting champions. I congratulate chief executive officer Martin Bullock and the entire academy team. I also highlight key academy award recipients for this year: George Abbott, Tanika Terkildsen, Daniel Waddell and Anya Barker.

#### **NARRAWEENA PUBLIC SCHOOL RUGBY TEAM**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (15:51):** I congratulate Narraweena Public School, which has won its first ever State championship in rugby union, winning the prestigious Bryan Palmer Shield. Many Wallabies players have called themselves State champions. The shield is named after a famous Wallaby player and coach, who also fought for his country in World War I. The school's rugby coach, Boyd Killingworth, won the shield as a player, but as a teacher and coach he is even more proud of his students. Only several of the children had any previous rugby experience. Training twice a week, their union skills started to develop and a formidable team was created. The team were the victors of the grand final, winning 66-0. I particularly congratulate two girls from the team who were selected for the Sydney North Girls Rugby Sevens team. The school and community are very proud of all the boys and girls' efforts. Look out for some of these students in the coming years on the sporting field.

#### **MADELYN BLACK**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (15:52):** I recognise Madelyn Black, who was recently awarded a Marie Bashir Peace Award. Recently Madelyn completed year 12 at Nowra Anglican College. In the words of her principal, she is an "outstanding young person" who has made a "significant contribution towards social harmony and peace in the Shoalhaven region". Madelyn is an integral member of the Sonder Youth leadership forum, implementing positive change targeted at youth mental health and climate action. Madelyn was instrumental in creating the project Mile for a Smile, which focuses on improving youth wellbeing, and This is not a Game, which is focused on minimising our individual carbon footprint. Madelyn's creative approach to tackling social justice issues and to bringing harmony to both school and community settings marks her as a leader who uses unusual approaches to deliver her messages. I congratulate Madelyn.

#### **MOON FESTIVAL**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Wahroonga) (15:53):** Thousands of Australians of east and south-east Asian descent celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival, or Moon Festival, which occurs when the moon is shining at its brightest, often between September and October. I was delighted to attend the recent Chinese Australian Services Society [CASS] Thornleigh Korea Moon Festival celebration at Thornleigh Hillcrest Uniting Church. CASS has provided social and community services to the multicultural community and people of all ages since 1981. It serves over 5,500 families every week with a team of over 620 staff and more than 350 active volunteers. It was lovely to see many seniors craft "make a wish" lanterns and "hang a wish" cards, before participating in

traditional cultural dances. We were welcomed with traditional Korean food before being served a delicious traditional meal for lunch. I thank the entire CASS Thornleigh group for hosting such a wonderful celebration of the Moon Festival.

#### **CENTRAL COAST MARINERS WOMEN**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (15:54):** I wish the absolute best of luck to the fabulous Central Coast Mariners Women team, which plays its very first game at Industree Group Stadium at 5.00 p.m. this Saturday. I expect all coasties, especially us women, to come along to support the Mariners Women. This is an exciting time in women's sport. This year the Matildas captivated the nation, showcasing their world-class skills and the professionalism of our athletes. For too long women athletes have had to fight for resources and recognition while playing at the top of their fields. I am absolutely thrilled to see the increasing recognition of women's sport. Their skills deserve it. The Mariners team is continuing on at this absolutely momentous time. I am excited to have a professional women's soccer team on the beautiful Central Coast. I congratulate coach Emily Husband, who has been pivotal in signing incredibly skilled players, bringing the new team together and championing the team across the coast and beyond. I encourage every coastie to get down to Industree Group Stadium this Saturday and to support our fantastic local team across the season as they take the Liberty A-League Women's competition to great heights on the Central Coast.

#### **KEMPSEY TRUCK SHOW**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (15:55):** With roaring horns blaring through the Macleay Valley, the 2023 Kempsey Truck Show returned bigger and better than ever after a three-year hiatus. This year's excellent truck show brought over 1,200 spectators, drivers and enthusiasts into town. The convoy parade involved 150 trucks rolling through the streets. It was a grand spectacle. Vehicle and spectator numbers were double that of 2019, and the event reignited community spirit. Trucking members were acknowledged for their vehicle's design, conditions and kilometres, and family-owned business O'Neil's Haulage took out the top gong in the Best Presented Fleet for 2023. Volunteers from the North Coast Trucking Social Club spent many hours preparing for this wonderful weekend, which was immersive for all members of the family. Most importantly, passion and pride was on display. We have missed that in recent years. It was a great return for the Kempsey Truck Show. The hours put in by the organisers did not go unnoticed. I am sure the show will double in popularity yet again under that brilliant crew.

#### **CHEN FAMILY**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (15:56):** It gives me great pleasure to formally recognise the talent and compassion of the Chen family from Padstow in my electorate of East Hills. Each member of the family is incredibly musically talented. The eldest, 15-year-old Freda, plays the French horn, Matthew sings and plays the cello, Isaac plays the flute and Ethan plays the violin. Recently the family performed together for several aged-care facilities, entertaining senior residents and bringing joy and laughter. Each member boasts various accolades. I encourage more aged-care facilities in East Hills to reach out to this amazing family to organise more shows for our senior residents. Once again, I thank the Chen family for their generosity of time and for sharing their passion for music with our community.

#### **AUNTY KATH DODD FARRAWELL**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (15:57):** I bring to the attention of the House local Elder and Kaanju-Birri artist Aunty Kath Dodd Farrawell, who has contributed several cherished artworks to our community. Aunty Kath is an ambassador for the Glebe Youth Service and was recognised as the 2022 NSW Local Woman of the Year for her work as a mentor and tutor to young people who are facing challenges. Recently Aunty Kath designed wonderful T-shirts in support of the Voice to Parliament. They have been embraced by locals and local businesses. Several hundred shirts have been distributed. I thank Aunty Kath for sharing her beautiful artwork, Katrina Darnborough for distributing those T-shirts and everyone in our community who is working to help implement Voice, treaty and truth.

#### **TREIGH STEWART**

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (15:58):** On behalf of the Bega electorate, I recognise Treigh Stewart, who was selected to play for the Papua New Guinea Kumuls in the Prime Minister's XIII match. Treigh is a 22-year-old Walbunja man who played for the Batemans Bay Tigers, Moruya Sharks and Queanbeyan Kangaroos before he was picked by the greatest club of all, St George Illawarra Dragons, in 2019. Stewart's addition to the Kumuls team comes after a long season with the Dragons in the 2023 Knock-On Effect NSW Cup. Stewart played fullback this season. After two years' experience with the team, he scored the final try of the Dragons' campaign on 26 August against the New Zealand Warriors. The former Moruya High School student also has cultural ties to Papua New Guinea and met relatives there for the first time. The Kumuls went down 30-18 in a hard-fought

match in front of a very supportive local crowd in Port Moresby. I congratulate Treigh on his amazing career. His hard work, dedication and perseverance has paid off. This is well-deserved success.

#### JENNIFER OU

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (15:59):** Over the past two weeks, the Davidson electorate office hosted local year 10 student Jennifer Ou for work experience. Jennifer comes from James Ruse Agricultural High School. It was an honour to have her join the team, particularly as she has a keen interest in public policy and service. I asked Jennifer to write a brief on a topic that she was passionate about, and that was education. Jennifer eloquently wrote:

... whenever we talk about our future... we talk about today's children. And when we talk about today's children, we are also talking about their teachers.

If we want to invest in the future, attracting and retaining talent in teaching is one of the most effective ways to do it.

Jennifer's research highlighted the importance of alleviating the administrative burden on teachers and creating more incentives to retain them. I am proud to share Jennifer's work with the House. I thank her for her public policy contribution and her work at the Davidson electorate office, particularly with Excel spreadsheets. I thank Jennifer for her service to our local community.

#### *Petitions*

#### SYDNEY COASTLINE ARTIFICIAL REEF

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** It being 4.00 p.m., community recognition statements are interrupted for the consideration of a paper petition signed by 10,000 or more persons listed on the *Business Paper*, regarding the creation of an artificial reef by having an ex-navy ship scuttled off the Sydney coastline, lodged by the member for Coogee. The question is that the House take note of the petition.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:01):** Today I speak to the petition that has been tabled and brought forward. I thank the Sydney Dive Wreck Organizing Committee for getting the petition together, especially considering the significant community support for this proposal from the Coogee electorate and across Sydney. The Sydney Dive Wreck Organizing Committee members are amazing, and we need to pay tribute to them for their dedication and the work that they have been doing over a long period of time. The committee has developed a strong presence in our community, through attending local events, hosting information market stalls, talking to locals down at the beach and lobbying local councils across the eastern suburbs. They do this to advocate for the wreck project. They have reached out to all relevant community and stakeholder groups, even those that did not initially support the idea. The committee has listened to their views and worked collaboratively in the name of local community.

The committee was started while the previous member, Bruce Notley-Smith, was in office, and it has been a joy working with them and watching them advance this idea at local, State and Federal levels. This shows that our local community is passionate about expanding opportunities to develop outdoor lifestyle activities that boost local tourism and create new adventures in their backyard. Most importantly, they do this in harmony with the environment by supporting artificial reefs and growing fish habitat. This is an important message for the Government to hear as we explore innovative and holistic policy approaches to conservation and economic growth at a community and statewide level. It is a great idea, and an idea that I fully support. However, we need to apply the financial realities of the State budget, as they were left to us by the former Liberal Government. It means that difficult decisions are being made right now.

That is not to say that NSW Labor is walking away from the principles that are at the heart of this idea: ecological rehabilitation, environmental sustainability, and restoring and championing our waterways. That is why I am also proud to be a part of a government that has announced that its latest round of the flagship grants program, worth up to \$400,000 per project, will see local coastal waterways flourish. This will ensure functional fish habitats and happy native fish all along the coast of New South Wales.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Happy fish!

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL:** I have actually been bitten by an angry fish, so I hope that there are more happy fish. The proposal has considerable community support because it combines local tourism with ecological rehabilitation and environmental sustainability, and that is a value that the Labor Government wholeheartedly supports. At a local level this value is reflected in the fact that one of the first election commitments we are delivering on is to address the Coogee stormwater issue.

In addition to our commitment to waterways rehabilitation, fish habitat restoration and improvement of water quality for humans and marine life, the Government is committed to environmental conservation and

protections of all kinds, from the local level to the establishment of a national koala park. Each of these initiatives will see a significant economic return through climate change mitigation and improvement of local and interstate tourism. These policy agendas prove that economic development and environmental sustainability can go hand in hand, and this is what our communities want. It is precisely this type of tourism and outdoor lifestyle developments that the people of New South Wales want. It is the reason we were elected.

However, when considering ecological rehabilitation and environmental sustainability in the context of local tourism, it is essential that we can deliver projects that are cost effective and cost efficient to ensure we can deliver affordable housing, new schools and hospital upgrades. I again thank the group for tabling the petition. The message is clear: Our community wants us to invest in tourism and economic growth that is embedded with environmental conservation. We hear them.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (16:06):** I thank the member for Coogee for bringing this petition and her commitment to the local divers. We have spoken about this proposal together, and I share the member's enthusiasm for this project. Earlier this year I met with Mr Sam Baxter, president of the Gordons Bay Scuba Diving Club, the proponent of this proposal. I am, in principle, supportive of this exciting plan and recognise that, as a sustainable and eco-conscious tourism venture, this project has the potential to boost local and international tourism while also benefiting local marine life and supporting scientific innovation. There is so much to be gained from this.

The aim of the Gordons Bay Scuba Diving Club is to scuttle an ex-navy vessel four kilometres off the Coogee coastline. Under this proposal, it is hoped that the Federal Government will provide for and bear the costs of sinking the decommissioned navy vessel and that the State Government will bear the costs of managing the dive wreck. Sam has told me this proposal would provide additional recreational benefits to the community who use our marine estate, provide significant environmental benefits by creating a new habitat for marine life, help drive increased revenue for New South Wales through tourism for the dive industry, and provide a new marine research site. I note the member for Coogee said that we are in tight budgetary climate. I obviously reject the assertion that it was left by the former Government; the former Government invested in recreation and the economic benefits of tourism. We should be looking closely at this project for those reasons. It will return benefits financially, as well for the environment and for people's wellbeing. We love the ocean.

There are similar precedents around Australia, including at Avoca Beach where HMAS *Adelaide* was sunk in 2011. Previously, the Federal Government also made two ships available as dive wrecks: the ex-HMAS *Sydney*, which was scrapped in Fremantle, Western Australia, at a cost of \$2.75 million, and the ex-HMAS *Tobruk*, which was sunk in 2018 off the coast of Bundaberg by the Queensland State Government at a cost of \$10 million. Since 1984 more than 159 ships and aircraft have been sunk worldwide as dive wrecks. In Australia seven ex-navy and three pirate ships have been sunk as dive wrecks too, with an estimated economic benefit of \$30 million per annum. This is where I talk again about the benefits to our State. The club's business plan states:

Very little scuba diving activity occurs at the proposed location because of the sandy sea floor, which supports little marine life. However, a sandy sea floor offers a perfect environment in which to sink a dive wreck. Additionally, the site is adjacent to five star rated dive sites at Wedding Cake Island, the Magic Point Grey Nurse Sanctuary, and Shark Point, Clovelly NSW.

I am a keen scuba diver myself, although I will admit that I have not taken a dip for a few years with the equipment. But I am very determined to do that this summer. I have not been courageous enough to dive on a wreck. However, if the State Government were to invest in this exciting project, I would commit to the training, I would overcome my fears and I would gladly be one of the first to dive on the wreck.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Near Shark Point.

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE:** I am not afraid of sharks. I am worried about the technical expertise, but I can overcome that. Other divers tell me that some of the wonderful benefits of diving on a wreck are the sense of history on the dive combined with the beautiful marine life and the technical expertise that it takes. I know that this proposal would provide an exciting new opportunity for divers on our coastline. I would be keen to see the advancement of discussions, including with stakeholder groups, and I look forward to learning more about the State Government's response to the proposal.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (16:10):** I thank the petitioners and the member for Coogee for bringing the petition to the House. It is a huge effort to get 20,000 signatures. Is it 20,000?

**Dr Marjorie O'Neill:** It is 10,000.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** It was a paper petition. It is a huge effort either way. I congratulate the petitioners, the Sydney Dive Wreck Organizing Committee and the Gordon Bay Scuba Diving Club on their advocacy in their community and the effort they have put into garnering those signatures and getting their petition, through their local member, to the House today for our consideration. It is important that communities have the mechanism



provided by the Parliament's petition system to raise, in the forum of Parliament, issues that are important to them and the people of the State, and to have those issues addressed directly by the Government. It is a great feature of our democracy in the State of New South Wales.

The petitioners are asking for an ex-navy ship to be scuttled off the Sydney coastline for the purposes of providing an artificial reef and a scuba-diving attraction. The Central Coast, where my electorate is located, has already been through that process. I say to the petitioners that it is a worthwhile process. The outcomes that we have seen on the Central Coast suggest that there are many benefits to be obtained from undertaking the construction of an artificial reef and a diving area off the coast using an ex-navy ship in a controlled manner. It improves the safety of access to dive wrecks, which the diving community will naturally be attracted to. It ensures that the dive wreck artificial reef is constructed in the most environmentally sensitive way. The contaminants on the ship are cleaned out. An assessment is made of the structure to ensure that, if it is placed on the ocean floor for diving, there is a low risk of diver injuries as a result of diving on that structure.

The reports assessing the performance of the dive structure and artificial reef after it was constructed on the Central Coast show that many divers—3,000 a year—attend the *HMAS Adelaide*, which was sunk 1.8 kilometres off Avoca Beach. That is a huge boost to local tourism. Those divers stay on the Central Coast and spend money on the Central Coast. But the dive wreck off the Central Coast has also become a habitat for marine life. It has slowly turned into a place where marine life grows. A particular soft coral has taken hold on the wreck. It is an important species that was dying off in other areas. Cuttings from that coral have been used to repopulate other areas. So there are a whole bunch of benefits.

What should the petitioners do now? They are doing the right thing by bringing it to the attention of the State Parliament. But they need to keep working with their local member and, if they keep electing the current member for Coogee, I think they will be on the right path to achieving what they want. I note that local media reports suggest that Randwick Labor mayor, Dylan Parker, is also in favour of the project. I encourage the petitioners at the council elections next year to ensure that Labor is returned, so they have double the chance of getting this wreck. Then, of course, they have to find themselves a naval ship ready to be sunk. It is a big body of work, and I am not qualified to talk on that today.

But I stress the points made by my colleague the member for Coogee. We inherited a huge budget deficit of \$187 billion in the forward estimates—the largest debt passed from one government to another. There is a limit to what we can do to attend to the social problems left to us by those opposite. But if the petitioners persist, they will succeed—and they are only going to succeed with Dr Marjorie O'Neill as their local member.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (16:15):** I am absolutely delighted to speak to the petition as the only member of Parliament in New South Wales who has a sunken ex-warship in his electorate. I am absolutely delighted to congratulate the proponents of this petition. I have seen the difficulties that arise when such projects are put forward. I congratulate the member for Coogee and her predecessor, Bruce Notley-Smith, who kickstarted it. These are major projects. I am also delighted that a former Liberal State government and a former Liberal Federal government delivered the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* to the people of the Central Coast. It has been an incredible success.

Sadly, there was a lot of opposition to the proposal originally, when all sorts of spurious claims were made by the No Ship Action Group, which said that it would be an environmental disaster of epic proportions. I remember being on the water the day that we sent ex-HMAS *Adelaide* to the bottom. It is positioned off Avoca Beach. Even on that day, the group was still protesting about the environmental disaster the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* was going to cause to the Central Coast coastline and the wider environment. There were no facts, of course, behind any of it. Fast-forward from 2011, it is ironic that not only is the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* the most successful dive site on the east coast—more than 15,000 divers have dived on the vessel, which was sunk appropriately in the right location and taken care of and treated by the navy prior to its sinking—but also pink coral is growing on its bow. The importance of that pink coral is it has now become home to the endangered White's seahorse.

Those who opposed sinking the ship, the No Ship Action Group, literally delayed the process by about 18 months. The group cost the taxpayers of New South Wales about \$8 million in legal fees and then walked away scot-free. The so-called environmental disaster has turned out to be an environmental godsend for the people of New South Wales and our environment because it is now providing a valuable safe haven for the White's seahorse. That group complained and then walked away and took no responsibility. Quite frankly, it should have been billed the \$8 million that it cost the taxpayers of New South Wales to delay delivery of the ex-HMAS *Adelaide*.

In addition, the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* has had an economic benefit multiplier effect. I congratulate the Central Coast Artificial Reef Project, headed by Sue Dengate, and the team. It spearheaded the delivery of the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* off the Central Coast, which has generated millions of dollars in economic benefits for our region in tourist visitations. It is arguably the most successful artificial dive site anywhere on the east coast. It also

provides a valuable home to marine life. But part of the success of the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* is that it is also a marine reserve. That means people cannot fish on the dive site, which means the site is protected in perpetuity for divers and the environment.

Recently an artificial fishing reef was sunk off Terrigal. This is a million dollars worth of infrastructure provided and funded by the former Liberal-Nationals Government. It provides a place for people to go to fish. It also keeps the protection around the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* to remain an environmental, sensitive centre of sea life development on the Central Coast. There is increased marine life activity around the ex-HMAS *Adelaide*. I say to the Gordons Bay Scuba Diving Club and proponents that this is an excellent proposal. The ex-HMAS *Adelaide* has done a wonderful job for our environment. It was a long battle by the Central Coast Artificial Reef Project proponents of the ex-HMAS *Adelaide*, sadly opposed by people who knew nothing about the actual delivery of the project. The former State Liberal Government funded the scuttling of the ex-HMAS *Adelaide*. It has provided millions of dollars worth of economic growth.

More importantly, it has provided an incredibly sensitive area of marine ecology in New South Wales with the growth of the pink coral on the bow, which provides a home to the endangered White's seahorse. It has been a win-win, not only for the local economy, divers and visitors to the beautiful Central Coast, but also for the fragile marine environment. There has been a proliferation of marine life. We only need look at the video images on the live cameras. It is a great diving spot. It is 30 metres deep so the member for Vacluse should make sure her diving licence is up to date. Every single day boats go out from the Haven to this fantastic dive site. I congratulate the proponents on obtaining 10,000 signatures. This is a project well worth delivering for New South Wales. I call on the Government to fully fund it.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) (16:20):** One might ask why the member for Blue Mountains is supporting a dive wreck. As the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment and for Climate Change, I stand proudly next to my neighbour in this place, the member for Coogee, to acknowledge the signatories on the petition calling for the creation of an artificial reef by having an ex-navy ship scuttled off the Sydney coastline. I thank those who put so much effort into putting together a petition. It is no mean feat. I acknowledge some of the information that the department provides to us as members when we respond to issues brought to the Parliament by communities.

For those in the Blue Mountains who are listening from home, the broad process to scuttle a vessel takes quite some time and involves background investigations to select a vessel and a site, the creation of a business plan and the environmental, navigational and operational plans have to be looked at. Assuming the activity occurs on Crown land—within three nautical miles—there needs to be administrative actions to create a Crown reserve and determine a native title pathway as required; a governance and administrative structure for the site in perpetuity has to be created; and obviously a series of planning approvals, including environmental assessment, development consent and potential litigation have to be gone through.

As the Parliamentary Secretary and somebody who lives in a unique place in this world, in a World Heritage-listed national park, I always look at the issue of an environmental assessment in a serious way. In the discussion around a proposal such as this, members have talked about the great benefits of tourism and the pros and cons of ecological and environmental sustainability and conservation alongside economic returns. It is important to look at those examples. As we have heard, the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* has become a haven for marine life and is a popular spot for scuba-diving. I believe the member for Vacluse is ready to dive 32 metres below the surface of the water about 1.8 kilometres off Avoca Beach near Terrigal, and come back to report to this place on that exercise as soon as she can. I do not believe for a moment that the member for Terrigal would.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** We wouldn't inflict a wetsuit on those people.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE:** No, I don't think you would get through the porthole, mate. We know that this particular example has attracted divers from all over the world. The support for the tourism sector and the economic outcomes for the Central Coast have been highlighted. While many of the world's top dive sites are hours offshore, the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* and potentially something near the member for Coogee's electorate, would be just a short boat ride from land and provide an easily accessible underwater experience. In making a determination on this proposal, this example shows us what happens when a new structure is introduced to the marine environment: a thriving marine ecosystem that attracts divers. Tiny organisms such as microscopic algae in ocean waters land on the surface and create the first layer of slime and then layer upon layer of microorganisms slowly settle and create a food source for many more permanent and visiting organisms. That in turn attracts fish and becomes home to a rich diversity of marine life. I thank the signatories to the petition and look forward to further discussions.

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (16:26):** On behalf of Mr Michael Daley: In response, I am delighted to congratulate the member for Coogee on bringing forward the

petition, and the community group who worked hard on the project so far and collected the signatures. It is an exciting idea. It is not easy and it is not an instant solution. As a number of speakers have pointed out, it is also quite expensive. I say up-front that right now the Government does not have the funding available to do the work. But that is not to say the proponents should not keep working on things like the business case. I noted the speech by the member for Terrigal and I congratulate him because apparently the former Liberal Government secured the ex-HMAS *Adelaide* and sunk it in the record time of 18 days after coming into office. It is amazing.

I was the Minister responsible for fisheries for a couple of years leading up to that and was involved in some of the work that went on. That had been going on for about a decade. It was a long process leading up to the sinking. The member for Terrigal is right in saying there was some opposition to it, and it went to court to test some of the environmental impacts. We need to plan very carefully. There were concerns and there is ongoing monitoring of things like the effects of zinc and lead in the paint on the ships. Those things all need to be considered.

It is very exciting. I was personally quite disappointed that I did not get to go to the sinking of the ship, as we had a change of government and I was biding my time somewhere else, probably licking my wounds or something like that. It is a great project. It attracts a lot of people. The Labor Government at the time also introduced the artificial reefs up and down the New South Wales coast, funded through the fishing licence fees and fishing trust funds. I was pleased that the former Government continued those. They make an amazing contribution to recreational fishing in the State and we are continuing that work.

The wreck that is ex-HMAS *Adelaide* is specifically for diving. It creates an amazing environmental benefit, as can be seen. I encourage the group to continue. I cannot tell them that the Government can fund this project right away because they need to continue to work on things like the business case and the proposal to get funding from the Federal Government and bring back the case with the support that they have indicated for the Government to consider in the future. I congratulate the member on bringing the petition to the House and the people who prepared it. I know that our Ministers who are involved—and there is more than one—look forward to working with her on it in future.

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL (Coogee) (16:29):** In reply: I again acknowledge and thank the Gordons Bay dive wreck committee. It has been said over and over again, but it is a huge effort to get 10,000 signatures. It is no small feat, and the committee should be incredibly proud. The petition has brought our community together by demonstrating that there is an issue and there is something the community wants, not just those in the eastern suburbs of Sydney but across New South Wales. We hear them. I also acknowledge and thank those who have contributed to the petition debate today: the member for Vacluse; the member for The Entrance; the member for Terrigal; the member for Blue Mountains, and Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment; and the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, who is a former fisheries Minister. I thank the member for Vacluse for her enthusiasm for the project. I know that, together as neighbours, we will continue to push this.

As has been said, we have inherited a \$187 billion debt. The answer is not a no; it is just a not yet. We will keep chipping away at it. Members are supportive of principles of economic development intertwined with environmental conservation, which is great to hear. I say to the member for The Entrance, that is how governments get good ideas. Communities come forward and pitch them. That is what we have here. I thank the member for Terrigal for sharing his experience, even though it needed to be fact-checked. I thank the former fisheries Minister for his insights. This is not simple. There are really long processes to go through, and, as was pointed out, there are ongoing environmental tests that continue to be undertaken. When we do these things, we need to make sure we do them right.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** I welcome the visitors in the gallery. I hope they know how to train people to scuba-dive, because there are a lot of members here who now want to learn.

**Petition noted.**

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **CANLEY VALE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (16:32):** On 5 September I was delighted to attend the Multicultural Day celebration at Canley Vale Public School. It was evident that students had put in tremendous effort and dedication to make this day a success. Their performances were nothing short of outstanding, showcasing the rich diversity of cultures that make up our local community. The children's enthusiasm and talent shone through as they performed many poems, songs and dances from various cultures, including Vietnamese, Samoan and Chinese cultures. It was heartwarming to witness the students not only learning about and embracing their own cultural heritage but also appreciating and celebrating the cultural diversity of others around them. I extend my sincere

gratitude to the school for the kind invitation to be a part of this wonderful event. I eagerly anticipate next year's Multicultural Day, where we can once again come together to celebrate the beauty of our multicultural community.

#### **MID-AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (16:33):** I recently had the opportunity to attend the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival Chinese opera performance, held at the Marana Auditorium in Hurstville. The Mid-Autumn Moon festival is such an important time in the Chinese calendar, honouring the full moon and celebrating a plentiful and good harvest. This is a time for families and friends to come together and celebrate the sharing of mooncake whilst upholding age-old traditions. On the day we were fortunate enough to enjoy performances from an array of local artists, all of which were fantastic. We live in one of the best multicultural societies in the world, and events like this contribute to our outstanding reputation, allowing us to celebrate the cultural heritage and traditions of the Chinese community living in New South Wales. I thank Anne Farrah-Hill, the CEO of Kingsgrove Community Aid Services, who did a fantastic job of organising the day. I also thank the former mayor of Georges River, Nick Katris; the member for Strathfield, Jason Yat-Sen Li; and Councillor Nancy Liu of Georges River Council. I thoroughly enjoyed the performances and I look forward to next year's event.

#### **TAFE FLORISTRY STUDENTS**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (16:34):** I congratulate the fabulous 15 students undertaking a certificate III in floristry at Penrith TAFE who prepared the 60 table presentations of Australian flowers for the highly successful Better Foundation hospital gala night. The students applied their trade in a practical setting under the guidance of Jodie Street, the Western Sydney head teacher for floristry. The flowers were delivered from Sydney Flower Market to the college and the students prepared them, which involved unpacking, sorting and conditioning flowers. Students then designed and sorted the flowers into their respective boxes and finished their wonderful creations. The pressure on these students to perform was immense as the gala night had over 450 people attending and their flower arrangements were the central feature on each table. I can attest that the flowers must have been a sought-after memento as none were left in the room by the end of the night. I congratulate the students, who I know will have a blossoming career in floristry!

#### **JAMBEROO RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (16:35):** I recognise the Jamberoo Rural Fire Brigade, which held its first trivia night to raise funds for specialised equipment at Club Jamberoo on 9 September 2023. Tickets for the night were in hot demand, with all 100 tickets selling out in 10 days to 10 tables of trivia enthusiasts. The night was hosted by quizmaster and deputy captain John Temlett, who swapped out his orange firefighting gear for a retro velvet purple suit. John was assisted by firefighter Jen Maclean. I acknowledge deputy captain John Temlett, brigade vice-president David Butcher, captain Hannah McInerney, Jordan Casson-Jones and Marc McLaren. The night included six rounds of questions with games like "First in, best dressed", where participants dressed up like firefighters. The charity auction was hosted by brigade vice-president and veteran firefighter David Butcher, who sold a wide selection of items including artworks and a rare opportunity for a family portrait by photographer and firefighter Linda Faiers. Showing true dedication to firefighting, brigade captain Hannah McInerney left the event to respond to a grassfire and returned in firefighting gear later that night. What a champion!

#### **PNP CONSTRUCTIONS**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (16:36):** I acknowledge another fantastic local business located in the Camden electorate, PNP Constructions. PNP constructions provides high-end, bespoke, complex home modifications and specialist disability accommodation that is personalised to the needs of participants. Founded in 2019 by Marcus and Eva Pavlakis, who are both passionate about making a positive impact in the disability sector, PNP creates safe, quality environments that can transform the lives of those living with disabilities, making everyday life that much easier by catering directly to their needs. Their whole team work tirelessly to change the perception of disability bathrooms by giving people living with disabilities an opportunity to feel safe and comfortable whilst providing the same aesthetically beautiful design and accessory options that others enjoy. The fantastic work of PNP Constructions has previously been acknowledged, with the company winning Outstanding Business of the Year and Outstanding Trade and Service at the Camden Local Business Awards, as well as recently winning an award in the open category for bathroom and kitchen renovation at the National Australia Trades Small Business Awards 2023. Hats off to another fantastic local business.

#### **CHARLOTTE WARD**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (16:37):** I acknowledge Charlotte Ward, a Hawkesbury resident from Maraylya, who recently received the 2023 Netball Athlete of the Year award. The Western Sydney Academy of Sport's Annual Athlete Awards recognised a long list of athletes and coaches from 10 disciplines including swimming, triathlon, rowing, softball, volleyball and netball—a favourite of mine—at a dinner at Wentley Leagues

Club on 29 September. Charlotte was recognised for her talent, dedication, leadership qualities and commitment to netball. She credits her interest in the code to her mother's keen involvement in netball. Charlotte was given the honour of delivering the athlete's address, in which she spoke admirably of the importance of discipline, dedication and determination. Charlotte is a member of the Glenwood Netball Club, which has been extremely supportive of her. She attributes her success to their wraparound support.

#### **TRIBUTE TO MARIE THERESE WOOD**

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:38):** I remember and celebrate the life of a remarkable woman, Marie Therese Wood, who passed away on 9 September 2023. A long-term former resident of Merrylands, Therese touched the lives of countless people during her 86 years on this earth. She married John Wood, a craftsman and carpenter, and together they raised eight sons. She became a beloved grandmother to over 22 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. She dedicated herself to charity work, serving in various capacities at Patrician Brothers Granville, volunteering at St Vincent de Paul for over 25 years, and becoming the president of the Frances Fisk Child Care Centre. She served as an alderman on Parramatta council, and her contributions were recognised with life membership of the Australian Labor Party in 2009. Marie Therese Wood leaves a lasting legacy of service and dedication that will continue to inspire us all.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY BEARS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (16:39):** I congratulate my local rugby league club the mighty North Sydney Bears on an incredible 2023 season, which saw them reach the NSW Cup grand final. It is a source of pride for our community that the Bears were minor premiers after so much hard work, training and effort this season. In a thrilling grand final, the Bears were defeated by South Sydney. I congratulate Souths on winning the 2023 premiership. I commend Bears president Daniel Dickson; head coach Jason Taylor, "JT"; team captain Zach Dockar-Clay; and all the players, staff and supporters of our great club for the efforts they put into making this season such a tremendous success. I particularly recognise and thank Jason Taylor, who is moving to a new role in the National Rugby League after five fantastic years as head coach of the Bears. I wish North Sydney every success for the season ahead and look forward to cheering them on in 2024.

#### **JIZELLE SIBAI**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (16:40):** I recognise Condell Park's Jizelle Sibai, a young rising star in the world of tennis, who recently took on the world's best young talent at Wimbledon. Jizelle is a talented year 8 student who was selected to compete at the junior grand slam under-14s Wimbledon Championships. She has been playing tennis for nine years, picking up her racquet at the age of five following in her dad and older brother's footsteps, who also share a love of tennis. She competed in a round robin event at the prestigious All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, where she was able to showcase her skills, drive and determination. Jizelle has also previously competed in the Sydney South West School Sport program when she was a student at Georges Hall Public School. The program encourages students of all abilities and aims to improve fitness, refine their skills and help them to become supportive team players. I congratulate Jizelle on her amazing achievement. I am sure this marks the beginning of a great sporting career.

#### **PITTWATER ELECTORATE RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (16:41):** I acknowledge the emergency service personnel who attended the two crashes on Mona Vale Road West in my electorate of Pittwater on 9 October 2023. I thank the members of the Ingleside Rural Fire Brigade who attended the crashes: Brad Kelly, Melissa Gough, Adam George and Chris Darge. Pittwater is very fortunate to have such an active and committed local RFS community. Time and again, the local RFS members have displayed their dedication to keeping our community safe. Not only do they give their time to provide support during emergencies, they also sacrifice countless hours completing training so they can continue to protect our community. Pittwater is so grateful for the bravery of our RFS members and their willingness to sacrifice their own safety to help others. The scene of an accident can be quite distressing and confronting, so I also acknowledge Brad, Melissa, Adam and Chris for their ongoing selflessness and courage. Our community supports and thanks them all.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **JEWISH COMMUNITY VIGIL**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse) (16:42):** Many people in my local community have been deeply impacted by the events in Israel over the past week. My electorate of Vaucluse has one of the largest Jewish populations in the country, with about 20 per cent of people identifying as being of Jewish faith. Last night thousands of members of the Jewish and broader communities came together at a vigil to reflect, pray and mourn. At a park in Dover Heights we saw a sea of blue and white. People young and old were draped in Australian and

Israeli flags. We all stood in solidarity with the people of Israel. We stood together as one community that rejects the vile acts of terrorism that have been seen overseas and the violence and hate speech that were seen on the footsteps of the Opera House.

Last night the Jewish community joined together to remember those lost, pray for those still in the hands of Hamas and hope for better days. This is something the Jewish community has done for millennia. In the darkest days of adversity, when hatred and evil has swirled around them, they have shown time and again their resilience. I extend my thanks to many members in this place who attended last night's vigil. I also thank the Premier and Leader of the Opposition for their very heartfelt and meaningful words last night. The reality is that the pain of these events will be felt for a very long time. They will be very hard to forget. Many people in my community are still processing what happened. More Jews were murdered during Saturday's attacks than on any other single day since the Holocaust. It is impossible for us to comprehend. As we have heard over the past 24 hours, never again is now.

Scenes this week in Sydney have only demonstrated that we must be ever vigilant against antisemitism. We can have no tolerance for antisemitism or any other form of racism and no tolerance for those who would seek to dehumanise someone because of their religion. We must tell the truth about the events of the past week and we all have a role to fight misinformation. My local community and the whole of New South Wales is so much stronger and a better place thanks to the contributions of the Jewish community. From Esther Abrahams to Sir John Monash, Sidney Einfeld to Barnett Levy and Frank Lowy to Ernie Friedlander, Australia is the successful multicultural country it is today thanks to the contributions of the Jewish community from the First Fleet to now in 2023. They are integral to our story. Australia will always stand with Israel.

I take this opportunity to thank a few people, including David Ossip, the President of the Jewish Board of Deputies, for his leadership and strong support of the Jewish community this week. I also acknowledge the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, especially Alex Ryvchin and Jillian Segal, for its steady words of comfort and reassurance to the broader Australian Jewish community. In 2018 I was fortunate to attend a women leaders delegation to Israel with Jillian and the Australia Israel Chamber of Commerce. It was a life-changing trip that gave me an even deeper perspective of both modern and ancient Israel, from the holy city of Jerusalem to the rich culture of the colourful city of Tel Aviv.

I visited a school where Jewish and Arab students sat side by side in the classrooms and played together at lunchtime, blind to ethnic or religious difference—a school where a peaceful future could be imagined. My heart breaks for those children today because that peaceful future is so hard to imagine in the midst of this cruel war. In the days, weeks and months ahead we must continue to remember that there is far more that unites us than divides us. Our ability as a society to show mutual respect to one another is what has made Australia the successful multicultural society it is today. My heart goes out to the Jewish community. I believe in hope. We will overcome this difficult time together by fighting against antisemitism and for what is right.

### RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (16:47):** Today I speak about the former Government's failure to plan for public schools, an issue felt acutely in Riverstone and throughout New South Wales. After 12 years of Liberal-Nationals Government, the students and parents of Riverstone were left with a school network that is bursting at the seams, failing to cope with the influx of growth. For a party that supposedly specialises in numbers and economics, the school situation in Riverstone should have been a simple case of supply and demand. The former Government created the population growth. It saw the state of overfilled schools and understood the need to build more, yet it did nothing to meaningfully address the issue—slapping demountable onto demountable and invading green spaces and lunchtime playing fields, taking away the spaces that foster many of our children's most teachable moments.

Learning is not only contingent on the quality of the curriculum and what is taught in the classroom; it is also driven by the environment in which children learn. Overfilled classrooms, overworked teachers and a lack of playground space all have a negative effect on the way our children learn. The previous Government created environments that were not conducive to learning, affecting teachers just as much as students, who were overworked by burgeoning class sizes and increased workloads because of an increased administrative burden and chronic understaffing. I am yet to meet a teacher who has entered the profession to become rich. They do not do this job because of the money that goes into their pay packet; they do this job because of the quality of education they provide to our students. They measure their success on the success of their students.

A failure to plan for the schools and the plan to keep teachers' wages suppressed with a wages cap saw workloads increase exponentially. The growing number of students in existing classroom allocations drove teachers to breaking point. Last year, for the first time ever, teacher resignations outstripped teacher retirements. Teaching is not only about the time spent in the classroom; it is also about preparing lessons, marking homework,

meeting with parents and so much more. The previous Government's failures in education, from infrastructure to staffing, have had a demonstrable negative effect on the quality of education received by our students. It is this Government's responsibility to ensure that we have reliable, free, quality education in New South Wales.

Education should be the great equaliser. Yet, despite the cost burden, many parents in my electorate are forced to send their kids to private schools because the former Government neglected public education. To make matters worse, many families in Riverstone simply cannot afford to send their children to private schools. Before entering Parliament, I was aware of the overcrowding being experienced by schools in Riverstone. When I was vice-president of the Business Chamber, I calculated that by 2030 an estimated 20,000 residents aged between 12 and 18 would be living in the catchment area of Riverstone High School. As alarming as it was to discover this, it was more alarming to learn that there was no plan to fund more schools to deal with the explosive population growth.

Immediately after I took office, I realised that the true depth of the problem is even worse than I thought. One school, with an expected cohort of around 550 students, in 2020 enrolled just short of 2,100 students this year; the after-school care alone caters for almost 500 students. There is a high school on the same campus. Built for around 1,000 students, it currently has over 2,100 enrolled. School times are staggered to cope with the influx of students every day. Siblings are being separated by changes in catchments. Parents are forced to organise their days around school drop-offs or pick-ups because bus services have not been to extended school routes. Instances like these are commonplace in Riverstone, with students and parents bearing the brunt of poor choices made by a government that neglected them and undervalued public education.

Planning for public schools, especially in fast-growing populations, cannot be done impulsively. Those opposite had 12 years in government to give the students in my electorate a quality education and build the schools that those students needed, but they failed. Not only did their lack of foresight extend to teaching staff, but also they rezoned at least four schools in my area to either residential or green space areas. Sites in Tallawong, Schofields, Kellyville Ridge and Stanhope Gardens that were dedicated to school facilities are all now either green space or new housing. This Minns Government will not follow the same path. Students and parents of newly developed areas, such as Schofields and Tallawong, will receive new primary and high schools. Existing schools will get the upgrades they need. We will do the right thing by students and by teachers alike.

### ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:52):** Like all members in this place, I was shocked and distressed by the images of Hamas' invasion of Israel. I went to dozens of music festivals in my teens and 20s. Scenes that normally are so familiar became scenes of unimaginable horror, when 260 people were killed, with others taken hostage. Hundreds more died in nearby towns that were attacked or in cities that were shelled. Since the attack by Hamas, the death toll is now in the thousands, with over 1,000 Israelis and over 1,000 Palestinians killed—overwhelmingly civilians. The loss of so many innocent lives is an absolute tragedy.

A humanitarian crisis is unfolding now in Gaza, as 260,000 people are now homeless, supplies of food and water are being cut, and there is no electricity. Hospitals are running out of supplies for their backup generators. In the community I represent, many Palestinian families have made Australia their home, seeking safety and security as refugees. Most spent years in refugee camps in horribly overcrowded conditions—camps that have now housed generations of Palestinians. Many have taken advantage of the opportunities to become friends with members of the Jewish community in Sydney in our wonderful multicultural, multifaith society.

No-one I know supports or celebrates the actions of Hamas this week. All dread the death and destruction that will follow. All are worried for friends and relatives in Gaza and the West Bank, and many are mourning the deaths of Israelis and Palestinians. Their aspirations for Palestinian statehood are based on an entirely legitimate and understandable desire for self-determination, safety, security and sovereignty in a land where Palestinian people have lived for centuries. The peace process has been stalling for years and has suffered a huge setback this week, but peace is needed now more than at any time since the Oslo Accords were signed.

Peace is not just the absence of conflict, and peace building is hard. It is also essential to guarantee safety and security to both Israelis and Palestinians. While official leadership may often be lacking, there are wonderful civil society organisations working towards a lasting peace. Earlier this week the Minister for Foreign Affairs called for restraint. As the member for Bankstown so eloquently pointed out in this place yesterday:

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.

Tensions in our community are very high, and the Jewish and Palestinian communities in New South Wales need our support. Those who celebrated the actions of Hamas or chanted antisemitic slurs deserve condemnation. I assure the House that their views are not widely held or condoned in my community. Antisemitism and

Islamophobia have no place in our society. They are corrosive to the values that we all hold dear. More than ever, these communities need us to lead and reach out to one another. It is not a time to inflame those tensions.

#### **TAREE AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS LIFEblood DONOR CENTRE**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (16:55):** Today I speak about a cause that deserves our attention, appreciation and active participation. I recently had the privilege of donating blood for the first time at the Taree Australian Red Cross Lifeblood Donor Centre. This nationwide institution works tirelessly to facilitate the donation of blood, tissue, organs, breast milk, bone marrow and microbiota. It is no small task, and it is all thanks to the dedication of thousands of people from all walks of life working together as one. In Australia one in three people will require blood or blood products at some point in their lives, yet only one in 30 Australians donate. Those statistics underscore the urgent need for more donors to step forward and help save lives.

It is particularly important for anyone with O negative blood to donate. O negative blood is often referred to as the "universal donor" blood type, as it can be safely transfused to individuals with any other blood type, making it invaluable in emergency situations when there is limited time to determine a patient's specific blood type. During my visit to the Taree donor centre I had the pleasure of meeting Ruth, who gave me a tour and explained the donation process and the journey of donated blood and plasma. One blood donation has the power to save up to three lives, and one plasma donation can be used in 18 different life-saving ways. The donation is transported to a processing centre, and these cutting-edge facilities process thousands of collections every day. Here they are tested for infectious diseases and blood type, then separated into red cells, plasma and platelets.

Those components serve different medical purposes. Once tested, the components of the donation are stored until hospitals request them. I got a text message to let me know where they had been distributed, which was wonderful. These teams work 24 hours a day, every day of the year to fulfil orders. Donations are sent wherever they are needed, anywhere in Australia, ensuring that the right product reaches the right place at the right time to help the people who need them most. Each blood donation travels, on average, 368 kilometres—that is almost the same distance from the Myall Lakes electorate to New South Wales Parliament House. One inspiring aspect of my visit was seeing the donor legends board at the Taree donor centre. At the top of this board is a true hero in my community. Mr Bill Ireland has made an astounding 700 donations in his lifetime, and he is rightfully recognised as one of Australia's largest donors.

Bill's journey as a blood donor began over five decades ago at Sydney University's Great Hall. His motivation stemmed from the life-saving blood transfusion that his father, Clive, received during the war. In tribute to his father's legacy, Bill has continued to donate plasma every fortnight, impacting thousands of lives throughout his incredible journey. People can even register at their local donor centre as part of a Lifeblood team. Every donation that they or their team members make counts towards saving lives and their team's tally. It was wonderful to see a list of all the local organisations, businesses, schools and community groups in my electorate who are giving blood together and changing the lives of so many people.

A notable aspect of the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood is its reliance on non-donor volunteers. Lifeblood has over 3½ thousand employees and over 1,000 volunteers. Those volunteers help things run smoothly, are excellent milkshake makers and make sure every life-changing donor leaves feeling great. I encourage all Australians to consider the importance of blood and plasma donation. Australia needs around 33,000 donations every week to meet demand and the need for these life-saving gifts is constant. If people have not already, I encourage them to register as a donor and take the opportunity to give the gift of life. Together we can ensure that no-one goes without critical blood and plasma in their time of need. Thank you to all those who are already donors, making a positive impact on our community and beyond. To register and donate blood and/or plasma, people can visit the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood website and make a difference today.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (16:59):** I speak in response to the contribution by the member for Myall Lakes. Previously I was a regular blood donor until I went to the United Kingdom in the late eighties, which then excluded me until just recently. This year, once given the all-clear, I have recommenced giving blood. My favourite place to go is the donor centre down at St Andrew's, and I recognise the efficiency of the units there. My lived experience is of the number of lives that have been saved by blood donors, particularly women's lives. My own daughter was born at 30 weeks, weighed 820 grams and needed regular top-ups. I recognise blood donors for the life-saving gift they give to our community. I could go on about the history of blood donation, stepping back to the Second World War. However, I commend the member for giving blood, I commend the Red Cross and I commend all the donors.

#### **BLACKTOWN ELECTORATE PROJECTS**

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (17:01):** I update the House on some of the wonderful projects that not only impact my electorate of Blacktown but also have broad outreach across Blacktown City, Western Sydney



and beyond. WEXPO is the colloquial term for the Western Sydney business and community expo, which was first held last year. I thank Blacktown Workers Club board and staff for their support of WEXPO, particularly the community-minded board, led by Kay Kelly, and CEO Morgan Stewart. WEXPO Blacktown, a flagship event now in its second year, was held on Tuesday 5 September 2023.

There are four streams to the daylong conference event. Firstly, community leaders gather to hear from industry experts on topics and discuss how these issues can be addressed by their communities. This year SydWest Multicultural Services led discussions on cost-of-living pressures. Western Sydney Diabetes had a panel discussion on the challenges of diabetes and ways to address the issue. Novo Nordisk Pharmaceuticals coordinated a session on creating healthy workplaces. WentWest Primary Health Network provided feedback on conducting citizen panels that was held over three days, examining opportunities for community-led transformation of health and social care. The second stream is to have a keynote speaker, which this year was the Hon. Stephen Kamper, MP, Minister for the portfolios of Small Business, Lands and Property, Multiculturalism and Sport—all important portfolios that have a major impact across Western Sydney. The third stream was information sessions and the final stream was the business expo stalls.

Last night over 80 community leaders gathered with three guest speakers in the Parliament House theatre to present their findings, with at least 20 MPs and MLCs present. The speakers included the CEO of SydWest Multicultural Services, Elfa Moraitakis; WentWest Primary Health Network CEO Ray Messom; and Blacktown Campus Dean of Australian Catholic University Dr Valentine Mukuria. All three speakers gave powerful speeches that addressed key issues for Western Sydney. Minister David Harris and shadow Minister Mark Taylor responded to the issues and concerns.

The charity for Blacktown and Mt Druitt hospitals is known as the Better Foundation, which on 5 September held its annual gala night. Over \$60,000 was raised on the night that will go to various needs, including the establishment of an eye-injecting clinic for Medicare patients suffering from macular degeneration, diabetes and stroke-related eye damage. The fantastic night was emceed by Tahir Bilgiç, with entertainment by Brian Lorenz and his Copacabana Band. Health Minister Ryan Park also spoke on the night, and we were extremely grateful for his donation on behalf of the Government. I thank my fellow Better Foundation board members for their efforts, including Irene Ross, Lee Ussher, Dr Peter Zelas, Brad Ceely, Madhavi Shankarling, and board observer program member Lisa McKenna. I thank the sponsors and volunteers for making it a wonderful event. The attendees included allied health, support workers with the Health Services Union, and nurses and doctors from Blacktown and Mount Druitt Hospital.

Transformational opportunities across Blacktown City are many years in the planning and advocacy before they are delivered. They require coordination from council through to State and Federal MPs, with strong support from community, religious and sporting organisations and the residents of the area. SBS is one institution that is slowly outgrowing its requirements on the North Shore and will eventually need to move. Madam Temporary Speaker, whilst it is great that the ABC has moved to your electorate of Parramatta, I was disappointed that Blacktown was not considered. In 2015, when I was Mayor of Blacktown City and representing the community against the negative profile of my city by the so-called pedestrian-style documentary called *Struggle Street*—which I thought was more akin to poverty porn than a documentary—I called for SBS to relocate to Blacktown.

There is no better place for SBS to relocate to than Blacktown City, which is home to approximately 188 cultures. Many film producers and actors hail from Blacktown City, including Toni Collette, Joel Edgerton and emerging film producer Daniel Okoduwa, who is from an African background. This makes the relocation of SBS to Blacktown logical. Federal MP for Greenway, and Minister for Communications, Michelle Rowland is also a long-term advocate for the relocation of SBS to Western Sydney and was recently criticised by North Shore MPs about this. The Prime Minister is onside, with his comment that moving SBS to the west "makes sense". It would be great for Blacktown City Council to come out strongly in support of the SBS move to Blacktown.

### LIZARD ROCK DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (17:06):** It is no coincidence that my first private member's statement in this place was about the proposed rezoning and development of the Lizard Rock site on Morgan Road, Belrose. This threat was a key motivation for me to stand at the March 2023 election. During the election campaign and since, the depth and breadth of community opposition has been crystal clear. The 12,000-strong petition I tabled in this place in June only reinforces this. Clearing high-value bushland for a low-density, 450-home residential subdivision is outdated, is not strategic and is risky. The development of the Lizard Rock site is environmentally reckless, goes against good planning principles and is not in the public interest. It must be stopped.

Unfortunately, since my first private member's statement in May this year the proposal to rezone the Lizard Rock site has continued to progress through the planning system. On 15 June the proposal was cleared

through gateway determination, which was extremely disappointing. Then, two weeks ago, the rezoning proposal opened for a six-week public consultation, this time with a new name: Patyegarang. It was rebranded, yes, but it is essentially the same proposal to destroy 45 football fields of natural vegetation for a low-density residential subdivision in a location with high bushfire risk and limited infrastructure. Have we learned nothing from previous bushfire disasters?

In many ways, it is exasperating that Northern Beaches Council and the community is again being forced to jump through hoops to make their already well-established and well-founded opposition known. However, it is necessary. In fact, this is a crucial opportunity for us to make our voices heard. Submissions close on 7 November, and I encourage everyone in the community to participate and make a submission. I am totally committed to doing everything I can to oppose the progress of the rezoning proposal. In the coming weeks every letterbox in Wakehurst will receive a flyer with information and a submission that residents can post back to my office to be submitted on their behalf.

I am very much in favour of density done well; that is no secret. The *Northern Beaches Local Housing Strategy* makes clear that we are committed to meeting housing targets on the Northern Beaches—and we are doing so through adding density in strategic locations. This is consistent with good planning policy and the Government's stated vision for new dwellings to be concentrated close to infrastructure. Guess what? The Lizard Rock rezoning proposal is totally counter to that logic. With the Beaches Link tunnel now formally cancelled and with no plan B, we need to be even more judicious about the location and quantity of our new housing. The justifications for stopping Lizard Rock have not changed. There is the ecological impact, the lack of strategic planning merit and no supporting infrastructure. However, I particularly stress how managing bushfire risk has not been adequately addressed in this proposal.

As part of council's submission in the gateway determination, they commissioned advice from expert bushfire consultants Blackash. This assessment made clear that "The planning proposal has been developed on the premise of evacuation being provided by Morgan Road and a new slip lane onto Forest Way and a new emergency access onto Oates Place." Is that serious? "The availability and utility of both of these key aspects has not been demonstrated in the planning proposal and are fundamental enabling provisions for the proposal." These evacuation route issues remain unresolved, with the proposal currently on exhibition. I have spoken to firefighters who were in the field during the 1994 fires, which affected the suburbs surrounding the Lizard Rock site, and the thought of having thousands of additional people to evacuate from the location is terrifying.

A local coastal engineer, Angus Gordon, OAM, has also recently brought to my attention the downstream implications of increased run-off if the development goes ahead. He outlines that this will have implications for the Wakehurst Parkway and will cause more flooding events. Additional run-off is the last thing we need at a time when flooding events are intensifying and we are trying to fix existing issues with Wakehurst Parkway. I ask the people of Wakehurst and the northern beaches to please make their submissions as soon as possible. I also encourage them to attend the information night being hosted by the Bushland Guardians at 6.30 p.m. on Thursday 19 October, next week, at Club Belrose. Let us protect Lizard Rock and stop this destructive and hazardous proposal from going any further. We must do this.

#### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (17:10):** I support a First Nations Voice to Parliament and put on record that I will be voting yes in the referendum on 14 October 2023. It has been a long journey for our First Nations people since the 1967 referendum, when Australian voters were asked whether to give the Federal Government the power to make special laws for Indigenous Australians and whether Indigenous Australians should be included in official population counts. Prior to the 1967 referendum, not only were First Nations people not counted for constitutional purposes, but they were also not given the same rights afforded to others.

Recently Van Badham wrote about how her poor Irish migrant family were able to purchase a war service home in the 1940s. After the Depression and the Second World War, veterans were given the opportunity to secure low-cost government home loans with low insurance costs, which enabled working class families to own a home. Indigenous Australians were excluded from this scheme because of their race. It did not matter if they had weathered the Depression like many other Australian men and women. It did not matter that they too had fought in World War II. They were excluded from the scheme.

While Van Badham's family was able to use one little fibro cottage to reduce financial strains and allow her family to transform from immigrant, itinerant shearers to being university educated in three generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not. It was some thirty years later, in the seventies and eighties, under the Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke governments, that there was a growing awareness of the negative impacts of colonisation on First Nations people. Their lives were marred by trauma and injustice. Dispossession, disease, massacres, and assimilation and elimination of culture and stolen children has been the legacy of past policies.

We know that, due to those past policies, Indigenous people in Australia have worse health outcomes than non-Indigenous people. They are over-represented amongst the poor and disadvantaged, have lower life expectancies and, despite making up only 3.8 per cent of the general population, make up 26 per cent of the prison population. The leading cause of death for younger Indigenous Australians is suicide. We also know that success in improving these disparities has been limited. If we want to close the gap, we must work with Aboriginal people to solve the issues that impact them.

In 1973 Gough Whitlam formed the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, which had a principal function of advising the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister on issues of concern to First Nations peoples. The members of the committee were elected by First Nations people, just as proposed in the Voice. In 1977 Malcolm Fraser changed the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee to the National Aboriginal Conference. By 1985 the National Aboriginal Conference was abolished. In 1990 the Hawke Government formed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. In 2004 Howard announced the agency's abolition. He said:

... the experiment in elected representation for indigenous people has been a failure.

Since 2005 there have been numerous successors: the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs, the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination and the National Indigenous Council. The latter was to be a temporary body only, until a proper national elected representative body was put in place. The National Indigenous Council was wound up in 2008, again, along with any voice to Parliament. We are now in 2023, and we have 50 years of failures behind us. The status quo is not working.

The term "fair go" is one of the most distinctive expressions in Australian cultural discourse. This weekend we have an opportunity to make history together and show the rest of the world what a fair go actually means. It is obvious that what we have done previously has not worked, and that is why our First Nations people need a Voice to Parliament that is enshrined in the Constitution, a voice that will help inform the policy that impacts their lives.

Let us make policies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, not for them. Giving people a say will lead to more effective results. A Voice to Parliament is a practical action, where we can walk a path together and, for the first time, recognise First Nations people in the Constitution. This is a big step on the pathway to reconciliation and closing the gap. For the vast majority of Australians a Voice to Parliament will not be a big change, but for First Nations people this will be a massive change. Let us turn the clock back 50 years and start again, but this time let us ensure that the government of the day cannot reverse the decision. Let us enshrine the Voice to Parliament in our Constitution.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Donna Davis):** I thank the member for South Coast. That is a very strong message.

#### **AUSTRALIAN ARMENIAN COMMUNITY**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (17:15):** I recognise and acknowledge the Australian Armenian community in New South Wales. I have always said that diversity is our community's greatest strength. In the Davidson electorate, we proudly have 848 Australian Armenians, including 266 in Belrose, 182 in Frenchs Forest and 118 in St Ives. In my first speech to Parliament, I acknowledged the genocide of the Armenian people from 1915 to 1923. We must never forget the horrors of the genocide that claimed the lives of over a million Armenians, as well as Assyrians and Greeks. Genocide denied equals genocide repeated.

I acknowledge that New South Wales was the first Australian Parliament to formally recognise the Armenian genocide, in 1997, under Premier Bob Carr and Opposition leader Peter Collins. During the 2023 election campaign, I met the Armenian National Committee, led by Michael Kolokossian. I was proud to make the following election commitments: firstly, to join the Armenia-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group; secondly, to support the inclusion of the Armenian genocide in the New South Wales curriculum; thirdly, to support the self-determination of the Republic of Artsakh; fourthly, to assist in securing a \$100,000 pledge from the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition for the Armenian-Australian Archives Project; and, finally, to participate in a delegation to the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh.

I was pleased to fulfil the final election commitment when I visited Armenia from 24 to 28 September 2023. I acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues the member for Prospect, Hugh McDermott, and the member for Willoughby, Tim James, who led the delegation, along with the member for Oatley, Mark Coure, and the Hon. Susan Carter from the other place. We were also joined by Victorian members of Parliament the Hon. Kim Wells and Ann-Marie Hermans, and former MPs Tim Wilson and David Morris. I also acknowledge as part of the delegation Zrinka Lovrencic, Simon Morris and Linda Morris. I am happy to confirm that the trip did not involve the expenditure of taxpayer funds.

Sadly, the delegation did not visit the Republic of Artsakh. I acknowledge and recognise the Republic of Artsakh. The closest we got was a border town called Goris on Wednesday 27 September. That was a confronting visit. At that stage, 30,000 people from Artsakh crossed the border into Armenia. We saw people of all ages, including children, mums and dads, and grandparents, many with all their belongings fitted to the car. They had everything from teddy bears and washing machines to clothes—everything members can think of. Many were so desperate to cross the border that, when they ran out of fuel, they used methylated spirits to complete the journey.

I share three quick stories from that visit. The first story is that when we were in Goris town square being briefed by the deputy mayor, a grandmother came up to us. Speaking in Armenian, she told us that she had crossed the border and was hungry and tired and needed support. Thankfully, that was later provided. The second story is that while we were in Goris square little children were sitting there trying to work out how to use fruit drinks. It was touching that we all knelt down to talk to and comfort the children. The final story is about when we were being briefed regarding food supplies with many Australians who are in Goris to support the efforts. When the briefing finished, without hesitation all of us picked up the supplies from the car and took them to the nearby tents. As they say, many hands make light work.

I send my thoughts and prayers to Armenia and the people of Artsakh. I thank the people we met on the trip, including the chair of the Australian-Armenian Parliamentary Friendship Group; the Armenian deputy foreign Minister, the Artsakh foreign Minister; and His Holiness, the Supreme Patriarch of all Armenia and the Armenian Apostolic Church. I thank the Armenian National Committee for their leadership on the trip, in particular Michael Kolokossian, Khajaque Kortian, Gisele Kapterian, Hratch Loussikian and Tristan Manwaring. I had an incredibly moving visit to the genocide memorial in Yerevan. It was there I read:

We believe in the power of memory and through our activities we strive to maintain the memory and legacy of the Armenian Genocide alive.

It was incredible to be given the opportunity to visit Armenia. The reason I believe it was so important is because it will help me better represent the people of Davidson who are of Armenian descent. Visiting Armenia and seeing firsthand what is happening there will ensure that I can represent our community. It was an opportunity to listen to what is happening and see it firsthand. My thoughts and prayers are with the people of Armenia and the people of Artsakh. We live in a very dangerous world and we need hope.

### THE BEAGLE

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (17:21):** I acknowledge the voyage of discovery aboard *The Beagle*. I acknowledge its evolution and persistence in following a journalistic trail. I thank *The Beagle* for our close association during my years of advocating for improved local health services and commitment to a new Eurobodalla regional hospital. *The Beagle* kept me and many other political candidates honest during election campaigns and supported the participatory democracy of the Tuross Head Progress Association's Meet the Candidates forums for local, State and Federal government elections. Sadly, due to the ill health of its captain, *The Beagle's* journey has come to its end.

Lei Parker has been a resident of the Eurobodalla for 37 years. Lei committed himself to his Tuross Head community since first arriving in 1985. Lei worked at Eurobodalla Shire Council in surveying and engineering for 21 years before retiring in 2006. During his time with council, Lei was the recipient of several industry awards for his work in asset management and the development of groundbreaking facility data systems. In that time, he committed 13 years as a presenter and committee member of local community radio station 2EAR FM before calling it a day to undertake overseas travels and foreign aid assignments.

Lei has long served on the committees of the Tuross Head Progress Association and the Tuross Head Business Association, actively advocating on behalf of his community. He created a Tuross Head newspaper in 1999. Initially it was weekly. Later he produced the *Tuross Giant* monthly, which is appropriately named, as Lei is a man of similar proportions to me but with a distinctive grey ponytail. The newspaper kept locals informed of everything happening in the town with small stories that were Tuross specific. Tuross Head then had a voice, and it was heard far and wide by over 2,500 readers.

In 2006 Lei decided to establish a website for the Tuross Head community. Previously there was virtually nothing about Tuross Head or its community on the internet. The website has over 11,000 photos, a full and comprehensive history and over 100 pages that cover everything from natural history to individual Tuross Head groups and organisations. The website also has a free business directory to promote every business in the town, from trades to accommodation and eateries, as each business is a local family and their financial wellbeing is crucial. Wanting to ensure the community had solid, reliable communications in case of accident, flood or fire, Lei established the Tuross Head Facebook page in August 2008. The page now has more than 7,000 followers and played a vital role in community communications during the 2019-2020 summer bushfires.

The *Tuross Giant* published its last edition on 1 October 2016 to allow for the coming of *The Beagle*, providing online news for the Eurobodalla shire. This free, community-focused online newspaper landed on 1 November 2016 and became the leading online newspaper for the Eurobodalla community. *The Beagle* had all the latest Eurobodalla shire-wide news. It also had food, the arts, lifestyle, community and what's on, along with letters and opinion and all the council, State and Federal media releases relevant to the shire. In addition to *The Beagle*, Lei produced the comprehensive weekly real estate guide *Beagle Abode* that promoted local independent realtors and gave them an affordable outlet for their marketing.

The community enjoyed local, quality and timely news via a website, social media and via his twice-weekly subscriber emails that have now reached 300-plus weeks of the *Beagle Weekender*. *The Beagle* Facebook page now has more than 12,000 followers. It too played a vital role in community communications during the 2019 summer fires. *The Beagle* weekly website was created to provide residents and visitors to the Eurobodalla area with an independent news source. But most importantly it has the important small-town stories captured and presented on individual town pages. *The Beagle* was born from the philosophy that a community needs to be informed, included and encouraged. With the right media, they can be. The *Tuross Giant*, from which *The Beagle* was born, proved by example that media is important to informing and giving voice. That example, which developed within one small, inclusive and informed community, expanded to cover the whole Eurobodalla shire. I thank Lei Parker for his guardianship of the public interest and the activities of his community and government.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONES

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (17:25):** In 2020 the New South Wales Parliament passed legislation to create renewable energy zones across New South Wales. It was a watershed moment for the transition from one phase of energy generation in this State to a more diverse generation of electricity with technologies, moving to a renewable energy future. It was all about making sure that the State had a more strategic approach to the renewable sector, including where it developed, how it developed and the planning of transmission infrastructure to connect those electricity-generating projects so that everyone on the eastern seaboard could benefit from them. It was also about putting communities more in control of their own destiny, rather than simply relying on the planning system which can be very slow and cumbersome and puts communities on the back foot in responding to proponents calling the shots.

One of those renewable energy zones was the New England Renewable Energy Zone, covering all, or the vast majority, of the Northern Tablelands electorate. I was then, as I am now, a big proponent for that renewable energy zone. I advocated strongly for it because in my view it was about bringing order to chaos. We are a region that is very rich in renewable resources, being on the tablelands. We have a high wind resource, given our altitude, and we are a very good location for solar development as well. At the moment New England has the two largest wind farms in the State and the largest commercial solar farm in Australia built, operating and generating electricity right now.

The key to that legislation, as I saw it, and the reason I was so supportive and believed it was about bringing order to chaos, was section 29 of the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020. Section 29 gave the Energy Corporation, which was created, the ability to make an order to deny proponents access to the transmission infrastructure before they have even entered the planning system. That is, if a proponent did not meet certain standards, the Energy Corporation on behalf of the people of New South Wales could say, "Sorry, you haven't stepped up to the mark. Tell your story walking; off you go. We're not interested in having you."

Like John West, we will be judged by the quality of what we reject because there is no shortage of proponents that want to develop in New England. The issue is making sure that they develop in the right location, in accordance with community standards. Our region has demonstrated with a number of projects that that needle can be threaded if proponents are willing to work with communities. We have a number of success stories that we can point to that are operating right now. In my contention, the issue is that Energy Corporation is quickly running out of runway to demonstrate to the community that it is actually serious about holding some of those cowboy proponents to account.

Now is the time for the Energy Corporation of NSW—EnergyCo—to exercise its powers under section 29 and start giving the boot to some of those proponents that are not willing to play ball with local councils and communities, and actually to develop projects that are sympathetic to the vision we have for our region, to the existing industries like agricultural production, and also to the amenity of some rural residential areas. Our area is pretty big. There are plenty of spaces and locations where the transmission infrastructure exists or will be built. There is no need for a proponent to trespass on areas where the community does not support it, because there are plenty of areas where the community will support it.

Section 29 outlines the key provisions that EnergyCo must consider before making an order: There must be significant opposition from the community, making the order must be necessary to maintain community support

for the renewable energy zone and other infrastructure projects, and making the order must be in the public interest. EnergyCo needs to demonstrate to the community that those words have teeth and that they mean something. Whether that is done by developing a regulation or a protocol, the Energy Corporation needs to act quickly before community support for some of these projects and the energy zone evaporates altogether.

I nominate one such project that EnergyCo could start with: Squadron Energy's Boorolong wind farm project, which is completely inappropriate and will impact 200-odd households. That is the first company I would put forward to be told under section 29, "Tell your story walking, Squadron. You're not wanted in the region." We welcome projects, but we are not a welcome mat to be walked over by anyone. We want good projects and we want to be of part the renewable energy system, but we do not want rubbish, we do not want cowboys, we do not want Boorolong and we certainly do not want Squadron Energy.

#### **CAMDEN ELECTORATE SCHOOL LEADERS**

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (17:30):** I acknowledge the amazing contribution that school leadership teams have made to the schools of Camden. As HSC students begin their exams this week, it is important to reflect on the journey they have made over 13 years. As a former teacher, I know the leadership qualities that our senior students show every day: They create new initiatives in schools, provide support for struggling younger students, and allow safe places for discussion and feedback. Student leadership is an excellent way to expand important qualities of public speaking and guidance. These students often volunteer many hours of their time to school events and they represent their school throughout the community, often juggling that with their study, sport and social lives.

I have had the privilege of working with and teaching many of the students who have recently completed their time as local school leaders. They are fine people with an exciting future ahead of them. I know some of them are aspiring journalists, lawyers, social workers and, of course and most importantly, teachers. I have known them to be speakers, leaders and musicians. For 13 years, students have been told when to attend school, what to wear and what work to complete. They know the expectations. For many, the future seems scary and unclear. Many students have spoken to me of their trepidation about the months and years ahead. I say to all year 12 students sitting their exams this week: Take your time; you know your work. The exams are designed to allow you to show how much you have learned. Look after yourself mentally, physically and emotionally. This time will pass, but your mind and body will be with you forever. Drink enough water, get some fresh air and talk to people about things that are not related to the exams.

I say also: Know that these exams are a stepping stone. You are not expected to have it all sorted. As someone who has had a complete career change in my—shall we say—mid life, you do not know what lies ahead. Start by making decisions for next year and see what happens from there. Understand that there are many people who care about you and want the best for you. If there has been someone who has made a big change in your life, especially at school, please make sure you tell them. To the student leaders whom I have worked with and taught over the past 12 months, our schools and communities thank you for your service and hard work.

I acknowledge Camden High School captains Samuel, James, Caitlyn and Angelina; Elderslie High School captains Mia, Jeremiah, James, Claire, Connor, Kiara, Jackson and Anna; Elizabeth Macarthur High School captains Sanjana, Cameron, Zaine and Jack; Magdalene Catholic College captains Timothy, Lily, Stella and Marcus; Mater Dei Catholic College captains Breeana and Jack; and Mount Annan High School captains Ebony-Rose, Nikolai, Mehakpreet, Aaron, Lara and Nicolas. To say that we are proud of those students is a massive understatement. They have served their schools with distinction and pride. We are very proud of what they have achieved.

As they go through this 2½-week cocoon that is the HSC exams, they will come out the other side and they will deserve a break. I hope they enjoy many hours of free time after this. They may even enjoy destroying their notes, which I know many year 12 students have made a habit of doing as soon as they finish their exams. I commend those students for the leadership they have shown and the way they have led their schools. On behalf of the community of Camden, I say thank you and best of luck.

#### **BALMAIN ELECTORATE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (17:35):** Everyone in New South Wales deserves to feel safe while going for a walk in their community. Green, walkable streets are one of the things we cherish most. These spaces help to create the kinds of connections that make a neighbourhood feel like home. Disappointingly, over the past several years the streets of the Balmain electorate have become increasingly unsafe for pedestrians. The costly and polluting WestConnex project has brought more traffic than ever into the area, while reducing pedestrian amenity. The promised benefits of a walkable Victoria Road and Parramatta Road have failed to materialise under both the Liberals and so far under the current Labor Government.

Over 1,600 people have now called on the Minister for Roads to transform Victoria Road into a place for people, not just cars, with over 400 residents sending letters directly to the Minister. They have had no response from the Minister and our community has still not received any commitments regarding this historic opportunity. I urge the Government to deliver real change for Victoria Road and not miss the chance to make it into a pedestrian- and business-friendly place for the community. In many places that were once safe for pedestrians, safe crossings have been removed due to WestConnex. The Terry Street signalised pedestrian crossing closed in April 2020, meaning that residents getting off buses at Terry Street must walk an additional 500 metres in order to cross underneath Victoria Road.

At the other end of Victoria Road, the removal of a pedestrian bridge from Lilyfield Road to the Anzac Bridge has meant that constituents have to walk a huge extra distance up and down a steep hill in order to cross busy Victoria Road. This is a significant accessibility issue for elderly residents, some of whom have reported to me that they are unable to use buses to get into the city any more and now resort to taking cabs. A promise to reinstate the crossing at Terry Street earlier this year has been postponed indefinitely and the Government has so far not committed any action, nor any funds, to making Victoria Road the pedestrian-friendly strip that was promised by WestConnex advocates.

It is simply unacceptable that our community is suffering from not only increased traffic, pollution and noise as a result of this toll road, but also streets that are less safe. We have seen many serious accidents and near misses at several crossings, including at City West Link and Norton Street in Leichhardt, where a woman was hit by a truck; at Victoria Road and Darling Street in Rozelle; at City West Link and Balmain Road in Lilyfield; and at Johnston Street and The Crescent in Annandale. These unsafe crossings make it particularly difficult for children to walk safely and independently to and from school. Students from Orange Grove Public School and Sydney Secondary College have to brave the dangerous crossing at City West Link and Balmain Road, with many families driving the short distance to ensure safe travel to school. Rozelle Public School students have experienced years of near misses at the Victoria Road and Darling Street intersection.

A campaign from locals and the school community has finally led to the installation of a red-light camera at that intersection, but it should not take years of lobbying to make streets safe for our kids. More needs to be done to make our streets walkable and safe for everyone, given the increase in local traffic due to WestConnex. I encourage Transport for NSW to undertake a comprehensive review of the pedestrian impacts of WestConnex and the measures that can be introduced to improve pedestrian safety. I also encourage Transport for NSW to take into account community feedback when making decisions about how to address safety issues. The lack of regard for community needs that Transport for NSW has shown in removing the right-hand turn from Johnston Street onto The Crescent has been incredibly frustrating for residents, who have advocated for months for Transport for NSW to take action on this dangerous intersection, only to be offered an incomplete solution that worsens local traffic congestion and decreases safety in other areas of the neighbourhood.

Our community deserves to be heard on decisions that impact our streets. The additional traffic from WestConnex is also having an impact in Ultimo. Changes around the Western Distributor will see a pedestrian crossing at Allen Street removed, the 501 bus diverted from Pyrmont and 99 trees removed in the process. The diversion of the 501 bus will have a particularly negative impact on residents, reducing inbound passenger access to Pyrmont and likely creating parking congestion as a result of more people travelling to Pyrmont by car. This is the opposite direction that our city should be going with regards to transport.

Over 260 local residents have made submissions to indicate their concern with the changes. I urge Transport for NSW to give serious consideration to this community feedback and work to enhance public transport and reduce traffic congestion in Pyrmont. I urge the Government to engage proactively with the loss of pedestrian amenity and safety arising out of WestConnex. I know many of my colleagues in the Government share these concerns. We need intersections that prioritise pedestrians over cars, more safe places to cross, pedestrianised roads and more green space. The Government must act now to ensure that our neighbourhoods are places for community and are not traffic wastelands.

### TOUKLEY HAWKS

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast) (17:40):** A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of crowing about the Toukley Hawks back-to-back premierships on the Central Coast. Last Friday I had the pleasure of attending the Toukley Hawks Senior Rugby League Football Club presentation night as we celebrated this back-to-back effort and the efforts of all of teams over the past season. Every person in the room felt part of the success of the grand final wins. They are the first community club on the Central Coast ever to go back to back. It was an amazing achievement built on commitment and mateship. I listened to stories of the people carrying pretty serious injuries into important games and pushing themselves through the pain barrier. I congratulate the Hawks on another successful season, particularly coach

Jake Fitzpatrick. I also congratulate the newly inducted life members, Lynda Scown and Darren Leaudais, as well as the volunteers, the president Phil Gearsides and the players and coaches across all of the teams.

First Grade took out their second win 8-6 in the grand final at Woy Woy against the Erina Eagles. We talked about the possibility—the dream—that next season it could be three in a row; that hunger is still there. They are ready to turn up next season and hopefully do it again. I congratulate all the award winners in the league tag, open age, women's tackle, reserve grade and first grade teams. I also congratulate all the club winners. The player of the year women's was Kasey Gardner. The player of the year men's was Kiran Page. The award for 100 first grade games went to Nathan Akers, who was a very popular person on the evening when he received that award. The highest try scorer was Zac Hayward. Of course, I congratulate the Coach of the Year, Jake Fitzpatrick.

There is a long list of talent within the Hawks' club teams, and one of the former players who also won a grand final this year was Jack Cogger. Jack played for the Toukley Hawks before being signed by the Newcastle Knights and this year won his first grand final as a Penrith Panthers player. He came on in the second half and did an absolutely magnificent job. In the league tag the coach and managers award went to Rachel Howieson; the most consistent player awards went to Courtney Doyle and Madi Smith; and both the players' player and the best and fairest awards went to Caitlin Smith. In open age the coach and managers award went to Michael Taylor and Conor McRandal; the most consistent player was Zaxson Eaton; the players' player was Mason Craig; and the best and fairest award went to Blake Faulks.

In women's tackle the coach and managers award went to Tyla Binnie and Matilda Taylor; the most consistent player award went to Florence Mulia; the players' player award went to Kasey Gardner; and the best and fairest award went to Tanaya Millar. In the reserve grade—which also backed up the First Grade team on many occasions—the coach and managers award went to Tallis Williamson; the most consistent award went to Cohan Lorusso and Dean Browne; the players' player award went to Zac Sun, which was a very popular decision; and the best and fairest award went to Joey Bokkerink. In first grade the coach and managers award went to Aaron Heaven and Jarrod Kessler; the most consistent player award went to Kallin Adams and Jakob Giles; the players' player award went to Brady Barwick; and the best and fairest award went to Kiran Page.

As we went through the evening, life member Rod Morton told me something. I know Rod well; he is the uncle of Ben Morton, a Federal member from Western Australia. Rod said to me that the club is built on one word: camaraderie. You could feel the truth of that comment in the room on the night. In other club awards the highest point scorer overall was Josh Kessler; the 50 first grade games award went to Kene Te Whata, which was a really popular decision—he played through a terrible injury to get to the grand final; the most improved award went to Kody Papa; the players dedication award went to Brady Barwick; the machine of the year men's award went to Kallin Adams; the machine of the year women's award went to Tyla Binnie; the club person of the year award went to Lynda Scown; and the rookie of the year award went to Jack Thomas.

It was a great evening at Wyong Rugby Leagues Club, which is a sponsor of the Toukley Hawks. It is a club that makes you feel good when it wins premierships. Toukley had jerseys and other decorations lining the streets on grand final day. I wish them all the best. Hopefully next year I will be back talking about three in a row.

### CENTRAL COAST VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:45):** Recently I attended the regional ceremony of the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards, and I take this opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the excellent work of our volunteers on the Central Coast. The Central Coast boasts the greatest number of volunteers as a proportion of its population, defining our region as one of the most giving in our State. Our volunteers give their time and energy to help make our local community a better place. Their tireless work helps support people across health, education and the sporting and community sectors. The awards recognise their work and give us the chance to say thank you. The Central Coast regional ceremony recognition is part of the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards and celebrated category winners Terry Vella, Jenna Smith, John Avis, We Care Connect volunteers and treasured nominees in our region.

Patrol captain and rugby league first aider Terry Vella was named the 2023 Central Coast Volunteer of the Year and Senior Volunteer of the Year for his dedication to safety on the sand, in the sea and on the turf throughout the region. Terry Vella is a volunteer patrol captain and training officer at the Shelly Beach Surf Life Saving Club, helping other volunteer club members with training in radio and advanced resuscitation techniques. With 48 surf lifesaving and first aid awards, he serves as a key official at surf lifesaving events at club, State and national levels. Off the beach, Terry continues his commitment to safety as the first-aid officer in the New South Wales Rugby League competition. I congratulate Terry and thank him for his commitment of time and for sharing his knowledge so generously.



Young Volunteer of the Year Jenna Smith gives her time to raise awareness about the plight of abandoned and homeless pets for numerous organisations across the Central Coast, including Society of Companion Animal Rescuers, Peggy's Promise, Claws 'N' Paws Rescue and the Bateau Bay Neighbourhood Centre. Jenna raises funds and collects food and other pet essentials, while also highlighting the vital role that shelters play in community wellbeing. Her volunteering not only provides essential supplies for animals but also educates the public about the urgent need for compassionate and medical care for shelter animals. I thank Jenna for her immense dedication to the most vulnerable animals in our community on the coast.

John Avis was named Adult Volunteer of the Year and is a dedicated mentor and facilitator for the Junior Lifesaver of the Year program, which has propelled the North Avoca Surf Life Saving Club to new heights of success. John has also organised the youth leadership and development camp for 30 youth at Narrabeen Sydney sports centre. His innovative junior club captain program enhances the leadership skills of rookies and juniors. I thank John for committing his time and for sharing his knowledge with our youth on the coast.

I congratulate the incredible volunteer team at We Care Connect, which was awarded Volunteer Team of the Year. The 76 members of the We Care Connect volunteer team are dedicated to mitigating the effects of childhood disadvantage caused by factors like unemployment and domestic violence. The team focuses on enhancing life outcomes and self-esteem for at-risk and marginalised youth, many of whom grapple with severe trauma. They provide clothing, educational resources and essential toiletries, helping to restore a sense of normalcy and dignity to these young lives. I say well done to the team. I again congratulate all of our volunteer award recipients, nominees and everyone who took the time to nominate amazing volunteers for an award. It so important that we acknowledge and celebrate our wonderful volunteers.

I have spoken in this place many times about the incredible generosity and contribution of volunteers on the Central Coast. As the member for Terrigal, I am so proud to represent a region that has such an incredible wealth of compassion and dedication. As we know, there are more than 365,000 people on the Central Coast, with more than 40,000 people taking up some form of volunteer role in our region—whether it be RFS, VRA, Meals on Wheels, Surf Life Saving clubs or other volunteer organisations from one end of the Central Coast to the other—which is absolutely unprecedented. I am proud that we were able to recognise those recipients this year. I also congratulate the team from the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards association, which helps highlights the great work that our volunteers do. They do not seek recognition, but they deserve it.

I am proud that I was able to attend the service at the Gosford Golf Club recently to thank all of those volunteers, who give literally hundreds and hundreds of hours of their personal time to help others. I speak on behalf of the entire Central Coast when I say how proud and thankful we are for the extraordinary work of all our volunteers. Their contribution makes an enormous difference. It is the backbone of our community. They should be proud of what they do every day supporting other people, many of whom they do not even know. Again, on behalf of everyone on the Central Coast I say a huge thankyou.

### MARONITE EPARCHY

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (17:50):** The Maronite Eparchy of Australia, established in 1973, encompasses a collective organisation of Maronite churches in Australia that have contributed to the expansion of the Maronite faith across the country. The eparchy's main goal is to help Maronite churches fulfil their mission in providing spiritual guidance and nourishment alongside humanitarian relief within Australia and overseas. The development of the Maronite Church in Australia can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century. The first Lebanese Maronites arrived in Australia by 1850, eager to practise their faith and integrate themselves among the local Catholic community. That was marked with the establishment of the first Maronite parish, Saint Maroun's, in Redfern in 1897.

The Maronite diocese expanded across Australia throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with the creation of more beautiful churches such as Our Lady of Mercy in Goulburn, Our Lady of Lebanon in Thornbury, Melbourne, and St Charbel's in East Cannington, Perth. In 1978 the Maronites in Sydney selected my electorate of Parramatta for a new place of worship, opening the Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Harris Park. As part of the jubilee celebrations, it was a pleasure to attend the recent blessing of a new five-metre statue of Our Lady to be installed at the top of the cathedral—a symbol of the parishioners' unwavering devotion to their faith.

A golden jubilee dinner celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia was held at Rosehill Gardens on 21 September. In attendance was the Maronite Patriarch, His Beatitude and Eminence, Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai; Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay; the Prime Minister of Australia; the Premier of New South Wales; Federal and State Ministers and members of Parliament, including myself; along with members of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia and Maronite parishioners and representatives from committees. The jubilee dinner reflected the compassionate spirit of the Maronite community in Australia. The event raised

hundreds of thousands of dollars to address the ongoing schooling crisis in Lebanon and to better the opportunities of less fortunate children and families overseas. That great example of generosity demonstrates the sheer determination of the Australian Maronite community to help the most vulnerable in society.

On the night, Bishop Tarabay highlighted the importance of supporting the children of Lebanon, as "without good education, Lebanon will lose the heart of its mission and message". When I dwell on the bishop's words, I am reminded of the significance of that cause for the eparchy, as the education of children can also determine their future opportunities and success. The eparchy's generous investment in the education of the youth of Lebanon speaks to the organisation's more significant aims to save Lebanon's future from economic turmoil. After attending the eparchy's fiftieth anniversary jubilee dinner, I can truly say that the organisation has done a spectacular job in ensuring the achievement of those goals.

The success of the eparchy will remain an enduring testament to the efforts of the early Maronite emigrants in laying the foundations for the growth of the faith in Australia. The Golden Jubilee Solemn Mass at Ken Rosewall Arena in Sydney Olympic Park especially encapsulated the strength of the church today, with thousands of Maronite parishioners in attendance. The Maronite Eparchy's influence in the broader community is clearly demonstrated through the variety of projects and organisations it administers. A great example is the vision and execution of a very significant project in the Parramatta electorate—the construction and establishment of the recently opened Our Lady Mercy Place residential aged-care facility in Harris Park.

Additionally, I acknowledge the role of the many associated organisations within the eparchy such as Maronites on Mission, MaroniteCare, Maronite Catholic Society and Maronite Ladies of the Gospel. The Maronite Eparchy has made fundamental contributions to the Maronite order in Australia. I know the eparchy's success as a united faith-based organisation will continue as it creates a legacy that inspires younger generations to become model Maronites. I thank the Maronite Eparchy of Australia for making such a difference to the lives of so many at home and abroad and for its contributions to Parramatta and New South Wales.

#### **SYDNEY EVEREST CARNIVAL**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (17:55):** This week we have discussed many grave things in Parliament, but I will share a little ray of sunshine as we head towards the end of the sitting week. As the chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Racing and Breeding, I speak about the Sydney Everest Carnival. The huge carnival has been happening all through this week, with some huge events leading up to, of course, the big horserace on Saturday. It had very small beginnings in 2017, but it is now absolutely magnificent. There is a lot of buzz in the air. It is truly going to become one of Sydney's greatest tourist attractions. We will see a lot of people travelling from all over the country to what is one of the greatest races in Australia.

There has been a carnival of events all through the week, including the Women in Racing event earlier in the week and the barrier draw on the Sydney Harbour. For those who have not seen the innovative ideas that come out of Racing NSW for barrier draws, I suggest they have a look at that because it was absolutely fantastic. There was Taste of Turf and a Business Sydney luncheon event—and, of course, the big day itself at the Australian Turf Club at Royal Randwick Racecourse. It is the richest turf race in the world. We should be very proud of it. It is very innovative. It is only a number of years old. When it started, a lot of people did not believe that it would get off the ground. But the idea of 12 slots going to slot owners, who then have to seek horses and trainers to fill those slots, has brought a whole buzz and energy to the industry.

In addition, there is a brand new race on Saturday: the King Charles III Stakes. We are the first jurisdiction in the world to recognise His Majesty the King in that way. That race has a \$5 million prize pool. Who knows, maybe the race will, in the next couple of years, entice the King to visit us. Let's cross our fingers. But on Saturday there is also my favourite race: the Kosciuszko. That is a \$2 million prize money event, but it is all about country-trained horses. Those country trainers get the opportunity to come to the city and get involved in one of the biggest events in the racing calendar. Almost 50,000 people will be at Randwick on Saturday. It will be a huge event, with plenty of buzz, plenty of fashion and—I can tell you—plenty of fun. All members should make sure they attend. Everyone needs to stand at Randwick in the Winx Stand once in their life and listen to Neil Diamond's *Sweet Caroline* sung by 50,000 Australians. Perhaps even the Welsh would be jealous.

But I am most proud of being the member for Upper Hunter, which has a number of horse studs. A lot of Australian horses are born and bred in the Upper Hunter. With over 250 horse studs, there is significant employment in the industry and a high level of participation in the sport. In all regional areas we love our country racetracks. It is great to see a lot of country people heading down to Sydney this weekend to take part, if they are not here already. The innovative concept is the work of Racing NSW. I thank the chairman, Russell Balding, for his visionary work, and CEO Peter V'landys, who has put a huge amount of energy into the New South Wales racing industry—the world is jealous. I thank Peter McGauran, the chair of the Australian Turf Club, which is

holding the event, and all the directors who are involved. Well done to all of them. I think we should be proud of what has been achieved in this industry. The event will be great.

### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (18:00):** I take this last opportunity to speak on a pivotal historic moment for the Bega electorate, New South Wales and the Australian nation. On Saturday 14 October our community has a generational opportunity to change the soul of our nation, to change our relationship with our First Nations peoples, and to move forward in completing our reconciliation with them. Our nation has had 44 referendums since Federation, but only eight amendments to the Constitution have been successful in just over 120 years. Only one other, the 1967 referendum, has been of such moral importance. The Australian people will be asked:

A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?

The proposed alteration will read:

In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia:

- (i) there shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice;
- (ii) the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- (iii) the Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to matters relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, including its composition, functions, powers and procedures.

Members may have heard the quote, "If not now, when? If not us, who?" It is attributed to many who have sought action on change for improvement in society. I have a connection with Faith Bandler, who campaigned during the 1967 referendum. I met her during her life. I knew her daughter and I delivered her granddaughter. That strong woman said:

Friends, what is reconciliation about? It is about promoting discussion. It is about the rights of the Indigenous people. It's about those rights being enshrined in legislation. It's about being watchful and remembering. It's about the violation of the First People's rights, and it's about valuing the differences of those cultures that make up this country. All rights must now be recognised, and it's our job to make sure that they are. It is rare that a government will deliver out of the goodness of its heart, but history has shown that a genuine people's movement can move more than governments. It can move mountains. Dear friends, much pain has been endured in the past, and that pain is no longer designated to hopelessness. It's time to move the process of reconciliation forward with a little more speed. That is the task. If not now, when? If not us, who?

The conclusion of the yes vote is a process of logic, the result of the deductive argument "if X, then Y". If people vote yes, then the Indigenous peoples will have a Voice to Parliament. If people vote yes, then that Voice to Parliament will recognise the Indigenous peoples rightly and justly in our Constitution. If people vote yes, then that Voice to Parliament will make the Indigenous peoples heard in Parliament and in the Executive Government. If people vote yes, then that Voice will produce the representation that will allow self-determination of Indigenous peoples and the closing of the gaps in health, housing, education and employment.

It can be difficult to say yes. It is easy to say no. But if people say no, then nothing changes. The Aboriginal peoples have something to say. The Aboriginal peoples have something to say about their health, and about the most fatal gap—the difference in life expectancy for Aboriginal peoples. They have something to say about the gap in suicide rates for Aboriginal peoples and about the gap in health outcomes. The Aboriginal peoples have something to say about the gap in education standards for Aboriginal children and adults. The Aboriginal peoples have something to say about the gap in housing availability and standards for Aboriginal peoples, and about the gap in having a home on the land where they have lived for 65,000 years. The Aboriginal peoples have something to say about the injustice of having the highest rate of incarceration.

The First Nations peoples have something to say. Our nation must give them a Voice; our nation must hear them. When I was 10 years old, over 90 per cent of Australians, being of goodwill and with a sense of justice about the rights of our Indigenous peoples, voted to count the First Nations peoples in our census and to give the Federal Government the power to legislate on matters affecting First Nations peoples. Now we have our chance to show that goodwill and to show what is right, fair and just. I am sure that everyone's parents told them to do what is right, fair and just. I put this question to everyone in New South Wales: When your children and grandchildren ask, "Did you vote to recognise the Voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders?", will you be able to say yes?

### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore) (18:05):** I speak today about why I am going to vote yes in the referendum on Saturday. I am voting yes because it is right and just to ensure that the voices of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander peoples will be heard in a direct way in the Federal Parliament and in the Executive Government. I am voting yes because the Voice will recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were the First Peoples to live in this land. The land that we call Australia, our home and our nation, was their land. I am voting yes because a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have asked us to walk with them to a better future and a more inclusive Australia. We have heard from the Prime Minister and many others that this is a generous offer, given our history. I am responding to that generous offer.

I am voting yes to ensure that we do things together with each other, not to each other. That has often been the history of government—we do things to people, not with them. It is time that we started to do things with people. Our history has been replete with dispossession, displacement and disenfranchisement, and that has caused major disadvantage. We know the statistics across a range of areas. But there is a willingness in the community to turn this around, as most Australians are generally fair minded. We need to try this. It is an act of reconciliation. If we vote yes, it will show that we are a politically mature nation, comfortable in our competence to achieve reconciliation.

In my area, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise twice the national average in terms of population. There are a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in my area. There are many communities in my area that were once called missions. The statistics show that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who commit suicide is significant, and we have not been able to address that. The number is getting larger. Let us give the Voice a go. As some people say to me, and others have texted me, "If you don't know, give it a go". Let us try it. Let us vote yes on Saturday as we continue this journey of reconciliation.

When I was in Federal Parliament, I was on the expert panel for Constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians. The four members of Parliament on that panel were me, Ken Wyatt, Rachel Seaworth and Rob Oakeshott, representing Labor, the Coalition and The Greens, plus an Independent. The four of us worked together and walked together to make sure that we stayed with one voice. It was a wonderful experience. Some very well-known people who are out campaigning for the yes vote were members of the panel. The co-chairs were Mark Leibler—some members might know Mark from a big law firm and the large Jewish community in Melbourne—and Senator Patrick Dodson. I remember at the first meeting I said, "Two good men, but I would have preferred a woman here too." But they are two good men—two good blokes—and they did a good job co-chairing the panel. On 6 March, before he went on sick leave, Senator Dodson said that we have to turn around the statistics and that nothing has been done on the incarceration rates since the royal commission—if anything, they have probably got worse. If we vote yes on Saturday we have a real opportunity to turn around some of these issues, so I will be voting yes.

#### *Bills*

### **WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

#### **Returned**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

### **CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AMENDMENT (CHILD SEXUAL OFFENCE EVIDENCE) BILL 2023**

#### **Returned**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 18:11 until  
Tuesday 17 October 2023 at 12:00.**

#### *Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

### **MORTDALE HERITAGE PHARMACY - UTI TREATMENT TRIAL**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)—**Speaker, I rise to congratulate the entire team of staff at the Mortdale Heritage Pharmacy, who are currently participating in the New South Wales UTI Pharmacy Reform trial. This new trial allows the Mortdale Heritage Pharmacy, alongside almost 100 others throughout the State, to prescribe antibiotics for urinary tract infections. This much-needed reform is allowing women in our community to access the services they need, when they need them. From what I have heard, the response from the community has been

exceptional so far. Getting an appointment at the GP can be a lengthy process nowadays, so the option to visit a local pharmacy often means the world of difference to women in the Oatley Electorate. I look forward to the expansion of the trial program in September, where pharmacists will be able to provide repeat dispensing of oral contraceptives. This is another huge win for our community! I would like to thank the Heritage Pharmacy in Mortdale for their willingness to embrace the program, which has seen great outcomes so far. I wish them the very best moving forward!

#### **REVIVAL LIFE CHURCH – 50TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate Georges River Revival Life Church, who recently celebrated their 50th anniversary. This was an opportunity to recognise the past, present, and future of this amazing local institution. Established in 1973, Revival Life Church is committed to the core values of community, fellowship, and ministry. Their dedication to serve the local community through kids and youth ministry is outstanding, providing a space for locals to learn and grow spiritually. It was wonderful to celebrate alongside current and former members of the congregation, who shared memories and testimonies spanning across 50 years. Families were also able to enjoy an exhibition of the church's rich history, with plenty of fun activities on offer for the little ones. I'd like to thank Senior Pastors Grant & Michelle Hobbs, as well as Youth and Young Adults Pastor, Aywan Suleiman, for their hospitality on the day. I'd also like to thank the rest of the team at Revival Church for their fantastic work over the years. I look forward to working closely alongside Revival Life Church well into the future.

#### **RETIREMENT OF FATHER PAUL HILDER – ST JOSEPH'S OATLEY**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to thank and congratulate Father Paul Hilder of St Joseph's Oatley, who recently retired after 7 years of service to the school and church community. Father Paul joined the St Joseph's community in 2016 after serving as the Dean of St Mary's Cathedral. He was loved by students and staff alike and was always happy to lend an ear to listen, whilst also being quick to crack a joke. He always put the needs of the students above his own, exemplifying what it looks like to be wise, knowledgeable, and most importantly, kind to everyone he met. I had the privilege of attending St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Oatley whilst growing up, and I must say, it was and still is a fantastic local school. The entire team of staff go above and beyond for their students, and I still have very fond memories from my time there. I would like to once again thank Father Paul for his service to the school and the surrounding community, and wish him all the very best in retirement.

#### **SYDNEY COMMUNITY GROUP, MATESHIP FESTIVAL**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—The Mateship Fair was held on 24 September 2023 at the historic Castle Hill Showground. The fair was promoted as the 'Iconic Fair that brings the world to Hills Shire Council'. The fair certainly lived up to its name and how it was promoted. There were food stalls, activities, dancing on the stage and much more. The Mateship Fair 2023 aimed to celebrate, showcase, and bring to the Hills the richness of cultural diversity and to foster camaraderie, friendship, and mutual support among the Hills Shire Community. The event was a success and achieved the aim of fostering friendship and mutual support. The captivating stage performances and culinary delights from around the world were amazing and I can say that everyone in attendance had a wonderful day. Thank you to the Opposition Leader Mark Speakman MP and to Mayor of the Hills Shire Council, Dr. Peter Gangemi for attending and supporting the fair. I also thank specifically for organising the wonderful fair the President of the Sydney Community Group, Indu Harikrishna, and the Events Director Manjula Viswanath. Thank you to everyone concerned for a wonderful Mateship Fair.

#### **DAME MARIE BASHIR PEACE AWARDS, 2023, CHRISTA-MARIA INATY**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I was delighted to attend the Annual Dame Marie Bashir Awards. The Awards recognises women who have significantly contributed to social justice, promoting harmonious relationships and courage within their school and community. I congratulate all recipients for their compassion, dedication, and service to the community. I have no doubt each award recipient will continue to make a positive difference to the future of our community. I specifically recognise Christa-Marie Inaty from The Hills Grammar School at Kenthurst. Christa-Maria's main leadership purposes has always been to make an impact. Christa-Marie has come to acknowledge that she should not only strive to be an agent of change, but that change should hold sustainable and positive impacts and outcomes. Christa-Maria has a passion for charity work especially having visited the poorer side of the Middle East including Lebanon and refugee camps that serve thousands of Syrian people. Christa-Maria has initiated several fundraising events to help support the Lebanese Red Cross in the Northern parts of Lebanon and continuously dedicates time and effort to volunteering at refugee camps. Christa-Marie has recently started visiting and working with children hospitals specialising in cancer in Lebanon. Congratulations Christa-Maria.

**DAME MARIE BASHIR PEACE AWARDS, 2023, SIENNA HANSEN**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I was delighted to attend the Annual Dame Marie Bashir Awards. The Awards recognises women who have significantly contributed to social justice, promoting harmonious relationships and courage within their school and community. I have no doubt each award recipient will continue to make a positive difference to the future of our community. I specifically recognise Sienna Hansen who was highly commended for her work as a Youth Ambassador within her local government area. Sienna has been involved in a variety of initiatives such as promoting the safety of women through a street lighting program and youth mental health awareness. She has supported women's refuges through organising drives to meet their needs as well as those of the Smith Family. Sienna has volunteered at a Nursing Home where she has welcomed guests and taken residents to Mass providing them the opportunity to practise their faith. Sienna has been involved in organising initiatives within the College to help those in crisis and in need including White Ribbon Day, Ukraine Day, Food drives for Jesuit Refugee Services and St Vincent De Paul, Floods Appeal, R U OK Day and many more. Congratulations Sienna.

**ENRICH SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney)**—I would like to recognise Enrich Support Services, an inspiring organisation that is dedicated to supporting people with a disability. Among their great work with providing support services to people with a disability, Enrich Support Services runs a food bank. This food bank provides free meals and hampers to NDIS participants who are doing it tough. Enrich Support Services also offer free day trials of their services to ensure the comfort and satisfaction of individuals before committing to the service. This is a great organisation that has positively impacted the lives of people with a disability and their families within St Marys and surrounding areas. Enrich Support Services is an excellent organisation that is committed to servicing and supporting those most vulnerable within the community. I look forward to continue seeing the great work you do.

**WOLLONDILLY HERITAGE CENTRE'S (VOICES FROM THE KITCHEN)**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I'd like to take a moment to reflect on a recent event that brilliantly merged community and history. The Wollondilly Heritage Centre successfully hosted an afternoon tea called "Voices from the Kitchen," in commemoration of History Week. Attendees came with homemade delicacies from their family archives, sharing not just food but also stories that spanned generations. Organised by Sue Davis, a respected archivist and secretary of The Oaks Historical Society, the event served as a reminder of the kitchen's multifaceted role in our lives— from culinary arts to home remedies and social interactions. This gathering was not merely about nostalgia; it was an active endeavour to preserve our community's rich cultural fabric. Ms. Davis has expressed interest in compiling these historical recipes and stories into a book, a potential treasure for locals and future generations alike. Entry was free for those who brought recipes, encouraging broad community participation. I commend all involved for creating such an enriching experience.

**THE APPIN WHEELS FESTIVAL REVS UP COMMUNITY SPIRIT**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—The Appin Wheels Festival, held last at Appin Public School, was a roaring success, attracting around 3,000 attendees and showcasing 200 cars and bikes. Now in its fifth year, the event was the largest to date. Organised by the school's P&C, the festival has evolved into more than a fundraiser; it's become an invaluable community event. The festival came alive with the rock 'n' roll vibes of Rust Storm, who performed a gripping set from 11:30am to 12:30pm. Children and adults alike enjoyed a range of activities, from face painting and temporary tattoos to rides and show bags. Raffles offered fabulous prizes, making the event even more exciting. Market stalls provided a variety of merchandise, from car accessories to handmade gifts and clothing. Food trucks served a delicious spread that included everything from burgers and barbecues to doughnuts and slushies. The event not only entertained but also strengthened the community spirit, proving once again why it's a can't-miss event in the Appin community calendar.

**COMMENDING THE APPIN JUNIOR FIRE BRIGADE'S COURAGE AND SKILL**

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly)**—I rise today to commend the Appin Junior Fire Brigade, who recently represented Wollondilly at the Australian Fire Cadets Championships in Douglas Park. Competing against 20 teams nationwide, these young cadets showcased their firefighting skills, initiative, and safety procedures through life-like scenarios. The team consisted of Anna Zammit, Dean Perrin, Hamish Crompton, Dylan Kelly, Alex Beaton, and Tyler Smith. While they may not have won, they earned something far more valuable: the respect and pride of their community and the Rural Fire Service. An RFS spokesperson said it best: "They competed with courage, teamwork, and values, and we as a district are exceptionally proud of them." This event is more than a competition; it's an investment in our future firefighters. The championships provide a platform for the 'firefighters of tomorrow' to develop their skills. More than 11,000 young Australians have

completed this cadet program, gaining essential fire safety techniques and an understanding of community service. By nurturing the young talents of today, we are ensuring that our community will be in capable hands for decades to come.

#### **BUNDEENA MENS SHED**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—There are so many wonderful organisations located throughout the Heathcote electorate. One of those organisations is the Bundeena Men's Shed. Located in the picturesque town of Bundeena, the men's shed provides a space for local men to meet, socialise and tinker with equipment and items. Bundeena Men's Shed was formed just 12 years when a group of likeminded locals decided it would be beneficial to many in the area. On December 6, 2011, that concept became a reality when the men's shed was incorporated. The members of the shed undertake a number of activities including woodwork and metalwork. However, it's the social aspect of Men's Sheds like Bundeena that is truly important. Keeping active and social is incredibly important – both physically and mentally – particularly during retirement years. Men's sheds provide that space for members to get their fix of physical activity and mental stimulus. Led by president Jim Cannon, the Bundeena Men's Shed has gone from strength to strength in 12 short years. I can't wait to see what the organisation will achieve in another 12 years.

#### **JO LYONS PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to congratulate Jo Lyons for her success in this year's International Pet Photographer of the Year Awards. In a competition with 2,299 entries from 32 countries, Jo's talent shone bright, earning her a silver award and four bronze awards. There were 16 internationally acclaimed judges (all renowned animal photographers) from all over the world. The awards featured five distinct categories: Action, Creative, Documentary, Pets and People, and Portrait. Jo's bronze award-winning photographs were all from her 'Tails of Barrington Coast' book, a project that celebrates the diverse stories of dogs in our community. Jo donates a portion of her book sales to Aussie Ark, with having currently contributed \$2,677 to their cause. Congratulations on your well-deserved recognition Jo. Thank you for showcasing the beauty and stories of our local dogs and supporting Aussie Ark.

#### **TAE'EJAH DORWARD**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to congratulate 11-year-old Tae'ejah Dorward from Old Bar, who was recently awarded the 2023 Encouragement Award at Kempsey Eisteddfod for classical ballet. Locally, Tae dances at Andrea Rowsell Academy of Dance, 5 days a week for up to 13 hours and volunteers with kids and adults with special needs for an hour on Saturdays. Tae has been accepted into TPA Tanya Pearson Academy of Dance in Sydney and "The Academy" for guest programs which she will continue to attend this year. Tae was recently awarded the Intermediate Classical Scholarship winner 2024 in her dance school and as part of her home-schooling, in 2024 she will be starting Certificate 1 in dancing. Tae's long-term goal is to be accepted into a ballet school to further her studies and work on becoming a dance teacher. Her goal is to play the White Swan in Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. Congratulations, Tae, on your incredible accomplishments and may your passion for dance continue to shine and inspire others.

#### **WINGHAM MUSIC FESTIVAL**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to congratulate the Wingham Music Festival for being named a finalist in the NSW Tourism Awards 2023. This achievement is a testament to the festival's commitment to excellence, innovation, and outstanding customer service over the years. From its humble beginnings in 2007 at Wingham Central Park, this festival has grown not only in size but in its dedication to sustainability and the enrichment of our community. With its vibrant yet relaxed atmosphere, the festival has provided a platform for both local and renowned artists to share their talent. Through the years, the Wingham Music Festival has persevered. The festival's resilience and adaptability were on full display in 2020 when it transitioned to a live-streamed format, bringing music directly into people's homes during challenging times. As we eagerly await the announcement of the Tourism Award winners, I want to thank the hard-working team behind the Wingham Music Festival – Donna & Kev Ballard, Julie Blanch and Pete Trood. Thank you for enriching our community with the gift of music. I look forward to celebrating your continued success. Congratulations once again on this well-deserved recognition.

#### **DOROTHY MAMMATT**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and recognise the wonderful work of lifelong volunteer, Ms Dorothy Mammatt. Ms Mammatt has been volunteering her time and energy to help and support both the Bexley and Rockdale Uniting Churches for over 76 years. Over these years the number of ways Dorothy has helped out the Church is endless. As Church Council Secretary, Dorothy runs the annual Church Fete, coordinates the yearly Lamington drive, assists at English Classes every Friday, helps at Kits Club

and runs a Craft Group every Tuesday. At 96 years of age, Dorothy is truly an inspiration to us all and the perfect role model. I wish to sincerely thank Ms Mammatt for the wonderful and selfless work she does to support the Church and our local community, for which we are extremely grateful. I want to also pay respects to Dorothy's husband of 61 years, Mr Eric Mammatt and acknowledge his invaluable contribution to our community. Eric was an instrumental figure within the Church and helped organise and set up many of their programs and initiatives that still run today.

#### **MILES MACASADO**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to recognise and celebrate the incredible work of volunteer, Mrs Miles Macasado. Ms Macasado has been giving up her time and energy to volunteer at St Patrick's Catholic Church Kogarah for several years. Miles primarily assists with the church's choir development and has been instrumental in fostering a sense of community and purpose within the church. Miles sacrifices at least 8 hours a week at rehearsals and mass, to sing with her team of choir members and even helps teach children Latin hymns. In addition to this, Ms Macasado helps organise social events and open rehearsals where church members gather to eat, drink, chat and sing. This has significantly enhanced the wellbeing of everyone involved and created a sense of family at the church. Miles is well known to churchgoers as a warm, kind and caring person who always puts her hand up to help in whatever way she can. In just a short time, Miles has become a much loved and much needed contributor to the church. I would like to thank Ms Macasado for the wonderful work she does to support our community, for which we are extremely grateful.

#### **JESSICA QIU**

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

#### **WEST WYALONG HIGH SCHOOL AEROBICS**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to congratulate the West Wyalong High School Aerobics team who recently travelled to Adelaide, representing West Wyalong at the National titles after winning gold at the State level. The team under the coaching guidance of Sherrie Clemson comprises of Leah Brohan, Emily Seaman, Scarlett Webster, Teila Kremer, Jo Dignan and Loudy Bishop. After many training sessions and hard work the girls competed against High Schools from across Australia. Placing sixth on the day was a tremendous effort by the girls and shows just how hard they have worked and trained. Leah, Emily, Scarlett, Teila, Jo and Loudy all looked fabulous during the competition thanks to the kind sponsorship of What's Cookin. A massive thank you is also extended Shannon Milsom for organising the trip and for all the behind-the-scenes work. The team is performing at the Lions Club Charity night on October 21 and the word on the street is the shire is looking forward to their performance. Congratulations once again West Wyalong School Aerobics on a tremendous team effort.

#### **MAYORAL ELECTIONS 2023**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—My congratulations to the newly elected or re-elected Mayors and Deputy Mayors from the Cootamundra Electorate. Councils within the seat of Cootamundra recently appointed their new Mayors and Deputy Mayors to fill a 12-month term until the 2024 Local Government Elections. Bland Shire Council: Councillor Brian Monaghan – Mayor, Councillor Tony Lord - Deputy Mayor. Coolamon Shire Council: Councillor David McCann – Mayor, Councillor Alan White - Deputy Mayor. Cowra Shire Council: Councillor Ruth Fagan – Mayor, Councillor Paul Smith - Deputy Mayor. Cootamundra- Gundagai Regional Council: Councillor Charlie Sheahan – Mayor, Councillor Gil Kelly - Deputy Mayor. Hilltops Council: Councillor Margaret Roles – Mayor, Councillor Alison Foreman - Deputy Mayor. Junee Shire Council: Councillor Robert Callow – Mayor, Councillor Matt Austin - Deputy Mayor. Narrandera Shire Council: Councillor Neville Kschenka – Mayor, Councillor Sue Ruffles - Deputy Mayor. Temora Shire Council: Councillor Rick Firman – Mayor, Councillor Graham Sinclair - Deputy Mayor. Weddin Shire Council: Councillor Craig Bembrick



– Mayor, Councillor Paul Best - Deputy Mayor. Congratulations again and I wish all outgoing Mayors and Deputy Mayors well for the future.

### **GRENFELL PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING RESILIENCE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to congratulate the year 5/6 class of Grenfell Public School lead by Mrs Makin on their recent 'Resilience Project.' Earlier in the year selected teachers from Grenfell Public School attended a seminar to empower them with additional tools to improve the overall wellbeing and mental health of their students. Years 4, 5 and 6 all completed a survey about how they were feeling about themselves at this time. This information was then used to determine what areas needed addressing to improve the students' self-esteem. Each class participates in a 30-minute lesson, using various resources, and videos to bring awareness to their feelings, understanding empathy, gratitude and how their actions or words can impact on others. The program has already been a great success with students completing another survey after the first few lessons already feeling a sense of belonging. It has brought awareness in both the classroom and playground, in accepting others and being mindful of their fellow students. Congratulations Grenfell Public School on such a wonderful program to support the students in the overall understanding of mental health and wellbeing.

### **SAMI BAYLY**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—27-year-old author and illustrator Sami Bayly has released her fifth illustrated book in five years. She grew up in Wallsend and went to school and university in our electorate. Sami is intrigued by all things weird and wonderful, as can be seen in her books published in countries including the UK, USA, South Korea, Sweden, Israel and Russia, with future publications planned for China and beyond. Sami's new book, "How we came to Be: Creatures of Camouflage and Mimicry", shows that animal camouflage and mimicry not just a defence mechanism, but for improving their love lives, communicating emotions and managing body temperature. Some of these animals, like the satin bowerbird and anemone stinkhorn, live in Newcastle. Sami's list of awards is substantial and includes Best Designed Children's Non-Fiction Illustrated Book, GOLD Winner Juvenile Non-Fiction Award, Highly Commended for NSW Community Educator of the Year, and she is included in Booktopia's Top 50 Favourite Australian Books. For your animal advocacy efforts, and a sixth book next year, congratulations Sami, particularly for making a difference presenting fascinating school workshops and enhancing children's learning journeys.

### **SHAYE QUINN – REACHING FOR THE STARS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—17-year-old Year 11 Wallsend high school student Shaye Quinn lives with a condition called achondroplasia, a form of dwarfism, and Hyperphosphatemic Rickets, which affects her skeletal system and bones. She also has craniosinostosis, autism, wears hearing aids in both ears, is legally blind in her left eye – and has her heart set on a stage career. Shaye loves nothing better than performing – singing, dancing and connecting with people on deeper levels. It hasn't been easy. At twenty months, she had major skull reconstruction surgery as her brain was running out of room to grow, she didn't walk until she was four years old and was very delayed reaching her childhood milestones. But she thrived in a mainstream environment, and she progressed amazingly. Shaye auditioned for an American talent scout agency and was one of an elite thirty candidates selected to perform at Disney World Florida in August 2023. This dream come true experience for Shaye sparked interest from four talent agents and the possibility of performing opportunities in the USA. The sky's not the limit! Shaye, you are an inspiration to us all.

### **ELIZABETH (BETH) ELLIOTT**

**Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend)**—Newcastle-based poet Beth Elliott felt compelled to help Ukrainians after exposure to horror stories about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, so she composed a poetry anthology, her third, involving the injustice and unfairness of what the Ukrainian people were enduring as the world watched on. Tilting at Windmills – The Impossible Dream was launched on August 26 with around sixty people in attendance, including Darko Senko, President of the Ukraine Crisis Appeal and Newcastle U3A's Hilary Oliver as MC. The launch featured Ukrainian music and a speech from myself and Guest of Honour, Father Paul Bereznjuk of Newcastle Ukrainian Church. The hall hire and book printing were done at Beth's own expense. More broadly, the poems reflect her feelings about injustice, unfairness and evil which are prevalent in today's world. Two of the poems relate directly to the tragic events currently happening in Ukraine. The book launch was an engaging experience - sales and donations amounted to over \$2,600 and we sampled traditional snacks and a piece of special cake iced with Ukrainian blue and yellow. My respect goes to this generous, humble, passionate lady, Elizabeth Elliott.

### **ELLY IRELAND**

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Speaker, I wish to congratulate Forbes' Elly Ireland on a great effort at the 2023 International Dragon Boat Federation's World Nations Championship. A student at Red Bend Catholic

College, Elly was a member of the Australian Auroras under 18 crew which secured seven bronze medals at the world regatta in Thailand. Canada and the US dominated the U18s division, but the Australian girls and mixed teams were nipping at their heels during a gruelling six days of competition which covered distances from 200m to 2km. Elly has risen through the ranks quickly since taking up the sport with her grandfather Neil May and the Forbes Dragon Club. She only had two training camps with the Auroras before heading overseas but put in plenty of time in the gym and was a regular on Lake Forbes, paddling with her Pa. Elly has also been guided by Forbes dragon boat coach Chris Favelle and central west-based Auroras' teammates Estella Ferri and Kerry Madden and Dubbo's Rhonda Betts. Again, I congratulate Elly on her efforts with the Australian dragon boat crew and look forward to her future achievements.

#### MARC PAYNE

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate my constituent Marc Payne, from Parkes, on receiving international recognition for portrait photography. A finalist in 2021 and 2022, Mr Payne's work has again been listed in the top 101 images in the International Portrait Photographer of the Year competition. This means two of his five entries have been included in the 2023 International Portrait Photographer of the Year awards coffee table book, which features outstanding work by photographers from around the globe. A house painter by trade, after serving his apprenticeship with his dad Alan, Marc Payne was introduced to photography by his brother David and he has moved through natural landscape pictures before developing skills in portraiture. Marc grew up in Parkes and his work reflects his connection to its community with portraits of well-known residents Stan Adamski and Kevin Dumesny to feature in the 2023 book. Shot in a more traditional style, Marc's portraits are haunting and captivating and it's not surprising he achieved his goal of featuring in the top 101 of more than 700 entries. I congratulate Marc Payne on the beauty and quality of his work and its recognition on the world stage.

#### DEAN BRUS AND PETER BRUS

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate Peter Brus and his father Dean Brus on a remarkable effort at the World Association 1500 Pistol Championships in Sweden. From the village of Spring Hill near Orange, the pair returned home from tournament host Stockholm with a swag of trophies representing three world titles and a new world record. Shooting for the Australian team, Peter finished first in the pistol and off duty revolver categories while in the optic sight category, shot by teams, he set a world record with the score of 598 from a possible 600. This was a great moment for the Brus', with dad Dean, Peter's mentor and coach since he was 12 years old, joining him in the optic team. The pair joined forces in three events, finishing third in the WA1500 pistol and 6th in WA1500 revolver. Dean Brus is an old hand at pistol shooting, having represented Australia and winning national titles. Peter travelled to Sweden as the defending revolver world champion and withstood the pressure to maintain his level of excellence. Together the pair have represented NSW for more than a decade and salute them for this latest world-class effort.

#### WE AUSTRALIANS ARE CREATIVE INC EVENT- (POWER OF CHANTS) AN EVENT FOR SOCIAL AND HARMONY IN THE COMMUNITY

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On 28 September WAACI (We Australians Are Creative Inc) held an event for social cohesions and harmony in the community called 'Power of Chant'. I was delighted to attend this event and participate in the networking of creativity in Australia. The event involved creative collaboration from the multicultural ethnic communities through poetry, Sufi and Bhakti chants, and rhymes along with exclusively composed musical patters in theatrical styles. Additionally, within this event, internationally known visiting musicians Shubhendu and Saskia Rao also participated. This further extended and empowered the differing groups present on one platform upholding social cohesion on the grounds of unity. I would like to extend my appreciation to all involved in organising this event for offering such a diverse and unified evening. Thank you also to Abbas Raza Alvi, President at We Australians Are Creative Inc for the kind invitation.

#### MULTICULTURAL MAWLID CONCERT

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—On Sunday 24th of September I was delighted to attend the Darulfatwa Islamic High Council of Australia's Multicultural Mawlid Concert in Commemoration of the Birth of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which was at the Sydney Olympic Park. Darulfatwa Islamic High Council of Australia is a high Islamic authority in Australia. It has been founded to meet the growing needs of the Australian Muslim community. The event showcased artistic performances in various languages and with people from different Australian communities such as: Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Sudan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bosnia, Turkey, Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Uyghur community. I was delighted to attend this special event along with my parliamentary colleagues, Ambassadors, Consuls-General from numerous nations and so many friends and attendees. My thanks go especially to Darulfatwa for the kind invitation.

### TASTE CAMDEN

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—This year's Camden Festival includes a return to the much-loved event, TASTE Camden. TASTE was held on Sunday the 24th of September at Camden Town Farm. This much-loved event includes a huge range of food, drink, produce, live music performances, celebrity chef demonstrations, kids cooking demonstrations, kids' entertainment and much more. We were treated by wonderful performances from Ria Brcic, Joe Moore, Ellie Drennan, Top Shelf Live and Taste of Soul as well as Honey Sippers, Jake Edgley, the Stringline Folk Band and Shara Rose. Celebrity Chef Darren Robertson attended, demonstrating popular dishes that anyone can try at home. Darren showcased Herb Flatbread with pickled shallots and fried eggs as well as Corn, pumpkin, and whey risotto and to top it all off, Spring vegetable bruschetta. In addition, several stallholders were available for all to enjoy, including delicious baked goods and sweets, hot dogs, fairy floss and of course ice cream. Congratulations to the organisers of this year's TASTE Camden for making it a fun and enjoyable event for the local community.

### BAKERS DELIGHT

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Bakers Delight, at Warilla Grove, for winning the Outstanding Bakery/Cake Business 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 Bakers Delight on this outstanding achievement.

### SHOES AND SOX

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Shoes & Sox, at Stockland Shellharbour, for winning the Outstanding Fashion 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 Shoes & Sox on this outstanding achievement.

### WARILLA LAKE SOUTH GORILLAS LADIES LEAGUE TAG 2

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate the Warilla Lake South Gorillas Ladies League Tag Division 2 team for winning the Group 7 South Coast Rugby League Ladies League Tag Division 2 Grand Final at the Bill Andriske Oval in Mollymook on Sunday 10 September 2023 against Berry Shoalhaven Heads Magpies 16 points to 12. Well done to the whole team, training staff and coach, Anthony Cashman, on a very successful year. The Ladies were the Minor Premiers as well as Grand Final winners. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to the Ladies League Tag Division 2 team and wish them all the best for next season.

### WILLOUGHBY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—I offer my warmest congratulations to the new high school student leaders beginning their tenure at the start of Term 4. These student leaders have been either appointed or elected at the eight high schools across the Willoughby electorate including 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. It is a great honour to become a student leader of one's school and a reflection of the high esteem in which they are held by their respective school communities. I am confident that these impressive young men and women will serve as fine leaders and role models of their peers. As I mentioned to the House in September, I was honoured to host a group of student leaders here at State Parliament and was impressed by their maturity and leadership qualities. I wish the incoming student leaders for 2024 all the best as they assume their new roles and trust that it will be an enriching and character-building experience for each leader.

### WILLOUGHBY ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The Republic of Armenia is once again facing a humanitarian crisis as the situation in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) and Armenia has intensified in recent weeks. The escalation of this crisis has naturally distressed the Armenian community here in Australia and I have been moved by the response of the 3 500 Armenian Australians in the electorate of Willoughby. The community and the many Armenian groups and organisations based in Willoughby, such as the Armenian National Committee, the Apostolic Church and the Homemetsmen sporting and scouts groups have rallied to give generously to aid organisations including the Armenian Relief Society of Australia to help Armenian people fleeing violence and oppression. I acknowledge too Willoughby City Council for its contribution to the Mayor's Appeal for Artsakh, which is providing humanitarian relief to the people of Artsakh. I commend the people of Willoughby for their community spirit and outpouring of generosity and know they stand with the people of Armenia and Artsakh at this difficult time.

### CAMMERAY PUBLIC SCHOOL ART SHOW

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—The community was delighted to see Cammeray Public School re-introduce its prestigious Art Show held on Tuesday 22 August. Students from Kindergarten to Year Six showcased their artwork and impressive creative talents at the show. The artwork on display was of high quality, creative, diverse, and impressive - a real credit to the talent of the students. This year, Cammeray Public partnered with Cammeraygal High School as the venue for the art show. I would acknowledge Cammeray Public's specialist art teacher, Mrs Sharon Fahey, for her partnership with Cammeraygal High School in hosting this event. I am always proud to celebrate and acknowledge student achievements in the creative arts and thank everyone in the local community who supported the art show. I was proud to have a selection of the student's artwork on display in the Willoughby Electorate Office. I congratulate Cammeray Public School on its initiative to showcase the creative talents of its students to our community.

### UMINA BEACH SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Congratulations to the Umina Beach Surf Life Saving Club on its successful Open Day! The club welcomed several participants signing up for nippers, youth, open, or master's age groups on the day. The fabulous day was celebrated with additional attractions such as face painting, ice machines, a guess the lollies jar, surf lifesaving demonstrations and surf education. The attractions made for a very rewarding day that became a wonderful day out for the family. Surf, swim and lifesaving skills are essential to have, especially with all the beautiful beaches we have here in Gosford. The Umina Beach Surf Lifesaving Club teaches individuals the skills of surf lifesaving from ages 5 all the way up to adulthood. They should be commended on their great contribution to and their active involvement in the education of community members young and old. Huge congratulations to the Umina Beach Surf Life Saving Club on their mighty turn out at their open day and good luck in the preparation for the upcoming summer.

### PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—It was an honour to attend the fabulous Public Service Association Women's Conference alongside many other esteemed women to discuss the rights, issues and the future of women within the public sector in NSW. I would especially like to thank all the delegates who travelled from far and wide to attend. You do such important work supporting PSA members in a vast diversity of workplaces across our state, your work is absolutely crucial and very much appreciated. It was fantastic to join everyone for the conference, and then dinner and I'd like to give a special thanks to Denise Hanlon aka Tina Turner for taking her time to come and entertain us. A special shout out to Kellie Jermyn from Department of Communities and Justice, Tweed Heads who was recognised amongst her peers for her incredible work and advocacy for others in the community services sector. Thank you ever so much to the Public Service Association and your delegates for continuing to support the workers of the NSW public sector and for all you do for communities across NSW.

### PETER BONVINO AND NATHAN METCALFE

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Well done to Peter Bonvino and his brother-in-law, Nathan Metcalfe, in playing their part to raise a mighty \$2 million in support of Cancer Council's fight against cancer. This year, the two will set off from October 13 as they attempt to complete a daunting 2,500 km journey from Port Douglas to Adelaide. The rules of the competition say that all competing cars must be purchased for \$1,500 or less, and the pair were able to snatch a 2001 Toyota Camry wagon off a Brazilian backpacker for just \$1,400! They're also not allowed to make any modifications to the car bar a few exceptions, so it's a large undertaking, and for a worthy cause. Cancer touches so many of us and our loved ones, so it's fundraisers like this that allow the Cancer Council to continue their work in cancer research. I wish the two the best of luck on their 2,500 km journey for such a worthy cause.

### LAVINGTON BOWLING CLUB 40TH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to the Lavington Bowling Club on the significant occasion of its 40th anniversary. September 2023 marks four decades of "Happy Bowling" and is a testament to the endurance of this club. A special mention and recognition goes to all its members and to those special life members - Slawko Kitt, Sandra Kitt, Ray Edwards, and Les Waldron. These life members have witnessed the club's evolution - their collective roles have shaped the club's character over the decades. Sandra Kitt, one of the long-standing members and founding members of the women's division in 1985, recalls when only a handful of local women knew the sport - her vision and determination paved the way for future generations of female bowlers. I am certain there are countless unforgettable memories that have been created and friendships forged over four decades at Lavington, with many more to come. Happy 40th Anniversary, Lavington Bowling Club!

### MAKAYLA MCMILLAN – SARAH LLOYD SCHOLARSHIP

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate Makayla McMillan of Thurgoona who has received the Sarah Lloyd Scholarship Fund award which was created to support women working in non-traditional trades. Makayla was one of three recipients for financial support of \$2000. At the age of 19 Makayla is completing her trade Certificate III Painting and Decorating, working through a not-for-profit apprenticeship and training organisation called VERTO. I understand Makayla will use part of this funding to buy a brand-new pair of work boots for her trade – and may they be sure-footed and serve her well. Makayla, I wish you all the very best success as you contribute to the community with your chosen craft, and as you honour the legacy of Sarah Lloyd.

### OAKLANDS CELEBRATES UNIQUE ORCHID

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge the community of Oaklands who gathered together to commemorate 'Threatened Species Day' on September 7, to save the endangered Oaklands Diuris Orchid. The unique orchid known as 'donkey orchids' are identified by their donkey ear-like petals and can be found thriving only in the Riverina's white cypress pine woodland. A special mention goes out to the efforts of the 'save and protect' team which includes Shanna Rogers (Murray Local Land Services), Anna Murphy (NSW Saving and Species program), Meredith Mitchell (Corowa District Landcare), Heather Kerr (Oaklands CWA), Judy Kirk (Corowa District Landcare), Tracey Michael (Murray Local Land Services) and Shona Cowley (Crown Lands). Thank you for your dedication and for your efforts to save the Diuris Orchid.

### ZULMA MARQUEZ

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport)**—I would like to express my appreciation to Ms. Zulma Marquez, for her outstanding dedication in leading the 'Rock & Wool' group at Rockdale Library. Zulma has been a cherished member of our local community for two decades, enriching the lives of our residents through her volunteer work with the knitting and crochet group. Zulma attends my office regularly to collect donated yarns and takes it back to the group, which meets bi-monthly. Zulma consistently encourages and welcomes people of all skill levels while generously mentoring and assisting. Under Zulma's guidance, the group creates fabulous, knitted squares, which are then taken to an organisation called "Wrap with Wool". Zulma extends her volunteering efforts to their warehouse where blankets are made from these squares and distributed to those in need, including single mothers and the homeless, to communities affected by disaster, in Australia and overseas. I would like to thank Zulma for her endless effort, boundless enthusiasm, and for her wonderful contribution to our community.

### ARNOLD WOULF

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt)**—I wish to recognise Mr Arnold Woulf who is the Academy Director 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, without Arnold, the academy would not be as successful as it currently is. With activities such as R U OK Day, the Ross Kelly Cup, Sydney University Day experiences, the Academy encourages these young men to participate in new opportunities, providing them with the tools to participate in a meaningful society. As the Academy's Director, Arnold ensures the success of these young men, I look forward to seeing his future achievements.

### NSW STATE SPECIAL OLYMPICS TEN PIN BOWLING WINNERS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I rise to recognise the Port Macquarie members of the Mid Coast Special Olympics team who have won medals at the NSW State Special Olympics ten pin bowling competition. Singles Gold medal winners were Vicki Thompson, Kylie Barefoot, Kaleah Parsons and Justin Cain.

Silver medals were awarded to Gary Hanna, Keith Lawlor and Darren Wallis. A team of 37 represented the Mid Coast Region at the Campbelltown competition and the team success is due to the dedication and work of Di Davis, Chair of the Mid Coast Region and her many volunteers who coordinate transport and team logistics. The Special Olympics is a global movement to give people with an intellectual disability the opportunity to play sport. The Special Olympics is a year-round multi-sport program for people with an intellectual disability – of all capabilities – who also have access to robust competition pathways including World Games which is hosted on a four year cycle in summer and winter sports. Importantly, Special Olympics opens the door to personal achievement, pride and inclusion for members of our community who otherwise may be marginalised or isolated. My congratulations and best wishes to all participants.

#### **ETC – 2023 NSW LARGE TRAINING PROVIDER OF THE YEAR**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—I am exciting to announce to the House that one of Port Macquarie's local training providers ETC was crowned the 2023 NSW Large Training Provider of the Year. The NSW Training Awards were held on Friday, 15th September at Sydney Town Hall to recognise the achievements of students, teachers, employers and training organisations who have excelled in the vocational education and training sector. A not-for-profit recruitment agency with over 34 years of experience, Enterprise and Training Company [ETC] was named the 2023 NSW Large Training Provider of the Year for providing specialised programs that cater for the community's industry needs. Local girls Sarah Hudson and Petah Russell proudly showcased the decorative award which acknowledged the expertise of a passionate organisation focused on delivering the very best in training options that support sustainable employment. ETC is committed to reinvesting profits back into the business and into communities. Since 1989, ETC has helped 95,292 people find employment, 46,146 people in training and 40,438 people in small business. ETC has also taken out the Small Training Provider award three times before taking out the major accolade this year. Congratulations ETC on this wonderful milestone.

#### **2023 NEAMI COMMUNITY CUP**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I am pleased to acknowledge the 2023 Neami Community Cup, held on the 10th October which aims to raise awareness of mental health and its impact on our most vulnerable community members. The Neami Community Cup is an annual event held in October to recognise Mental Health Month. The day features a round robin soccer competition at Findlay Park, with 16 teams representing community service workers, clients and volunteers, all vying for the distinguished title of 2023 Neami Community Cup champions. Behind the fun-filled activities is the more pertinent topic of mental health which can affect any of us at any time. It is a day to focus on wellness and to encourage people to speak up when troubled and are in need of support. Neami Service Manager Cherie Caltabiano noted the free event brought the community together to break the stigma of mental health and to highlight the incredible local organisations that play a vital role in our community. Twenty organisations and agencies hosted stalls facilitating an opportunity for community members to have a chat and to access services. This year's theme for Mental Health Month is "we all have a role to play".

#### **TRAVELLERS' CHOICE AWARD FOR TWEED REGIONAL GALLERY**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—Hats off to the Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre in Murwillumbah, which was recently announced as a Travellers' Choice award winner by global travel review website Tripadvisor. The award celebrates attractions around the world that have consistently received great traveller reviews over the previous 12 months, and means the gallery is ranked among the top 10 per cent of attractions worldwide – not bad at all for a regional Aussie gallery. The award coincides with the Gallery's celebration of the 100-year birthday anniversary of Margaret Olley, our favourite local artist who was born in my hometown of Lismore. The Gallery has been holding a range of events to tell the story of her incredible life and career, the latest being an exhibition starting on 18 October 2023 called Light and Life. The exhibition brings together paintings by Margaret Olley with new work by three contemporary Australian artists who have been inspired by her work: Laura Jones, India Mark and Mirra Whale. I would urge anyone visiting our Northern Rivers region to pay a visit to the gallery – it really deserves its global star power.

#### **WOODBURN RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL 2023**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—We have many great festivals up on the Northern Rivers but the one I want to celebrate today is the Woodburn Riverside Festival. This year's event was held on 23rd September and was absolutely huge for the community, which is still struggling in the aftermath of last year's catastrophic flood which literally wiped out much of the town. Many of you would recall TV footage of residents, pets and farm animals huddled at the top of the Richmond River bridge as floodwaters raged all around. Well, this is one tough little community and people from all over the region turned out in force to show their support, with a full day of fun keeping them entertained. The Evans Head Ukelele Group got things going and after the Welcome to Country

there were boat races on the river, a wildlife show, school performances, a biathlon, a tug of war, face painting, market stalls, live band Borrowed and Blue, and a grand finale fire-twirling performance to wrap things up. Hats off to event co-ordinator Pam Bellingham and the many volunteers and community organisations that made the festival such a terrific occasion.

#### **DHEZI DELI, BEXHILL**

**Ms JANELLE SAFFIN (Lismore)**—One of the things that has always made the Lismore area such a great place to live is its variety of cafes, restaurants, greengrocers, butchers and specialty food outlets. Just under a year ago we welcomed a new addition to our foodie scene, Dhezi Deli at Bexhill, owned by Suzanne and Bobby Dhesi. Dhezi Deli's passion is cheese, and they have literally hundreds of varieties from all over the world and around Australia available for tasting and sale. They also have a good range of gourmet cold meat, salads, olives and other delicacies and are always happy to share their passion with customers. Suzanne and Bobby have a long connection to the Lismore area, starting with Suzanne's parents who bought the Bexhill General Store in 1993. They are also survivors of the 2022 Lismore floods, spending six hours in floodwaters before being rescued and losing almost \$2 million of stock when Pirlo's Fruit Barn in South Lismore was inundated. But in true Northern Rivers style they're now back on their feet and back in business, and it is wonderful to have Dezi Deli in our neighbourhood.

#### **MAY JOUNI**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to recognise May Jouni, a community worker in South-West Sydney who has consistently worked for the betterment of our children in the education system. May has worked with culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] communities for more than a decade, assisting them in overcoming obstacles and adversities that hinder positive integration into Australian society. May is currently a bilingual liaison officer at Lurnea High School, one of South-West Sydney's most disadvantaged areas. In her work, May has connected the broader school community to extracurricular and external programs that can assist with a student's development to ensure they get the most out of their time in the secondary education system. I know May as an incredibly hard worker as her passion lies within helping those who need it most, and I wish her all the best into the future as she continues the work she does.

#### **NEDAL (SKINNY) HUSSEIN**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I am thrilled to extend my congratulations to Nedal "Skinny" Hussein, a beloved figure in Liverpool, for his recent induction into the Australia Boxing Hall of Fame. Skinny has made his name known on both the Australian and world boxing stage, including the now infamous encounter with Manny Pacquiao, in which he was regrettably denied a victory due to the referee's later-admitted misconduct. After retiring from active competition, Skinny has continued to contribute to the sport and the community by running his 'Body Punch Boxing' Gym in Prestons. Having previously spoken about his story in this place, his commitment and skill to boxing is something to be admired. He has certainly earned this honour and remains a source of inspiration to aspiring boxers to this day.

#### **EWELINA ELLSMORE**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—Today I would like to recognise Ewelina Ellsmore, School Principal and Polish Language Educator at the Liverpool Polish School. Operating out of Casula Public School, Ewelina shares her knowledge, traditions, and history of Poland and the Polish language to the next generation. In 2018, Ewelina was awarded a Silver Cross of Merit by the President of Poland for her work in this space and promotion of Polish culture, including the first online interactive learning experience for students in 2018. Ewelina has also worked with University Technology Sydney in her field and for the betterment of CALD community engagement. I wish her all the best with her future endeavours and I look forward to working with her into the future.

#### **DEBUT 1,000 BOOKS BEFORE SCHOOL PLAN**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—Early literacy skills are necessary for developing an interest in lifelong learning beyond primary and high school. Research shows that reading with a child several times a week develops their literacy skills up to a year beyond their peers. Canterbury Bankstown Council's 1,000 Books Before School program aims to encourage parents and carers to read 1,000 books with young children before they start kindergarten. This program aims to get children off to a great start in literacy long before they see the inside of a classroom. I would like to thank Deputy Mayor Rachelle Harika for proposing this initiative to Canterbury Bankstown Council and it was welcomed by a local mother, Yusra Metwally, and her son Karim. Ms Metwally emphasised the profound impact of the campaign in cultivating a love for books among young children and equipping them with essential skills for learning readiness. This program aims to encourage our community to improve our children's literacy skills. It's easier than you might think to read 1000 books! I am

pleased to see the effort that has been made, through this program, to improve our children's education in the city of Bankstown.

#### **THE UNITED MUSLIMS OF AUSTRALIA REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

**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 the United Muslims of Australia [UMA] founder Sheikh Shadi Alsuleiman for his hard work in establishing a new community redevelopment project. UMA, founded in 2002, has worked tirelessly for this redevelopment to occur. In a further significant stride towards realising this project, the UMA has initiated a \$28 million redevelopment project which will be completed in approximately 18-24 months. Central to the redevelopment is the construction of a new mosque that can accommodate thousands of worshippers. This state-of-the-art mosque will replace the current temporary masjid and will serve as a spiritual sanctuary for the Muslim community, providing a place for congregational prayers, religious gatherings, and community events. Importantly, it will open onto a beautiful courtyard, providing further space for worshippers. One of the most noteworthy additions to the new complex will be the establishment of the first Islamic university in Australia. This educational institution will play a pivotal role in addressing the shortage of homegrown Imams and Islamic scholars in the country. I am pleased to see such remarkable work being put into this redevelopment as this is an important aspect of the Bankstown community.

#### **CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN COMMUNITY SAFETY EXPO**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On Saturday 7 October 2023, alongside NSW Fire and Rescue, SES, Ambulance, and Police Force, I had the pleasure of attending the Canterbury Bankstown Community Safety Expo at Bankstown Central. The event provided residents with the unique opportunity to observe the skilled techniques employed by firefighters in extricating individuals from vehicles, witness the proficient response of first aiders, as well as engage with surf lifesaving virtual reality demonstrations. Attendees also had the privilege to interact with local safety and emergency service professionals such as police, firefighters, paramedics, and SES volunteers to gain invaluable insights into their vital role in safeguarding our community. Firefighters from Arabic, Greek, and Vietnamese backgrounds spent time with locals to discuss fire safety in their native languages. The electorate of Bankstown is one of the most diverse in the state and it is important that we prepare residents for any emergency that might put them at risk of home fires. I would like to acknowledge the Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW SES, NSW Ambulance, and NSW Police Force for taking the time to educate and demonstrate to our community how they work to keep the community safe.

#### **ST CLAIR NEWSAGENCY**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I rise to warmly congratulate St Clair Newsagency, recently crowned the winner in the Newsagency category at the Local Business Awards for Mt Druitt/St Marys. A staple in our community, St Clair Newsagency has long been more than a place to purchase papers and lotto tickets, it has been a place of friendly faces and warm greetings, where community members can stay informed and connected. Their recognition in the Local Business Awards is a testament to their unwavering dedication to our community, providing not merely services but contributing to the rich tapestry that binds our local area. I commend the team at St Clair Newsagency for their outstanding achievement and extend hearty congratulations for being recognised as leaders in our local business community. Their award is truly well-deserved.

#### **MICK T'S MEN'S CLOTHING**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I rise to warmly congratulate Mick T's, an exemplary local business that has been distinguished as the winner of the Local Business Awards for Mt Druitt/St Marys in the Fashion category. Mick T's Men's Clothing has steadfastly demonstrated a commitment to providing quality, style, and outstanding service to our community. This local establishment adds to the vibrant and dynamic business environment in the Badgerys Creek electorate. In an industry often dominated by large-scale retailers, Mick T's has proven that a local business, with a keen eye for style and a heart for the community, can not only survive but thrive and be recognised for excellence. Congratulations to Mick T's for not only winning this well-deserved award but also for contributing positively to our community's economic vitality.

#### **WAR ON WASTE**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I wish to bring to the attention of the House residents of Wood Street, Eastwood in my electorate of Ryde. Now famous, Wood Street featured on the ABC's 'War on Waste', where residents talked about opportunities to increase and improve recycling in our community. I recently met with the residents of Wood Street, and they are like a big family, dedicated to making society a better and cleaner place. On camera, they chatted about new and innovative ways to cut down trash, turn kitchen leftovers into compost, and implement activities to help clean up the local neighbourhood. Their passion persuaded me to advocate to the



local Council for a local business recycling campaign - something I am pleased to inform the House passed successfully last month. While the challenges afflicting our climate and the environment require additional efforts far beyond the reach of my local community, I am encouraged by the example Wood Street is setting for communities, council's and governments elsewhere. Each resident is a hero in our community, and thanks to them, Wood Street Eastwood has set the benchmark for how to live sustainably for the good of the planet. Congratulations and thank you!

#### **MANDY FLECKNOE**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I wish to bring to the attention of the house Mandy Flecknoe, the dedicated director of Goulding Hill community preschool in my electorate of Ryde. Mandy has devoted her life to nurturing and supporting the families and children within our community, where her unwavering commitment often extends well beyond the classroom. Unfortunately, Mandy came face to face with a formidable adversary two years ago—non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In the past two months, the disease has aggressively progressed further. True to her nature, Mandy has faced this health challenge with the spirit of a champion. Her resilience and determination have turned each battle into a demonstration of her strength. Astonishingly, amid her personal struggle, she remains steadfast in her mission to raise awareness for lymphoma. Through her efforts, she has managed to rally the community and raise over \$10,000 for this crucial cause. I am grateful to Mandy's daughter, Molly, for bringing her mother's courageous journey to our attention. In honoring Mandy's fight, I am encouraging people to contribute to her fundraising campaign, and my office is available to share details. Thank you, Mandy, for inspiring and uplifting others. The NSW Parliament wishes you a speedy recovery.

#### **DOUBLE TENTH BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—On September 30, 2023, I had the pleasure of attending the 5th Double Ten National Day Cup Basketball Championship at Ryde Community Sports Center. Coordinated by the dedicated organising committee of Richard and Winnie Lu, and Aven Lin, the event saw 18 teams and over 100 players participate in an exciting display of basketball prowess and cultural diversity. I congratulate the players, and acknowledge the new Director General of the Taipei Cultural Affairs Office, David Wu for coming to Ryde to support the occasion. Alongside Ryde Mayor Sarkis Yedelian OAM and Councillor Trenton Brown, I was witness to the strong fusion of sports and culture, as evidenced by the traditional Taiwanese bell-pulling, Ukrainian vocalists and other impressive performances. The tournament culminated in an awards ceremony where we not only celebrated the strong displays of sportsmanship, but also showcased the rich tapestry of cultural exchange between Taiwan and Australia. I acknowledge the City of Ryde for supporting this important event, and note that this event was even bigger and better than last year. I am confident this trajectory will continue, and that the Double Tenth Basketball Championship will be a highlight in Ryde's ongoing sports calendar.

#### **MONA VALE, BAYVIEW AND WARRIEWOOD COMMUNITY GROUP**

**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 Mona Vale, Bayview and Warriewood Community Group is no exception. The group has over 11,800 members and its success is tribute to its wonderful admin team: Ella Hutcheson, Kandice Johnston and Lauren Cara. 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, Mona Vale Bayview and Warriewood Community Page Group a safe and friendly space for our community to stay connected. Recent contributions have seen residents advertise their small businesses, find local live music performances, share community petitions and find lost items. The content of Mona Vale, Bayview and Warriewood Community Group 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 Ella, Kandice and Lauren for their service to our community.

#### **JACKSON CASTLE**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I wish to acknowledge an extraordinary young member of the Pittwater community, Jack Castle. Only 10 years old, Jack is already a passionate and successful golfer, having been a cadet at the wonderful Bayview Golf Club for four years. Jack recently returned from a six-week trip to the United States of America, where he competed in four different world championships across three states: Calloway's Future Championships in San Diego, the IMG Junior World Championships at Torrey Pines in San Diego, the Under Armour World Championships in Florida and the US Kids Golf World Championships in Pinehurst, North Carolina. Competing against thousands of the world's best junior golfers, Jack was hugely successful, earning himself a position in the world's top 20 junior golfers. This is a momentous achievement, and the Pittwater community is very proud. Due to his impressive ranking, Jack has been invited to compete in the USA World

Championships in 2024. Our community will be cheering Jack on in his future endeavours, both in golf and other pursuits. I wish Jack all the best, I am sure he will continue to go from strength to strength.

#### **HARRISON DENE**

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I wish to recognise an impressive member of the Pittwater community, Harrison Dene, a young athlete whose remarkable achievements on the rugby field have not gone unnoticed. Harrison's performance as part of the NSW Waratahs in the Super Rugby 16s series is a testament to his dedication, skill, and hard work. Harrison Dene, a student from Barker College, has shown exceptional talent and commitment in the sport of rugby. Notably, his proficiency in converting four out of five tries in the first half of a recent game was instrumental in the team's dominant performance. In addition to his achievements on the field, Harrison's is known for his sportsmanship and leadership qualities. He serves as an inspiring example for the youth in our community, demonstrating the importance of discipline and striving to meet high standards both in sports and in life. Harrison's dedication and accomplishments in the field of rugby make him a source of pride for our community. We commend him for his unwavering commitment and wish him continued success in his sporting journey. He is a true role model, and we look forward to witnessing his future achievements and contributions to our community.

#### **NALYN SIRIVIVATNANON**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I would like to recognise Nalyn Sirivivatnanon for her wonderful achievements. I first met Nalyn and her mother Jenny through the Let's Get Going group and I was pleased to hear that Nalyn recently represented NSW as part of the state team in the Marie Little Shield National Netball Tournament in Victoria. The netball competition provides female athletes with an intellectual disability the chance to represent their state at a national level. This was Nalyn's fifth time representing NSW at the tournament. I commend her for bringing home 4 gold and 1 silver medal for NSW since 2016 – a truly remarkable achievement. I am told it was a tremendous tournament in Victoria and Nalyn had a fantastic time catching up with her netball friends from all over Australia. She was also lucky to meet and have breakfast with members of the Diamonds, our Australian National Netball team. Nalyn has been recognised for her sporting achievements and was recently presented with the Encouragement Award for Outstanding Sporting Achievement in Netball by the Ryde Sports Foundation. Once again, I sincerely congratulate Nalyn. Your hard work and determination has paid off. Well done, I wish you all the very best.

#### **GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE MARONITE EPARCHY OF AUSTRALIA**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I wish congratulate the Maronite Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania on its Golden Jubilee Anniversary. Celebrations for the Fifty years of the Maronite Eparchy were marked in Sydney with a Gala Dinner and a Golden Jubilee Mass. The Gala Dinner, held at Rosehill Racecourse was attended by religious leaders and many dignitaries including the Prime Minister and Premier of NSW. Over 5,000 people attended to celebrate the occasion and to raise money for education for young people in Lebanon. It was also special to join Mass with over 10,000 people at Ken Rosewall Arena on Sunday 24 September to mark this joyous milestone. The mass was celebrated by His Beatitude and Eminence Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. I would like to acknowledge and thank Most Reverend Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania for the invitation to attend and join the celebrations. I congratulate our Maronite community on this wonderful occasion. The Parish plays a central role in the lives of its many parishioners, bringing people together in faith. I wish our Maronite community all the very best.

#### **FERRAGOSTO COLOURING COMPETITION 2023**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—I would like to acknowledge budding young artists in my community. Recently and as part of the Ferragosto Italian Street Fair which welcomes over 100,000 people to Five Dock, I held a colouring competition. The task was to colour in an Italian scene that represented Ferragosto and Italian culture and heritage. I would like to congratulate the winners of the 2023 Ferragosto Colouring Competition. The proud recipients are: - Eve Murrow, - Olive Murrow - Indiana Bohl - Zoe Wright I would like to congratulate Eve, Olive, Indiana and Zoe for their wonderful winning entries. I was impressed by their talent and creativity. I would like to thank these young artists as well as all other entrants for taking the time to enter the competition. All entrants should be very proud of their lovely artworks. I am sure that their family and friends are very proud. Once again, I would like to say congratulations and well done, and I wish Eve, Olive, Indiana and Zoe the very best.

#### **SCULPTURE ON THE FARM 2023**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—The biennial sculpture exhibition 'Sculpture on the Farm' held over the October long weekend continues to be a drawcard for artists and art lovers alike. From the gardens to the

paddocks and even the tractor shed – Fosterton, Dungog was again the unique studio for 155 works from over 80 sculptors. Well done to two Upper Hunter craftsmen who finished among the prizemoney for their work. Will Maguire of Elderslie won the prize for Metallurgical Excellence with 'Dome Influence Struggles.' 'Uasal Damh - The Noble Stag' delivered the Local Dungog Shire Artist Prize to Liam McIntyre. Congratulations to Jimmy Rix from Victoria's Macedon Ranges on winning both \$20,000 Sculpture on the Farm Acquisitive Prizes. Jimmy's 'Kangaroo and Honeyeater' to be publicly displayed at Gresford Arboretum and 'Collecting fur to line the nest 2' will be displayed in Dungog Common. 'UFO Utopia' by Canberra's Nigel Dobson won the \$15,000 Sculpture on the Farm Acquisitive Prize and will also be donated for display in the Dungog township. My congratulations also to Philippa Graham and the Sculpture on the Farm Committee for attracting 2,000 people to this year's event.

#### **TONY TOWNSEND MEMORIAL GOLF DAY**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Dungog Golf Club has been the setting for a fitting tribute to one of Dungog's favourite sons. Sunday 8 October 2023, the Dungog course hosted the first Tony Townsend Memorial Golf Day raising funds for the NSW Cancer Council. Tony was a talented man – a Dungog Warriors rugby league player and later captain-coach, who made his debut as a professional footballer with St George in 1985 then became a foundation member of the Newcastle Knights in 1988. 'TT' as he was affectionately known served in the Australian Army before joining the NSW Police Force in 1983 for a 39-year career that included serving as a Police Prosecutor and attaining the rank of Chief Inspector. Leukaemia took Tony from family, friends and colleagues in August 2022 with a crowd of 2,000 celebrating his life at Hunter Stadium on 1 September 2022. Over 100 people attended the memorial golf day whilst others made online donations to chip-in over \$10,000 for the Cancer Council. Congratulations to all involved including Dungog Golf Club, the golfers and those who attended to pay tribute to 'TT'. I am sure Tony would be humbled by this tribute.

#### **CONGRATULATIONS, CELINA PELLETT**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—2023 will be a year that Celina Pellett of Rookhurst will remember for a long time following her success at this year's NSW Training Awards. The Tocal College, Paterson trainee dairy farmer was recognised for being a Trainee of the Year Finalist in the state awards. The presentation ceremony at Sydney Town Hall, however, was capped-off with Celina named the 2023 NSW Training Awards Women in Trades winner. The road to state success began with this year's Hunter Region Trainee of the Year Award. Celina was nominated for initially showing great potential during the Certificate III in Dairy Production qualification. After attending the six intensive training blocks at Tocal throughout the year and meeting the on-farm practical skills assessment through the 12 months, she returned to Tocal this year aiming to complete the Certificate IV in Agriculture with a Dairy farming pathway. What began as 'city girl' childhood ambition has allowed Celina to excel in agriculture as she gained confidence with a tractor, quad bike and in the milking shed. I also want to acknowledge Gloucester's Graham Forbes of Forbes Dairy and Tocal trainee coordinator Jill Clayton for their support of Celina during her course.

#### **WALK 4 HOPE 2023**

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The Walk 4 Hope is a fundraising event that raises awareness of Huntington's Disease. A disease that damages the nerve cells in the brain, causing individuals to experience a decline in cognitive functions and mental health. It was a pleasure to officially open the walk in Parramatta Park on 24 September. Coordinated by Huntingtons NSW/ACT the event brought families, health professionals and supporters together to walk for hope. I note that Westmead Hospital has one of only two Huntingtons Disease Outreach Services and Clinics in NSW. Walk 4 Hope has come a long way since 2014 in fulfilling the original goal to educate the community on Huntington's Disease, improve the quality of life for those affected by the condition and advocate for more effective government policies and services in the disability, health, and social care sectors. In 2019, the initiative gained government support through the creation of the NDIS Coordination Service that dedicated resources to patients with Huntington's. The Walk 4 Hope will continue to inspire the community to look out for one another and better understand the impact of Huntingtons. Thanks to the Lions Club of Parramatta who provided food for participants on the day.

#### **ADAM PROWSE PERSONAL TRAINING**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I would like to congratulate Adam Prowse Personal Training on another successful charity bootcamp on Saturday the 7th of October. Bootcamps are hard work for all involved, this one however was worth it. The bootcamp raised over \$1,600 for the Heart Foundation to help fight heart disease. As we know heart disease is the number one killer of Australians. The Foundation makes such a difference with their health programs, public education and life-saving research. None of this would be possible without community fundraisers such as this bootcamp. The bootcamp day saw many gym-goers dress-up as superheroes to have fun and stay active. And this is not the first time they

have held a charity bootcamp, the last one supported the work of the amazing Starlight Foundation. Once again, I congratulate the team at Adam Prowse Personal Training for running such a successful charity bootcamp.

#### **KENDALL HARRISON**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I wish to acknowledge Lochinvar's Kendall Harrison who has spent her life volunteering and contributing to the betterment of the Maitland community. Kendall has worked with many organisations including Friends of the Earth, on various recycling projects, facilitated tree plantings, and fundraising for Westpac Care Flight. Kendall is currently the Seed Library coordinator for Slow Foods Hunter Valley, this Seed Library program sees seeds borrowed, planted and enjoyed. Borrowers are asked to leave a portion of the crop to go to seed, harvest and dry the seeds, returning them to the Seed Library for others to borrow and to grow. Kendall's involvement also includes facilitating workshops at the regular Maitland Taste Festival for children to gain a love for gardening and the skills to garden. Kendall demonstrates values of sustainability, community, and generosity. Kendall's contribution is worthy of recognition as a valued member of the Maitland Community.

#### **MAITLAND WELCOMES FIFTY-SIX NEW AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—In the last two months, Maitland City Council's Australian Citizenship Ceremonies have seen fifty-six individuals become Australian Citizens. These ceremonies mark a special chapter in each and every new citizen's migration story and their ongoing commitment to Australia and our shared values. The most recent of these ceremonies took place as part of the Maitland Riverlights Festival, a festival that has grown into a weeklong celebration of Maitland's Colourful Cultural composition and the perfect setting to welcome our new citizens. I would like to extend a warm welcome to each and every one of our new citizens who have come from nations across the globe including Afghanistan, Estonia, Indonesian, India, United Kingdom, Thailand and New Zealand. It's wonderful to have these individuals and their families in the Maitland community as proud Australian Citizens. Their own personal experiences add to the fabric of our multicultural community, and they contribute to the economic and social development of our community. Congratulations and welcome!

#### **BERT OLDFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL – COMMUNITY HUB**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was great to visit the Bert Oldfield Public School Community Hub, Seven Hills on 5th September 2023. Bert Oldfield Public School is a dynamic learning environment that strives to support students to achieve their full potential. Serving an increasingly diverse local community, the school offers holistic support to students, parents and our wider Western Sydney community. As part of the National Community Hubs program, the Bert Oldfield Community Hub links families and children to local education, health, and community services in a familiar and friendly place. Programs at the Hub celebrate individuality and diversity within our community, supporting children and families to access essentials and build community cohesion. Being part of a Hub gives families a sense of belonging, nurturing friendships and creating welcoming support networks. Mothers, fathers and carers connect at this Hub with volunteer, education and training pathways that can lead to employment. Thank you to Principal Doug Perrott, Community Hub Leader Sivinanthini Suresan, Community Hubs Australia Government Relations and Research Officer Kit Van Maanen and the Bert Oldfield Public School teachers and staff for the wholistic support the Community Hub offers our families in Western Sydney.

#### **ZEN TEA LOUNGE FOUNDATION – ANNUAL FUNDRAISER**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—I was pleased to attend the Zen Tea Lounge Foundation's Solidarity Against Family Violence Fundraiser at the Smithfield RSL Club, on September 22nd 2023. A grassroots charity in Western Sydney, The Zen Tea Lounge Foundation empowers women affected by domestic violence, abuse, and isolation. They facilitate community programs offering employment and social skills, boundary setting, tools to create healthy relationships and a safe space for people experiencing disability or neurodiversity. The Solidarity Against Family Violence Fundraiser offered a moving tribute to lives lost at the hands of domestic and family violence and raised \$7,206 for the Foundation. Providing an opportunity to stand in unity, our community took the Domestic Violence Pledge and renewed our commitment to safe and harmonious communities. I thank Guest Speakers Tony Hoang and Chantelle O'Donohoe for sharing their powerful stories. The Foundation tirelessly supports women across Western Sydney to transform their lives, granting survivors financial-freedom, autonomy and a fresh start. They inspire us to do more to impact meaningful change for people in need. Thank you to Founder Amy Nguyen, Foundation Ambassadors George Bousamra, Paul Rodgers and Thy Ha and the dedicated team for the hope you offer our community.

### ST ANTHONY'S MERCY DAY AWARDS – YEAR FIVE

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Alicia Dangol and Geneva McDermott on receiving a 2023 Mercy Award, on September 22nd at St Anthony's Primary School, Girraween. An excellent student in the 5G Class at St Anthony's Primary School, Alicia received the Mercy Award for Service, displaying this value through word and deed. Always eager to help others, Alicia even assists teachers during recess. Alicia's kind demeanour and generous spirit embody St Anthony's legacy of service. An integral member of the 5W class, Geneva received the Mercy Award for Compassion, in recognition of the courteous and mature way she engages with others. Geneva actively lives the Gospel values, going above and beyond to help those in need. Following the footsteps of the Mercy sisters, Geneva's warmth and empathy supports everyone to feel included. Mercy Awards recognise students who embody the Mercy values of hospitality, justice, compassion, respect, service and courage. Alicia and Geneva were selected as the Year Five Award winners. Congratulations Geneva and Alicia. 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 in their Catholic faith.

### DR JESSICA ALLEN

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Charlestown electorate local Dr. Jessica Allen is an electrochemical engineer, a senior lecturer at the University of Newcastle and an Australian Research Council fellow—and now she has been recognised with a NSW Young Tall Poppy Science Award. The Young Tall Poppy Science Awards are run by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science [AIPS] to honour up-and-coming scientists who combine their excellent research with a commitment to science communication. Dr Allen leads the recently established Electrochemical Engineering Laboratory at the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources, where her research into energy technology development includes innovations in sustainable materials for batteries, carbon capture and use, hydrogen energy and zero emission manufacturing for green steel and aluminium. But her influence extends far outside the halls of research and academia: in the face of climate change, her communications skills provide the community with leadership and refreshing hope. Dr Allen accepted the award at a ceremony in Sydney on Wednesday 13 September. Congratulations to Dr Allen on this well-deserved award. It is fantastic to see brilliant women in STEM, communicating the importance of scientific research and advancement.

### YEAR 12 GRADUATION AWARD WINNERS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Every year, it is my pleasure to sponsor Community Service Awards for year 12 school leavers at high schools in the Charlestown electorate. The Community Service Award goes to young people who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to supporting their school community in a wide range of endeavours. It comes with a gift voucher for an excellent book shop in the Charlestown electorate, Harry Hartog. I would like to acknowledge the 2023 recipients: Linus Deeming of Kotara High School; Zo Lennon Hatchman of Hunter Sports High; Matthew McKinnon of Warners Bay High School; and Oliver Morrison of Whitebridge High School. Each of these exceptional young people were nominated by their schools for their achievements, and it is my absolute pleasure to recognise them for all their hard work. I hope each of them was able to get some rest and relaxation over the school holidays in amongst the study ahead of their exams. I wish them all the best for the HSC, as well their future learning and careers. I'm sure I'll hear more about these exceptional young people in the years to come!

### CASS DAVIS

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—When the Newcastle Jets kick off their A-League Women's campaign against the Central Coast Mariners on Saturday 14 October, Charlestown electorate local Cass Hill will be running on to the field. Cass was a netballer up until the age of 12, before she decided to give soccer a go. Her first junior club was Warners Bay, before she went straight into playing rep at Macquarie. From there, she moved on to Northern and eventually grew into the WPL. She represented the Institute of Sport at nationals, too. By then, she was a Year 12 student and skipped schoolies to try out for the Jets. Unfortunately, she didn't make the cut at that try-out. This upcoming season will mark her eleventh with the Jets, and the defensive midfielder has set a few records in her career. On Matchday 3 of the 2021-22 season, she set a record for the league when she played one hundred games; and in March 2022, when she made her 109th consecutive appearance, she set the record most consecutive top-flight games for either men or women. It's so good to see this homegrown hero on the field for her hometown side.

### NATIONAL EMERGENCY MEDALS GO TO LOCAL FIRE FIGHTERS

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of recipients of the National Emergency Service Medals from the Northern Tablelands district, following the black summer bush fire season of 2019/2020. Those presented with this outstanding award included Matt Friend and Michael Jackson of the Black Mountain Brigades, for their sustained, significant service during national emergency(s) in Australia. The late Barry Lockyer of Guyra Brigade was also awarded this medal along with the Premier's Bushfire Citation, which was presented to his partner Raylene Shearer. I congratulate also those who were recognised for their long-standing service, including: Matthew Jackson and Michael Jackson of Black Mountain Brigade; Ben Jackson, Charles White, Jodie Stewart of Tenterden Brigade for giving 10 years of service. Vicki Bell and Tim Youman of Black Mountain Brigade for 20 years of service, and an impressive 40 years of service given by Wayne Jenkyn and Ron Walls of Black Mountain Brigade. I commend each of the recipients for their hard work, incredible contribution and selfless commitment to their communities, by saving people's lives, homes and livelihoods.

### MOREE BOARS RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I would like to recognise the achievements of Moree Rugby League players on their recent impressive wins in the Group 4 competition. In the first grade Moree Boars versed Kootingal Roosters winning 42-20 and in the Reserve Grade the Boars played Werris Creek, winning 64-10. I congratulate A Grade players: Adrian Smith, Jake Tighe, Joseph Wade, William Baker, James Duncan, Jamie Sampson, Michael Watton, Caleb Binge, Brent McDonald, Marshall Barker, Cameron Rodgers, Daniel Jobson, Peter Waton and Reserve Grade team members: Wyatt Roberts, Latrel Newman, Mark Pegus, Richard Simpson, Jason Saunders, Shannon Hippi, Richard McGrady, Jason Humphries, Jake Hetherinton, Luke Hobday, Dyland Reading, Anthony Robinson, Neville Sharpley, Corey Ricketts, Tyrell Smit, Luke Raveneau, Brian Smith-Saunders. I commend the coaches, referees, team staff, sponsors and volunteers on your support to the teams and the Moree Rugby League Club for hosting the games. I commend the players for their hard word and commitment to their teams and to the sport of Rugby League.

### MOREE RUGBY UNION

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the Moree Rugby Union Club and the fantastic season players and officials have just concluded. I congratulate the major award winners – in the Women's competition – Nadia Husbos – Best and Fairest, Djurdjina Cikota – Most Dedicated, Olivia Turner – Most Improved, Alexandra Marchand – Highest Try Scorer. In the Men's competition – Ben Legg – Best and Fairest in 2nd grade, Duncan Woods Most Dedicated in 2nd grade. Angus Roberts – Best and Fairest in 1st Grade. Percy Duncan and Lachlan Smith – Highest Try Scorer, Lachlan Elworthy and Ian Ranger – Best New Players, Jack Ticehurst – Beat Team Man, Callum Melton – Good Bloke Award, Kaleb McIlveen – Award for Courage and Determination, Peter Winkley – Club Person of the Year, and Jack Ticehurst was named as the Goose of the Year. I commend the Moree Rugby Club for their efforts to create an inclusive and exciting competition in Moree and I am sure the Wallabies could learn a thing or two about successful rugby from this energetic group.

### MAHAVIR JAYANTI

**Ms JULIA FINN (Granville)**—I was delighted to represent Premier Chris Minns at Mahavir Jayanti at The Centre for Oneness in Glendenning, on 16 September 2023. I joined with members of the Jain community to celebrate Lord Mahavir's Birthday and it was an honour to be part of the event. The gathering was a testament to the vibrant and thriving Jain community in Western Sydney. With around 2000 people in attendance, it showed the spirit of unity, compassion, and devotion that defines the Jain way of life. It was an example of the importance of inclusivity and diversity in our society. The Jain community's values of non-violence, truth, and self-discipline resonate with the principles of harmony and cooperation that our democracy should uphold. It was an opportunity to remember his teachings of compassion, tolerance, and respect for all living beings. These principles should guide our actions, not just within our community but in our engagement with the broader society as well. In the spirit of unity, let us open our doors to people of all backgrounds, regardless of their political affiliations, to join us in celebrating this joyous occasion. Thank you. Jai Jinendra!

### WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARD

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—In recognition of her tremendous contribution to her local community, Renee Traynor was awarded the top honour at the 2023 Minister's Awards for Women in Local Government. Renee's vision to make a difference in the community she grew up in shines through her work at Canterbury-Bankstown Council. Starting as a cadet at 19 years old, Renee is now the Team Leader for the Council's Diversity and Inclusion unit. Renee was awarded the 'Woman of Distinction Award – Metro' for her outstanding achievements in fostering an accessible and inclusive City. Renee is the force behind several community initiatives, including establishing the Council's annual Say NO to DV Tug O' War Cup, planning

CBCity's 2023 Domestic Violence Summit, developing a First Nations Cultural Hub and Resource Centre, Reconciliation Action Plan and initiating a Social Justice Charter. Renee's work is instrumental in building a more diverse and inclusive community where everyone has a sense belonging. It was wonderful to hear CBC CEO Matthew Steward acknowledge Renee as a shining example to all women and young people looking to start a career in community service. I congratulate Renee on her remarkable achievements.

### THE VOICE REFERENDUM

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—This Saturday, 14 October, Australians will cast their vote for a Voice to Parliament. The Voice is simply about recognition and improving outcomes through an advisory body empowered to provide advice on the unique challenges that Indigenous communities face and help to make a difference. In my electorate of East Hills locals like Uncle John, a respected Indigenous Elder and Shannon Foster, a Sydney D'harawal Saltwater Knowledge Keeper and Educator are sharing stories and sharing their knowledge with our community. We are all enriched when we enhance our knowledge and pay respect to the local Traditional people, for my electorate, the Bidjigal, a clan group of the coastal Dharug people. With their land spanning from Salt Pan Creek, Revesby and the estuarine surrounds north of Georges River. The Voice will enshrine the recognition of First Nations people, the longest and continuous culture on this land. Let's accept the generous offer to walk together and make history. This once in a lifetime opportunity to vote with our hearts, support change and unite Australia as we move forward together.

### BANKSTOWN CANTERBURY COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—Thank you to Bankstown Canterbury Community Transport [BCCT] who visited Parliament House last week with over 30 elderly, disabled and socially disadvantaged people from my electorate of East Hills. It was great to catch up with Hayley Orr from BCCT, who has a lovely, caring, and bubbly nature, and does a wonderful job of ensuring all her clients are well looked after. BCCT is a not-for-profit organisation based in Revesby, that provides transport to many people in my community, transporting people to medical appointments, social events, shopping centres and other important activities. These outings provide vital connection to local communities for the many people that cannot drive and need more support to attend appointments and venture out of their homes. BCCT has nearly 3000 clients and has completed over 48,000 trips this year, including fun trips to Bowral Tulip Time Festival, Yule Fest on the Nepean River and HARS Aviation Museum. I want to recognise the great work BCCT do and thank Acting CEO Gary Williams, Chair of the Board John Murray, other board members, staff and volunteers for providing a fantastic and vital community service.

### SUTHERLAND SHIRE POLICE AREA COMMAND AWARDS PRESENTATION CEREMONY 2023

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I acknowledge the outstanding individuals recognised with NSW Police Medallion Lapel Pins and Commissioner of Police Long Service Awards at the Sutherland Shire Police Area Command Medals and Awards Presentation Ceremony on 29 August 2023. The NSW Police Medallion Lapel Pin is for unsworn members and former unsworn members of the New South Wales Police Force who have completed ten or more years of diligent and ethical service. The medallion portrays the NSW Police Force wedgetail eagle, Nemesis Scroll and the State badge, surrounded by the inscription "NSW Police – diligent and ethical service". I commend the individuals that were recognised. I acknowledge the recipients of the NSW Police Medallion Lapel Pin and the Commissioner of Police Long Service Awards namely, Melissa Kehane for 15 years and Debra Sweeny for 25 years of service. I also acknowledge Former Senior Constable Emily Mackay for being presented with her Certificate of Service and Inspector Timothy Carter for receiving a Certificate of Commission. I was pleased to join members of the NSW Police Force to celebrate their exceptional achievements and again take this opportunity to formally thank them for their ongoing service to our community.

### MIRANDA MAGPIES FOOTBALL CLUB W14 TEAM

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the Miranda Magpies Football Club on being named Sutherland Shire Football Association's 2023 Junior Women's Champion Club. The Magpies have seen many successes in women's football and have developed a reputation for being our local leader in this space. It is little wonder that the 2023 season saw four of their junior women's teams finish as Premiers, namely the W12B, W12C, W14B and W14C teams, with two teams also claiming Minor Premierships. Such success would not be possible without the talent and dedication of the incredible players. I recognise the Magpies W14B team of Sharlae Ataya, Shelby Davenport-Smith, Zoey Griffiths, Tully Hills, Khloe Lewis, Rose Mackinnon, Tahlia Medanic, Lara Mikkelsen, Maya Millett, Pearl Moore, Jasmine Ronald, Bianca Smith, Eliza Wheatley, Manager Heidi Reynolds Ataya and Coach Craig Smith. I also acknowledge the W14C team of Charlie Ahrens, Emily Carruthers, Sara Chander, Kelly Connolly, Sienna Cook, Sophia Di Cosmo, Isobel Gleeson, Sophia Henderson, Chaya Hyde, Teiana Kapua, Lyla Lloyd, Mia Marzolla, Despina Mouhtar, Jesse Rykers, Coco Tsigouris, Summer Wihare,

Manager Clare Murray and Coach Damien Gleeson. I commend the Miranda Magpies Football Club for fostering a love of football amongst our local women.

#### **PORT HACKING HIGH SCHOOL TRAMPOLINING TEAM**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the Port Hacking High School students, Hugo Kato, Noah Anderson and Tyson Radman who so ably represented their school and Sydney East at the New South Wales Combined High Schools Trampoline Sports Championship. Hosted over two days on the Central Coast, the event brought together talented young trampoline gymnasts from across New South Wales to compete and showcase their skills. The Port Hacking High School students, who are coached by Miranda RSL Youth Club's Louise Brown, put in an incredible effort at the championships with their combined scores securing a commendable fifth place in the multi-class division. Individually, year 10 student Hugo Kato impressively finished first in his trampolining category in addition to a third place finish in the double mini. Also from year 10, Noah Anderson secured a superb third place in his trampolining category, with Tyson Radman of year 7 putting in a solid effort to finish in sixth place. I commend Hugo, Noah and Tyson on their incredible efforts and wish them every success in their future sporting endeavours.

#### **JANNA MARTIN**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Janna Martin, Founder and Director of Mums2Mums Home Services, a successful high quality cleaning business with 18 franchises across NSW. Named as a finalist for the AusMumpreneur Awards, Janna went on to recently win the Women's Champion and Personal Services Business of the Year awards. Presented by The Women's Business School, these awards celebrate and recognise mothers in business and acknowledge the growing number of women who successfully balance motherhood and business. Mums2Mums has been recognised for not only providing exceptional cleaning services, but for also offering flexible employment options for team members to accommodate school or daycare hours, competitive wages and comprehensive training. Congratulations Janna for receiving this much deserved recognition and providing such a great service and employment opportunities on the Central Coast.

#### **CENTRAL COAST HSC DRAMA STUDENTS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the HSC Drama Students from the Central Coast Grammar School here on the Central Coast who have achieved a historic result for the school this year, with every single one of the drama students being nominated to appear at the ONSTAGE event showcase. ONSTAGE is an event showcase featuring the works of exemplary performances and project work by HSC drama students. Following their practical HSC assessment, all 14 Drama students were nominated for Group Drama Performance and 7 were also nominated for Individual Performance. It is the first time in the school's history that every Drama student has been recognised in this way and it's a great achievement and recognition for the students, the Performing Arts teachers, and the school. Congratulations again to the students and for the teachers and the school that helped support the students to achieve this wonderful result.

#### **CCLHD – CARING FOR THE COAST AWARDS**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—Central Coast Health District recently held their Caring for the Coast Awards, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and recognise the winners, finalists, and nominees. Central Coast Local Health District provides high quality public healthcare to the Central Coast community through their network of hospitals, healthcare centres and community-based services. The Caring for the Coast Awards provide an opportunity for the Central Coast Local Health District to recognise staff for their outstanding contribution and achievements. The awards celebrate individuals and teams who go above and beyond and exemplify the CORE values of collaboration, openness, respect, and empowerment. Congratulations to the following winners: Excellence in Aboriginal Healthcare - Gawal Matjarr (Many Hands) Volunteer of the Year - Noeline Darcy; Research, Innovation and Sustainability Award - Pharmacy PROCUREMENT and FORMulary Improvement [PRO-FORM-I] initiatives; Keeping People Healthy Award - Central Coast School Garden Interest Group; Patient Safety and Experience Award - CNC-Pharmacist referral pathway to reduce falls, delirium, and polypharmacy - Staff Member of the Year - Leanne Andrew; Team of the Year - Recruitment Team. Congratulations to all the winners and finalists and thank you for the great work that you do.

#### **KITES 4 KIDS**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to recognise the success of the recent 'Kites 4 Kids' day held in Dubbo. The event, which began back in 1992, aims to be a celebration and raise awareness of the benefits of early intervention for young children with developmental delays and disabilities. This year was bigger and better than last, with over 400 kites being purchased, decorated and adorned by decorations. Many families travelled to spend time flying the kites and were rewarded with a strong wind lifting the kites high and flying



beautifully. Kite flying is a wonderful activity that can bring children of all abilities together and the smiles on the children's faces were a clear indication of the success of the day and the very reason this event will continue to be popular in years to come. Well done to the team at Orana Early Childhood Intervention for a marvellous day and sharing such important messaging with our community.

### **TULLY PICKERING**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to congratulate Tully Pickering, an inspiring young basketballer from Dubbo who lit up the court on her recent trip to the United Arab Emirates. The talented young player was selected for the NBA Basketball School Australia U15's team which travelled to Abu Dhabi during the school holidays. Not wasting any time, Tully quickly showed her skills and was named MVP in the first match against teams from various NBA basketball schools across the globe. Undefeated in the tournament, the Australian team won Gold and Tully once again was named 'Player of the Final' a medal she proudly wore home alongside the gold. Now having her sights set on a US College Scholarship, Tully is an incredible young sportsperson flying the flag for the high-level athletes Dubbo is home to! Congratulations Tully for your incredible results abroad. Keep reaching for the stars and striving for even greater success in the future. Your journey in basketball is just beginning, and we can't wait to see all the incredible things you will achieve. Your determination and perseverance are an inspiration to us all.

### **SAMUEL JOHNSON**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo)**—I would like to recognise the commitment to the Dubbo community that has been made by Samuel Johnson OAM. In a recent tour of the region, Samuel announced a world first clinical trial in precision medicine that will be happening in Dubbo and that is sponsored by his charity 'Love your Sister' to the tune of \$1.2 million dollars. His unwavering belief that your postcode shouldn't dictate your access to cancer treatment follows on from the scary statistic that if you're from a rural, regional or remote area, you're nearly 20 percent more likely to die from cancer. This cancer trial and the support and advocacy of Samuel will benefit not only those seeking cancer treatment in Dubbo but will have ripple on effects for patients right across the wider Western Region. Thank you, Samuel, for your passion and support of increasing health services and clinical trial opportunities in the Dubbo region and for all the people living in regional and rural areas. You are an inspiration to us all.

### **IRIS LODGE ALPACA'S BUSINESS AWARDS 2023**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Recently the Iris Lodge Alpaca's had been nominated in three categories in the 2023 Business NSW awards, Excellence in Micro Business, Excellence in Sustainability and Outstanding Visitor Experience. The unique lodge won Excellence in Micro Business Award, which effectively driven growth and was able to demonstrate the specific strategies implemented to achieve business success and resilience. The Iris Lodge Alpacas opened in January 2020 by the founders Sean and Sharon Hooper who have been providing tourist and locals with a unique experience entailing Breakfast with alpacas attracting thousands of visitors over the world. I have visited the lodge and I thoroughly enjoy my experience every time on the property. Congratulations to Sean and Sharon with this fantastic result.

### **WARNERVALE BULLS JRL**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—Congratulations to Warnervale Bulls U12 Division 3 Junior Rugby League team winning the grand final 24-18 against Blue Haven Raiders. It was a tough game and Warnervale played well as a team to earn victory. Well done to Man of the Match Aloisio McKenzie playing fullback in doing a great job saving several tackles near the try line. This was the first year Jake Harrison coached the Warnervale Bulls, putting in the time and effort at training and games to earn a great team result at the end of the season.

### **THE GLEN FOR WOMEN**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, and Minister for the Central Coast)**—The Glen for Women an Aboriginal rehabilitation centre at Wyong Creek officially opened on 30 August, 2023. The women centre has a capacity of 20 clients and runs a 12-week program where they will meet new and interesting groups. Program co-ordinator Natalie Purchase showed me around the property where the clients will learn new skills from cooking classes, art programs, engage in personal training, parenting and support programs, community work, and education. This is a much-needed facility in the community for women to connect to a supporting and safe environment.

### QUAKERS HILL TOASTMASTERS 30TH BIRTHDAY

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—I wish to express my congratulations to the Quakers Hill Toastmasters Club on it reaching a milestone of 30 years. Tony Yetton, his wife Liz and two others founded the club in 1993. And 30 years later, the club is still going strong. Travis Whitehouse, Eddie Van er Hout, Ray Buttigieg a member for over 10 years, Govind Sarda, and Wasantha Kumara have contributed greatly to the continued growth and supportive environment of the club. There are currently 25 members. Approximately 250 members have come through the club over the last 30 years. Meeting on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month at the Quakers Hill Neighbourhood Centre. Being a member of Toastmasters offers many valuable benefits for personal and professional growth. Toastmasters provides a supportive and encouraging environment for individuals looking to enhance their communication, leadership, and public speaking skills. Through regular meetings, members will practice impromptu speaking, prepare speeches, and receive constructive feedback from mentors. Overcoming the fear of public speaking can boost self-assurance, providing a clear path for continuous improvement and ensuring that members evolve into polished communicators and leaders in their workplaces and the community at large.

### VICTOR CHANG AWARDS

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—I am thrilled to report that the Riverstone electorate has a strong showing at the Victor Chang Awards, with 7 students taking home the award. A gigantic congratulations to Donnell Matongo and Tara Dempsey from St John Paul II Catholic College; Yoonji Jung, Daniel Devkota, Parsana Abbasnia and Kathleen Dela Cruz from The Ponds High School and Sneha Brahmabhatt from Quakers Hill High School for their receiving of the award. These students also had the opportunity to engage with the scientists at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute. This experience undoubtedly broadened their horizons and provided valuable insights into the space of STEM, gene technology, and cardiovascular disease research. The Victor Chang Institute's commitment to ground-breaking medical research continues to lead the way in the quest to find cures for these diseases. These student's achievements remind us of the incredible potential within our youth, and I look forward to witnessing their future contributions to the scientific community. We all should continue to support and invest in the bright minds of the next generation, who are the foundation of a prosperous future for our nation. Congratulations once again to everyone on their remarkable accomplishments.

### AHALYA RENTALA

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone)**—Today I rise to recognise the extraordinary community service of Ahalya Rentala. Ms Rentala is the director of community services for The Ponds Rotary Club and has overseen many social projects within the Riverstone Electorate. Empowering women and addressing grassroots issues exemplifies her commitment to the community. Collaborating with the NSW Police, her Dowry Abuse Forum raised awareness among South Asian communities in Western Sydney, fostering safety and understanding. She introduced the "Shared the Dignity" vending machine at Blacktown Max Webber Library which provides essential supplies to disadvantaged women such as sanitary packs. Ms Rentala also engages CALD women in digital literacy workshops further demonstrating her forward-thinking inclusion. Ms Rentala also supports local schools through fundraising and workshops showcasing her dedication to education. She is currently working with The Ponds School in building a commercial kitchen reflecting her dedication to special needs students' vocational training. Also, Ms Rentala is working on introducing immersive technology to Parklea Correctional Centre, using Virtual Reality to help inmates reconnect with real-life situations. This not only aids in rehabilitation but also facilitates smoother community reintegration. Ms Rantala's contributions exemplify community-driven leadership and serve as an inspiring model for others.

### THE BIG ISSUE

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—We all need to be inspired. If we look around, we will find inspiration. Today as I was walking up Martin Place to Parliament from Wynyard, I ran into Jack who was selling The Big Issue. I admit, I may have walked past him in the past. That changed. Today Jack got my attention, saying that he was in this month's issue. I was pleased to buy the magazine. Jack grew up in Coonabarabran, with a lot of love in his family. After school, he undertook labouring, logistics, driving trucks and hospitality. When his Mum passed away, he discovered ice. Ice that negatively impacted his life, and he was homeless. Then there was hope. In June 2018 he made the choice to sell The Big Issue. While selling, he met his wife and now has two children. Jack speaks of the power of prayer. I look forward to now buying The Big Issue. Selling for \$9, with vendors buying it for \$4.50. Jack says "every person that grabs one – they are making a difference". Jack makes a difference, giving us joy first thing in the morning as we walk Martin Place. Thank you Jack for inspiring me.

### NEOPOLITANE AZZOCIAZIONE AND THE LEICHHARDT SCHOOL OF ARTS

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain)**—Today I bring to the attention of the house the work of the Associazione Napoletana and the trusteeship of the Leichhardt School of Arts, who provide a valuable contribution to the Leichhardt community. Initially founded by as an association of Southern Italian migrants, the Associazione Napoletana provides support and wellbeing its diverse community, meeting monthly for dinner and entertainment-based events. The association and trusteeship offers its space to the Leichhardt community, enabling get-togethers and special events including graduations to take place. Recently, a Community Building Partnership Grant allowed them to make critical repairs to the roof, and to construct a welcoming new entryway to the building. I recently had the privilege of visiting the site and viewing the tremendous progress that has been made to preserve the association's impressive legacy. While there, I also met with School of Arts trustee Sam Trombetta and treasurer of the association, Sal Rizzo, who informed me of the significance of the site for charity fundraising and numerous other community uses. Congratulations to the Associazione Napoletana and the trusteeship of the Leichhardt School of Arts for their continued contribution to our local community.

### GLADSTONE CAMP-DRAFT

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I am thrilled to extend my heartfelt congratulations and recognition to the organisers, participants, and volunteers of the Gladstone Campcraft event. This remarkable occasion marks a significant achievement in showing casing the rich heritage of camp drafting and fostering a sense of community in the Gladstone area. The Success of the Gladstone Camp draft is a testament to the hard work, dedication and passion of all those involved. From the detailed planning to the seamless execution, every aspect of the event exemplified the spirit of teamwork and collaboration. For over 50 years, the gladstone Camp draft event has not only provided a platform for skilled riders to showcase their talent and expertise but also brought together people from across the state that come from all walks of life, this event fosters connections and creates lasting memories. I extend my warmest congratulations to the organisers, participants and volunteers of the Gladstone camp draft event for their execution efforts in keeping the event alive and creating a memorable and successful time. The dedication and passion have not only enriched the lives of those involved but has also left a lasting impact on the community.

### CWA DORRIGO'S NEW NURTURE COWORKING SPACE

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I am here today delighted to extend my heartfelt congratulations and recognition to CWA Dorrigo for the grand opening of the new Nurture Coworking Space. The momentous occasion marks a significant milestone in fostering a vibrant and supportive community for entrepreneurs, freelancers and professionals in the Dorrigo area. The establishment of the Nurture coworking space exemplifies the commitment of CWA Dorrigo to nurturing local talent, fostering collaboration, and providing a conducive environment for innovation and growth. This beautiful, designed space offers a haven for individuals to connect, share ideas and cultivate their profession endeavours. I commend CWA Dorrigo for their vision, determination, and commitment to creating a space that encourages the productivity, collaboration, and person growth. The opening of the nature coworking Space is a testament to their unwavering support for the local community and their belief in the power of collective effort. I extend the warmest congratulations to the CWA Dorrigo on this momentous achievement and wish them continued success in their endeavours to nurture and empower the community through their innovative initiatives. May the Nurture coworking space become a hub of creativity, inspiration and collaboration for years to come.

### VALLA BEACH 45TH HOT ROD RUN

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—It is my absolute pleasure to extend my sincere congratulations and recognition to the organisers, participants and attendees of the 45th Valla Beach Hot Rod Run. This momentous occasion not only celebrated the rich automotive heritage but also brought together a community of hot rod enthusiasts who share a passion for these remarkable machines. The 45th Valla Beach Hot Rod Run was an extraordinary event that captivated the streets with an awe-inspiring display of 355 of the nation's most impressive hot rods. The filled streets were more than just cars, they reflected the artistry and craftsmanship that goes into creating the automotive masterpieces. The attention to detail and the flawless paintwork, the powerful engines and the unique deigns all contributed to the allure and excitement of the event. Congratulations once again to everyone involved in the 45th Hot Dog Run. Your collective efforts have not only made this event a resounding success but have also enriched the community by celebrating the artistry, craftsmanship and passion that define the hot rod culture. Here's to many more years of this thrilling event.

### INTERSECTION OF FOREST WAY AND GLEN STREET

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise the residents of Belrose and Frenchs Forest who have raised with me and Transport for NSW the danger that traffic poses on the intersection of Forest Way, Glen and Adams

streets. In particular, I acknowledge Kylie Westren and Jacqui North for their advocacy on improving road safety on this stretch of road. Thank you to Opposition Leader Mark Speakman SC MP for meeting with myself, Kylie and her daughter to see firsthand the danger this intersection - particularly young kids from the Wakehurst Public School. Two collisions have occurred, both involving cars flipping onto their sides and going into the footpaths. Kylie's petition says... "it's only a matter of time before a tragedy occurs". I am fully committed to improving safety on this road, I will continue working with the community and with my colleague, the Member for Wakehurst, Cr Michael Regan MP, to keep our residents safe. Residents deserve to feel safe especially when their kids walk to the bus. I look forward to continue working together to achieve these outcomes.

#### **SHIRLEY AND CLANVILLE ROADS INTERSECTION, ROSEVILLE**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I recognise the Lindfield / East Lindfield / Killara / Roseville Community Group on Facebook for their advocacy regarding the intersection of Pacific Highway, Shirley and Clanville roads in Roseville. For many years, this has been the site of repeated traffic accidents. In May 2023 a resident was involved in a serious accident, when a vehicle travelling north ran a red light and hit her as she was entering the Pacific Highway from Shirley Road. Thankfully the resident and her one-year-old daughter were not injured, but the accident resulted in \$30,000 of vehicle damage. The NSW Government is exploring the possibility of installing a camera near the intersection and is currently investigating the intersection's safety. I acknowledge Ku-ring-gai councillors Sam Ngai and Alec Taylor for their continuing efforts on Ku-ring-gai Council raising traffic issues affecting residents. I am fully committed to continue working with the local community to prevent injury and ensure there is safety on our local roads.

#### **ANYTIME FITNESS GRAFTON – TREAD AS ONE EVENT**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to acknowledge members, staff and participants at Anytime Fitness in Grafton who once again held the 'Tread as One event' in the aid of raising money and awareness for R U OK? a suicide prevention charity that aims to start life-changing conversations. An incredible \$25,000 has been raised over the past five years with this year's event raising over \$2,800 with donations still trickling in. The event was a lot of fun all the in aid of a wonderful cause. Special thanks goes to staff members Kathryn Langford, Brooke Robinson, Lorraine Lloyd, Lydia Gabanski, Kate McMahon, Cherrie Dirs, Sarah Langford and Annie Lydon for their efforts in making the event another great success. A hearty congratulations to Jayd Urquhart who takes part in the event every year - this year despite being hampered by injury, she inspired everyone by racking up 50km walking and on the bike. I offer my appreciation to everyone involved in making this event a success.

#### **MARY MORAN**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I offer the sincere gratitude of the local community to Mary Moran of Maclean who has for 23 years generously offered her time as a volunteer community transport driver for 'Connect You Too', a not-for-profit organisation in the Clarence Valley. Mary has been very giving of her time for over two decades driving those in need to medical appointments, shopping and to other essential services. Connect You Too farewelled Mary with a delightful morning tea and presented her with a bouquet of flowers in appreciation of her long service. Volunteers like Mary are the very people who make our community a better place to live. On behalf of the Clarence Valley community, I thank Mary for her selfless and dedicated service to her local community and wish her all the very best in her retirement. I extend my thanks also to Connect You Too and their team of volunteers for the invaluable service they provide to the Clarence Valley community.

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