



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Assembly**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday 23 November 2023**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Announcements .....	1
Legislative Assembly Photographs.....	1
Business of the House.....	1
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Bills .....	1
Bills.....	1
Environmental Planning and Assessment Legislation Amendment (Agritourism) Bill 2023 .....	1
First Reading.....	1
Second Reading Speech.....	1
Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023 .....	5
First Reading.....	5
Second Reading Speech.....	5
Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023.....	7
Second Reading Debate.....	7
Members .....	8
Member for Port Stephens .....	8
Visitors.....	8
Visitors.....	8
Members .....	8
Representation of Ministers Absent During Questions .....	8
Question Time .....	8
Police Taser Use .....	8
State Infrastructure.....	9
Police Taser Use .....	10
Western Sydney Schools .....	10
Cabbage Tree Island Aboriginal Community.....	12
Macquarie Park Rezoning Proposal.....	12
Transport for NSW Employee Workplace Safety .....	13
Children's Health Services.....	14
Paramedic Wages.....	15
Task Force Magnus.....	16
Port of Newcastle Protests .....	16
TAFE NSW .....	17
Rental Market .....	18
Silicosis.....	20
Petitions .....	20
Petitions Received .....	20
Business of the House.....	21
Business Lapsed.....	21
Bills.....	21
Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023.....	21

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Second Reading Debate .....	21
Motions .....	33
Goulburn Police Academy Graduates.....	33
State Finances .....	38
Business of the House.....	42
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Bills .....	42
Bills .....	42
Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2023 .....	42
First Reading.....	42
Second Reading Speech.....	42
Announcements .....	45
Office of the Speaker .....	45
Petitions .....	45
NSW Ambulance and Paramedics.....	45
Bills.....	52
Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2023 .....	52
Second Reading Speech.....	52
Community Recognition Statements .....	53
One Meal – it Makes A Difference Sutherland Branch.....	53
Youth 4 Difference .....	53
King Park Public School.....	53
Dawne MacDougall .....	54
Cultural Ambassador Program .....	54
Mort Bay Community Garden.....	54
Ladies Like to Lunch .....	54
Shine A Light on Lung Cancer Walk .....	54
Aluminium Revolutionary Chassis Company .....	55
Yamba Shores Tavern Fishing Club.....	55
Jeanie Feng .....	55
Kiama and District Business Chamber .....	55
Nepean Festival of Arts and Design .....	55
Nathan Mete.....	56
Miller Technology High School .....	56
Shannon Evans.....	56
Bakers Delight, Woy Woy.....	56
Tribute to Don Jones.....	56
Cabra-Vale Diggers Club Remembrance Day.....	57
Dorrigo Multi-Purpose Service.....	57
Strathfield Sports Club .....	57
Men's Kitchen Association .....	57
Dr Corin Miller .....	57
North Shore Police Area Command Awards .....	58

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Oliver Facer .....	58
Motor Traders' Association.....	58
Queanbeyan Diwali Mela Lantern Festival .....	58
Castle Hill RSL Youth Wind Orchestra .....	58
Dr Saul Griffith.....	59
Navy Cadets.....	59
Private Members' Statements.....	59
Dads and Male Caregivers Day .....	59
Monaro Electorate School Events.....	60
Colleen Symington .....	60
Warami Book Launch.....	61
Muswellbrook Bypass Funding .....	62
Bankstown Electorate Maronite Community .....	62
Homelessness.....	63
Riverstone Electorate Infrastructure .....	64
Lindfield Commuter Car Park .....	65
State Economy .....	65
Fairfield Hospital .....	66
Little Big Dairy.....	67
Penrith Electorate Infrastructure .....	68
Political Corruption .....	68
Parramatta Electorate Projects.....	69
Ronald Raymond James, OAM.....	70
Disabled Surfers Association, South Coast Branch.....	71
Junee Correctional Centre.....	71
Energy Efficiency .....	72
Western Sydney Social and Affordable Housing .....	73
Multiculturalism .....	74
Macquarie Park Housing and Infrastructure.....	75
Written Community Recognition Statements.....	76
St Bernadette's Primary School Fun Fair.....	76
Surveyors Academy's First Graduating Class.....	76
Castle Hill High School Leadership Induction .....	76
Helen McAnulty .....	77
Caroline Morris.....	77
Danielle McDonald.....	77
McHappy Day.....	77
Balloon Aloft .....	77
Rebecca Pattinson.....	78
Jenna Sergeant .....	78
David Flynn .....	78
Helen McKenzie .....	78

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Nicole Lowertarbert.....	78
John Ashcroft-Cootamundra Men's Shed.....	79
Jones Beach Lifesaving Incident.....	79
Kiama Junior Football Club.....	79
Dementia Inclusive Kiama Project.....	79
Phil Corbett.....	80
PCYC Campbelltown.....	80
Community Spirit.....	80
Caps 50th Anniversary.....	80
Women In Local Government Award Winners.....	81
Ron and Jan Headon.....	81
Katie Alpen.....	81
Phillip Wells.....	81
Wyong Christian Community School.....	81
Wyong Hospital Auxiliary.....	82
Jake Charlston.....	82
Logan Jensen.....	82
Koonawarra Primary School-Koala Food Forest.....	82
Sloane Orski Bracelet Drive.....	82
Easts Dragon Boat Club-20 Years.....	82
Cal Baum Queen's Scout Celebration.....	83
TVN On-Country Wins Top Honours at Australian Defence Industry Awards.....	83
Tumbarumba High RFS Cadets Graduate.....	83
Thurgoona Country Club Resort, for Hosting the 2023 NSW Senior Open Golf Tournament.....	83
Cooper Williams Cycling to Support Movember.....	83
Newcastle Permanent's Primary School Mathematics Competition.....	84
Australian Mathematics Competition Results.....	84
Hunter Sports High Netball.....	84
Quinn Armstrong.....	84
Charlestown Golf Club.....	85
Girls In Boys Cars.....	85
Brislington Museum 40th Anniversary.....	85
Leora Technologies.....	85
Cancer Council Central Coast Relay for Life.....	85
Central Coast Basketball 30th Birthday.....	86
McHappy Day.....	86
Camdenville Public School Student Leaders.....	86
John (Chimp) Franklin.....	86
Christine Adams.....	86
Bentleg Market 30 Year Anniversary.....	87
Bluff Point Quilters Exhibition.....	87
The Australian Hillclimb Championship - Grafton Sporting Car Club.....	87

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Goodstart Early Learning, Woy Woy .....	87
June O'Neill .....	87
Charity Bowl Raises \$1000 for Central Coast Kids In Need .....	88
Alex Sutherland .....	88
Courtney Webeck .....	88
Grace Russell, Queen's Guide.....	88
Detective Chief Inspector Robert Allison.....	88
Bruce and Carmel Martin .....	89
Mr and Mrs Lin.....	89
Norm and Anne Bromfield .....	89
HammondCare Braeside Hospital – Family Room Opening .....	89
Cumberland Branch - NSW Justices Association Inc. ....	89
Justice of the Peace Certificate of Appreciation – Clarence Palmerburton.....	90
Remembrance Day at Manly Dam .....	90
Symphony of Lights Diwali In Concert.....	90
Osmond Pitts AM Rd.....	90
Macleay Valley Honoured at NASCA Integrity Award for 2023 .....	91
Isabella Stretton Shines at National Futsal School Championship.....	91
James 'jim' Simpson.....	91
Mexicoast Cantina Fundraiser .....	91
Remembrance Day.....	92
San Antonio Da Padova Annual Gala.....	92
Archie Kingham.....	92
Medals Awarded to Members of NSW Rural Fire Service .....	92
Walk to Support.....	92
Retirement of Paul Henry PSM .....	93
Connect Preschool .....	93
Diwali .....	93
St John Ambulance .....	93
McHappy Day-Chatswood .....	93
Hunter River Dragons at the Masters Games 2023 .....	94
Hunter Young Business Mind Awards .....	94
Sue Shilcock .....	94
St Aloysius College Cronulla Student Leaders.....	94
Julie's Big Breakfast .....	95
Fitness for Purpose .....	95
Lakemba RSL Sub-Branch President Recognised with Award.....	95
10th National Mosque Open Day 28 October 2023 .....	95
Link Community Care .....	96
Milla Brown.....	96
Northern Beaches Music Festival 2023 .....	96
Sydney Harbour Surf Club Mosman's Movember Challenge .....	96

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Taronga Zoo Beating Plastic Pollution.....	96
North Sydney Art Prize .....	97
Billy Herb .....	97
Canterbury-Bankstown Chamber of Commerce 2023 Gala Dinner.....	97
Liverpool Chamber of Commerce 2023 Gala Dinner .....	97
Orchids Central Exhibition at Club Condell Park .....	97
40 Years of Community Radio- Connect FM.....	98
Brian Dill .....	98
Dr Andrea de Felip - Consul General of Italy In Sydney .....	98
St Ambrose Art Exhibition – Ramon Coloma.....	98
Honeybears Kankinya.....	98
Ken Marslew.....	99
Oyster Bay Public School.....	99
Natalie Rose.....	99
Annie Martin.....	99
Georges Riverkeeper.....	100
Felicity and Baker Prescott.....	100
Ronnie Riskalla.....	100

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Thursday 23 November 2023**

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

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

## *Announcements*

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PHOTOGRAPHS

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

## *Business of the House*

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: BILLS

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron—Minister for Local Government) (10:03):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on this day to:

- (1) Postpone the introduction and second reading of the ICAC and Other Independent Commissions Legislation Amendment (Independent Funding) Bill 2023.
- (2) Permit the member for Lake Macquarie to introduce the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023 and complete the giving of his second reading speech at the conclusion of the time for consideration of general business notices of motions (for bills), if required.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (10:04):** We do not oppose the suspension of standing orders.

**Motion agreed to.**

[*Notices of motions given.*]

## *Bills*

### ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (AGRITOURISM) BILL 2023

#### First Reading

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

#### Second Reading Speech

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (10:20):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Environmental Planning and Assessment Legislation Amendment (Agritourism) Bill 2023. The bill proposes to reverse certain changes made by the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Amendment (Agritourism) Order 2022; to introduce a new proposed land use, agritourism premises, and set out the development standards that will apply to the proposed use; and to make consequential amendments to certain environmental planning instruments. I live in the most beautiful part of the greatest State of the best nation on earth. My electorate of Kiama covers population centres like Nowra, Kiama and Albion Park, but it is also dotted with seaside villages, which are surrounded by large agricultural holdings. My electorate is home to some of the most beautiful and incredible environmental assets, including arable and farming land. Many of those farming families have worked the land in our community for generations, and I know that is one of the many attractions of our area.

If tourism is defined as lifestyle conducted elsewhere, no wonder people love coming to the coast and experiencing everything from farmstay, cellar door, ecotourism and even trying their hand at picking fruit and farming for a day. Whilst I believe in sharing all of those experiences, I also believe in property rights. A fundamental principle of property rights is that a person's actions should not unreasonably encroach on the rights of another. Whilst it may not have been the intent, changes introduced by the former Government to promote what it considered to be agritourism risks disenfranchising property owners and property rights, fragmenting agricultural land and risking our State's biosecurity. Agritourism should celebrate farming. It should complement

agricultural practices, but it should not impact the quiet enjoyment of property enjoyed by neighbouring property owners.

In 2021 the Department of Planning and Environment sought to make it easier for farmers to use their land for agritourism to complement their existing businesses. That included running activities on their farms such as farm experiences, cellar doors, cafes, retreats, roadside stalls, fruit picking and small wedding venues. Agritourism was identified as a sector where the Government could streamline approvals and enhance opportunities. In its initial briefings, the department defined agritourism as ancillary to genuine agriculture and stated that policy changes could support farmers and primary producers doing it tough through times of drought and floods to help rebuild and futureproof their farms.

In presenting the proposed amendments, the department characterised the changes as being underpinned by the principle of no or low environmental impact. A consultation period followed, including 25 questions on farmstay accommodation, farm events, farmgate activities, approval pathways for small-scale processing plants, rebuilding farm infrastructure, stock containment areas, dam biosecurity, setbacks for rural dwellings and recreational beekeeping. Forty-six councils made submissions as part of the consultation. I commend my local council, Shoalhaven City Council, and also the councillors who took a great leadership role. I commend all of the councillors who voted unanimously. The council's submission states:

Shoalhaven's proximity to Canberra and Sydney means that the area benefits from but is also directly impacted by the tourism industry and popularity of our area. It is essential that any legislation recognises and identifies the different pressures that coastal communities experience compared to, for example, western and peri-urban councils. Thus, it is essential that careful planning and consideration is still an integral part of the process for certain land uses to ensure that there is a balance between the benefits and potential impacts.

Whilst councils were originally told by the then New South Wales Government that they would be able to "opt out" of agritourism rules, that was not the end result. The new policy was applied statewide from 1 December 2022. The changes meant that agritourism became a sub-term of agriculture in the standard instrument local environmental plan. Two new agritourism land uses, farm experience premises and farmgate premises, were established. Those new land uses see high-impact infrastructure and activities such as function centres, restaurants, caravans and camping allowed on any land where agriculture is permitted. The provisions also removed local council's ability to manage agritourism developments and see agritourism as no longer ancillary to the agricultural uses of agricultural land.

Importantly, those changes mean that activities on agricultural land now fall into exempt and complying development codes, which means that no development application [DA] would be required for activities defined as agritourism. In short, it means that local councils' ability to manage agritourism developments is reduced and that agritourism is no longer ancillary to the agricultural use of agricultural land. The changes mean that function centres became captured by the term "agriculture". Not only is that a ridiculous proposition; it means that anyone who owns agricultural land can set up a function centre without a DA—no consultation, nothing, just the use as defined. The provisions could literally turn every farmer into a restaurateur without a single approval from local council or a notification to neighbours.

Whilst I support agritourism, I also believe that the most appropriate approval pathways for those high-impact activities is through a local council, properly regulated to ensure that people have a say in the future of their rural environments and that those activities do not unreasonably impact neighbours and things like biosecurity. When I stood for election in March this year, I promised to take a proposal to Parliament to reverse those changes. I released a draft bill for public consultation in August 2023 at a public meeting in Berry. I take this opportunity to thank all those who turned out to the public meeting. It was quite a large gathering. In particular I thank the members of the Berry Forum, particularly Mr Stuart Coughlan, who has been a passionate advocate for measured and sensible agritourism reform. I also take this opportunity to thank Graeme Day of 2ST and other local media outlets that have given a voice to people concerned about the issue.

Since releasing the draft, I have received literally hundreds of submissions of support. I understand my friend the planning Minister has received many of those submissions as well, and I encourage him to consider them carefully. One such submission was from a third-generation dairy farmer on the New South Wales South Coast, who said:

We have experienced inflated land values beyond the scope of viable agricultural values, inflated LGA rural land rates and increasing leasing costs on rural blocks purchased by investors. We have witnessed agricultural blocks zoned RU1/RU2 and flood effected being advertised with development potential that agritourism provides.

Another submission stated:

Pre-emptive changes to planning on rural land for the stated purposes of assisting farmers to manage financial hardship will not achieve its intent and in some, if not many, instances will create harm to the industry it purports to support.

The author of the submission went on to observe a couple of things. Firstly, the conversion of agricultural land into high-value tourism, peri-urban and residential developments has been ongoing for years, driving up land prices beyond what can sustain commercial farming. Secondly, unregulated access to such land for tourism purposes, not genuine agritourism, will exacerbate this trend, pushing farming to less attractive and less productive land and necessitating larger scale operations. Thirdly, this shift requires substantial capital investment and poses risks to farmers, contributing to the ongoing loss of agricultural populations, especially to corporate farms. Fourthly, careful local level planning is essential to ensure this is done thoughtfully. That submission was from a former head of the now Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences. Question 4 of the 25 of the Government's consultation questions asked the following:

Should there be different development standards for farm stay accommodation based on land size or location (such as whether the land is inland or east of the Great Dividing Range)? If yes, please provide your suggestions and reasons.

In response to that question, the department summarised the submissions it received as follows:

There was broad support amongst submissions for different development standards for farm stay accommodation based on land size or location. Suggestions for standards included considering tourist numbers, property sizes, densities, farming operations and environmental impacts. Views were more evenly divided amongst survey respondents, with just over half of survey respondents stating there should be different development standards for farm stay accommodation based on land size or location.

What is clear is that there were concerns by stakeholders and the Government that this policy may not work across the State. This Government already made amendments to the policy in August 2023. The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces said the Government will work with councils and agritourism operators and find the right balance. He acknowledged that this policy "needed another look". I agree with the Minister. The bill will accomplish what I think many would seek to achieve, which is the right balance between supporting genuine agritourism and promoting the rights of property owners and our environment.

To this end, schedule 1 amends the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006 to reverse certain changes made by the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Amendment (Agritourism) Order 2022. The schedule also amends the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006 to introduce a new proposed land use—agritourism premises—and sets out the development standards that apply to this proposed use.

Schedule 2 makes consequential amendments to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008. Schedule 3 makes a consequential amendment to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021. Schedule 4 makes consequential amendments to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Primary Production) 2021. Schedule 5 makes consequential amendments to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts—Regional) 2021. Many of the changes proposed in the bill are self-explanatory, so I will not take up the time of the House explaining each and every one of them. However, I will address directly some of the more important components of the bill. I start with schedule 1, clause 5.24, which proposes to omit the existing clauses 5.24 and 5.25, including the directions, and insert instead the following new clause:

- (1) The objectives of this clause are as follows—
  - (a) to allow agritourism on land used principally for primary production at a scale that does not adversely affect the principal use of the land for primary production,
  - (b) to balance the impacts of agritourism with the use of land for primary production, the environment, scenic values, infrastructure and adjoining land uses.
- (2) Development consent must not be granted to development for the purposes of agritourism premises on land unless the consent authority is satisfied that—
  - (a) the development will not result in noise or pollution that has a material adverse impact on the following on or near the land—
    - (i) residential accommodation,
    - (ii) primary production operations,
    - (iii) other land uses, and
  - (b) the development will not have a material adverse impact on the following on or near the land—
    - (i) the visual amenity or heritage or scenic values,
    - (ii) native or significant flora or fauna,
    - (iii) water quality,
    - (iv) traffic,
    - (v) the safety of persons, and

- (c) the development is not on flood prone land, and
- (d) the land is suitable for the proposed development, and
- (e) the development is compatible with nearby land uses.

Importantly this clause refers to a new term, "material adverse impact". This has not been used in the legislative lexicon before, and I deliberately chose this wording to mean an activity that would not be any more intrusive than the usual impacts of farming on neighbours. This is to be read as a lower threshold than "significant impact", but high enough to exclude activities that would not be complementary or reasonably ancillary to farming.

Turning to the dictionary, the bill proposes to omit the definitions of agritourism, camping ground, caravan park, commercial farm, farm experience premises, farmgate premises, farmstay accommodation, landholding, manufactured home and primitive camping ground. The bill proposes to insert, in alphabetical order:

*Agritourism premises* means a building or place—

- (a) on a commercial farm, and
- (b) ancillary to the farm, and
- (c) used to provide visitors to the farm, on a commercial basis, with the following—
  - (i) small-scale and low-impact tourist or recreational activities related to the agricultural use of the land, including the following, but not including motor sports, functions or conferences—
    - (A) farm field days,
    - (B) farm tours,
    - (C) horse riding,
  - (ii) agricultural products predominantly from the farm, supplemented by products from other farms in the region, or with services or activities related to the products, including the following—
    - (A) the processing, packaging and sale of the products, but not the processing of animals,
    - (B) the preparation and serving, on a retail basis, of agricultural products from the farm to people for consumption on the premises or as take away meals,
    - (C) tastings, cooking classes or workshops,
    - (D) the provision of information or education related to the products,
  - (iii) agricultural products sourced from farms in the local area.

*camping ground* means an area of land that has access to communal amenities and on which campervans or tents, annexes or other similar portable and lightweight temporary shelters are, or are to be, installed, erected or placed for short-term use, but does not include a caravan park.

*caravan park* means land, including a camping ground, on which caravans, or caravans and other moveable dwellings, are, or are to be, installed or placed.

*commercial farm* means a farm on which agriculture is undertaken that is a primary production business within the meaning of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 of the Commonwealth, or part of a primary production business, including a business that—

- (a) was a primary production business, and
- (b) has temporarily ceased to be a primary production business because of a natural disaster, including a drought, flood or bush fire.

*farm stay accommodation* means a building or place that provides temporary or short-term accommodation to paying guests on a working farm as a secondary business to primary production.

For clarity, the bill is not retrospective. There are savings clauses in schedules 2 and 4 to the bill, so that a development application or application for complying development certificates submitted but not finalised or determined before the commencement of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Agritourism) Act 2023 must be determined as if the Act had not commenced.

The bill I present today seeks to provide the right balance. We need to ensure that genuine agritourism is supported. At the same time, this needs to be balanced against ensuring that practices that cannot be remotely characterised as agritourism are not allowed without any check or balance. The bill addresses the concerns of farmers and primary producers. It addresses the concerns of councils and local communities. The bill has been the result of much work by my office. In particular, I thank James Vernon, who has been involved in this bill, along with the Parliamentary Counsel's Office, which has worked incredibly hard with my office.

I also mention Mr Toby Gibson in my office, who has also been working to assist. I again thank all the people who made a submission in relation to the bill. As I mentioned, the Berry Forum has been instrumental in standing up, even prior to this legislation, against the inappropriate development that detracts from the lifestyle and character of Berry. They have stood up on this particular issue because of the broader impacts of these

changes, which essentially allow carte blanche, no-holds-barred rules to apply to agricultural land. They have stood up to that.

As already mentioned in my address, I thank Mr Stuart Coughlin, who has been integral in developing the provisions of the bill. I will be reaching out to all members of the House, and I have an open door policy for any member that wishes to discuss these matters with me. I know that in a minority Parliament, these matters should be given careful consideration by all parties and also by my crossbench colleagues. I ask members to consider the impacts of the current laws as they stand—the impacts they are having on private property rights, farmers, the fragmentation of agricultural land and biosecurity. For all these reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

**HUMAN TISSUE AMENDMENT (ANTE-MORTEM INTERVENTIONS) BILL 2023**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Piper, read a first time and printed.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) (10:41):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I am pleased to introduce the Human Tissue Amendment (Ante-mortem Interventions) Bill 2023. This important bill aims to improve outcomes for organ and tissue donation recipients in New South Wales by ensuring that donated tissue and organs are in the best possible condition when retrieved for transfer to a donor recipient. The bill will also allow for a more efficient organ donation process by permitting medical imaging to determine the viability of potentially donated organs prior to costly and potentially unnecessary organ retrieval operations taking place. If the bill is passed, there is no doubt that more lives will be saved and changed in New South Wales.

The bill amends the Human Tissue Act 1983, and subsequently the organ and tissue process in New South Wales, to include a process for the authorisation of ante-mortem interventions prior to a potential tissue donor's passing. Ante-mortem interventions are procedures carried out before a potential tissue donor dies that do not have a medical benefit to that person but can determine, maintain or improve the viability of organs or tissue to be donated, thereby allowing for better outcomes for organ donation recipients. Such interventions can include the administration of medications, the undertaking of blood tests or the undertaking of medical imaging.

Currently, the use of ante-mortem interventions for the purpose of organ donation in New South Wales is restricted, for reasons I will get to shortly. Certain medications have been shown to improve the function and viability of the donated organs when transplanted to a recipient. For example, intravenous anticoagulant medications such as Heparin, if administered before a potential donor dies, can reduce the possibility of blood clots forming and reduce the risk of organ failure or damage, and possibly the need for secondary transplants in the future.

Additionally, allowing medical imaging such as coronary angiograms to be undertaken prior to a potential tissue donor's death for the purpose of the assessment of organs will reduce the need for avoidable and costly retrieval procedures when an organ is assessed as unviable for transplantation. This will save unnecessary distress to a potential donor's family and potential organ donor recipients, who are advised of a potential donor match and then are subsequently advised that the organ has been assessed as unsuitable after the retrieval process. At that terrible time, when families are dealing with the often unexpected loss of a loved one but have made the generous decision to donate their loved one's organs or tissues, this bill will allow consent to be given for interventions that will ensure that gift is given the best possible opportunity to save the life of another.

At the present time, the use of ante-mortem interventions in New South Wales is severely limited due to restrictions around medical consent. Currently, where a patient lacks capacity to consent to an ante-mortem intervention, the provisions of the Guardianship Act 1987 restrict a guardian or next of kin from consenting to their use. This is because under the current provisions of the Guardianship Act, consent to medical treatment on a patient by a responsible person has no effect if that proposed treatment is carried out for a purpose other than that of promoting or maintaining the health or wellbeing of the individual patient.

Ante-mortem interventions generally provide no benefit to an individual patient. They are primarily for the benefit of a transplant recipient. As such, as the law in New South Wales currently stands, consent cannot be provided for such ante-mortem interventions for the purpose of organ and tissue donation. The current legislative provisions significantly limit opportunity for the use of ante-mortem interventions to the extraordinarily rare situation where a potential donor can provide express consent to the treatment. This is so even if a potential donor

has consented to the donation of their organs after death, generally through inclusion on the donation register or where the potential donor's family have also consented to organ donation.

Ante-mortem procedures are only considered at the point where medical specialists have determined that the person is so ill that they are expected to die, and that active treatment will no longer be of benefit to the patient, generally after the decision to withdraw life support is made. In drafting this bill we have worked closely with senior clinicians in the field of organ and tissue donation to ensure that the processes for consent to ante-mortem interventions align with the organ donation process. Amendments to legislation allowing for consent to the use of ante-mortem interventions were introduced in Victoria in 2020. New South Wales is currently out of step.

There is much work to do in the organ donation space in New South Wales. Despite having a higher population and organ donation consent rate, our deceased organ donation rate is almost 20 per cent lower than in Victoria. In 2022 there were 22 more deceased organ donors in Victoria than in New South Wales and an extra 52 transplant recipients—52 extra people given a second chance at life. I am not suggesting that ante-mortem interventions are the only factor here, but I do believe allowing the use of ante-mortem interventions in New South Wales will increase our deceased donor rate, allowing more lives to be saved. I know there are many in this House who are interested in improving organ donation rates in New South Wales. I note that I have discussed this with the member for Wagga Wagga, my friend the member for Sydney and other crossbench members. Particularly, I note my discussions with the member for Holsworthy, who I believe has joined us in the Chamber. I look forward to working with her in this policy area into the future.

I acknowledge and thank the organ donation specialist clinicians working at St Vincent's Hospital, particularly Professor Peter Macdonald, clinical nurse specialist Liarna Honeysett and transplant coordinator Rodrigo Fritis-Lamora, who have championed this reform. The St Vincent's team are passionate advocates for ante-mortem interventions and organ donation. I am grateful for their assistance and for the invaluable work they do day in, day out for the New South Wales community. I am also grateful for the assistance of Associate Professor Michael O'Leary, co-State medical director of DonateLife NSW, for his guidance and assistance around this issue, and the support of other clinicians working in the field of organ donation, including Dr Michael Crawford, head of transplantation services at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

I acknowledge the assistance and advice of NSW Ministry of Health staff regarding the organ donation process. I also acknowledge the tireless work of the many organ donation advocates in New South Wales, including Brian Myerson from ShareLife and Robert Manning, who many in this House would know well. I recognise that many of these people have joined us in the gallery today. I thank them for all of their assistance and for joining us in the gallery to witness what I hope is the passage of this important bill.

I will now turn to the details of the bill. The bill inserts a new part 4A into the Human Tissue Act 1983 and establishes a process for authority to be given for the carrying out of an ante-mortem procedure for the purpose of transplantation of tissue from a donor's body after the donor's death to the body of another living person. The definition of "relevant purpose" in new section 27B of the bill specifically excludes ante-mortem interventions for the purpose of the transplantation of gametes from a potential tissue donor. Gametes are reproductive cells—ova or egg cells in females and sperm in males. The bill is not proposed to amend current laws around posthumous reproduction and for the avoidance of doubt has been specifically excluded within the bill. New section 27B includes a specific definition and hierarchy of "senior available next of kin" which replicates, in substance, the current definition of senior available next of kin within the Human Tissue Act. Amendments have been made to reflect the fact that the potential tissue donor is not yet deceased.

It is noted that there are two distinct and separate consent processes in New South Wales which must be considered during end-of-life care and the organ donation process. These are medical consents before a patient's death, which is regulated by the Guardianship Act, and consent to organ donation after death, which is regulated by the Human Tissue Act. Organ donation guidelines dictate that discussions with potential donors' families are separate discussions to end-of-life conversations and should only occur after medical and family consensus has been reached that active treatment will no longer be of benefit to the patient. Medical treatment decisions before death are primarily determined by a "person responsible" as defined within the Guardianship Act, whereas consent to organ donations is generally determined by a person's "senior available next of kin", as defined within the Human Tissue Act.

While often a responsible person under the Guardianship Act and a senior next of kin under the Human Tissue Act are one and the same person, this is not always the case. Ante-mortem interventions would only be considered following discussions with next of kin authorising organ donation to proceed. The bill has been intentionally drafted to allow for senior available next of kin consent to ante-mortem interventions, rather than a person responsible under the Guardianship Act. This is to incorporate ante-mortem intervention discussions within the organ donation process and to avoid confusion and added complexity to this process.

New section 27C of the bill sets out the process of authority to carry out an ante-mortem procedure. It provides that a designated officer for a hospital may authorise an ante-mortem procedure to be carried out if a potential tissue donor consents; or where a potential tissue donor lacks capacity to consent, senior available next of kin consents—subject to certain requirements being met; or where a potential tissue donor lacks capacity to consent and a senior available next of kin cannot be located, a designated officer may authorise, but only if they are satisfied the potential tissue donor has provided written consent to organ donation during their lifetime.

New section 27C (3) provides protection for potential donors by requiring a prescribed practitioner to certify in writing that they are reasonably satisfied that the death of the potential tissue donor is expected and the carrying out of the ante-mortem procedure will not hasten death or cause more than minimal harm to the potential tissue donor. The inclusion of the reference to minimal harm acknowledges that most minor and simple everyday medical interventions such as the insertion of a cannula may cause a minimal degree of harm. New section 27C (4) defines a prescribed practitioner to be a designated specialist in the first instance or, in circumstances where a designated specialist is not available, an experienced medical practitioner registered for at least five years. Neither a designated specialist nor an experienced medical officer providing the required certification can be involved in care of the patient.

New section 27D provides that a senior available next of kin may not provide consent unless they have no reason to believe the potential tissue donor has expressed an objection to the carrying out of an ante-mortem procedure. Finally, new section 27F addresses possible situations of conflict between treatments which may have been consented to by a person responsible within the meaning of the Guardianship Act and ante-mortem procedure consent by a senior available next of kin. New section 27F provides where a person responsible has given consent to a treatment, and this treatment is incompatible with an ante-mortem procedure, an authority to ante-mortem intervention has no effect.

The bill is a rational and sensible proposal to address an issue within the medical consent process and the organ donation process. It has widespread support by clinicians working in the field of organ transplantation and organ donation advocacy groups. It strikes the right balance between protecting potential organ donors and ensuring we embrace every opportunity to improve the effectiveness of organ donations in New South Wales. The concept here is simple, if an individual or their family have made a decision to consent to organ donation, we should be doing everything reasonably possible to ensure their gift is honoured. Families are not being forced to consent to ante-mortem interventions or organ donation, they are simply being given the opportunity to access these interventions if they wish to use them.

Organ donation saves and improves many lives in New South Wales every year, but our processes could no doubt be better. This is but one small change which could help to improve our current system, but it is an important one. The bill has been carefully prepared with many involved, but I particularly recognise my research officer, Roisin Moir, and thank her for the skill and expertise she brought to the process. I am hopeful that all members of the House will recognise the benefit of this simple, and I would hope uncontroversial, legislation and that the bill finds broad support as it traverses both Houses. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (TRANSFER OF WATER) BILL 2023**

### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from 20 September 2023.**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (10:57):** I make a contribution to debate on the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023, introduced in this place by the member for Murray. I say at the outset that I have watched the member for Murray being incredibly passionate, thoughtful, provocative, constructive and engaging in all that she has contributed to this place on the topic of water. I have been fortunate enough to spend a number of hours with the member for Murray, learning from her all that I could about the topic of water and the role that it plays in her community. More importantly, its role in business and communities across New South Wales in agriculture and our exports, but also making sure that our supermarkets have fruit and vegetables on the benches, that there is milk in the fridge and rice on our shelves, and for those people who, after they have filled their shopping trolleys with all the essentials, might buy a few nuts to throw in there for a bit of Christmas cheer.

The member for Murray has probably forgotten more about water than I will ever know. There can be no doubt that she knows water. I place on record a little bit of history, which all members should be cognisant of, so that we can consider the bill properly and contemplate where we are today. Sixteen years ago we established the Water Act and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. That required a significant amount of work as we progressed to get a better balance between water being extracted from the river systems, and water being protected and kept in our river systems for the sake of the environment.

The unfortunate reality for the people of New South Wales and Australia, and the environment, is that between 2011 and 2023 in New South Wales, and between 2013 and 2022 at the Commonwealth level, Liberal-Nationals governments, particularly The Nationals, were determined to make sure that there was not only no progress on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan but that things went backwards. To the enormous credit of the National Party at the State and Federal level, in trying to completely wreck the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, they succeeded. Good on them, they stuffed it for everyone. Now federally we have a new government—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** It being 11.00 a.m., pursuant to standing and sessional orders, debate is interrupted for question time and the routine of business. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

*Members*

**MEMBER FOR PORT STEPHENS**

**The SPEAKER:** It is hard to believe, but the member for Port Stephens has rolled over one more year and I wish her a very happy birthday. I will not be singing; I am Greg the merciful.

*Visitors*

**VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** We have a significant number of visitors in the gallery. I am very pleased to welcome everybody to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly for question time. I hope they enjoy it, and I am sure they will be impressed by the quality of debate in the Chamber today. I extend a warm welcome to guests of the member for Riverstone, the Consul General of India, Sydney, Mr Manish Gupta; his wife, Mrs Nimeesha Gupta; and consul, Mr Sanjay Mulukar.

I welcome guests of the member for Upper Hunter, students and staff from Dungog High School. I also welcome to the Chamber guests of the member for Liverpool, participants of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women's Leadership Program of Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre. I also welcome my guests, Grahame and Kerry Danaher, Ross and Angela Howard, and Debbie and Larry Dennis. I acknowledge a guest of the member for Wagga Wagga, Molly Pillow, who is doing work experience in the member's office.

I also acknowledge guests of the member for Barwon and the member for Orange, members of the Central NSW Joint Organisation. I had the pleasure of meeting with them yesterday afternoon. I welcome a guest of the member for Willoughby, Ornice Tang Sun from Willoughby Girls High School. I warmly welcome guests of the member for Sydney—we would hardly recognise these names—Adam Hall, Gerard Hayes and members of the Health Services Union. We hardly ever see them. I also welcome a guest of the member for Vaucluse, Olivia Pelly. I acknowledge a guest of the member for East Hills, Saim Saeed from East Hills Boys High School.

I welcome guests of the member for Castle Hill and the member for Hawkesbury, Bev Jordan, Reverend Carmel Ieraci and Ingrid Kirk Elkjaer. I also acknowledge guests, who I met earlier, of the member for Northern Tablelands, Mark Johnson, Mayor of Moree Plains Shire Council; and Clint McSpeddon, Inverell NSW Ambulance registered paramedic. Finally, I acknowledge in the Chamber Raphael Cheung from Redfield College. That is a big list. Everybody in New South Wales will be through this Chamber by the end of this term of Parliament. That is our commitment.

*Members*

**REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Mr RON HOENIG:** On behalf of Mr Chris Minns: I advise the House that the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice.

[*Interruption*]

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

*Question Time*

**POLICE TASER USE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:07):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. The Minister has told the House that an initial police media statement on 17 May did not mention tasing so that Clare Nowland's family could be informed first. But documents now released reveal that the senior next of kin and family members were advised that morning of the tragic tasing of Mrs Nowland and

that the Minister's media manager was told on 22 June. Will the Minister resign for misleading Parliament and the people of New South Wales?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:08):** The Leader of the Opposition should step back and think about what he is saying. I reckon I have answered this question nearly a thousand times. The Opposition is trying to find a smoking gun, and it does not exist. There have been a number of orders for papers. There have been a number of GIPAA's in relation to this matter. There are at least 2,500 documents in this building. There is no cover-up.

Do members opposite honestly believe that tasing a 95-year-old woman in a nursing home—a public facility—in front of witnesses and taking her to a public hospital could be covered up? Do they honestly believe that? The Homicide Squad was involved the same day that she was tasered. A critical incident investigation was stood up immediately, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission is the oversight body, a coronial inquest will come, and an investigation is underway. On what planet has there been a cover-up? The Leader of the Opposition is a joke.

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

### STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (11:10):** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on threats to the Government's plans for infrastructure in New South Wales?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:10):** That is a good question and a pertinent one for New South Wales as we deal with the enabling infrastructure the State needs to grow housing, grow the economy and accept migration. I can tell members of the House that one of the biggest threats to that is the decision by the Commonwealth Government to have a review on critical infrastructure for New South Wales. The truth of the matter is that when that review was begun, it was publicly explained as an examination of projects that did not have a benefit-cost ratio or a business case; it did not stack up. But now we are seeing the kind of public transport and road infrastructure that is desperately needed for a fast-growing State. I say to the Commonwealth Government that we need it to stop that infrastructure review and ensure that New South Wales taxpayers get their fair share of infrastructure in this State.

The truth of the matter is that enabling infrastructure is important for the economy, for housing and for our share of inbound migration over the next two years. I can tell members of the House that the New South Wales population is 31 per cent of the entire country, this State will accept about 37 per cent of all inbound migration over the next two years, and our share of the national economy is about 30.5 per cent. However, over the next 10 years, with the current Federal Government's infrastructure pipeline of work, we are expected to receive just 23 per cent of Federal infrastructure matching grants.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** What are you doing about it?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I'm raising it right now in Parliament.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This goes to the central point that we have seen a steady decline in the share that has been going to New South Wales over a prolonged period.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** In 2015-16, the amount was 30 per cent.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** In 2017-18, presumably when the member for Kiama was a Minister, it was 32 per cent, and it has declined year on year after that.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Last year it was 24 per cent, the year after that it was 24 per cent, in 2023-24 it is expected to be 24 per cent, and then it drops even further for the 10 years beyond that. One of the reasons for that is that the National Party has been asleep at the wheel when cornering its Federal counterparts in the previous Government. Do not take my word for it. Former Federal member Andrew Gee was recently quoted on 2MCE Bathurst talking about Eugowra flood money. He said, "The leader of the National Party came to Orange a couple of days ago and basically said this assistance needs to be rolled out straightaway. I could have choked on my Weet-Bix." Then the host says, "Who is this? Dugald Saunders?" [*Extension of time*]

Andrew Gee said, "Yes. Yes, the NSW Nationals, who had 4½ months to do this and did absolutely nothing. All the money was spent in Sydney in the lead-up to the election, and it's one of the reasons why I am no longer a member of that party." This is someone who knows them best. He is a former colleague of theirs who sat in their party room, then went to the Federal Parliament. He quit in disgust at their lack of impact when it comes to Federal-State infrastructure money. There is also a level of ignorance from the National Party. I refer to an interview given by Bronnie Taylor.

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

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

**Mr Paul Scully:** Speaking of level of ignorance, there he is.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Look in the mirror.

**Mr Paul Scully:** Level of ignorance himself.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wollongong will come to order.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** That's unparliamentary. My point of order is under Standing Order 129. This has no relevance to the question that was asked. I am more than happy to debate the Premier on the substance of the former member, but he needs to do that properly.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** There is a level of ignorance. Yesterday on 2CC Bronnie Taylor was interviewed. She was talking about the Southern Connector Road and the Federal infrastructure review. She said, "The New South Wales Government is doing one thing and saying another. It's one of the reasons why people are protesting outside the Premier's office, saying they're going to be a one-term government." She believed that all those angry people were waving Palestinian flags because of the Federal infrastructure review and that is why they were out the front of my office in the past 24 hours. The level of ignorance!

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** One MP is working around the clock, and that is the member for Bathurst. He does not stop. Recently he was on Facebook. He is always spruiking about the bush. He wrote, "If you are looking for something spooky to do this Halloween, head to the Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum. Come along to this self-paced murder mystery and see if you can discover the mystery of who killed Dougal the Dinosaur Keeper." I am not making this up. He then wrote, "Help the museum find who let the monster out before it strikes again!" The police have released a description: He is five foot four and has spiky hair.

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

#### **POLICE TASER USE**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) (11:16):** My question is again directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Given the Minister's answer to my previous question, why did the initial police media statement not mention tasing?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:16):** I have already answered that question.

#### **WESTERN SYDNEY SCHOOLS**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (11:16):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Can the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government's record investment in Western Sydney schools will deliver the best education outcomes and opportunities for our students?

**Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry—Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney) (11:17):** I certainly can. I thank the member for Leppington for his question. I relish the chance to talk about our record investment in Western Sydney schools for all the children who are growing up in the growing parts of Western Sydney. I will certainly not get questions from those opposite about the Government's investment in growing parts of Western Sydney, because for 12 long years they failed to invest in the schools for our rapidly growing suburbs.

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

**Ms PRUE CAR:** Communities were promised schools that were not delivered. Members opposite can yell all they want but explain that to the communities of Gregory Hills, Marsden Park and Edmonton Park. They

know the truth. Let me talk about something that is close to the member for Leppington's heart that he lobbied really hard for during the campaign. The Government is so proud to have already been able to deliver progress on this.

At the election we promised to bring a brand-new sports stream to Eagle Vale High School in south-western Sydney. The Talented Sports Program will begin there in 2025. It means that students in the Macarthur region will no longer have to travel hours and hours to Endeavour or Westfield. Some of the talented athletes who have come from sports high schools include Matildas players and Usman Khawaja, who came out of Westfields at Fairfield. Thanks to the member for Leppington, this Government will be building the athletes and Olympians of the future at Eagle Vale sports high school, where initially basketball, cricket and rugby league will be offered.

Last week I visited Birrong boys and girls high schools with the member for Auburn. Those schools have been waiting decades for first-class upgrades to their facilities. The multipurpose hall has been there since long before even the member for Auburn—who is an old girl—was there. They were left in planning limbo for years and years, but we have finally got that going. It is all part of our record investment in schools, and particularly in growing areas in Western Sydney—new high schools at Tallawong, Schofields, new high schools at Gregory Hills and Gledswood Hills, and a new high school at Melrose Park. Of course, Gregory Hills and Edmonton Park are finally getting the high schools that the previous Government never delivered. Do not even get me started on the communities of Jordan Springs and Marsden Park. Those opposite said for years and years that a school was not needed—while tens of thousands of people moved in and had children. Those children—brainwave—grow up and need to go to school. [*Extension of time*]

Given the 12 years of ignoring these fast-growing suburbs that took the lion's share of population and housing growth pressure—particularly on the urban fringe of Sydney, represented by people like the member for Camden, the member for Leppington, the member for Penrith and, proudly, me—you would think the previous Government and the shadow Minister would, when asked about building schools in new areas in Western Sydney, sit this one out and have some self-reflection that she has not one ounce of credibility when it comes to this issue. Instead, this week in *The Daily Telegraph* she said, "To build high schools in growing areas with a maximum capacity of only a thousand is completely short-sighted." I tell you what, it is better than zero.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** Point of order: It is taken, clearly, under Standing Order 129. The Minister's comments have no relevance to the question that was asked. I am happy to expand on that point.

**The SPEAKER:** I understand the point of order. I have heard enough.

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** The Minister is wasting time by sledging somebody else.

**The SPEAKER:** I have explained numerous times—and the previous Speaker also articulated this point—that a threshold of direct relevance must be met and then the Minister is given some latitude for the remainder of the answer. There is no point of order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** To the point of order—

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

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** The last part of the question was about delivering on our State's share of increased housing supply under the national accord, and the Minister was addressing education questions on—

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** She was talking about Sarah Mitchell.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** I am sorry. The Minister was addressing them on a broad—

**Mr Mark Coure:** Wrong question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Oatley, and indeed all Opposition members, will cease giving their learned opinions. The Leader of the House has the call. The member for Oatley will come to order. He is not helping.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** The question was about delivering the best education outcomes and opportunities for students in New South Wales; it is a wideranging question. The Minister was dealing with all those issues and she had reached the relevance threshold. It is a broad question and the Minister was discussing education policy.

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

**Mr Mark Coure:** Point of order: It is Standing Order 129, relevance. Attacking the former Minister was not a part of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Oatley to order for the third time. He will resume his seat. The Minister will conclude her answer.

**Ms PRUE CAR:** I know that members opposite are tetchy about it, but the former Minister is the problem. That is what we inherited from the former Government. I will say it every day in defence of what we are doing in Western Sydney for the growing communities that those opposite failed.

#### **CABBAGE TREE ISLAND ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) (11:24):** My question is directed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty. Since the Minister's recent visit and meeting with members of the Cabbage Tree Island community, has he considered their request to return to the island to rebuild their homes with the funding that was allocated to them after the 2022 floods?

**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) (11:24):** I thank the member for Ballina for her question and for her hospitality when we visited her electorate. I acknowledge her strong advocacy and commitment to this issue. We have committed to work constructively together to try to resolve it. I also commend the member for Lismore, the Parliamentary Secretary for Disaster Recovery, for trying to find a resolution to this complex issue. As the member is aware, I visited Ballina on 7 November together with the Deputy Secretary of Aboriginal Affairs, Shane Hamilton and the member for Lismore. The visit included the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council [LALC], the Bullinah Aboriginal medical service, the pod village and the Bunjum Aboriginal Corporation.

The visit involved sitting with the families affected by the flooding of Cabbage Tree Island to listen to their stories and understand their pain and trauma. It was very sobering. Until this has happened to you, you cannot understand what it means to be removed from a home where not just your children are being raised but your relatives have lived for a long time. There were quite a few tears and some very frank and open discussions. These are extremely difficult circumstances brought about by an unprecedented natural disaster. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting the Cabbage Tree Island community and Jali LALC towards a safe and culturally appropriate future on the island. The Government is continuing to engage with the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Cabbage Tree Island community about rebuilding residential properties impacted by the 2022 Northern Rivers floods.

I am pleased to say that the New South Wales Government, together the Federal Government, will soon be announcing funding for Aboriginal organisations to undertake flood recovery works on some of their facilities that were affected. The principles of free, prior and informed consent must be embedded in communication and decision-making with the Jali land council board and its members as we continue to support them in the rebuild of their community. A number of New South Wales government agencies, including Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Housing Office, the Department of Planning and Environment and the NSW Reconstruction Authority, are involved in supporting community decision-making. [*Extension of time*]

They are actively supporting community decision-making regarding residential housing on Cabbage Tree Island. This includes balancing the need to respect the local community's connection to country and the right to make decisions about their own future with the considerations of safety and flood risk. It is not an easy path. Aboriginal participation in all decision-making processes is an ongoing priority in this consultation and any subsequent planning and building work. It is important that all perspectives are considered, particularly those communities and people directly impacted by the natural disaster. They must have a voice. I commit to continue to work with the member for Ballina and the member for Lismore to navigate these very difficult issues. I thank them for the invitation to go up there and to meet with these people. It gave me an important perspective, and I conveyed to the different departments that these conversations need to continue. We have to get, where we can, the very best outcome.

#### **MACQUARIE PARK REZONING PROPOSAL**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (11:28):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Will the Minister outline how the rezoning proposal for the Macquarie Park precinct will deliver at least 3,000 new homes, eight hectares of public open space and help deliver on our State's share of increasing housing supply under the national accord?

**Mr PAUL SCULLY (Wollongong—Minister for Planning and Public Spaces) (11:29):** I am happy to update the member for Strathfield and the House on the Macquarie Park proposal that the Premier and I announced recently. The member for Strathfield has a keen interest in housing proposals and has spoken to me regularly about options to deliver homes in his community to give young people an opportunity to live close to where they grew up. The Minns Government is confronting the housing crisis it inherited from members opposite. The previous Government allowed housing pressures to build up over years, ending up in the crisis that we face today. Worst of all, the previous Government was happy let young people pay the price and let houses become less

available and less affordable. But we are turning the tables. It has been interesting lately, because even the Young Liberals are warning that their party needs to start prioritising the ability of gen Z voters to buy a home. Media reports state:

In a sign of growing generational divide, the Young Liberals are lobbying the party ... to develop a "comprehensive housing policy"...

I say good on them. Their senior party members are not doing that. Here is a tip for the young and the restless and those wanting a home: Get with the party that will deliver it—the Labor Party. The Minns Government is making decisions to expand supply because more supply will allow more young people to live near their parents, rather than living with their parents for a long period. An excellent example of that is the Macquarie Park plan through which the Government is proposing at least 3,000 new homes to create a vibrant community in that suburb.

The rezoning proposal will deliver more homes and also eight hectares of new open space, as the member for Strathfield pointed out. It will have a large multipurpose indoor recreation facility and paths for walking and cycling. We know that fewer people are working in the office on a daily basis since COVID. The Government will allow flexibility for the zoned commercial office space in the area. Developers will have the choice to develop commercial space or 5,000 build-to-rent homes.

Macquarie Park is in a well-located part of Sydney, bounded by not one but two metro stations. It is home to Macquarie University and shopping centres, and it is near Lane Cove National Park. It is close to jobs, either in the precinct or via a short metro ride to the Sydney CBD. It is close to where Landcom and Link Wentworth are developing the Lachlan's Line Affordable Housing project. Importantly, it will have a mix of development, including mixed-use commercial and residential development, with areas for entertainment, dining and recreation. This is an opportunity to create a vibrant place where people want to live. Macquarie Park is near transport, near jobs and near education opportunities. It is just the place where the schoolkids in the gallery would love to live in the future. [*Extension of time*]

Of course, this is yet another occasion for members opposite to oppose a sensible suggestion for housing. Within minutes of the announcement, the shadow Minister suggested that it was "a short-sighted attempt to address Sydney's housing crisis". He has clearly missed the seismic shift in the property market over the past few years. The member for Ryde wears a pin saying that he loves Ryde. He loves it so much he does not want anyone else to live there! He is a bloke who has not met a housing proposal he did not oppose. In fact, he even opposes rumours of housing proposals. That is how much he does not like housing.

The Government is getting on with the task. We are rezoning Church Street North in Parramatta, which is another area that the previous Government forgot to get a hold of. We are getting on with it. We are lifting the dwelling cap on the Showground Station precinct so that more homes can be built near that metro station. We are making changes to planning rules that will provide government agencies with a chance to deliver more homes. We are reforming rental laws and improving building quality.

While members opposite continue to oppose more homes at every turn, councils in their electorates are lining up waiting to see me about how they can help the Government deliver homes. The councils of many members in the Chamber are lining up to see me. They are busting to find out how they might contribute. The Minns Government is getting on with the task of confronting the housing crisis, addressing the cost of living, restoring essential services, bringing down Liberal Party debt and getting the renewable energy road map back on track. Meanwhile, the Opposition is struggling to keep any sensible position for a continuous 24 hours on any issue confronting the people of New South Wales.

#### TRANSPORT FOR NSW EMPLOYEE WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes) (11:34):** My question is directed to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads. Rochelle Hicks, a senior Transport for NSW executive, received a death threat from a male contractor on the Coffs Harbour bypass project. Why, once the Minister knew this, did she do nothing for three days? Will she now apologise to Rochelle Hicks for the treatment she received?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) (11:34):** I thank the member for Myall Lakes for raising this matter, which is really important. As a survivor of violence against women and an advocate for victims my entire professional, personal and political life, I condemn the alleged actions of Mr Brown. That action is extremely serious. As soon as I was advised about it, I asked for a briefing. I continue to unreservedly express my sympathy and my regret to Ms Hicks. She has been placed in an awful situation. I do not wish that on anyone. To be clear, as soon as I heard about it, I requested an urgent briefing. In that briefing, I was told that Mr Brown had been ordered off site. That did not happen in an ideal time frame, but I have been told that he has not been onsite. I have confirmed that again and again since 14 July this year. I have been told that he has not been onsite, which is entirely appropriate given the gravity of the allegations.

I reiterate that every single person deserves to feel safe at work. Those allegations of behaviour should not come from another employee, a customer or a stakeholder. I have expressed my utmost concern to the department about this to ensure that the investigations on foot will put recommendations forward to ensure that this never happens again. It is appalling. There are legal processes on foot and there are also police reports. I understand that police reports were made by Transport for NSW after Ms Hicks made her report, and that is unfortunate. I do not want to say anything that would prejudice her case. That is important to me. Even more important than that, I am very concerned—

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

[*Government members interjected.*]

I am loath to interrupt.

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** I am trying to quietly and respectfully take a point of order about relevance regarding the final part of the question. That is all. Will the Minister apologise to Rochelle?

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Dubbo will resume his seat. The Minister heard the question, and she is answering it appropriately. The Minister will continue her answer.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I continue to express unreservedly my support, sympathy and apologies to her, if that helps. My concern is that she has been the one to suffer throughout all of this and all of the conversations about it. As I was saying, once the investigation is finalised, those recommendations will be implemented in full to ensure that this never happens to anyone again. My understanding is that, if Ms Hicks wants to continue in her employment, that is an option for her to decide. These issues are so important. I hate to see them being politicised. It is so fundamental. I thank the member for the question. I know that it came from a good place, because we are all concerned about our workforce. I want Ms Hicks to be safe. That is my priority during all the conversations going on at the moment.

#### CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (11:39):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister outline how the Minns Labor Government is investing in better health services that help to protect sick kids?

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (11:39):** I thank the member for Parramatta. Recently, I was with her at Westmead, along with the Premier and the Deputy Premier, to look at the facilities that I will talk about in a moment. MPs from Western Sydney understand that this Government is investing around \$4 billion in health and infrastructure services across Western Sydney. We are making significant investments in two world-leading hospitals: the Children's Hospital at Randwick, for which the member for Coogee has been a tireless advocate for such a long time, and the terrific hospital at Westmead that also looks after some of our sickest children from across New South Wales. The investments of around \$619 million for Westmead and \$658 million for Randwick are significant and important.

At Westmead, we had the opportunity to see firsthand a concept known as "positive pressurised rooms". The rooms will be put in place from 2025 as part of the massive rebuild across the two children's hospitals and will protect some of our most vulnerable and sickest children in this State. Those children may be undergoing treatment for rare cancers, undergoing transplants or undergoing invasive treatment and care. They are significantly immunocompromised, and they are at real risk. If an infection or virus were to attack their body, the likelihood that they would die would be very real. It is a pressure that mums and dads live with every single day.

I have spoken to many of them over the past few years, both as the shadow Minister and the Minister. I cannot begin to imagine the stress on families who are dealing with a child who is gravely ill. The new rooms are designed to almost put a super shield around those children to stop viruses and infections going from the corridor to the room and therefore infecting a child who is immunocompromised, which would have devastating and catastrophic outcomes. These investments count. They are part of the innovation that we are building into our new hospitals. I am extremely proud of the team at NSW Health and the teams at those two world-leading hospitals. [*Extension of time*]

I am delighted that members of the Health Services Union are in the gallery today. While this infrastructure investment is important, it is the magic that our healthcare workers deliver every day that absolutely counts. On the weekend I was with the member for Willoughby at the Great Humpty Ball. The Humpty Dumpty Foundation provides equipment for paediatric units across New South Wales; members will know it well. We were honoured

to award the Michelle Beets Award for Inspirational Paediatric Care across regional, rural and metropolitan areas. Dr Kummerow, a paediatrician in western New South Wales, received an award. From the city area, it was awarded to Dr Andrew McDonald—a person who is familiar to this place and a man whom many people in south-western Sydney know well. I acknowledge his decades of service over such a long period.

It is the magic of healthcare workers that makes the difference. Whilst the investment in capital and infrastructure is important, we will not build our way out of the challenges that the health system faces. We will do it by continuing to support our staff in every way possible, whether that is our paramedic staff, our allied healthcare professionals, our nurses, our doctors or our cleaners. We will support all our staff who work in our hospitals, because they are the ones who make the magic happen. I acknowledge them, and particularly those in our paediatric units across New South Wales, for their incredible work and tireless efforts to support our sickest children.

### PARAMEDIC WAGES

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (11:44):** My question is directed to the Premier. On 21 June 2021, when asked what he would do as Premier to resolve disputes with paramedics, the Premier said, "Intervene in the strike and pay them what they are worth." Will the Premier apologise to the paramedics and to the people of New South Wales for misleading them before the election?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier) (11:45):** Note the confected outrage from the shadow Minister for Health. He carries on like Norma Rae in here and Milton Friedman out there. Let me inform members of what he said about the wages cap that the New South Wales Government removed.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I have an opportunity to answer the question, surely? He said, "It will destroy the budget. It will wreck the economy." That is what he said about removing the wages cap.

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. The Premier will resume his seat. The member for Hornsby rises on a point of order.

**Mr Matt Kean:** My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The only thing that is confected is the Premier's position on paramedic pay.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I will go through what the New South Wales Government has done in just eight months for industrial relations in this State. Number one, we lifted the wages cap—opposed by the member for Hornsby. Number two was the 4½ per cent wage increase for this year—opposed by him. Number three was the salary packaging tax savings of up to 70 per cent, or \$160 million a year—opposed by him. Number four, we introduced an industrial court in New South Wales—opposed by him. Number five was the 500 paramedics for regional New South Wales—opposed by him. Number six was lifting the incentive for regional health workers—opposed by him.

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

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

**Mr Dugald Saunders:** My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. Talk about confected outrage. It was a question about the Premier's lie. We have a gallery full of people who would like to know the answer. What does the Premier say to them?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Members opposite hate it when they are told their record. But this is not their record in government; this is their record in opposition.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This is their record since the election campaign. The gall of the shadow Minister for Health! He deliberately brought down a budget to cut 1,200 nurses from the health system.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order—

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** Now, all of a sudden, he expects us all to believe that he is some kind of Florence Nightingale riding to the rescue. He has a history and a record of smashing healthcare workers. That is his legacy.

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will stop the clock. Has the Premier completed his answer?

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** No, I will keep going.

**The SPEAKER:** That is what I thought. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr Matt Kean:** It is under Standing Order 73. The Premier is deliberately misleading the House. He has just cut \$250 million out of the health budget, including \$150 million for dying patients.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** This is a joke. He cannot defend his record in opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the Premier that the clock has not been restarted. I will rule on the point of order. Standing Order 131 (9) states that points of order should not be "vexatious, repetitive, interfering or used to make a statement in response to the answer". All those terms could be applied to the points of order that Opposition members have taken. The next member who takes a similar point of order will be in breach of Standing Order 131 (9) and will be directed to remove themselves from the Chamber. The Premier has the call.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** It does not end there. We are introducing safe staffing levels for New South Wales hospitals—opposed by the member for Hornsby. We will have a ratio of one to three on the wards and one to three in emergency departments—opposed by him. He has a record level of disregard for healthcare workers in New South Wales. His colleagues are even worse. On 22 May 2023 Natalie Ward said, "It's really disappointing to see that their first call to action is to scrap the wages cap." It is disappointing to hear it. After his policy of reintroducing 2.5 per cent wage outcomes for New South Wales public sector workers, the member for Hornsby then expects us all to forget it during question time so that he can pretend to be the workers' friend. We will not forget his despicable record on health in New South Wales.

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

#### TASK FORCE MAGNUS

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) (11:49):** My question is addressed to the good Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister please update the House on the work of Task Force Magnus in combating organised crime and violence in our communities?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:49):** Indeed, I will. First of all, I thank the member for Mount Druitt, and Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Counter-terrorism. He is such a proud advocate for the New South Wales police in his area and across New South Wales as well. It would be my absolute pleasure to once again update the House on the incredible work of Task Force Magnus. I take the opportunity in this place to back in our police for all of the fantastic work that they do in keeping our community safe. Members of this House might be experiencing a bit of *deja vu* as a matter of fact. But I am incredibly proud of Task Force Magnus.

The latest results are in and they are fantastic. Task Force Magnus was stood up in late July and there have been 425 arrests, 2,392 charges laid, 53 firearms seized and staggering quantities of illegal drugs seized, with values in the millions. I am talking over \$2.5 million of cocaine seized alone. The seizures are getting illegal and dangerous items out of the hands of violent criminals and making it much harder for their criminal enterprises to operate in New South Wales. The swift and decisive actions of Task Force Magnus in tackling serious and organised crime head-on and getting dangerous criminals off our streets are remarkable. Mark my words, they have more work to do. They are not done yet. The 100 police we combined to work under Task Force Magnus, including 70 elite detectives, are showing absolutely no sign whatsoever of slowing down.

We are coming at serious and organised crime in New South Wales from every angle. We are taking aim at the ill-gotten gains that criminal enterprises rely on to sustain their illegal activities across this State. I advise the House that, in addition to Task Force Magnus, the NSW Crime Commission's Criminal Asset Confiscation Team has been busy cracking down on criminal wealth. It is doing a fantastic job. The Criminal Asset Confiscation Team has been restraining properties and seizing vehicles, gold bullion, designer jewellery and luxury handbags. We told criminals that we would come after their Lambos and that is exactly what we have done.

**Ms Kate Washington:** And their Louis Vuittons.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** And their Louis Vuittons—you name it, we have got them. The decisive action of the Crime Commission, supported by the NSW Police Force Organised Crime Squad, is hitting organised crime networks where it hurts. [*Time expired.*]

#### PORT OF NEWCASTLE PROTESTS

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (11:53):** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter. The Premier said, "You cannot have a situation where our ports are blocked for commerce." Yet in relation to a 30-hour blockade of the Port of Newcastle to stop coal ships docking this weekend, the Minister said on TV, "I applaud people for getting involved." Why has the Minister

been contradicting the Premier's position and encouraging people to blockade the Port of Newcastle when she knows what that will cost the workers in the Upper Hunter?

**The SPEAKER:** It is an extraordinarily long question. Does the Minister recall the question?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea—Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter) (11:54):** I do not know if I could recite it, but I certainly got the context.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister does not need to recite it.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** As members would know, the Port Authority of NSW is working to facilitate the continued operations of the Port of Newcastle. This, of course, is an activist rally that happens annually. If the member for Upper Hunter came to Newcastle a bit more, he would know that. The Port Authority works very closely with those activists to ensure that the port remains very safe to all of its users, particularly to the workers. The Harbour Master is in close contact with the New South Wales police local area command. Naturally, we would expect that. The safety of maritime workers and the general public is absolutely the first priority of the Port Authority and the Harbour Master.

Again, everybody has the right to protest, but it has to be done peacefully and within the law. This weekend's protest will be heavily policed. I have been guaranteed that. And—no surprise—if someone breaks the law, they will be arrested, just like we saw earlier this week. As I said, this weekend's protests will be heavily policed and people will be arrested if they break the law. Police have worked with the organisers in the lead-up to this weekend. I will take members around the grounds. In the next seven days the police have 17 protests to contend with across this State. That is their reality.

**Mr David Layzell:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance to the question, which is about the Minister's support for a protest that is costing workers shifts.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the member for Upper Hunter. The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Like I have said many times, in our liberal democracy I support protests in this State. But they must be done peacefully and within the framework of the law. I hope that satisfies the question, even though I am repeating myself. In terms of what our police are facing, they have already had to corral and manage almost 100,000 protesters just in the last month. They are doing an extraordinary job. They are keeping our streets safe. All members opposite ever do is bag them. They hate the cops. They think the cops are doing a terrible job. They come into the Chamber and bag them. If you get out onto the streets and talk to police, they cannot wait to tell you that they have had nothing but a gufful.

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (11:57):** I ask a supplementary question. Given the Minister's answer and her previously stated close relationship with the Maritime Union of Australia [MUA], does she share the MUA's belief published on Facebook today that New South Wales anti-protest laws are undemocratic and are a sad indictment on the New South Wales Government?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Regardless of what the point of order may be, the supplementary question is out of order. That is all there is to it. We can debate the matter at some other time, but I will not allow the supplementary question. Any member who seeks to challenge my ruling can leave the Chamber.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** They are also out of questions, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the House.

#### TAFE NSW

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (11:58):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. Will the Minister please update the House on the second tranche of Fee-Free TAFE in New South Wales?

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (11:58):** I thank the member for Heathcote for her question and for her advocacy for TAFE in New South Wales, along with many members on this side of the House who recognise the importance of the vocational training system that we need to have. Earlier in question time today, the Premier talked a bit about areas of Commonwealth funding where New South Wales deserves a fairer share. I am pleased to say that, in Skills, we have recently signed a good agreement with the Commonwealth in the form of the National Skills Agreement.

Today I joined the Prime Minister at Meadowbank TAFE to announce the second round of fee-free training places for New South Wales. Over the next three years we will get 147,000 fee-free places in New South Wales. A minimum of 70 per cent of those will be provided by TAFE and that will enable us to deliver a more focused range of courses over the next three years. We have narrowed it down and focused on the courses where we have the greatest skills shortage for the State so that we are using that money effectively. Some 105 courses will be covered by the fee-free places, which will enable people to access VET training when they probably would not have been able to afford it otherwise.

The importance of this was rammed home to me recently when I visited Griffith TAFE in the electorate of the member for Murray. I spoke to some of the working mothers who are doing their training for aged care and nursing. They said that they would not have been able to access this training and get out of their paid work to do the training if it was not for the fact that they had fee-free access to the course. It is a really important way of ensuring that we get more people coming into our training system. As part of our program this year, we will be making sure that we are very quickly dealing with double enrolments and things that can use up places, meaning they do not go to the most effective uses.

In this area, over 21 per cent of enrolments are from people over 45, and over 27 per cent are from people under the age of 24. We are seeing better outcomes for jobseekers, with 32 per cent of fee-free training opportunities taken by jobseekers, and 5 per cent of the take-up is from people with disability. Some 37 per cent of enrolments are in regional New South Wales, which is really important for our rural communities. I have spoken before in this place about the importance of TAFE for rural communities in New South Wales. To be slightly parochial, nearly 2,000 people in the Monaro electorate have enrolled for fee-free training, which is fantastic.

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** Not a bad electorate.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Not a bad electorate. In fact, a really good electorate, it has to be said. [*Extension of time*]

We have seen these Commonwealth fee-free initiatives working in conjunction with our provision for apprentices through the New South Wales Smart and Skilled funding. At Meadowbank TAFE this morning the Prime Minister, the Federal Minister and I met with students working to become carpenters and plumbers and electricians, and we got a very enthusiastic response. It is really important that we address those issues. It is part of making sure that we are addressing the cost-of-living crisis from a number of angles by first making it cheaper for people to access their fee-free places, but also enabling us to get that flow-through of skills that we need. In the Monaro electorate—like in many regional communities—we have a huge shortage of builders. Because of that we are seeing very high prices for housing and a lack of housing for people who are needed in our essential services.

Those are the things we need to tackle through the whole pipeline that we are seeing from this Government—from training the tradies who need to work on those things to the planning reforms that we have been talking about, and making sure that we are delivering that housing in our communities right across New South Wales. We need to continue to do more to deliver skills training and skilled employees into the jobs market. That is why we are also working right now to deliver our election promises to create manufacturing centres of excellence in the Illawarra, Western Sydney and the Hunter.

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

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I was really thrilled to be in the Illawarra earlier this week with the fabulous local members representing that area to sign a memorandum of understanding about exploring the potential for a super TAFE on the BlueScope Steel site in the Illawarra. It could be a fantastic achievement for the area if that produces a result, and we will be working hard to achieve it.

## RENTAL MARKET

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:04):** My question is directed to the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. It has been nearly six months since the appointment of the inaugural NSW Rental Commissioner and eight months since the NSW Labor Government was elected after promising to make renting fairer. What reforms have renters been delivered in this time, if any, and when can renters expect legislation to finally end no-grounds evictions in New South Wales?

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections) (12:04):** I thank the member for Newtown for her question. I know this is an important issue for her, for the Government and for everybody in the Parliament, given that one in three people in New South Wales rent; indeed, in metropolitan areas one in two people rent. There is no doubt that the

rental reforms that we will deliver in this term of Parliament will be about making renting better, fairer and more balanced in the market. It is also no secret that we have inherited a significant challenge in the rental market and the housing affordability market. Twelve years of inaction has led to a significant undersupply, which is putting significant pressure on rental housing affordability. It is also no secret that this Government is committed to making our rental market fairer, more balanced and more modern for the millions of people in New South Wales who will be living in rental accommodation.

The current laws do not reflect the living arrangements of so many people in New South Wales. We have committed to giving renters and property owners greater confidence and security in the rental market. We understand that when it comes to property there are polarising views. In terms of the member's question, Ms Trina Jones was appointed as the Rental Commissioner. She is doing the work the Government has asked her to do in consulting extensively with the many stakeholders to ensure that we reform rental laws. As we know, the Government introduced a reform earlier this year to ban solicited rent bidding from landlords, agents and tech platforms.

When it comes to no-grounds evictions, which was included in the last part of the member's question, I can tell members what the Rental Commissioner has advised us. She has told us that this is one of the most difficult and contentious parts of rental reform. The reality is that there are very strong entrenched views on both sides and there is very little agreement between them. The gulf between the two sides is significant.

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

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** Given the significant difference between tenants and tenant advocates— [*Extension of time*]

The reality is, given the difference and the gap between tenants and tenant advocates, and property owners and property advocates, we want to make sure that we get this reform right. We want to get long-lasting reform that does not get changed because each side is agitating for change. Long-term reform takes time. The commissioner has asked us for a little bit more time, and we are going to give her that time to get this balance right. Members might be keen to know that as part of the reform process, 9,000 renters had their say through the consultation process, while 5,500 property owners had their say. We want to make sure that the Rental Commissioner speaks to both sides to come up with a fair and balanced approach. We know that the rental market is under significant pressure with a 1.1 per cent vacancy rate built up over 12 years. That is the core reason why renters are experiencing so much pressure. Of course, part of the solution must be bigger—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Upper Hunter will come to order. I will direct him to leave the Chamber if he continues to interject.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** The reform is not just about no-grounds eviction; it is also about getting quality supply. I thank and acknowledge the Premier, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Minister for Housing for working to ensure that we get quality supply in the market as quickly as possible. Members want to talk about reform. This week alone we have passed the strata legislation and the building investigation, both of which are about fixing the housing market. I thank all members for supporting those bills. This rental reform is a high priority for the Government and I know it is a high priority for crossbench members. I hope it is a high priority for the Opposition, and that it will support our reforms as well. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (12:10):** I ask a supplementary question—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Before the member for Newtown asks her question, I will hear from the Leader of the House.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** The standing orders do not permit the member for Newtown to ask a supplementary question. The questions allotted to the Government, Opposition and crossbench are counted.

**The SPEAKER:** I will hear the point of order again. The member for Terrigal will cease interjecting.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** A supplementary question counts as a question, Mr Speaker. Crossbench members do not get another question under the standing orders relating to question time. The Opposition had run out of its question entitlements as well when one of its members sought to ask a supplementary question.

**The SPEAKER:** Having consulted the Clerk, I will defer to the Leader of the House. I do not permit the member for Newtown to ask a supplementary question. I advise the House that I will refer the matter of supplementary questions to the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee to clarify the issue.

## SILICOSIS

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (12:12):** My question is addressed to the good and patient Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety. Will the Minister update the House on what the Minns Labor Government is doing to stop the scourge of silicosis in workplaces across New South Wales?

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (12:12):** I thank the hardworking member for Cabramatta for this very important question and for his strong advocacy for safe workplaces. This morning I was honoured to join the Premier, members of this place and those of the other place in speaking at an event held by the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia [ADFA] to commemorate Asbestos Awareness Week. The week serves to remember the many lives lost to asbestos-related diseases and the many workers who continue to be afflicted with lifelong diseases as a result of their exposure to asbestos. I acknowledge the incredible efforts of Barry Robson and his committee, and thank him and ADFA for their continued advocacy.

I also thank Andrew Klock, a former stonemason, who is with us in the gallery today. After years of working with engineered stone, Andrew has now been diagnosed with silicosis. He is a strong advocate for its ban. I also acknowledge the memory of Bernie Banton. Bernie became the face of asbestos victims and has been such a driver for change and recognition. I also acknowledge the work of the former Carr Labor Government. Twenty years ago it established the inquiry that set up the workers compensation fund. After people had tried for 70 years to ban asbestos, the findings of that inquiry and the subsequent public pressure forced the James Hardie company to take responsibility. Only a Labor Government will make a change in New South Wales.

While we reflect on the long shadow asbestos has cast on the lives of so many, it is more important than ever that we remain committed to protected workers from dust diseases. The new challenge we face today is silicosis. The Minns Government was elected on a platform to protect workers from silicosis, a deadly disease contracted from exposure to silica dust. As all members are aware, for the past decade cases of silicosis have risen significantly from a low baseline. Historically the disease affected miners, quarry workers and tunnel workers, but with the rise of the engineered stone benchtop industry we have now reached a position where approximately one in four workers in the industry have silicosis.

Members would be aware that last month Safe Work Australia released its report entitled *Decision Regulation Impact Statement: Prohibition on the use of engineered stone*. That report, based on expert advice, concluded that there is no safe amount of silica content in engineered stone. As a result, the report recommends a total ban on the use of engineered stone in Australia. Our Government and our Premier have been leading the way in standing up to protect the right of all workers to a safe workplace. [*Extension of time*]

The Premier and I have stated that the Government strongly supports the recommendation of the Safe Work Australia report to ban the use of engineered stone in Australia. Both Bunnings and IKEA have announced that they will be removing engineered stone from shelves. This goes to show how strong leadership can create change. Through the Safe Work Australia process, we are working with other jurisdictions to ensure that we get a national approach to banning engineered stone. If a national approach cannot be achieved, New South Wales will go it alone. However, we have to let the national process play out before taking any unilateral position. We must do everything we can to ensure the national approach so that we do not have engineered stone making its way across borders and through the back door.

We need to get this right. We cannot afford to let silicosis become this generation's asbestos. I am proud to be part of a government that is driving progress at a national level to resolve this critical issue as soon as possible. I congratulate the union movement, community members and injured workers, and those like Andrew in the gallery today who have been strong advocates. I also acknowledge the strong advocacy of the media. Business groups have also been supporting the shift to silica-free products.

I have seen firsthand the devastation that asbestos has caused to families. All members know family members who have contracted silicosis or asbestosis and have a dust disease. Migrants who came to our nation were working in dust-filled factories with no protection and have suffered; I have some in my family. The Minns Government is dedicated to keeping workers safe.

### *Petitions*

## PETITIONS RECEIVED

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

### **Great Northern Railway**

Petition requesting the Legislative Assembly make available passenger train services on the Great Northern Railway between Armidale and Jennings/Wallangarra, received from **Mr Adam Marshall**.

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

*Business of the House*

#### **BUSINESS LAPSED**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise the House that in accordance with Standing Order 105 general business notices of motions (general notices) Nos 512 to 540 have lapsed.

*Bills*

### **WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (TRANSFER OF WATER) BILL 2023**

#### **Second Reading Debate**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) (12:20):** I continue my contribution to debate on the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023, introduced by the member for Murray. I previously acknowledged the member's extensive knowledge of water. The intention of the bill is to make it necessary for a government, State or Federal, if it was to take possession or ownership of water, to undertake a public interest test or an assessment of the socio-economic impacts on the community that potentially may lose the water, and for the government give an assurance through that process that the community would not be any worse off.

I talk specifically about a figure of 450 gigitalitres of water, which the Federal Government committed, under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, to be returned to the environment on top of the original agreed 2,750 gigitalitres of water. Just before question time I said that unfortunately at a State and Federal level between 2013 and 2022, there were Liberal-Nationals governments, and the National Party was responsible for water. The modus operandi, the intent, the purpose and the outcome of their actions at that time was to dramatically interfere with the entire Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

That is not to make excuses for what the current government in New South Wales and federally needs to do going forward, but it is to say that we should not be in the predicament we are in today. We should be much further progressed towards restoring all the necessary water under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and getting the balance right for the communities that rely on water for their economic activity of putting food on our tables and in the supermarkets. Those communities have often developed entirely around their agricultural businesses. Temporary Speaker Layzell and I could compare those communities with the communities in our part of the world in the Hunter Valley that revolve around coal. If coal were shut down that would have a significant impact. Eventually, over time, that will head in that direction.

The bill introduced by the member for Murray is eminently and absolutely sensible. But the Government in New South Wales and federally is between a rock and a hard place because we have long-term commitments that we need to get to. Not enough work has been done over the past 10 years, we are getting to the pointy end of it all and, unfortunately, the Federal Government has put water buybacks on the table. The position of the New South Wales Government is that we absolutely do not want to see water buybacks, but we understand that they are on the table. We would much rather take on projects and get investment to try to realise the water that needs to be returned to the environment without the buybacks, but we understand that they are on the table. As important as water is for those communities, we also have to acknowledge that a lot of other factors and levers have had a demonstrable effect on their success, condition and socio-economics.

I have previously mentioned in Parliament how agriculture has changed over the years, not necessarily by water being less or more available, but by other elements. It is a simple fact that we have genetically modified crops that take less work and fewer workers to bring to harvest. We have some dairy farms that have significantly reduced their workforce by way of automation—robot machinery that does much of the work that was once done by people. I visited a cotton farm in Bourke that historically had a school and an entire community on the property, because so many workers were required to bring the cotton to harvest. Now the school has gone and the entire community on the property has gone. Work like cotton chipping, which was often done by itinerant workers particularly in the local community, has been bred out of the cotton seed that is used. All of those jobs have disappeared.

The tractors that now run up and down the paddocks are twice, three times, four times or five times wider than they ever were. There are tractors now that are fundamentally becoming driverless. Those jobs have disappeared as well. A lot of elements about the difficulties, challenges and, in some instances, decline of our regional communities are completely unrelated to water. Water absolutely is an essential element to agriculture—

I am not saying it is not—and taking it away absolutely will have impacts, but I also say that we are not putting a lot of other factors into legislation, so should we do it specifically with water? [*Extension of time*]

I was going to wind up my remarks but I notice the Parliamentary Secretary and member for Campbelltown at the table was deeply engaged in the contribution I was making, so I will expand a little bit more. I am trying to make the point that our agricultural communities are affected by many things other than water. Water sometimes does not stay in the valleys, catchments and zones for which it was originally licensed—the member for Murray knows this and probably explained this to me. Sometimes those transfers take the water out to other parts of the State. That has undoubtedly had an impact on the success or decline of some agricultural business. I also know that since water became a product that goes on the mark, essentially the person with the most money or willingness to pay the highest price buys the water.

That has also had a terrible impact on some agricultural businesses, in particular dairy farms. I visited a number of dairy farms along the Murray. They said that when there is not as much water around as they would like, when there is no natural rainfall to make sure that the grass is green in the paddocks, they simply cannot compete with some of the other water users, such as those growing rice or nuts further down the river. Our dairy—which is one of the first products I put in my shopping trolley when I go to the supermarket—is under threat, not because water has been bought back by the Federal Government in this instance, but because other products are now in the ground and growers are willing to pay a higher price for water.

In the case of nuts, as a classic example, they have essentially bought rubbish desert land in the south-west corner of the State and then purchased water. Now because they have a licence to have the water provided to them, we have the problem of running water incredibly hard down the Murray to get it to those people who built a farm in a desert. All that water has been taken out of a variety of communities to get there, but we are not legislating to stop that from happening and that has had a terrible impact on communities right along that river system.

The water is running so hard in some parts of the Murray system that it is affecting non-agricultural industries like tourism and businesses along the river system. That is affecting the quality of the water in the system, making it muddy and allowing space for more carp to grow. It is folding trees into the river system because we are delivering water to a place that is way down the end of the system. They are all terrible impacts, but those are not effects of buybacks but rather of the way that New South Wales and Australia is managing water within the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The Government will not support the bill. I emphasise that that is not to say I do not think that taking water out of a community has an impact, but many other things also have an impact. We are not legislating for them. We have to deliver the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We are committed to delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We have a commitment from the National Party in New South Wales that they also want to see the Murray-Darling Basin Plan delivered in full. I think collectively across the Chamber we hope to see no more water buybacks, but we are in a position where the Federal Government has said that is part of the conversation. We would absolutely rather see projects deliver the water back to the environmental desires of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, but we are not quite there yet. The State Government will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government to negotiate, stay in the game, stay at the table and try to do everything we can to make sure water buybacks are not necessary, but we simply cannot support the bill from the good member for Murray.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ (Auburn) (12:32):** I contribute to the debate on the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. The bill requires the Minister for Water to not register a transfer of an access licence to the Commonwealth or the State or a Minister, public servant, public authority, agency or subsidiary of the Commonwealth or the State without there first being an assessment undertaken that demonstrates the transfer causes neutral or positive socio-economic impacts. The bill prescribes those socio-economic impacts as production output levels; employment levels and diversity; individual and business incomes; cost of carrying on businesses; changes to working conditions; psychological wellbeing levels, including in relation to stress, happiness, security, family harmony and the ability to undertake leisure activities; and access to and the level of provision of social services.

I understand why the member for Murray has introduced the bill in the House. She has long been an advocate for her community and for highlighting the impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan on her electorate, which relate to a whole range of issues. I have always struggled with any plan that takes utilities, some of our most important resources, and effectively puts them into a free market. Even Adam Smith argued that there are some things that should not be part of the free market. Water is one of our most valuable resources. It underpins the important agricultural industry which is not only about the food it produces but the food manufacturing that represents 40 per cent of our economy.

The member for Murray has long advocated for members to visit her community to see what happens there. There is a lot of truth to the risks that industries are facing in the Murray. I have been down to the electorate of

the member for Murray. She showed me what happens at the Barmah Choke in the south-west corner of New South Wales and what happens in the dairy industry when there is an inequity in free-market water allocation. They are competing with almond producers and big multinational companies. They are providing a vital product. Everyone is able to buy milk from a supermarket. Milk and dairy products are such a fundamental part of the Australian diet and what we produce. I know it has been difficult for that industry.

The member for Cessnock made reference to the dairy industry relying more heavily on technology and automation. If that industry's producers do not have access to water or do not know when they will have water, they will take their animals off pasture and put them on feedlots. That is exactly what I saw happening in the electorate of Murray. The member for Murray has advocated for all industries to get their fair share of water. For the past decade, the way water was allocated by the previous Government was not fair. We have all seen the reports. We have listened to ICAC's decisions, which found that the State's water policies were undermined by departmental favouring of the irrigation industry for a decade. It found that certain decisions taken by the New South Wales department with responsibility for water were inconsistent with the objects, principles and duties of the Water Management Act.

When the Act is not applied as it is meant to be applied, some communities get a better crack at the water than other communities. An embargo put in place by a previous Minister meant water catchment further upstream in New South Wales restricted downstream flows, and that had a big impact. The member for Murray has long advocated for a better outcome because buybacks will greatly affect her community. Her community already struggles to get water licences and the water it needs, particularly in the dairy industry. There has to be surety. Alongside that is the decision of the New South Wales Government to support the Murray-Darling Basin. We lived through long droughts and know the long-term impacts on those rivers.

How do we get that balance right and make sure one community is not paying more than another? We do not want available water to be bought through cashbacks, particularly when it is impacting on the community at the corner of the Murray and the Darling. The New South Wales Government hopes that the outcomes will not lead to buybacks. The Victorian Government has put forward a policy that it opposes buybacks, but that does not stop buybacks. There are huge constitutional issues about the Commonwealth rights. That goes back to the ruling in Tasmania over the—

**Mr Greg Warren:** Franklin River.

**Ms LYNDIA VOLTZ:** —Franklin River Dam and an agreement that States have signed on to. The New South Wales Government hopes there is investment—investment is sorely needed—to ensure better water management and that the outcomes necessary for the basin are achieved through investment and not through buybacks. The Minister has stated she is opposed to buybacks, but only as part of a Murray-Darling Basin Plan, with a view to protect the health of the river in the long term, which the Government committed to in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. But that does not put aside that we are in this situation today because of the perpetual undermining of the Basin Plan by the National Party. It is inexcusable that the department's approach amounted to it favouring commercial interests over the environment. It is not just me saying that. ICAC also found that it favoured commercial interests over the environment. That meant the water that should have been available downstream was not available, which has had an impact on communities further downstream.

We need to make sure that there is a balance in the water management plan that ensures our crucial agricultural industries go forward but communities do not suffer. I understand that every member of Parliament wants to protect their community. They do it up the top, in the Armidale region, around Tamworth and Griffith—everywhere there is agricultural industry. It is not right if one part of the State gets a fair go but other parts do not—which is effectively what happened under the previous Government. The member for Murray has done a fantastic job advocating on water issues. She was essentially abused in the Chamber by members opposite for her interest in water—as a person of the land—and she stood up to it. I suspect that is why in electorates like Murray members like Helen Dalton have been returned.

The previous Government dragged the chain on water management. This Government is committed to the plan, but we are very conscious of what buybacks mean for communities. That is why we are advocating for investment in water management, because it will deliver the best outcome. The best outcome is no buybacks. I congratulate the member on bringing the bill before the House. There are technical issues with the bill, and the Government has made its position on them clear. But the advocacy of the member for Murray on this issue has been long and overwhelming, and she deserves congratulations on it.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (12:42):** I begin my contribution to debate on the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023 by acknowledging the member for Murray, who is a very passionate and good representative of the people in her electorate. Having had the privilege of visiting the member in her electorate, I know firsthand that she is particularly passionate about this issue. I saw her passion, as well as

the consultations and presentations about the many issues that her community continues to confront. That is another reason—further to the reference by the member for Auburn—the member for Murray was returned to this place so convincingly.

While the Government does not support the bill—and I will go into some of the specific reasons—I take nothing away from the member for Murray and her passion for what she sees as a major issue. The Government also believes it is a major issue, but I am advised that the bill may create some complexities. The Government's lack of support for the bill does not represent a lack of support for the member for Murray more broadly. It is more about the unintended complexities that the bill may create. The Government is committed to taking meaningful action to protect communities from the potential impacts of non-strategic water buybacks by the Commonwealth. While we share many of the same goals, the New South Wales Government's approach to achieving them differs from that of the member for Murray.

The Minister for Water has been a tireless advocate in this portfolio. I discussed this matter with the Hon. Rose Jackson, who advised me that she has had good consultations with the member for Murray and is working alongside her every way she can. I commend the Minister for that, as I also of course commend the member for Murray. I was advised that some weeks ago the Minister met with the member for Murray in Deniliquin to try to get a better understanding of the views of the community. I know the Minister is in touch with regional and rural issues, which is why she and the good member for Murray met with that community. The Minister made it clear to me that the Government supports the Commonwealth's commitment to deliver the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full. However, she has also been clear that this cannot be achieved without more time, funding and flexibility, which unfortunately could be hampered by the passage of the bill.

More specifically, the bill may prohibit the right of farmers and other water users to sell their water licences freely and restrict legitimate water trading purposes overall. For some farmers and water users, the option to sell water licences could help to unlock other investment opportunities. Looking at the financial circumstances that many local communities find themselves in, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales, we see it is very important that they have the flexibility to make financial decisions in their best interests. Our valued farmers run probably the oldest commercial activities, which have driven our economy since Federation. They know all too well that they require flexibility in these challenging times.

The bill, which is the culmination of a lot of work by the member for Murray, is representative of what she feels is most important in addressing this issue. By not accepting the recent agreement with the Commonwealth to deliver the Basin Plan, Victoria has not avoided buybacks in that State. On this side of the border, the New South Wales Government is prioritising having constructive and robust conversations with the Commonwealth and other basin States, because that is what delivers results. We need to be clear and reflect on the past and the previous Government's inaction, which has ultimately put us in a situation that has become even more complex and challenging to manage. Had the previous Government taken appropriate steps and more action, I believe we would be in a different circumstance and better placed to move forward. However, as we know, that is simply not the case.

The Government will continue to advocate strongly on behalf of farmers, irrigators and other water users to minimise the social and economic impacts of water buybacks on New South Wales communities and the water market. As we move into summer, it is important to note that the climatic forecasts are not looking the best for many of our farmers, irrigators and those who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. It is also important to be very clear that we are in this situation because of the perpetual undermining of the Basin Plan by the National Party—and I do not say that lightly. I have always believed we should never seek fortune from another's misfortune. Farmers and irrigators in affected communities are now paying the price because a government did not take this matter seriously and give it the attention it deserves.

When we reflect on the past, I believe we must not be distracted by the past. We must reflect on the past to see what did not happen and the mistakes that were made to ensure that we map a plan for the future that addresses those issues. As I previously stated, the member for Murray has introduced the bill with good intentions and with a passion for her community. But it is a bit like the light on the hill—we know where we want to get to; it is just the route to get there that differs.

I end my contribution by reiterating the Government's position and commitment to find a better resolution to the issues concerning the Murray-Darling Basin, particularly when it comes to water management in our State. That will only happen when we work cooperatively with the other basin States. The water Minister is working very hard to achieve that, not just for the Government but for a better outcome for those affected communities. As I mentioned, I knew the bill was coming and I wanted to make a contribution. In my electorate of Campbelltown we do not have the same issues as those down south; however, I have visited the Murray electorate with the member for Murray. It is important to acknowledge the work that she is doing as well as the Government's commitment to find a resolution.

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden) (12:51):** I oppose the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. I will outline certain aspects of the bill and why I oppose it. The purpose of the bill is to restrict the transfer of water access licences to the Commonwealth or the State, unless certain conditions are met. First, requiring that the Minister for Water not register a transfer of an access licence to the Commonwealth or the State; or a Minister, public servant, agent, public authority, agency or subsidiary of the Commonwealth or the State without there first being an assessment undertaken that demonstrates the transfer causes neutral or positive socio-economic impacts. Secondly, that the assessment of socio-economic impacts must have regard to the following criteria:

- (a) production output levels,
- (b) employment levels and diversity,
- (c) individual and business incomes,
- (d) costs of carrying on businesses,
- (e) changes to working conditions, including hours worked and health and safety conditions,
- (f) psychological wellbeing levels, including in relation to stress, happiness, security, family harmony and the ability to undertake leisure activities,
- (g) access to, and the level of provision of, social services.

My time in this place has been relatively short, and I am very aware that our situation in Camden is, unlike the Murray electorate, often a situation of too much water. However, from talking to my colleagues and watching this House over time, I have nothing but respect for how the member for Murray continually fights for the people in her community. Her concern for her community and her seeking to ensure that the recovery of environmental water does not negatively impact on the water security of regional communities and their ability to have a strong economy is paramount in her thinking and advocacy. I acknowledge, publicly on record, that the member is a genuine and passionate advocate for her community.

Unfortunately, the current drafting of the bill is impractical and may generate more problems than it will solve. The bill may prohibit farmers and other water users to freely sell their water licences and overall restrict legitimate water-trading purposes. It will also add layers of bureaucracy and lengthy assessments that will cost significant time and money. We know that people are crying out for us to reduce the layers of bureaucracy and lengthy assessments so that they can get things in a timely manner.

Some have claimed that the bill is similar to the moratorium that the Victorian Government imposed on buybacks and therefore would bring New South Wales in line with Victoria; however, that is not correct. By not agreeing to the recent agreement with the Commonwealth on delivering the Basin Plan, the Victorian Government has not avoided buybacks happening in its State. Like Victoria, we have been clear in New South Wales that we do not support buybacks. Unlike members opposite, we welcome the opportunity to have a seat at the table with our Federal counterparts. We would like to prioritise having constructive and robust conversations with the Commonwealth and other basin States because that is how we will deliver the results that we need. Those conversations mean that policies can be meaningful and constructive to better the outcomes for everyone in New South Wales and across the country.

We have put our energy into prioritising investment in infrastructure projects that recover water for the environment and deliver good Basin Plan outcomes. We have projects like off-farm water efficiency projects that enable water users to upgrade their infrastructure. The Government will continue to listen to and strongly advocate for farmers, irrigators and other water users to minimise the social and economic impacts of water buybacks in New South Wales communities and the water market.

The bill seeks to amend the Water Management Act 2000 to prevent the Minister for Water from registering a transfer in the access register under the Act unless an assessment has been undertaken. Unfortunately, we need to oppose the bill because it has some drafting shortcomings that may create a potential constitutional dispute. As we have said, there are some issues with making sure that we are working with the Commonwealth Government to get a solution that works across the board. It poses significant implementation challenges and is a regulatory burden. The idea is to make sure that we have a regulatory framework that makes life easier, not harder, for the people of New South Wales. The bill will also apply indiscriminately across New South Wales, including to coastal and metropolitan areas. When we look at the bills that are introduced in the House, it is important to recognise that this bill will affect the whole of New South Wales. It removes options from agricultural and water-dependent businesses which could cause those businesses stress. It will cost them time and money to apply for a transfer through this new bureaucracy that involves lengthy assessments, which could be very devastating for them.

The bill could ultimately lead to a forced reduction in water allocations in New South Wales if water recovery cannot be completed. The longer I am in this place the more I realise that every issue that we face is a lot more complex than it first appears. It is certainly much more complex than it appears in the media. Often the topics we discuss in this Chamber have unforeseen flow-on effects—excuse the pun. The bill could have some flow-on effects. While I commend the intent behind the bill and I understand where the member is coming from, the bill has some unintended consequences that are problematic and may be impactful to the people of New South Wales. Therefore, I oppose the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill. While some excellent ideas are contained in the bill, unfortunately it has some drafting issues which will have unintended consequences, and other users—agricultural and water-dependent businesses—that need access to that water would be adversely affected. The idea that there are ongoing problems with the bill is the reason I oppose it. However, I commend the member for Murray for bringing the bill before the House and allowing us to debate it.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (12:59):** I contribute to debate on the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. The purpose of the bill is to restrict the transfer of water access licences to the Commonwealth of the State unless certain conditions are met. To achieve that, the bill would require the Minister for Water to not register the transfer of an access licence to the Commonwealth of the State, or a Minister, public servant, agent, public authority, agency or subsidiary of the Commonwealth of the State, without there first being an assessment undertaken that demonstrates that the transfer causes neutral or positive socio-economic impacts.

The bill would also have to prescribe that the assessment of socio-economic impacts must have regard to production output levels; employment levels and diversity; individual and business incomes; costs of carrying on businesses; changes to working conditions, including hours worked and health and safety conditions; psychological wellbeing levels, including stress, happiness, security, family harmony and the ability to undertake leisure activities; access to, and the level of provision of, social services. The bill would also require the Minister for Water to publish a report on the assessment.

I certainly understand the sentiment behind the bill; however, in its current drafting, the bill is impractical. Furthermore, the current drafting of the bill would potentially create more issues than it would solve. As legislators, the aim should be to streamline services and regulations, not convolute them. That is one of the biggest problems with the bill. The importance of farmers for providing produce and products that we consume daily should never be understated. The aim should be to assist farmers, not bind their hands with more red tape. The bill has the potential to prohibit farmers and other water users from freely selling their water licences which, in turn, would restrict legitimate water trading. This could restrict farmers and other water users from pursuing other investment opportunities.

As I mentioned before, the bill will simply bind the hands of farmers and other water users with more red tape. It will add more layers of bureaucracy and result in lengthy assessments that ultimately cost more time and money. Make no mistake about it, those implications will have a flow-on effects and every community throughout our State will feel those impacts. If farmers or water users are forced to endure a greater financial burden, those costs would likely have to be passed on to the customers further down the supply chain. There have been claims that the Victorian Government has imposed a moratorium on buybacks similar to this bill, so this bill would essentially bring New South Wales in line with our counterparts to the south. That is simply not true. The Victorian Government has not avoided buybacks simply because it did not agree with the Commonwealth Government on a recent agreement regarding the Basin Plan. New South Wales, like Victoria, has been crystal clear that we do not support buybacks.

The New South Wales Government has made it a priority to engage in sensible, practical and robust conversations with the Commonwealth Government and other basin States because we know that is the best way forward for everyone. By engaging in these conversations with our Federal counterparts, there is a greater opportunity to establish policies that are constructive and achieve positive change. Our energy and attention are focused on prioritising investment in projects that recover water from the environment and, in turn, deliver positive outcomes for the Basin Plan.

One example is off-farm wind and water-efficient projects. These ultimately enable water users to upgrade their infrastructure. It is the New South Wales Government's role to not only support farmers, irrigators and water users but also advocate for them. The aim should be to minimise the social and economic impacts of water buybacks on New South Wales communities. The bill, unfortunately, would create a greater burden to farmers and water users. In its current form, I certainly cannot support the bill or the negative outcomes that it would deliver for farmers and other water users.

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (13:04):** I oppose the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. But I say before the House that the member for Murray is a cracker human being and does an amazing job advocating for her community. She is a good friend in this place, so it is tough to oppose a bill that she has

brought before the House with heart and care for her community. I tell a story behind the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Friends of mine in wheelchairs in the very early eighties went kayaking down the Murrumbidgee River. At that stage, they were able to camp on the sides of the river in their chairs. It was a lovely experience of a slow, meandering trip down the river. They went to do a 25-year anniversary kayak and the river was absolutely scoured out, with nowhere that they could camp on the edge of the river.

The way that non-Aboriginal people have used the river and what we have done to the waterways definitely need to change. The way that we manage the river must also change, hence the birth of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, government interventions in water harvesting, and discussions in Parliament about this. I thank the member for Murray for the interest and understanding that she has brought to the House about the importance of water and its impacts on communities up and down the Murray-Darling Basin. However, the bill contains significant issues in drafting, leading to unintended consequences for our regional communities and water users across New South Wales. For this reason, I oppose the bill.

The Government supports the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full. However, it is important to be clear that the Government does not support water buybacks. It has been clear in this position, and the position has not changed. I reinforce that both State and Federal governments over the previous years have put a handbrake on moving forward with this, so it is with a sense of real urgency that the New South Wales Government commits to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan now. The State Government will continue to hold the Commonwealth to account in the process of buyback programs, ensuring that we reach the fairest deal for communities and farmers across New South Wales.

The New South Wales Government believes that water recovery can be achieved in other ways through strategic investment. It has reached an agreement with the Australian Government that will allow for more time for New South Wales to implement projects, minimising any risk of future water buybacks. Importantly, the agreement provides for a \$700 million investment in regional New South Wales. The New South Wales Government has been clear that achieving the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, one of the most important environmental plans of our time, requires funding and flexibility.

This flexibility is of the utmost importance. The bill would significantly impact flexibility for water users. The bill would require assessment of socio-economic and environmental impacts, with unclear time frames for assessment and a lack of clarity about who is responsible for the buybacks. As such, the bill seriously restricts water users seeking to sell their access licences, significantly slowing down and stalling New Wales water users' flexibility across this space. The red tape and agony of being involved in government circumstance is something that we do not want to increase any more for the people across New South Wales.

Importantly, it is anticipated that the bill may create significant unintended legal and constitutional issues by placing trade restrictions on New South Wales licence holders. The behaviour of the previous Government placed projects in jeopardy due to unsound legal grounding and a lack of care for legal rules, and this Government will not risk that. The risk of legal and constitutional challenges by the Commonwealth in the High Court is not a risk that the New South Wales Government is willing to take. Action in this space must be highly considered, taking into account the need for swift action while balancing the need for substantive action to protect the Murray-Darling Basin. The risk of protracted legal and constitutional action risks further delays in achieving our goals for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We cannot take that risk.

The restrictions that the bill would place on New South Wales water users are of utmost importance. By removing the option for water users to sell water licences, the bill would not allow businesses to manage their business their way, diversify their assets or pay down debt. All members in this place have seen the devastating impacts of drought on our farmers. Our farmers have done it extremely tough. They do not deserve undue pressures that would place further burden on their business practices.

Lastly, by applying indiscriminately across New South Wales, the bill would also limit water users in coastal and metropolitan areas, including the Central Coast. I recently had the opportunity to visit the Mangrove Mountain Plateau Chamber of Commerce for its annual general meeting and listen to stories of our agricultural community over the past year. I thank the farmers in my community and farmers across New South Wales for working hard to keep agriculture alive and prospering in our State. I thank the member for Murray for bringing the bill to the House. Unfortunately, in this circumstance, we cannot support the bill.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (13:10):** I make a contribution to debate on the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. I represent a community that benefits from the extraordinary contributions made by the people, the organisations and the communities of the Murray-Darling Basin. Although we may not live in the basin, we benefit extraordinarily from it. Therefore we are all invested in the future prosperity and the protection of this incredibly important arterial river system. I thank the member for Murray for bringing this private member's bill to the Parliament, which seeks to amend the New South Wales

Water Management Act 2000 to restrict the transfer of water access licences to the Commonwealth or the State unless certain conditions are met.

In effect, the bill would significantly slow down, if not stall, New South Wales water users from voluntarily selling their water access licences to the Commonwealth for environmental water recovery under the Basin Plan or for other purposes. I understand that the member for Murray is particularly concerned about the socio-economic impacts of recovery of the 450 gigalitres of additional environmental water under the Basin Plan. Although I support the sentiments of the member for Murray in bringing this private member's bill, I cannot support the bill in its current form. The current drafting of the bill is impractical and may generate more problems than it will solve.

The bill may prohibit farmers and other water users the right to freely sell their water licences and overall restrict the legitimate water trading purposes. For some farmers and water users, the option to sell water licences could help unlock other investment opportunities for them. The bill will add layers of bureaucracy and lengthy assessments that will cost significant time and money. That will have a statewide impact, not just in the southern basin communities but also across coastal, metropolitan and other regions. There have been claims that the Victorian Government has imposed a moratorium on buybacks similar to this bill and therefore this bill would bring New South Wales in line with Victoria. That is not correct. By not agreeing to the recent agreement with the Commonwealth on delivering the Basin Plan, Victoria has not avoided buybacks happening in that State.

New South Wales has been clear that we do not support buybacks, just as Victoria has been. New South Wales is prioritising having constructive and robust conversations with the Commonwealth and other basin States, because that is what delivers results. Unlike those opposite, we welcome the opportunity to have a seat at the table with our Federal counterparts. Conversations mean that policies can be meaningful and constructive to better the outcomes of everyone in New South Wales and across the country. By absenting ourselves from the table, we do nobody any favours—especially those communities that are reliant on having a constructive plan to help resolve this issue. We have to put our energy into prioritising the investment in infrastructure projects that recover the water for the environment and deliver good Basin Plan outcomes.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan is one of the most significant environmental reforms in our history. We want to make sure that the plan delivers the environmental outcomes intended, while supporting regional communities and industries. The New South Wales Government supports the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full, which means that we want to see the extraction of water within sustainable diversion limits. We want to make sure that all 20 of our water resource plans are fully accredited by the Commonwealth and then that our sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism projects are delivered, as well as ensuring that the contribution towards the target of 450 gigalitres of additional environmental water is met. However, we know that it is not possible for all of those commitments to be delivered by the deadline in the Basin Plan: 30 June 2024.

New South Wales has been seeking more time to deliver projects and more flexibility to maximise the water recovery efforts so that the environmental outcomes intended under the Basin Plan can be achieved. To be clear, the New South Wales Government does not support water buybacks and its position on that has not changed. We will proactively put forward projects to the Australian Government this year to support water recovery and reduce the risk of buybacks. The agreement reached with the Australian Government will provide more time for delivery, as we have previously requested, as well as a pathway for new projects to be brought forward.

If the Australian Government does not pursue buybacks, it must take a balanced and strategic approach designed to minimise and mitigate social and economic impacts on communities, industries and the water market. Any negative social and economic impacts associated with water buybacks must be minimised and mitigated, and New South Wales has pushed the Australian Government to provide substantial structural adjustment support to affected communities. As New South Wales has not yet completed its water resource plans, the formal sustainable diversion limit [SDL] compliance has not yet been assessed by the Inspector-General of Water Compliance. However, New South Wales does undergo SDL compliance assessment each year under a bilateral agreement with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. New South Wales has been noncompliant in the Barwon-Darling, according to the SDL assessment, and agreed to a make-good plan with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. With modelling improvements, this should now come into SDL compliance.

As I said before, although the intention and the focus of the bill is one that I think members in this House would appreciate and have empathy with, I cannot speak in favour of it because of the drafting of the bill. I acknowledge that the Murray-Darling Basin and the communities and the organisations that serve the economic prosperity of our State are hugely important. We all need to make sure that we get this right and work together to achieve constructive outcomes in this space.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr David Layzell):** Before I call the member for The Entrance, I welcome to the public gallery the hardworking Mayor Steve Reynolds and General Manager Derek Finnigan of Muswellbrook Shire Council. They are regular visitors to Macquarie Street, banging on the doors. I thank them for their hard work on behalf of the people of the Upper Hunter.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (13:17):** I contribute to debate on the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. The Murray-Darling drainage basin is the nation's largest river network. It is a hugely complex and important environmental, economic and social part of the fabric of this nation. The drainage basin rises in southern Queensland, and drains most of western New South Wales and most of Victoria before exiting in South Australia. It supports more than two million Australian citizens and more than 7,000 irrigated agricultural businesses. It also supports more than \$22 billion worth of agriculture each year. Those factors, and the future of that very important resource for our nation, have been the subject of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The plan was initially entered into, more or less by consensus, in 2012. Since the idea of the plan was settled on by State and Federal governments, there has been more or less agreement. The development and the implementation of the plan has ebbed and flowed based upon the weight given to the commitment and the emphasis on its implementation by various State and Federal governments since that time. The position of the New South Wales Government is very clear: we support the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. We do not support water buybacks.

The New South Wales Government supports the Commonwealth's commitment to deliver the plan in full; however, we have made clear to the Commonwealth, through the water Minister, that that cannot be achieved without more time, more flexibility and more funding in place. In that context the member for Murray has introduced the bill. I commend her for her efforts. It is a huge piece of work and reflects her commitment to her area and to this subject and to doing what she believes is the right thing by her constituency. The bill will amend the Water Management Act 2000, the Constitution Act 1902 and the Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 1983 as follows:

- (a) to require holders and co-holders of water access licences to hold a UIN, a unique identification number allocated to a person for the WM Act,
- (b) to make amendments relating to the Water Access Licence Register ...
- (c) to impose requirements relating to the holders ... of rights to exercise entitlements conferred by an access licence, or a holding in an access licence, held by an irrigation corporation,
- (d) to provide for a code of conduct for brokers,
- (e) to require annual reporting of the foreign beneficiaries of trusts that have an interest in a water access licence,
- (f) to require Members of Parliament to publicly disclose interests in water access licences held by the Member or the Member's spouse,
- (g) to make other minor or consequential amendments ...

Savings and transitions have also been built in. It is a huge piece of work and, as I said, it is a credit to the member for Murray that the bill has been brought before the House. It reflects her keen interest and the time she has spent endeavouring to craft a piece of legislation to serve the interests of her constituents. As stated by members on this side of the House, the New South Wales Government does not support the bill. The Minister said that the Government supports the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full. We believe that the Commonwealth needs to allow more time for the plan to be properly implemented. It needs to be more flexible in the implementation and provide more funding to prioritise water recovery through infrastructure rather than buybacks.

In that context, the Government opposes the bill. I encourage the member for Murray to continue to engage with the Government on this issue. I know the Minister has met regularly with her on it. The work that the member is doing in the context of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is important. It holds the Government to account. It provides an opportunity for her constituents to engage on the plan and with different levels of government, and to raise issues that the Government will need to respond to as part of the implementation of the plan. Again, I commend the member for Murray. One of the reasons she was re-elected earlier this year, even though she is no longer a member of the political party that she was originally elected to represent, is her fierce commitment to and fierce advocacy on behalf of the people of her electorate, and her ability to bring to the House issues of importance to her constituency in the manner that she has done today. The Government opposes the bill.

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (13:24):** I oppose the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. The Fifty-Eighth Parliament of New South Wales is dedicating considerable time to scrutinising legislation related to the Murray-Darling Basin. I acknowledge the hard work and passionate advocacy of the member for Murray on behalf of her region. The Murray-Darling Basin Plan is one of the most significant

environmental reforms in our history. We want to see the plan deliver the environmental outcomes intended while supporting regional communities and industries. The New South Wales Government supports the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full. That means we want to see the extraction of water within the sustainable diversion limits and all 20 of our water resource plans fully accredited by the Commonwealth. We want to implement our sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism projects and the contribution towards the target of 450 gigalitres of additional environmental water.

We know that it is just not possible for all those commitments to be delivered by the 30 June 2024 deadline in the Basin Plan, which is why New South Wales has been seeking more time to deliver projects and more flexibility to maximise water recovery efforts so that environmental outcomes intended under the Basin Plan can be achieved. To be clear, the New South Wales Government does not support water buybacks and our position on that has not changed. We want to see the Australian Government prioritise investment in recovering water through other ways, and we are committed to taking meaningful action to protect communities from the potential impacts of the non-strategic buyback of water by the Commonwealth. If the Australian Government does pursue buybacks, those buybacks must take a balanced and strategic approach and must be designed to minimise and mitigate social and economic impacts on communities, industries and the water market.

To that end, New South Wales is prioritising having constructive and robust conversations with the Commonwealth and other basin States, because that is what delivers results. Unlike members opposite, we welcome the opportunity to have a seat at the table with our Federal counterparts, and to have concrete conversations to ensure that policies can be meaningful and constructive to better the outcomes of everyone in New South Wales and across the country. We will be proactively putting forward projects to the Australian Government this year to support water recovery and to reduce the risk of buybacks. While I understand why the member for Murray has brought the bill forward, I am concerned that the current drafting may only further complicate the already complicated way in which water is managed in New South Wales. The bill may prohibit farmers and other water users the right to freely sell their water licences and may restrict legitimate water trading purposes overall, meaning that, for some farmers and water users, the option to sell water licences that could potentially help unlock other investment opportunities for them will be denied.

The bill will add layers of bureaucracy and lengthy assessments that will cost significant time and money and those delays will have a statewide impact—not just in the southern basin communities but across coastal and metropolitan regions as well. The bill has a complicated relationship with the Commonwealth water policy. The legislation could mean that there is a potential for a lengthy and drawn-out dispute with the Commonwealth. As previously stated, the bill may have unintended effects because, by effectively removing the option to sell water licences, it reduces the ability and flexibility of water users to manage their businesses their way. As we move into an El Niño weather pattern, that could remove opportunities for water users to droughtproof their businesses and diversify funds. With a forecasted dry spell on the horizon, the Government fully supports the delivery of the Basin Plan in full to ensure that enough water remains in the river system to protect our rivers and wetlands.

While the Government supports many of the same principles that the member for Murray is asking for, we need the flexibility to negotiate with the Commonwealth. We need to continue to hold the Commonwealth to account in the way it rolls out any buyback programs so that we can ensure that we are getting the best deal possible for our regional communities. While I commend the member for Murray for her good intentions and her strong advocacy on behalf of her community, I do not support the bill.

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (13:29):** I speak in opposition to the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. I acknowledge the member for Murray, who introduced this private member's bill on 29 June this year seeking to amend the Water Management Act 2000 to restrict the transfer of water access licences to the Commonwealth or the State unless certain conditions are met. The member for Murray is a passionate advocate for her electorate and regional New South Wales. While I have not known the member for Murray for a long time, I have gauged very quickly that her advocacy and tenacity with regard to water issues is second to none. As someone who also grew up on a farm and understands the importance of this precious resource to rural communities, I recognise the member's sustained advocacy on behalf of her community and the people of New South Wales.

I appreciate the concerns of the member for Murray for her community and that the member is seeking to ensure that the recovery of environmental water does not negatively impact on regional communities' water security and their ability to have a strong economy. In response, the New South Wales Government is taking meaningful action to protect communities from the potential impacts of the non-strategic buyback of water by the Commonwealth. While we share many of the same goals, the approach taken by the Government to achieve those goals differs to that of the member for Murray. The Minister for Water is in touch with regional and rural issues and is fully aware of the concerns that have led the member to introduce the bill. That is why the New South

Wales Government continues to call for ongoing investment in and prioritisation of water recovery by the Commonwealth through projects rather than buybacks.

The Minister for Water has said that our Government supports the Commonwealth Government's commitment to deliver the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full, emphasising that this cannot be achieved without more time, funding and flexibility. Flexibility is the key to success. It is the view of the Government that flexibility would be hampered by the passage of the bill. We are in a challenging situation. Due to neglect and delays caused by the previous Government over the past decade, we are massively behind on delivering our commitments under the Basin Plan. We are directing our efforts to working effectively with other water Ministers, because that is where the robust negotiations and decisions to protect New South Wales communities take place.

There is no doubt that the Commonwealth must consider fresh and innovative ideas to meet the water recovery targets under the Basin Plan without causing significant impacts to regional communities. However, if the Commonwealth Government follows through on its intent to pursue water recovery through buybacks, then we must ensure the buybacks are done strategically. We will demand that significant support is provided to our communities to mitigate the negative social and economic impacts that may result. It is important that we continue to hold the Commonwealth to account in the way it rolls out any buyback program so we can ensure that we are getting the best and fairest deal for our regional communities.

Nature shows no mercy. We cannot be complacent, particularly with another dry spell on the way. Our Government will support the delivery of the Basin Plan in full to ensure that enough water remains in the river system to protect its health, particularly in times of drought. We seek to protect our rivers and our wetlands, as well as helping communities to thrive through firm and constructive negotiations with the Commonwealth. For those who enjoy a history lesson, let me remind you that we got into this dire situation because of the perpetual undermining of the Basin Plan by none other than the National Party. Dragging its feet at every turn, it caused a lot of unnecessary misery. Yes, there is work to be done to get New South Wales back on track. Yes, there are very real legal risks, even though they are unintended. Yes, there is the strong possibility of constitutional challenges by the Commonwealth in the High Court, which is not a risk the New South Wales Government is willing to take.

The Minns Labor Government went to the election with a commitment to reduce red tape. If the bill were to pass, it would apply to all water licences in New South Wales, adding further unnecessary red tape, time and money to the process of transferring water licences across the State. The recent parliamentary inquiry found that water trading in New South Wales is already too complex, and we have no intention of making that situation worse. We must work together—all levels of government—to deliver the Basin Plan. It is important to avoid quarrelsome conflict with the Commonwealth, and the bill, if passed, would set the scene for a complicated relationship with Commonwealth water policy and legislation, even raising the potential for a protracted, costly and damaging dispute with the Commonwealth, plus the possibility of Constitutional litigation. That situation would be far from ideal.

I reaffirm my belief that the member has introduced the bill with all the best intentions. However, while our Government supports many of the same principles that the member is seeking, the focus must be on creating an environment that provides the flexibility to negotiate robustly and constructively with the Commonwealth. I do not believe the bill will work. Ten years of delays and ten years of neglect by the former Government has put us in the position we are in today. There is much to be done in New South Wales, and our Government is focused on the doing. I again acknowledge the member for Murray for her advocacy for her electorate and for rural, regional and remote New South Wales. I look forward to the member's continued contributions as our Government works with her and all stakeholders to deliver the Basin Plan.

**Mr STEPHEN BALI (Blacktown) (13:36):** I speak in support of the Government's position to oppose the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. At the outset I acknowledge and commend the member for Murray for her incredible advocacy on behalf of her community and the people of New South Wales, particularly on water issues. The member for Murray has been a tireless and passionate advocate for what she believes is the best way to move forward on this issue. She has spoken of it many times, whether through private member's statements or private member's bills discussing the importance of water rights and disclosures.

I note that the previous National Party Minister often spoke with vitriol to her, but the member for Murray responded coolly, with facts and data. I understand our Government's Minister for Water has had discussions with the member for Murray and will continue to have those discussions. Hopefully, the member for Murray is seeing a different level of consultation with us compared with the previous Government. Water issues in our State are something that I, the Government and the Minister for Water in the other place are equally passionate about, and I sympathise with the member for Murray having introduced the amendment bill. While the Government and the member for Murray share many of the same goals, we differ from each other on how best to achieve them.

The Murray-Darling Basin is Australia's largest and most complex river system. It accounts for about 14 per cent of Australia's landmass and spans four States and a Territory, representing 8 per cent of South Australia, 15 per cent of Queensland, more than 50 per cent of Victoria, the entirety of the Australian Capital Territory and 75 per cent of New South Wales. It is for that reason that in 2012 the then Federal Labor Government passed into law the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, an agreement between the Federal and State governments to share water between all users and the environment in a sustainable way. It is one of the most significant and important environmental reforms in the history of our State and of the country. That is why the Minns Labor Government in New South Wales is committed to delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full.

Unfortunately, there is a massive lag on delivering commitments under the Basin Plan due to the wasted decade of delay and neglect caused by the previous Liberals-Nationals Government. I share the frustration of the member for Murray on this fact. However, I do not believe the current drafting of the bill is the best solution. It is likely to generate more problems than it will solve, including adding layers of bureaucracy and lengthy assessments that will cost significant time and money. These delays will have a statewide impact, not just in southern basin communities but across metropolitan and coastal regions as well.

There have been claims that this bill would somehow bring New South Wales in line with the laws in Victoria, which imposed a moratorium on water buybacks. That is false. Just like Victoria, the Minns Labor Government in New South Wales does not support water buybacks. Our preference is investment into water recovery initiatives. The reality is that Victoria's laws have not prevented buybacks happening in that State. As long as the Commonwealth is intent on pursuing water recovery through buybacks, our hands are tied. Our focus then must be to hold the Commonwealth to account in the way it rolls out any buyback program, and to demand the best and fairest deal for our regional communities, including those in the electorate of the member for Murray. Once again, I reiterate my support for the member for Murray and her advocacy not just for the people of the Murray electorate but for all who rely on the Murray-Darling Basin. The Government supports many of the principles argued for by the member for Murray, but unfortunately I cannot support the bill in its current form.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (13:41):** I oppose the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023. In their contributions, several members have acknowledged the advocacy of the member for Murray on water issues and for her community. As a fellow rural member, I say to the member that our communities share the challenges of climate change, the resulting natural disasters and insecurity of water supply, and their effects on the local, State and national economies. The member and the New South Wales Government want to act responsibly in a way that avoids any negative impact on her community and the State. I also acknowledge that we share similar health issues. The member has advocated on the subject of women's health, including endometriosis, and her issues dealing with radiation oncology in her electorate.

The object of the Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023 is to amend the Water Management Act 2000 to restrict the transfer of water access licences to the Commonwealth or the State unless certain conditions are met. The proposed new section applies to transfers of water access licences to the Commonwealth and the State, and to Ministers, public servants, agents, public authorities, agencies or subsidiaries of the Commonwealth and the State. The proposed new section prevents the Minister for Water from registering a transfer of this type in the access register under the Water Management Act unless an assessment has been undertaken and a report on the assessment has been published on a publicly available website that demonstrates the transfer causes neutral or positive socio-economic impacts and neutral or positive environmental impacts in the locality, being the relevant New South Wales water tagging zone or, if there is no relevant zone, the State.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan is obviously one of the most important environmental reforms in our history. As a government, we want to see the plan deliver the environmental outcomes intended while supporting regional communities and industries. The New South Wales Government supports implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full. That means that we want to see extraction of water within the sustainable diversion limits and all 20 of our water resource plans fully accredited by the Federal Government. Our sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism projects must be delivered and a contribution made to the target of 450 gegalitres of additional environmental water. We also acknowledge that it is not possible for all these commitments to be delivered by the 30 June 2024 deadline in the Basin Plan. New South Wales has been seeking more time to deliver projects.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The time for consideration of general business orders of the day has expired. I set down resumption of the interrupted debate as an order of the day for a later hour. I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

*Motions***GOULBURN POLICE ACADEMY GRADUATES**

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (14:32):** I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all police cadets from class 359 who graduated from the Goulburn Police Academy in August 2023.
- (2) Notes that 13 probationary constables have been allocated to the police area commands covering the Campbelltown electorate.
- (3) Thanks all our police for the fantastic work they do to keep our community safe.

We talk about many things in this place, and as the Temporary Speaker often says, acknowledging those in our community who contribute so much to our society is very important. Let us be honest: There are not too many more important things to families, communities, businesses and our society than being safe. It is the responsibility of the NSW Police Force—the biggest one in the country—to do that day in, day out. Around 20,000 police officers serve in our communities, keeping families safe every day. I say around 20,000, because of course the numbers fluctuate. I was talking to the former police Minister, and at times the number has been as high as 22,000. At the end of the day, that is an enormous amount of people making a massive contribution.

The service they provide and the dangers they face every day represent their commitment to not only the NSW Police Force but also the community they serve. We must always remember that many police officers serve in communities that they were born and raised in, particularly in rural and regional areas. I know that is the case as I grew up in Dubbo in the Central West of New South Wales. Many police officers aspire to go back to their hometown to serve and protect their community. More specifically, class 359 graduated 159 new probationary constables who will serve from Ballina to Broken Hill and in my beloved Campbelltown as well. Those 159 new probationary constables join the front line in defence against many different crimes committed in communities every day.

Police do a wonderful job in many ways, arresting crooks and getting them off the streets so our communities stay safe. They do that day in and day out. They also do a lot of other things. They provide support to local, marginalised communities to ensure that they get the education they need, particularly from a crime prevention perspective, and particularly in domestic violence. We know that 40 per cent to 70 per cent of the police workload is dependent on the command to address domestic and family violence throughout our communities. That is a startling number. But the most frightening part is that it is a real number. Most of those recruits are Australian born, but many of them are from other countries—new Australians. That includes officers born in Iraq, the Philippines, England, New Zealand, Afghanistan, South Korea, Pakistan, Nepal and Saudi Arabia. I believe that is a representation of the diversity of our multicultural communities, particularly mine in south-west Sydney. It is representative of the diversity that exists within the NSW Police Force. That is something that it embraces, and so do we in this place.

Some good things are happening in the police space. I commend the Premier, the police Minister, the police commissioner and everyone who is taking every step to further strengthen and enhance our Police Force so that our officers get the resources and support that they need. There is no greater resource for the Police Force than more people—that human resource. The Government's announcement of pay for recruits while they study is a game changer. For more than 20 years police have had to pay to study. To be honest, I did not realise that was the case. Those recruits went to Goulburn to learn how to serve and protect the community, and they had to pay for it. Frankly, I think that is absurd and outrageous, but it has been fixed now and that is a very good thing.

The game-changing announcement is that from March 2024 student police officers will be employed as clerk grade 1/2 administrative employees on temporary, fixed-term contracts. They will receive a total salary of approximately \$30,984 over the 16-week study period. Current recruits at the academy will not be left worse off, with class 360 to receive a pro rata scholarship, and class 361 to receive a \$21,770 scholarship. I again thank all our police officers, particularly those who gave their lives protecting communities. I draw the attention of the House to Senior Constable Jim Affleck, who in 2001 was a Campbelltown police officer and died on the Hume Highway near Mark Evans Bridge while trying to apprehend a speeding stolen car. I remember that day vividly. On a positive note, earlier I was talking to the member for Blue Mountains. She has a young bloke in her office. He has just graduated from school and is aspiring to join the Police Force. The member for Blue Mountains is a dear friend of mine, and it is so heartening that she has a young bloke in the Parliament meeting the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. I wish Lucas all the best. I thank all police officers, who protect us every day, for their service.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst) (14:39):** I commend the member for Campbelltown for bringing the motion to the House. I acknowledge the work of our police officers across the State. I do not think there is a more

important profession. Police officers run towards danger when the natural instinct is to run in the opposite direction. They do it because they want to keep people safe. It is nice to speak about those who are becoming police officers across New South Wales.

I congratulate the 159 new probationary constables who graduated at Goulburn Police Academy on 18 August. They should feel a lot of pride and satisfaction in completing the course, as was expressed by the many attendees of the attestation service. Having attended a number of attestations, I know there is no prouder moment for those students than to graduate. There is also no prouder moment for their loved ones, families and teachers, as well as the communities they will be part of. Their training is not just academic but also physical and mental. It is one of the most demanding jobs. I commend them for taking on the profession.

The newest graduates from class 359 are men and women from different backgrounds, regions and parts of the country who went to Goulburn to train to be police officers in our communities. Since graduating, they have been deployed to police stations in regional, rural and metropolitan areas across the State. Some of them might have returned home; some might have travelled to new communities. There is no higher responsibility than serving the community. It is not just about the uniform that our police wear. It is about the partnership that they build within their local community. They build trust, care and respect from being part of the community. Forty-nine officers were deployed to regional areas and 110 went to metropolitan areas. Given the police shortages, those officers are a much welcome boost to boots on the ground in our communities.

All members agree that being a police officer comes with significant sacrifices. Members of the NSW Police Force continue to give outstanding service to our great State. They work 24/7, all year round. When we finish Parliament this year and enjoy our Christmas holidays, let us not forget to thank our police officers. Many of them will still be on duty because crime never stops. That is why our police never stop doing what they do. Their presence is a reassurance and gives a sense of security. They are committed to fostering a safe and thriving environment. We want each officer to know that their efforts are deeply appreciated. Again, I thank the member for Campbelltown for bringing the motion to the House today as it allows us to acknowledge our police irrespective of politics.

It can be confronting to start a new job. Everyone has experienced a first day of nerves and jitters, waiting with anticipation to see what will happen. On 21 August, when class 359 were allocated to police stations on their first day, after so much time training, they would have felt like part of the team. Becoming a police officer is not a light-hearted decision. There are many factors to consider, including the effects that the career will have on individuals. The job comes with sacrifices, including the constant threat of physical harm and the mental and emotional strain of dealing with crime, accidents and emergencies on a regular basis. That can take a toll on an officer's mental and emotional wellbeing. They may witness traumatic events.

We need to remember that it is not just a job that police officers turn up to every day. They deal with confrontational situations. The work also includes irregular hours, night shifts and work on weekends and holidays. It also goes beyond the immediate physical risks. Officers may face threats to their personal safety and to their families. Despite having to make those sacrifices, our police officers are driven by a sense of duty and a desire to serve our communities. As the shadow Minister for Police, I thank police officers across the State for their service, for continuing to stand up and for their great achievements in our communities.

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (14:46):** I make a short contribution to debate on the motion and thank the member for Campbelltown—my sort of neighbour—for bringing it to the House. Previous speakers have mentioned the incredibly valuable role of our police officers within our community, and I absolutely agree with that sentiment. It is important to explore the role of our local police commands not only in responding to serious and distressing crime but also in contributing to the economic development of our areas. One of my first meetings after I was elected as the member for Liverpool was with Adam White, the commander of the Liverpool City Police Area Command. He was incredibly frank in talking through the challenges, the opportunities and the work that he and his team do within our area.

As a growing area, Liverpool has significant challenges to ensure that we protect the existing communities and residents as well as the growing number of people moving into our area. The 159 new probationary constables who graduated as part of class 359 will often respond to issues in emerging areas like Liverpool. I note that south-west Sydney received about 32 graduates. It is fantastic to see that the recruits were from right across the world, with some being born in Iraq, the Philippines, England, New Zealand, Afghanistan, South Korea, Pakistan, Nepal and Saudi Arabia. Six of the new recruits from the more recent class are Indigenous Australians, and they will be fantastic role models and leaders in their communities.

Perceptions of safety are incredibly important to ensure that local businesses are better patronised so that we have thriving local economies in our areas. Recently I attended the launch of Liverpool's Little India, where it was pointed out that perceptions of safety were a key priority for economic development. I will be working very

closely with my local command to ensure that those things come together. The fact that such a diverse class is going into the Police Force is incredibly important for an increasingly multicultural south-west Sydney. In responding to issues like domestic and family violence and the many challenges that exist, having a diverse workforce will ensure that we can better meet those demands. I know that multicultural officers in the Parramatta area were at the heart of ensuring that resources were created and deployed to assist them when responding to incidents of dowry-based abuse. In many other commands across New South Wales, similar projects and initiatives are taking place. Once again, I commend and thank the member for moving this motion. I look forward to seeing what impact the graduates will make.

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange) (14:50):** I make a brief contribution to debate on this motion, moved by my colleague the member for Campbelltown. I thank him for moving a motion to discuss the great work that New South Wales police are doing. I also note that the previous police Minister—my colleague down the highway, the member for Bathurst—also spoke on this very important motion. Class 359 is nearly 100 classes after I joined the NSW Police Force in 1995. I was class 261.

**Mr Stephen Bali:** Is there anyone left?

**Mr PHILIP DONATO:** There might be a few, but not many. I congratulate the police graduates from class 359 who have embarked on their police career, 13 of whom went to the western region. One has been deployed to the Central West Police District, which is terrific, but we could certainly do with some more. There are police resource shortages across the State. These days it is becoming increasingly challenging for our police officers to maintain law and order. They play an important, pivotal role in our local communities, especially in the regions, where our police really embed themselves in their local communities. Often they are members of local sporting groups and clubs and are involved in coaching, teaching and mentoring. They play a range of different and important roles in their local communities.

There is an element of danger and risk every time a police officer goes to work, and that should never be forgotten by any member in this Chamber. Every time they put on their uniform and go to work, there is always the thought in the back of their mind about whether they will come home at the end of their shift and if they will see their husband or wife and children. We should always recognise and pay specific attention to the element of risk that comes with being a police officer, because it is not an easy job. It is easy to sit back, scrutinise and be critical of police responses and actions but, by and large, the police overwhelmingly do an amazing job, often in very difficult and trying conditions, and we should all acknowledge the work they do.

Policing is a remarkable career. So many different avenues and pathways can be taken after joining the Police Force, which is what I was attracted to. I get quite bored doing the same thing over and over, so I liked the option of being able to specialise in different areas. From general duties, detectives and highway patrol to police prosecutions and rescue, there is a range of different policing agencies that police officers can partake in that make a policing career so unique.

I welcome the recent decision by this Government to pay police recruits attending the academy. I previously raised with the police Minister that not paying them was a real impediment and it deterred people from joining the Police Force. I am not surprised to see the huge spike in the number of people who have decided to join the NSW Police Force. Quality candidates will now want to join the Police Force, including maybe some who are changing their careers later in life. They may have commitments, families and children, but they would make excellent officers. That impediment of having to pay their own way and not having a guaranteed income for six or 12 months has been removed, so I congratulate the Government on making that announcement. I thank the police in our communities for the amazing job they do in trying conditions across New South Wales. I also thank the member for Campbelltown for moving this very important motion to provide an opportunity to talk about and acknowledge the great work that New South Wales police officers do.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank the member for his service in blue.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (14:55):** I am pleased to make a contribution to debate on this motion about the Goulburn police academy graduates. I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney, the member for Campbelltown, for moving this motion. As previous members have already said, not only is the NSW Police Force the finest police force in the world, it is also one of the largest. The new graduates from class 359 are probably the most highly educated in Australia. They have more qualifications than any other police force in the Commonwealth, and that says a lot. I welcome the 159 new probationary constables from class 359 at the academy and welcome them to the electorate of Prospect. It is amazing to think that the electorate has four area commands—Parramatta, Cumberland, Blacktown and Fairfield. My constituents deal with the NSW Police Force on a regular basis—almost daily—on one issue or another. Also, because we have such a multicultural community in Western Sydney, the NSW Police Force is integral to harmony and a key part of making my community the wonderful place it is.

The area commanders—in Parramatta, Superintendent Wayne Cox; in Cumberland, Superintendent Andrew Holland; in Blacktown, Superintendent Kirsty Heyward; and in Fairfield, Superintendent Michael McLean—are all outstanding leaders. They engage with their communities and help in any way they can, 24 hours a day. Fourteen probationary constables will be allocated to the area commands covering Prospect: two in Parramatta, two in Cumberland, two in Blacktown and five in Fairfield. I congratulate all the new officers on completing their training. I am glad to know they will be helping to keep my community in the Prospect electorate safe. It is wonderful to think that many of those graduates are from my community. They grew up in Western Sydney and reflect our multicultural community. Many are Australian-born but others come from places like Iraq, the Philippines, New Zealand, Afghanistan, South Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Nepal. That reflects Western Sydney in so many ways and it is just fantastic. Six of the new recruits are Indigenous. I do not know if they will come to my electorate, but Blacktown, to the north of my electorate, has one of the largest Aboriginal communities in New South Wales. I am pleased to welcome them as young leaders.

It is also fantastic to know that from March next year new recruits will get paid. From 2010, when I worked at Charles Sturt University and taught at the police academy in Goulburn and the graduate school of policing, I debated and argued with the Government that students should be paid, and finally they will be. The NSW Police Force was the only police force in Australia that was not paying its recruits. It was an absolute travesty and I am so pleased that it will change. Recruits will receive decent money for decent training and will graduate with associate degrees.

Despite the fact that we still need more police officers, I am so pleased that we have this intake. Every area command in Western Sydney has around a 20 per cent deficit in numbers, so we really need to recruit more police. The Minns Labor Government has said, "We will pay recruits to study and get through the academy and we will help recruit." The numbers show that this should have been done over a decade ago. I do not know why it was not, but I am pleased that this Government has defeated the evils of Treasury and convinced it to pay recruits. I thank the Premier and thank the NSW Police Force for the amazing work it does. I also thank the Police Association of New South Wales, which pushed for this reform.

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (14:59):** I contribute to the motion before the House concerning the New South Wales police department, of which I am a former member. I acknowledge that the member for Orange was also a member of the NSW Police Force. I joined the Police Force in 1980. I was out of class 167. That was a long time ago.

**Mr Stephen Bali:** Is that BC or AD?

**Mr MARK HODGES:** I will ignore the comment from the member. Back then being a police officer was a completely different type of job than it is now. The culture was different in the police department back then. The work was different, and we did not have the multitude of equipment that the Police Force has now. It was a great job, and it remains a great job. All police who serve in our State do a wonderful job. I recall going to the academy at Redfern—I did not go through the Goulburn academy—with all of the recruits from class 167, and the enjoyment that we all had in our three months of initial training and when we were passed out. I will pause to note that my father was also a distinguished police officer, having left the police department as a chief superintendent. My brother was a police officer. I am very much a person who has a great affinity with the New South Wales police department.

Over the years, the salaries in the police department have increased. They have certainly increased over the past 12 years, during the reign of the former Government. One of the issues that has given me some concern over the years is the culture of the police department, and strong leadership is required in this area. That leadership must come from the top. That is one thing that I, as a former policer officer, feel is very important with the police—apart from the salary. I must say I welcome the decision by the Government to increase the salaries of police officers. That is a great thing that the Government has done, and it will certainly go a long way to help the New South Wales police department maintain its numbers. But increasing the salary is not the only thing that will increase numbers in the police department; it is, as I said, the culture.

In the Castle Hill electorate—and I have spoken about this as recently as about a week ago with some of the police officers there—we have police officers who join and go through the academy, only to leave within a few weeks. Why somebody would do that—it can only be that once they get into the police department, they have some difficulty understanding what it is all about. Perhaps the Government and the police Minister should think about making sure that those people who go through the academy do have a greater understanding about what they are getting into. It does not help anyone to have a whole lot of police come in through the academy and start, only to then leave soon.

Many police stations are down in strength, and significantly so. Castle Hill, for instance, is down about 20 per cent. I was told the other day that Burwood is down to about 67 per cent of its actual strength, which would

make it down to about 33 per cent. The lack of numbers of police in New South Wales is an important factor. I truly hope that this Government—apart from doing what it has done to pay people going through the academy—takes appropriate steps to improve the culture of the Police Force so that it can retain those police officers.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank the member for his contribution and also for his service in the blue uniform.

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (15:03):** By leave: I contribute to debate on this motion and echo our Government's unwavering dedication to fortifying our Police Force and ensuring the safety of our communities. Recently the police Minister, alongside the police commissioner, extended a warm welcome to 159 new probationary constables from class 359, graduates of the police academy in August. Earlier today I met with the Minister and representatives from the Police Association, including from the Riverstone Police Area Command [PAC], who suggested that while we are doing a fantastic job so far, more needs to be done. It brings me great pleasure to affirm that this Government is resolutely committed to policing our State and securing the wellbeing of communities across New South Wales.

Riverstone lies in the heart of the north-west growth area, and its people deeply appreciate the Government's steadfast commitment to strengthen our Police Force. As our communities burgeon, so should our civil services, particularly the Police Force. The correlation between community growth and the need for enhanced civil services, exemplified by our police, is undeniable. Our Police Force is not merely a reactionary entity; it is an integral part of our community, which actively engages in education and awareness initiatives. One of the Riverstone police officers, Mel Rosevear, was recently awarded the top in the State for her community outreach efforts. It is the first time a Riverstone police officer has been awarded such a prestigious award.

Having witnessed firsthand the proactive nature of our Police Force officers, I can attest that they play a vital role in keeping our communities safe through information dissemination. I recently organised a police forum for the Riverstone electorate, where officers from the Riverstone PAC shared their valuable insights with the community on steps they can take to ensure the safety of themselves and their families. It is evident that a bolstering of our Police Force is crucial for managing its workload effectively. This entails prioritising active and passive policing strategies. The challenges faced by the Riverstone PAC, which is tasked with safeguarding one of the fastest-growing communities in New South Wales, are immense. The commitment and diligence exhibited by these officers is truly commendable. The dedication they bring to their duty is honourable, and the New South Wales Government is steadfast in its efforts to provide them with the support they need.

The induction of 159 new probationary constables, who will be spread from Ballina to Broken Hill, is a significant milestone. Three of those officers were sent to the Riverstone Police Station. These officers, hailing from not only Australia but also diverse corners of the world, enrich the cultural diversity of our Police Force and reflect the makeup of our communities. Importantly, the new probationary constables are becoming frontline defenders against domestic and family violence, which is a pervasive issue that sadly constitutes a significant portion of our police workload. Our commitment to addressing this insidious community epidemic is reflected in the NSW Police Force's ongoing domestic and family violence reforms, and the new recruits will play a pivotal role in turning the tide against such violence. Moreover, the Minns Government is making a substantial investment in community safety by allocating an additional 50 officers in the north-western and south-western regions over the next four years.

In recognising the importance of attracting the best talent to the Police Force, the Minns Government—in collaboration with the Minister for Police and Counterterrorism, the Premier, the police commissioner and the NSW Police Association—has introduced groundbreaking measures to support police recruits. For the first time in 20 years, we are paying new recruits to attend. That has already seen immediate results. Our Government is committed to the NSW Police Force for safety, justice and prosperity to prevail for all.

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (15:07):** By leave: I make a quick contribution to the motion. I commend the graduates of the recent police class who will embark on what is a very significant career. Growing up in Cabramatta and Fairfield, I have seen the impact police have on our community. They have the ability to transform a community for the better. As many would recall, Cabramatta was going through some significant drug and gang crime in the 1990s. Seeing the Police Force in gear in Cabramatta and working with the communities had a transformational effect on me. It inspired me to go through school and university and then to join the police, albeit the Federal Police, to make a contribution to protecting our society.

I commend the police recruits for what they have gone through, particularly as they now embark on their respective careers in the police area commands and display teamwork, sacrifice and excellence in making this society better. The Government's role is to protect society and the police do just that. I commend the police Minister for her initiative and making it easier for people to join the Police Force to further contribute to society.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank the member for Fairfield for his time in the uniform, protecting our communities.

**Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) (15:09):** In reply: I thank my colleagues who contributed to the important motion. More specifically, I thank the member for Bathurst and acknowledge his time as a former police Minister. He spoke about the importance of the partnership, trust, care and respect that police officers bring to our communities. He made a good point that, when we are out enjoying our Christmas holidays, these officers are out on the highways and roads making sure we are okay and protecting our communities. The member for Liverpool, as always, was specific and succinct in making reference particularly to the six Indigenous recruits that graduated, which is wonderful for engagement in our Indigenous communities.

I also acknowledge the member for Orange and his time as a police officer. He referred to another important factor of police involvement in sporting clubs and other clubs, like the PCYC, and the pathways that the police can provide into specialty roles, like detectives and investigations. I understand that the member for Orange was a police prosecutor at the tail end of his career. My colleague the member for Prospect, a Parliamentary Secretary, was on point when he said that police do so much to make our communities the great places that they are to live in. He is absolutely correct.

The member for Castle Hill joined the Police Force in 1980 AD and went through the Redfern academy in class 167. My brother was a police officer. He joined in Goulburn in the mid-80s or sometime around then. I think he was one of the first officers at the Goulburn academy. I remember Redfern and the officers who went through there. The member for Castle Hill served at Redfern, and his dad too. I am humbled to see members be proud of themselves and their families. He is right when he draws the attention of the House to the challenge of getting numbers into our police stations. That is not a matter of politics; it is a matter of pragmatism. The Government made good steps with its announcement on that. I am sure the previous Government did everything it could. That is important to acknowledge. The numbers are down and the culture is improving but, like the member for Castle Hill said, there is always more work to do to improve culture.

The member for Riverstone, referring to his outer Western Sydney electorate, was correct when he said that the dedication of police is honourable. Members of Parliament are called "honourable" from a protocol perspective, but in reality there is nothing more honourable a person can do than serve their community by keeping people safe. The member for Fairfield was a Federal Police officer. He was on point when he referred to the two pillars we all use: teamwork and sacrifice. I thank all members for their contributions. I know that every member in this place, irrespective of their side of the House, supports our local police, who ensure our safety. We may well take that for granted at times. In closing, I acknowledge that since 1962 a total of 276 police officers gave their lives in the line of duty. I also acknowledge my home police station, led by local area commander Grant Healey, and every police officer in Campbelltown.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank members for one of the nicest debates we have had in this place. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

## STATE FINANCES

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** Before I call the member for Hawkesbury, I point out to members how lovely it has been in the Chamber for the past 30 minutes. I ask that they continue their good behaviour for another 30 minutes, and then I am out of the chair and it will be the next Chair's problem.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (15:14):** Mr Temporary Speaker, I hope you retain that memory for quite some time. Enjoy it. I move:

That this House:

- (1) Commends the previous Government for its triple-A credit rating.
- (2) Condemns the Government for consistently making misleading statements that there is a massive budget deficit.
- (3) Calls on the Government to maintain this State's triple-A credit rating without contributing to inflation through pay rises to its union mates.

The previous Coalition Government can stand proudly on its economic management record—

**Mr Stephen Bali:** Really?

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** —which was reinforced by maintaining this State's triple-A rating. I hope I do not have a running commentary from Government members on every sentence I speak.

**Mr Stephen Bali:** As long as it's right.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** The member for Blacktown might learn something from this if he listens. The triple-A rating is the highest possible rating that can be given to a company or country and is awarded only when there is an extremely strong capacity to meet financial commitments. This gold standard means that a triple-A-rated borrower can usually secure a loan at a lower interest rate because there is much less risk that the loan will not be repaid. Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States have a triple-A credit rating. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government considered that achievement as a goal to strive for and maintain, even having endured a global pandemic.

New South Wales was the only State in Australia with a Moody's triple-A credit rating, which was retained despite allocating about \$45 billion to support people and businesses and to bolster the health system to combat COVID-19. Those back-to-back triple-A ratings recognise the previous Government's strong economic management during COVID-19. That was due to our diverse, resilient and flexible economy and world-leading response to COVID-19. The State's ability to manage our record \$108.5 billion infrastructure pipeline in the previous term of government—as we continued to invest in our economy, transport, health, education and innovative technologies—kept us excelling.

At this point, I acknowledge former Premier Dominic Perrottet and former Treasurer Matt Kean for maintaining an enviable standard of economic management of the State. The notion that the previous Liberal-Nationals Government left a massive budget deficit is false, misleading and irresponsible. I am sad to say that every member of the Minns Labor Government has been indoctrinated to say that statement in almost every motion they move. It is like they have a motion template that starts off with that untruth, and the dribble flows on from there.

There is no denying facts; they speak over the top of the lies. In fact, the strong financial management of New South Wales under the previous Coalition Government supported our credit rating and enabled the previous Government to continue to deliver on its record \$112.7 billion infrastructure program. New South Wales remained on track to return a surplus in the 2024-25 financial year. The State's net debt was projected to stabilise at about 14 per cent of gross State product by June 2026 compared with a projected 26.5 per cent for Victoria on 30 June 2026. The Minns Labor Government is clearly focused on different priorities to the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. People will look back at the Coalition's time in office and applaud the projects that were delivered. I am talking about NorthConnex, WestConnex, Sydney Metro Northwest and upgrades to Central Station.

**Mr Matt Cross:** And Woollahra station.

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON:** I thank the member for Davidson. Members of the Minns Labor Government like to stand for photo opportunities and say, "We went to Central and spoke about how great it is that we have this new appearance with everything upgraded." They cut the ribbons for something that we delivered. The education Minister, and Deputy Premier, has talked about how no education money was spent. There were 180 new or refurbished schools built in the previous term of the Coalition Government, and 280 new or upgraded hospitals were also delivered. That is a proud and undeniable legacy left by the previous Coalition Government.

The challenge for this Minns Labor Government is the legacy that it will leave: pay rises for those who handed out at polling booths and contributed to its political campaigns. It has to now give the payback that it promised. For 16 years, we lived in the Bob Carr "Build Nothing" days—the dark days of neglect and no infrastructure. He built nothing at all. The Liberal-Nationals Government had to come in and support the people of this great State. It was not great then, but look at it now. We drive on fantastic roads. Not long ago I went up on NorthConnex, which is an amazing piece of infrastructure. I am proud of what we on this side delivered as a government. I would like to think that the Minns Labor Government could deliver something. It thinks that it can. I am yet to see that. Let us not have that template pulled out again and again, because what those opposite talk about is actually not very true. The truth is that they might cut the ribbons, but we build the infrastructure.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) (15:20):** The Government opposes the motion, not because it comes from this failed Opposition but because the motion is so factually wrong. It is factually wrong on an economic basis, and it is factually wrong on a historical basis as well. I will address each part of the motion in turn. The first part deals with commending the previous Government for its triple-A credit rating. Let me set the correct historical foundation for today's debate. On Saturday 26 March 2011 Premier Barry O'Farrell and Treasurer Mike Baird of the then newly elected Coalition Government inherited a triple-A credit rating from Moody's, handed to them by the outgoing Labor Government. They also inherited a triple-A credit rating from Standard and Poor's, handed to the incoming Coalition Government by the outgoing Labor Government.

If anything, the former Coalition Government maintained a triple-A credit rating on those two standards for some years. But an accumulation of massive gross privatisation and transfer of expenditure onto the general public from the privatisation of government assets, the massive spending program in excess of the money made

through privatisation and blown out at every stage by mismanagement and overruns, and the underinvestment in our frontline public services with its wages cap policy meant that by 7 December 2020 Standard and Poor's said, "We're taking that triple-A credit rating off you. You're downgraded. You're double-A plus."

If we are going to talk about the previous Government's triple-A rating, let us be clear: The former Government saw a downgrade in the credit rating from Standard and Poor's during its time in office. Following the election of the incoming Labor Government earlier this year, it inherited triple-A from Moody's and double-A-plus from Standard and Poor's. Treasurers Baird, Constance and Berejiklian never earned a triple-A credit rating; they maintained it. Treasurer Perrottet lost one, and Treasurer Kean maintained it and put things in a perilous position. It is simply wrong to say that the Liberal Party's triple-A credit rating was a creation of the former Government. At best, it barely maintained ratings inherited from the former Labor Government.

The second proposition of the motion is that it condemns the current Government for consistently making false statements on the budget deficit. I will simply refer those opposite to page 5-1 of the last Kean budget, "Fiscal outlook". The aggregates say it all: the aggregates for 2020-21—a deficit; the aggregates for 2021-22—a big deficit; the aggregates for 2022-23, the year of this budget paper—a deficit; the projected aggregates for 2023-24—a deficit. They are damned by their own budget papers. We inherited the largest deficit ever inherited from an outgoing to an incoming government, \$7.8 billion. On the settings inherited on the changeover in government earlier this year, we are heading for \$188 billion in debt, which called for the incoming Government to get down to work immediately to try to address it and repair the budget.

The third point of the motion "calls on the Government to maintain this State's triple-A credit rating without contributing to inflation through pay rises to union mates". I am pleased to advise the House that the current Government has done that. Following the first Mookhey budget and first budget of the new Labor Government in September, Moody's reassessed its credit rating and on 24 October maintained the triple-A credit rating for the State of New South Wales. On 27 October Fitch, another ratings agency, affirmed our triple-A credit rating. On 22 November, just this week, Standard and Poor's maintained our double-A plus rating despite the former Treasurer saying that Labor's policy of investing in our State's public servants would destroy the budget and wreck the economy. Labor's first budget has done nothing of the sort. Labor's first budget has invested in our frontline workers. Labor's first budget has addressed the perilous position that we inherited from those opposite.

It was all down to the good work of Treasurer Mookhey, comprehensively supported by finance Minister Houssos, whose comprehensive expenditure review did a huge job in finding \$13 billion of savings that we could then redirect to Labor's priorities and help us immeasurably in repairing a perilous budget position inherited from those opposite. New South Wales has demonstrated excellent financial management. That is the statement made by Moody's, and Standard and Poor's. The Treasurer said to this House in September that Labor has begun the hard work of reducing New South Wales' debt. We on this side have done that. The gross debt of \$14.8 billion in the first Mookhey budget will be lower by 2026. Compared with our predecessors, the net debt is \$10.5 billion lower. We are achieving what we said we would achieve in opposition. We are repairing the budget, delivering for the people of New South Wales and investing in our public services without privatisation.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Clayton Barr):** I thank the member for The Entrance. Before I call the member for Davidson, I welcome to the gallery Saim, who is doing work experience in the office of the member for East Hills. I hope his time observing this Chamber does not dissuade him from his interest in politics.

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (15:28):** I support the motion moved by the member for Hawkesbury. It is an important motion, which talks about the economy. It talks about the importance of the triple-A credit rating. It talks about the importance, I believe, of paying down debt and making sure that we are paying down deficit. It also highlights the very interesting relationship between the Australian Labor Party and its Ministers and union bosses. As we all know, Ministers have to disclose their diaries once every three months. The first six months of ministerial diary disclosures have come out, and members opposite might be interested to know that we have the tally board of which Ministers have met with the unions, and how many times each. The overall figure of meetings that have taken place between Ministers and union bosses comes to 353. Now, let us look at the leaderboard. In third place we have none other than the Treasurer with 44 meetings—right up there, with more than one a week. In second place—any guesses?

**Mr Mark Hodges:** The member for Blacktown.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** No, he is not a Minister yet. We have the Minister for Health, who is on 44 meetings.

**Ms Robyn Preston:** Except paramedics.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** I acknowledge the interjection. Yes, what happened to paramedics? The Minister who had the most meetings with union bosses was none other than the Minister for Industrial Relations, with a solid 73 meetings. But there is a wooden spoon award. I am sure that the other Ministers will be very disappointed.

Steve Whan has not met with a single union yet. Every three months I look forward to when the ministerial diary disclosures are made so that I can update members on the leaderboard of all the union meetings. In terms of the importance of the triple-A credit rating, I want to be very sincere now and say that, when I was an adviser to Mike Baird as Treasurer—

**Mr Mark Coure:** Senior adviser.

**Mr MATT CROSS:** I was actually a senior adviser. At the time the Treasurer took the triple-A credit rating so seriously that he told me once that, if we ever lost it, he would resign. I do not know if that is public information but, under the Baird Government and Baird Treasury, the triple-A rating was always maintained. In terms of the Labor Party, we all know that for Eric Roozendaal the triple-A credit rating meant a free trip to New York every December because he had to visit the Moody's ratings agency. The interesting thing is that Moody's actually had an office in Sydney, but he still used the excuse to go. I find it very interesting. We asked a question to the current Treasurer about whether he is intending to visit Moody's in New York too. What was his answer? He said, "I will meet all my reporting obligations for my overseas travel and meetings as required." He has not ruled out taking the trip.

But let us look at triple-A credit ratings across the nation. New South Wales has a triple-A credit rating under Fitch and Moody's. Victoria lost its triple-A credit ratings in December 2020. Who was in government then? It was the Labor Party. The Australian Capital Territory, or the Socialist Republic of Canberra, lost its triple-A credit rating in September 2023 under a Labor-Greens Government. Queensland lost its triple-A credit rating in 2009. Who was in government then? It was the Labor Party. South Australia lost its triple-A credit rating in 2012—under what government? It was a Labor government. In the last six seconds of my debate time, I note an interesting article with the headline "Mookhey clears runway for AAA credit rating loss from NSW budget".

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (15:32):** I oppose this motion and I note the contribution of my friend the member for the Entrance, who has absolutely demolished the claims made in the motion by the member for Hawkesbury. As the member for the Entrance noted, the multitude of errors, falsehoods and contradictions contained in this motion include ignoring that it was a Liberal-Nationals government that lost the triple-A credit rating from Standard and Poor's in December 2020; denying the five straight budget deficits delivered by Treasurer Perrottet and Treasurer Kean; and pretending that the first Mookhey budget has done anything other than uncover \$13 billion of savings, plug \$7 billion of unfunded programs and reduce State debt by more than \$14 billion. I take particular issue with the attack the Opposition makes on the commitments this Government has made to rebuild essential services, including to pay our essential service workers fairly. Far more than good credit ratings, good economic management is about improving the lives of our citizens. That means respect and reward for people whose work is vital to our community. The Treasurer said in this year's Budget Speech:

... paying people enough to provide for their family is right morally; it is correct economically; and it is vital if we want to rebuild essential services to the world-class standards NSW demands.

If we want a world-class health system, we have to train, recruit and retain enough health workers to staff our hospitals. If we want young people to have more opportunities than we did, we need to stop denying that there are teacher shortages—as those opposite do—and instead act to solve it. That is what we are doing. The Minns Government has removed the arbitrary wages cap the conservatives introduced, which only served to stoke confrontation, and we are replacing it with a bargaining system that fosters cooperation. That includes the ministerial engagements that have been happening since we have been elected. It is called bargaining. We actually consult. We created a \$3.6 billion Essential Services Fund to share the fruits of reform with those who deliver them. Another decade spent holding down people's wages will result in more inequality, a weaker economy and worse public services.

Not only is the motion wrong in its facts; it is wrong in its focus. The true measures of economic success are the lives of our people, not just the ratings financial analysts make. For people in my community, it means good hospitals, good schools and good public transport. In Penrith it means publicly owned infrastructure so that tolls do not add to the cost of living. The motion should commend the work of our Government for stabilising our State's financial position and for rebuilding our essential services and doing so without flogging off any more public assets. The people of New South Wales gave Labor a clear mandate. They did not fall for the former Government's spin on its record of privatisation and economic mismanagement in March this year, nor should this House accept it today.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:36):** I take the opportunity to speak on this absolutely wonderful motion. I thank the outstanding member for Hawkesbury for moving it. Over the past 12 years, we on this side have had a proud record of financial management in this State. We saw record spending when it came to education, health and transport in New South Wales. And, of course, over the past 12 years we saw an infrastructure

revolution in New South Wales. We saw new and improved hospitals and schools built. We saw upgrades to train stations. We saw commuter car parks.

And in the past nine months of this Government, what have we seen? What has been Labor's track record over the past nine and a bit months? It is a good question. Let me tell members about Labor's track record. Labor members will not tell the truth about their track record over the last nine months, but I will. We saw cuts to the Active Kids rebate, the Creative Kids rebate and the First Lap rebate. I think I need some audience participation. We saw cuts to First Lap, cuts to Active Kids—

**Mr Jordan Lane:** Shame.

**Mr MARK COURE:** I thank the member for Ryde. We also saw backflipping. We saw nothing in the budget to deliver pay increases for certain public servants. We saw a backflip and a broken promise when it came to privatisation of government-owned land. We also saw cuts, lies and broken promises over the past nine months. Look at the previous Government's track record when it comes to new and rebuilt hospitals. We on this side built new and improved hospitals across New South Wales, including Liverpool Hospital, Shellharbour Hospital, St George Hospital, Blacktown Hospital to Ryde Hospital. We also saw Albury, Cessnock, Bathurst and Bankstown in the budget two years ago. There was \$1.3 billion for Bankstown. Is that work experience kid in the gallery? They are getting a hospital at Bankstown, which we started last year under our Government. There was a billion dollars a couple of years ago for a major, significant upgrade to Nepean Hospital. There was \$1.4 billion for a major rebuild and redevelopment of Westmead Hospital. The Liberal-Nationals Government built new and improved hospitals and upgraded schools. As part of our transport infrastructure revolution, we upgraded stations and built community car parks, not to mention metros right across Sydney.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** The time for consideration of general business notices of motions has expired. I set down resumption of the interrupted debate as an order of the day for a later hour. The House will now proceed to Government business.

#### *Business of the House*

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: BILLS**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (15:41):** I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to:

- (1) Permit the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety to introduce the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2023 without notice and give the second reading speech during the time allocated for Government business today.
- (2) Permit the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety to complete her second reading speech on the bill at the conclusion of the petition debate today.
- (3) Allow for the debate on the second reading to occur from Tuesday 28 November 2023.

The Government has moved this motion because, as members are very well aware, industrial relations reform is a key commitment that Labor took to the last election. It is something that the Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety has been working on diligently since we came to government. As I said, it is a high priority for the Government, and it is important for Parliament to consider the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2023 before the end of the year. That is why I have moved this suspension motion.

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (15:42):** The Opposition supports the suspension of standing and sessional orders. We note that, although Parliament has sat for only 35 days this year, the Government has had a number of months to get this done. However, we support the suspension motion in order to hear from the Minister for Industrial Relations.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Bills*

### **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

#### **First Reading**

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

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (15:44):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I stand before the House on behalf of my colleagues, the Labor movement and the people of New South Wales to fulfil one of the Government's major election commitments. I am proud to introduce the Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2023 on behalf of the Minns Labor Government. It has been a very long, difficult 12½ years for public sector and essential workers in New South Wales—hardworking nurses, firefighters, paramedics, road workers, bus drivers and police who have done an extraordinary job. For 12 years since June 2011—and I will never forget that period because I was the shadow Minister for Industrial Relations—our essential public servants have not received an adequate wage rise. Their wages were capped.

Section 146C of the Industrial Relations Act was introduced, which was about wage suppression. The Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales basically had its hands tied and was null and void. The Industrial Relations Commission had, for over 100 years, been the independent umpire between workers and the employers. It was a fair system. The Government made a commitment to remove the wages cap; to listen to our essential workers; to respect, respond and rectify; and to work through the many important issues that have been sitting on the backburner for 12 years.

A key priority of the Minns Government election commitments was to reform our industrial relations system in New South Wales. The Government asked the former Deputy President of the Fair Work Commission, Anna Booth, and the Hon. Roger Boland, who has vast experience in the field of industrial relations—including nearly 14 years as a judge of the Industrial Court of New South Wales and over five years as President of the Industrial Relations Commission—to establish the commission's pioneering interest-based bargaining program. Mr Boland and Ms Booth provided a report to the Government making recommendations in four broad categories, being interest-based bargaining, particularly in the New South Wales public sector; the structure, powers and functions of the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales; the modernisation of the Industrial Relations Act; and how any of the proposed changes may impact the local government sector.

During the review, Mr Boland and Ms Booth met with and consulted 40 individuals and organisations that have either an interest or a stake in the operation of the New South Wales industrial relations system. This included union members and employer groups, as well as members of the legal profession. First and foremost, the taskforce's report found that there is no desire for the Federal system of industrial relations regulation to apply to the New South Wales public sector or local government. Users generally believe the New South Wales system, based on the Industrial Relations Act 1996, has stood the test of time. If I can refer members to that time, it was the late Hon. Jeff Shaw—a great man and pioneer—who introduced the Industrial Relations Act 1996. Many members are aware that there has been a very long and considered consultation process to change and rebuild that Act and make it modern and proactive. It is an Act that has stood the test of time. We are building on that, but also rebuilding what those opposite destroyed over the past 12 years in government.

The wages cap, via section 146C of the Act, severely limited the commission's conciliation and arbitration powers and had a stultifying effect on its ability to resolve disputes out of what seems to have been a concern that any resolution, recommended or arbitrated, might breach 146C of the Act and the policy underpinning that section. There is no doubt the wages cap has had a repressive effect on public sector bargaining, modernising awards and genuine engagement between employees, their unions and public sector agencies. I acknowledge the paramedics who are in the gallery and thank them for their service to the people of New South Wales. I also acknowledge their union, the Health Services Union. This blunt, unsophisticated instrument will be replaced by a resumption of genuine, meaningful public sector bargaining in New South Wales.

It is important that any new arrangements provide the best chance of achieving both sustainable public finance outcomes and desirable terms and conditions of employment for employees. Improving productivity in the public sector is important to underpin the joint achievement of these objectives. Both the taskforce and this Government believe taking an interest-based approach to bargaining and consultation is the best possible way of advancing this. During the taskforce's consultations there was a general consensus about the need to improve the structure, powers and functions of the Industrial Relations Commission. Both Mr Boland and Ms Booth made recommendations aimed at restoring the commission to an integrated court and tribunal.

Amongst other things, this will mean that the Industrial Court will once again exercise jurisdiction regarding prosecutions under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 as well as the powers transferred to the Supreme Court and other courts in 2016. During the consultations it was made apparent that the prospect of approaching the District Court or Supreme Court to resolve industrial disputes was perceived as a deterrent that ultimately limited accessibility to workplace justice. The bill before the House intends to rectify these perceptions by creating a one-stop shop for workplace justice in New South Wales. The bill gives effect to an election commitment to abolish the former Government's wages cap on the public sector and implements a number of recommendations made by Mr Boland and Ms Booth.

Specifically, the bill finally repeals section 146C of the Industrial Relations Act 1996; adds a new, more consultative mutual gains bargaining approach to allow workers and their unions to engage with government agencies; establishes an industrial relations court that would have jurisdiction to resolve work health and safety matters and other workplace issues; amends section 146 of the Act, "General functions of Commission", to provide that when it is exercising its functions in relation to public sector employees, it must also take into account the New South Wales Government's fiscal position and outlook; adds an object to the Act to encourage strategies to attract and retain skilled staff where there are skills shortages so as to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of public services; and makes consequential amendments to other New South Wales legislation.

The former Coalition Government's wages policy had a detrimental effect on public sector bargaining and failed to effectively incentivise parties to pursue workplace reforms. The New South Wales Labor Government was elected with a clear mandate to abolish the wages cap. The bill before the House delivers on this commitment to repeal section 146C of the Industrial Relations Act to ensure that the Government can once again negotiate effectively with public sector workers to promote potential increases in real wages while returning benefit to the people of New South Wales. The adoption of a new bargaining approach, the mutual gains bargaining approach, in the public sector will be achieved by a combination of amendments to the Industrial Relations Act set out in a new chapter 2A and the issuing of a Premier's memorandum outlining the New South Wales Government's fair pay and bargaining policy for the public sector.

The bill will insert a new chapter 2A in the Industrial Relations Act that will include principles of mutual gains bargaining at section 129L and modernise the good faith bargaining provisions that already exist in chapter 3. Under chapter 2A, the parties will give written notice to the commission of their intention to commence mutual gains bargaining. The commission will then act as a facilitator but, if the parties agree, they can appoint their own facilitator. It is expected the facilitator will attend meetings and take a proactive role in facilitating the mutual gains bargaining process for the parties. However, it is important to note that the use of facilitators is not compulsory. If the parties do not wish to use a facilitator, they are under no obligation to do so.

Following this collaborative, mutually beneficial approach to bargaining, once an agreement is reached it can be submitted to the commission, with the outcome being a new award or enterprise agreement. As per the new section 129P, in circumstances where mutual gains bargaining has been unresolved, after consulting with the commission the facilitators will provide the commission with written notice and provide a report, which will include matters that remain in dispute in the negotiations. Once this has been received by the commission, it will be taken to be the notification of an industrial dispute under section 130 of the Act and the usual conciliation and arbitration provisions of chapter 3 will apply to the parties, with certain modifications, as provided for in section 129Q (3) of the bill before the House.

The New South Wales Government's fair pay and bargaining policy will enable public sector employees and unions to engage effectively with government agencies through a cooperative approach to bargaining, departing from the traditional adversarial approach to industrial relations. The policy aims to restore the sector to being an employer of choice and a leader in innovative work practices. The fair pay and bargaining policy refers to two types of consultative forums that will support mutual gains bargaining across the public sector to facilitate discussions on the Government's financial position and delivery of reform improvements. Firstly, a peak engagement council will be established, comprising representatives of Industrial Relations, Unions NSW and Treasury.

This council will provide a forum to share information, have an ongoing dialogue about the fiscal position and outlook of the State and the performance of agencies across the public sector, and track bargaining outcomes. Secondly, engagement councils in each agency will be established, comprising senior decision-makers and the relevant union representatives to facilitate the delivery of reform improvements. The engagement councils should provide an ongoing consultative forum for agencies, including driving, monitoring and recording improvements in public service delivery.

Upon being elected in 2011, the former Government immediately set about tearing apart the Industrial Court, and in 2016 eventually abolished this important institution. The bill before the House will rebuild the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission into a modern body that operates both as a tribunal for an arbitral purpose and as a separate industrial court for judicial purposes. The bill provides for the new Industrial Court to be established as a superior court of record with equivalent status to the Supreme Court and the Land and Environment Court.

Turning to the Industrial Court's jurisdiction, schedule 1.2 to the bill provides that the court will again deal with the judicial functions transferred by the former Government in 2016 that are currently exercised by the Supreme Court. This includes small claims, contravention of dispute orders, proceedings for declarations of right and the cancellation of the registration of industrial organisations. Prior to its transfer in 2011, the work health and safety jurisdiction had resided in the Industrial Court since 1983. Schedule 2.35 to the bill provides that the

Industrial Court will once again have jurisdiction to deal with certain offences under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011.

The amendments that the bill makes to section 229B of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 will mean that proceedings for offences against the Act or the regulations will again be able to be heard before the Industrial Court, as well as summarily before the Local Court. This includes proceedings for category 1 offences alleged to have been committed by corporations—the most serious offence under the Work Health and Safety Act. Category 1 offences alleged to have been committed by individuals will be prosecuted on indictment before the District Court of New South Wales and a right of appeal will lie with the Court of Criminal Appeal in the same way that it currently does for persons convicted on indictment in criminal proceedings generally.

The amendments to the Criminal Appeal Act 1912 made by schedule 2.12 to the bill, provide that if a person is convicted of an offence by the Industrial Relations Commission in Court Session they may appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal but only if they have first exercised any rights that they have to appeal to the Full Bench of the Industrial Relations Commission in Court Session under the Industrial Relations Act 1996. In these amendments the term "person" includes a corporation. The bill reinstates the offices of President, Vice President and Deputy President who will be able to be appointed as judicial members of the commission. The fact that the Industrial Court and the commission will be part of the newly constituted Industrial Relations Commission will permit a judicial member of the Industrial Court to switch roles immediately and act in either a conciliation or arbitration role as a presidential member of the commission.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** It being 4.00 p.m., debate is interrupted for the petition take-note debate. I set down resumption of the debate as an order of the day for a later hour.

#### *Announcements*

### **OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER**

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** I inform the House of an incident involving a staff member of the Speaker who required medical assistance earlier today. In the first instance, I thank the member for Bega, Dr Michael Holland, Deputy Speaker Sonia Hornery and paramedic Phillip Owens, who was luckily nearby and able to render assistance, including remaining to provide observations to ambulance personnel who attended. I thank everybody who assisted. I acknowledge the paramedics from the Health Services Union who are in the public gallery today. Thank you very much for your service and everything that you do for the people of New South Wales.

#### *Petitions*

### **NSW AMBULANCE AND PARAMEDICS**

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

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:02):** I also thank and welcome the paramedics from the Health Services Union who join us here today in Parliament, and congratulate them on the over 10,000 signature petition to call for better pay and conditions for paramedics in this State. I also acknowledge and thank the health Minister for being here for this important petition debate. Paramedics are fundamental to the healthcare system and the response to crises and emergencies. They have the unique skills and expertise to save lives in highly stressful situations, stabilising people who are seriously injured or experiencing a life-threatening acute medical condition before they go to hospital. They make quick decisions under very difficult circumstances.

As frontline workers, paramedics are exposed to significant risks to their own health and safety. They deal with immobile patients, alcohol- and drug-affected patients and motor vehicle accidents on heavily trafficked roads, for example. Australian paramedics are seven times more likely to be injured at work than other workers, and paramedics working in New South Wales suffer the highest rate of injury of all paramedics in Australia. The dangers are not only physical, but also psychological. The traumatic scenes that paramedics are exposed to, including road accidents, domestic, family and sexual violence, fires, explosions and severely distressed loved ones, can have lifelong impacts. Post-traumatic stress disorder occurs at higher rates in paramedics compared with the rest of the population.

Unfortunately, paramedics in this State are not appropriately recognised for their contribution and sacrifice. Years of public sector wage caps have made them the lowest paid paramedics in the country. Queensland pays up to \$20,000 more in base wage for a similar role, and a paramedic with six years' experience will take home nearly \$300 a week less than a paramedic with the same experience working in the Australian Capital Territory. New South Wales is also an expensive State, particularly when it comes to housing. The cost-of-living crisis is now having a drain on paramedics, who are moving to other States and Territories where their wages better reflect their contribution and provide a better quality of life. The Health Services Union has provided me with statements

from three paramedics in New South Wales demonstrating the sheer impact low wages is having on the sector. A paramedic from Tweed Heads said:

We have multiple trainees ... leave New South Wales Ambulance to go to Queensland because we work with ... [the Queensland Ambulance Service] often. Queensland often seek out our trainees who are younger ... especially when they already live on the Gold Coast, the money is too good, and the transition too easy.

After recently working with a trainee for one whole day the next week she turned up to work and she said she'd been offered a role over the border and that she needed to take it, she wasn't going to hang on in New South Wales and fight for the pay rise when she already had a good paying job on offer.

A paramedic who left Queanbeyan to work in Tasmania said:

I've been a paramedic for 16 years and the way we were treated under the Liberal Government was insulting, the year-on-year effective pay cuts were brutal, and now the gap between us and everyone else has grown so much, it's ridiculous. I felt pretty disillusioned, and I love this job. Ambulance Tasmania offered me a \$40,000 pay rise, and the cost of living is much lower in Tasmania. New South Wales is one of the most expensive states to live in.

A paramedic from the Blue Mountains said:

While the Government continues to wonder why paramedics keep leaving, all New South Wales Ambulance paramedics have long held the answer to that very simple question. Let me make it simple, why would anyone stay, if every other state in this country pays almost double for the exact same work? Most of us can't afford let alone pay rent with the rising cost of living in this state. I've had to take on another job on top of my full-time position ... and have started applying for other states whose wage reflects the rising costs because that seems to be the only way to make ends meet these days.

Paramedics from New South Wales want to stay; they want to serve their local communities. But it is not an attractive option when their wages are lower than anyone else's, and staying means they need to take an additional role to make ends meet. While the new Government lifted the wages cap, the gap with other States and Territories remains excessively high and we are losing a vital workforce. Without paramedics our health system would collapse. The wages paid to our paramedics need to catch up with the rest of the country so we can retain and encourage new workers, and better recognise the significant contribution that paramedics make to keeping our community safe.

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (16:07):** I am pleased to speak on this significant petition tabled by the member for Sydney, Mr Alex Greenwich, and thank him for his contribution. I also recognise my professional healthcare colleagues in the gallery. This petition requests that the Legislative Assembly ensures paramedics in New South Wales receive the resourcing and recognition they deserve. The New South Wales Government is making an investment towards the NSW Ambulance workforce, including hiring 500 paramedics in our rural and regional areas. The 2023-24 New South Wales budget invests \$438.6 million over four years towards this aim, comprising \$327.8 million of recurrent expenses and \$110.8 million in capital expenditure.

Having more paramedics will not only improve emergency care for our regional and rural communities, but also will improve the wellbeing of the hardworking paramedics, reducing the need for overtime and on-call shifts. Regional and rural areas make up most of the State, and the NSW Ambulance workforce reflects that. Its regional sector currently has 2,983 staff, including 2,743 employees and 240 volunteers. There are also 301 staff who work for the regional control centres. Our hardworking paramedics are committed to serving the community.

In the 2022-2023 financial year, there were more than 627,000 ambulance responses in regional New South Wales, which is an average of one response every 50 seconds. Demand is also growing in regional New South Wales, with a 4.3 per cent increase in total incidents in 2022-2023 compared with the previous 12 months. Despite that increased demand, there was an improvement in response times for the most life-threatening priority incidents, which is a testament to our outstanding NSW Ambulance staff. The investment in the rural and regional workforce as part of this year's budget will support further improvements to response times.

The Government recognises that attracting, supporting and retaining employees in some rural and regional locations is a challenge. New South Wales is no different to the rest of Australia in that regard. A range of benefits and incentive schemes are in place to address that. In July 2022, NSW Health introduced the Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme to enable health agencies to recruit and retain key health workers in hard-to-fill and critically vacant positions. These hard-to-fill and critically vacant positions include paramedic and station officer positions. The scheme offers a rural and regional health allowance as one of its monetary benefits.

Employees in incentivised positions may be eligible to receive up to an additional \$10,000 every 12 months that can be used at their discretion within the policy. From 1 July this year, the Government has increased the incentive value package up to \$20,000 to further attract health workers to our rural and regional locations. NSW Ambulance has also established a rural incentive benefit, which enables employees who are posted to priority stations to receive financial relief in the form of rental relief payments of \$100 maximum per week, and HELP fees support at \$2,000 maximum per financial year.

Meanwhile NSW Ambulance's Transferred Employees Benefits Scheme provides monetary incentives to permanent employees who are required to relocate as a result of transfer to an extremely remote, very remote, remote, far rural or inner rural classified station from a non-classified station, or to a directed posting outside of the Sydney metropolitan area. The scheme provides additional leave and financial assistance to meet the cost of travel, accommodation and meals when seeking accommodation and commencing duties, school uniforms for dependants, removals and storage, and purchase and sale of real estate. Our paramedics and wider NSW Ambulance staff make a tremendous contribution to communities all over New South Wales each and every day. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting them now and for the long term.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) (16:12):** I am incredibly proud to contribute to the take-note debate on the petition with more than 10,000 signatures calling for professional recognition and fairer pay for our hardworking New South Wales paramedics. I acknowledge and thank the member for Sydney not just for tabling the petition but also for his record of support for this campaign and support for all paramedics over many years. I acknowledge the many paramedics in the gallery, representing all parts of New South Wales. Being the parochial MP that I am, I would be remiss if I did not highlight Clint McSpeddon from Inverell—Mr Inverell himself. He is without a doubt—he paid me to say this—the best paramedic anywhere in this State. He is certainly up there.

Recognition of paramedics is a very important topic. It is particularly acute in rural, regional and remote locations. As has been said, our paramedics are incredibly hardworking and dedicated medical professionals, and in most of the communities that I represent in the Northern Tablelands, which is not too dissimilar from many other rural electorates, they are the most experienced and the highest-qualified medical professionals. We do not have the presence of general practitioners like we used to nor, unfortunately, our amazing, hardworking frontline nursing staff, but our paramedics are the bulwark upon which the health system in the bush is based. They are almost the only thing that is left holding the health system in the bush together. For that reason, professional recognition is long overdue.

I say that in a non-partisan way. Now that we are in opposition, I am not in Parliament to heap criticism on the Government. As far as I am concerned, this issue reaches far beyond partisan politics. This is about doing the right thing and, in my view, correcting something that should have been done a long time ago, which is recognising the professional status and the incredibly high level of skill, and the qualifications required for that, that our paramedics display on a daily basis. We also need to properly remunerate them for the high level they perform at. I have seen that firsthand with Clint and his fellow paramedics in Inverell and at other stations. I have been on rides with them. Admittedly we did not do much the day I was there. I will have to come back. We did not have many callouts that day, but I have seen the hard work they do and the difficult circumstances they face, as the member for Sydney mentioned.

The care they provide in the back of their incredibly well-equipped ambulances is at the same level or better than the treatment people would get in most of our rural and regional hospitals. I do not say that as a criticism of our hardworking nursing staff. I say that in recognition of the professionalism and the expertise but also the reality of what the bush is like where these men and women are the ones people want to be treated by when the chips are down: when there is a car crash, when there is an accident on a rural property, when there is an incident in the middle of a town. They want the paramedics there. They are trusted and they perform at such a high level. I have seen hospital staff ask the paramedics to come into the hospital and help because they have more expertise than the locum who is on duty on that particular day, assuming we have a doctor in the hospital at all.

It is not unusual in my patch to see three or four ambulances from various parts of the electorate all based at Armidale hospital as they also perform one of the unfortunately inglorious parts of their role of ferrying patients around our region. They do so always with professionalism, a smile and care. I get so much positive feedback about them. The reality is that an electorate like Northern Tablelands borders Queensland, and we are losing so many ambulance staff to Queensland. Staff can leave my electorate and go to Goondiwindi, Texas or Stanthorpe across the border and get a \$20,000 a year pay increase from day one ongoing for doing the same job. We have 160 ambulance staff in the New England North West. For the next nine-week roster we have 26 vacancies across that, and that will continue to get worse. Professional recognition is not just about valuing what we have; it is about stemming the haemorrhaging—the loss—of staff in my area interstate. It should happen. It has to happen. They deserve it, but we need to do it for the future of Ambulance and the future of health care in the bush.

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (16:17):** I thank the member for Sydney for bringing the petition to the House and for his advocacy. Our New South Wales paramedics are such hardworking and committed frontline workers. I acknowledge those in the gallery, and particularly the Health Services Union for its continued advocacy for all paramedics across New South Wales. Our paramedics and the people who support them are available 24/7, every day of the year for their local communities. I thank them for the care they have provided and for the assurance that help is always on hand when needed.

They do more than respond to emergencies. They help, comfort and show compassion to people going through a difficult and vulnerable time in their lives. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting our frontline paramedics and wider NSW Ambulance teams in their vital duties. The recent State budget investment will not only improve emergency care right across New South Wales but also help share the workload across our frontline crews and better support their wellbeing. It will complement the range of health and wellbeing initiatives already in place at NSW Ambulance.

The NSW Ambulance staff health and wellbeing strategy aims to support a mentally and physically fit workforce. It includes a range of activities focused on promoting positive mental wellbeing, building resilience and encouraging early intervention for mental health issues. The strategy also includes practical support, education and assistance to employees through structured preventative health and fitness programs. NSW Ambulance uses the wellbeing platform, an app-based and online platform that offers a personal health and wellbeing experience that delivers NSW Ambulance staff health programs, tailored resources, fitness challenges, healthy habit trackers and mindfulness activities. NSW Ambulance staff also have access to health coaching, fitness passports for staff and their families, Medic Fit exercise equipment and injury prevention specialists.

Given the demands and pressures of the job, staff who are exposed to traumatic work incidents have access to specialist trauma psychologists. NSW Ambulance staff can also engage a private psychologist and NSW Ambulance will cover the cost of a total of 10 sessions. That is in addition to staff having access to online wellbeing and resilience training and resources, in-house staff psychology services across the State, employee assistance and psychological services, the Family Support Network, psychological education sessions, networked support for paramedics and their families, peer support officers, chaplains, grievance contact officers and therapy dogs. NSW Ambulance also runs targeted in-house campaigns to promote health, wellbeing and social connection, such as Thank a First Responder Day, International Day of Families and R U OK? Day.

Staff also have access to several external services, such as those delivered by Fortem Australia, a not-for-profit support service that provides support to first responders and their families. NSW Ambulance also implements a range of support programs to ensure a welcoming and inclusive workplace, including tailored training programs, mentoring initiatives and ongoing professional development opportunities for all personnel. I again thank our paramedics and the wider NSW Ambulance family. I thank them for everything they have done, and continue to do, to support communities all over New South Wales.

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray) (16:21):** I thank the member for Sydney for bringing this petition to Parliament. New South Wales paramedics are world class. They are highly trained, hardworking and deeply committed to saving our lives if things ever go wrong. So why does this Government undervalue these incredibly important men and women? Paramedics in New South Wales are the worst-paid paramedics in Australia. How can that be? This should be a source of shame for the Government. The Minns Government should also be ashamed of the paltry 4 per cent pay rise offer it made to the paramedics in August. Four per cent is insulting and it does not compensate our paramedics for their incredible skills and the incredible work they do.

Being a paramedic is not like any other job. Many days paramedic work involves life-and-death situations—literally life and death. How many of us can say that? The fact is that few workers have to face the kind of stress that our paramedics do, and yet they continue to endure this stress because they are deeply committed to our community. They care for us, and it is time we showed that we care for them by paying them properly. I have been proud to attend all the rallies that the Health Services Union and paramedics have held in Sydney. It is clear that too many people take our paramedics for granted and do not think about them until they need them. That is not good enough. We are fast approaching 1 December, when more than 1,500 paramedics say they will not renew their paramedic registration. The Government must avoid this by finally paying our paramedics properly—and it needs to do that now.

**The ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Jason Li):** Before I call the member for Wollondilly, I acknowledge and welcome students from Baulkham Hills High School who are in the public gallery.

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (16:24):** By leave: I come to this debate with a different point of view to look at the professional recognition that ambulance workers receive. On 30 November 2018 paramedicine became a regulated profession. The terms "paramedic" and "paramedicine" became protected by law, and only people registered with the Paramedicine Board of Australia are able to call themselves a paramedic. The national board chair, Associate Professor Stephen Gough, ASM, described it as a milestone for the paramedicine profession. After many years of debate, deliberation and sustained effort, paramedics will be joining over 700,000 other registered health practitioners in a national regulatory scheme that has public safety at its heart. Associate Professor Gough said:

While paramedics have always had the patient at the centre of everything they do – showing compassion, understanding and empathy to those they provide care – the past two decades have also seen the profession grow in complexity; paramedics are now working in a range of roles and environments, using sophisticated treatments and technology, to provide world class services to Australian communities. Regulating paramedicine under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme ... acknowledges the critical role paramedics play in our health system and recognises paramedics, in their own right, as registered health professionals.

Paramedics have a couple of ways to become qualified, and most now have a degree and many have post-graduate qualifications. As I quoted, they work with increasingly complex clinical situations and carry out many public health tasks. This change has evolved over the past couple of years.

As registered health professionals, they follow codes of conduct and complete ongoing professional development, which they pay for on top of registration costs every year. As we know, their pay rate in New South Wales falls well below the average ordinary weekly earnings for males and females. We have all heard about the shortage of health professionals, but if we continue to pay paramedics such poor rates then they will also leave. They are the ones who administer drugs and look after people on stretchers, waiting for the scarce doctors and nurses to be ready for a handover. If they leave to go to other States where they will receive better pay or leave the service totally, where does that leave the people of New South Wales?

We all need to consider that when we or a family member are in the most dire and stressful situations, paramedics are most likely to be the people whose efforts make the difference between life and death. Whether delivering a baby, rushing to help a person suffering a heart attack or climbing into danger to comfort a person trapped in a car after an accident, these are the people we rely on. I know many do it for the love of the job, but what value do we put on what they do? I think all members will agree that we are not demonstrating that we value them with such poor pay. I thank paramedics, especially those in my electorate of Wollondilly, for all the wonderful work they do.

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (16:27):** By leave: I support this petition, which calls out the fact that New South Wales paramedics are the lowest paid in the country and how this is affecting performance as well as their mental health and causing a churn. We have seen pay increases for other essential services workers, so why not our paramedics too? This is not only a moral issue of adequately valuing the crucial work that paramedics do but also a real quality-of-service issue, as we risk brain drain. With the rates of pay so much lower than in other States, we are losing precious human capital and skilled workers across health sectors and our borders.

Today I speak on behalf of paramedics, both locally and across the State, some of whom I even get to call "mate". I thank the Minister for Health for what he is doing across the Health portfolio to address the numerous issues that he inherited. It is noted and appreciated by many I speak to. I am also aware that things take time and the Minister has to step through each issue carefully, prioritise and so on. I know from personal conversations with the Minister that he values paramedics as much as he values nurses, but this issue is dragging on. Pay rates have already been mentioned, so I will speak to the minimum operating levels. I am sure members will be as shocked as I was when I heard this firsthand example from the northern beaches. I have this person's permission to read this word for word, as written by them. They stated:

Current practice, is to staff accordingly, to an outdated Minimum Operating Level (MOL) i.e. lowest number of ambulance crews per shift as applied across a given area. This level does not include the staffing enhancements of the past several years. Resources at MOL across the zones, are far below adequate for current population density. What this means in real terms is that the enhancements approved and paid for by the people of NSW, are not being maintained. ANSW is applying the outdated and inadequate coverage of ambulance crews at MOL to be the current level. This MOL used to be applied per zone. If a certain zone was below MOL, sector management would source overtime to back fill the vacancies. However current practice is MOL is applied Metro wide with disregard to location - with dire consequence.

**True scenario 1.**

Northern Sydney zone was down 3 cars on a particular night some months ago. There were no crews at Balgowlah (IC or GD)—  
that is intensive care or general duty—

and only 1 crew at Narrabeen (the IC car). Both are double module stations which cover a huge area. The nearest station to these after midnight are Artarmon, Belrose and St Ives to the west, and Avalon to the North. If you draw a line on a map linking these stations that leaves a massive responsibility for one paramedic crew to manage. Once that crew has a job there is no other local resources available. The service deemed it appropriate as they were over the outdated MOL metro wide. Due to enhancements, there was enough resources to send 3 cars from the Sydney west sector to cover the shift. The workload in the west, however, was as usual, extremely high meaning the 3 promised cars never made it out of the west at all. They never appeared on the north board.

And so it happened on this particular night, a local resident suffered a critic rupture of a renal dialysis fistula with no ambulances available, the only available solution was for a manager in a marked ANSW passenger car to attend (not designed to carry a patient) no stretcher and no care possible during transport. This manager's only recourse was to apply a tourniquet and rush the unfortunate individual in the front seat to NBH. It is incomprehensible should something else catastrophic happen simultaneously fortunately or as luck would have it, as far as I am aware whilst there were some very long waits for ambulances and some people just drove themselves, there was no other adverse event. This this situation is not uncommon.

**True scenario 2.**

Friday night shift commencing 6 October. Northern Sydney zone was 1.5 under MOL meaning 1 and a half ambulances (3 paramedics). I, personally, was left to operate single in the IC car at St Ives. This was deemed acceptable because the service was 1.5 ambulances over the MOL at Liverpool and Penrith.

Early in the morning, a serious car accident occurred on the Beaches. What ensued was tragic, resulting in one loss of life and critical injuries to 4 others. Paramedics and medical teams worked feverishly in the attempt to save that boy. Many resources were deployed to manage the scene, including me as a single operator. I was tasked to work alone with a patient with serious injuries, aided by F+R NSW personnel as there were no other paramedics available. Thus, plans were made for F+R NSW personnel to drive my ambulance while I treated in the back, however, eventually another paramedic became available and was tasked to drive for me. On completion of this incident, I returned to St Ives to continue my shift as a single operator, and the zone remained under-resourced by minus 1.5 ambulances.

Minister, I would be shocked if you did not have bipartisan support on this issue. I will happily volunteer with my crossbench colleagues to make that happen. This is a critical issue. The number one State should have the number one paid professionals working for it. Let us make this happen.

**Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) (16:32):** By leave: I thank the House. I begin by acknowledging the outstanding men and women in the gallery today and those who are not here today. I believe they are some of the biggest heroes in our health system. I thank them for what they do day in, day out. It is hard to believe that those sitting opposite could come to this Chamber and mention the Treasury talking points with a straight face, when those same people stood beside paramedics and campaigned to pay them what they are worth. They are not my words. They are the words of the Premier of New South Wales, who ran on his election campaign promising a pay rise in line with inflation. What is the inflation rate today in New South Wales? It is 5.3 per cent.

Paramedics know that is not the pay rise that members opposite offered. Did the Premier offer a pay rise in line with inflation? No, he did not. He offered a 4 per cent pay rise. That is a breach of his promise. The Premier also promised to intervene on behalf of our paramedics. Where is the Premier today? Why is he not in the Chamber now? Where is he? It is his promise, and he should be held to account for his promise. On 21 June 2022 it was the Premier who was on air on 2GB and who made a virtue of the fact that he was going to pay paramedics what they were worth. Do the paramedics believe that he is paying them what they are worth? Well, they are here today saying no, they do not.

That is the exact problem. If paramedics in New South Wales cannot take Premier Chris Minns at his word, what chance do the rest of us have? If paramedics cannot take the Premier at his word when he says, "I'm going to give you a pay rise in line with inflation," why should other public servants in this State trust him? If paramedics cannot trust the Premier to intervene on their behalf, given everything that they do for the people of this State, why should the rest of us trust him? The reality is the Premier's word does not mean anything. If it did, he would be delivering for the people who stood by him and believed him when he said he was going to deliver for them. He is not delivering for them, and he is not delivering for the people of New South Wales.

Let me tell members who he is delivering for. He delivered a tax cut to Star City Casino of over \$320 million. It was a racket that protected organised crime. They got a tax cut, but apparently it is too much for the budget to bear to deliver his promise to pay paramedics what they are worth. That is just wrong. Politicians say lots of things—I know I am one. But members opposite need to be held to account. As the shadow health spokesperson in New South Wales, as a member of the Coalition, I intend to hold the Premier and the Labor Government to account for the promises that were made. In doing so we are upholding what the people of New South Wales expect from their Premier and their Government, and that is to deliver on their promises.

He promised pay increases for paramedics, nurses and public servants across the State in line with inflation. They were his words. He said a pay rise less than inflation is a pay cut. Those are not my words. They are the Premier's words to the people of New South Wales. They voted for him on the expectation that he would deliver on his promises. Paramedics of this State rightly deserve a government that will deliver on its promises. The people of this State rightly deserve a government that will deliver on its promises. Paramedics should hold the Premier and his Government to account. The Coalition will ensure that paramedics get what they were promised by this Government, which is to pay them what they deserve.

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) (16:37):** By leave: I thank the House. I was in the Chamber to offer my support to the member for Sydney and to the incredible paramedics in the gallery today, and to simply watch this debate. But after hearing the hypocrisy of the former Treasurer—who held the purse strings in the Liberal-Nationals Government for 12 long years and failed to give any public sector worker in this State a proper pay rise—I could not remain silent. I had to put on record The Greens' support for paramedics and the need for our healthcare workers in this State to be paid adequately. On behalf of The Greens, I acknowledge the member for Balmain and the member for Ballina, and offer our support to paramedics and their long-held demand for action on better pay and conditions.

We know that the New South Wales paramedics are the lowest paid paramedics in the country. Current pay and working conditions for paramedics are causing burnout, so our paramedics are leaving New South Wales for other jurisdictions. But let us not pretend that this problem just started in March. It did not. There was a wage cap and a pandemic. At the time the Liberal-Nationals Government was under the reign of the former Treasurer, who is now the shadow health Minister and is pretending to care about the plight of paramedics. It is clear that the action of the former Government of imposing a wage cap got us into the current crisis.

It is clear that the New South Wales Minns Labor Government needs to step up. It is not enough to say, "We are going to get into government and we are going to deliver for the workers of this State." Delivering for the workers of this State means making sure they are paid adequately. For two years the Health Services Union has been calling for a 20 per cent pay rise on top of the 4 per cent offer to ensure that the pay of New South Wales paramedics does not fall further than any other State in the country. It is critical that paramedics in this State are paid in line with Queensland.

We know that the Australian Paramedics Association is also demanding fair real terms and pay increases. What we have heard is absolutely critical. We know that there is a massive departure of paramedics from New South Wales to other States, we know that the Premier is concerned about that, and we know the solution. The Greens do not believe that the Liberal-Nationals, now in Opposition, finally care about workers in this State. We offer our support to paramedics in this State. We urge the Premier and the health Minister to step up and offer the pay rise that they are demanding. The Greens stand in solidarity with paramedics and with workers across the State. We recognise the direct actions they are taking to demand that their wages and conditions are held to the highest standard. We also recognise the quality of service and care that they give to the people of New South Wales.

I thank everybody who signed the petition. I acknowledge the member for Sydney for bringing this debate before the House. It is clear from the debate today that paramedics in this State are supported by crossbench members in their push to be paid the wages that they deserve. We thank them for their expertise and service to our community, despite the failure of successive governments to deliver the wages they deserve. I end on this: The previous health Minister may think that we forget the attacks and cuts that were delivered to workers while he was Treasurer, but I remind him that every time he speaks in this Chamber I am happy to put on record that The Greens remember that the former Government delivered absolutely nothing for the people of this State.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira—Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast) (16:41):** In response: I begin by acknowledging and thanking paramedics, including those in the gallery today, and the Health Services Union more broadly. But they are not here for thanks. They are here for a pathway to professional recognition. No-one understands that in this place more than me. I will get to that in a moment. I am working harder to achieve that in one day than the former health Minister did in 12 years. I will not be lectured by him.

**Mr Matt Kean:** They are your promises that you can't deliver.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Not one of my members will be lectured by you, mate. You had 12 years. I have worked harder in a single day for working men and women than you ever have. No member on this side of the Chamber will get a lecture from you. The role and professionalism of paramedics has changed dramatically. They are not ambulance drivers; they are highly skilled, highly trained and highly regarded health professionals. I understand that. Spending four years as the shadow Minister and now seven or eight months as the Minister, I have had an opportunity to spend an incredible amount of time not only with the Health Services Union, which has been generous with its time, but also with individual paramedics from right across New South Wales. I understand that we need to move forward on this issue.

I say to the paramedics and union members in the gallery, and paramedics across New South Wales who may be watching this debate, that no-one is working harder in this place to get this resolved than I am. I have been given the task and responsibility as the Minister to work through this issue. Whilst I will not take a lecture from the former Minister, I recognise the challenge before me. After a decade of wage suppression, the mountain is high. But I was the person on the ballot paper who sought to be their Minister. I am proud to be their Minister now. I will work on this every day until we get an outcome that appropriately recognises paramedics. However, I understand that we are operating under challenging budget circumstances at the same time. I understand that those two things are difficult, but this is a mountain we must climb. We are continuing to discuss this issue. I thank them for their negotiation and their openness and for moving forward on this issue. They have my word that we will continue to move forward.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (16:45):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the petition debate, and I know that many more wanted to contribute. We have heard a fair amount of politics and thanks, but paramedics do not want either of those two things. They want better pay and conditions and

professional recognition. That is why they are in the gallery today and that is why over 10,000 people signed this petition, and we know that even more people across the State support it. They are here to sound the alarm that we are losing paramedics to the other States, that they are under pressure and that our system is in crisis at the moment.

I thank the Health Services Union and its leadership representatives who are in the gallery today: Gerard Hayes, Stuart Hatter, Adam Hall and everyone who made the trek to New South Wales Parliament. I hope they are not leaving here disappointed. I hope they are leaving here knowing that their cries have been heard. I know they want to see faster, stronger action from the Government. I know through my dealings with the Minns Government, particularly with the health Minister, they are working hard. The health Minister understands the issue and he is taking it seriously. He is a good Minister who can hopefully get this across the line. The Minister and the Government know that they have support from crossbench members to make sure that paramedics in New South Wales get the pay and conditions and professional recognition that they have deserved for well over a decade. I thank them for being here. We have to do better in this place. I hope they go home today knowing that we have made that commitment to them.

**Petition noted.**

### *Bills*

## **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms SOPHIE COTSIS (Canterbury—Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety) (16:47):** The bill before the House reinstates the offices of president, vice-president and deputy president. The people appointed to those positions will be judicial members of the commission. The fact that the Industrial Court and the commission will be part of the newly constituted Industrial Relations Commission will permit a judicial member of the Industrial Court to switch roles immediately and act in either a conciliation or arbitration role as a presidential member of the commission. That will provide enormous flexibility and cost savings to the State's industrial stakeholders.

The bill also provides for the least amount of disruption to the industrial parties on the commencement of the Industrial Court by ensuring that the impending proceedings will continue to be heard in the relevant court until their completion. Section 146 of the Industrial Relations Act deals with the general functions of the Industrial Relations Commission and what it must consider when exercising those functions. Currently, under section 146 (2), the commission must take into account the public interest when exercising its functions and must have regard to the objects of this Act, the state of the economy of New South Wales and the likely effect of its decisions on that economy.

The bill will add to those considerations by making it clear that the commission must also take into account the fiscal position and outlook of the New South Wales Government and the likely effect of the exercise of the commission's function on the position and outlook. That amendment in the bill only applies when the commission is exercising its functions in relation to public sector employees. There will also be an important addition to the objects of the Act in section 3, namely, "to encourage strategies to attract and retain skilled staff where there are skill shortages so as to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services".

Finally, schedule 2 deals with amending other pieces of New South Wales legislation consequent on the re-establishment of the Industrial Court. These include updating references to the reinstated Industrial Court, as well as enabling the transfer of proceedings between the Supreme Court and Industrial Court, and providing that the Industrial Court has jurisdiction to deal with and to hear appeals from the Local Court in relation to certain offences under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011.

I say in conclusion that the Minns Government was elected with a mandate to scrap the wages cap and deliver public sector pay rises and a mandate to fix essential services by investing in the workforce that delivers essential services. We have introduced not only the recent pay rise but also an Essential Services Fund to ensure long-term improvements in pay. Now we are delivering on our promise to fix our State's industrial relations system, which, after 12 years of the Coalition Government, is in desperate need of reform. The bill before the House will ensure that the New South Wales industrial relations framework is modern and effective, with an independent Industrial Relations Commission that is accessible to workers, practitioners and all users.

The mutual gains bargaining provisions will promote cooperation and mutual interest between government and public sector unions to achieve outcomes which benefit the citizens of New South Wales accessing public services, the workers who deliver the services and the New South Wales Government. The bill will implement the Boland and Booth recommendation that the Government appoint judicial officers with special expertise in

industrial matters, including work health and safety. The outcome of the amendment bill before the House will be a rebuilt, modern New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission that operates both as a tribunal for arbitral purposes and as a separate Industrial Court for judicial purposes to ensure that workers and employers will once again have a one-stop shop for workplace justice at their disposal.

After 12 long, hard years, it is an honour to stand before the House as a Labor member of Parliament and Labor's industrial relations Minister. I pay tribute to the thousands of public sector workers in New South Wales, who do an extraordinary job delivering public services to the people of New South Wales. I pay tribute to the labour movement, to Unions NSW, to injured workers and to the unions representing public sector unions for their goodwill and cooperation on this bill, as well as the industry groups, the business groups, the legal fraternity and local government. I also especially acknowledge the Premier and the Deputy Premier, my caucus colleagues and our candidates who did not make it as MPs but fought very hard for the past 12 years. Many of them went and became candidates for the third time in tiger country, but always put forward fairness and equity into arguing for the removal of the wages cap and arguing about how we have gone backward.

I acknowledge all those people in the labour movement who have stood very strong over the past 12½ years. They have seen history being made tonight with the introduction of this bill. I acknowledge the offices of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, and the Attorney General and his office. I also make special mention of my amazing staff, who have worked incredibly hard around the clock for months and months. This is something that they can all be very proud of. All of my staff have done an incredible job. Of course, I acknowledge the important work of the Treasurer and his office. I also acknowledge our professional industrial relations staff from the Premier's Department industrial relations office, who are in the gallery today. I thank all of them for their incredible work on this bill. I hope that I have not left anybody off—if I have, I have the reply speech. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Community Recognition Statements*

#### **ONE MEAL – IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE SUTHERLAND BRANCH**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (16:56):** The Sutherland Shire is a community that is famous for its generosity. When someone is in need, there is never a shortage of people eager to lend a hand. One Meal – It Makes a Difference is one organisation filled to the brim with people wanting to assist others. The not-for-profit has several locations, including one in Sutherland. The Sutherland branch was established in 2016 and offers a variety of services throughout the Shire, including a free community dinner at Revive Church in Cronulla on Thursdays; a free community dinner out the front of Chill Cafe in Engadine on Wednesdays; a free community dinner at Miranda Salvos on Tuesdays; and a free community dinner at 816 Old Princes Highway in Sutherland on Sundays. The organisation also provides breakfast packs that can be taken away and can also assist with blankets, clothes and toiletries where possible. We are so fortunate to have One Meal – It Makes a Difference, in Sutherland. I thank the entire team at One Meal – It Makes a Difference for their efforts and dedication.

#### **YOUTH 4 DIFFERENCE**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (16:57):** I acknowledge, highlight and promote Youth 4 Difference, an amazing organisation doing work to promote volunteering on Sydney's North Shore and beyond. It is great to have Kevin Hao and Gina Chen in the New South Wales Parliament. I also acknowledge Mya Wu, Rebecca Ju and Kevin Wang. These students are not leaders of tomorrow; they are leaders right now. We all know that today we have a challenge around volunteering rates. Youth 4 Difference flips volunteering on its head. It goes beyond the "bring a gold coin", a mufti day or just cooking a barbeque. Instead, its purpose is to bring together students and their friends, as well as some people that they may not know, to make a difference in our local community. It is about three things: fun, friends and service. Every two to four weeks, around a weekend, they organise events around high school schedules, including beach clean-ups, tree plantings and fun runs, as well as supporting events from numerous charities. I encourage everyone to visit [youth4difference.org](http://youth4difference.org), follow them on Instagram and, importantly, sign up and get involved.

#### **KING PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Dr DAVID SALIBA (Fairfield) (16:58):** Hundreds of schools across the State compete in the NSW Primary Schools Sports Association knockout soccer championship each year. Today I am smiling as I recognise King Park Public School for winning the knockout for a second consecutive year, marking a record 13-match winning streak. King Park kicked off the tournament with comprehensive wins over several rounds, cumulating in winning scores of 10-0 in the semifinal and 7-0 in the final, setting another State record. Congratulations to players Blake Murphy, Vincenzo Bagiante, Lucas Alessi, Sasha Botic, Daniel Stegnjaic, Nathan Borg, Phillip Botonis, Shwan Khaffaf, Djordje Galic, Isaiah Wanna, Aaron Pascin, Namanjit Singh,

Bayley Smith, Jayden Jacobs and Sebastian Silva on this incredible achievement. I also recognise the wonderful coaches Alex Gollan and Kory Babington, teachers Michelle Joester and Rida Botonis, as well as Rodney Galic for supporting these players in achieving their goals.

#### **DAWNE MACDOUGALL**

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (16:59):** I wish a belated happy birthday to Trangie local Mrs Dawne MacDougall, who celebrated her 100th birthday on 26 October. I had the privilege of visiting Mrs MacDougall at home a few weeks ago. Dawne is very spritely and credits her longevity to a healthy and active lifestyle, along with just a little help from her nightly glass of wine. Born in Trangie, Dawne married Allen MacDougall and had their children, Allen, Robert, Scott and Kim. Now a proud grandmother of 12, Dawne's seventeenth great-grandchild is also on the way. She has life memberships at the Trangie Golf Club and the bowling club, thanks to her regular involvement over many years. She can also be found quite regularly on Friday nights playing a game of cards with the girls. Mrs MacDougall is a much-loved and valued member of the tight-knit community at Trangie. It was a real honour for me to visit and be a small part of her 100th birthday celebrations. Once again, happy birthday to Dawne.

#### **CULTURAL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (17:00):** I acknowledge the great work done by students Eshpreet Kaur and Jacey Nguyen of East Hills Girls Technology High School. They have been newly elected as cultural ambassadors, welcoming cultural diversity into their school community. The Cultural Ambassador Program is an opportunity to help international students adjust to life in Australia by promoting cultural awareness and acceptance to make their transition easier. The program provides a quality educational experience and also fosters a sense of belonging in the school community. It allows students to express their identity through their shared experiences. I extend my gratitude to the outgoing cultural ambassadors, Jessica and Cate, for their extraordinary work and commitment to bringing this idea to life and making it the amazing program it is today. Young minds like theirs are the future, helping our community thrive. I wish the best of luck to Eshpreet and Jacey, who I am sure will do a great job making everyone feel welcome and accepted at East Hills Girls Technology High School.

#### **MORT BAY COMMUNITY GARDEN**

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (17:01):** Today I bring to the attention of the House the 11-year anniversary celebration of Mort Bay Community Garden, a cherished pocket of community in our local area. A volunteer-run place for people to grow their own food, the garden is an important means of building community, securing urban habitat, educating about the origins of food and encouraging a healthy lifestyle. Since opening in 2012 with the support of then mayor Jamie Parker and later Rochelle Porteous, the garden has continued to flourish, with around 40 raised beds, a busy composting area and shaded picnic tables. Through frequent working bees and garden talks, the garden has fostered a very special pocket of community around growing and sharing food. I thank Tony Hill, Frank Portegys, Louise Archer, Michelle French and everyone who helps makes Mort Bay Community Garden the special place that it is.

#### **LADIES LIKE TO LUNCH**

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (17:02):** October was Breast Cancer Awareness Month and I capped it off with the annual Pink Ribbon Luncheon courtesy of Ladies Like To Lunch. Ladies Like To Lunch is a fantastic local organisation focused on supporting women from south-west Sydney dealing with the effects of cancer. The Pink Ribbon Luncheon saw community members from across south-west Sydney gather to raise funds for the fantastic work of the organisation. I admit that I paid an exorbitant amount of money for a rare bag of Fantaes. It was an incredible event, with a focus on empowering and supporting those affected by breast cancer. Part of that was an auction segment, when I purchased the aforementioned bag of Fantaes. I thank directors Antoinette and Lorenzo Sulfaro and Grace Newcombe for putting on such a fantastic event. Their advocacy for women with cancer in south-west Sydney is an inspiration, and I look forward to attending the event for many years to come.

#### **SHINE A LIGHT ON LUNG CANCER WALK**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) (17:03):** I take this opportunity to thank local clinical nurse specialist from my electorate Donna Grieve for recently hosting this year's Lung Foundation Shine a Light on Lung Cancer walk along the Gosford waterfront, which I enjoyed attending. The Shine a Light walk signifies the start of Lung Cancer Awareness Month, when we recognise those living with lung cancer and the impacts of lung cancer on our society. Sadly, 39 people a day are diagnosed with lung cancer and it is Australia's biggest killer. Having worked previously in cancer services within the Central Coast Local Health District over her 17 years in nursing, Donna has seen firsthand how lung cancer can affect patients and their families. Passionate about raising

awareness and funds for life-changing research and support services for people, Donna did an amazing job hosting a well-attended community event. Shine a Light on Lung Cancer walks were held across Australia and, thanks to the efforts of organisers such as Donna who hosted events, Lung Foundation Australia achieved its \$175,000 target. I congratulate Donna and look forward to joining her next year.

#### ALUMINIUM REVOLUTIONARY CHASSIS COMPANY

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) (17:04):** It was great to join the Hon. Courtney Houssos, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and the member for Coogee, Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, at the Aluminium Revolutionary Chassis Company [ARCC] Smithfield on Wednesday 8 November 2023. Proudly Australian, ARCC is pioneering socially responsible engineering to develop an all-electric, zero-emission bus chassis. Leading the way from Western Sydney, ARCC manufactured Australia's first hydrogen fuel cell electric bus. Now transporting passengers across the Central Coast in the New South Wales zero emission bus trial, the bus can drive 16 hours across 515 kilometres of road on just 32 kilograms of hydrogen. A diesel bus on the same journey consumes 170 litres. I thank managing director Peter Murley, marketing and quality system manager Samuel Yeo and the ARCC team for creating sustainable solutions for our future.

#### YAMBA SHORES TAVERN FISHING CLUB

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence) (17:05):** What a big afternoon it was at the Yamba Shores Tavern Fishing Club's presentation day. It was a fantastic event. The fishing club has generously donated \$10,000—a significant amount indeed—to local community groups. Well done to Matt Muir from the tavern; president Peter Stewart; and committee members Allan Harding, Graham Bailey and Ron Jones for their tremendous efforts. The lucky community groups included the Marine Rescue Iluka Yamba squad, the Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter, the Yamba Surf Life Saving Club nippers and the Yamba RSL Sub-Branch. The club demonstrated that it is committed to its community. It has distributed \$87,000 over the past few years and is well on its way to raising \$100,000 for those valuable community groups. That is a lot of meat trays. I congratulate the club and I look forward to joining it again next year.

#### JEANIE FENG

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (17:06):** I congratulate one of my younger constituents, Jeanie Feng, from Schofields Public School. Jeanie, who is only in year 1, has had one of her artworks, titled, *Peeking Frog*, put on exhibition at the 2023 Operation Art exhibition. *Peeking Frog* displays brilliant artistic expression combined with a dazzling array of colours. Being a student in year 1 makes the feat of being an exhibited artist even more commendable. Jeanie's work has also been selected as part of a touring collection of works that will be displayed at the Children's Hospital at Westmead and in regional galleries across New South Wales. To achieve that much at such a young age is extraordinary. I am proud to know that there are passionate and creative children in my electorate who have such bright futures. Congratulations to Jeanie.

#### KIAMA AND DISTRICT BUSINESS CHAMBER

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) (17:07):** Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Kiama and District Business Chamber. The Kiama and District Business Chamber held its annual general meeting on Tuesday 24 October 2023. The leadership team consists of returning president Cameron McDonald, returning vice-president Cathryn Lyall, newly appointed treasurer Michael Emmett and newly appointed secretary Rachel Edwards. Its board members include Marie Beikmanis—who is the immediate past president and life member and who has been well known to many over many years for her florist shop in Kiama—Greg Langford, Michael Cains, Anthony Hourigan, Nicole O'Brien, Cameron Thomas and Tanya Emmett.

The new line-up brings a blend of experience and fresh perspectives, positioning the chamber for continued success and growth. Cameron McDonald and Cathryn Lyall, who are returning to their roles as president and vice-president, bring valuable insights to the organisation. The newly appointed treasurer, Michael Emmett, and secretary, Rachel Edwards, will continue harnessing the skills they have brought to the chamber over many years. The addition of directors Greg Langford, Michael Cains, Anthony Hourigan, Nicole O'Brien, Cameron Thomas and Tanya Emmett continue to add fresh perspective. I congratulate all members of the chamber on their election.

#### NEPEAN FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND DESIGN

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (17:08):** It was an honour to recently attend the Festival of Arts and Design hosted by Nepean Creative and Performing Arts [CAPA] High School at Emu Plains in collaboration with the Zonta Club of Nepean Valley. The festival hosted artworks and designs from emerging and professional artists, photographers, designers and tertiary students not only from my electorate of Penrith but also from the wider Nepean-Blue Mountains-Hawkesbury areas. The exhibition encompassed private and public education by hosting artworks from all schools regardless of their education stature. Over 11 art organisations assembled to support,

fund and collaborate to build on last year's inaugural festival. I acknowledge the dedication of event coordinator and head teacher of creative arts at Nepean CAPA Prudence Rowston, who created the festival and cultivated it to become the staple of creativity and culture in Western Sydney that it is today. All profits from the event go to the Zonta Club of Nepean Valley, which funds programs for women and girls in need.

#### NATHAN METE

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater) (17:09):** I acknowledge Nathan Mete, the curator of the popular Instagram account Retro Sydney. With 125,000 followers and growing every day, Retro Sydney is described as a celebration of Sydney through the decades. Nathan works hard going through archives to find nostalgic photos of Sydney, from our iconic landmarks to more simple pictures of people boarding trains or enjoying the water. For many, Nathan's collection offers reminders of the past, while for others, particularly younger followers, the collection shows them glimpses of a time before the Sydney they know. Social media and the internet can often, sadly, be a negative place. But Nathan's account shows what a wonderful tool social media can be. One follower recently commented, "Your content gives me pure happiness of what was such a good time, the good old days." I thank Nathan for taking the time to remind us of our city's beautiful history. I am pleased that an acknowledgement of his contributions is now on the record of the oldest Parliament in Australia.

#### MILLER TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (17:10):** Stories have extraordinary power to change lives, perspectives and communities. For this reason, it was a privilege to see students from Miller Technology High School perform at the Seymour Centre as part of Treehouse Theatre. Treehouse Theatre seeks to tell the personal stories of young refugees, which are recorded verbatim and written up into scripts by Treehouse directors. The scripts are workshopped with students and rehearsed in a safe and happy environment, and are then performed in front of a theatre audience. Eliciting a variety of emotions, the *Why Us?* performance by Miller Technology High students made for a touching insight into the devastating impact of war on some of our young community members. I laud the tremendous courage of the 11 students who participated in the performance, and I extend my sincere congratulations to Miller Technology High School, George Rosier, Ken Edge and the theatre's directors and volunteers.

#### SHANNON EVANS

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (17:11):** I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Shannon Evans, a clinical nurse educator at West Wyalong Hospital whose hard work has been recognised by the Humpty Dumpty Foundation. Shannon received a highly commended in the 2023 Michelle Beets Award, which is presented to nurses who demonstrate inspirational paediatric care. Shannon was recognised for always going above and beyond to advance children's health in New South Wales. Shannon is passionate about teaching children all about first aid. To that end, she has led training days with children aged between five and 10 during school holidays to teach them all about various first aid techniques, as well as educate them on what to say when they call 000 and what to expect when they have a medical procedure like an X-ray. I congratulate Shannon again on all her efforts. It is an incredible honour and it is well deserved.

#### BAKERS DELIGHT, WOY WOY

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford) (17:12):** Last month was Small Business Month, and one of our local businesses brought home a big win. I congratulate Bakers Delight Woy Woy on being the winner of the Outstanding Bakery/Cake Business award at the 2023 Local Business Awards on the Central Coast. What a fantastic achievement. Bakers Delight Woy Woy is an excellent example of the saying, "Hard work pays off". The owners juggle showing up every day at 2.00 a.m. for 361 days of the year with growing a young family at home. This award amplifies their commitment to serve our community. On top of that, this wonderful business is the sponsor for many local sport and community groups. It is a business that gives back to its community, which probably explains why there is always a queue whenever I go past. It makes me truly happy to share a success story like this, because it motivates us to keep working hard on our dreams. I thank Bakers Delight Woy Woy—I am certain that the team will bring home more awards in the future—and I thank all the local businesses across the Central Coast.

#### TRIBUTE TO DON JONES

**Mrs JUDY HANNAN (Wollondilly) (17:13):** I reflect today on the late Don Jones, husband of my colleague Councillor Suzy Brandstater of Wollondilly Shire Council. Don's life was a journey of service, innovation, and fatherhood. More than a professional, he was a father, a mentor and a pillar of every community he touched. His career in veterinary science was marked by intellectual and innovative contributions, but it was his role as a father and dedicated community leader that truly defined him. Overcoming personal challenges, Don transformed his experiences into opportunities to uplift others. His commitment to community safety was evident

through active roles in the SES and Southern Highlands Support Brigade. Don's fatherhood extended beyond his own family. His profound support and empathy, seen especially in the guiding of his children and others through challenges like dyslexia and mental health conditions, were remarkable. His nurturing spirit also influenced lives through scouting and education. Don's ingenuity shone through when tools he designed for his heartworm research were used by a heart surgeon to save his son's life, a testament to his resourcefulness and devotion. Don's legacy is a tapestry of professional excellence, compassionate fatherhood and community service. His life story inspires and guides us, a testament to the profound difference one person can make.

#### **CABRA-VALE DIGGERS CLUB REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (17:14):** On 11 November 2023 at the eleventh hour, I had the honour of participating in the Remembrance Day commemoration service at Cabra-Vale Diggers Club. This year marked a departure from the norm, as most of the program was expertly conducted by local high school students. Their remarkable contributions, spanning from heartfelt speeches to soul-stirring music, left a lasting impression. I extend my sincere gratitude to the club president, Mr Walter Robinson, all the directors and the group general manager, Mr Michael Foulkes, for extending the gracious invitation. The event honoured the memory of those who served for our freedom today. It also showcased the remarkable talents and dedication of local youth. As the program drew to a close, I was deeply honoured to be bestowed with a badge as patron of the club. It was a humbling experience, and I look forward to contributing to the club's continued success and meaningful contributions to the community.

#### **DORRIGO MULTI-PURPOSE SERVICE**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley) (17:15):** They might be a small team, but their big hearts are filled with a compassion, care and generosity that outweighs that of most. I commend the nursing team at Dorrigo Multi-Purpose Service, which excelled at the NSW Health Excellence in Nursing and Midwifery Awards, taking out the Team of the Year Award. Dorrigo nurses work tirelessly to meet the needs of our small rural community. Identifying ways to meet gaps in services and skills, these lovely nurses have adapted their range of care to ensure all patients have access. Beyond just caring for our community, they are also opportunists in furthering their own skill set to ensure nurses in the Bellingen shire can access training close to home. From the assistants in nursing to the nurse unit managers, all ranks work cohesively and diligently to bring a bright, welcoming spirit to anyone who relies on their vital care. The team is an inspiration, and we are fortunate to leave our health in their very capable hands.

#### **STRATHFIELD SPORTS CLUB**

**Mr JASON LI (Strathfield) (17:16):** Last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of two new tennis courts at Strathfield Sports Club, built with the help of New South Wales Government funding from the Greater Cities Sport Facility Fund. Located on Morwick Street in Strathfield, Strathfield Sports Club has served the tennis and recreation needs of our local area for over 140 years after being established in 1881. The grand opening of the new facilities on Sunday was also a belated 140th birthday celebration for the club and its members, who were unable to celebrate at the time due to COVID. I extend a warm thankyou to the Strathfield Sports Club, including the president, Robert Bow, and the general manager, Chris Dunn, for inviting me to this memorable occasion.

#### **MEN'S KITCHEN ASSOCIATION**

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (17:17):** On behalf of the Wakehurst electorate, I acknowledge and thank the Men's Kitchen Association for its incredible work in establishing and maintaining a safe community space for older men to learn culinary skills. It was great to visit recently and participate in a cooking class—to be fair, I just ate everything! It was a lot of fun. Since its opening in Forestville in 2015, the not-for-profit organisation has committed to supporting thousands of males aged 60 and over living on the northern beaches. It provides a safe and instructive environment for skills development in meal preparation, whether the men are living alone, assuming this responsibility for others, or just wanting to learn. This valuable work in supporting the community is commendable, and I thank the Men's Kitchen Association for the positive difference that it is making and has made in our community. I encourage all MPs to contact me about starting up a men's kitchen in their local area. All they need is a community centre and a small kitchen and, yes, they are expanding.

#### **DR CORIN MILLER**

**Dr MICHAEL HOLLAND (Bega) (17:18):** I congratulate Dr Corin Miller on her recent award as Regional and Remote Health Practitioner of the Year. Dr Miller, a general practitioner with specific training in paediatrics, has worked in Merimbula since 2016. She also works as a GP paediatrician at the South East Regional Hospital in Bega. Recognising the deficiencies in access to paediatric services in rural areas, Dr Miller developed a new model of care at Eden Marine High School in 2020. The Djing, gii Gudjaagalali Kids Clinic accepts referrals

from local public high schools and has supported more than 70 students. Dr Miller has further plans to develop a rural schools health plus pilot program to build on the Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse Coordinator program. Working with the University of New South Wales and the University of Melbourne, it aims to reach 4,475 students in 24 schools in the Bega and Monaro electorates. I again congratulate Dr Corin Miller. I will continue to advocate for her rural schools health plus pilot program.

#### **NORTH SHORE POLICE AREA COMMAND AWARDS**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby) (17:19):** On Friday 3 November I was proud to honour the local police officers of the North Shore Police Area Command at their annual awards ceremony. The Willoughby community is grateful to our local police, who work around the clock to keep us safe and sacrifice so much to maintain law and order and to keep our streets and communities safe. I know I speak on behalf of all of my community in thanking them for their professionalism, courage and bravery in carrying out their duties. Congratulations to all those recognised, including several local community members applauded for their bravery as civilians. I acknowledge particularly the remarkable service of our local police area commander, Superintendent Paul Devaney, BM, APM, VA, who this year marks 35 years as a police officer. Among other things, our police officers deserve our utmost respect for their roles in tackling crime, upholding road safety, maintaining order, and performing and conducting search-and-rescue operations. Our personal safety, property, livelihoods and, indeed, our very lives are indebted to their service.

#### **OLIVER FACER**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (17:20):** I am delighted to recognise the remarkable achievements of Oliver Facer, a 15-year-old hurdler from Georges Hall who is on the cusp of an incredible opportunity to compete at the World Junior Championships in Peru in August next year. Oliver's dedication and talent have set him on a path to represent Australia on the international stage, and his list of accomplishments is nothing short of extraordinary. He proudly holds the Little Athletics NSW and Australian records for all-time best performances. He has even claimed the Athletics NSW 100 metres hurdles record, a feat that involved taking the record from Olympic medallist Nick Hough. Oliver recently secured his place in the Australian All Schools Championships in Perth by winning both the 100 metres and 200 metres hurdles. His achievements have elevated him to the number one ranking in Australia in his age group. Behind Oliver's success is his unwavering commitment to the sport. I am incredibly proud of Oliver, his family and the community who have supported him along this journey. I wish him the best of luck in his future races.

#### **MOTOR TRADERS' ASSOCIATION**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (17:21):** I acknowledge the Motor Traders' Association, which recently gave me a tour of its planned new facility in the heart of Western Sydney at Girraween. The Motor Traders' Association of New South Wales has been dedicated to representing the automotive industry in New South Wales since 1910. The MTA provides expert teaching and quality learning experiences for budding automotive experts. This will be encapsulated in its new training academy. The academy will deliver training programs to an estimated 4,500 students a year, which will notably increase the number of automotive apprentices and add significant investment to our local Western Sydney economy. As a representative of the Western Sydney community, and the shadow Minister for Western Sydney, I am always pleased to see new jobs and growth in our area. I extend my thanks to representatives of the Motor Traders' Association for their generous tour of their planned facility and look forward to seeing it open soon.

#### **QUEANBEYAN DIWALI MELA LANTERN FESTIVAL**

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (17:22):** Last Saturday night Queanbeyan held its first ever Diwali Mela Lantern Festival. A big crowd turned out by the Queanbeyan River and enjoyed a really joyous event, with fabulous dancing, food and the lantern festival. Our region now has a large and growing community from India, particularly around Queanbeyan and Googong. They have made a wonderful cultural contribution to our community, and many residents joined in on the riverside on Saturday to celebrate light and knowledge. I was pleased to join Queanbeyan-Palerang Mayor Kenrick Winchester, who of course turns up at every event and every sporting event in the Queanbeyan region. I congratulate him, the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council and the Queanbeyan Multicultural Centre for making the celebration possible. I also thank the many great sponsors of the event, including Kammy Singh's company. I thoroughly enjoyed many of the dance performances held on the night.

#### **CASTLE HILL RSL YOUTH WIND ORCHESTRA**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill) (17:23):** It is with pleasure that I record the achievements of the Castle Hill RSL Youth Wind Orchestra. Along with many members of the community, I recently attended the Castle Hill and District RSL Sub-Branch show remembering Vietnam 50 years ago at the Castle Hill RSL Club.

The evening featured wonderful performances, but it was the performance by the youth wind orchestra that was the standout performance of the night. The youth wind orchestra has a proud tradition and is regarded as one of Australia's finest symphonic wind bands. Members range from 10 to 19 years of age. The musical and artistic director is the acclaimed Mr James Brice, OAM, who has over 34 years of extensive professional conducting and teaching experience. The youth wind orchestra has won an impressive 30 Australian national and New South Wales State titles since 2003 and is the current 2023 Australian National Junior A Grade Concert Band and Open B Grade Concert Band champions. The youth wind orchestra performance of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* received a standing ovation. I recognise and congratulate James Brice and all members of the youth wind orchestra for a wonderful performance.

#### **DR SAUL GRIFFITH**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote) (17:24):** It was so pleasing to see Dr Saul Griffith nominated as a finalist for the 2024 NSW Australian of the Year. The Austinmer resident is one of the biggest driving forces behind the transition to renewable energy not just in the Illawarra, New South Wales or Australia but internationally as well. The engineer and entrepreneur's passion for clean and green energy is obvious. He has even penned books about the subject. Many Illawarra residents know Saul due to his involvement with Rewiring Australia and Electrify 2515. Both are great initiatives that are certainly making a significant impact in terms of education and raising awareness about the need to transition to renewables. It is no secret that climate change is one of the biggest threats to our globe. Luckily there are people like Saul who are leading the charge to educate and facilitate change. Saul has done so much for others, so it was wonderful to see him recognised as a finalist for the 2024 NSW Australian of the Year award. I congratulate Saul on a much-deserved nomination.

#### **NAVY CADETS**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy) (17:25):** On Wednesday 25 October 2023 I had the opportunity to visit the Training Ship *Kanimbla* at Holsworthy army barracks with my good friend the member for Oatley. The Navy Cadets is a voluntary youth organisation for boys and girls aged between 12 and 18 years, sponsored by the local community and the Royal Australian Navy. The aim of TS *Kanimbla* is to teach the cadets lifelong skills and qualities to navigate the complexities of life, including leadership, self-reliance, confidence and teamwork. This was certainly on display during our visit. It was so wonderful to see our youth participating in these activities. It was a wonderful night that finished with a question and answer session with the cadets where I discussed my role as a member of Parliament. I give a special shout-out to David Barnes, commanding officer of TS *Kanimbla*, for his time. I look forward to working with them into the future. I thank the House.

#### *Private Members' Statements*

#### **DADS AND MALE CAREGIVERS DAY**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Winston Hills) (17:26):** I acknowledge the dads and male caregivers recognition day that was recently held in my electorate of Winston Hills. It is always a privilege to attend community events in the local area. They are great opportunities to gather and spend time with family, friends and residents in common activities. These events bring our community together and give individuals things to look forward to throughout the year. The dads and male caregivers recognition day was no exception. The event was generously hosted by the Winston Hills Mall Child Care Centre at the local Bruce Cole Reserve.

It featured a wide variety of family-friendly activities that could be experienced by all ages. Children were able to enjoy the jumping castles, craft activities, pony rides and petting zoo. There was also a range of food stalls to choose from throughout the day, including the classic Australian sausage sizzle, fairy floss, popcorn and beverages to keep one cool in the sun. A number of community organisations pitched in to make the day a success. I was able to catch up with local groups such as the Winston Hills Tigers Junior Rugby League Club, the Winston Hills Lions Club and the local parkrun group. The Cancer Council and the local State Emergency Service were also there.

Through the combined efforts of our local organisations, the day was a great success. I pass on my sincere thanks to the Winston Hills Mall Child Care Centre and its entire staff for delivering the event. The day was created to celebrate the impact that fathers and male caregivers have on children across our community. The role of a father or male caregiver in the household spans a diverse range of activities. They bring a unique perspective to parenting that enriches the lives of their children. Fathers and male caregivers have significant positive impacts on their families and, importantly, reflect the values of sacrifice, respect and shared responsibility. It is not often that families have the opportunity to truly acknowledge and thank their fathers and male role models for what they impart to children. In the same vein, celebrating all that fathers and caregivers do for their families can sometimes highlight the way that men silently struggle in their day-to-day lives, which was a theme of the event.

As we see a rise in recognition of the impact and magnitude of men's mental health issues, it is important we take effective steps towards the provision of mental health resources and assistance in our communities. Over 40 per cent of men in Australia have admitted to struggling with mental health issues in their lifetime, and Australian men are three times more likely to die from suicide. Directly addressing mental health challenges facing our community is a priority of both the former Government and the current Government, and it is critical to provide the best services and avenues for men or women across our State so that they can seek effective help in their struggles.

Men in the Winston Hills electorate have access to a number of organisations that can help them to connect and socialise throughout the week. Regular socialising is one of the key pillars informing good mental health within the community. The Australian Men's Shed Association was founded in 2007 with the intention to provide men with support and prevent them feeling socially isolated. It has a strong core of dedicated volunteers and leadership, which contributes to the success of men's sheds across the country. Men's sheds across Winston Hills are not for profit and non-commercial organisations that provide safe and friendly environments for men to work on projects of interest, surrounded by like-minded others. For many men in local communities, gathering with their shed organisation is the primary social event in their week. It is an outlet for their social and creative pursuits.

The electorate of Seven Hills is home to two men's sheds, one at Northmead and one at Glenwood. I have been involved with the men's shed at Northmead for a number of years and have been able to provide them with grants to help fund their activities. Both Glenwood and Northmead men's sheds have made significant contributions to our local community for a number of years, and they continue to allow men from across the electorate to socialise and grow their skills. I thank the many men and women involved in the Day for Dads and Male Caregivers. I also thank everyone in the community who is helping improve men's mental health across the electorate.

## MONARO ELECTORATE SCHOOL EVENTS

### COLLEEN SYMINGTON

**Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education) (17:30):** I acknowledge the great work of students and teachers in several high schools in the Monaro area and one outside the Monaro area. Recently I was privileged to attend the CSIRO Generation STEM event at the Bicentennial Hall in Queanbeyan. Generation STEM was born out of a need to strengthen and diversify the New South Wales science, technology, engineering and mathematics pipeline through connection, engagement and research-backed programs. It is held in a number of places around the State, one of which was Queanbeyan. As part of the day, and before I got there, the Generation STEM event included a showcase of many of the employment and training opportunities available to students who are interested in STEM subjects. I hear that it was extremely well attended by many of the local schools.

I saw two local schools show off the projects they had been working on as part of the Generation STEM event. They were expected to find a problem, research it and come up with some ideas for how they might solve it. Yass High School, which is in the Goulburn electorate, came along with an enthusiastic group of people who had been working on a flood warning system for low-level crossings in the rivers in the area. That was borne out of the fact that a number of their crossings have closed in recent years with flooding. They worked with a local technical company getting the equipment they needed, developing software and reporting, and used a web-based mapping application to show whether a crossing was flooded.

Those young people did some terrific work. I congratulate them and their teacher, Kate Vale, and other Yass High School staff who were there; Keith Rosario, who is from the company they were working with; and students Bill Phillips, Freddie Grose, McLean Young, Noah Salzke, James Dokter, Tashi Phillips, Ella Collins and Jess MacDonald. They were all very enthusiastic and did a terrific job. I think they were about to sell me the product at one stage.

The Jerrabomberra High School was also there with a number of different environment-focused projects on waste management, native birds, vertical gardens and urban heat. I went around to all of them and had them explain their projects to me. Again, they were really enthusiastic about their work. They were particularly enthusiastic because at the moment it was students in year 7 and year 8 from Jerrabomberra High School who were putting those projects together. They had made some great models and presentations to go with them. I will not mention all of their names but teachers Penny Whiting and Kingsley Vance were very important. I spoke to Emilia Wheatley, Melissa Whittington and Yasmine Dryden about their urban heat project. I congratulate those schools on their efforts.

Some other local schools were involved in something else really exciting this week—Schools Spectacular. I am going on Friday. Thirty kids from Karabar High School, accompanied by a number of incredibly dedicated

teachers—one of whom is my daughter—will be attending. A number of the kids are performing in the dance groups and as the focus singers. Quite a few have been in the specialised programs that Karabar offers, because it is a performing arts selective school. They are doing a lot of the backstage and production work. Young people from Jindabyne Central School and Bungendore High School will also be there. I congratulate them all on their work. I am very much looking forward to witnessing the performance on Friday night. I have watched it on television many times. It is exciting and looks like it will be spectacular.

In the time left, and totally off topic, I congratulate Colleen Symington in the Whip's office on receiving her tenth anniversary award for working in the Parliament. As everybody in the House knows, Colleen is essential to the running of this Chamber and keeps our members on the straight and narrow. Well done, and may she be here many more years.

### WARAMI BOOK LAUNCH

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills) (17:35):** I celebrate a remarkable event that took place recently in the heart of the East Hills electorate, the Warami Book Launch. This event stands as a testament to the power of unity, collaboration and the beauty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, with participation from local public schools across my electorate, including Condell Park, Padstow Park, Padstow North, Padstow Heights, Panania, Panania North, Picnic Point, Revesby, Revesby South and Tower Street public schools. This initiative was borne out of a vision to foster collaboration among schools in our community and celebrate culture.

Indigenous students from several different schools came together to create different picture books that explore important aspects of their culture. There was also a combined book with contributions from all the schools. The individual books varied, touching on recognition of country, different totems and traditional language, smoking ceremonies and Dreamtime stories. From stories that echo the ancient rhythms of our land to narratives that weave contemporary experiences, each book is a unique reflection of the cultural richness within our community. I am excited to say that all those books have been published. The young authors have not only embraced the legacy of their Indigenous heritage but also contributed to the ongoing narrative of a shared identity. All the primary schools were invited to come together for a presentation of the books. It was a fantastic event and I was incredibly grateful to attend.

The significance of Indigenous cultural celebration cannot be overstated. Our country is steeped in a rich Indigenous heritage that deserves not only acknowledgment but also celebration. The Warami Book Launch was a resounding affirmation of the pivotal role education plays in promoting cultural understanding and unity. Recognising Indigenous culture affirms Aboriginal children's identities, instilling a sense of pride and fostering a strong connection to cultural roots. By acknowledging and celebrating Indigenous heritage, those children see their rich traditions, languages and histories valued and respected. That recognition helps counter feelings of marginalisation, empowering them to navigate the complexities of their cultural identity with confidence.

Ultimately, recognising Indigenous Australians is not just an act of cultural appreciation; it is a crucial element in building a supportive environment where Aboriginal children can grow, learn and flourish with a strong sense of self and community. The launch event was fantastic. It began with a smoking ceremony and representatives from all the schools took part. We then heard from some special guests and speakers, and the Bankstown Network of Schools text was launched. We were treated to a scrumptious morning tea and then heard from individual students about their texts and languages. Traditional games were then played, led by First Nations high school students. That gave younger Indigenous students more chances to connect with older students, adding to that sense of cultural celebration and collaboration.

Afterwards, Indigenous author Kylie Captain gave a motivating and moving speech, which was followed by a Koomurri song and dance. The Warami Book Launch has had a profound impact on our community. It has been a source of inspiration and pride for all those involved, from the educators who nurtured the young minds to the students who poured their hearts into each page. It was heartwarming to see everyone come together in such a wholesome experience and celebrate our community and its diversity.

I stand before the House incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be involved and to celebrate those amazing kids. I thank all the participants whose creativity and dedication have brought the Warami Book Launch to life. I thank the teachers and organisers who worked tirelessly to ensure the success of this event. Finally, I thank all the attendees and the students who bravely shared their stories. The event was an invitation to continue fostering initiatives that promote cultural celebration and unity in the East Hills electorate. Our community is a mosaic of diverse cultures, and it is in the celebration of this diversity that we find strength and resilience. I look forward to more celebrations of culture and diversity within our community.

### MUSWELLBROOK BYPASS FUNDING

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter) (17:40):** I inform the House of the impacts on the electorate of Upper Hunter of the independent strategic review of the Australian Government's infrastructure investment program. Projects in the electorate of Upper Hunter included in the review were the New England Highway Muswellbrook Bypass, which can now proceed through planning, with the remaining money reserved for construction; New England Highway corridor projects, including the Singleton Bypass, Rocky Cut realignment and the Belford to Muswellbrook safety and capacity upgrade; Coulsons Creek upgrade, Merriwa-Willow Tree Road, which will be built as planned; Clarence Town Road, Dungog to Raymond Terrace, which will be built as planned; Bucketts Way improvements, which will also be built as planned; and the new Clarence Town Bridge, which received additional funding of \$781,000 on top of the existing Federal commitment of \$9.5 million.

I have questions about some of the finer details of Canberra's 10-year plan and what it means for the region. Key among my concerns is construction of the Muswellbrook Bypass and whether it will deliver both the New England Highway upgrade and the Coal Road connection with the township of Muswellbrook. The language that has been used in the report is somewhat curious. It indicates that it is not a project that has been cancelled. However, it is not clear when the project is likely to proceed. The exact words used by the Federal Government are:

The following projects will proceed through planning, with remaining funding reserved for construction:

...

New England Highway - Muswellbrook Bypass.

It goes on to state that \$27 million has been allocated out of the \$242 million required to complete the project. On the face of that statement, one would think that the project is locked away. However, there are some interesting details that we still need to have clarified. Firstly, why has the Federal Government suddenly decided to keep one foot in and one foot out? Why not just have the project in the list of approved projects? That seems curious. I am concerned it seems a little sneaky. The Muswellbrook Bypass project is ready to go. Planning for the project has been going on for a number of years, and I am not sure how much more planning is seriously required. The options report has come and gone. The route has been agreed to. The infrastructure business case has been done. The land acquisition is well underway. Service diversions, albeit minor ones, have started. The contract to build will require a design and construction component that could take another six months after contract award date. The Federal Government is stating it wants to complete the planning before committing to the rest of the project.

Recently at budget estimates, the Deputy Secretary for Transport for NSW stated that the project is on hold until a firm commitment from the Federal Government is given. That seems to be a reasonable position since there is no use going ahead with the construction tenders without a guarantee of funding from the Federal Government. If that is the case, why are we now waiting to confirm the project? Why are we speaking about planning when we are waiting for the go-ahead? A simple commitment by the Federal Government could mean we could start the tender process now. By the time we have completed the expressions of interest, the preferred tenderers, the tender period, the tender review, the tender award and the contractor mobilisation, the tendering process could easily end up being 12 months before serious earthworks. That is a lot of work that we are putting on hold. That is a lot of work we could be doing now and should be doing now.

It is important to provide some context to the commitments made to date because there is significant bipartisan support for the project. The Federal member for Hunter, Dan Repacholi, representing the Labor Party, confirmed a number of times during the election campaign that Muswellbrook Bypass would be delivered and that they would not stand in the way of its immediate delivery. Again on ABC Radio a few weeks ago, he was very clear to state that the Muswellbrook Bypass was protected from the infrastructure review and that it would not be impacted. We all need clarification regarding this latest development from last week's announcement. What is the time line?

The project is really important to the community of Muswellbrook. For too long the community has been split by the New England Highway and we need to bring it back together. Most importantly, if the Federal Government wants to continue with its renewable energy projects, we need the bypass for oversized and overhigh trucks. It is worrying that the language about the Muswellbrook Bypass has been changed, and therefore I am very concerned. As a matter of urgency, I need the Federal Government to clarify its position on the Muswellbrook Bypass. Is it going ahead soon?

### BANKSTOWN ELECTORATE MARONITE COMMUNITY

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice) (17:45):** I congratulate the Maronite Eparchy of Australia on the golden jubilee of the eparchy and I shed some light on the remarkable contributions made by the

Maronite community in my electorate of Bankstown. In September the Maronite Eparchy of Australia celebrated 50 years at the golden jubilee dinner in the presence of His Beatitude and Eminence Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. The celebration was attended by well over 2,000 guests at Rosehill Gardens. Sitting through the festivities, the vibrancy of Maronite culture was evident in the attire, music and smell of Lebanese cuisine. It was a testament to the rich heritage of the Australian Maronite community.

But beyond the festivities, I was also reminded of the immense contributions that the Maronite community has made to our local community and Australia. Their story is now an important part of the Australian story. In the true Maronite spirit of giving, not only was this dinner a celebration of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia but it was also an opportunity for members to come together as one community around the Patriarch to help students in need in Lebanon. I know that you, Temporary Speaker Di Pasqua, were in attendance as well. Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay launched the Lebanese School Appeal in collaboration with Mission Australia, with aims to extend the Maronite church fundraising efforts beyond just the golden jubilee dinner.

This charity extends to the wider community, whether it be through the sourcing and distribution of food packs during the COVID lockdowns; supporting people who may need assistance with housing and accommodation; caring for the elderly in a manner that is culturally sensitive and compassionate; ensuring that all children, regardless of the financial position of their family, feel supported in their schooling; or fundraising and volunteering during times of need both in Australia and abroad, including feeding the homeless people in Martin Place through the Maronites on Mission.

Their rich history is deeply rooted in the traditions and values of Lebanon. It is evident through their tireless work that they have successfully preserved their cultural heritage while embracing their new home within the Australian multicultural community. One cannot talk about the Maronite community without acknowledging their dedication to education. The establishment of Maronite schools has played a pivotal role in shaping the lives of countless individuals, providing them with quality education and a strong moral compass. In my electorate, St Charbel's College is a thriving school community with a student population of more than 1,000, the majority of whom are Australian Lebanese Maronites. The now Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay was the principal at the school when I was the principal at Punchbowl Boys' High School. We had many conversations about how we were going to solve the problems of the world, like getting young boys to school on time.

They also established the St Charbel's Care Centre, an inclusive and progressive residential aged-care home for elderly members of the community to live in a caring, secure and homelike environment that promotes the celebration of all lifestyles, cultures and experiences. Moreover, the Maronite community has consistently demonstrated its unwavering commitment to charitable endeavours. Through various initiatives, they have uplifted the lives of those less fortunate, extending a helping hand to the most vulnerable members of our society. Their acts of kindness, compassion, and generosity have touched the lives of countless individuals, embodying the true spirit of community and humanity. In addition, the Maronite community has embraced the importance of interfaith dialogue and harmony. They actively engage in fostering relationships with other religious and cultural groups, promoting understanding and respect across diverse communities. Their commitment to unity and cooperation serves as an exemplary model for a harmonious and inclusive society.

I also commend the Maronite community for their strong emphasis on family values. They place great importance on upholding the sanctity of families and familial bonds and nurturing the wellbeing of children. Those values, deeply embedded in their religious teachings, contribute to the social fabric of our community and foster a sense of unity and belonging. It is imperative that we recognise and appreciate the immense contributions that the Maronite community has made, and continues to make, in my electorate of Bankstown.

I particularly acknowledge my friend Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay for his interfaith work to bring people together in the difficult circumstances that communities face. Church leaders, volunteers, contributors and people in the community, regardless of faith—or not faith—work incredibly hard to not only preserve but also develop the strong, multicultural, multi-faith, cohesive community that we live in. The golden jubilee night was a wonderful celebration, and I hope all members continue to support all endeavours to work collaboratively to create an environment where everyone's contributions can flourish.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I was also at that golden jubilee dinner. I congratulate the Maronite community of Australia on 50 years of the church in Australia and also congratulate Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay.

#### HOMELESSNESS

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) (17:50):** Homelessness is a very dangerous situation to be in. It creates significant risk of violence and intimidation and prevents people from getting the care they need, causing health and mental health to deteriorate. Homelessness makes it more likely that someone will enter the criminal

justice system and can make getting and keeping a job near impossible. People do not choose to become homeless. The causes are out of their control and include domestic and family violence, trauma, natural disaster, mental health, addiction, job loss and poverty. It usually involves an element of being down on one's luck and can happen to anyone.

The inner city is seeing a huge and dangerous increase in the number of nonresident people sleeping rough. This cohort includes asylum seekers, temporary visa holders, undocumented people and New Zealand citizens who arrived in Australia after 2001. Their situation is especially dire because their visa status excludes them from very basic government-funded services, leaving them with no access to temporary accommodation, homelessness support, domestic violence support or health care. Even women and children fleeing domestic violence cannot access government-funded refuge accommodation.

Nonresident people experiencing homelessness rely heavily on charitable and philanthropically funded services, but those organisations cannot connect them with any government services, excluding most options to exit homelessness. Furthermore, when a person is in housing crisis, there is no way to resolve the basic challenges to improving their circumstances, like being on the wrong visa or other administrative issues. During the pandemic, State government funding was provided for accommodation and wraparound support for nonresident people sleeping rough to keep them safe from the virus. The approach not only protected homeless people and the wider community from the spread of COVID-19 but also successfully provided nonresident rough sleepers with pathways out of homelessness.

Access to health, housing, food and crisis services ensured those on the front line were able to help the cohort find solutions to their challenges, including updating visas, providing access to health care, gaining employment and securing more stable accommodation. While they are not eligible for social housing when they are not in a crisis situation, specialist homelessness services were able to explore options like changing their visa or accessing their funds to get back home. For the first time in New South Wales, people were largely able to get out of homelessness. But these services are no longer funded and rough sleeping by nonresidents has surged, particularly in the inner city and, I understand, in Parramatta.

It is estimated that around one-fifth of people sleeping rough in inner Sydney right now are nonresidents. Specialist homelessness services report being overwhelmed, with few options to help this very vulnerable group. Frontline workers are especially distressed when their only options for people seeking to escape domestic violence are between staying in a violent situation and rough sleeping. Organisations regularly see nonresident women and trans people who leave domestic violence sleeping rough. A joint request to the Government has come from Mission Australia, the Salvation Army, St Vincent's Health Network, St Vincent de Paul, the Wayside Chapel, Jewish House, the Haymarket Foundation, the Station, House of Welcome, Neami National, the Institute of Global Homelessness, the Jesuit Refugee Service and the Asylum Seekers Centre to reinstate funding for crisis accommodation for nonresidents. Providing nonresidents with crisis accommodation is vital and evidence based. It is the solution for getting this group out of homelessness. It is cost-effective because it also keeps them out of emergency departments and off the streets.

This problem crosses a range of portfolios, including Families and Communities, Youth Justice, Housing, Homelessness, Health, the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and Multiculturalism, with additional crossover into Commonwealth jurisdiction through immigration and visa policies. We need to work together to resolve this situation and ensure that there is government support to prevent and resolve homelessness among nonresidents. I know from my brief experience living on the street for the 2018 SBS series *Filthy Rich and Homeless* how impossible it is to improve one's circumstances when sleeping rough. The situation is usually hopeless. I call on the Government to work with specialist homelessness services to find a solution to what is a humanitarian crisis on our doorstep and ensure that nonresidents can access emergency housing.

### RIVERSTONE ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr WARREN KIRBY (Riverstone) (17:56):** Riverstone, tucked away in the heart of the North West Growth Area, has taken more than its fair share of population growth in the past five years. In fact, it is the fastest growing electorate in the State. Despite this massive growth, the infrastructure that services the area is still reminiscent of the Riverstone of my youth. Roads, health care, transport and schools are all left behind. Sitting on the edge of the Hawkesbury-Nepean flood plain, Riverstone and its inadequate roads falter when delivering safe evacuation from the region. The failure to deliver adequate infrastructure is more than just a daily inconvenience experienced by locals. It can be life threatening. For this reason, the Government has recently announced its decision not to move forward with the draft planning proposals for the rezoning of the Riverstone town centre, Riverstone West and Marsden Park North. The previous Government was aware of updated flood modelling in early 2021, which prompted it to put Marsden Park North, West Schofields and the Riverstone town centre on indefinite hold.

The May 2023 Hawkesbury-Nepean flood evacuation modelling report was commissioned and considered by the previous Government, but it was never made public. It reveals the extent of infrastructure failures in emergencies. The flood evacuation model has indicated that proposed residential developments in the three precincts would significantly increase the risk to life to the Hawkesbury during a potential flood evacuation. The previous Government did not look at ways to fund the much-needed infrastructure. Instead of addressing the problem, it proposed to raise the dam wall. It placed planning proposals on indefinite hold, leaving residents and landholders in limbo while it tried to convince everyone that somehow raising the dam wall a couple of decades from now would fix the lack of roads.

Presented with the same data, the Minns Government has promptly made the report public, giving landowners the certainty they deserve, and has immediately allocated funds to rectify the critical road infrastructure gaps to ensure the community's safety. The previous Government not only failed to deliver the infrastructure but also failed to be honest with the landowners and residents of Riverstone, West Schofields and Marsden Park. It failed to make a decision that may not have been popular, but it was necessary to address the years of inadequate funding in the region.

This Government's first budget invested more than \$600 million in flood evacuation in the region, including funding for Garfield Road East and Bandon Road in Riverstone and further widening for Richmond Road between Townson Road and the M7. The Government's first budget also allocated funding for a new Hawkesbury River crossing at Richmond, providing a faster, safer and more resilient connection. While road upgrades are welcome news, many people in Riverstone have been devastated to learn that work on their town centre will not proceed.

A master plan for the Riverstone town centre has been under consideration since 2014. Creating a sustainable master plan for Riverstone is long overdue and has become a critical issue. Repeated failure to deliver it has contributed to the pressing issues facing the residents of Riverstone and the entire North West Growth Area. The previous proposal adopted by Blacktown City Council in 2018 had a residential focus, adding over 3,800 units or around 10,000 new residents in shop-top housing without adequate provision to accommodate the growth. This is one of the reasons the proposal failed. Another was a lack of traffic management. After years of neglect, we now have the chance to create a town centre capable of adequately supporting the 200,000 new residents in and around the area.

Riverstone is a place that I have called home all of my life. While we need to take into account the evolving needs of the community, it is a community that has undergone remarkable growth and transformation since the initial conception of the town centre. Surrounding the Riverstone town centre are multiple new residential developments—in fact, whole new suburbs—but there is a noticeable absence of local employment. This presents an opportunity to once again position Riverstone as the focal point for jobs in the region. A master plan focused on generating employment will promote economic growth and job creation. By providing designated space for employment-generating uses, the town centre will help to attract businesses and create new job opportunities. A shift away from a residential focus to a service focus will make Riverstone a liveable place once again. Local jobs will mean local spending and a holistic traffic management plan will lead to reduced traffic.

Currently, the North West Growth Area suffers from a lack of social amenities, such as sports and recreational facilities, social support services and active green spaces. Riverstone is home to the most young people and kids in the State. Our sporting clubs are overfilled, and their amenities are lacking. The town centre can be the key to solving many of those issues with an innovative design that prioritises community benefits and alleviates existing pressures. Riverstone can be a place that will revive the north-west.

## LINDFIELD COMMUTER CAR PARK

### STATE ECONOMY

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson) (18:01):** This week I was shocked when the Minns Labor Government cut \$9.8 million from commuter parking at Lindfield. This is a kick in the guts for every resident of Lindfield, and my community deserves better. We deserve our fair share of infrastructure investment, particularly as Labor has plans to increase housing. You cannot increase housing when you are going to cut infrastructure. Ku-ring-gai Council states that Transport for NSW contacted it about the cut, saying, "Reasons given were that there have been Federal and State infrastructure reviews. Funding has been decreased and priorities have changed with the new Government." There you have it—Federal and State Labor cuts. I invite my community to sign my petition at [mattcrossmp.com.au](http://mattcrossmp.com.au) to call on the New South Wales Labor Government to commit to the \$9.8 million for Lindfield commuter parking, as budgeted by the previous Liberal Government. Let's fight for our fair share of infrastructure funding together.

I take this opportunity to share my economic values, frameworks and the purpose for government when it comes to the economy. I believe the economy is central to everything, and it provides endless opportunities to the

citizens and taxpayers of New South Wales. As a Liberal, I believe in a government that nurtures and encourages citizens through initiative, not punishing them with burdensome taxes, and encourages the facilitation of wealth so that everyone might enjoy the highest possible standards of living, health, education and social justice. In practice, these values mean that a strong economy is needed to invest in more services and infrastructure. In relation to services, a strong economy means even more nurses, doctors, police, teachers and frontline staff. We should have the best and brightest among the 400,000 public servants in New South Wales. As the son of a New South Wales public servant of 40 years, I pay tribute to our public servants.

In relation to infrastructure, the Government has a duty to establish an environment where infrastructure can be built, working with all stakeholders—from local communities to the private sector—and embracing public private partnerships, so long as it is in the interests of the public good. We do not talk enough about the importance of spending taxpayer funds. Government budgets and funding belong to citizens, not to politicians. Budgets are for the public good and not political purposes. Pork-barrelling is not only bad politics; I believe it is immoral. Sadly, Labor's small commitments allocation scheme is a complete disgrace and should be investigated by the Auditor-General. We need to have budgetary frameworks. For me, this framework includes fiscal responsibility with a balanced budget because a government should always live within its means; paying down debt to protect the triple-A credit rating and to make sure that we do not put the burden of debt onto future generations; and maximising investment in projects with a positive cost ratio analysis as every dollar invested by a government should return more than one dollar to the broader economy.

We also need to reduce red tape. The Institute of Public Affairs has calculated that \$176 billion each year is lost in economic output because of red tape, which is equivalent to 9.2 per cent of gross domestic product. We need to do everything we can to cut red tape. In 2013 the former Federal Liberal Government established the Red Tape Reduction Day, which took place in 2014 and 2015. One of the red tape regulations that was cut meant people could travel on aeroplanes without putting their phones on flight mode. That was a smart regulation to cut and highly practical for everyone. I believe—as did the O'Farrell Government when it introduced this policy—that for every new regulation, two regulations should be removed. I hope that cutting red tape will create further economic growth by creating productivity. We, as legislators, need to do everything we can to make sure we do not introduce red tape that particularly impacts small business.

I look forward to discussing economic policy well into the future. As a Liberal, I believe the economy is central to everything. All of us in this place want to make sure that we are getting investment into each of our communities. The Davidson electorate should get the infrastructure and services it deserves. The best way to do that is to make sure we deliver a strong economy. That involves cutting red tape, balancing budgets and making sure we do not have debt and that every individual can reach their full potential.

#### **FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL**

**Mr TRI VO (Cabramatta) (18:06):** Fairfield Hospital is located on the corner of Prairie Vale Road and Polding Street in Prairiewood—almost at the exact corner where the electorates of Prospect, Fairfield and my electorate of Cabramatta intersect. Fairfield Hospital provides a wide range of hospital and community services for people in those electorates, and especially for my constituents. Every year Fairfield Hospital admits over 30,000 patients, performs over 7,000 surgical procedures, delivers over 1,500 babies and has over 35,000 presentations to the emergency department. All of this is performed with just 220 beds. For the past 12 years, the Liberal-Nationals Government neglected Fairfield Hospital. It consistently failed to commit the necessary funding to upgrade Fairfield Hospital to keep up with the growing population of my community. Due to this neglect of our health system, my constituents who are in need of urgent medical attention have suffered.

Due to the lack of funding for Fairfield Hospital, patients have reported waiting for months for elective surgery, on average, and it has been reported that 50 per cent of patients spend at least three hours in the emergency department waiting for treatment. I have heard many stories and complaints from constituents that Fairfield Hospital has fallen short of acceptable standards. My family and especially my three children have used this hospital on many occasions. There were times when we waited for sometimes five to eight hours, and when we saw the doctor we were referred to other hospitals, including Liverpool and Westmead. This is not a criticism of the hardworking doctors, nurses or staff, but more a criticism of the decisions by previous governments that have led to the current situation where this hospital is underfunded, under-resourced and understaffed.

However, under the leadership of Premier Chris Minns and health Minister Ryan Park, we are able to mark a new chapter for public health and for Fairfield Hospital—a chapter that I am proud to be a part of. In delivering on our election promises, the 2023-24 New South Wales budget has included \$3 billion for new and upgraded hospitals across Greater Western Sydney. Our Government has committed \$550 million in upgrades for Fairfield Hospital, delivering its first major redevelopment since it opened in 1989. The upgrade will include expanding bed capacity, improving facilities for critical and emergency care, and increasing funding to expand critical

services at the hospital. These upgrades will lead to reduced waiting times and improved care for patients, giving my constituents the medical care they deserve.

This Government puts people first by listening to our communities and understanding what demands need to be met. We put people first by building infrastructure and delivering services to address what is needed, not just for now but also for the future. This investment in Fairfield Hospital is very much welcomed, and I look forward to seeing continued support for the hospital. I commend the New South Wales Premier, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Western Sydney for their leadership and for continuing to deliver on the funding, facilities and resources that New South Wales needs. I look forward to further collaboration with my neighbouring MPs and with the Minns Labor Government to continue to deliver upgrades to Fairfield Hospital and to develop a strong and robust healthcare system in New South Wales.

### LITTLE BIG DAIRY

**Mr DUGALD SAUNDERS (Dubbo) (18:10):** I congratulate Dubbo's Little Big Dairy on reaching the remarkable milestone of 10 years of operation. The journey of this family-owned dairy is not just a story of success but also a real testament to resilience, innovation and community spirit. In 2012 when Steve and Erika Chesworth's daughter, Emma, returned home from university, it was to a struggling family farm. The dairy industry was in crisis and, at the time, some of the milk from the farm was being sold for far less than the cost of production. It was tough. It was in this moment that the pivotal decision was made to look at building their own factory. In September 2013 that farm factory became a reality, marking the beginning of a transformative journey. Fast-forward a decade and Little Big Dairy has grown into a thriving enterprise with close to 50 employees. Its milk and cream are now distributed to more than 1,000 wholesale customers across New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

The success of Little Big Dairy, according to Emma, is rooted in the philosophy that the little things add up to something big. In 2019 Little Big Dairy entered the Australian Food Awards and came away with a swag of medals, including gold for its full-cream milk, less-cream milk and pouring cream. It was awarded silver medals for double-cream milk, no-cream milk, non-homogenised milk and fair trade coffee milk. It received bronze medals for fair trade chocolate milk and—one of my favourites—for honey, malt and vanilla flavoured milk. The achievement underscores the dedication this team has to producing high-quality goods, which have become synonymous with the Little Big Dairy brand. There have been many other gold medals since that time.

In 2021 Little Big Dairy successfully secured funding from the then New South Wales Coalition Government through the now sadly scrapped Regional Job Creation Fund. The \$500,000 secured was invested in building a new shed for storage and office space, along with purchasing a fully automatic wraparound case packing machine to replace the hand-packing system. That project not only enhanced operational efficiency but also provided opportunities for employee upskilling and advancement. The strength of the Little Big Dairy family was put to the ultimate test in December 2021, when tragedy struck. Emma's husband, Jim Elliott, was sadly killed in a farm accident and the family faced absolute heartbreak. With incredible resilience, mutual support and a deep sense of purpose, the business continued to run and to honour Jim's legacy.

Little Big Dairy, as members have probably gathered, is more than a business; it is a family. It has over 1,000 purebred Holstein cows, each known by name, that all contribute to the amazing range of single-source products. Each member of the human family has a defined role to play in the process and management of the business. The company aims to purchase all materials and labour from within the Central West. All the fodder for the cows, for example, is produced on farm or comes from within a 200-kilometre radius. Little Big Dairy believes passion and heart are the main ingredients to delivering amazing flavour. It is that commitment and passion that makes Little Big Dairy more than a milk company. With a commitment to sustainable farming and fair trade practices, Little Big Dairy not only takes care of its home but also actively contributes to the community. By donating products to various not-for-profit community organisations and sporting groups, Little Big Dairy exemplifies the spirit of giving back.

To celebrate 10 years in business, Little Big Dairy released strawberry milk for the first time, with 2 per cent of sales going to Ovarian Cancer Australia. I have been lucky enough to spend time with some of the family members over the years, learning more about the business as it started to grow and look for more opportunities. I was delighted to spend time with Emma and Jim and to be with Erika and Steve Chesworth when they were recognised at the Royal Easter Show this year. Little Big was a finalist for the prestigious President's Medal awarded by the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, which means it was recognised as one of the country's best. Well done to Emma, Erika, Steve and the entire Little Big Dairy team for the passion, hard work and unwavering heart and dedication we see. May the next decade be filled with even greater achievements, as this extraordinary dairy continues to make a positive impact on the industry and the community it serves. I congratulate Little Big Dairy on 10 years of excellence.

## PENRITH ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms KAREN McKEOWN (Penrith) (18:15):** At a time when Penrith can least afford it, we have been sideswiped by the Federal Government's decision to axe vital local infrastructure in and around my electorate. To say I am deeply concerned is an understatement. These cuts were announced without any prior consultation or warning. Western Sydney has borne the brunt of the cuts, which I find unacceptable given that we are a region with the third largest economy in Australia. Local infrastructure has not kept pace with our rapid growth. As a region, Western Sydney, and Penrith in particular, has done the heavy lifting, taking on more than our share of increased population. The announcement to scrap Kingswood Commuter Car Park is short-sighted in the extreme. Commuter car parks are important pieces of infrastructure that enable the community to access public transport because we are heavily dependent on our cars. It makes absolutely no sense to scrap the St Marys Commuter Car Park in an area that will service a metro that has a direct link to the new airport in Western Sydney.

It is important to remind the House that the City of Penrith is geographically the closest to the airport, being only 12 kilometres from our CBD. While the commuter car park cuts are nonsensical, we in Penrith have had a triple hit with the axing of the widening of Mulgoa Road stage two, Glenmore Parkway to Jeanette Street; stage 5A, Blaikie Road to Jamison Road; and stage 5B, Jamison Road to Union Road. While stage one of the Mulgoa Road upgrades is going ahead, without these important missing links traffic will only be funnelled to a standstill. Cutting public transport options and then further cutting vital road and arterial upgrades, especially to the new airport, will severely impact our city, our businesses and investment in our region.

When the airport was planned, we were promised that we would have connectivity. It was acknowledged that Western Sydney residents would have some pain but that the promised infrastructure upgrades would go some way to alleviate that. It was sold to Western Sydney residents on the basis that the benefits would outweigh the negatives, but we have had this bombshell dropped on us without any reasonable explanation. I am extremely angry that there seems to be an attitude that the State Government will automatically kick the can to finish these projects. New South Wales contributes 33 per cent to the Federal Government tax base but only 23 per cent comes back through co-funded infrastructure. This Government is not in a financial position to pick up the Federal Government's slack.

To demonstrate the lunacy of this decision, in July this year I had an onsite meeting with dozens of local business owners and operators who were concerned about the planned changes to the industrial end of a local road, Coreen Avenue, as it would detrimentally restrict access to their premises and force heavy vehicles through the narrow residential streets of Thornton in order to service their businesses. There was a significant number of objections to the proposal. At the time I wrote to the Federal Minister, making representations on behalf of our residents and businesses, explaining the negative impact on Coreen Avenue and advocating that those Federal funds would be better spent on the future stages of the Mulgoa Road widening, which were a much higher priority.

That was also confirmed in a subsequent meeting that I instigated with Transport for NSW. I fail to see how two roundabouts and a set of traffic lights on Coreen Avenue, which is to be funded by the Federal Government, can be determined to be of national significance but finishing Mulgoa Road, which is a main arterial, is not—just ask any of the residents who have sat in a standstill for 30 minutes on Mulgoa Road at 4.00 p.m. or have tried to exit the M4 off-ramps at any time of day where traffic is dangerously queued into the breakdown lanes trying to exit. The Federal review may well have been conducted on a desktop somewhere in Canberra, but I challenge those making the decision to rethink the announcement. They should come to Penrith and then explain to us why those cuts are justified.

## POLITICAL CORRUPTION

**Ms KOBI SHETTY (Balmain) (18:20):** This evening I would like to talk about corruption. While I do not believe that there is much said about it in this place and it does not seem to have raised more than a quiet nod in the media, it has been a busy time for corruption in New South Wales. The major news is that former New South Wales Labor Minister Joe Tripodi now faces prosecution for feeding confidential information to a private property developer, misusing his position as a member of Parliament and improperly providing an advantage.

**Dr Marjorie O'Neill:** Point of order: Private members' statements are meant to be about a member's electorate.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I uphold the point of order. I ask the member to relate the private member's statement to her electorate.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** I do not know where to go from here. I have just started speaking.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I will refer to the Clerk for advice. The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Balmain may continue to speak on the subject of corruption, provided that it relates to her electorate.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** It has been seven years since the Independent Commission Against Corruption released its finding against Mr Tripodi. The matter has now been referred to court and hearings will commence next week. I will keep a very close eye on the matter, and I encourage members across the political spectrum to take a similar interest. I am sure that it will be very instructive on what not to do with our time in this place.

**Dr Marjorie O'Neill:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**Dr Marjorie O'Neill:** The member for Balmain is yet to relate her private member's statement to her electorate.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** I think she is about to.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** I was attempting to, yes.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua):** Has the matter been raised with you in your electorate?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** Yes, absolutely. Members of my electorate of Balmain have a keen interest in corruption, and there has been a great deal going on in a close jurisdiction, City of Canada Bay, where Mayor Angelo Tsirekas was found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct, resulting in his removal from office. People in my electorate are raising corruption with me all the time. They see that my role as an elected representative and as a member of The Greens is to make sure that corruption is stamped out in New South Wales. It is a very important issue to the people that I represent.

Let us not pretend that ICAC investigations and findings of serious corrupt conduct are the sole domain of the Labor Party. Recently we have heard that former Liberal Premier Gladys Berejiklian is considered to be a possible replacement for the top job at Optus. That follows the resignation of the Optus CEO after a disastrous few months. As it stands, Berejiklian is not a serious contender because we know that she was also found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct. At a time like this, she would probably not be the ideal candidate. Ms Berejiklian is keen to challenge the ICAC's findings on a number of legal technicalities, so we will have to watch that space.

Those examples of elected representatives putting their own interests and the interests of their mates above the public interest is a firm reminder of the long list of scandals that have ended many a political career. In this term of Parliament we have seen some concerning referrals to the ICAC, including questions about the duties of an apolitical staffer and questionable election grant schemes. An esteemed director of the Centre for Public Integrity and former counsel assisting at ICAC inquiries, Geoffrey Watson said, "This is pork-barrelling, pure and simple." Is it any surprise that confidence in politics is at an all-time low? Whether it is a Premier's secret relationship, using confidential information to obtain a commercial advantage, doing favours for your mates—

**Dr MARJORIE O'NEILL:** Madam Temporary Speaker, the private member's statement by the member for Balmain is out of order. This is not about the member's electorate. I move:

That the member for Balmain be not further heard.

**Motion agreed to.**

### PARRAMATTA ELECTORATE PROJECTS

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta) (18:25):** Parramatta, or Burrumatta, has always been inextricably connected to its river. Since time immemorial, it has been a songline for the Burrumattagal people of the Darug nation, who have relied on the river for sustenance, culture and transport. Today the Parramatta River is a vital arterial that forms part of the ferry network, providing one of the most popular modes of transport that sees in excess of 6,195 people using our ferries every weekday. That does not include the thousands who take to the river on weekends, grasping the opportunity to soak up a scenic and relaxing ferry ride. Soon those rivergoers will benefit from the introduction of seven new ferries, designed by Incat Crowther's leading naval engineers based in the northern beaches and made in Australia, after the New South Wales Government awarded the construction tender to Richardson Devine Marine shipbuilders in Hobart.

The Parramatta Class ferry design will be a vast improvement on the 10 overseas-made River Class vessels that entered service in October 2021 under the previous Liberal Government. They are plagued with approximately 43 defects, including the upper deck seating that was deemed too dangerous to be used when

passing under Camellia Railway Bridge and Gasworks Bridge. Those defects—worthy of a *Utopia* episode—delayed their service commencement dates by well over a year.

In contrast, the new Parramatta Class ferry design will also allow for future conversion to electric propulsion as battery, charging and engine technologies improve. I am proud to be part of a Labor government that understands both the cultural and economic importance of the river so much as to deliver those fantastic vehicles that are not just tailor-made for the river but also named in its honour. The seven new vessels will replace seven much-loved Cairns-built RiverCat vessels, which are ready to retire after 30 years as the very first passenger ferries to chart a course all the way to Parramatta wharf in 1993—a wharf that, like the RiverCat ferries, has undergone a revamp and a rebrand.

Rivergoers can now enjoy the benefits of Parramatta's newly upgraded Charles Street Square at the Parramatta Quay. The New South Wales Government has contributed \$4.65 million to jointly fund the City of Parramatta's upgrade to Charles Street Square as part of a commitment to deliver great public open spaces. The new-look square will officially open on Monday 27 November. Drawing inspiration from the curved geometry of the river, the surrounding landscape and the site's unique history, this revitalised entrance to the river city will have the elegance and accessibility befitting of a truly international city.

When Parramatta Light Rail and Sydney Metro West open, we will be the only location in New South Wales outside of the City of Sydney to possess all five modes of public transport: ferries on Parramatta River, light rail down Macquarie Street, the metro, heavy rail and buses. Transport connectivity is key to the success of our modern Parramatta as a true 24-hour economy and a true 24-hour city. It is a genuine alternative to Sydney, the gateway to the west and a destination to live, to work, to play and to thrive.

#### **RONALD RAYMOND JAMES, OAM**

**Ms ROBYN PRESTON (Hawkesbury) (18:29):** I speak in my capacity as shadow Minister for Veterans, and I acknowledge any veterans that may be present in this Chamber, those veterans who are not present, those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and fought and died for our freedom, and current Defence personnel. I recognise Ronald Raymond James, OAM, whom many know as Ray James. Mr James recently retired as RSL NSW president on 17 November. Ray is a Vietnam veteran who served over 20 years in the Royal Australian Navy and another 26 years in the Royal Australian Navy Reserve before retiring with the rank of chief petty officer.

As a young boy on a school excursion to Magnetic Island, Ray saw HMAS *Melbourne II* off the shore of Townsville harbour and knew from that moment he was going to join the navy. His voyage with the Australian Navy began at the not-so-ripe age of 15, when he joined as an engineer in January 1965. Ray then travelled to Western Australia where he joined HMAS *Leeuwin* to undertake 12 months of academic and naval training before being transferred as a 16-year-old sailor to HMAS *Sydney III*, which was nicknamed Vung Tau Ferry at the time. In March 1966, just after he turned 17, Ray made his first trip to serve in Vietnam. During his time in the Royal Australian Navy, he also served on HMAS *Brisbane* and HMAS *Melbourne II*.

Like a lot of veterans, Ray's family tree speaks volumes. His father was in the Seventh Division of the 25th Battalion and first fought for Australia in Kokoda at the age of 16, with a Defence career spanning from 1942 to 1947. Ray's father was reluctant when he learnt of his son's desire to join the navy, wanting him to first finish the mechanic apprenticeship he had already started. To this day the Defence tradition continues in the family, with Ray's grandson Harry Whalan now experiencing the crisp, salty air on board HMAS *Melbourne III*. Ray's dedication to the public service continued. He served with the Transport Investigation Branch and NSW Police Force, using the skills he acquired in the navy. During his time with the Police Force, Ray helped train 480 officers in bomb search techniques and how to protect the athletes' village ahead of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

It is important to understand the history of our RSL members because there is always a great tale behind them. When we take the time to learn about Ray James' contributions to this country, we can understand how and why his history has afforded him the compassion and dedication to do what he has done for RSL NSW, both in presidency and prior. Ray joined the RSL in 1975 at the Marrickville Sub-Branch—one of the few sub-branches that was accepting of Vietnam veterans at the time—and was made a life member of the league in 2016. He became acting president of RSL NSW in 2019, before being elected president in 2020 and serving a three-year term. This year I attended a moving memorial service at the Cenotaph, Martin Place, where Ray James publicly apologised to Vietnam veterans on behalf of the RSL for the rejection they experienced after the war.

Having just retired this month, Ray is upbeat about the future of RSL NSW. When we remember his history, it paints a picture of the compassion and dedication that motivated Ray during his time as an RSL member and RSL State president. Ray has helped guide the organisation to its first membership increase in 40 years, with membership increasing 11 per cent in the past 18 months alone. The average age of members was 78 years of age and has impressively lowered to 51 years of age. That increase in membership is attributed to a commitment to

making people aware of what the RSL is and what it does. The Returned Servicemen's League began in 1916 to look after veterans, their families and their mates. To this day, Ray stands for that purpose and believes it should continue to be the RSL's focus.

It goes without saying that beside every great man is a great woman. I recognise Pauline James, Ray's wife, who has worked hand in hand with Ray in supporting veterans. I thank her for her contribution too. Mr James was elected as RSL NSW president on 8 December 2020 following a historic one-member, one-vote election, and he remained in the role until his recent retirement. Through his commitment, passion and dedication, Ray has also made an important contribution as a trustee of the ANZAC Memorial Trust, and I know he will continue to offer counsel and support. Newly elected RSL NSW president Mick Bainbridge is a very capable successor, who will, I am sure, appreciate Ray's contribution. I thank Ray for the legacy he leaves, and may he enjoy his retirement.

### **DISABLED SURFERS ASSOCIATION, SOUTH COAST BRANCH**

**Ms LIZA BUTLER (South Coast) (18:34):** I acknowledge and celebrate the South Coast branch of the Disabled Surfers Association, which held its annual Mollymook event on Saturday 18 November. The Disabled Surfers Association in Australia has 19 branches and they are all run by enthusiastic and hardworking committees that rely on volunteers to continue to provide an opportunity to those with a disability who just want to surf. All branches are self-funded through fundraising and donations, and all are run by their own committee and team of volunteers. The vision is to keep giving people of all disabilities the amazing experience of surfing, and to continue to set the world's best practice for safe, fun surfing experiences. Putting smiles on dials is what it is all about.

The Disabled Surfers Association of the South Coast was established by Jim and Sue Bradley in the early 1990s. Jim Bradley was a maths teacher at Oak Flats High School and was instrumental in the introduction of school surfing in New South Wales. The first ever disabled surfing event for the Illawarra and South Coast was held at Bellambi Beach and was made possible by Jim, who rallied his students to volunteer and assist alongside members of the Layback Longboarders club. There are now four events each year along the Illawarra and South Coast at Mollymook, Thirroul, Gerroa and Port Kembla. The Mollymook event started 15 years ago when, as a member of the Ulladulla Boardriders Club, I wanted our younger members to realise how lucky they were and to give back to the community. Surfing is a great equaliser and brings everyone together, with social inclusion as the outcome. The best surfer of the day is the one with the biggest smile and who is having the most fun.

It took me one year to convince Jim Bradley that the Ulladulla Boardriders Club and the wider community could rally up enough volunteers to support the participants. Now, 15 years later, I am happy to say that not only did we accomplish that, but the Mollymook event is now one of the biggest events on the South Coast. This year we had 52 participants with 165 volunteers and 56 carers on the beach helping out. Many of those volunteers were first-time attendees at a disabled surfing event. The South Coast Branch of the Disabled Surfers Association is run by an enthusiastic and hardworking committee. In attendance at Mollymook last Saturday were some very special association members. Judy Horsey, Gary Horsey and Sandra Gould have been members of the Disabled Surfers Association South Coast branch for 30 years, and Len Snowdon, Cec Campbell and President Ian Picton have been members for 29 years. Those members have been to every event held at Mollymook over the past 15 years. This is an amazing achievement and I congratulate them on all they do for the Illawarra and South Coast.

I also give a big shout-out to some of the participants that attend every year: Jason Russell, Scott and Daniel Colebrook, Stevie Malmo, Lusa and Peter Gilford, Scottie Norris, Dax Pennie and my mate Blake. That crew have attended for many years, and I know they look forward to our one special day of the year as much as I do. I cannot begin to list all of the health and other benefits of being in the ocean and surfing, but providing the opportunity to those with a disability to participate in a fun, friendly and safe environment while putting smiles on dials is what it is all about. I am so proud of everyone involved in the Disabled Surfing Association, as everyone involved generously gives their time every year to make the event in Mollymook such a special one. I am blessed to have met so many wonderful surfers and their families over the years. The only bad thing is that we now have to wait another 12 months until the next Mollymook event.

### **JUNEE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra) (18:38):** Tonight I talk about the New South Wales Government's complete disregard and lack of respect for local communities in my Cootamundra electorate in relation to the decision to take control of operations at the Junee Correctional Centre. This announcement came completely out of the blue. It blindsided residents in a way that left them searching for answers that to this day continue to elude them.

I was first made aware of the situation on Tuesday 31 October, when a concerned resident contacted me about rumours that the Government intended to take control of the Junee Correctional Centre when current operator GEO Group's contract expired in 2025. My office immediately contacted the corrections Minister's

office, seeking urgent clarification on the matter. I am still waiting for that query to be answered. Publicly, however, the Minister clarified three days later when, on Friday 3 November, he eventually put out what appeared to be a hastily cobbled-together media release that confirmed what many in the local community had suspected.

Not only did the Minister fail to consult the community about the decision but he did not even pay them the courtesy of coming to Junee to break the news in person. Instead, once the cat was out of the bag, he did one ABC radio interview. Apart from distorting the facts around his communication—or lack thereof—with me and my office, he alarmingly did not even seem to know the location of the community he was potentially turning upside down. As the proud member for Cootamundra, it concerned me greatly to hear the Minister in his radio interview refer to Junee as being somewhere "down there".

I assure the House that I have since addressed any knowledge gaps the Minister may have when it comes to rural and regional geography. I have written to the Minister and formally invited him to Junee. I included a map that provides directions from Macquarie Street directly to the town's main street. In all seriousness, however, it is vital that the Minister makes himself available to come to Junee to answer the questions of community members and allay fears they hold for their future. The Minister was given the chance to fully explain himself during budget estimates earlier this month. However, anyone looking for reassurance that the decision not to put the operational contract out to tender again was done on the basis of sound reasoning was extremely disappointed. The Minister was unable to provide any credible rationale for the decision. Instead, he hid behind technical jargon to justify what appears to be a highly dubious move from this Government. The Minister has made vague references to locking in jobs, but the reality is there were never any doubts about jobs at the centre.

Troublingly, following these developments, doubts are starting to emerge. When pressed during budget estimates on whether there would be any job losses once the Government was in charge, the Minister danced around the question. As a local member, this concerns me greatly. This is one of many questions that remain unanswered. For instance, was the decision to take control of the centre about the job performance of the current operator? Apparently, it was not. To quote the Commissioner of Corrective Services during budget estimates on Wednesday 8 November, operator GEO Group "is doing a good job".

Frankly, the Minister's decision is looking murkier by the day. By his own admission, he failed to meet with and consult the community about this issue. In contrast, the Minister has freely admitted to meeting with the union multiple times since being appointed to this portfolio and refused to deny that he spoke with the Public Service Association about the Junee facility. The Minister acknowledged the financial contributions of current operator GEO Group and what it has provided to the Junee community over the years. However, he has been unable to guarantee that the Government would be able to provide a similar level of support going forward. This is simply not good enough. The Minister must come out of hiding, clear his diary and make every effort to come to Junee as quickly as possible. He needs to front up to the community and provide the vital answers it deserves.

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN (Wakehurst) (18:43):** Today my private member's statement builds on my advocacy to ensure that the New South Wales Government supports consumers on their journey to reduce their carbon emissions. In response to my question last month, Minister Dib informed the House that the Minns Labor Government's consumer energy road map will be launched in the new year. As we await the road map, I say that to date I do not believe successive State governments have sufficiently leaned into the task of supporting households to decarbonise.

The previous Coalition Government established the Empowering Homes Program, a pilot in three regions across New South Wales whereby households could access interest-free loans for battery and solar with battery installations. Investigations into this pilot program found there was no competitive tender for the implementation partner, the end-to-end program design was clunky at best and consumers were not sufficiently supported through the program. It sounds like *Utopia*. Sadly, only \$7 million of interest-free loans were written.

When I was Mayor of Northern Beaches Council, we set ambitious targets of 50 per cent of suitable premises to have solar by 2030. Despite the fast payback of solar, time and again people told me they can't afford the up-front cost. I understand consumer energy rebates were an election promise by the Minns Labor Government, but such payments are a one-off—a sugar hit with no ongoing benefit, no multiplier effect and no reduction in emissions. I hope the Government does not throw the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak, and its consumer energy road map offers households interest-free loans to fund energy-efficient upgrades. These types of schemes have proven most effective in other jurisdictions.

Recently in Canberra I met with the architects of the ACT's successful Sustainable Household Scheme. In under three years, one in 10 Canberra households have taken out an interest-free loan of up to \$15,000 to fund energy-efficient upgrades around their homes, making it the Territory's most successful consumer policy to date.

They are going to continue to roll this out. If you are eligible, the scheme provides a loan from \$2,000 up to \$15,000 to buy and install a range of energy-efficient products such as rooftop solar panels, household battery storage systems, electric heating and cooling systems, hot water heat pumps, electric stovetops, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and ceiling insulation.

Over the life of the scheme you can install one product or a bundle of products up to a combined value of \$15,000. Participants attend a free online or in-person workshop to assist with their energy efficiency choices. Pleasingly, the loan book's default costs are negligible. It is important to offer a range of energy-efficient upgrades to consumers, as options such as solar are not straightforward for those in apartments. Instead, apartment owners can participate by installing an induction cooktop, electric heating or cooling, an electric vehicle charger or maybe a hot water heat pump.

We often pat ourselves on the back and say Australia has the highest per capita uptake of solar in the world, at 33 per cent. But what about those without solar, this miraculous technology that generates free electricity? I estimate well over one million houses in New South Wales are suitable for solar, but the prime real estate of many rooftops lies bare. That is over three Eraring Power Stations' worth of capacity already connected to the grid. Offering interest-free loans for energy-efficient upgrades provides households with significant and ongoing cost-of-living relief and significant and ongoing emissions reduction.

It can help many people escape the scourge of energy poverty. Demographic profiling of the ACT's scheme found loan demand to be greatest amongst those most in need. Consumer sentiment in Australia is at an all-time low. With the housing crisis, climate change and global tensions, many are plain losing hope. People are asking, "What is it all about? Why am I busting a gut but going backwards? What future will my children and grandchildren have?" We must think big and be ambitious in our policies. We must give people hope that politicians can come together and solve these difficult problems.

I commend the Minns Government for the gusto with which it is seeking to address the housing crisis, but it is lamentable that the housing crisis had to become this extreme before smart solutions at scale were put on the table. The housing crisis was a slow-moving train wreck many saw coming, but no action at scale was taken to get ahead of it. I say the same about the climate crisis. We know what is ahead of all of us. The time to take action at scale is now. I thank the House.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms CHARISHMA KALIYANDA (Liverpool) (18:48):** Earlier this month I joined the Centre for Western Sydney, in partnership with Western Sydney Community Forum and Evolve Housing, for the launch of *Home Truths: The Real Housing Story in Western Sydney* at the Western Sydney University campus in Liverpool. The report presents new quantitative data from several key sources as well as stories on the ground. These both indicate the extent of the housing crisis in Western Sydney, which is the result of a confluence of factors. Low property completion rates, soaring housing costs and a lack of meaningful investment into social and affordable housing development are all part of the picture.

The great Australian dream is, in its narrowest sense, a belief that in Australia home ownership can lead to a better life and that it is an expression of success and security. However, over the past couple of decades, the housing crisis we find ourselves in has deteriorated to the point where young Australians are no longer only asking if they can afford to buy a home but are facing the real possibility that they cannot afford to rent a home. For those who are experiencing unprecedented levels of pressure, especially those on very low incomes, the housing crisis is real and pressing. Social and affordable housing, which was once an accessible safety net for those needing safe and secure accommodation, has been replaced by waitlists that can exceed 10 years in some parts of Western Sydney. Housing is often poorly maintained and now the system can no longer respond to even the most dire of circumstances.

The Home Truths report articulates five clear, tangible priorities for action. First, it encourages the National Housing Accord to take the opportunity to clearly define affordable housing to create certainty and support delivery at scale. Secondly, the report highlights the lack of clear public targets for social and affordable housing, and encourages setting these at local government level, informed by current and projected demand. Thirdly, we need to ensure that social and affordable housing dwellings take into account larger family sizes and intergenerational living arrangements so that we align the dwelling mix to demographics. Fourthly, the report encourages affordable housing for key workers, which is vital in the consideration of health, education and innovation precincts to safeguard and retain the region's essential workforce. Finally, the report calls for consistent and digestible capturing of the impact of social and affordable housing so that we can all clearly see the social and economic return on investment of each dwelling.

When we consider all this together with the fact that Western Sydney will accommodate nearly two-thirds of Greater Sydney's population growth over the next two decades, the scale and urgency of the problem is clear, as is the need to take action. However, I am pleased that the Minns Labor Government and the Minister for Housing in the other place have placed housing at the centre of their priorities and as a key focus of the Government. In the first budget handed down by this Government the approach to social and affordable housing was a stark contrast to the decade of fragmentation, privatisation and deterioration that came before it. Over the past 12 years more than \$35 million in social housing stock was sold off by those opposite in Liverpool alone. The current budget, in contrast, delivered \$14 million in upgrades to housing stock and the creation of new social housing stock. We have more to do though.

Liverpool currently has a mayor who says that developers have it tough—with a straight face. The debate about several pieces of legislation introduced this week in this place made it clear that they have acted with little accountability over the past decade and are far from doing it tough. Furthermore, Western Sydney is rife with those who seek to benefit from the growth while having very little skin in the game. They do not live in or have any connection to Western Sydney, but seek to enrich themselves at the expense of the hardworking community who have always had to live with the outcomes of these grifters.

I had the privilege of participating in the panel discussion where we talked about the need for long-term thinking and wraparound support services, and I also shared some of my own experiences of the pointy end of the housing crisis in Liverpool. I extend my thanks to the Centre for Western Sydney for producing the report, and especially the work of Dr Anita Hanna, Tom Nance and Professor Andy Marks. I also especially acknowledge Dr Rhonda Itaoui for her excellent moderation of the launch event. I look forward to seeing some of the recommendations contained within it realised.

### MULTICULTURALISM

**Mr NATHAN HAGARTY (Leppington) (18:53):** The recent Alliance for Responsible Citizenship, or ARC, conference saw a global cavalcade of conservative talking heads, knuckle draggers and chronic sufferers of relevance deprivation syndrome descend on London. While there they made a considerable and lasting contribution to the atmospheric output of hot air. The conference featured a shallow talent pool of political has-beens, such as failed United States House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, failed Australian Prime Ministers Tony Abbott and Scott Morrison, and the currently struggling Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy. Foremost among these professional outrage generators was former Prime Minister John Howard, who took the opportunity to denigrate our nation's multiculturalism. He said:

Multiculturalism is a concept that I've always had trouble with. I take the view that if people want to emigrate to a country, then they adopt the values and practices of that country.

His comments were not only incendiary but also untrue. I say to Mr Howard that multiculturalism is a core Australian value. In an article critical of Howard's comments, Joe Hildebrand—of all people—wrote:

Democracy, it is worth remembering, is the fundamental belief that people with differing views can peacefully coexist if we all accept that we all have a say even if we might not always get what we want.

...

Thus democracy itself is in its very essence multicultural.

In my electorate of Leppington we live and breathe the benefits of multiculturalism, and I am privileged to attend the many festivals, dinners, ceremonies and events that our community holds throughout the year. Multiculturalism was central to the Australian character long before Mr Howard took on the prime ministership. One might argue that multiculturalism began with the arrival of the First Fleet. Indeed, the convicts that arrived in January 1788 were themselves a multicultural bunch. I trace my heritage back to the First Fleet and a convict named John Randall, an African American and former slave born in Connecticut. More recently, the Whitlam Government introduced an official policy of multiculturalism, repealing the White Australia Policy and passing the Racial Discrimination Act. Malcolm Fraser's Liberal Government, of which Mr Howard was a senior member, proceeded with multiculturalism, cementing it as a bipartisan policy and a core national value.

It is my strong belief that chief among the reasons we are such a successful multicultural nation is our public education system. During my 13 years of public schooling I experienced and was witness to the great equaliser and enabler that is public education, not just through a levelling of class and socioeconomic circumstances but as a place that sees kids discover and understand each other's culture, customs, languages and religions. The public school playground is one of the most effective environments for younger generations to both foster racial and cultural harmony and push back on the bigotry of older generations. No wonder one of the Howard Government's lasting contributions was the underfunding of our public schools. In 2007 Howard described the public school as a "safety net", there to provide the minimum standard of education for those who could not afford better private schools.

In keeping with this, Howard only funded public schools to the lowest of standards. The disparity between funding for public and private schools under Howard is stark. Between 1999 and 2005, Federal funding for public schools increased by \$261 per student, compared with \$1,584 for each private school student. Under his Government, while new private schools were opened, almost 200 public schools shut their doors. Howard's rhetoric matched his policies, openly denigrating the public school system. His decade in power saw a misleading culture war unleashed on public schools, including false claims about failing standards, lack of numeracy and literacy skills and disciplinary issues, and a general portrayal of public schools as being unsavoury. The Howard era, and its perverse thinking on conservative politics, still reverberates today.

I see this shameful legacy in my electorate, where not one public high school was built by the previous Liberal Government to accommodate the exponential growth in Austral, Denham Court and Leppington. When reflecting on Mr Howard's comments, it is not hard to understand why he lost his diverse Bennelong electorate in 2007 and why his party has lost so many seats with large multicultural communities more recently. In addition to my seat of Leppington, the Liberals lost East Hills and Parramatta, saw Kogarah run away from them and—as the member opposite will know—hold Ryde by a measly 54 votes. At the most recent Federal election, the Liberals lost Bennelong, Reid and North Sydney in New South Wales. To those opposite, I offer a word of advice: Wheeling out John Howard, whose fossilised ideas belong to a bygone era, does not resonate with or reflect today's Australia. Thankfully, it is evident that, almost two decades since his prime ministership, Australia has moved beyond him. The Liberal Party might do well to do the same.

### MACQUARIE PARK HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde) (18:58):** Today Macquarie Park is the sixth largest gross domestic product producing centre in the country and is on track to be number four by the end of the decade. For years, Federal, State and local governments alike have been united in their vision to turn the Macquarie Park Innovation District into Australia's Silicon Valley. We speak ad nauseam in this place about new housing supply, and I note that my electorate has delivered well over double its housing targets for years. There are 20,000 new dwellings in the development pipeline in Ryde as we speak. The vast majority are to be delivered in Macquarie Park. I am proud to represent an electorate that has done more than its fair share and acknowledge the extraordinary patience of my constituents who still wait for supporting infrastructure to be delivered.

How extraordinary, then, to have the Premier and Minister for Planning and Public Spaces a fortnight ago proclaim, without so much as a heads-up to the local council, that Macquarie Park will be home to another 8,000 apartments. I remind members that the local council has worked with the State and Federal governments for years in curating a long-term vision for science, technology and research jobs in Macquarie Park. In fact, in 2021 Ryde Labor councillor Bernard Purcell spoke specifically about the need to create a precinct that accommodates the job needs of the future. He said in an online blog post:

We also need to develop smarter, greener, digital businesses in Macquarie Park and around Ryde to replace manufacturing.

In 2019 then Labor mayor Jerome Laxale, now the Federal member for Bennelong, complained about State government intervention in planning. He said:

The state government released the priority precinct program [and] rezoned large swathes of land in North Ryde and Macquarie Park, allowing for a maximum of 37 storeys.

He went on to say:

Those two state interventions alone will allow for 15,000 dwellings once both those suburbs are completed.

He was complaining about 37 storeys. His Labor colleagues today are advocating for 60 storeys. In 2017, speaking to local paper *The Weekly Times*, the entire Labor council team took a platform to the election that would "encourage night-time activation in commercial zones and make Macquarie Park the live music capital of Sydney's north-west". While we are still waiting for a concert in Macquarie Park, it was right to acknowledge the potential that lies in commercial precincts. All that will be lost with this enormous about-face from Labor, an about-face that was never announced prior to the election. Labor simply did not take to the election a plan to override councils and communities, let alone a plan for 8,000 apartments in Macquarie Park's commercial core.

Ryde has fundamentally lost confidence in this Government to deliver the infrastructure needed to make it work. Why? Because look at the two commitments it made before the election: one to Ryde's Korean community to build a new cultural centre, which is ineligible under the Government's own rules, fully unfunded, and on land they don't even own; and the other to save TG Millner, a policy that Ryde's Labor councillors are actively walking away from at the behest of colleagues in this place who develop any site they can find, whether it makes sense or not.

In the same week this 8,000-apartment plan was announced, the one road-improvement project the Government did promise before the election was scrapped, a minor intersection upgrade in Eastwood. You cannot

build new housing without infrastructure or public confidence, and this Government has neither. Before we proceed with more housing in Macquarie Park, noting the 20,000 already in the development pipeline, I call on this Government to deliver a new school. The Midtown Macquarie Park primary school delivered by my predecessor and the K-12 school proposed for Macquarie Park were designed with existing growth numbers in mind. Add 8,000 and you simply must deliver another.

Finally, I note that more people working in tech live in Ryde than any other community in our country. For years we have been deliberate about creating jobs for those people to work near their homes. They are not corporate office jobs where people can work from home. We are talking about specialised laboratories, advanced manufacturing and testing facilities—some of the most in-demand commercial real estate in the world. The Government is effectively sending away the jobs of the future, which will consequently force more people into peak-hour traffic and onto overcrowded trains while driving economic opportunities interstate and overseas. It is time this Government listens to the locals, as it was forced to do with Macquarie mental health hospital and North Ryde Common. Scrap this short-sighted plan and work with us to create a better, more sustainable Ryde and New South Wales.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 19:02 until  
Tuesday 28 November at 12:00.**

*Written Community Recognition Statements*

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

#### **ST BERNADETTE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL FUN FAIR**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On Friday, 27 October 2023 I attended the St Bernadette's School Fun Fair. The Fun Fair is a bi-annual event held at the St Bernadette's Primary School at Castle Hill. The fair is always a popular event, and this year was no different. With great entertainment, including the Rock Band, Heroes and Villains Parade, Dance Performance, the Live Auction, and the Chocolate Wheel there was something for everyone. The range of culinary delights was extensive with Kebabs, Pizzas, Giant Pretzels, Dutch Pancakes, Corn and much more. There was the Jumping Castle, Pirate Ship, Go Karts, Teacup Ride to name a few of the rides for the children. The Fun Fair would not have been possible without the dedication, drive and commitment given by the St. Bernadette's Parents and Citizenship Association Committee. I particularly acknowledge and recognise the hard work of the President of the Committee, Rita Bradshaw and the Fun Fair Co-Ordinator Jeff Younis. Proceeds will be used to renovate and replacing the artificial grass within the top play area. Thank you again to the Committee and to everyone who contributed to the success of the fair.

#### **SURVEYORS ACADEMY'S FIRST GRADUATING CLASS**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—I recently attended the offices of Surveyors Australia, formerly the Association of Consulting Surveyors, who represent more than 400 businesses, half of those based in NSW employing land surveyors who are critical to building and infrastructure projects. I was witness to the first cohort graduating from the Surveyors Academy. It was particularly pleasing to join our former State Parliament colleague Melanie Gibbons and their national President Craig Turner. Craig operates SDG Surveyors, a business based in the Castle Hill electorate, and has employed two young men who worked and trained with him while undertaking their studies. I was pleased to join him, and Surveyors Australia CEO Michelle Blicavs, to congratulate Ben Ginman on his Certificate IV in Surveying and Spatial Information Services, and Prasad Colombage on his Diploma of Surveying. The Surveyors Academy offers an alternate pathway to TAFE, and if the success of their first cohort is anything to go by, they will help to make a dent in the current skills shortage – and make a difference to construction projects right across Australia. These graduates may choose further study to become a registered surveyor using this education as their foundation. Congratulations to all involved.

#### **CASTLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP INDUCTION**

**Mr MARK HODGES (Castle Hill)**—On 6 November 2023 I had the pleasure of attending the Castle Hill High School Leadership Induction Ceremony. I congratulate the incoming leadership team: School Captains: Heidi Wilkinson and Zac Dankert. Vice Captains: Antonia Tsigounis and Harrai Bhangu, SRC Presidents: Kristina Skoric and Holly Spinks. Junior SRC Coordinator: Wuntha Naing. Sports Captains: Whitney Matalavea and Andrew Hagggar. Sports Vice Captains: Lowani Somi, Pyper Marchant and Joshua Bray. Year 12 Prefects: Rithul Anand, Nina Barr, Moudy Belal, Olivia Bloem, Liam Castline, Emily Chan, Yenuli Dias, Naomi Gan, Prem Hari, Cassidy Jephtha, Ava Jones, Adhithya Krishna, Melissa Park, Chloe Poon, Callum Rice, Nicole Salama, Kristina Skoric, Holly Spinks, Jethro Sultana, Klara Tinker, and Antonia Tsigounis. Year 11 Prefects: Farhaj Ali, Ishaan Bhawkar, Taj Beri, Katrina Bezkorovainy, Eden Capovilla, Josh Dickenson, Sophie Du Preez, Kareen Essmat, William Go, Hermes Graham, Grace Huang, Oshi Indrawansa, Harrison Lowe, Parmin Nejad,

Joshua Portelli, Joshua Scott, Elyssa Tedesco, Ricardo To, Chantelle Wong, Claire Wong, and Layla Wright. I acknowledge Principal Georgina Fleming and all staff for dedication, commitment, and service to the education of our school community. I wish the new leadership team a successful year in representing the school community.

#### HELEN MCANULTY

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise my constituent Helen McAnulty and her commitment to ensuring lived history is preserved for future generations. Mrs McAnulty has, for at least 50 years, been recording the changes in every-day life in a unique and informal way, gathering a small group of like-minded seniors, providing them with a topic based on daily living, as opposed to major events, and then diligently jotting down their memories. Helen has the motto 'behind every face is a story', a philosophy she developed when, whilst a teacher living in Nyngan, she met a World War I veteran who spoke of his rural upbringing during the turn-of-the-century but neglected to mention he was a Victoria Cross recipient. Her teaching career then took her to Gulgong where she formed an oral history group after becoming a member of the local historical society. A move to Orange in 2008 meant the process was repeated. Now a resident of Uniting Wontama aged care, Helen says she's in the perfect place to continue gathering stories of yesteryear and sharing them in her 'History Talking' columns in local media, giving today's generation a glimpse of days gone by. Well done, Helen.

#### CAROLINE MORRIS

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—Speaker, I wish to congratulate a young woman smashing stereotypes within my electorate, mechanical tradie Caroline Morris. Freshly minted as the 2023 NSW TAFE apprentice of the year, Caroline, who is 24 and now qualified, is the first woman to complete a fitter-machinist apprenticeship at her workplace in more than 20 years. Employed by Newcrest as a Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade apprentice in 2019, Caroline admits school wasn't her strength but threw herself into her TAFE studies at Orange campus and revelled in the practical experience offered at Newcrest's Cadia mining operation. She has worked on a variety of equipment including mill machinery, pumps and crushers and while she says she encountered a few old-fashioned attitudes during her learning journey, she took it all in her stride and is keen to encourage other young people to pursue a career in the trades. As Caroline will tell you, a trade can open doors many young people may not have considered going through. Her achievements also reflected the need to keep our TAFE system vibrant and agile to meet the skills needs of industry. I commend Caroline on her achievement and wish her well.

#### DANIELLE MCDONALD

**Mr PHILIP DONATO (Orange)**—I wish to recognise 16-year-old Danielle McDonald from Parkes on winning two Australian motocross titles and then accepting the amazing but challenging opportunity those wins presented. Danielle was recently named in Australia's 3-rider women's team for the International Motorcycle Federation [FIM] International Six Days Enduro (ISDE) in San Juan, Argentina this November. She joins multiple ISDE trophy winners Jessica Gardiner and Tayla Jones in the team. A unique aspect of the ISDE is that riders are responsible for their own mechanical upkeep and repairs for their bike for six days of the event, an aspect that has Danielle excited heading into her first major foray on the international scene. To make the national outfit, Danielle won the female 100-150cc 2-stroke and 200-250cc 4-stroke (13 to 16 years) categories, announced after the Darwin round in June. Since then she's been clocking up the hours travelling to tackle enduro courses as well as spending time on the family's home course. As is the case with most rural kids that excel, Danielle is backed by her family, mum and dad Christine and Jason and her brother and sister, who are travelling to South America with her. Congratulations and best wishes, Danielle.

#### MCHAPPY DAY

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—Last Saturday across the country was McHappy Day, a day where McDonald's restaurants across the country support sick kids and their families at Ronald McDonald House Charities. On McHappy day the community were able to support Ronald McDonald House Charities by purchasing \$2, \$10 or \$50 helping hands, \$5.95 silly socks or buying a Big Mac with \$2 from every Big Mac sold going directly to Ronald McDonald House. I was lucky enough to be spend McHappy day at 3 different McDonald's restaurants across my electorate. I attended Camden McDonald's, Spring Farm McDonald's and Gregory Hills McDonald's, meeting with staff and customers who were all apart of what makes McHappy day such a wonderful day in the yearly calendar. Congratulations to McDonald's and Ronald McDonald House Charities for putting on another successful McHappy day.

#### BALLOON ALOFT

**Mrs SALLY QUINNELL (Camden)**—Congratulations to Balloon Aloft Australia on winning the Gold Award in the Adventure Tourism category at the 2023 NSW Tourism Awards. The winners of the 2023 NSW Tourism Awards were announced during a gala evening at White Bay Cruise Terminal on 8 November 2023. The

awards celebrate tourism experiences that inspire visitors to feel New South Wales as well as recognise businesses who exemplify outstanding tourism experiences. Balloon Aloft provides passenger balloon rides over the Hunter Valley, Camden Valley, Byron Bay, Mudgee, and Burketown. Conducting Australia's first commercial balloon flight over 40 years ago in the Camden Valley, Balloon Aloft has now expanded in Camden Valley. Balloon Aloft provides hot air balloon flights over the picturesque landscape of the Camden Valley. The whole experience is breathtaking and ends with a Celebration Breakfast at Camden Valley Inn. Once again, congratulations to Balloon Aloft Australia for winning the Gold Award.

#### **REBECCA PATTINSON**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge Rebecca Pattison, the personal trainer behind Fitness by the Beach. Bec has significantly impacted our community - her outdoor group fitness classes in Tuncurry, Forster, and Hallidays Point cater to all ages and fitness levels, from low-impact sessions for seniors to high-intensity workouts. Bec's classes go beyond exercise; they're gatherings that create friendships, confidence, and a passion for wellness. She's not just a personal trainer; she's a community builder, inspiring individuals to grow both physically and mentally. Bec constantly evolves her business to meet the needs of her clients, she is a Fitness Passport provider and most recently she has introduced boxing and aqua aerobics. Bec's dedication to her clients and her genuine care for others make her a local hero. She continues to transform lives and encourages people with her regular fitness challenges. Thank you Bec for your exceptional work, and for making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

#### **JENNA SERGEANT**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge Jenna Sargeant for her outstanding role in creating and successfully organising the She Speaks Business event. Jenna's visionary efforts have been a driving force behind this event, designed to spark, empower, and establish connections among like-hearted female entrepreneurs on the Mid-North Coast. The event, which spanned three hours, featured captivating entertainment, and a line-up of guest speakers. I had the honour of sharing the stage with Kelly McCarran, Kimberly Haworth and Lisa Byrne – these ladies are leaders in their industries and a source of inspiration for women in business. I thank Jenna for her dedication and the resounding success of this event, which not only provided invaluable networking opportunities but also showcased exceptional businesses through the She Speaks Business showbags, gifted to every participant. Jenna's commitment to supporting and uplifting women is both commendable and inspiring.

#### **DAVID FLYNN**

**Mrs TANYA THOMPSON (Myall Lakes)**—I would like to acknowledge David Flynn the president of the Bulahdelah & District Men's Shed on a successful charity golf day raising funds for the new Bulahdelah Men's Shed. David is on a tireless mission to raise \$220,000 for their new shed which is to be situated at Bulahdelah Golf Club. The event featured a splendid array of raffle prizes, generously contributed by local businesses in the Myall Lakes. The coveted grand prize, two masterfully crafted deck chairs by the Men's Shed, had everyone's eyes fixed on it. There were hot dogs, a BBQ, and a few "sneaky shots" – both on and off the course – adding to the festivities. I extend my appreciation to all who supported and continue to support David and the Men's Shed – local businesses, individuals, and dedicated volunteers. Through your generosity, the Men's Shed has inched over \$8000 closer to realising their vision.

#### **HELEN MCKENZIE**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I wish to acknowledge the incredible efforts of a Coolamon local woman for her voluntary contributions and involvement to her local community. Mrs Helen McKenzie better known as June, is an invaluable member of the Coolamon community. Mrs McKenzie has been a vital member of the Coolamon Mothers Club, P&C associations, Coolamon Swimming Club, Coolamon Girl Guides, Coolamon Scouts, the Country Women's Association, Meals on Wheels, community transport driver, Coolamon Up-To-Date Store, ladies' golfers, Anglicare Op Shop in Ganmain, Anglican Church, Coolamon Rural Women's Day Gathering and the Coolamon local craft shop. Mrs McKenzie has also held several executive positions in the many of these clubs. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our regional communities and without them many community organisations and events would not be possible. I thank Mrs McKenzie for everything she has done and continues to do for the Coolamon area. Her contributions are greatly appreciated.

#### **NICOLE LOWERTARBERT**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—Congratulations is extended to local Cowra women, Nicole Lowertarbert. Nicole recently competed in SANDA (Chinese kickboxing) at the highly anticipated 16th World Wushu Championships in Fort Worth, Texas. This achievement marks Nicole's second time representing Australia this year, following her commendable performance at the IFMA Senior World Championships in Bangkok,

Thailand which were held in May this year. Nicole's performance was nothing short of exceptional, and as such she claimed the silver medal in Muay Thai (Thai Kickboxing). Nicole also qualified for the 2023 World Combat Games which were held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in late October. However, due to previous commitments and financial costs, Nicole was unable to attend this event. The World Wushu Championships is a biennial event organised under the auspices of the International Wushu Federation, featuring competitors of the highest calibre within the sport. It stands as the premier event in the wushu calendar, showcasing the pinnacle of wushu talent from around the globe. I congratulate Nicole once again on this incredible achievement.

#### **JOHN ASHCROFT-COOTAMUNDRA MEN'S SHED**

**Ms STEPH COOKE (Cootamundra)**—I would like to thank John Ashcroft, who recently stepped down as the President of the Men's Shed in Cootamundra. John has been involved with the Men's Shed for sixteen years, including a decade as the President. On 25 October I visited the Men's Shed to attend a farewell BBQ in recognition of John's tireless advocacy on behalf of his local community but also to celebrate the growth and success locally for the Men's Shed. The Men's Shed is an important organisation, and it's not just about hobby sharing. For many men they can find a sense of belonging and social connectedness, for others it is an important outlet for their mental health and within these organisations you will encounter amazing people like John. I've had the pleasure of knowing John both personally and professionally for many years, and I'd also like to recognise his incredible wife Cathy for standing by his side throughout what has been an incredible journey. I would like to wish the new president Bill McCaskill all the best during his time in the role. John and Cathy will now excitingly commence their next chapter in Wagga Wagga.

#### **JONES BEACH LIFESAVING INCIDENT**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the vital actions of off-duty Kiama Downs Surf Club members who on Tuesday 14th November 2023 provided first aid and assistance to two men from Sydney who got caught in a rip whilst swimming at Jones Beach. Local surfers were nearby and rescued the pair. Kiama Municipal Council lifeguards have also reminded local residents and visitors about the dangers of swimming at unpatrolled beaches. Off-duty members of the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club then provided first aid until paramedics arrived, taking the pair to hospital for assessment. I also acknowledge and thank Kiama Council's Supervising Beach Lifeguard Craig Bowley who said that this rescue was a sobering reminder of the dangers of swimming after hours at unpatrolled beaches. Our local Councils and surf lifesaving clubs provide patrol services at numerous locations up and down our South Coast beaches. I join with Kiama Municipal Council lifeguards message and I too urge all swimmers, whether they are locals or visitors to our region to please stick to patrolled beaches during patrol hours and to always swim between the red and yellow flags.

#### **KIAMA JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Kiama Junior Football Club. The upcoming 2024 season promises to be a historic year for our local Kiama Junior Football Club. The club is gearing up for its Heritage Year in 2024 and a chance to unite our local Kiama community, marks a legacy for over 48 years and offers businesses an opportunity to get involved. The KJFC Heritage Year Sponsorship Prospectus has been unveiled, offering local businesses the chance to strengthen their connection with the club. KJFC has crafted sponsorship packages, starting as low as \$500 to ensure businesses of all sizes can collaborate. It will include an expanded program of activities, both on and off the field, special commemorative matches, community outreach programs, player development opportunities and overseas tours are just a few items on the agenda, each providing a platform for sponsors to enhance their visibility. Over the past two years, Kiama Junior Football Club has undergone a remarkable transformation, emerging as one of our region's fastest growing junior sporting clubs. I acknowledge Kiama Junior Football Club President Andrew Wales and Vice President Karen Appleby. Well done and congratulations.

#### **DEMENTIA INCLUSIVE KIAMA PROJECT**

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)**—Today the Parliament of New South Wales recognises the Dementia Inclusive Kiama Project. In a world where inclusivity is paramount, the Dementia Inclusive Kiama Project stands as a beacon of hope, transforming Kiama into a more open, friendly, and supportive community for residents living with dementia. The Dementia Inclusive Kiama Project, which began its mission in 2014 as Australia's first national pilot, continues to thrive. I acknowledge Lyndal Henderson, a renowned advocate for dementia inclusivity, recently presented her insights to the Aged Care Royal Commission, shedding light on the challenges faced by people with dementia in the Kiama region. The Kiama Electorate is home to an estimated 1,200 people living with dementia, with at least 300 in the Kiama LGA. This number is projected to rise to around 4,000 within the next 25 years, making dementia inclusivity more critical than ever. The Dementia Inclusive Kiama Project consists of two local groups: the Dementia Alliance, comprising people with dementia, their supporters and

relevant stakeholders and the Dementia Advisory Group. The project's primary goal is to simplify daily tasks for people with dementia. For people interested, the Dementia Advisory Group holds its meetings every Wednesday.

#### PHIL CORBETT

**Mr JAMES GRIFFIN (Manly)**—I rise to acknowledge the incredible contribution of Mr Phil Corbett to the people of NSW. Next month Phil will be recognised at the 2023 Parliamentary Service Awards for his 15 years of service as an Electorate Officer in the NSW Parliament. Throughout this time Phil has worked in electorates right across NSW – including Davidson, Pittwater, Tamworth, Northern Tablelands – and, of course, my community of Manly. Parliamentarians he has assisted include former NSW Speakers Jonathan O’Dea, former NSW Ministers Rob Stokes and Kevin Anderson, and former Federal Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce. A former journalist, Phil’s expertise in communications has been invaluable in providing accurate and engaging information for local residents. Indeed, Phil has always been passionate about nurturing communities. In a previous life – during his time as a radio broadcaster – he even had a hand in creating the very first Tamworth Country Music Festival. Phil is widely respected by his colleagues, family, friends, and the community for his integrity, dependability, versatility, and compassion. He has an exceptional moral compass and is a pleasure to work with. Thank you, Phil, for your ongoing support and counsel – and congratulations on this achievement.

#### PCYC CAMPBELLTOWN

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections)**—The Police Citizens Youth Club [PCYC] Campbelltown in Minto is empowering young people to thrive through activities and programs in partnership with the police and the community. GRIT (Growth Intervention for Teens) is an innovative program that incorporates evidence-based strategies aimed at cultivating resilience. Experienced PCYC GRIT facilitators guide teens in a safe and inclusive environment through fun physical exercise, creative arts and experiential learning activities. Students from Macquarie Fields High School have been participating in the program, which helps promote a growth mindset, gratitude and self-care strategies. PCYC Campbelltown also offers gymnastics and boxing, with students from Sackville Street Public School regularly taking up the opportunity to enjoy the gymnastics facilities. PCYC Campbelltown received grant funding through the Community Building Partnership program, enabling the club to enhance its foyer area and install cooling fans in the gymnastics space. I commend club manager Alese Keane for her passion and commitment in helping young people reach their full potential. The club is having a positive impact on our community’s youth and continues to offer a safe and engaging space for recreation, social connection, and life-skills.

#### COMMUNITY SPIRIT

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building, and Minister for Corrections)**—Tis the season for giving and our community’s big-heartedness is once again on display. With the cost-of-living crisis, our community is turning more than ever to local charities for assistance. I thank the following organisations for their continued service to helping others in times of need. The Rotary Club of Ingleburn is again hosting its annual ‘Gifts of Hope for Children’ in the lead-up to Christmas. A group of committed local organisations are involved in this year’s Christmas Toy Drive, including South West Multicultural and Community Centre; Hands on Hearts Macarthur; Minto Cobras, the Silver Coin Project; NSW Council for Pacific Communities; The Formal Project; and Young Spirit Mentoring Program [YSMP]. The Shining Stars Foundation is hosting its Hamper and Toy Drive, seeking donations of non-perishable food. I am proud of our community’s generosity and commitment to helping others. Our local area is renowned for its strong sense of community spirit. I thank everyone for their kind donations, for giving their precious time and for their commitment to supporting others. Our community is all the better for these acts of generosity at this time of year.

#### CAPS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I was honoured to recently attend a celebration dinner recognising the 50th anniversary of the Child Abuse Prevention Service [CAPS], Australia’s oldest child abuse prevention service. It is with heartfelt appreciation that we recognise the profound impact CAPS has had on our community as it reaches this remarkable milestone. For half a century, CAPS has been a beacon of hope and support, diligently working to achieve their simple but powerful vision: “Every child is safe, supported and loved”. The longevity of CAPS and its powerful impact on so many lives is testimony to the unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of the CAPS team, volunteers, and supporters. I acknowledge the commitment of Chairperson Fiona McDonald, Executive Director John Cowell, the Board and leadership team. CAPS’ legacy of compassion, innovation, and service echoes through the generations, inspiring us to continue striving for a more equitable and thriving society. Their commitment to making a difference, one person at a time, exemplifies the

very essence of community spirit and solidarity. As we honour CAPS' 50 years of unwavering service, let us celebrate the many achievements and extend our deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to this remarkable journey.

#### **WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARD WINNERS**

**Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill—Minister for Transport)**—I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Ms Mary Boustani and the Inner West Council on their recent honours at the Women in Local Government Awards. These Awards were established to recognise the achievements of women working at the grassroots level of government as either councillors or council staff. Ms Boustani is an ICT Systems Engineer with Inner West Council and was the winner of the Alternative Pathways Award – Metro. This Awards recognise the accomplishments of inspirational women in local government across NSW. Inner West Council has won the Employment Diversity Award - Metro. This award recognises a Council that runs a successful program to increase female participation in senior leadership at council or elected representative level. It was exciting to see the most recent progress with Inner West Council electing its youngest ever Deputy Mayor, Councillor Chloe Smith. Congratulations Mary and Inner West Council for winning these awards. It is fantastic to see such wonderful representation and progress for women in the Inner West.

#### **RON AND JAN HEADON**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Ron and Jan Headon for their years of commitment to the Rural Fire Service. Ron and his sons, David and Neil, are foundation members of the Hay Headquarters Brigade, Ron serving over 20 years as captain. Joining the service just after leaving high school, Ron has been there for 45 years. He uses his immense experience and skills to mentor the young recruits in his brigade, some of whom go on to take up careers in the NSW Rural Fire Service. The NSW RFS is all about a commitment to community and going above and beyond to help others. Ron has certainly proved that, being recognised when awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal in 2013 and being honoured with Life Membership to the Rural Fire Service in 2023. Jan too, has been committed to her community, being a member of the Brigade for 25 years, and secretary for around a decade. Ron and Jan are to be congratulated for their continuing leadership and service to the NSW RFS and their community.

#### **KATIE ALPEN**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today, I would like to acknowledge the success of Griffith girl Katie Alpen who along with Bethany Carver became the top Australian qualifiers in the HYROX Doubles competitions in Melbourne and Sydney. HYROX is a unique international competition begun in 2017, combining running and functional workout stations and can be run at a competitor's own pace, in 11 countries, culminating in a world championship. The girls' success means that they will be going to France in June 2024 to represent Australia in the World Championships. They have a lot of hard work ahead of them as the next stage will be more competitive and they will be up against the best in the world. Congratulations to the Katie and Bethany, it is wonderful to see representatives from a rural town competing on the world stage.

#### **PHILLIP WELLS**

**Mrs HELEN DALTON (Murray)**—Today I would like to acknowledge Murrumbidgee Council's longest serving mayor, Phillip Wells. Mr. Wells moved to Darlington Point in 1987 to lease the iconic Punt Hotel. He was elected as a councillor in the late 90's before he was elevated to the rank of deputy mayor and then mayor in 2004. Mr. Wells has been awarded an outstanding service award for his leadership and engagement as mayor of both the former Murrumbidgee Shire Council and the current Murrumbidgee Council over a 20 year period. The community of Darlington Point and respective councils have been lucky to have him and he is acknowledged as exceptionally acquitting his duties over the years leaving an enduring and outstanding legacy. His numerous achievements have been noteworthy in the community and not something to be underestimated. Today I am proud to make this Community Recognition Statement to Mr. Phillip Wells for his dedication to his community.

#### **WYONG CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

**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)**—Wyong Christian Community School celebrate their 30th anniversary of Christian education and the school grounds. This special milestone invites school students, staff, family, and friends coming together as a community to share this extraordinary moment and memories of education. The school grounds will have a range of fun activities and attractions, lawn games, crazy competitions, live music and a range of food and dessert trucks onsite. Part of the celebration the school will be raising funds for Samoa Missions through the purchase of popcorn, fairy floss, lolly bags, glow sticks, and Dunk the Teacher game. Wyong Christian Community School opened in 1993 with 24 students, catering from Kindergarten to Year 6. Throughout the past 30 years new and modern facilities

have been installed to assist in the delivery of educational programs and catering up to year 12 was introduced. The school's commitment is to provide the necessary resources to achieve excellence in education in line with the growth of the school and encourage parents to become involved in the school community. Congratulations to Principal Mr Darren Milligan, staff, students, parents, and those who made an impact in the past to celebrate this occasion.

#### **WYONG HOSPITAL AUXILIARY**

**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)**—Members from Wyong Hospital Auxiliary generously donated two Rapid Response Team emergency trolleys to Wyong Hospital's Intensive Care Unit. The purpose-built trolleys are specifically organised to make it easier for the team to access the equipment they need. The Rapid Response Team emergency trolleys are worth more than \$6,000 including everything needed to manage a patient's airway and circulation, along with personal protective equipment, and will support the team when responding to clinical emergencies on the ward and in the hospital. Wyong Hospital Auxiliary have been donating to support Wyong Hospital since 1999 totalling more than \$575,000 to enhance the care and comfort provided to the patients. Auxiliary members set up a stall at the front of Wyong Hospital with hand made crochet baby goods and items that are much-loved by staff and visitors. The members are willing to dedicate their time to support the raising funds of Wyong Hospital and everyone involved are doing an amazing job making a positive impact within the community.

#### **JAKE CHARLSTON**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Jake Charlston, from Shellharbour, for being selected to play for NPL Victoria powerhouse South Melbourne FC. Jake, a promising goalkeeper, has enjoyed developing his craft in the Illawarra Premier League with Wollongong United over the past few seasons until he was offered a deal by one of Victoria's biggest clubs. Jake is set to play in the under-23's grade and will be in South Melbourne's top three gloveman for 2024. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Jake and wish him well in all his sporting endeavours.

#### **LOGAN JENSEN**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to take this moment to congratulate Logan Jensen of Dapto High School and The Dapto Canaries Cricket Club, who proudly represented the South Coast in the NSW Combined High School Cricket. He delivered an outstanding performance by scoring 75 runs to secure their spot in the final, and then went on to score an impressive 42 runs without losing his wicket in the final match, ultimately crowning South Coast as the champions of NSW, an outstanding result. From this outstanding performance, Logan has earned a well-deserved spot in the NSW Combined High School team, and we extend our heartfelt best wishes to him as he continues his cricket journey.

#### **KOONAWARRA PRIMARY SCHOOL-KOALA FOOD FOREST**

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)**—I would like to congratulate Koonawarra Primary School, partnering with Wollongong City Council and Symbio Wildlife Park, for planting hundreds of specially selected local eucalyptus tree to establish the first 'Koala Food Forest' at Eleebana Reserve in Koonawarra. This 'Koala Food Forest' will be a source of food for the beloved marsupials at Symbio and those in an emergency during natural disasters like the 2020-21 bushfires. The trees, which were selected by Symbio, will take around 18 to 24 months before their leaves are able to be harvested but once established, the wildlife park will be able to sustainably harvest 25 to 100 small branches every few weeks, depending on their growth rate. On behalf of the entire Shellharbour community, I would like to express our congratulations to Koonawarra Primary School for being a part of this wonderful initiative.

#### **SLOANE ORSKI BRACELET DRIVE**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to acknowledge the initiative of one of my young constituents, Sloane Orski. At 6 years old, Sloane has started making blue and white loom band bracelets to raise money for Israel. The orders have been flooding in – and some big names in business have been dollar matching. I am proud to say that Sloane has now raised more than \$90,000. Most of the donations so far have gone to the Magen David Adom Australia ambulance service. Sloane's local project has also now gone global, with children in the United States also jumping on the "band" wagon and selling their own loom bands for Israel. Our community thanks you Sloane. You and your parents, Jess and Avi, are an inspiration.

#### **EASTS DRAGON BOAT CLUB-20 YEARS**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate the Eastern Suburbs Dragon Boat Club who recently celebrated their 20-year anniversary. Easts has been taking to Sydney Harbour since 2003. They

offer members a chance to compete in male, female, and mixed categories at NSW Regattas. I'm proud to say that Easts were awarded the Dragon Boat NSW Club of the Year in 2021. This was a reward for their professionalism, strong membership, and success on the water. Under the leadership of President Robert McCulloch, I look forward to the club continuing to build their history and community in the years ahead. Congratulations Easts.

#### **CAL BAUM QUEEN'S SCOUT CELEBRATION**

**Ms KELLIE SLOANE (Vaucluse)**—I would like to congratulate the achievements of Cal Baum, a member of the Bondi Scout Hall. Cal is the recipient of the prestigious Queen's Scout Award. This Award is a major milestone in a Venturer Scouts journey and carries an outstanding reputation within Scouting and the community. To achieve this prestigious award a Venturer Scout must be able to set a goal; plan progress towards that goal; organise themselves and others; and maintain the determination to overcome difficulties and complete the task. Cal is focused, disciplined and has a love of scouting. He is challenged by learning new skills and is eager to help pass on his knowledge to younger scouts. Congratulations Cal.

#### **TVN ON-COUNTRY WINS TOP HONOURS AT AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE INDUSTRY AWARDS**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to extend my congratulations to TVN On-Country directors Jonathon Whelan and Jebb Hutchison, celebrating their win at the Australian Defence Industry Awards held in Canberra. These proud Wiradjuri men have been named the 'Estate and Infrastructure Business of the Year' in this year's Australian Defence Industry Awards. Having started their Indigenous-owned construction company in a three-by-five metre rumpus room in 2017, they entered the construction industry as relative business newcomers. They have managed to maintain over 20 per cent indigenous employment for this organisation – and in a traditionally male-dominated industry, an impressive 33 per cent of their workforce are women. This has made TVN a leader in the industry. Both Jonathan and Jebb have surrounded themselves with the right people to propel them forward as they "Dare to Dream" what they would like to achieve. Well done Jonathan, Jebb and team. I wish you continued success in the future.

#### **TUMBARUMBA HIGH RFS CADETS GRADUATE**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to congratulate the following students of Tumbarumba High School who have recently graduated from the Rural Fire Safety [RFS] Secondary School Cadet Program: Benjamin Fulton, Riley Murfett, Darcy Finnimore, Ted Smith, Hayden Morrison, Jack Jarick, Gemma Arnold, and Connie Dengate. The students completed a vigorous 10-week course, giving them invaluable skills and understanding of the roles played by volunteer firefighters within our community. A special mention goes to RFS Inspector Peter Jones, a staunch advocate for this program, Tumbarumba High School's Principal Mr Michael Blenkins, teachers and staff who all supported and contributed to the success of this program, and to the Riverina Highlands District which facilitated the course. As we embark on the summer months ahead, I thank each of you for your commitment and service to the safety and well-being of your community.

#### **THURGOONA COUNTRY CLUB RESORT, FOR HOSTING THE 2023 NSW SENIOR OPEN GOLF TOURNAMENT**

**Mr JUSTIN CLANCY (Albury)**—I would like to acknowledge Thurgoona Country Club Resort, for its role in hosting the 2023 NSW Senior Open Golf Tournament. This was the fifth consecutive year for this major event at Thurgoona. The Golf Tournament continues to shape the sporting landscape of our Albury region, commencing on 27 October and running a program across three days. The venue at Thurgoona Golf Club is known for its picturesque 18-hole championship course designed by Peter Thomson and Mike Wolveridge. The event, which fosters camaraderie amongst players, involves many in the community with volunteers and spectators bringing a boost to the local economy while enjoying themselves in our region. I would like to extend my congratulations to tournament winner Adam Henwood and to Scott Barr who finished in second place.

#### **COOPER WILLIAMS CYCLING TO SUPPORT MOVEMBER**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Today I take the opportunity to recognise a determined young man from Port Macquarie, Cooper Williams who after just completing Year 12 school, is now undertaking an epic cycling trip to support the Movember charity and men's health. The bike ride from Tasmania to Brisbane and then from Brisbane back to his home in Port Macquarie is a 4000 kilometre challenge both physically and mentally. After flying to Hobart and cycling up to take the ferry across Bass Strait, Cooper will start the mainland journey from Melbourne to Brisbane. His sister Liana is joining Cooper for the mainland part of the trip to offer her support for this epic and challenging ride. Cooper's preparation has included a 500 kilometre bike ride in 24 hours to challenge his mental and physical strength and to ascertain how he will push through the tough times during the journey. Men's health awareness is very close to Cooper's heart and he wants every man to know it is okay to talk and to reach out and ask for help. Cooper hopes to raise \$100,000 for the Movember charity through his ride. Well done Cooper Williams.

### NEWCASTLE PERMANENT'S PRIMARY SCHOOL MATHEMATICS COMPETITION

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—Congratulations to two impressive, young mathematicians - Year 5 student Kade Currie from Coopernook Public School and Year 6 student Benjamin Ryan from Tacking Point Public School in Port Macquarie. Kade and Ben were recently presented with District Awards for their top performance in the Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition. This is one of the largest and longest running annual maths competitions in Australia being more than 40 years old and attracting almost 21 000 students state-wide. Year 5 and 6 students participate from some 330 schools across NSW and are challenged to complete 35 questions in an allotted time of 45 minutes. Calculators, rulers and other mathematical instruments are forbidden, so students must rely on logical, accurate numerical thinking and the application of their mathematical skills to problem solve and find answers to everyday questions. The top performing students from each region are invited to attend a special awards presentation and further compete in the annual Newcastle Permanent Primary School Online Mathematics Team Challenge in May each year. I am incredibly impressed with Kade and Ben's achievements and applaud their teachers who have guided them throughout their primary school journey. Congratulations!

### AUSTRALIAN MATHEMATICS COMPETITION RESULTS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie)**—It was wonderful to hear the news from St Columba Anglican School Port Macquarie of those students who received Distinction awards at the Australian Mathematics Competition [AMC]. Recognised as the longest running and largest mathematics competition in Australia, the AMC recently published results of the successful students who scored Distinctions for demonstrating excellence in unique problem solving situations that show ingenuity, creativity and determination skills. St Columba in Port Macquarie registered 156 students to participate in AMC among 170,000 schoolchildren from 2,156 schools worldwide. Students were asked to solve 30 mathematical problems that demonstrated the importance and relevance of mathematics in a person's everyday life. I congratulate the following students that were awarded a Distinction: Year 7: Yahya Al Kinani and Riley Hill; Year 8: Lucy King, Charlie Finnecey, Samuel Gumbleton, Ryan Partridge, Jedd Quirk and Jayden Su; Year 9: William Shaw, Matthew Smith, Finneas Vicars and Jiayi Yang. A special mention goes to Lucy King who received the best standardised result in the school. Well done! An impressive result and commendations to all students who entered the competition from across the electorate.

### HUNTER SPORTS HIGH NETBALL

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—It's been a big year for Australian netball, with the Diamonds claiming yet another World Cup win in South Africa, and some of the next generation talent might well be coming up through Hunter Sports High School at Gateshead. In late October, the under-15s Hunter Sports High netball team travelled to Wollongong to compete in the NSW Combined High Schools Sports Association Netball finals. The event brought together the top 16 school teams from across the state, and the Hunter Sports High team played a gruelling 15 games over the course of the tournament. Despite the high-speed pace, the team performed extraordinarily well: they came away with fourteen wins and a second-place finish. What a fabulous result for the team! I absolutely applaud the players on their sportsmanship, commitment and conduct both on and off the court—they displayed strength and endurance over two big days of netball, and their sportsmanship was by all reports phenomenal. Fantastic work, girls! I would also like to thank the side's coaches, Tracey Baggs and Julie 'Julz' Fox, for their work with the side.

### QUINN ARMSTRONG

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—St Pius X student and Newcastle local Quinn Armstrong has always had a passion for all things fast cars. Having raced karts and F4 in his younger teen years, Quinn's passion for motorsports has only grown—and along with that, his talent. Quinn landed a spot with USF Juniors in preparation for a spot in the Indycar championships. He started his motorsports journey in May 2019 after receiving his first kart when he turned twelve, and he competed in the 2020 and 2021 Australian National Karting Championship. In 2022, he finished twelfth in a partial season of the USF Juniors Presented by Cooper Tires, scoring seven top-ten finishes and a best qualifying position of sixth. In his first full-time USF Juniors campaign, Quinn finished an extraordinary second in the championship—and doesn't he have the silverware to show it! Splitting his time between Australia, where he studies, and the United States, where he races, Quinn keeps his skills sharp in vehicles and racing sims. His racing goal is to become a successful Indycar series driver, and I'd say he's well on his way!

### CHARLESTOWN GOLF CLUB

**Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown—Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault)**—Congratulations to the Charlestown Golf Club on being named the NSW Country Gold Club of the year at the NSW Golf industry awards! The award is judged on a number of criteria, including membership, growth in revenue, golf programs and volunteer initiatives and comes after what has been an absolutely stellar year for the Charlestown Golf Club. General manager Joanna Mantle puts the club's success down to hard work and big decisions, including what she's called a "leap of faith"—a \$2.7 million investment in a new high-tech driving range, which was completed in August 2022 and has driven a spike in interest in the club, bringing a whole new demographic into golfing. The initial projection would see the investment pay off over five years, but they've cut that down to two. Membership has grown, bar revenue is up fifty per cent, and they recorded their biggest ever profit in the last financial year. Great news all around. Congratulations to Joanna, her team, and the Golf Club board on this success.

### GIRLS IN BOYS CARS

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—It was an absolute pleasure to attend National Theatre of Parramatta's production of *Girls in Boys Cars* by Felicity Castagna at the Riverside Theatre. It's so refreshing to see a truly Western Sydney story on the stage with two strong female leads. Rosa and Asheeka are brilliant female characters. Their issues are so real; their predicaments felt honest and believable. The complexities of life for younger people today, the peer pressure, identity struggles, and the need not only to fit in but where that place may be is authentic in this play. Western Sydney is a district of unique stories and endless diversity. There is nothing more relatable than a play with scenes set in the Parramatta Macca's car park. It's so valuable for residents to see their lived experiences reflected back at them and for other theatregoers to gain perspectives. National Theatre of Parramatta has demonstrated the value of continued investment in the phenomenal and burgeoning Western Sydney literature and theatre scene. Congratulations Director and Adapter Priscilla Jackman, Associate Director Lucy Clements, Stars; Ziggy Resnick, Nikita Waldron, Suz Mawer, Ella Prince and Alex Stamell the crew and City of Parramatta for investing in the arts.

### BRISLINGTON MUSEUM 40TH ANNIVERSARY

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—The Brislington Medical and Nursing Museum showcases the fascinating medical, social and convict histories of the beautiful 200-year-old Brislington House. The Georgian styled house remains the oldest dwelling in the inner city. Since 1983 Brislington has been operating as a Medical and Nursing Museum for the former Parramatta Hospital and I would like to recognise and celebrate the 40-year anniversary since the museum's opening. Brislington features five different rooms with individual themes. Each room focuses on different elements of the house's convict and medical histories. The museum showcases to visitors the resources, clothing and everyday procedures that doctors and nurses used to conduct their medical practices. Visitors can also explore artefacts of the old Parramatta Hospital, including operating tables, instruments, suturing materials, anaesthetic equipment, and ward beds. Brislington also pays homage to nurses that enlisted and served in various theatres of World War One, including a display of medals and awards given to local nurses. The Museum's work in preserving heritage listed sites such as the Brislington House is important for the Parramatta community to gain a deeper appreciation of the rich history of the city.

### LEORA TECHNOLOGIES

**Ms DONNA DAVIS (Parramatta)**—On October 13 I joined the Premier at the Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence at Doltone House Marconi. A celebration of the outstanding business leaders and organisations who are actively contributing to Western Sydney's growing economy, the room was filled with the success stories of a wide array of individuals from across our diverse communities. Having been the driving force of these awards for 33 years, I acknowledge the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce for consistently supporting and showcasing businesses in our region. My congratulations to all businesses shortlisted, the award winners with an extra special shout out to those award winners based in Parramatta. I want to particularly acknowledge, 'Leora Technologies' for winning Outstanding Start-up. Leora is a modern Employee Assistance Program unlocking employee wellbeing with an AI workplace wellbeing coach. Leora provides a seamless balance of AI-powered tools and clinically validated support that helps promote mindfulness practises that build resilience and promote safe workplace culture. A huge congratulations to Founder and CEO, Esha Oberoi who developed Leora after recognising the need for an alternative to the overstretched EAP support for her employees at Afea Care Services. I look forward to seeing Leora Technologies prosper.

### CANCER COUNCIL CENTRAL COAST RELAY FOR LIFE

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and acknowledge the Central Coast Cancer Council for once again holding a very successful Relay for Life fundraising event.

Hosted and supported by a wonderful local Club, Mingara Leisure Centre, it was great to join over 500 participants for this year's Relay for Life. Relay for Life is an incredibly important, deeply moving, and personal event for so many of us on the Central Coast. It is a chance for the community to recognise and celebrate local cancer survivors, those going through a cancer experience and their carers, and to honour and remember loved ones lost and to raise money to help save more lives. Congratulations and a big thank you to the organisers and every single person who has and continues to support this community fundraising event. Donations have reached over \$70,000 and the money raised, and the awareness generated makes a positive difference to the future of cancer treatment, research, and support services.

#### **CENTRAL COAST BASKETBALL 30TH BIRTHDAY**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I would like to congratulate Central Coast Basketball for recently celebrating their 30th birthday with a celebration event which was enjoyed by past and present players, organisers and supporters. It is clear from the stories and experiences shared on the night that Central Coast Basketball has and will continue to foster the growth of the sport of basketball, provide opportunities for friendship, connection and fun here on the Central Coast. There is a lot to celebrate and more to look forward to. Congratulations Central Coast Basketball on this wonderful milestone.

#### **MCHAPPY DAY**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal)**—I recently had the pleasure of taking part in McHappy Day in my electorate and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge local franchisee owner Ron Mussalli, for allowing me to join the teams at his Kincumber and Erina restaurants. McHappy Day is a day to help raise funds for Ronald McDonald House, which supports families with seriously ill children. McHappy Day has raised over \$61 million for Ronald McDonald House Charities since 1991. Restaurant Manager Ben Mussalli at the Erina restaurant and Restaurant Manager Thomas Millar at the Kincumber restaurant showed me the ropes and made me feel part of the team. Greeting the customers on the front counter and Drive Thru as well as holding the donation bucket which was full of donations from our wonderful community. 85% of McDonald's Australia's restaurants are operated by local businessmen and women like Ron. Erina has been operating since October 1987, and Kincumber has been operating since August 1995. Both restaurants have employed hundreds of local community members during that time. Congratulations to Ron and his team for taking part in such a fantastic fundraising event.

#### **CAMDENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS**

**Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown)**—On behalf of the Newtown electorate, I would like to recognise Camdenville Public School's 2023 Student Leaders, and their contribution to the school community. Members of their 2023 Student Leadership Body are Sandy (Head Minister), Artemis (Deputy Head Minister), Harriet and Sana (Community Ministers), Clara (Environment Minister), Lydia (Wellbeing Minister), Alfie (Sport Minister) and Harper (Technology Minister). Representing your school is a highly rewarding way to contribute to the strength and wellbeing of our community - whether at school, in our neighbourhoods, or around the world. It has been so wonderful to see these Student Leaders enact some incredible initiatives throughout the course of the year - including importantly ensuring that their First Nations Students have a formal voice across the Student Leadership team by introducing the role of two Deadly Legend Ministers for 2024. This year, they also promoted sustainable practices across the school, developed relationships across the student body by implementing a Peer Support program, and engaged the broader school community in students' learning. I acknowledge the Camdenville Public School's 2023 Student Leaders, and thank them for their contributions to the school, their community and beyond.

#### **JOHN (CHIMP) FRANKLIN**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—After 67 Years as Coonabarabran's local Barber, John, better known as "Chimp" is retiring. Chimp was just 14 when he began to learn to cut hair and after finishing his apprenticeship at 18, he eventually went on to open his own shop with Chimps first customer being MP at the time Jack Renshaw. Chimp was loyal to his customers and kept prices affordable. Congratulations Chimp on your deserved retirement. Thank you for providing the locals to a quality service, which I'm sure they will miss. I hope you enjoy the next chapter in your life.

#### **CHRISTINE ADAMS**

**Mr ROY BUTLER (Barwon)**—I would like to congratulate Christine Adams who was recently named the 2023 Far West Volunteer of the Year. Christine is a historian and volunteer curator, treasurer and secretary for the Sulphide Street Railway and Historical Museum Trust. She is the driving force behind the creation of an important historical complex at the Museum, which includes the Broken Hill Migrant Museum, Ron Carter Transport Pavilion, and the Hospital Museum Annexe. She also volunteers her time to guide locals and tourists

on heritage tours, recording and sharing Broken Hill's rich history with current and future generations. Thank you, Christine, for your commitment and dedication to Broken Hill.

#### **BENTLEG MARKET 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to offer my congratulations to Rob Bentley the owner of Bentleg Market in South Grafton. Bentleg Market has been filling a niche in the market providing art supplies, materials and picture frames for 30 years. The South Grafton CBD draws in both locals and visitors with its arts and crafts, music and café culture. Bentleg Market and other specialty shops have played a vital role in bringing in customers to the area and helping to develop this unique Bohemian side of Grafton. The shop always has an eye catching selection of local art and supplies in the window, and Robert always has time to stop and talk to aspiring artists. Over the years Rob has offered space in his shop free of charge for local artists to run classes. I understand that in the future Rob hopes to find someone new to take on the business and expand its potential, giving him more time to work on his art. I wish him the best in this endeavour and hope the shop continues to thrive.

#### **BLUFF POINT QUILTERS EXHIBITION**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to offer my congratulations to the Bluff Point Quilters on the successful outcome of their annual Quilting exhibition, which raised over \$5,300 in support of the Lawrence Historical Society. The exhibition, held at the Lawrence Museum in September, hosted over 250 items – a record number for the Bluff Point Quilters. The Museum welcomed an eclectic display of patterned quilts, enjoyed by around 300 keen attendees. Stalls by Grafton Textiles, New Horizons Quilting, the Handstitched Owl and Grafton Floral Art Group were in attendance, as were the Museum Recycle and Collectors' shop and the Museum Gardening Grannies. The funds donated will go towards the Museum's upkeep and the preservation of current and future displays, received by Vice President of the Lawrence Historical Society, Roz Jones. The Lawrence Museum relies on charity funds from groups such as the Bluff Point Quilters to maintain and operate the Museum. I thank the quilters for their ongoing contributions to the Museum and other organisations within the Clarence Valley

#### **THE AUSTRALIAN HILLCLIMB CHAMPIONSHIP - GRAFTON SPORTING CAR CLUB**

**Mr RICHIE WILLIAMSON (Clarence)**—I would like to congratulate the members of the Grafton Sporting Car Club who participated at the Motorsport Australia, Australian Hillclimb Championship recently at the MG Car Club Ringwood track at Newcastle NSW. With over 100 entrants, the Championship was won overall by Dean Amos in his Gould GR 55B. Dean, from Lismore is a member of, and regular competitor at the Grafton Sporting Car Club at Mountain View Motorsport Complex. Miles Hoare, another regular attendee at the Mountain View Complex came in overall 9th and Dave Morrow 10th. Craig Klingbiel came in at 30th position, Daryl Small position 56 and Stephen Hoade position 79, all regular competitors at the Grafton Sporting Car Club. The Australian Hillclimb championship is an annual National Motorsport single car speed event held on a rotating basis across the states, Grafton has held the Championship in the past, at the Mountain View Motorsport Complex. Congratulations to President, Graham Merry, the committee and all participants of the Grafton Sporting Car Club.

#### **GOODSTART EARLY LEARNING, WOY WOY**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—Early education plays such an important role in shaping the future of our country. Tonight, with much excitement, I want to congratulate Goodstart Early Learning Woy Woy for being the New South Wales State Winner with a KindiCare Rating of 9.9, at the 2023 KindiCare Excellence Awards. I am certain that winning this award was not an easy challenge. The centre had to compete with more than 3,000 other early education centres in our state and this fantastic achievement simply amplifies their commitment to excel at their services. A ship can't sail far without a good captain, the Centre's Director, Tracey Davies, has been here for more than 16 years. With a strong passion for early childhood education, she worked and studied tirelessly to acquire various related qualifications to lead the centre to its success today. I praise Ms Tracey Davies and her beautiful team at Goodstart Early Learning, Woy Woy for their hard work. Pride with such high standards of care, I am confident that the futures of our littlest learners are in good hands.

#### **JUNE O'NEILL**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—With great pleasure, I want to acknowledge June O'Neill, a beautiful Coastie who knits special Teddy Bears for trauma victims on the Central Coast. At the age of 83 years young, June works her magic and creates hundreds of adorable Teddies to give to children who have undergone trauma. This year alone, she has knitted 370 bears. The Teddies are put together with June's love and care, and they all have a smiling face. It all started years ago, when June saw a lady, who was knitting a Teddy Bear at her physio appointment, they got chatting and she learned that it's called a Trauma Teddy. After her appointment, June contacted the Australian Red Cross office in Gosford and June continues to work with the Red Cross to create

these magical Teddies for trauma victims. I am humbled to thank June for her kindness and she is a great example of 'not all heroes wear capes'.

#### **CHARITY BOWL RAISES \$1000 FOR CENTRAL COAST KIDS IN NEED**

**Ms LIESL TESCH (Gosford)**—I want to extend a job well done to the Ettalong Bowling Club for their fundraising efforts for Central Coast Kids in Need. On 24 September, the Club held a Charity Bowling and Raffle Day for a greatly appreciated donation to the organisation. Bowling awards were given to Sharon Wakelin and winning rink prizes to Kerry Watkins, Neil Puls and Alec Aked. Every month this year, the Club has held a Charity Bowls for Kids in Need and I'm sure many more will go ahead as they are a great source of fun and kinship for all involved. To see members within my community taking it upon themselves to help others in need is an inspiring sight to behold and is just one example as to why I care so much for the community I represent. To the members of the club and all donating participants, keep up the good work.

#### **ALEX SUTHERLAND**

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle)**—Well done to Alex Sutherland, a fantastic preschool teacher, on receiving the Premier's Early Childhood Education Scholarship. Mr Sutherland is an educator at Hamilton Childcare Centre. This scholarship will fund Mr Sutherland's overseas research trip to study the 'Original Learning Approach' and educate the wider early childhood education sector when he returns. 'Original Education' is a practice that allows children to learn through playing. Mr Sutherland's dedication to his profession is admirable and I wish him the best of luck with his travels and his research.

#### **COURTNEY WEBECK**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Congratulations Courtney Webeck of Gloucester on your latest achievements – this time on the world sporting stage. The 19-year-old vision-impaired athlete has now had world success in both individual and team sports. Courtney is the world women's singles titleholder following September's International Blind Tennis Association World Championships in Poland. Her world singles crown built on two medals in Blind and Low Vision Tennis at the 2023 International Blind Sporting Federation World Blind Games in Birmingham, England during August. Courtney won bronze in the B2 Women's category and joined with Australian teammate Grace Hobbs to win gold in the Women's B2/4 Doubles. It was a history making tournament, with Courtney named Vice-Captain of the first Australian Women's team to contest Blind Cricket at the World Blind Games. Australia played England and India to bring home the silver medal after a rain disrupted final against India at the Edgbaston Cricket Ground. 2023 has been a sensational year for this multi-talented sportswoman, with Courtney heading overseas as the Australian Blind and Low Vision women's singles tennis champion in both the B2 and B3 classifications. Courtney, may 2024 and your future continue to be amazing and prosperous.

#### **GRACE RUSSELL, QUEEN'S GUIDE**

**Mr DAVID LAYZELL (Upper Hunter)**—Australian Christian College, Singleton student Grace Russell is an inspiration for anyone who wants to set themselves a goal and then achieve it. Congratulations Grace on becoming the youngest ever recipient of the Queen's Guide Award. In 2017 aged 10, Grace set about achieving her ambition to attain the peak achievement award for youth members of Girl Guides Australia. The Queen's Guide Award provides girls an opportunity for extraordinary personal development and greater self-awareness. It has two parts, including the challenges for the Gold Endeavour Award which focus on participation and learning, and the additional challenges focus on organisation and leadership. Compulsory service and leadership challenges are included for each part and are built around the six skill areas of creative thinking, communication, character, collaboration, community and commitment to learning. Girl Guides has given the now 16-year-old many skills such as first aid, boat and jetski licences, crocheting for blankets and the experience of packing a bag for a five-day camping trip. Grace was one of 15 recipients to receive their award from NSW Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, on Saturday 2 September at Government House, Sydney.

#### **DETECTIVE CHIEF INSPECTOR ROBERT ALLISON**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to congratulate and recognise a very special member of the St George community, Detective Chief Inspector Robert Allison. Mr Allison joined the NSW Police Force in 1984 and was confirmed as a Constable at Darlinghurst Police Station. In 1994, he was selected and transferred to the Homicide Unit Major Crime Squad South, where he quickly established himself as an outstanding homicide investigator. In this role, Mr Allison investigated and solved several high-profile murders. The dedication and professionalism he displayed during those investigations have been formally recognised through numerous awards and commendations. In 2011, he was recruited to establish the Unsolved Homicide Unit, where he implemented practices and procedures that are still current to this day. Since 2019, Robert has been serving the community of Kogarah as the Crime Manager at the St George Police Area Command. Detective

Chief Inspector Allison is an accomplished senior police officer and has performed his duties for 40 years with outstanding dedication, service, diligence and integrity. I wish to sincerely thank Mr Allison for his distinguished service in keeping our local community safe and bringing families across NSW peace of mind.

#### **BRUCE AND CARMEL MARTIN**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Mr and Mrs Martin, who celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on the 14th of March, 2023. Bruce and Carmel grew up in Forbes NSW and met, working at the local newspaper. In 1953, they married and not long after, moved away from the beloved country life and bought their first home in the suburb of Bexley North. Remarkably, 63 years later they still live in the same home, where they have welcomed their nine children. Bruce has worked tirelessly for over 50 years while Carmel was extremely busy looking after their nine children. As a couple, they witnessed the arrival of television in the 1960's, automatic washing machines, seatbelts and colour television in the 1970's. In 2001, they were fortunate enough to realise their 50-year-old dream by travelling to the United Kingdom and Europe. Carmel and Bruce are both wonderful and loving people, with nine children, 21 grandchildren and ten great grandchildren. The story of the Martin family is truly inspiring and I wish them good health, happiness and peace of mind for the future.

#### **MR AND MRS LIN**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah—Premier)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Mr and Mrs Lin, who together celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in April of this year. Mr and Mrs Lin grew up in Taiwan and met in the small city of Chiayi, some 51 years ago, through mutual friends. Not long after, they married and had three beautiful children. Mr Lin, a highly qualified high school teacher and Mrs Lin, a professional accountant, both worked tirelessly and often multiple jobs to support their young family. Sixteen years later, Mr and Mrs Lin immigrated to Australia. From then on, they had to face the significant challenges of being a migrant in a country with a different language, culture and educational system. However, through their diligence, hard work and values of compassion and respect, they were able to integrate into the community seamlessly. Both Mr and Mrs Lin, are most proud of being able to support their three children and seeing them enter selfless professions such as medicine, physiotherapy and veterinary. The personal journey of Mr and Mrs Lin is truly inspiring and I wish the whole Lin family good health, happiness and peace of mind for the future.

#### **NORM AND ANNE BROMFIELD**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst)**—Husband and wife duo Norm and Anne Bromfield have been honoured by the title of Life Members of the Yetholme and District Progress Association. Having been part of the association since its inception some 46 years ago Norm and Anne have had an immense impact on the progress of the area. One of their proudest achievements was helping to build the Yetholme Community Hall which has become the heart of the community. Norm and Anne have always been active members of the community raising funds and providing volunteer labour where needed as well as hosting annual balls and catering for events. It was my pleasure to award the first ever life memberships of the association to Norm and Anne at a recent awards evening in the hall they helped build. The pair were thankful for the recognition from their community and have no plans of slowing down. Congratulations Norm and Anne, you have made Yetholme a beautiful place to live and have instilled a strong community spirit of supporting and caring for those around you. A legacy that will live on forever.

#### **HAMMONDCARE BRAESIDE HOSPITAL – FAMILY ROOM OPENING**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was great to attend the Hammondcare Braeside Hospital Family Room opening on Friday, 20th October 2023. Braeside Hospital provides important health care services to our community in Western Sydney. The hospital and its dedicated team of staff, nurses, specialists, and doctors, offer a wide range of services such as rehabilitation and care for older peoples' mental health. Braeside Hospital also offers palliative care services. The palliative care team help those who have been diagnosed with life-limiting illnesses to live as comfortably as possible, with expert medical care and their loved ones nearby. The service provides invaluable support during some of the most difficult moments of our community's lives. The Family Room at Braeside Hospital provides a comfortable and peaceful space for family members to come together to share and create memories during these important moments. Thank you to Hammondcare CEO, Mike Baird, General Manager Andrew Montague, South Western Sydney Local Health District, and all the dedicated doctors, nurses, and committed staff and volunteers, who help deliver inclusive and supportive health services to our community at Braeside Hospital.

#### **CUMBERLAND BRANCH - NSW JUSTICES ASSOCIATION INC.**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—It was great to attend the NSW Justices Association - Cumberland Branch Meeting on Monday 16th October 2023, in Wentworthville. Established in

1911, the NSW Justices Association is a charity that supports Justices of the Peace across NSW. The Justices Association fosters a community of professional, committed JPs through training and development opportunities, advocacy services, and networking and fellowship initiatives. Justices of the Peace perform an integral role in our community, providing accurate and trusted verification services. JPs are entrusted to be independent and impartial witnesses. Certifying legal documents, such as powers of attorney, statutory declarations and affidavits, they are an important component in our legal system. The Cumberland Branch of the NSWJA attests this, having assisted our community to access fair and informed support on over 23,000 occasions to date, this year. Their local, complementary services assist our community to achieve just and efficient outcomes. Thank you to Cumberland Branch President Rees John JP, the committed Executive and all the dedicated volunteer JPs for the support you offer our Western Sydney community. I also thank NSW Justices Association State President Dr John Brodie for your considered advocacy for JPs in our community.

#### **JUSTICE OF THE PEACE CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION – CLARENCE PALMERBURTON**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect)**—Congratulations to Clarence Palmer-Burton on receiving a Justice of the Peace Certificate of Appreciation by the Cumberland Branch of the NSW Justices Association on Monday 16th October 2023. The NSW Justices Association was established in 1911 to offer support, information and advocacy to Justices of the Peace across NSW. Justices of the Peace perform an integral role in our community, providing accurate and trusted verification services. Justices of the Peace are entrusted to be independent and impartial witnesses. Certifying legal documents, such as powers of attorney, statutory declarations and affidavits, they are an important component in our legal system. Justices of the Peace assist courts and governing bodies to provide timely outcomes. The Certificate of Appreciation is awarded to outstanding members of the Association, who have demonstrated great loyalty and longevity. Clarence has generously volunteered his time as a volunteer JP in the NSW JA – Cumberland Branch for 30 years. Congratulations Clarence on your receipt of this significant award. Thank you for your dedicated service to our community. I also thank NSW Justices Association State President Dr John Brodie for your considered advocacy for JPs in our community.

#### **REMEMBRANCE DAY AT MANLY DAM**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Friday 10 November 2023 I attended the Remembrance Day Memorial Service at the Manly Warringah War Memorial Park at Manly Dam. It was a moving and reverent ceremony, attended by veterans and their families, students from local schools and local RSL Sub-Branches. The commemorations concluded with the release of pigeons, symbolising the role the birds played during combat, saving many lives through the messages they delivered. I recognise Bob Giltinan OAM, Vice President, Manly Warringah War Memorial Park Trust, Forestville Sub-Branch representatives Bob Lunnon and John Balfour OAM, the Pittwater House Concert Band, and the school captains and students from local schools, who combined to convey the solemnity of the occasion to all present. I was pleased to be joined by fellow elected representatives, the Member for Manly, James Griffin MP and the Member for Warringah, Zali Steggall OAM MP, as well as Northern Beaches councillors, Mayor, Cr Sue Heins; and Deputy Mayor, Cr Georgia Ryburn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning. We will remember them. Lest We Forget.

#### **SYMPHONY OF LIGHTS DIWALI IN CONCERT**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—On Friday 10 November 2023, I attended the Symphony of Lights Diwali in Concert, at the Concourse Chatswood. Held this year for the first time, the Symphony of Lights features the music of the Australian Indian Orchestra (AIO), with some 60 members playing the vibrant rhythms and melodies of Bollywood, music that almost demands that you dance along with the dancers accompanying the orchestra. I recognise Saroni Roy who, with her Saroni Foundation, has provided the support needed to hold an event on such a grand scale. I also recognise the extremely talented brothers Sagar and Suraj Nagaraj, who founded the AIO this year. Their passion for music has connected Australia and India through the sounds of Bollywood, played on orchestral instruments blended with sitars and other traditional Indian instruments. I also acknowledge Willoughby Council for their initiative in providing such a magnificent venue for this event; and my parliamentary colleagues Tim James MP and Hon. Scott Farlow MLC who joined me at this amazing event. Our Davidson electorate community has a vibrant and growing Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh community, who I am proud to represent in the Parliament of NSW.

#### **OSMOND PITTS AM RD**

**Mr MATT CROSS (Davidson)**—I acknowledge the recent 100th birthday of Davidson resident Mr Osmond Pitts AM RD. Osmond – Ossie to his family and friends – was born on 7th November 1923 in Southampton, England and spent his early years swapping comic books with his next-door neighbour, a young lad named Benny Hill. Going to the sea at 16, Osmond became a Master Mariner on troop ships during the war and was awarded the Reserve Decoration for his service. Coming to Australia in 1953, Osmond joined the

Australian Naval Reserve. He began a new career as a travel agent, retiring only when he turned 85. He served on the board of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents, elected as president in 1969 and 1984 and as AFTA representative on the World Body of Travel Agents for eight years, two years as its president. Osmond was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1988 for his services to the travel industry. He was a member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron for 50 years and sailed until he was 85. I was honoured to present a birthday message to Ossie as he celebrated his milestone in North Turramurra.

#### **MACLEAY VALLEY HONOURED AT NASCA INTEGRITY AWARD FOR 2023**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I rise today, expressing my congratulations for two outstanding students in the Macleay Valley honoured at the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy Awards. Melville High School's Amalie Iliffe and Kempsey High School's Leveda Jarrett were both recipients of this prestigious award, which empowers young Australian people to improve school attendance, strengthen cultural pride and develop career pathways. Both students exemplify these core values. Leveda was awarded for her excellence in Integrity. As a proud Dughutti and Gambahngirr student, she has always valued what is right, sticking to her strong belief systems and facing adversity to rise to the challenge. It is unsurprising that Leveda received a few nominations as a bright and resilient role model. Amalie was awarded for Cultural Pride and Inclusion. As a Year 10 student, Amalie was celebrated for her dedication and involvement in the NASCA Program, showcasing her pride in culture at school and within the community. Amalie is an inspiration for her peers. Well done, Amalie and Leveda for your accomplishments. The community is proud of all the great work you continue to do.

#### **ISABELLA STRETTON SHINES AT NATIONAL FUTSAL SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Mr MICHAEL KEMP (Oxley)**—I rise today, congratulating a talented footballer in the making, Isabella Stretton, for an outstanding performance at the National Futsal School Championship in Brisbane. As a Year 8 student, Isabella has already showcased dedication and expert skill as the under-15s goalkeeper for the East Coast Eagles Futsal Team. The East Coast Eagles took out the 2023 Championship Medal in part to Isabella's expertise in the nets. It's a remarkable achievement for the squad, especially against a two-time consecutive winning Queensland team. Isabella's contribution and saving mechanisms were invaluable, and her hard work played a significant role in securing this victory. Our community is incredibly proud of Isabella's accomplishments and the positive representation she has brought to her school and hometown. She is a shining example of talent, teamwork, and commitment, and this experience highlights her leadership and dedication to a fast pace, and quick-thinking sport. Congratulations Isabella on this well-deserved victory, I wish you continued success in your future endeavours on and off the field. Well done!

#### **JAMES 'JIM' SIMPSON**

**Dr JOE McGIRR (Wagga Wagga)**—I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Mr Jim Simpson on his 70th year with the Rural Fire Service. He is currently the Lake Albert Rural Fire Brigade president as were his father and grandfather before him. Mr Simpson told the Daily Advertiser newspaper he joined the RFS at eight years old while he was still at primary school. He has said the goal of the RFS has always been to protect each other and help the community. He has been the president of the brigade for 26 years and contributed to ensuring the Lake Albert fire station benefitted from new materials. Mr Simpson has spent decades protecting people's properties and fighting bushfires in his local community and around Australia. He recently received a Long Service medal from the RFS for his 70 years of service. Congratulations on your achievements, Mr Simpson, and thank you for all the hard work and leadership. I'm sure the community is also very grateful for all you have done.

#### **MEXICOAST CANTINA FUNDRAISER**

**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)**—Restaurant Mexicoast Cantina in Toukley is supporting Wyong electorate residents in need by hosting Wing Wednesday Fundraiser with all dinning in proceeds going towards a cause in the community selling over 300 wings each Wednesday. Local man Mark Collard was supported by Wing Wednesday Fundraiser who is diagnosed with a blood infection attacking his lungs and kidneys and performed 6 surgeries and multiple blood transfusions. Josh Dibben of 28 years old tragically lost his life in an unfortunate car accident leaving behind his partner Brooke and four-month-old son Jai. Wings Wednesday Fundraiser proceeds will support Brooke and her son Jai to pick up the pieces of their shattered life. Owners Michael and Linda Cross and Jim and Yvette Constantinidis share a huge love and passion for the town and the people of this wonderful community since early 1970's. The dream together was to put their love back into the local community Toukley and the northern end of the Central Coast. It is fantastic to see business owners making a difference in the community and supporting those in need.

### REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I wish to bring to the attention of the House those who partook in Ryde's 2023 Remembrance Day Ceremony. Specifically, I acknowledge Callan Flynn, representing Holy Cross College Ryde [HCCR], who MC'd the event and represented his school with distinction. I also recognise Alena Bondarenko from Meadowbank Public School and Nathaniel El-Azzi from St Therese Primary School who delivered a poignant recitation of "One Minute of Silence," a touching poem by Meadowbank Public School, which captured the ceremony's solemnity. Ben Towle and Charlie Ward from Marist College Eastwood [MCE] presented the Youth Address, with a powerful and insightful speech that highlighted the youthful contributions and sacrifices in times of conflict. Jacob Watson from Epping Boys High School [EBHS] then recited the Ode, a moment that underscored the ceremony's reflective gratitude towards those who served. Finally, Madelaine Reid from St Michael's Primary School concluded the ceremony with a heartfelt rendition of The Lord's Prayer, offering a moment of spiritual contemplation and solace. Each student's contribution underscored the importance of remembrance, honoring the sacrifices made for peace and freedom, ensuring these acts of valor and sacrifice are never forgotten. It was a true community event - lest we forget.

### SAN ANTONIO DA PADOVA ANNUAL GALA

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I wish to bring to the attention of the House the San Antonio Da Padova Annual Gala Ball which was held on 11 November 2023. The ball is a key event for an organisation deeply committed to community service, and allows them to raise critical funds to continue offering aged care services. This is especially the case within the local Italian community who have played such a critical role in writing the history of Ryde. The leadership team, headed by President Filippo Pace, plays a vital role in shaping the organisation's direction and impact, and I wish to also acknowledge the extraordinary work of Vice President Paul Signorelli; Secretary Maria Franco; Treasurer Nunzio Pace; Assistant Treasurer Sandy Barbagallo, and the board, consisting of Filippa Indovino, Lina Maiorana, Carmela Ohmenzetter, Anthony Avvenevole, and Nicholas Di Girolamo, The team offers a diverse range of skills and insights, enriching the organisation's strategic planning and governance. Their collective efforts enable San Antonio Da Padova to navigate challenges and capitalise on opportunities for community betterment, and exemplary service to those requiring aged care services in the Ryde electorate. Congratulations to all involved on such a successful night!

### ARCHIE KINGHAM

**Mr JORDAN LANE (Ryde)**—I wish to bring to the attention of the House Archie Kingham, a student from Marist College Eastwood who was recently selected from a group of 110 students across New South Wales to participate in the National Schools Constitutional Convention in March 2024. Archie was one of only thirty to attend the prestigious constitutional convention right here in NSW Parliament, and will now represent our State in the nation's Capital next year. Archie's selection underscores his academic excellence and deep interest in Australian governance and legal systems. Archie's accomplishment, amidst a competitive selection process, highlights his exceptional talent and potential as a current and future leader. No doubt his forthcoming visit to Canberra will further accentuate and enrich his academic and personal development. Archie's path from Marist College Eastwood, my own alma mater, to the NSW Parliament, illustrates a journey of commitment, intellect, and aspiration. It's a journey that not only signifies his personal success but also exemplifies the quality of education at Marist College Eastwood. I wish Archie well for the convention and trust he will represent our State, the local Ryde community and his school with distinction.

### MEDALS AWARDED TO MEMBERS OF NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the achievements of members of the NSW Rural Fire Service from the Moree Plains Shire, who were recently awarded long service medals for their exemplary service to the community. I congratulate recipients of the 10 year medal: Peter Lee (Gurley), Alan (Pat) Johnston (Bullarah), Scott Heinz (Pallamallawa) and Andrew Stanton (Bellata); 20 year medal: Craig Waters (Bellata); 30 year medal: Justin Wilkes and Terrence Wilkes (Bellata), Julie McLachlan, Christopher McLachlan and Allan McLachlan (Pallamallawa) and Ian Johnson (Bullarah); 40 year medal: Peter Dillon and Peter Guyer (Bullarah); 50 year medal being Brian Nairn of Bellata Brigade. Justin and Terrence Wilkes from Bellata were also recipients of the Premier's Emergency Citation, for their assistance in the 2019/20 bushfire season. I commend each of the recipients for their hard work, incredible contribution and selfless commitment to their communities, saving lives and homes and for upholding the values of the Rural Fire Service.

### WALK TO SUPPORT

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the team at Woolworths Moree for staging a walk to support, to assist those suffering Pancreatic Cancer and to remember sufferers who have lost their lives, especially their friend and colleague Donna Stephens, who bravely battled this disease up until her

passing in June of this year. The walk was over 32km, starting at Moree and moved eastward to Pallamallawa, which was Donna's hometown. I congratulate the organisers of this event, participants, supporters and volunteers for contributing to the wonderful success of the day. Special thanks to John Murphy for providing a bus; escort vehicle drivers Brendon Aitken and Andrew McLaren, along with Phil O'Loughlin for providing water and provisions. A special thankyou to the participants: Mary Ross, Maxine Hobday, Tracey Aitken, Tayla Forbes, Bindi Johnson, Robyn Gallagher, Abby Price, Neil Grose, Emily Hobday, Chelsey Hobday, Kathy McKlaren, Kim Grose, Jasper Taunton, Hamish Taunton and Addison Evans. I commend all involved in this wonderful walk of support, for the funds and awareness raised for this worthy cause, achieved through your foresight and generosity of time and effort. The Moree community and district thanks you.

#### **RETIREMENT OF PAUL HENRY PSM**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands)**—I recognise the long-serving General Manager of the Inverell Shire Council, Mr Paul Henry PSM, on the momentous occasion of his retirement from public service. I congratulate Mr Henry on his long career and especially for his strong leadership and commitment to the Inverell Shire Council and the community for more than 32 years in various leadership roles. His career has been quite remarkable and he has shown fantastic stewardship that has allowed the Inverell Shire to prosper and grow into the vibrant community it is today. I commend Mr Henry on his professionalism and dedication. It has been a fantastic opportunity for me as the local MP to work alongside him and his executive team for the past decade. He has achieved so much and retirement comes well-earned. I wish Mr Henry and his wife, Gabrielle, both a long, happy and enjoyable retirement.

#### **CONNECT PRESCHOOL**

**Ms MARYANNE STUART (Heathcote)**—I rise to recognise a wonderful preschool that is located in my electorate of Heathcote. In 1973 a community institution in Engadine opened its doors. Connect Preschool – formerly known as Engadine Church of Christ – identified the need for another preschool in the local area. What has followed has been 50 years of quality education for the many, many children who have walked through the doors of the not-for-profit preschool. Up to 27 children each day are cared for at the premises located in Engadine. The fact the preschool has remained open for 50 years speaks volumes of how highly regarded the preschool is by the local community. Congratulations to everyone who has been involved with Connect Preschool over the past 50 years. I can't wait to see the good work the preschool will do in the next 50 years as well.

#### **DIWALI**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—Known as the 'Festival of lights', Diwali is India's most important and sacred holiday. Celebrating the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil, Diwali is a highlight on the calendar for the Indian diaspora across the globe. With Willoughby home to a sizeable Indian and South Asia community, Diwali was widely celebrated, and I had the pleasure of attending the 'Symphony of Lights' Diwali Concert on Friday 10 November. Held at the Chatswood Concourse Concert Hall, the Australian Indian Orchestra put on a magnificent display of iconic Indian music with a 60-piece symphony orchestra, combining with traditional Indian instruments, together with wonderful singers and dancers. Willoughby's Indian community celebrated Diwali in style and I enjoyed the local festivities immensely. Thank you to Saroni Roy for your dedication and I thank two outstanding young men, Suraj Nagaraj and Sagar Nagaraj for their leadership and talent.

#### **ST JOHN AMBULANCE**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—St John Ambulance have been making a life-saving difference in communities across NSW for nearly 140 years, and it was my pleasure to meet recently with the local volunteers of St John Ambulance at the Dougherty Centre, Chatswood. The Willoughby volunteers of St John Ambulance help our community stay safe by providing medical care and first aid support at both community events and during natural disasters. I am so grateful for these volunteer members who are passionate leaders of our community, selflessly giving their time, expertise and energy to improve access to healthcare and increase first aid awareness. I express my heartfelt appreciation to the Commissioner of St John Ambulance Ilan Lowbeer OstJ, NSW CEO Dominic Teakle, Northern Metro Zone Leader Rob Lang, and North Hub Leader James French, for their leadership of this remarkable and life-saving community service.

#### **MCHAPPY DAY-CHATSWOOD**

**Mr TIM JAMES (Willoughby)**—On Saturday 18 November, I enjoyed helping and serving at Chatswood McDonalds to celebrate McHappy Day. Making my first fries and Big Mac, I worked alongside the staff to briefly serve locals on this special fundraising day to raise money for Ronald McDonald House Charities. On McHappy Day, \$2 from the sale of every Big Mac goes towards Ronald McDonald House Charities [RMHC] whose mission is to create, find and support programmes that directly improve the health and wellbeing of children. With a

42-year history, the charity opened its first Ronald McDonald House in Australia at Camperdown NSW in 1981. The program has since helped 100,000 families and houses up to 260 families per night. As well as caring for seriously ill children, RMHC run a support programme to assist sick children returning to school and offers family retreats for families of sick children. McHappy Day is a great initiative and worthy cause, I was delighted to play a practical part in it on the day. My thanks to Chatswood McDonalds owner Bernard Kelly and his team for making me welcome.

### **HUNTER RIVER DRAGONS AT THE MASTERS GAMES 2023**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Congratulations to the triumphant Hunter River Dragons dragon boat teams, whose remarkable achievements at the recent Masters Games in Adelaide are nothing short of commendable. Following months of dedicated and arduous training, their exceptional camaraderie and seamless teamwork were on full display, showcasing their unity as a formidable force. The club's outstanding performance resulted in a well-deserved haul of 5 gold medals and 1 silver medal. The A ladies 10's, A ladies 20's, A mixed 20's, A mixed open 20's, and A open 10's all clinched the coveted gold, a testament to their unwavering commitment and skill. Notably, the A mixed 10's narrowly missed the gold, falling short by a mere 2.5 seconds—a testament to their incredible competitiveness and determination. This triumphant display not only reflects the prowess of the Hunter River Dragons but also underscores the spirit of sportsmanship and dedication that defines their dragon boat teams. Their victories are reflective of the collective effort and passion invested by each team member, truly making them great representatives of the Hunter Valley and champions on and off the water. Congratulations to everyone involved.

### **HUNTER YOUNG BUSINESS MIND AWARDS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—I would like to congratulate all who entered the recent Hunter Young Business Mind Awards 2023. Now in its sixth year, the awards recognise young people under the age of 25 who have an innovative business concept, product, service or solution. The Awards are a great way to reward creative and dedicated teachers, and inspire young people of the Hunter to innovate and solve the problems facing the world, big and small. Winners received \$1000 in prize money and runners up \$500. Congratulations to Rutherford Technology High School teacher Jade Bassett who won the Teacher Innovation award for her program Women in STEM. Whilst student Lotus Antoni won the Secondary & Under 25's Innovation in Business Enterprise award for her submission Dairy Way. Hunter Valley Grammar School students, Annika van Woerkom was awarded runner up in the Secondary & Under 25's Innovation in Social Enterprise award, for her submission Safe Seats, and Isabelle Donohoe won the Secondary & Under 25's Innovation in Sustainability award for her submission Aquarinse. Congratulations to all these students and teacher. It seems that Maitland's future is in safe hands with these students and their award winning teacher.

### **SUE SHILCOCK**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland—Minister for Regional Transport and Roads)**—Proud Guringai woman Sue Shilcock has lived in the Maitland region for over 20 years. Sue has a extensive knowledge of community and spends her time advocating for some of our community's most vulnerable children and families. Sue has a strong connection to both the Aboriginal and non-Indigenous community. Employed in the NDIS sector, Sue works closely with disadvantaged communities, in particular children with disabilities and their families. Sue has worked tirelessly across both the business and community sectors and is also a proud mother to Lucinda, Hannah-Rose and Mathew. At community events Sue supports activities that improves community connection whether it be dance, music, art or culture. As an Elder Sue continues to work determinedly towards connection for all people, all ages and cultures across the community. For this work she is deserving of recognition

### **ST ALOYSIUS COLLEGE CRONULLA STUDENT LEADERS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I congratulate the 2024 elected school leaders at St Aloysius College. Ella Parker and Matthew Hallet were elected as school captains, and Claire O'Connor and Caleb Bradshaw as vice captains. Alannah Carmody, Jack Cooper, Sofia Comino, Demetrios Kyprianou, Lily Degan, Richard Nguyen, Alexandra Prior and George Skordas were elected as house leaders. Peter Petrouand Jessica Thorncraft were elected as mission leaders. Student leadership is a valuable opportunity to develop skills in communication, leadership and public speaking - skills which are important for school, the modern workplace and life generally. Student leadership is also an opportunity to enrich the life of the school and to serve others, and to have fun doing so. I wish the leadership team best of luck and every success in their roles and studies in 2024.

### **JULIE'S BIG BREAKFAST**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla)**—I recognise the work of Julie McKinnery on her successful 'Julie's Pink Breaky' held on 28 October. The fundraiser raises awareness of breast cancer, where the guests come dressed in pink. Julie took over the hosting position from Bev Walker, who ran the event for a decade. Julie did not expect however to be diagnosed with cancer herself. Her personal journey and the support she received encouraged her to help others who may be in a similar position. The fundraiser was held in her house at Caringbah which had a great social gathering to support the cause and goal of raising \$20 000. At the event, there were donations, raffles, silent auctions, and lucky door prizes. Active wear company, Running Bare, donated seven boxes worth more than \$10 000 to help the cause. The \$25 000 funds raised on the day will go to the National Breast Cancer Foundation [NBCF], whose goal is to have zero deaths from breast cancer. Julie has survived breast cancer twice and her event has raised over \$75 000 in the past six years.

### **FITNESS FOR PURPOSE**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On Thursday 2 November, I had the pleasure of meeting with Omar Mahmoud, Director and Founder of Fitness for Purpose, and Feroz Sattar, a Fitness for Purpose volunteer. Fitness for Purpose provides our community with culturally inclusive opportunities to access holistic health and social services, education, and skills. Fitness for Purpose delivers programs such as Swim Brothers, drowning prevention, and Learn to Swim program. Their programs include mental health support, nutrition and wellbeing workshops, and physical and skill workshops, that promote physical and mental health education highlighting the importance of physical activity, proper nutrition, and overall wellbeing. Recognising that individuals in the community have different needs and abilities, Fitness for Purpose strives to create an environment where everyone feels welcome and supported. These programs also provide early intervention case management for young people and families that require holistic support in managing a range of psychosocial challenges. I would like to express my deepest appreciation and acknowledgment to Fitness for Purpose for the remarkable work they do within our community. Their dedication and commitment to promoting health and wellbeing have had a profound impact on individuals and contributed to building a healthier and stronger community.

### **LAKEMBA RSL SUB-BRANCH PRESIDENT RECOGNISED WITH AWARD**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—At the recent RSL and Services Clubs Association Annual Conference Dinner at Lakemba RSL Sub-Branch President, Ann Garland OAM was recognised with a Spirit of ANZAC award for her incredible volunteer work and demonstration of loyalty and service to her club and the local community. The RSL & Service Clubs Spirit of ANZAC Awards recognise the valuable and outstanding contributions RSL Service Clubs, and their members make throughout the year which epitomises the sacrifices of those who served in the defence of the nation and in the traditions of the ANZACs values on which RSL and service clubs were founded. This award serves as a testament to Ann's tireless efforts in upholding the values and traditions of the RSL and in supporting veteran, ex-servicemen, and their families. Ann has demonstrated courage, mateship, sacrifice, and perseverance, reflecting the spirit of ANZAC. Being a long-time member of the Lakemba Sub-Branch since 1968, Ann Garland has been heavily involved in keeping the strong traditions of returned servicemen and servicewomen alive through veterans' events and causes. I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Ann Garland OAM for this incredible and honourable achievement.

### **10TH NATIONAL MOSQUE OPEN DAY 28 OCTOBER 2023**

**Mr JIHAD DIB (Bankstown—Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice)**—On 28 October 2023, the famous and popular Lakemba Mosque celebrated its 10th National Mosque Open Day with other Masjids across Australia. In 2008 the Lakemba Mosque was the first in Australia to organise a mosque open day. However, they later expanded the concept into a national initiative, and the Lebanese Muslim Association's Mosques that participated included Wabramatta, Regents Park, Paramatta, Guildford Rahma, and Young Mosques. Other interstate Mosque participants included Queensland, Hobart, Tasmania, and Palmerston in the Northern Territory. This year's celebration featured rides and gifts for children, Mosque tours, and a display of Islamic artifacts, manuscripts, and other historical relics from the Powerhouse Museum in Parramatta courtesy of Khaled Sabsabi, Ivan, and Amy. The funeral director Ahmad Hraiche was also on hand to conduct a tour of the Lebanese Muslim Association Funeral Services Facility. The goal of the National Mosque Day was to educate non-Muslims about Islam and its culture. The event was a huge success because of the numerous sponsors who gracefully volunteered their time and donated generous gifts. Additionally, the support from the local media helped promote the event which resulted in a huge turnout.

### LINK COMMUNITY CARE

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently had the opportunity to visit the Link Collective, an organisation based in Narrabeen in the electorate of Pittwater and see the wonderful work the team do through their Community Care program. The Link Care program provides affordable groceries, fruit and vegetables to the most vulnerable in our community. Supported by generous individual donors and various local businesses, the food care shop is well stocked with high quality groceries and essentials. Operated almost entirely by volunteers, the food care shop provides the experience of a mainstream grocery store. The Link Care also run various other programs to support our community such as pop ups and hampers. Their care hampers provide essential groceries at a low cost, and are easy to pass on, so individuals can support those they know in need. Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers in Pittwater who support the Link Care, including Lyn Nichols who warmly welcomed me to the food care shop. And thank you to Pastors Glen and Clare Wysman, Jodi Newton and the whole Link Collective team for all you do to serve our community.

### MILLA BROWN

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I congratulate Newport local, Milla Brown, on her amazing achievements in the surfing world. At just 15 years old, Milla is currently Australia's number one ranked surfer for under 18s girls and has been the NSW champion for the last three years. Just like many in our community, Milla and her family love surfing. Milla started surfing at just 2 years old, with a lifejacket on and her dad pushing the board. 13 years later, Milla still surfs daily at Bungan Beach. In July, Milla made history as the first girl to win both the under 16 and under 18 events at the World Surf Leagues event in Lennox Head. Milla's success has earned her a place representing Australia at the International Surfing Association World Junior Surfing Championships in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which starts on 24 November. Milla's success is a product of her dedication to training, regularly travelling to northern NSW to work with the nation's best coaches, positive attitude, and determination. I wish Milla all the best in Rio and her future endeavours. Our community is cheering you on, and we can't wait to see all you achieve, both in and out of the water.

### NORTHERN BEACHES MUSIC FESTIVAL 2023

**Mr RORY AMON (Pittwater)**—I recently attended the 2023 Northern Beaches Music Festival, held at the wonderful Berry Reserve and Tramshed Community Arts Centre in Narrabeen. First run in 2011, the Northern Beaches Music Festival was created with a vision to bring our community together to enjoy music, culture, dance and food. This year's program included 50 acts across 5 stages, with a diverse range of performers from rock to folk to our fantastic local school concert bands. It was awesome to have so many renowned acts, including those who usually play at the likes of Tamworth Country Music Festival and Bluefest, perform in Pittwater. Beyond the music, the festival offers so much to our local community, from facepainting to world fair food trucks to market stalls. While a bit of rain impacted the program, it was still a terrific event. Thank you to Paul Robertson and the Northern Beaches Music Alliance for your efforts organising the weekend. Much of the equipment is loaned from the teams' personal collections, which really reflects their dedication to bringing the festival to life. I look forward to attending again next year!

### SYDNEY HARBOUR SURF CLUB MOSMAN'S MOVEMBER CHALLENGE

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I would like to recognise the involvement of the Sydney Harbour Surf Club Mosman's involvement in Movember for this year. For those who do not know, the Movember Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation who supports projects for mental health, prostate cancer and testicular cancer. The Surf Club's initiative has been to encourage participants to paddle on Sydney Harbour 60km each week in November to raise funds to go towards the Foundation. The initiative also encourages people to get paddling on the water to enjoy themselves and create a sense of community, which is by itself good for improving our mental health. This is the club's third year of participation with proven fundraising successes in previous years. Luke Hoder, the director of the Surf Club, expects even greater success this year. I would like to thank the Surf Club for their contribution to Movember and congratulate them on the continuing success of the paddling initiative. I would like to give special commendation to Luke Hoder for leading the club's involvement in Movember.

### TARONGA ZOO BEATING PLASTIC POLLUTION

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—As we all are aware, plastic waste is an incredibly challenging issue that causes detrimental damage on our environment, with an estimated five trillion pieces of plastic currently floating in our oceans. In efforts to combat this problem, Taronga Zoo is collaborating with NSW Government to reduce plastic pollution with its campaign, 'Litter Free Oceans'. I congratulate Taronga Zoo on their commitment and efforts to save wild animals that have been harmed by plastic litter. One story I want to bring attention to is Andrew, a green sea turtle that unfortunately ate a piece of litter and became stranded on one of Sydney's beaches.

He was taken to Taronga Zoo's Wildlife Hospital and luckily made a full recovery. Because of how much plastic waste there is in our oceans, stories like this happen too often. It should not be something that our sealife has to endure. I commend Taronga Zoo and their efforts to bring awareness about our personal impacts on litter, helping to stop plastic pollution.

#### **NORTH SYDNEY ART PRIZE**

**Ms FELICITY WILSON (North Shore)**—I acknowledge the opening of the biennial North Sydney Art Prize, inviting artists from across the nation to demonstrate creative genius and artistic capabilities. The theme of this event is to draw inspiration from sustainability and innovative environmental practices which are displayed at the Coal Loader site, where the finalists' artworks will be exhibited. This year, there is over \$35,000 in prize money, divided over six categories. I am so excited for this exhibition as I know that it will bring in the finest artists from across Australia. This competition is an gathering of varying art styles and mediums, coming together to create a myriad of stunning art works inspired by sustainable technologies and innovation. As we know the Coal Loader site was transformed from an industrial area to a green space for the community to enjoy, showcasing new technologies, native bush nurseries and community gardens. Finalist artworks will be displayed throughout the Coal Loader site, including underground tunnels and chambers. I wish all submitting artists the best of luck and I look forward to seeing the finalist displays next year.

#### **BILLY HERB**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—I would like to recognise Billy Herb, a student in my electorate that has excelled at cross country at the highest levels. In August 2023, Billy competed in the 3km race in 11 years boys at the Australian Cross Country Championships in Canberra, finishing second. This made him the runner-up national champion, as well as winning gold in two different teams events representing New South Wales. Billy also competed at the National Athletics Championships in the 800 metre and 1500 metre events last year, demonstrating his excellence at the highest level for consecutive years. It is wonderful to see people like Billy be competitive in sports that promote wellness and fitness, and I look forward to seeing him progress in the highest levels globally. Go Billy!

#### **CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2023 GALA DINNER**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—On Saturday 18 November 2023 I had the delight of attending the Canterbury-Bankstown Chamber of Commerce 2023 Gala Dinner. The CBCC's aim is to provide the business sector within South-West Sydney with a common voice and advance their interests through less regulation and stronger incentives for small and medium-sized businesses. The chamber often provides workshops to further enhance best practice, by educating its members to maximise the efficiency of their business. It was a wonderful celebration with my colleagues in State Parliament, along with Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC, KC. I would like to commend CEO Wally Mehana for organising and spearheading this wonderful evening, alongside the board of directors composed on Bill Parasiris, Jason Arraj, Geoff Gaymer, Sandra Duarte, Antoinette Khalil, Jessica Wehbe, and Tracy Minett. It was also an honour to become an Ambassador of the Chamber, where I will continue to fight for the interests of small and medium-sized businesses in South-West Sydney!

#### **LIVERPOOL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2023 GALA DINNER**

**Mrs TINA AYYAD (Holsworthy)**—On 20 October 2023 I had the delight of attending the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce 2023 Gala Dinner. The Chamber's aim is to provide the business sector within South-West Sydney with a common voice and advance their interests through less regulation and stronger incentives for small and medium-sized businesses. The chamber often provides workshops to further enhance best practice, by educating its members to maximise the efficiency of their business. I would like to commend the board of the chamber for organising such a wonderful event, including President Dimitri Karam, Vice President Tony Estephen, Treasurer Leanne Hume, Director Michael Azzi, and Director Dianne Lobasso. I look forward to working with the chamber into the future and I look forward to next year's celebrations!

#### **ORCHIDS CENTRAL EXHIBITION AT CLUB CONDELL PARK**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I would like to recognise and celebrate the incredible success of the first Orchids Central exhibition at Club Condell Park, where more than 1,500 Orchid enthusiasts came together to create a vibrant and flourishing community event. This event not only showcased the allure of orchid cultivation but also highlighted a heartening trend: a growing love for orchids by the younger generation. What was once considered an older person's hobby has evolved, with more and more younger individuals embracing orchid growing. Club Condell Park was transformed, with a diverse array of colourful blooms that captivated every visitor. The exhibition was not only a visual delight but also an educational and interactive experience. Experts shared their knowledge and experience while attendees eagerly participated in demonstrations and sought advice to help cultivate their own orchid-growing journeys. I commend Orchids Central for their commitment to fostering

a thriving community of orchid enthusiasts, as well as Club Condell Park for hosting such a fantastic event and letting the community come together for such a wholesome celebration of nature.

#### **40 YEARS OF COMMUNITY RADIO- CONNECT FM**

**Ms KYLIE WILKINSON (East Hills)**—I extend my heartfelt congratulations in recognising Connect FM as they celebrate their momentous 40-year anniversary. For four decades, Connect FM has been the unwavering voice of our local community, providing a vital platform for news, entertainment, and connection in the vibrant neighbourhoods of Bankstown and Auburn. The station started life as 2HCR (Harbour City Radio), when the government announced that there would be frequencies & licences made available to community-based broadcasters. Later a group put in a bid for a licence for the area, and 2BCR (Bankstown City Radio) was born. Operating then on a frequency of 88.7fm the station was to serve the Bankstown & Auburn areas. In 1999, it changed its frequency to 100.9, and became the station we know and love today. This remarkable milestone is a testament to the enduring dedication of Connect FM's team, who have worked tirelessly to keep our community informed, entertained, and connected. I congratulate the Bankstown Auburn Community Radio Team and look forward to the continued contributions they will make to our community in the years ahead.

#### **BRIAN DILL**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—Teaching is a noble and selfless career pathway. I would like to acknowledge and recognise Brian Gill for 47 years of service to educating and teaching the next generation of leaders. Brian began his career as a class teacher in 1976 at Blacktown South Public School. From 1995, he was a dedicated Deputy Principal. Later becoming Principal of Newbridge Heights Public School in 2004 and Georges Hall Public School in 2015. In 2016, he accepted a role as Principal of Drummoyne Public School and has led the school since. Brian has recently made the decision to retire. Brian when reflecting on his time at Drummoyne Public School wrote, 'In one of Milne's books, Winnie-the-Pooh says, 'How lucky am I, to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.' This encapsulates his dedication and passion for education. His approach to education was valued by our local students and families that were lucky to have him lead Drummoyne Public School for many years. I wish to thank Brian for inspiring generations of students and wish him the very best for the future.

#### **DR ANDREA DE FELIP - CONSUL GENERAL OF ITALY IN SYDNEY**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—Take this opportunity to recognise Dr Andrea De Felip, the Consul General of Italy in Sydney for his ongoing commitment to strengthening ties between the two nations. Dr De Felip has been the Italian Consul General from October 2019 and will be finishing his posting in Sydney in the next few months. I would like to thank Dr De Felip for his dedication and commitment to Italians living in Sydney and the wider Italian community in New South Wales. He has been an active and engaged representative, seen by many at Italian events across Sydney. I would like to acknowledge the service of Dr Andrea De Felip and thank him. I wish Dr Felip and his family all the very best for the future.

#### **ST AMBROSE ART EXHIBITION – RAMON COLOMA**

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA (Drummoyne)**—Art is a universal language of expression. Recently, I was invited to the St Ambrose Art Exhibition titled 'Art of Wisdom' at St Ambrose Parish in Concord West. Beautiful artworks by Ramon Coloma were on exhibition and were an expression of his love for his family, his faith, and the world. Ramon is a talented artist, and he is a kind and compassionate person. In his own words, Ramon tells me that his paintings depict inspirational messages of unity, hope and love to create awareness that we are blessed by God despite all that is going on the world. I was blown away by the beauty of his artworks which were bright and colourful with meanings of hope that resonate with us all during this time. Ramon has published a book of his work and has exhibited his artworks worldwide. The art exhibition was a fundraiser for the Parish and organised in partnership with Parish Priest, Father Chaminda Wanigasena Adm. I thank both Ramon and Father Chaminda for the kind invitation to attend the exhibition. I wish the Parish all the very best.

#### **HONEYBEARS KANKINYA**

**Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda)**—I recognise the incredible team at Honeybears Kankinya in Sylvania Waters which opened on 6 November. Established in 2007, the Honeybears Early Learning Centre brand is familiar amongst local families due to two centres, Honeybears and Honeybears Junior. The team behind these family-owned businesses pride themselves on providing the highest level of care and education to children aged 0-6 in a friendly environment. The new Honeybears Kankinya, which I recently visited, is no exception and extends upon the ethos of the other centres. The space at Honeybears Kankinya is designed to promote the intellectual curiosity and physical skills of children, featuring an outdoor area that includes a bike path and turning circle, sandpits, outdoor kitchen, combi van play equipment and much more. None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of the team at Honeybears Kankinya. I acknowledge Joanne Pasas, Jodie

Edwards, Laura Crompton, Alexandra Rrushi, Tiffani Huigen, Emily Kinnane, Sarah Way, Christine Tidory, Nikki Hancock, Nicky Treffeletti, Jordan Dedes, Ivana Naglic and Chantel Contarino. I thank the wonderful team at Honeybears Kankinya for showing me their welcoming new facility and for ensuring our littlest learners have a great start to their educational journey.

#### **KEN MARSLEW**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the exceptional Ken Marslew, founder of the Enough is Enough Anti Violence Movement Inc ("Enough is Enough") on the publication of his new book *Motivated by Murder*. In the book, Ken shares his personal journey following the murder of his son Michael in 1994 during a tragic robbery. The moving story includes this night of harrowing loss, Ken's experience with the legal system and the selfless establishment of Enough is Enough to improve the justice system, promote violence prevention strategies and provide counselling to both victims and survivors. All who have encountered Ken know that he is a truly remarkable individual who has devoted his life to making a difference. In addition to his work through Enough is Enough, Ken has served on the Premier's Council on Crime Prevention, the Attorney General's Victim Advisory Board, Victims Support Australasia, Corrective Service Restorative Justice Advisory Committee, NSW Sentencing Council, Young Offenders Advisory Council and the NSW State Parole Authority. Ken is a driving force for change and embodies the courage and altruism to which many aspire. I commend Ken for sharing his inspiring story and thank him for his tireless commitment in fighting for victims' rights.

#### **OYSTER BAY PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda)**—I congratulate the incredible team of students from Oyster Bay Public School who won the primary school category at the 2023 Game Changer Challenge. The Game Changer Challenge is an award-winning design thinking competition open to public schools across the state that encourages students to discover solutions for a real-world problem whilst applying classroom learning. Calling themselves "The Crazy Collaborators", this exceptional team of students developed an app for pet owners with properties backing onto or near the Royal National Park and notifies them, as well as wildlife authorities, should their pet escape their backyard. Impressively, Adobe has now offered the students a workshop to continue developing their app and Amazon has expressed an interest in the product. I acknowledge the innovative thinking and collaboration of the members of Oyster Bay Public School's team. I recognise Eliza Stafford, Charlie Howell, Nate Macdonald, Adelyn Gould and Allegra Blyton, as well as their teacher Ashley Napier, for their efforts. I commend the students from Oyster Bay Public School for seeking to protect native wildlife from domesticated animals and for winning the primary school category of this year's Game Changer Challenge

#### **NATALIE ROSE**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I rise to congratulate Natalie Rose on her recent appointment as the new chief executive officer of Shopfront Arts Co-Op. What a fantastic achievement! Natalie was previously the co-chief executive and creative director of Shopfront. She is currently gearing up for an exciting suite of events and programs in Shopfront's 2024 season, which was announced on November 16th. Their 2024 season will include a co-production between Milk Crate Theatre company and Shopfront's Harness Ensemble, which is incredibly exciting. Milk Crate Theatre Company is another community-based theatre company, whose aim is to achieve social change through the power of performance. Similarly, Harness is a theatre ensemble made up of young artists that are living with disabilities. The co-production between these two companies is going to be a performance that explores the effect of rapid technology growth on the community and life experience. I'm excited to hear that Natalie is also keen to continue the company's mission of amplifying the voices of young people and emerging artists. I would like to congratulate Natalie on her appointment and wish her and Shopfront the best of luck in all their future endeavours.

#### **ANNIE MARTIN**

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to congratulate a local teacher and front runner for innovation within my community, Annie Martin from Oatley. I was delighted to hear that Annie had recently won the 2023 Premier's Prize for innovation in STEM teaching, which I believe is an absolutely fantastic achievement. As a teacher of 30 years, Annie works incredibly hard to inspire schoolkids through student-led initiatives. She currently works as a Junior School Science Coordinator at Presbyterian Ladies' College in Croydon, and has directed her focus towards implementing hands-on STEM programs. By conducting independent research and collaborating with others, students can solve problems and take ownership over their own learning. I believe that Annie has truly gone above and beyond in implementing these classroom strategies. STEM provides such important skills that are becoming more and more important in our rapidly changing society. It is thanks to the work of teachers like Annie, that STEM has become so accessible to students throughout the State. I would like to congratulate Annie once again for receiving this prestigious award. I wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

### GEORGES RIVERKEEPER

**Mr MARK COURE (Oatley)**—Speaker, I would like to recognise and congratulate the entire team at the Georges Riverkeeper organisation. For their environmental efforts, they have received a 'Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Sustainable Cities' Award. This award recognises their commitment to preserving the Georges River catchment for future generations to enjoy. Established in 1979, Georges Riverkeeper has become one of Australia's longest serving catchment management groups. Over the last 40 years, they have advocated for better river management and preservation practises. As the largest body of water running through my Electorate, the Georges River is incredibly important for locals in my community. Not only is the Georges River used for recreational purposes, but it is also an enormous source of pride for indigenous members of my community. Their 'Zero Litter in Georges River' project is one I am incredibly proud of. In partnership with six local councils, primary schools and the wider community, Georges Riverkeeper has been able to reduce waste entering the Georges River through stormwater. I would once again like to congratulate everyone at Georges Riverkeeper for their continued efforts. I wish them all the very best moving forward.

### FELICITY AND BAKER PRESCOTT

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I rise to acknowledge Glenmore Park locals Felicity and Baker Prescott. This dynamic duo has launched an inspiring initiative that is not only promoting health and fitness but also fostering a sense of community spirit in Mulgoa. Felicity and Baker, with their infectious enthusiasm and passion for boxing, have started offering free fortnightly boxing classes at Mulgoa Rise Fields. These classes are more than just an opportunity to learn a sport; they are a platform for community members of all ages and skill levels to come together, stay active, and build lasting bonds. I commend Felicity and Baker Prescott for their outstanding contribution to our community. Their dedication to sharing their love for boxing and creating a welcoming space for all is truly commendable. They are shining examples of how individual passions can be harnessed for the greater good of the community.

### RONNIE RISKALLA

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Badgerys Creek)**—I am proud to recognise an extraordinary achievement by a talented individual from Glenmore Park, Ronnie Riskalla, he has made a significant mark in the Australian film industry. Earlier this year, Ronnie held the world premiere of his film, 'Streets of Colour', which has become one of the most successful independent film premieres in Australian film history. This milestone is particularly noteworthy as it highlights the potential and quality of independent filmmaking in Australia. Ronnie's success is a beacon of inspiration for aspiring filmmakers and artists in our community and across the nation. His achievement demonstrates that with dedication and talent, remarkable feats can be accomplished in the arts, even outside the mainstream cinema industry. I commend Ronnie Riskalla for his outstanding work and for bringing this incredible film to life. His achievement is a source of inspiration and pride for our community.

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